

has not been granted, and the conference expressed the opinion that in view of the railway extensions in other parts of the State, and that this part of the State has not had any extensions for a considerable number of years, consideration should be given to this request. I feel sure that as Minister controlling this important department, you will appreciate the position of these settlers, and I trust that something might be done to relieve the settlers of their long distances in carting. Thanking you in anticipation of giving this request your usual and prompt consideration.

That letter, signed by the town clerk of Geraldton, shows that for some years the people of Geraldton and of Dartmoor and Balla have been agitating for a railway service. One glance at the map should be sufficient to gain support for the proposed railway, because it will show that whilst other portions of the agricultural districts are criss-crossed with railways, the Central Province, which is the best agricultural province in the State, has been sadly neglected by all Governments. It seems to me that from the very inception successive Governments have had no faith in the lands of the Central Province because in the first place it was left to a private company to give us railway communication from the metropolis to the port of Geraldton. It can only be a question of time when the Government of the day will realise the advisability of buying out that company. Various Governments of the past have come very near to purchasing the Midland line, and had that been done we should not to-day have two main trunk lines of railway running parallel for 300 miles without a single spur line between them. The Chief Secretary has a close personal knowledge of the country to be served by the proposed railway.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is good country, undoubtedly.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: When the general manager of the Midland railway organised a big party of business men and members of Parliament to inspect the area, it was Mr. Miles who said to me, "Well, Hall, I frankly confess you have splendid country around Geraldton." Notwithstanding the bogey of motor transport, I am sure the House will be justified in voting for this short extension of the existing railway, for the soil is suited to the rainfall, and large sums of money have been spent on the Geraldton harbour. What was the use of spending that money if we cannot get the wheat down to the harbour? I regret that members have not been

given an opportunity to inspect the splendid country to be served by the proposed railway and mix with the very fine settlers to be found in that area. Notwithstanding the huge sum of money that has been expended on railway construction in various parts of the State, for many years past not a penny has been spent on railway construction in the Central Province.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Nathan, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.43 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 22nd August, 1933.*

	PAGE
Questions: Lepers, transport to Darwin ...	459
Coastal shipping service ...	459
State batteries ...	460
Lieut.-Governor, method of appointment ...	460
Bills: Road Districts Act Amendment (No. 2), 2r. ...	460
Land, 2r. ...	467
Municipal Corporations Act Amendment, 2r. ...	486
Returned Sailors and Soldiers' Imperial League of Australia, W.A. Branch, Incorporated, Headquarters Building ...	492

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

### QUESTION—LEPERS, TRANSPORT TO DARWIN.

Mr. COVERLEY asked the Minister for Health: Is it his intention to lay on the Table all papers in connection with the recent transporting of leper patients to Darwin?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: No, because the file is actively in use at present, but there is no objection whatever to the hon. member perusing the file at the department if he so desires.

### QUESTION—COASTAL SHIPPING SERVICE.

Mr. WELSH asked the Minister for Health: Has any arrangement been arrived at between the State Shipping Service and Dalgety and Co., Ltd., as agents for Holts

Line, to avoid two ships proceeding in the same direction coming into harbour on the same day at the North-West and Northern ports and Fremantle?

The MINISTER FOR HEALTH replied: No, but the question is being discussed.

### QUESTION—STATE BATTERIES.

Mr. WELSH asked the Minister for Mines: 1. Is he aware that pastoralists are obliged to provide housing accommodation for shearers employed for only a short time each year on their stations? 2. Is he aware that men employed for much longer periods of time at State batteries at Bamboo Creek and Marble Bar have no housing accommodation provided for them, and have to sleep anywhere they can? 3. Would he consider favourably the provision of housing accommodation for battery hands at Bamboo Creek and Marble Bar?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied: 1. Yes. 2. Yes. 3. Yes. Arrangements are being made for the erection of accommodation at Bamboo Creek, and the matter of similar accommodation at Marble Bar is under consideration.

### QUESTION—LIEUT.-GOVERNOR.

#### *Method of Appointment.*

Mr. NEEDHAM (without notice) asked the Premier: Does the Premier propose to make a public statement in regard to the negotiations which preceded the recent appointment of the Lieut.-Governor?

The PREMIER replied: No. Matters of this nature are always stipulated to be strictly secret and confidential, and are consequently treated as such by Ministers.

### BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 17th August.

**MR. DONEY** (Williams - Narrogin) [4.35]: This is not the first time the Minister for Works has attempted to abolish plural voting. He has attempted it on three previous occasions, namely in 1925, in 1926 and in 1928, in each of which years he brought down a Bill to foist the principle of

one-ratepayer one-vote on the people. On each of those occasions the people either said very plainly that they did not want the Bill, or else they were so little interested in the matter that they did not care whether they had the Bill or not. They have evinced a pronounced lack of interest in the matter; in fact, I think the only time the question is discussed is when the Minister has a Bill for the purpose before the House. Other than the Minister himself, I think there cannot be more than half a dozen people in the State who worry about this matter. The Minister's previous Bills have failed because, despite his experience and ability, he has on each occasion found himself utterly unable to construct a convincing case—and I do not think anybody else could do so with such poor material at his command. I make bold to say that at this, his fourth attempt, he is going to fail for a similar reason. It is obvious that this innovation has not been asked for. Nobody wants it. I do not think there is any sense of injustice anywhere, and plainly no one is suffering. I should like to ask the Minister what great wrong does he expect to correct by his Bill, or what benefits are likely to follow in its train—that is, assuming the unlikely contingency of its acceptance. I ask him, why not let well alone? This appears to me to be an attempt to give a political twist to an institution which at the moment is working very well and very smoothly. The Minister certainly cannot say he has any mandate from the people for such a Bill; because, during the recent election, I did not hear the matter mentioned, nor did I see any reference to it in the Press. The Minister said that requests for the widening of the powers of local authorities were constantly coming before the Government; and he indicated that in large measure the Government considered those requests were reasonable, and that, in certain circumstances, they would like to defer to them. There were, he said, many directions wherein local authorities could do certain works more economically and more effectively than could the Government. That is an important admission, and I hope members will take notice of it. Yet the Minister made it very plain that he was not going to give the local authorities an opportunity to do this cheaper and better work unless they first of all accepted a certain plank in the platform of the Labour Party which he himself holds very dear.

The Minister for Works: I thought you said nobody wants it.

Mr. DONEY: I did.

The Minister for Works: Yet now you say it is a plank in the platform of the Labour Party.

The Minister for Mines: It looks as if somebody wants it, for they returned a majority of that party at the last election.

Mr. DONEY: The question of plural voting had no effect whatever on the elections. The plain fact is that the local authorities are not to be permitted to save money or do better work, unless they do it in the way laid down by the Minister. I cannot help thinking the Government must be very strongly entrenched if they can afford to ignore efficiency and economy. I should like to know from the Minister exactly what name he gives to that type of argument.

The Minister for Works: What argument?

Mr. DONEY: The argument that local authorities should not be permitted to do better and cheaper work, except on the conditions laid down by the Minister.

The Minister for Works: You mean that it should be done in the interests of the select few.

Mr. DONEY: I think we might with some justification declare that the Minister, even in the Bill, has departed from his own principles when he requires the possession of property to be a voting qualification. We are with the Minister in that, and are quite content to follow him. He says, and we say too, that no property means no vote, and, as the Minister says, that some property means one vote. Then logically we say that more property should mean more votes.

Mr. Raphael: Do you believe in persons having 60 votes, as in the City Council?

Mr. DONEY: We can discuss that when we come to the Bill dealing with municipalities. In the meantime I think I may say the Minister has at bottom already the instincts of a landed proprietor. He has shown that on a number of occasions and I think he is slowly, very slowly indeed, reverting to type. It is absurd for anyone to pretend that there is anything unusual in the principle of a voting strength according to what one contributes from one's possessions. For instance, take the man with 500 shares in a company; naturally he has a bigger voting strength than has the man with five shares. I have never heard the

Minister declare that principle to be wrong although, of course, he may consider it wrong for all I know. Then we might take the members of a union, or any association where fees are required before a man can exercise the rights of membership, including voting. There a man plainly exercises a vote because of a certain monetary qualification.

The Minister for Works: Oh, nonsense!

Mr. DONEY: It may be nonsense, but not because the Minister says so.

The Minister for Works: It is absolute nonsense.

Mr. DONEY: The Minister will have an opportunity by and by to say it is nonsense, and even actually to show it is nonsense, which is an entirely different thing.

The Minister for Works: It is nonsense, on the face of it.

Mr. DONEY: On that basis I am entitled to say that the man who pays 500s. in rates should have a greater voting strength than the man who pays only 5s. The Minister may search until doomsday for a basis that would secure absolute equality of voting strength as between man and man, but he would never find it.

Mr. Raphael: Do you believe in land speculators controlling the voting.

Mr. DONEY: I do not believe in taking too much notice of the hon. member's interjections. They never seem to be to the point. In 1925, when the House was in Committee on one of the Minister's previous Bills, he said in support of the same plea that he submits now, "Our local government is the most obsolete, the weakest and most ineffective in the world." Whether that was right or wrong, I cannot help wondering whether the Minister really made the exhaustive and world-wide inquiries this sweeping statement would seem to suggest. I am inclined to think he did not do so. He went on to say, "We will never get people to take a live interest in local governing bodies while the existing state of affairs continues." One would think he was talking of some dreadful social malady afflicting the people rather than of a mild Bill such as that was. He also said, "While there is a restrictive franchise, you cannot expect a live interest in these matters to be shown." I cannot understand the Minister holding such views. I always thought that the institutions to which we are referring rather called forth the praise of every member for the particularly fine manner in

which they are carrying out their work. Generally speaking, they are very much alive and businesslike. People in the country who are affected by their work take a great interest in the activities of those bodies. Perhaps the Minister has changed his views since 1925. Perhaps he even is quite keen on taking the first opportunity of letting the House know that he has broadened his mind since then. I recall that on Thursday last he said that plural voting led to any amount of damage and stagnation in the work of local governing bodies. What damage or stagnation was he referring to?

The Minister for Works: There is plenty of it.

Mr. DONEY: If he can show that damage and stagnation have resulted from the adoption of the present methods, he is entitled to have his Bill passed. If he can show what he declares to be so, he will be welcome to my support and the support of many other members.

Mr. Raphael: Yours would not help him very far.

Mr. DONEY: The Minister made that statement, but has not proved it. I do not think he can prove it. He quoted the basis of local governing authority voting in Queensland and New South Wales as an example of the enlightenment of those States upon these matters. Such examples may suit him, but I do not think many people in this State would regard happenings in those States as worthy of emulation. Is the Minister prepared to insist that a change in the franchise in those States has led to any great improvement? If so, it is time to say exactly what these improvements are. That information would enable us to learn something other than what we can from a mere statement which is not amplified in any way. Does he consider that the local governing activities in those States are operating on a higher level than they are in the other States? The Minister went to a lot of trouble to show that in this State, in Tasmania and in Victoria things were different from what they were anywhere else in the world in relation to this question. What the Minister has to show is not that we are different from other countries, but that we are wrong in differing from them. When he says we are different in that regard from anyone else, I should like to know on what information he bases the remark. He made the assertion, but I do not think he knows on what he based it.

The Minister for Works: I made that statement nine years ago, and you have not yet been able to disprove it.

Mr. DONEY: This is the first opportunity I have had to check up the Minister on that point.

The Minister for Works: You have had nine years in which to do it.

Mr. DONEY: I have never previously attempted to do it, nor had the occasion to do it. In his reply the Minister will have the opportunity to prove the point if he can. Even if he is right, I do not know that it proves anything. We in this State have many methods and practices born of our newness as a State, and our limitless spaces, which differ from those found in the other States to which reference has been made.

Mr. Withers: You still want to be the Cinderella.

Mr. DONEY: There is no harm in being merely different from others. The Minister referred to certain disparities in the franchise between Parliaments and road boards. Because in this State the franchises differ, the Minister argued that it was illogical they should do so. It would be illogical provided the two elected bodies were performing identical functions, but that is not so. There is a very vital difference, as the Minister admitted last Thursday. Parliaments have great powers. They can declare war and conscript human life. These powers are of greater consequence than the restricted financial powers possessed by local authorities. They are as vital to one individual as to another. Parliaments have power over life and death. The democratic adult vote in that case is fully justified. The function of a road board to make a footpath or a road is very different from that of making a war. The difference between these two functions expresses the difference between road boards and Parliaments. Under charter from the Government road boards collect money from a selected number of people, and in general spend it on behalf of those people. The vote is generally not so much in proportion to the amount that is paid as in proportion to the manner in which the voters are affected. In these circumstances the grading of voters according to their contributions is a sound and equitable proposition. I listened carefully to the Minister's second reading speech.

Mr. Marshall: You cannot quote from "Hansard."

Mr. DONEY: I am very careful not to. So far as I can gather, the only concrete reason why the Minister wants plural voting is that it is the policy of his Government. We on this side of the House do not mind conforming to that policy, if it can be shown to produce certain benefits which, in fairness to us, ought to be named. At the conclusion of his speech, the Minister said he wished to see local government put upon an effective basis, and the works carried out more smoothly than was possible under the present obsolete Act. Inferentially, that means that the Minister holds that road board work is not effective at the moment, does not run smoothly, and is being carried out upon altogether out-of-date lines. The Minister plainly found it easier to state his conclusions than to go to the trouble of showing how he arrived at them. It would not be easy for him or anyone else to explain why, despite the disabilities under which he considers they are suffering, road boards are able to work more economically and effectively than can Parliament. I hope the House will have nothing to do with this Bill. I shall be very disappointed if certain members opposite, in addition to those on this side of the House, fail to see eye to eye with the majority of those who live in the country areas.

**MR. McLARTY** (Murray-Wellington) [5.1]: There is no doubt about the Minister's determination with regard to this Bill. With him it is a case of, if at first you don't succeed, try, try again. I hope I am not to be numbered amongst the ultra-Conservative Tories to whom the Minister referred if I oppose the measure, which I trust will meet the same fate as previous Bills of a like nature. I am at a loss to understand why the Road Districts Act cannot be amended unless this measure passes. From my knowledge of road boards and their working I feel sure that the Minister can repose his fullest trust in them. I agree with the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Doney) that there is no demand for the Bill. The Minister for Mines said it was mentioned during the general election, but I never heard it referred to.

The Minister for Mines: I did not say that.

Mr. McLARTY: I am sorry if I misunderstood the Minister.

The Minister for Mines: I said that the Bill was part of our platform, and that it would be given effect to if we were returned to power.

Mr. McLARTY: In my electorate I have not heard it asked for by one road board or even by a single elector. I may add that in my electorate there are five road board districts. If the proposed reform was urgently needed, surely there would have been a request for it from one of those road boards or from some resident. The Minister for Works has compared road board elections with Parliamentary elections, and has alluded to a comparative lack of interest in the former. I do not consider that a comparison can be drawn between the two sets of elections. After all, Parliament deals with the whole of the people and all their activities, whereas road boards deal with ratepayers only. The Minister also compared our local governing bodies with local governing bodies in England; but there, again, a comparison can hardly be instituted. The English County Councils are something like our State Parliaments, though probably not possessing as much power. However, they deal with education, health—

Mr. Latham: Police.

Mr. McLARTY: —with quite a number of matters that this State Parliament deals with. Therefore the comparison drawn by the Minister hardly holds.

The Minister for Mines: Local authorities deal with health too, in this State.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes, but not to the same extent as County Councils do.

The Minister for Works: We want to make the road boards more important, give them larger powers.

Mr. McLARTY: The Minister's proposal is drastic. The hon. gentleman laughs, but it is evident that other people share my opinion, or the Bill would have been enacted years ago. It provides that a ratepayer shall have one vote only. If a man has property in two wards, say £1,000 worth in one ward and £1,000 worth in another, then, if the Bill is enacted, he will have no say at all except as regards the ward for which he decides to exercise his vote. He will have no say whatever regarding the expenditure of money in the other ward, or what loans shall be raised there. In my opinion that is utterly unjust. If a man has property in a ward, he should be permitted to use his vote there in order that he may have a chance

to give himself some protection. In the event of the measure passing, ratepayers and landholders generally can make up their minds that they must submit to increased taxation. Under the existing system those who have to carry the greater burden do have some extra say, even if only a little, as to how money shall be spent and what taxation shall be levied.

The Minister for Works: They do not carry the burden.

Mr. McLARTY: If the Bill passes, the smallest ratepayer, the man who pays merely a few shillings—

Mr. Latham: The ratepayer who pays the half-crown minimum.

Mr. McLARTY: That ratepayer will have just as much say as the one who pays £100.

The Minister for Employment: What an awful crime!

Mr. McLARTY: I do not say it is a crime, but I say it is not justice. The small ratepayer, the man paying perhaps half-a-crown, is coming and going all the time; but the larger ratepayer has to remain and carry the responsibility. If a very small ratepayer sees a better opportunity elsewhere, he can leave the district straight away.

Mr. Raphael: Has not the other man the same chance?

Mr. McLARTY: No. It would be much more difficult for him to leave.

The Minister for Works: It is but seldom that the large ratepayer lives in the district.

Mr. McLARTY: I do not agree with the Minister there. That certainly does not apply to country districts. I have known of cases where a man has come into a district, obtained a very small interest indeed in it, and then has advocated all sorts of so-called progressive and incidentally expensive ideas.

Mr. Lambert: That is what the old-timers said when the tothersiders came to Western Australia.

Mr. McLARTY: I do not know what they said; I was not born then. Men of the type I refer to would under this Bill become a distinct danger. The Minister for Works has expressed the opinion that the abolition of plural voting will stimulate interest in local government elections. I do not share that view. In connection with our State elections people have to be compelled to enrol, and in connection with Federal elections they have to be compelled to vote. Those facts indicate that under the Bill in-

terest in road board elections would become no greater unless compulsion was applied. I have known considerable keenness to be evinced in road board elections. Hon. members will, I believe, agree with me that our road boards are composed of public-spirited men, in whom the Minister can put the fullest trust. It would be perfectly safe for him to amend the parent Act without the passing of this Bill. I have not looked at the matter from the aspect of increasing the responsibilities and powers of road boards, as indicated by the Minister. The matter is one requiring a good deal of consideration. Road board members now have to carry a considerable burden of responsibility, and to devote a good deal of their time to work which they do in an honorary capacity. Therefore I do not consider it advisable to load them with additional work.

Mr. Doney: I have not heard of any requests from them for additional work.

Mr. McLARTY: I shall oppose the second reading of the Bill.

**MR. LAMBERT** (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [5.11]: I support the Bill. The views of members of the Country Party do not altogether surprise me. I take it the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Doney) expresses those views, especially as regards the proposed change of franchise. It may at once be admitted that local governing bodies in this State have done and are doing highly useful work, although their powers are limited and their activities circumscribed; but I sharply disagree with the Minister for Works when he states that the powers of the boards should be considerably extended. In opposing that suggestion let me express my opinion that the time has arrived when there should be a thorough overhaul of the powers conferred upon our local governing bodies. Municipalities throughout the State have done good work, as also have road boards, many of the members of which make considerable sacrifices in attending meetings and exercising the functions of those bodies. However, when it comes to the more intricate working of local governing bodies, a halt should be called. From one aspect, the local governing bodies do good work in representing the parochial view of individual wards; but take the case of local bodies being called upon to purchase electric lighting plants. Recently I gave instances of Bunbury, Narrogin and Albany, irrespective of the econo-

mic position and the interests of the State, going in holus bolus for the purchase of crude oil engines.

Mr. Patrick: They have the advice of the Public Works Department engineers.

Mr. LAMBERT: If a Public Works engineer has advised a place like Bunbury, which is only 40 miles from the biggest known coalfield in Western Australia, to buy a crude oil engine, thus committing this country indefinitely to the purchase of crude oil, I hope the Minister will obtain that engineer's name and address and, in his characteristic style, see that the engineer obtains his walking ticket. The antiquated views expressed by the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Doney) may be typified in the personnel of some road boards. However, when it comes to a question of enlarging the powers not only of road boards but also of municipalities throughout the State, I consider that the whole subject of such powers should come up for a thorough review. With all possible deference to those who comprise municipal councils and road boards today, I have yet to learn how it can be expected that they shall know anything about generating plants, electrical machinery and so forth, to the purchase of which they commit the ratepayers from time to time.

Mr. Doney: Or that certain members of Parliament know anything about their Parliamentary duties.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie is getting away from the provisions of the Bill.

Mr. LAMBERT: I had in mind the Minister's remarks when he moved the second reading of the Bill, and stated that he wished to extend further the powers of local governing bodies. I do not desire to labour the question, but if it is his intention, after the Bill becomes law, to carry out that objective, I trust the common sense of members of this place and that of members in the Legislative Council will agree that plural voting should be abolished once and for all in Western Australia. It is foolish to say that merely because a man lives in a big house, owns a big farm, or has a lot of money, he must be possessed of all the intellectual qualities fitting him to be a member of a road board or a municipal council. Such a contention will not bear analysis. Before proceeding any further with such legislative proposals, I would like the whole question investiga-

ted, including the control of territory, the powers of boards and the overlapping of various authorities. The last-mentioned phase should be done away with altogether. In all probability, there are a dozen or two dozen road boards that could be dispensed with to the advantage of the ratepayers as a whole. Some exist, paying the secretary a mere pittance of £2 a week, merely for the sake of maintaining a road board and the road board office. That is an absurd position. What is required is legislation consolidating the laws applicable to local governing authorities, such as was passed in Victoria in 1914. That legislation has worked very well. Parliament should assume power to remodel the boundaries of the road boards and municipal councils throughout the State. I hope the Minister will not indulge in any frantic efforts to delegate additional powers to the local authorities without giving the whole matter due consideration. We could wisely set up an authority in the metropolitan area to which Parliament could transfer some of our subordinate functions, but we should stop at the departmentalisation of activities, which leads only to red tape and inefficiency. I support the second reading of the Bill, and I trust members will view the question of plural voting from a common-sense standpoint. We should bear in mind the progress that has been made regarding the franchise, and recognise that we must not always be committed to the hide-bound conditions that appeal so much to the conservative element in our midst, and which they would like to continue for generations to come. Local governing bodies would be considerably improved if we could revitalise them by the admission of men irrespective of whether they owned big farms or large houses. I hope the Minister will give serious consideration to the problem of the relationship of Parliament to the local authorities before he agrees to the delegation of additional powers to the latter. To-day I have indicated my intention to move for the tabling of a return, and when members get the particulars I desire, they will be shocked, I believe, at the way local governing authorities have committed Western Australia to the use of imported fuels as against our local fuel. That is one only of many considerations that should weigh with the Minister before he takes a step that may lead him to very uncertain ground.

**MR. RAPHAEL** (Victoria Park) [5.20]: Having had some practical experience, I can support the second reading of the Bill.

**Mr. Doney:** Some of us have had practical experience, too.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** You could not absorb much.

**The Minister for Employment:** That would depend upon what was being absorbed.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** Owing to the discussion that is going on, I can hardly hear myself speak.

**Mr. Sampson:** You will not miss much.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** You could not understand me.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! The hon. member should address himself to the Chair, and take no notice of members who interject.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** The Minister desires to make an attempt to clean up the open graft that has been indulged in for many years in connection with road boards and municipalities. I will quote one instance in connection with my own election.

**Mr. Sampson:** Why bring that up?

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** I would not like to bring up all I know about the hon. member.

**Mr. Latham:** You know nothing.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** I know more about you than I do about the member for Swan (Mr. Sampson). The instance I desire to draw attention to was in connection with a vote that was being taken from a sick man. A Justice of the Peace called upon him to take his vote. An election for the Lord Mayoralty was being held at the same time. His vote for the election of a councillor had been taken before the Justice of the Peace, and a query was put to him regarding the other election. This voter was at the time about 20 miles away from the district where he should have voted, and he had four votes for the Lord Mayoralty. He was asked if he desired to vote for the Lord Mayoral election, and the ratepayer replied, "I do not know. I have all the ballot papers here." It transpired that the ballot papers had been collected *holus bolus* from the City Council and had been distributed in their thousands. When such things can happen, it is time that someone woke up and cleaned up the mess.

**Mr. Sampson:** But that could not be done under the Road Districts Act.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** The papers are at the Trades Hall now, and were initialled by

E. Barker, J.P., not as votes, but for the purpose of proving that irregularities had occurred. Such a thing could not be done under the provisions of the Municipal Corporations Act, but the fact remains that it was done.

**Mr. Sampson:** Of course we have heard quite a lot of things.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** And you are hearing some more now. We have as members of municipal councils and road boards, some Goliaths of intellect. I can give another instance when the present Minister for Employment was interested in an election campaign. We went round canvassing for votes, but we found that most of the votes had already been cast before election day. One contractor was standing for election as a municipal councillor, and he had secured votes from people who lived within 20 yards of a polling booth.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** The hon. member would be in order in discussing that matter on another Bill that will be before the House shortly.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** But one matter leads to the other.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** I am sorry to disagree with the hon. member's belief. He is out of order in discussing municipal matters under the Bill before the House now.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** But, to my mind, one is wrapped up in the other.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** Order! I cannot allow the hon. member to discuss municipal matters under the Bill before the House, which deals with road boards.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** I do not desire to disagree with your ruling.

**Mr. SPEAKER:** You can do so by moving the necessary motion.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** I do not want to take that course. By the abolition of plural votings, many of the anomalies that exist now will be swept aside, and a different calibre of man will be elected to municipal councils.

**Mr. Sampson:** And some people will not be sorry.

**Mr. RAPHAEL:** The hon. member will be out of it for a certainty. We have been told that it was only by allowing large property owners to have a number of votes that they could be induced to take an interest in road board and municipal elections. I will quote two instances that occurred in



connection with a referendum that was taken on the Forrest-place extension.

Mr. Latham: That was not under the Road Districts Act.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member would make a much better speech if he reserved his remarks until we are dealing with the Municipal Corporations Act Amendment Bill.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I am dealing with plural voting and to lend point to what I have in mind, I will mention the trustees of Wesley Church, who exercised 60 votes in addition to their private votes on the referendum I have referred to. Land and estate agents carrying on in a big way have as many as 16 votes in municipal elections.

Mr. Patrick: But this Bill deals with road boards.

Mr. RAPHAEL: A man may own land in Victoria Park and elsewhere.

Mr. Latham: But he would not be in a road board area there.

Mr. RAPHAEL: The same position may arise in a road board district. There is nothing to prevent a man owning property in different parts of a road board area, and he would be entitled to just as many votes there as he would elsewhere.

Mr. Latham: Not at all.

Mr. RAPHAEL: I believe the House will agree that the sooner plural voting is done away with, the better it will be for the country.

The Minister for Works: It is possible for one man to have 40 votes in a road board election.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Under the Municipal Corporations Act, I have already cited an instance where the trustees of Wesley Church exercised over 60 votes.

Mr. Latham: It could be possible for someone to have 1,000 votes.

Mr. RAPHAEL: Don't be ridiculous! Until such time as these anomalies are set aside, I hope the Minister will not take any further action to support local authorities in their desire to secure extended powers. By wiping out the bricks and mortar vote, the ordinary ratepayer will be able to have some say in the expenditure of the money that he pays in the form of rates. The mere fact that a man owns a house in a road board district does not mean that he is necessarily a fit and proper person to sit on a road board. In all circumstances, the tenant should be entitled to a vote before the owner. Irre-

spective of whether a house is worth £1,000 or £1, if the owner is not living in it, he should not get the vote now. The tenant has the right to the vote. To suggest, as one member did, that an individual might go to a district and put up some hair-brained scheme and carry it off, might appeal to the old Tories. But does he suggest that, while such an individual was setting fire to the electorate, the other ratepayers would not be stirred up? Nothing could be more ridiculous. The Bill will fill a long-felt want, but I hope the Minister will do nothing further in support of road boards or municipalities that would enable the continuance of the anomalies I have indicated.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [5.30]: This Bill seeks to introduce that desirable democratic principle of one-man one-vote.

Mr. Doney: No.

Mr. CROSS: I should say one-ratepayer, one-vote. I consider the Bill a step in the right direction. I believe that the principle of plural voting has been sadly abused in a good many instances in this State. I have yet to learn from members of the Opposition any definite reason why the possession or tenancy of premises or land should be the qualification for a vote. The member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) said a man might have £1,000 worth of property in one ward, and £1,000 worth in another ward, and he wanted to know why such a man should not have a vote in each ward. At present it is quite possible for a man to finance the whole of another's operations and not have a vote at all. It is possible for a man sufficiently strong financially to finance the activities of the biggest mine or the biggest factory in the State, and because he resides at a hotel or at a boarding house, not to have a vote for the local governing body of the district in which he lives. That is not fair. I support the Bill.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [5.32]: I oppose the Bill because I realise that it will be the cause of a great deal of trouble. I believe that members who have spoken in favour of the Bill are labouring under an erroneous impression. They seem to think that by reverting to what they term democracy, they will bring local government representation under the same system as Parliamentary representation. The two things are quite different. The people who have to pay the piper should, to an extent, call the

tune. The member for Victoria Park (Mr. Raphael) during his speech, wandered away amongst municipal by-laws instead of sticking to the Bill under discussion. The Minister for Works told us that he knew of one person who exercised 40 votes at a road board election.

The Minister for Works: No, I said it was possible for one man to exercise 40 votes.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Act distinctly states that no person, regardless of the amount of property he holds, shall exercise more than four votes.

The Minister for Works: If there are ten wards, he may have four votes for each.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: No, he has to declare in which ward he will exercise his votes.

The Minister for Works: It is four for each ward.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The wording of the Act is as follows:—

Provided that no person shall exercise more than four votes in any road board district.

That is quite clear. The Minister for Works, who controls the local governing bodies, has been most sympathetic and fair in his attitude to them. During his previous term of office, covering six years, the whole of the road boards in my district were more than satisfied with the deal they received from him.

The Minister for Works: They did not vote for me.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I cannot speak on that, but I can say that the boards in my district were delighted with the utterances and actions of the Minister. The object of the Bill represents one of the Minister's ambitions. We have been told that it is a plank of the platform of the Labour Party. How many things are there in the platform of the Labour Party that have not been carried into effect? That being so, why should members endeavour to give effect to this one? Only when it comes to a question of this kind do members remind us of their platform. Why single out the local authorities for attention? If a man spends money in the country to acquire property and develop it, is he not entitled to greater voting power than an occupier who may be here to-day and gone to-morrow? A man renting a property is enrolled and is entitled to a vote, but is not the owner entitled to a similar right?

Mr. Raphael: Quite right, too.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The hon. member made extravagant statements in his speech. I do not know whether he can prove them.

Mr. Raphael: Then why say they were extravagant?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: When the second Bill is considered, the hon. member will have an opportunity to prove his statements. The road boards have roads to construct and works to undertake, and the funds for those works have to be provided by the men who have expended their money in the district. They are the men who have to pay.

The Minister for Works: Nonsense!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Why is it desired particularly to deprive such men of some right? Such a man is rated on the cottage he owns and, if the local authority desire to borrow money to provide a district hall, he has to pay the interest.

Member: What about the tenant?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: In many instances there is no tenant. I am referring to farmers, woolgrowers and cattle raisers who, though producing at a heavy loss, have to pay their rates. In fact, the first claim on their land is for road board rates. Having to pay, such men should be entitled to call the tune. I hope the Minister will see his way clear to drop the Bill. I believe he realises that, when it reaches another place, it is bound to be defeated. If the Bill were permitted to become law, another place could not continue to live a moment. The death of another place is one of the very first planks in the platform of members opposite.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in anticipating the death of another place.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Now that the Minister has discovered that no one ratepayer has more than four votes in any one district, he should be prepared, if not to arrest the Bill at this stage, to amend it in Committee. He has expressed the desire to vest greater power in the local authorities. I am pleased that he has admitted that the administration of many activities is rendering the task too big for the Government and that he favours placing various activities under the control of boards and giving them borrowing powers. But how could such boards exercise borrowing powers unless backed by the security of men who have spent their money in the country? Security will not be obtained from the man in the street. If it is desired to constitute boards and give

them borrowing powers, it should not be contingent on the passing of this Bill. I shall oppose the Bill, because I do not think it will serve any good purpose. The road boards are performing useful service. Public-spirited men are giving much of their time to work that is in the true interests of the State.

Mr. Raphael: Budding politicians!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I do not know whether the hon. member had first to get returned to the City Council before he entered politics. If so, it is a blot on the history of the State that he should have been elected to the council.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [5.42]: This Bill is almost a perennial. Like King Charles's head, it keeps popping up. I am not going to suggest that because there is a scarcity of other legislation, the Minister has resolved to have another smack at plural voting, but there are indications to justify that view. The first time the question of abolishing plural voting was introduced, was in 1925. Then it was brought up in 1926, again in 1928, and now once more in 1933. I realise that the Minister received no encouragement whatever from the Road Board Conference. No one can question the capacity of the gentlemen who attended that conference to voice the desires of the electors of road boards. Consequently the Minister has absolutely no justification, in the sense of a mandate, for bringing the Bill forward. Often we hear that blessed word "mandate" when there is justification for it. The Minister, however, has been silent on the question of any mandate because there is none. The road boards do not want the Bill; in fact, they are definitely opposed to it. I hope the measure will not become a part of the Road Districts Act. Here we find members once more voicing the same old troubles, advancing the same old arguments about troglodytes and others out of touch with public opinion.

The Minister for Employment: And the same old objections.

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, the same old interjections.

The Minister for Works: From the same old crew.

Mr. SAMPSON: And the same fixed idea that salvation from the standpoint of local government will follow the abolition of plural voting. Let us consider the matter

from the viewpoint of the proposition set forth in the Press by the Minister recently. He suggested that the amalgamation of a number of the local authorities would result in less cost of administration and better work being done. If that were so, little imagination is necessary to visualise the local governing bodies throughout the State being reduced to two, one a road district and the other a metropolitan municipalities district. Even if the Minister did not go as far as that, to amalgamate a number of bodies would mean, if the Bill were passed, that the ratepayers concerned would be able to exercise one vote only. If there is justification for a vote for the payment of the minimum rate of 2s. 6d., surely there is justification for the payment of more than one vote for a considerably higher sum. The Minister would have the vote for one ward only. What would be the position in regard to that? The ratepayer would have to select the ward, and every year in which there was an election in which he was interested, he would probably vary the ward where he intended to vote, and the secretary of the board would never finish his work of altering or making up the rolls. From the road board standpoint it might be that it was desired to elect a certain member. When that election was over, the ratepayer would have to make up his mind as to the ward in which he wished to be enrolled and so the trouble would be emphasised. It has been said that the Bill has been brought forward to give effect to democracy. I doubt very much whether democracy has anything to do with it at all. It is not the right of every adult to vote in connection with either a road board or a municipal council; it is the right of only those who occupy premises or those who pay rates.

Mr. Raphael: The Bill does not suggest that all should vote.

Mr. SAMPSON: The Bill does go some distance towards that, and the Minister has said more than once that if he had his way, he would give to every resident in any district the right to vote.

Mr. Raphael: What he has said in the past has nothing to do with the present Bill.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am inclined to think that democracy under the Minister's proposals would not win. Already it has been said that the vote shall be determined by the amount paid, so I need not repeat that; but I might refer to the principle common at

company meetings, where shareholders vote in accordance with their holdings. To an extent, a ratepayer under a local authority, votes in a similar way, because those who pay the heaviest rates should be given the greatest powers. That principle has always been followed. I do not know whether the Minister has ever been a shareholder in a company; if he has he will agree that a person who does something to develop a district is, in a sense, a shareholder in that district, and should be given consideration. I believe the Minister attended a road board conference on one occasion and suggested the road board law would be varied by the striking out of plural voting. The Minister will recall that his proposal was not received with enthusiasm, at any rate not that enthusiasm usually accorded to pronouncements by Ministers at those conferences.

The Minister for Works: I would expect as much from them as I would from you.

Mr. SAMPSON: I do not quite know what that means. When the Minister at the conference spoke on a different theme, his remarks were well received.

Mr. Withers: The members at that conference were elected on plural votes.

Mr. SAMPSON: Not necessarily. It is a fact that very frequently road boards have a difficulty in securing nominations for vacancies that occur. In our far north-western road board districts and in certain other districts members have to travel a considerable distance to attend meetings, and consequently there is sometimes a difficulty in securing nominations from those who are qualified to sit as members of the board. So, actually there has been no reason to object to plural voting, at any rate so far as the ratepayers generally are concerned.

The Minister for Works: Those on road boards are not ratepayers.

Mr. SAMPSON: Of course they are. The Minister has in mind rate-owners, those occupiers who have entered into an arrangement to pay rates; but very frequently occupiers do not pay rates and the responsibility is that of the owner.

Mr. Raphael: Often a tenant's furniture is seized for the non-payment of rates.

Mr. SAMPSON: I would not contradict that, but I have never heard of a single instance where furniture has been seized. The rates follow the lands. There would be no need, even if there were the inclination,

to take the extreme step the hon. member suggests.

Mr. Raphael: It has been done at Victoria Park a dozen times.

Mr. Cross: It has happened in connection with road boards in the last week or two.

Mr. SAMPSON: I recall what the Minister said, that on the passage of this and a similar Bill he introduced depends whether the proposed public works board will be established.

The Minister for Mines: Hear, hear!

Mr. SAMPSON: The proposal is a wrong principle to adopt. Those who pay the larger amount by way of rates should have the bigger say, but the Minister for Mines would suggest that the Road Districts Act gives no consideration to any one save the owners. The Minister should know that the occupiers take precedence in respect of voting, and, further, when it is decided to raise a loan, only the local resident owners are permitted to vote.

Mr. Raphael: But on a different franchise altogether.

Mr. SAMPSON: The franchise in respect to voting for a loan is set out in the Act and provides that in the taking of the poll voting papers in the prescribed form shall be used, and that all the provisions contained in the Act with reference to taking a poll at the election of road boards shall apply as nearly as may be. I have pointed out in regard to the proposal to restrict the vote to one ward only is perhaps the worst feature. No matter how much property an owner may be liable for in respect to rates, he is to be treated in exactly the same way as the person who pays a minimum fee. I feel that the passing of the Bill would not be in the interests of the State. It is wise to encourage enterprising people to go out into the country to develop it, and they should not have taken from them that little consideration which plural voting gives them. It is my intention to vote against the second reading; I voted against a similar proposal previously and I have fought many elections and never on one occasion has anyone questioned me in regard to it. If I had taken a different view I would have seriously offended many people. It is a striking fact that the people of the State have remained inarticulate. The Minister has again brought the proposition forward, but it has not had general support. I shall vote against the second reading.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT**

(Hon. J. J. Kenneally—East Perth) [5.57]: In recent years we have heard a fair amount of argument as to the necessity for delegating certain powers of government, and the peculiar part about it is that since a measure has been brought forward to give effect to that which a number of people have been asking for—possibly in the hope that they would never get it—all objections are raised as to the particular way by which it is intended to give effect to the proposal. The introduction of the Bill will test those who are asking for what it is now proposed to give. If they do not respond to the test, they can keep quiet for the remainder of the period. They have asked not only for the power to govern but the power to borrow in order to govern.

Mr. Doney: Who has asked?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: As a matter of fact, we are not breaking any new ground in making a proposal such as the Bill contains; it operates throughout the greater part of Australia. This State of ours is suffering in that respect in comparison with the other States.

Mr. Ferguson: It is the best State.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: The Government are prepared to give the hon. member and the House the opportunity now to prove that it is the best State.

Mr. Doney: Do you know the benefits in Queensland and New South Wales?

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: An hon. member who is opposing the Bill should not have to ask that question.

Mr. Doney: There is no answer to it.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: I would expect a member who is avowedly opposing the Bill to at least inform himself as to the conditions elsewhere. However, I assume that if the answer to his question were furnished him he would alter his opinion, and not be like the member for Swan who, because his father 30 years ago voted for certain principles, glories in voting for them now. What we should discuss under this measure is whether, if we pave the way for delegated responsibility, it will operate in the interests of the community as a whole. Under the Financial Agreement the borrowing of money is restricted to the various State Governments. But in some of the States there are important boards with delegated borrowing powers. To the extent that those boards in other States have sep-

arate borrowing powers, to that extent the States that have all their borrowing powers vested in their respective Governments have to suffer. The Metropolitan Boards of Works, both of Sydney and of Melbourne, possess separate borrowing powers. So when the Premiers of those States go to the Loan Council and secure money, no part of that money has to be spent in the development of the respective Metropolitan Boards of Works, because those two bodies are able to borrow for themselves all the money they require.

Mr. Doney: Subject to the authority of the Loan Council.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Not altogether.

Mr. Doney: The Metropolitan Board of Works in Melbourne was so subject.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: No, that statement is not correct.

Mr. Patrick: It is a concern independent of the municipality.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: It is a separate board, and it is the creation of a similar board that is contemplated in this measure. But we do not propose to hand over a form of Government which is now based upon adult suffrage to bodies which will be subject to plural voting. That has been made very clear by the Minister for Works. Whilst plural voting obtains, that will not be done. Those who have applied for this delegated power must realise that the Government will not hand over to a body elected by plural voting any of the powers of Government held by this Assembly, elected on an adult franchise. With this question is bound up the question contained in another Bill which you, Sir, have ruled cannot be discussed here. The same principle is involved. I have had to give much consideration to the question of employment recently, and I say that if the Government could see the way clear to delegating certain responsibilities and certain borrowing powers to the proposed bodies, whose duty it would be to put certain works in hand, we would have a means of absorbing the unemployed.

Mr. Ferguson interjected.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: We are endeavouring to do it in the manner that has been requested. If we are to give adequate attention to future water supplies, particularly in the city, we must soon embark on a fairly big expenditure; in this

regard there is room for expenditure of half a million a year for the next 10 years, and even then we shall not be in advance of the city's requirements.

The Minister for Works: And that is not accounting for sewerage.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Here we have an opportunity to make a move in the direction of providing for the water supplies of the future, and so in addition absorbing a large number of unemployed. One would think the Minister for Works himself had initiated the proposed abolition of plural voting. No such thing. He has been waited upon by people, whom members opposite are supposed to represent, who asked him to arrange to give the proposed delegated powers. Yet those members who say they represent the applicants are now standing in the way of the granting of the request. Recently the member for Swan advocated the straight-out sale to private enterprise of the East Perth power house.

Mr. Sampson: Yes, if the Government would not operate the monopoly they hold.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: In some respects the Government do not want to continue to operate the monopoly, but propose to pass on to others the responsibility the Government now hold. If the Government proposed to sell the State assets to private enterprise they would have the support of the hon. member, but when it comes to delegating to duly elected bodies the power to manage the people's assets, then the hon. member would say that he had opposed it 30 years ago, and so would oppose it still.

Mr. Sampson: The obligation is on the Government to extend the provision of electric current.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: If the hon. member has no greater authority for opposing the Bill than he has given us, I suppose we are not likely to alter his views, no matter what evidence we might put forward.

Mr. Sampson: Surely you do not advocate for the Government a mark-time policy in point of electrical extension.

The Minister for Mines: Why did you not hurry up your Government?

Mr. Sampson: I tried my utmost.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: Local authorities are public spirited bodies, and if they are given an opportunity to

function, doubtless we shall see that our judgment of them was right.

Mr. Sampson: That does not necessarily hang on the passage of the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: But it does. It is made very clear. Let me say that if the Bill goes out, the proposed delegated responsibility goes out also. If members throw out this proposition, then they throw out the proposition to give that delegated power: for the Government are not prepared to hand over to a body elected on plural voting the powers now manipulated by persons elected on an adult franchise.

Mr. Sampson: It has been stated that this board will be controlled by its own legislation.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: We are now dealing with the election of the board. This Assembly, once it is elected, has the power to do its own work. The local authority, once it is elected and has the necessary powers handed over to it, will perform its own work; but the method of its election is the pivot. If members say the method of election is not to be such as the Government can support, then that will be the end of the proposal. The Economic Council, representing every section of public opinion in the State, have pointed out, and produced figures to support their statement, the necessity for enabling boards in various districts to manage certain works and functions restricted to those districts.

Mr. Doney: Such as—

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: It would be peculiar that Western Australia should remain the only country in the world to fight for the retention of plural voting. It is left to the strange characteristics of some of the States of Australia to stand up still for this principle. It is not surprising to me to see, where protection is to be offered or fought for or given as a privilege, people like the member for Williams-Narrogin and the member for Swan violently fighting in defence of that privilege.

Mr. Sampson: We are well justified in doing so.

The MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT: According to the hon. member he is justified in fighting for the retention of privileges at all times. Whilst doing that he has

the temerity to introduce the question of democracy.

Mr. Sampson: I said that awful things are done in the name of democracy.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** He is riding on the back of democracy to protect the privileges of plural voting in the last country to give any attention to that particular question.

Mr. Doney: This is very different from democracy. This is putting up a plea for the ratepayers.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** God help the ratepayers if they have to depend upon the hon. member to put up a plea on their behalf.

Mr. Doney: How about explaining that statement?

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** I am simply quoting what members opposite have been saying to bolster up their arguments. They have brought in democracy to support their point of view. I hope the Bill will be passed.

Mr. Doney: No doubt it will.

**THE MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT:** It will be a gesture indicating the desire of this House that certain activities can be managed in a certain sphere by authority delegated to boards, such as it is proposed shall be elected. There is no reason why water, sewerage, tramway and other activities, which operate only within certain prescribed areas, should not be managed by a board such as has been instanced; neither is there any reason why the authority that is to be so constituted should be elected on a property franchise or by plural voting. A good argument could be put up for the adult vote instead of the principle of one ratepayer one vote. The adult vote operates in other places. If this Bill errs at all, it errs in not going far enough, for it refers only to one ratepayer one vote. Those who are opposed to the voting principles laid down in this Bill are in effect saying that the representations which have been made from time to time by the body they represent amount to so much froth and bubble. This will be the testing point as to their genuineness in wanting to effect an alteration in the present system. If they do not want any alteration, they will know how to vote. By their votes shall we know them.

**MR. S. STUBBS (Wagin) [7.35]:** I have no desire to delay the passage of this measure. The numbers opposite satisfy me that the Bill will be carried by a large majority. The question has been before the House on several occasions. I represent an area which contains within its boundaries no fewer than seven road boards. I should like any member to deny the statement that during the 22 years I have represented Wagin no complaint has ever been made in regard to the franchise for the election of members of those road boards. I have listened with great interest to the lucid statement of the Minister and the speeches of those who have supported him. I have not heard one good argument or reason that could justify me in supporting the Bill on the ground that the present system has done incalculable injury to any section of the community. Will the Minister seriously tell me I am wrong in saying there has never been a complaint by any member of a road board in my district, or on the part of any section of the people I represent with regard to the system of voting? The question I put to him when he was introducing the Bill was, "What is wrong with the present system of election for members of road boards?" He has not been able to answer that question. The majority of the people in the road board areas elect the representatives they desire. If so much damage had been done, as has been suggested, to persons residing in road board areas, surely I, who have represented the electorate for 22 years, would have heard something about it. I have yet to learn there is any demand from a large section of the people who pay rates and taxes for the abolition of plural voting in respect to road boards. If the Minister will tell the House where any injustice has been done in the past to any section of the community I shall be only too glad to listen to him. Otherwise, I do not intend to vote for the Bill.

**MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [7.39]:** I agree with what has been said by the member for Wagin, although I have not had the same long Parliamentary career that he has had. I can back up what he said about there being no complaint on the part of those who find the money for the activities of local governing bodies. There is, however, a decided objection on the part of many of the people I represent, to the proposal that a man who pays 2s. 6d. in rates

should have the same say as the man who pays £50. Those who are contributing the largest share of the revenue should have the most to say as to how the money should be expended. The revenue of a road board is a kind of pool which enables certain works to be done for the benefit of the whole district. Much has been said about democracy. I do not know that it is altogether a success, and I cannot say that we are looking for democratic methods to be imported into road board affairs. Those who have to contribute the largest part of the revenue have various responsibilities placed upon their shoulders, not only in regard to finances but in many other directions. Those who contribute only very small amounts to the revenue of the local authorities do not share to the same extent in those responsibilities. I oppose the second reading of the Bill, though I suppose it is futile in a House constituted as this is, to do so.

**HON. N. KEENAN** (Nedlands) [7.43]: I intend to give some reasons for my opposition to the Bill. There are two reasons in the main for my opposition to it. When the Minister brought down the Bill, he said he was prepared to give local governing bodies certain extended powers, very vastly extended, if the measure were accepted. That view of the matter has been emphasised in a strong manner by the Minister for Employment. I most strenuously protest and object to any Bill being recommended to the House by some inducement or something in the nature of a bribe. If it is desirable to alter the law or any Act whatever, such alteration should be justified by the reasons given for the alteration, not by the inducement of an offer to give certain advantages or privileges if the alteration be acceptable. In effect the alteration cannot be justified except by the sugar coating on the pill. In this case the sugar is of a most objectionable character. It is suggested that many of the functions at present discharged by Parliament and by the Government elected by Parliament, should be delegated to local authorities, and that they should be given power to carry out these functions, such as to raise money for road construction, etc. It is well known to us all that the State entered into a financial agreement with the Commonwealth. The object of that agreement was to control the borrowing of money by Governments. The State is not in a

position to borrow money for this particular class of venture or activity because of that agreement. I am aware that in the Eastern States these particular functions and activities are discharged by boards, and that by reason of that being so, they are outside the rules laid down and agreed to when we accepted the Financial Agreement. That is a most immoral proceeding. It is one against which the Loan Council has protested more than once. It is one also that it is wholly impossible to justify. I am the last man in this House to suggest for a moment that the impediments which are placed on our actions by our Federal ties should operate for a single moment longer than is necessary. So long as we are bound by those Federal ties, I am personally determined to observe them in the most honourable and perfect manner. Hon. members may recollect that during the last session of the late Parliament, when a certain proposal was made for the purpose of improving the position of our wheatgrowers, I objected to it, not because I was not anxious to improve the position of the wheatgrowers, but because it would have been a distinct infringement of the Financial Agreement, or not so much of the Financial Agreement as of the Federal Constitution, which does not allow of any one State encouraging by any form of taxation any of its industries for the purpose of competing with the industries of other States. Here we have exactly the same proposal: to delegate to different boards or trusts, whatever they may be called, some of the most important functions at present discharged by the Government, in respect of which the Government, if they want to discharge those functions, have to incur obligations in the way of loan moneys and thereby come within the control of the Loan Council. If that kind of thing is going to begin, what is going to be left to this Parliament? If we hand over to boards or trusts the tramways, harbours and electric light, what will be left?

The Minister for Justice: Those are parochial matters.

Hon. N. KEENAN: They are almost the entire matters with which this Parliament is concerned.

The Minister for Justice: Parochial matters.

Hon. N. KEENAN: We can hardly discuss anything that cannot in some way be described as parochial. So we should get



rid by a sidewind of the obligations imposed upon us in the Financial Agreement. It may not be a view shared by the Minister for Justice, but that, in my opinion, would be an evasion of the Financial Agreement. I do not want to be bound by that agreement for a minute longer than the Minister wishes, but so long as we are bound by it we should honourably carry out its contractual obligations. I would also join with the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) in the expression of some surprise at and some dissent against handing over these very important functions to local bodies. If we deprive ourselves of the control of these particular activities, what is left for Parliament to do? The Minister may laugh, but, after all, outside of our annual Estimates and the money spent on different functions of this character, all of which we can, if we want to do so, call parochial in the sense that they are geographical—with the single exception of the railway system, which is State-wide—

The Minister for Justice: What about education?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Education could be handed over. It could be said to be parochial.

The Minister for Justice: No.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The schools in each district could be handed over, as is done in England. There is no objection in the world to doing that. So we should strip ourselves of everything we have as a Parliament to do. I do not know that there has been even an attempt to make a case which would justify such an action. However, it is on the other ground I wish particularly to stress. Here we are attempting, by obviously and entirely a sidewind, to get round the Financial Agreement so as to be able to borrow where we pledged ourselves not to borrow without the consent of the Loan Council representing the whole of Australia. Naturally, when one is asked to assent to such a proposal, one hesitates a great deal. I have strong reasons for objecting to this legislation, objecting to the form in which it is brought down as an inducement or a bribe: and therefore I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill.

MR. BROCKMAN (Sussex) [7.50]: I oppose the Bill, and do not understand how any Ministry brings forward the proposals it contains. So far, road boards have always done their work in the interests of the

people of Western Australia; and I feel sure that there would not be better results if plural voting were abolished. In the country districts everyone is satisfied with the system. There have been no complaints whatever. I have attended road board conferences for the last 15 or 20 years, and any proposal for the abolition of plural voting has been rejected. I fail to see any object in instituting single voting in place of plural voting. The Minister for Works said he wished to give road boards greater powers. Even if he carried out that proposal, it would make no difference to the system to which road board members are elected. They are honourable men, and the present method of election is a good one. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) pointed out that one ratepayer can have only four votes at most; that if he has property in different wards, he must declare to the poll clerk the manner in which he desires to distribute his votes. That is a fair position, and I see no need to quibble at the manner in which road board members are elected. I do not even know that road boards are looking for greater powers. Their functions are certainly more or less parochial, and concern only individual districts. In my electorate there are three road boards, and the members of those boards would be disgusted with me if I supported the abolition of plural voting. The man who invests his money in a district and creates values there, should certainly call the tune as to the manner in which funds collected are to be distributed. I oppose the second reading.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [7.52]: I rise with a certain amount of diffidence to make my maiden speech in this Chamber, and I hope that hon. members will grant me their indulgence whilst I endeavour to grapple with this important measure. I do not think I could have chosen a more appropriate Bill on which to make my debut in this legislative hall than the one on which the House is now engaged. Probably I would not have taken the plunge had it not been for the remarks of the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan), the Leader of the Nationalist Party in this House. He appears to base his opposition to the measure entirely on the fact that we have a Loan Council and a Financial Agreement, and that we cannot borrow abroad as a State authority without the consent of the Loan Council. The hon. member proceeds to

argue that if this Bill is passed we may delegate to road boards and municipalities certain of the powers vested in this Parliament, and thus get round the Financial Agreement. I cannot follow the hon. member's argument. Despite the fact that there is a Loan Council, and despite the fact that permission must be given to a State before it borrows, public bodies in the Eastern States are still borrowing money abroad without the permission of the Loan Council. When that body was instituted, it dealt only with the State Governments. I have yet to learn that the Loan Council forbids or prevents, say, the Metropolitan Board of Works of Melbourne or any similar body in the Eastern States from borrowing money abroad.

Hon. N. Keenan: They cannot.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I have a distinct recollection of such bodies borrowing money outside the Loan Council. In referring to the Financial Agreement the member for Nedlands also stated—I believe I have almost his exact words—"I do not want to be bound by the Financial Agreement one moment longer than can be helped." I wish the hon. member and his party throughout Australia had held that opinion before the Financial Agreement was embodied in the Federal Constitution. It would have been far better for Western Australia had that provision not been there. If the hon. member repents now, I accept his repentance and shall be glad to assist him in removing that provision from the Federal Constitution at the earliest possible moment. The abolition of plural voting is an object worthy to be attained; and I agree with the Minister for Works that this State is lagging behind the times in clinging to that antediluvian system of voting. After all, it is simply giving a vote to bricks and mortar and denying it to intelligence, or flesh and blood. It is too late in the day to tell members of this Chamber or any intelligent people in the Commonwealth that intellect goes hand in hand with wealth; nor do I think it will be accepted to-day that poverty and ignorance necessarily go hand in hand. The Minister for Works pointed out that as regards the Federal Parliament, where questions not only of Australia-wide importance but of world-wide importance are discussed and determined, there is no account taken of property or of bricks and mortar in determining who shall choose the members of that

national Parliament. Ever since 1914, when this young Australia of ours was plunged into the cataclysm and vortex of war, the questions discussed in the Federal Parliament have been more or less of world-wide importance; and yet every Australian man and every Australian woman of the age of 21 years and in possession of his or her senses has had the right to vote who shall legislate in that Parliament. There are no road boards in the electorate I represent, but there is the Perth City Council; and I shall support the proposal to abolish plural voting. The statement that because these people have the responsibility of determining where a road shall be constructed and how it shall be maintained, they must have four or six votes, as against one allotted to another individual, represents an assertion that I cannot countenance, in view of modern progress. The individual man who may be a humble worker and has to pay rent, has just as much intelligence, and has to shoulder just as much responsibility in determining such matters as another, who may own half the district. Nor can I see where there is any comparison between the position of one man in the City of Perth having four votes for the election of a Lord Mayor as against every man and woman who has one vote only to determine who shall represent him in this Chamber. It is time we fell into line in the march of progress throughout Australia, as was indicated by the Minister for Works when he instanced the other States where plural voting has been abolished. A striking feature of the Minister's speech was his statement that in one of the Eastern States there was the spectacle of plural voting having been abolished when it came to a matter of voting on a loan. I cannot see the necessity for continuing a system that has proved itself to be undemocratic. If we claim to be anything at all in Australia, it is that we are a democratic people. As I remarked earlier in my speech, if, in the constitution of the Parliament of the Commonwealth where great issues are determined and the people's destinies are controlled, it is enough that every man or woman who is 21 years of age shall have the right to a vote, surely the same principle should apply when it comes to the constitution of a road board or municipal council. I support the second

reading of the Bill, and I trust that after it has passed this Chamber, our friends in another place will recognise the necessity for getting into line and agreeing to a democratic measure such as the Bill before us.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [8.3]: In briefly supporting the Bill, I do not propose to be over-critical of those who have offered opposition to its passage. I am not at all surprised at the arguments advanced by them. After 12 years' experience in this Chamber, nothing in the shape of hoary conservative ideas would surprise me when they emanate from Opposition members. The Minister was castigated because of his persistency in attempting to secure the passage of legislation that he had endeavoured unsuccessfully to have adopted in previous years. If there be any inconsistency associated with the measure, it is on the part of Opposition members themselves, and the only argument that contained any modicum of force was wide of the mark. The introduction of the measure has nothing whatever to do with what has happened in the past with reference to road boards. It may be true that in some hon. member's electorates little or no trouble has been experienced regarding the boards themselves. I can make the same statement with regard to the boards within my electorate, but that has nothing whatever to do with the Bill. If anyone were to complain of the effects of plural voting, most decidedly that complaint would not emanate from members elected under that system.

Mr. Sampson: How will the Meekatharra and Nullagine boards view this proposal?

Mr. MARSHALL: I cannot speak for either, because I do not know what the opinions of the individual members of the boards may be, but they know quite well where I stand with respect to plural voting.

The Minister for Works: You can speak on behalf of the Meekatharra ratepayers.

Mr. MARSHALL: They are the people about whom I am concerned. Naturally, Opposition members were correct when they suggested that no complaints had been made regarding the present system.

Mr. Stubbs: If you had 100 shares in a financial concern and another man held one share, would you like the other man to influence the position regarding your capital?

The Minister for Mines: In England co-operative concerns are handling millions, and that principle is followed.

Mr. MARSHALL: The question advanced by the member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) implies that his opinion is not mine. On the other hand, I am not differing from him in his views regarding companies because of the obvious fact that, as a shareholder in a company, he or I would have our concern registered under the Companies Act for specific purposes concerning ourselves personally. In our business we would interfere with no one outside our particular concern. It is an entirely different matter when we speak of a road board, seeing that the members of such a body control the affairs of a whole district and can interfere with the life and activities of every individual within the road board boundaries. If the hon. member and I were to meet to discuss matters affecting our company, it would be done at a meeting at which our business would be dealt with by ourselves in our own interests. As against that, Parliament has enacted legislation whereby certain individuals have been constituted members of road boards, and power has been placed in their hands to control the lives of the ratepayers. They have in their hands the welfare and health of the community. The road board at Wiluna, for instance, is also the health board and the water board.

Mr. Seward: And the vermin board.

Mr. MARSHALL: And the lighting board as well. The member for Wagin will agree that there is an obvious difference between the membership of a company such as he indicated and membership of a road board. It must be remembered that a road board can pass a by-law interfering with the liberty of the subject.

Mr. Stubbs: But the by-law must be ratified by Parliament.

Mr. MARSHALL: I agree, but since I have been a member, I know that scores of by-laws have been passed without any consideration by members of this Chamber. In fact, it is only when outside influence is brought to bear upon a member of Parliament that his attention is drawn to specific by-laws, and then we hear of them. We do not peruse all by-laws that are tabled. We give attention to them only when it is suggested to us that we should take certain action.

Mr. Sampson: But there is no reason why we should not do so.

The Minister for Mines: I wish you had waited for someone outside to prompt you before you moved the motion you did just now.

Mr. MARSHALL: There is one other matter mentioned by the Minister and that referred to the granting of further powers to road boards. The Minister said that his offer of extended powers was contingent upon the passage of the Bill. Two arguments were advanced against that proposal. One was as old as Methuselah, but the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) advanced a new one. In a sense he dissociated himself from those members who had spoken before him and adopted an air of injured dignity because he said he regarded it as an attempt by the Government to introduce legislation that would enable them to evade their obligations to the Premiers' Conference and the Loan Council. With all the eloquence he possesses, he said he would never be a party, while the law stood as it did to-day, to the suggested evasion and pointed out that it was obligatory upon the State to carry out the provisions of the Financial Agreement. I shall show how inconsistent is the member for Nedlands. He has forgotten his own performance of 12 months ago. The hon. member argued that we should not delegate powers to boards to enable them to borrow. The ex-Minister for Works last year introduced a Bill to authorise the bulk handling of wheat, and that measure contained a clause providing for a trust to be created to borrow money.

Member: With a Government guarantee.

Mr. MARSHALL: Never mind the guarantee. In the division list on the second reading appears the name of the member for Nedlands.

Hon. N. Keenan: What Government function was there for bulk handling at that time?

Mr. MARSHALL: The Bill proposed to give the right to a trust to be created. Yet the hon. member forgets that 12 months ago he voted in that way.

Hon. N. Keenan: The Government had no right to borrow money for bulk handling.

Mr. MARSHALL: The hon. member need not pretend to forget that a trust was to be created under the Bill and the trust was to have the power to borrow. This measure, like the Bulk Handling Bill, proposes to

give powers to borrow. Yet the hon. member voted for the one and opposes the other. I had almost forgotten that the hon. member, too, would commit a breach of the Financial Agreement. When the Bulk Handling Bill was being heatedly discussed in this Chamber, the member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) raised the point that the Bill was unconstitutional inasmuch as it provided for the borrowing of money, that being contrary to the Financial Agreement. The member for Nedlands, as he would have us believe, a stickler for every clause of the Financial Agreement, gave the member for Fremantle no assistance. Although a K.C., the member for Nedlands forsook his duty. I do not know whether he charged the member for Fremantle 6s. 8d.

Mr. Sleeman: No.

Mr. MARSHALL: Perhaps he should have done so for remaining silent. We need not accept too seriously the utterances of the member for Nelson. There is an old saying that the one who pays the piper should call the tune, and there may be logic in it. For centuries the idea has prevailed that because a man actually pays the cash, he should have all the say. History shows that the people revolted against that idea hundreds of years ago. Yet members opposite advance arguments the uttering of which years ago cost people their heads. What greater amount of intelligence or love for one's district is possessed by a person owning a hotel, highly rated carrying four votes—

Mr. Sampson: Not necessarily. Many townsites are on the unimproved basis.

Mr. MARSHALL: What higher intelligence has the individual who owns large premises and has four votes than the individual who has a little home carrying only one vote? What greater interest can the big man have in the district than the small man?

Mr. Wansbrough: The interest of £ s. d.

Mr. MARSHALL: And that is all. A resident of Perth may buy up one of the large hotels in Meekatharra and he would be entitled to four votes. He may not have seen Meekatharra; he may not know the candidates; he may know nothing of the district. He would be incompetent to cast an intelligent vote and he would have four votes, while an individual who had helped pioneer the place would have one. Yet members opposite consider that that argu-

ment should prevail, notwithstanding that the Government propose to vest local authorities with increased powers.

Hon. N. Keenan: Could not the occupier have the votes in Meekatharra?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, the tenant might claim the prior right to vote.

The Minister for Mines: Suppose he owns land and there is no house on it. has not he a vote for it?

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes.

Mr. Sampson: The occupier would have the preference in the matter of the vote.

Mr. MARSHALL: The member for Swan subscribes to all those old customs, conventions and ideas dating back hundreds of years. There is one good thing; he looks the part. Let me show where great inconsistency is evidenced by the Opposition. If the principle that the man who pays the piper should call the tune is sound, the existing law should not remain on the statute-book for 24 hours. The member for Nedlands may go to Meekatharra or Wiluna and spend a million of money.

Hon. N. Keenan: Not I.

Mr. Raphael: He might get somebody else's money.

Mr. MARSHALL: Then the hon. member has not collected enough six and eight-pences yet.

Mr. Hawke: Are you assuming that secession is already consummated?

Mr. MARSHALL: The present law is not in keeping with the times. Coming down to the measure of the hon. member's pocket, let me suggest £1,000.

Hon. N. Keenan: Make it a "fiveer."

Mr. MARSHALL: The hon. member could spend £1,000 in Meekatharra on gold mining leases—

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: And lose it all.

Mr. MARSHALL: --and he would not have a vote for the road board. Another individual might spend £50 on building a home or acquiring land and he would have a vote. The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs) knows there are individuals who have invested considerable capital in motor trucks. Notwithstanding the thousands of pounds expended in that way, they do not get a vote.

Mr. Rodoreda: Should it be one motor car one vote?

Mr. MARSHALL: The inequality of the existing law should be obvious to members opposite. The argument that the man who

pays the piper should call the tune is not sound.

Mr. Stubbs: What country can you name in which a person owning a motor car and not land can get a vote for the road board?

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not advocating anything of that sort. The man who actually pays the rates to a road board is no more entitled to the vote than are the hundreds of men who produce the wealth that make the road board valuations possible.

The Minister for Employment: Nor the man who pays the income tax.

Mr. MARSHALL: There are four hotels at Meekatharra. How long would they be paying rates to the road board if every miner left the town?

Mr. Hawke: You are demoralising the Opposition.

Mr. MARSHALL: The valuations of a road board are made possible by the activities of the community.

Mr. Lambert interjected.

Mr. MARSHALL: For the love of God keep quiet!

Mr. Lambert: That is good, coming from you; dog eat dog.

Mr. MARSHALL: Well, swallow yourself!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MARSHALL: Valuations arise from the presence of the community and are due to the activity of the community. It is the wealth thus produced that gives value to property. Without the community, there would be no valuation, hence the argument of members opposite, that the man who pays the cash should rule the roost, vanishes. An investor invests his money where there is an opportunity to reap a profit, generally a big profit, and he can pay rates only when the investment is successful. I know that there are certain anomalies which make it impossible for the people who have been rated to pay their rates, but the argument has been advanced that the person who pays should be the only person to be considered. That is an argument that has long since been forgotten. It is centuries old and therefore obsolete to-day. I suggest that the Bill does not go far enough. Every individual who lends his services to supply the complex demands of society in a given district is so actively operating that he is creating wealth; he finds himself living under certain laws and he should be entitled to say who shall make those laws. If it is good enough for that position to exist in connection with the

National Parliament of the Commonwealth, it should be good enough for road boards which are insignificant in comparison. Do we have to protect bricks and mortar and broad acres by giving plural voting? I shall raise another point and then conclude. If there is an individual who is entitled to vote either for a road board or for the legislative halls of the State or even the Commonwealth, it is the man who fought in defence of his country. Yet under our present laws thousands of those people are denied the right that should be theirs.

Mr. Doney: What about putting up an amendment with that idea in view?

Mr. MARSHALL: I only raise the point to show my friends opposite how inconsistent they are in regard to the franchise as proposed in the Bill we are considering and as it appears in the legislation of to-day, and also in the Constitution of this State in respect of the vote for another place. The men who paid the piper between the years 1914 and 1918 are denied, by some members who call themselves democrats, the right to vote in this country. I do not know whether I have convinced those hon. members—

Mr. Hawke: If you have not convinced them they are incapable of being convinced.

Mr. MARSHALL: I merely rose because it was stated by interjection that an individual such as myself who represents an electorate which includes a number of road boards, would probably cast a silent vote. I am not casting a silent vote.

Mr. Sampson: You would never be accused of that.

Mr. MARSHALL: It would be about the only charge the hon. member would not lay against me. My regret is that the Bill is not on true democratic lines, and is not allowing every individual over the age of 21 the right to say who shall make the laws and who shall rule, even though that ruling be confined to districts instead of to the State as a whole. I hope that the Government will stick to the measure as it is.

MR. PIESSE (Katanning [S.35]): I am surprised at the Government having introduced a measure of this kind, especially so early in this Parliament, and particularly in view of the fact that we have not yet emerged from the difficulties through which unfortunately we are passing, and which have existed for the past three years. The Minister will agree that the local gov-

erning bodies have played a very important part, especially in the last few years. I see no necessity for the Bill, and the fact that it has been introduced in its present form savours of want of true recognition on the part of the Government of the services rendered by local bodies, all of which have fulfilled an important mission, not only during the trying years we have recently experienced, but generally, and at all times in services for our agricultural and other industries. The Minister explained that the main features of the Bill were to broaden the basis upon which local authorities should elect their members in the future. It has already been stated by others who have spoken that the Minister advanced no real arguments for the change. Anyone would have thought that he would at least have taken into his confidence those bodies which he controls, and obtained from them their views upon such an important question.

Mr. Withers: Is it not better that the people of the State as a whole should be consulted?

Mr. PIESSE: I might say a lot with regard to the extension of the franchise along the lines the hon. member suggests. At the present time we are suffering through the extension of such franchise. We do not want our road boards to get into the position the Governments are in, not only the State but the Federal Government, none of which has been able, satisfactorily, to handle the finances.

The Minister for Mines: The Federal Government at any rate showed a surplus of three millions last year.

Mr. PIESSE: At the expense largely of the primary producers.

The Minister for Mines: You are condemning them for showing a profit: what will satisfy you?

Mr. PIESSE: The Minister, when introducing the Bill, advanced the argument that whilst this House was elected on adult franchise—

The Minister for Works: You just said I did not advance any arguments.

Mr. PIESSE: The Minister pointed out the franchise that existed in respect of the local governing bodies in the other States, but he did not tell us whether plural voting had failed. Neither has he shown us in what particular instance an improvement would be made in our local government

if the Bill were to pass. The local bodies already have power to borrow up to a certain limit, and it is quite right that there should be a limit, but if the measure is intended to give them further powers to borrow indiscriminately, the sooner we cry a halt the better.

The Minister for Works: I do not know why you should suggest that.

Mr. PIESSE: I cannot understand what is at the back of the Minister's head, because we know the local governing bodies throughout the State are doing very good work; even at the present time they are assisting the Government in the direction of finding work for the unemployed. The Minister himself realises that those associated with the local bodies are men who are only too anxious to help the Government. After all, local bodies have more direct local interests or community of interests than the Government, and they are not supposed to look beyond their own boundaries. If they can do their own jobs well, why not leave them alone? The Minister has not proved that they have not done their jobs well. I have not heard any arguments that will induce me to vote for the Bill. A lot has been said about plural voting. One man may have £1,000 worth of property and four votes, and another man with only £150 worth, one vote. After all there should be some degree of responsibility in that direction. When the Minister replies, I should like him to show that the present system has failed. In every part of the State there have been sacrifices, and it is satisfactory to realise the manner in which the people have co-operated and the local bodies have played their parts. The Government should have thought twice before bringing in a Bill of this kind. The Minister did not consult the road boards, and his attitude is tantamount to saying that they have not done their job. I hope the Bill will not pass the second reading. There are members sitting on the other side of the House who have a knowledge of the good work of local bodies. I suppose that during the past three years the local authorities have given up more time to their work than did any other such bodies in previous years. It is ungrateful to those boards to bring down this measure, for it is tantamount to saying they have not carried out their duties in the best interests of the ratepayers. After all, there should be

some distinction between the voting power of a ratepayer and that of an owner. During the past three years, despite all difficulties, there has been the utmost co-operation and good feeling between all the people in the various districts, and I repeat we should be thankful to those local authorities who have done so much for the State.

MR. LATHAM (York) [8.46]: One of the most convincing arguments that can be advanced against the Bill is that nobody has asked for it. Admittedly it is Government policy, but the Government do not in every session bring down Bills to carry out that policy, for many of them would be found unacceptable to the people. I am surprised at the Government introducing the measure at the present time when, presumably, much more important legislation is awaiting consideration.

The Minister for Mines: One to come after this is certainly much more important.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, the Minister for Mines has very important Bills awaiting consideration.

The Minister for Mines: Waiting on the Printing Office.

Mr. LATHAM: This is a challenge to those who are carrying out the administration of the Road Districts Act. It cannot be argued that the electors qualified under the Road Districts Act are not fully competent to pick the best men to represent them, whether they have one vote or four votes. Frequently in the pastoral areas we find districts containing very few men who have only single votes, where nearly all the electors have plural votes, and quite often elect as their representatives men of single votes. It is a striking expression of confidence in them, but that confidence will be destroyed by the Bill. It is of no use the Minister saying he has a mandate from the people, for I do not think any candidate at the last elections mentioned the franchise of local authorities.

The Minister for Works: I did.

Mr. LATHAM: Then the Minister must have been the exception. I could not picture the member for Northam, with a municipality and a road board in his electorate, attempting to win votes by saying that his party, if returned to power, would abolish plural voting. Of course, the hon. member would not say anything of the sort to win votes.

Mr. Hawke: All he would have to do would be to quote some of your election statements.

Mr. LATHAM: No doubt my statements, indifferent as they may have been, were used and twisted to suit some members opposite, and so played a very much more important part at the last election than did this legislation. I could not picture the member for Northam telling his electors that he proposed to have this legislation brought down, because that would have resulted in his losing votes. Nor could I picture the member for Gascoyne, with a municipality and a road board in his electorate, saying that his party if returned to power would abolish plural voting.

The Minister for Works: You be careful, or I will tell you something in a minute.

Mr. LATHAM: I would be glad to hear it, for I did not hear the Minister when he moved the second reading, and all that I read of his speech seemed to be a veiled threat that if the Bill were not passed, the Government would not do certain desirable things.

The Minister for Works: It was no threat; it is the settled policy of the Government.

Mr. LATHAM: I believe the local authorities in the metropolitan area require extended powers and that, irrespective of the attitude of the present Government, they will get those powers. Eventually it must be so, because tramways, electric lighting and other public utilities should be in the control of those using them.

The Minister for Works: You would not give them to the people.

Mr. LATHAM: There is nothing to prevent the Minister bringing down a Bill to carry out his desires under whatever franchise he might select; but I do not think he proposes to hand over these extended powers to the municipalities, for I believe he will appoint a metropolitan board of works, for which, of course, he could fix any franchise he desired.

The Minister for Justice: That would be pretty expensive.

Mr. LATHAM: It obtains in Sydney and in Melbourne. I can scarcely believe the Minister for Employment was voicing the opinion of the Government when he said the purpose of the Bill was to raise additional money. That reply, I think, was challenged by the member for Nedlands.

The Minister for Works: Wait till you hear me on the member for Nedlands.

Mr. LATHAM: After all, the function of a road board is to collect certain money from the ratepayers of a district and expend it on roads, footpaths, drainage schemes, and the like. That is the limit of their powers. But there is this important thing, which so far has not been mentioned: If we are to hand over to people who have but small interest in a district the power to mortgage the man with the bigger interest and charge him with the repayment of the money, it will be a very serious matter.

Mr. Wansbrough: Is not the boot on the other foot?

Mr. LATHAM: No, because the man who contributes the most provides the most footpaths and roads, while the smaller man gets the benefit. I do not know of a road board that he ever received from a single-vote elector a complaint of unfair treatment, but one can imagine the position that would be set up if the single-vote ratepayers secured full control and mortgaged for borrowed money the properties of the bigger men. I hope it is not intended to introduce politics into our system of local authorities.

The Minister for Works: You want only one brand of politics there.

Mr. LATHAM: No. The success of our local authorities is to be ascribed to the fact that all political parties can sit around the table and express their opinions.

The Minister for Works: There is only one brand of politics in that arena.

Mr. LATHAM: That is not so. I hope we shall keep out the politics both of the Minister for Works and of myself.

The Minister for Works: You certainly want to keep out my politics.

Mr. LATHAM: Not yours alone. There are in this State big property owners holding the same brand of politics as the Minister. I have no objection to that, but I want road board members to be able to sit around the table and dispassionately discuss the welfare of their districts.

The Minister for Works: Could not they do that just as well under single voting?

Mr. LATHAM: Not so well, I think. The member for Murehison quoted a speech made by the member for Nedlands last year. There is no analogy between the present position and that which obtained then.

Mr. Marshall: I quoted, not his speech, but merely his decision.



Mr. LATHAM: On that occasion the company asked the House, not for powers to borrow money overseas; they already had that power, and what they asked the House for was a monopoly and a guarantee of payment to the people from whom they raised the money. In the hon. member's electorate there is a gentleman who is abroad at present trying to borrow a very large sum of money for mining development in that district. He has previously raised large sums for the same purpose. There is no analogy between the purpose of the Bill and the decision of the member for Nedlands last year.

Mr. Marshall: With all the money that gentleman to whom you referred borrowed and spent in Wiluna, he has not a vote for the local road board.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not perturbed about that, nor do I think the gentleman himself worries about it; he knows he can safely leave in the hands of the people there the interests of mining and mine development. I do not think the people want this proposed change. The last election was not fought on anything like this. The member for Gascoyne was not present when I referred to him a little while ago, so I may repeat that I could not imagine him, who has a municipality and a road board in his electorate, expecting to win votes by telling his electors it was proposed to abolish plural voting for local authorities.

The Minister for Works: I have a municipality and a road board in my electorate, yet I did it repeatedly.

Mr. LATHAM: Of course, the strong personality of the Minister—

The Minister for Works: I got the biggest majority of any member in this Chamber.

Mr. LATHAM: The Minister is so popular, and has so strong a personality. It was known that he would hold a position of responsibility in the event of a change of Government.

The Minister for Works: There are municipalities as well as road boards in my electorate.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not think the Minister paid much attention to his own electorate during the elections, as he was so sure of his majority beforehand. On every occasion when I listened through the wireless I found him engaged at the microphone.

Mr. Marshall: He was sticking there all the time.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think that has much to do with the Bill.

Mr. LATHAM: I appreciate your indulgence, Mr. Speaker. I cannot support this Bill. I did not do so on a former occasion and am not going to do so now. We ought to get on with legislation that is of greater importance than this. In fact, we ought to leave well alone.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS** (Hon. A. McCallum—South Fremantle—in reply) [9.2]: I have no misgivings that anything I may say will win a single vote from members opposite. I am fully convinced that their reasoning faculties on this subject are beyond penetration. I am sure there is no Parliament in the world where one would hear such a succession of opinions, such antediluvian ideas as have been expressed by members opposite tonight. There is no Parliament in the world where there has been such an array of conservative speeches as we have listened to during the debate. We young Australians, who have boasted that we lead in democracy and stand for giving power to the people, have had to listen to members who are so much more conservative, more crusty in their beliefs, more steeped in dyed-in-the-wool conservative ideas than the Conservatives of the House of Lords, that they would not give expression to those ideas for which young Australians stand. Indeed, it makes one blush to think what other parts of the world will imagine when they learn of the array of talent opposite, which sticks to the antediluvian, antiquated, conservative ideas which have been passed over by every country in the world bar Australia, or rather the three States in it which still hold to those ideas. I am amazed to hear them say the Bill is not warranted.

Mr. Doney: We are one of the four States.

**THE MINISTER FOR WORKS:** We have only to mention in this Chamber something affecting road boards, some tinpot little governing body, and we can depend upon it that every member opposite will talk about it. How small, petty and parochial it is, does not count. It appeals to them all the more. It is their instinct to enunciate these little conservative, crusty ideas instead of enlarging the scope and outlook of public affairs. I am amazed that so many young

Australians sitting opposite should subscribe to these things. We can forgive some of the older members because they have been reared in that atmosphere. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Williams-Narrogin said there was a political twist in this proposal.

Mr. Latham: I did not say so.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The member for Williams-Narrogin made that remark. The Leader of the Opposition said he hoped this was not brought down with the idea of introducing politics into local governing bodies. Are there no politics associated with them? There must be road board and municipal politics as well as State and Federal politics. The idea of the hon. member is the same as that of members of another place. They say, "Keep out party politics." The only party politics they want are their party politics, and no other. They want nothing outside their own ideas. They say, "Let us go along undisturbed." They say they will do things of their own sweet will in regard to everything we like to send forward. I read this morning that if this Bill becomes law, it will prevent investments in city property. I suppose that is why there are so many scores of hundreds of thousands of empty blocks of land in London, New York, Rome, Paris and Berlin. Every one of those cities has abolished plural voting. In no city outside Australia is there plural voting. Nowhere has it affected building activities. It has not affected the putting up of skyscrapers in New York and enormous blocks of buildings in other capital cities. What a narrow parochial idea this is to deny what is happening in the rest of the world. If I were one of the members opposite, reared in this continent, I should be ashamed to give voice to such opinions.

Mr. Latham: I did not suggest such a thing.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I should be ashamed to stick to such old ideas.

Mr. Latham: I did not say that at all.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am referring to what I read this morning. The hon. member is objecting to the passage of this Bill for the same reasons that have been advanced by the City Council. Then they say to me, "Why have not the Government consulted the members of these parties?" That is a great idea. We are to consult the men, many of whom owe their presence on these bodies to plural voting. They could not win a seat without it. I have to ask them

if I may please abolish it. That is a nice position in which to put the Government of the country. Have we ever heard of such a ridiculous proposal? The Government are to ask the men who hold their seats on local bodies for authority to abolish plural voting before they ask Parliament to give these powers to the people. That is a nice state of affairs. That is not the section of the community the Government want to serve. We want to serve the people, who count with us. Members opposite say that this question was never mentioned at the election, and that if it had been it would have lost votes for certain candidates, but so far as they were concerned they never heard of any claim for any alteration, and are certain it would have been opposed by their electors. Is that why there are only 20 of them opposite?

Mr. Latham: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is that why there is only a handful of them on the cross-benches?

Mr. Latham: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Members opposite should hesitate before saying they know what is in the people's minds, in view of the manner in which their forces were shattered at the poll. They do not know what is in the people's minds. It is evident they are out of step with the community or they would not have been returned in such reduced numbers.

Mr. Latham: I know what they were told.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Results prove that the people had no time for their politics or ideas. They have marched ahead of members opposite and are tired of them. Members supporting the Nationalist Party were controlling the government of the country but are now a mere handful. That shows the views of the people regarding their opinion. They have no right to say what is in the people's minds.

Mr. McLarty: They change them every few years.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There was no mistake about the last change. It was most pronounced on this occasion.

Mr. McLarty: You cannot stop changes.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I suppose the hon. member is trying to stop the changes in this Bill. He is and others are sticking to their old ideas and beliefs which are a hundred years behind those of the Conservatives of the Old World. That is what we find in a young country like this. The member for Wagin (Mr. Stubbs)

wanted me to point out what evidence there was of some incalculable wrong having been done. We are to furnish evidence of this before we can change anything.

Mr. Stubbs: I challenge you to produce anyone in my electorate who has asked for a change.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: An incalculable wrong! Every other country in the world is wrong but this one.

Mr. Patrick: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no country outside Australia which has not made a change.

Mr. Patrick: A few democracies have crashed within the last few years.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Many of them were never democracies. One cannot be surprised at anything crashing that is associated with ideas such as have been expressed by members opposite. I would not be surprised at the people doing anything if they have such ideas to go by. If I understand the case put up by members opposite, it is that they believe there should be representation according to the taxation paid.

Mr. Doney: That is your idea, too, is it not?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Mr. Doney: You say one taxpayer one vote.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not going as far as I would like to go, or the Government would like to go. We are going one step. In fact, I am surprised at my own modesty.

Mr. Stubbs: Of course it will go through.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Bill will go through this Chamber. If it does not go through another place, that will not prevent me from bringing it down until such time as it does become law. The Bill is designed to give representation to the people to whom we owe our duty, not to members of another place. I do not think I have misinterpreted the case when I say that the opposition of members to the Bill is fundamentally on the ground that there should be representation according to the taxation paid. As to taxation according to values, the member for Murchison has answered that case. The value of property is created by the people. Without the people there would be no values. There can be no dispute about that argument. There has been no answer to the case that I put up

when introducing the Bill, that it is not the man who owns the title deeds who pays. When a man lets or leases his property, he takes into account his outgoings and puts that on to the rent. If it is a hotel or a boarding house, the cost is passed on to the lodgers. If it is a business house it is added to the cost of the goods sold to the people. Ultimately the cost is met by the people, not by the person who owns the title deeds. It is not the latter who in the final analysis pays the cost. There has been no attempt to answer that case. Everybody knows that that is the true position. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) said, and one or two hon. members repeated the statement, that if a road board set out on a violently irresponsible crusade and mortgaged the assets of the district, the owners would ultimately have to carry the rates. In the first place, however, the borrowing powers of local authorities are narrowly circumscribed, being based on the amount of rates collected; beyond that, the authorities cannot go. Now to carry that argument into the State or Commonwealth Parliament: Is it to be said that because this State Parliament can tax without limit and borrow almost without limit representation should be according to taxation, or that because the Commonwealth Parliament has unlimited taxing and borrowing powers representation there should, similarly, be according to taxation paid?

Mr. Latham: The Commonwealth Parliament taxes everybody.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, and can discriminate in taxing. The Commonwealth Parliament can relieve the poor and tax the wealthy, or tax the poor and relieve the wealthy.

Mr. Latham: What about the Customs?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is not the man with the heaviest family obligations taxed most heavily through the Customs?

Mr. Doney: You are quite right. We do not deny that.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Federal Parliament levies on the poor through the Customs and on the wealthy through land taxation. Yet both Federal Houses are elected on adult suffrage. The House of Commons, too, is elected almost on adult suffrage.

Mr. Latham: So it ought to be, because everybody is affected there.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Is not everybody affected in this instance?

Mr. Latham: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I said in opening that the reasoning faculties of some hon. members cannot be penetrated. It is not the man who holds the title deeds that pays. He passes the taxation on.

Mr. Latham: Farmers and pastoralists cannot pass it on.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I shall show in a moment how they can pass it on. I do not doubt that hon. members opposite would like plural voting to apply to this Chamber and to the Commonwealth Parliament. They do not wish to see the last trench of Conservatism go. They want to use that trench, and gradually work back from it to the old position, applying plural voting to State and Federal Parliaments. They have not yet given up the fight. If they were successful, we should eventually have to wage over again the old battle of people against nobles. The member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan) made an extraordinary speech. He has been reminded of one inconsistency already. I wish to remind him of another. One begins to wonder where the hon. member's logic begins and where it ends, whether he has any consistency at all in politics, whether he stands on any foundation or whether each wind that blows carries him hither and thither, supporting something to-day and opposing it to-morrow. It is wrong for the hon. member to say that the Loan Council have taken exception to the establishment of such boards as proposed. At the last meeting of the Loan Council, attended by the Premier and myself a month or so ago, the Victorian Government submitted a proposal to establish a board to control bulk handling of wheat. They were given borrowing powers as required, and it was suggested that if the proposed board could borrow money in England it would be all to the advantage of Australia. A number of such boards can borrow independently, subject to the consent of the Minister controlling them. The Minister goes to the Loan Council and says that, for instance, the Metropolitan Board of Works of Melbourne wants to borrow £1,000,000. The Loan Council reply, "They can get the million, and they should go on

the market at such and such a time so as not to clash with us; and we consider that their rate of interest should be so much, in order to conform with our rate." Then the board go on the market as suggested. Does that support the hon. member's idea that this is a dishonourable method of getting behind the Loan Council? Did not the hon. member as a Minister in the previous Government bring down to this House a Bill to establish a body that could go on the market and borrow money for the Agricultural Bank?

Hon. N. Keenan: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member was a member of the Government that passed the measure through both Houses, and now he calls this Bill dishonourable. The Industries Development Act gives power to borrow money for the Agricultural Bank irrespective of the Loan Council. The hon. member was told by us, then sitting in Opposition, that money could not be borrowed in that way; and, as a matter of fact, none has been borrowed during the three years the Act has been in existence. Yet the hon. member called the present Bill immoral. He asked, if we transferred to a board the power to control water supply, sewerage, tramways and electricity, what would there be left for this Parliament to do? Apparently, in the hon. member's opinion, the job of this Parliament is to decide which street a tramway is to run along, and whether there shall be penny sections, and whether a three-inch or a six-inch main should be laid. Those functions being gone, the hon. member says, there would be nothing left for this Parliament to do. Seemingly the development of Western Australia counts for nothing. The important questions of this Parliament are what street a tram should run down, the size of a watermain, and what premises should be connected with the sewerage system. To decide such questions members are brought from Wyndham and Esperance and Kalgoorlie, according to the hon. member. If that is his view on this subject, his stand on other public questions is not surprising. Section 36 of the existing Act provides that a corporation can appoint an agent to exercise its vote for members of road boards. In the pastoral areas, which are nearly all controlled by companies, one agent has been known to represent 20 of these companies. That agent has been able to exercise 80

votes in an election for a North-West road board. That is a state of affairs for hon. members to consider. There is the danger.

Mr. Latham: But that has never happened.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I can tell the hon. member where it happened.

Mr. Latham: I shall be glad to have the names of the companies.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot give the names, but I can tell the hon. member where one man represented 20 companies.

Mr. Latham: And voted on behalf of those 20 companies?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. I shall be glad to give the hon. member the name privately; I do not wish to publish the facts to the world. Now, I do not expect to gain votes from hon. members opposite. I never deceived myself with the hope of gaining votes from members of either the Nationalist or the Country Party, because their feelings on this subject are known. We on this side consider plural voting to be a blot on the public life of Western Australia, an antiquated, antediluvian, crustedly Conservative idea that should not be allowed to exist any longer; and that is why we now take the earliest opportunity, as we did when in office before, to remove it from the statute-book of Western Australia.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	21
Noes	..	..	..	..	17

Majority for	..	..	4
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**AYES.**

Mr. Clothier	Mr. Munro
Mr. Collier	Mr. Needham
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Cross	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hawke	Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Kennelly	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Wise
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Withers
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Millington	

(Teller.)

**NOES.**

Mr. Brockman	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Keenab	Mr. Seward
Mr. Latham	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Thorn
Mr. J. T. Mann	Mr. Doney
Mr. North	

(Teller.)

**PAIRS.**

**AYES.**  
Mr. Tonkin  
Miss Holman  
Mr. Troy

**NOES.**  
Mr. Welsh  
Mr. J. M. Smith  
Mr. Warner

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee.*

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Works in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 33:

Mr. DONEY: The clause really represents the Bill itself, and members should pause before definitely supporting proposals that will not confer a benefit on anyone. I had hoped that the Minister would have attempted to show what benefits his suggestions represent, but he did not do so. The clause will destroy necessary protection for a small minority without conferring the slightest benefit on any section of the community.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 14—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

**BILL—LAND.***Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 17th August.

MR. LATHAM (York) [9.35]: I raise no objection to the second reading of the Bill, which represents the consolidation of various legislative enactments dealing with transactions under the Land Act. The Bill is fairly simple, but it may take considerable time at the Committee stage. Had the Minister been present this evening, I would have suggested the Bill be referred to a select committee of the House without the power to call outside evidence. If that course were adopted, it would save considerable time. The Bill is necessary and if we had a Committee representative of members of both sides of the House, they could go through the clauses with the expert officers of the Lands Department, and the explanations given then would probably obviate much discussion at the Committee stage. Natur-

ally I should like the Minister for Lands himself to be in charge of the select committee, and I do not like to proceed with my suggestion in his absence.

The Premier: There is no objection on the part of the Government to the Bill being referred to a select committee as suggested by the hon. member.

Mr. LATHAM: I raise no objection to the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

### **BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 17th August.

**MR. DONEY** (Williams - Narrogin) [9.42]: The Bill is on all fours with the Road Districts Act Amendment Bill we have just disposed of. It embodies practically all the objectionable features noted in the companion measure. Practically all the remarks of members on the other Bill apply equally to the one now before us. I again suggest to the Minister for Works that his chances of success would be greater if he were to justify to members the very poor opinion he holds of local governing bodies generally. I refer to the low value he places on their work. If he could afford a little time to indicate to members what benefits are likely to accrue in the unlikely contingency of the Bill being passed, it would be of interest. I must declare my disappointment that the Minister has not given any explanation of what weaknesses in the Act he hopes to cure. Apparently he affects to regard the lack of public interest in road board and municipal elections as an argument against plural voting. I cannot accept that view at all. I do not know that the people of Western Australia are anxious to have any more electoral excitement than they have now. Public opinion would suggest that the people have had rather more than a fair share of it, and only yesterday at a meeting of the Perth City Council, a motion was passed by a large majority expressing disagreement with the provisions of the Bill now before us. I do not say that members should be guided by such a motion.

The Minister for Mines: Would you expect them to do anything else?

Mr. Raphael: Are we to be guided by the Perth City Council?

Mr. DONEY: If interjections were restricted to one at a time, I might be able to answer them. It is not often that road board conferences or executives have discussed this particular question, because it does not excite much interest but when it has been discussed, motions have been passed objecting to the introduction of such amendments. Let me make a suggestion to the Minister, though I know he will not accept it. I suggest that he would be well advised to put the Bill in the pigeon-hole and leave it there until the people by whom he is controlled more or less pointedly ask for its production.

The Minister for Justice: By whom is he controlled?

Mr. DONEY: As a good democrat he should, to a large extent, be controlled by the wishes of the people.

Mr. Raphael: He is controlled by their wishes and that is why he has brought this Bill forward.

Mr. DONEY: The hon. member should not be stupid.

**HON. N. KEENAN** (Nedlands) [9.46]: I do not desire to repeat any argument addressed to the second reading of the Road Districts Act Amendment Bill—obviously the same arguments would apply here—but I do desire to make clear the point I take that it is undesirable and immoral for us to be parties to an act enabling us to evade an agreement. So late as December of last year a proposal was made by way of amendment to certain propositions submitted by a member of the present Government in the direction of suggesting legislation to pay a fixed sum on all wheat in order to provide a certain sum of money that would be used to the advantage of the wheatgrowers. On that occasion I pointed out, as reported in "Hansard," that we were bound by the terms of the Constitution, just as we were bound by the Financial Agreement, and that we were prohibited from giving any bounty in support of any industry except gold mining, and I added that no one was more desirous than I was of being free from the incubus of the Federal Constitution, but that so long as we remained under it, we were bound to observe its provisions. So, too, in this in-

stance. If we are bound by the Financial Agreement and if we are shedding these various activities from the Government to local bodies, mainly because the Government cannot borrow, and by reason of the shedding process enabling the local authorities to be in a position to borrow, are not we doing exactly the same thing as that to which I took exception last year? It is exactly the same. It is absurd to say that if Parliament shed its tramways, it might not shed its railways, its control of harbours and its control of education.

The Minister for Works: Who suggested that?

Hon. N. KEENAN: It is suggested that we should part with the tramways. In what sense are they more local—in the sense of ability to give them a geographical boundary—than are the railways?

The Minister for Works: Much more so.

Hon. N. KEENAN: In what way does the railway running from Midland Junction to Fremantle differ from a tramway? Not at all. Except that one runs on railway rails and the other on tram rails, there is no distinction. I said, I think, that I agreed with the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie that this delegation of authority to other parties might go too far. I agree it would be absurd to say that it would take away from Parliament its main functions.

The Premier: You know that this Parliament is more powerful in that respect than are other Parliaments.

Hon. N. KEENAN: It would be absurd to say that it would take away the main functions of Parliament, but it would take away some of those very important functions and under conditions that I conceive—though I may be wrong—constitute a breach of our contractual obligations under the Financial Agreement to which the present Premier pledged this State. The Government in power at the time the Financial agreement was adopted was headed by the present Premier and he pledged the State to observe the agreement. That is the attitude I have taken up. I do not concede that it warrants the bitterness or the attempts to revile that have been indulged in. It is a great pity that in discussing our affairs we should always seek—always, I repeat—some personal reasons. Surely it is possible sometimes to get away from the personal. I think it is quite possible. I have sinned; it is possible I have sinned less than others. That is no answer. The point is cannot we rea-

sonably discuss matters without attempting, and unsuccessfully attempting, to give offence by way of personal retort. That is not what I rose to speak about. I rose to say that there should be some limitation suggested or indicated to the process of denudation of Parliament in handing powers to other bodies and, of course, we should recognise that in doing so, we are lending ourselves to an evasion of the Financial Agreement. We candidly admit that but for the fact that the Government cannot borrow, we would not do that.

The Minister for Mines: That is not so.

The Minister for Railways: Proposals along those lines were made before the Financial Agreement was entered into.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I have not heard any reason for the suggested giving up by the Government of the tramways, power works or harbours except the mere fact that under existing conditions we cannot borrow money to develop them, but we consider that if we created those bodies, they would be able to borrow the money required.

Mr. Marshall: A metropolitan board of works was suggested years ago.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not know whether those bodies would be able to borrow the money, but if they were, surely the whole conception is to free ourselves from the tie imposed upon us by the Financial Agreement. In that sense our action would not be defensible. It might be advantageous, but it would not be defensible.

**MR. LAMBERT** (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [9.53]: I am surprised at the suggestion of the member for Nedlands. The delegation of power from this Parliament to some subordinate authority has been discussed for a considerable number of years, and I think the time has long passed when we should have seriously considered practical steps towards giving certain bodies the requisite power and towards shedding many of the activities departmentally controlled. As I stated on the previous Bill, I sharply differ from the Minister for Works in his desire to create a larger metropolitan council as outlined by him.

The Minister for Works: Why?

Mr. LAMBERT: If I had my way, they would be abolished to-morrow. There is no question about that.

Mr. Raphael: A darned good thing for the whole State if they were.

Mr. LAMBERT: I would not have a man functioning unless he was paid for it and unless he earned his money. I shall not refer to the saving resulting from the carrying out of certain duties free to the public, but I do say that the work of certain municipalities has become highly specialised. Particularly does that refer to the metropolitan area, and equally does it refer to the control of such works as water supply and sewerage and such activities as electricity supply and tramways. I hope that the Minister, before delegating powers to civic authorities, will realise the seriousness of the step and appreciate that there is sufficient work in this young country for a metropolitan water and sewerage board. I hope that the whole question of control of power will be considered with the idea of adopting a scheme on broad and commonsense lines capable of development. For the member for Nedlands to suggest that this is a desire by Parliament to make a specious departure from the Financial Agreement to defeat its provisions is quite absurd and will not bear analysis. For years country members who have no direct interest in the metropolitan water supply and sewerage system, in the tramways or in the generation of the city's power supply have urged the appointment of a separate controlling authority. It is quite natural for them to feel that functions of that kind could usefully and economically be exercised by a subordinate body. That, to a large extent, has been the reason underlying the restlessness of many country members regarding the departmental control of Government activities. If, as contended by the member for Nedlands, it is desired to enlarge the scope of our borrowing, I should say it is quite legitimate. When the Financial Agreement was made, it was doubtless pre-supposed that we would take advantage of our sovereign rights and delegate powers to certain subordinate bodies. I do not see that that is immoral or wrong. I cannot see that such action by Parliament would convey any such impression to any party to the agreement. We have the right to say to-morrow that the Perth City Council should have a borrowing limit of one million pounds and that any local authority, whether municipal council or road board, now circumscribed, should have extended borrowing powers.

Mr. Patrick: They can borrow more by raising their rates.

Mr. LAMBERT: Indirectly they can do so. If we saw fit to confer power upon the Perth City Council to borrow £5,000,000, surely the hon. member would not contend it was an immoral action on the part of Parliament. The member for Nedlands is wrong in making that suggestion. It may damage us in the eyes of other Parliaments in Australia who are parties to the Financial Agreement. I hope the second reading will be carried, and that eventually plural voting will be abolished.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Members may be said to have taken advantage of my good nature, but owing to the way the Minister introduced the Bill, and to the suggestions which have been put up, I have allowed a good deal of latitude with respect to the question of boards. Members will realise that as they have discussed this question thoroughly during the debate preceding this one, there is no necessity for them to go over the same ground again. In fact, neither Bill contains any suggestion as to boards. Owing to the manner in which the Minister introduced the Bill, it was obvious that the question would be referred to, and I allowed the discussion to continue on those lines. I hope, however, it will not be continued on this Bill, because it is out of order.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [10.3]: I had intended to speak on the previous Bill, but my comments would apply more particularly to municipalities. I appreciate your remarks, Mr. Speaker, with regard to the discussion on boards generally. The Opposition have declared that the Minister gave no reason for wishing to alter the system of voting. I contend he gave good and explicit reasons for the change. The whole question hinges on that of plural voting. It has been said that the people have not spoken in favour of a change. Are we going to continue a system that was evolved many years ago and which has got us nowhere, or are we going to be democratic and give the people a say in the election of members of road boards and municipalities, not the people who are themselves elected to these local authorities? The property owner is not always the man who has the vote. The lessee or the agent has the qualifications of the owner. The owner may not live in the district, and may have no interest in it outside that of his property. In the Bunbury



municipality I know of an agent who controls a considerable number of properties. He votes as he thinks fit at all municipal or mayoral elections, and not as the owner thinks. The owner himself has no say in the election of members of local authorities. A man may aspire to be mayor of a municipality and may be elected. He may have only one vote as a ratepayer, but the people who elected him may each have four votes. I do not know where the sense of that comes in. I would not be so much concerned if some genuine basis were established. The man who owns property of a rateable value of £25 is entitled to one vote at a mayoral election, and if the property is of a rateable value of under £50 and over £25, he has two votes. A man who owns a block alongside the one who has one vote may be entitled to two votes because his block is worth £26 or £27. That is inconsistent. I have been a municipal councillor for a number of years.

Mr. Latham: You were elected on the plural voting system.

Mr. WITHERS: No. If the plural voting had been strong enough, I would not have been elected. The majority of the people in my ward and the majority of the tenants voted for me, and I got in by seven votes, the margin being small because a coterie of people in an adjoining area were very nearly responsible for my defeat. I had the majority of the people behind me, but I had great difficulty in being elected.

Mr. Sampson: We had better retain the plural voting.

Mr. WITHERS: The Minister said he was prepared to give more powers to local governing bodies, but not to do so until the Act abolished plural voting. I appreciate the remarks of the member for Katanning (Mr. Piesse) and others who have eulogised local governing bodies. Those bodies deserve a great deal of credit for the work they do. I do not think the Minister or any member on this side would speak disparagingly of them. The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) has frequently spoken of municipal bodies as bumbles. He has said more than once that the councillors in Bunbury are bumbles. He has also taken councillors to task for using crude oil for the development of electric power instead of the local article, Collie coal. We should have the power to protect those who elect us. We introduced the crude oil engine in preference to a coal engine

because we desired to protect the interests of the ratepayers. If we had not possessed the necessary power, we could not have given the people of Bunbury electricity at the present price. The Kalgoorlie mining companies have established a crude oil engine generating system for the supply of their own electricity. They did that to protect the mining industry and the shareholders. They have proved that with the use of crude oil engines they can produce electricity cheaper than can be done in Perth.

Mr. Marshall: That has nothing to do with the comparison you are making. You have the coal at your door.

Mr. WITHERS: The directors were protecting the interests of the shareholders. Councillors are elected to protect the interests of the ratepayers. We had to see which was the cheapest method by which our people could be served. It is all very well to say that the Bunbury Bumbles do not take these matters into consideration. We would have been at the mercy of the Collie Power Company if we had accepted their offer of 2d. a unit, transmitted something like 40 miles.

Mr. Wilson: And you use blackfellows' oil.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the hon. member not to continue along those lines.

Mr. WITHERS: That is the power possessed by local governing bodies. If plural voting were to hold good, the people of Bunbury, who are to-day enjoying cheap current, might, by reason of the powers exercised by those who have plural voting in their grasp, find themselves handed over to private enterprise. Why should it be handed over to private enterprise, which is to-day seeking to take away from a local governing body the control of its own affairs? If plural voting continues, there may be sufficient plural votes to sway the decision in a town like Bunbury, which is now negotiating with a view to obtaining current more cheaply by taking it from the Collie Power Company than by producing it at the Bunbury plant. We know that the people who have the single vote, being the most numerous, are the greatest consumers; but if the plural votes outnumbered their votes on a question of handing over a function of the local government to private enterprise, which would require a 20 or 25 years' contract, a wrong would be done. Under the single vote such a thing could not happen. There

is nothing new in the proposal to abolish plural voting; but if the Minister came down to the House with a request for the abolition of plural voting he would be asked, "Why? There is no reason for it." In connection with this Bill the Minister has given a reason. The last Government endeavoured to establish a board of control for similar purposes. Towards the establishment of such a board the abolition of plural voting is essential. Hon. members opposite apparently wish to stick in the old rut instead of establishing democratic control.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan) [10.12]: Like the measure to amend the Road Districts Act, this Bill goes further than merely reducing the number of votes to be cast in a municipal election. It proposes to limit the vote insofar as a candidate for only one ward in a municipality may be voted for. In the case of a person holding rateable land in two or more wards, he will be permitted to vote for that ward which he may select; but beyond the ward selected he will not have even one vote. In the metropolitan area the chief authority is the Perth City Council, whose territory comprises Greater Perth, taking in the old North Perth, Victoria Park, and Leederville municipalities. It might happen that a person owning property in both Victoria Park and Leederville—

Mr. Raphael: You own about a hundred properties in those two places.

Mr. SAMPSON: It might happen that a person with an oblique turn of mind would desire to vote for a certain sitting councillor in Victoria Park and also for a certain sitting councillor in Leederville; but under this Bill he would not be allowed to do that. He could vote for one or the other, but not for both. Why should one ward have an advantage over the other? What special gain is there in limiting a ratepayer to voting for either the Victoria Park ward or the Leederville ward? I fail to see the justification for the restriction. The Minister in replying will perhaps give it. Again, it is stated that the territory of the Perth City Council may be enlarged. There is some suggestion that Subiaco might be added to that territory. But the Bill proposes to deprive people who own property in more than one district of the right to express their desires in respect of representation on the

City Council. Personally I have every respect for our municipal councils, and consider that ratepayers and others qualified by the Act should have the right to cast votes accordingly. There may be something in what the Minister said with regard to multiple voting or plural voting, though personally I do not admit it. Certainly no argument has been put up in favour of depriving those who own property in different wards of the right to vote in those different wards. The Minister is so keen on one man, one vote that he might well insert in this Bill a provision that a ratepayer shall have one vote for each ward for which he is qualified under the existing Act. I merely suggest that the Minister might contemplate the difficulty in which ratepayers desiring to vote in both Victoria Park and Leederville would be placed by the discovery that because of this measure—in the unlikely possibility of its becoming an Act—they are prevented from voting in more than one ward.

On motion by Mr. Latham, debate adjourned.

**BILL — RETURNED SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' IMPERIAL LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA, W.A. BRANCH, INCORPORATED, HEADQUARTERS BUILDING.**

Returned from the Council without amendment.

*House adjourned at 10.19 p.m.*