

The PREMIER: With all due respect to whoever drafted this proposed proviso, in my opinion it is most difficult to understand. It would be better to report progress, so that the Committee may have a chance of ascertaining exactly what is meant. In the meantime something more satisfactory might be evolved.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.5 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 21st September, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (8).

VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS.

As to Shortage.

Mr. WILLMOTT asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) In view of the serious shortage of veterinary practitioners in the dairying districts of the State, are any arrangements being made to overcome this difficulty?

(2) Can the services of veterinary practitioners be supplemented by a more extended system of lectures and demonstrations in the districts concerned?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) The Department of Agriculture is endeavouring to fill staff vacancies for veterinary officers, and if successful may be able to extend demonstration work, but

will not undertake work normally carried out by private practitioners. The present depleted staff cannot undertake any further duties.

METROPOLITAN MILK ACT.

As to Producers' Representative on Board.

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Has he noted that 108 producers licensed under the Metropolitan Milk Act for No. 1 zone, are entitled to elect one member of the board, whereas 262 licensed producers in No. 2 zone have only the same representation on the board?

(2) Will he give consideration to an alteration of the zone areas in order to secure approximately equal numbers of licensed producers in each zone?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes, if such alterations are found to be warranted after representations have been made by the producers concerned.

NATIVE SETTLEMENTS.

As to Allegations of Unsatisfactory Conditions.

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) Has his attention been drawn to recent Press reports dealing with charges by the Anglican Synod and other bodies in respect of what is alleged to be such a breakdown of efficient control at certain named native settlements in this State where conditions are spoken of as appalling and as resembling a brothel?

(2) Having regard to the disquieting nature of these charges will he inform the House either—

(a) that the charges are untrue; or

(b) that they are true; or

(c) that he has insufficient information at present, but will order—or has already ordered—the necessary investigation to be made with a view to a report to Parliament upon the position?

(3) If the charges, in his opinion, are untrue will he supply supporting evidence?

(4) If true, what corrective action is proposed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Except for Press statements, no specific charges have been made by the Anglican Synod or other persons. However, a departmental inquiry is in progress relative to the Press statements referred to, and the House will be advised of the result at a later date.

(2), (3) and (4) Answered by No. (1).

COLLIE COAL.

As to Loss of Production.

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) Has his attention been called to a report in "The West Australian" of Friday, the 15th September, setting out that coal losses in this State for 1944 (up to the 12th August), amount to 56,662 tons, a total which whilst very much lower than in the case of New South Wales and Queensland, is nevertheless 73 per cent. above the combined total losses in Victoria, Tasmania, and South Australia in respect of the same period?

(2) Are "The West Australian" figures correct?

(3) If they are, what percentage of the 56,662 tons was lost from—

- (a) strikes;
- (b) absenteeism;
- (c) other causes?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) The figures are supplied to me by the Commonwealth Coal Commission and obtained from official returns made to the Commission by the producers.

(3) Percentage losses relating to the 56,662 tons are as follows:—

- (a) Strikes, 18.91 per cent.
- (b) Absenteeism, 65.40 per cent.
- (c) Other causes, 15.69 per cent.

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE RELATIONSHIPS.

(a) As to Government Expenditure on Referendum.

Mr. DONEY asked the Premier:

(1) Is the Government yet in a position to advise the House what percentage of the total appropriation from the Commonwealth public funds (designed for propaganda pur-

poses in respect of the recent Referendum) was used directly or indirectly upon the campaign in Western Australia?

(2) If so, will he quote that expenditure in itemised form?

(3) What expenses were incurred (by Western Australian Ministers in campaigning in support of the Referendum) that have been debited to the public account and what other charges—if any—have been so debited?

(4) Irrespective of what may be the answer to No. (3) will he advise whether the Government has received any grant or other payment from the Federal Treasurer in satisfaction of services rendered in connection with the Referendum, or, otherwise, whether any request by his Government for such payment has been submitted and, in either case, what are the amounts involved?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) No. We have no information on the matter.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) None.

(4) No grants have been received and no request for payment submitted.

(b) As to Referring Powers to Commonwealth.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Premier:

In view of the expressed support of the powers contained in the Referendum proposals, by the people of W.A. and particularly by Service personnel, will he give consideration to parliamentary action in order to refer such powers to the Commonwealth?

The PREMIER replied:

Yes. Consideration will be given to the whole matter.

AVIATION.

As to Seaplane Base on Swan River.

Mr. KELLY asked the Premier:

(1) In view of the importance of oversea air traffic in the post-war period has the Government given full consideration to the possibility of allocating a suitable alternate seaplane base to the one recently operated at Crawley?

(2) What, if any, alternate places are under consideration?

(3) Has any application been received by the Government for the right to establish a

seaplane base in the Swan River, or any adjacent waters?

(4) Is it known to him that an application to establish a seaplane base in the Swan River has been made to the Commonwealth Government?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) I am advised that no satisfactory seaplane base exists in the Swan River other than Matilda Bay and Melville Water.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

(3) Yes, by the Civil Aviation Department for the period of the war and 12 months thereafter.

(4) No, other than by the Civil Aviation Department referred to in reply to Question No. (3).

COMMONWEALTH HOUSING SCHEME.

As to Survey by Local Authorities.

Mr. WATTS (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Will he lay on the Table of the House a copy of the information supplied to local authorities showing the result of the housing survey (to which he referred yesterday in answer to a question)?

(2) Will he also lay on the Table information supplied re housing by the following local authorities, or any of them?—

Collie Municipal Council and Road Board; Upper Blackwood Road Board; Bunbury Municipal Council and Road Board; Merredin Road Board and Northam Municipal Council; Katanning, Broomehill, Tambellup, Gnowangerup, Cranbrook and Plantagenet Road Boards.

The PREMIER replied:

(1) The answer to the question given yesterday was that the survey was the result of information supplied by local authorities.

(2) Of the local authorities mentioned Bunbury Municipal Council, Northam Municipal Council, Merredin Road Board and Katanning Road Board supplied answers.

The information supplied by them is being tabulated and will be tabled when it is available.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Metropolitan Milk Act Amendment.
Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.
- 2, Rural and Industries Bank.
Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 19th September.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [4.39]: Having listened to the debate on this measure, particularly from the opposition benches, I am led to wonder what case would have been put up by the Opposition had not the Minister, in introducing the Bill, mentioned the word "mandate." The whole of the structure of the discussion of this Bill from members opposite seemed to centre in the mandate question, possibly with a view to diverting attention from the crux of the Bill. Little was said in connection with the justification of the attempt to provide for adult franchise for the Legislative Council. The member for Nedlands in his remarks said that the House of Commons in England threw down the gauntlet, but that we had not done so in Australia at the proper time. We are now throwing down the gauntlet. With the member for Nedlands I agree that it is long overdue, although it has been said by members, when speaking to this Bill, that there has not been any miscarriage of justice from another place in connection with legislation sent down by this Chamber.

Since 1924, Labour has been out of office only three years. That to my mind is sufficient for us to say that we are throwing down the gauntlet to those people who, over that period of time, rejected legislation which would have meant the putting into effect of this party's policy. If the people of this State have seen fit in those years to elect a Government on adult franchise, with all due respect to the figures quoted, I say that on that account we have a mandate to give effect to our policy if not to this particular vote. We bring down legislation which is the party's policy, and which is for the benefit not only of our party, but of the people generally, but it is not given effect to because it is stifled

in another place. Can it, on that account, be said that Labour's policy during its period in office has been a failure because of Labour? While another place is able to defeat legislation sent from this Chamber, I do not know where we shall get with our democratic principles.

Like other members of this Chamber I am concerned about the word "democracy." I do not really know whether democracy functions as it should do or whether we do not understand its meaning. Nevertheless, today we are claiming to be democratic and to be fighting for democracy. As I understand democracy, it is government of the people, for the people and by the people, and that is by a large majority. Members opposite have seen fit to quote a considerable number of electoral figures in connection with the position of this House as it is today, but they have been very careful in selecting those figures to relate them only to this House. The Bill before us deals with another place, and I have taken out a few figures in connection with the position as it applies to it. In the Metropolitan-Suburban Province two years or less ago when an election was held, 27,092 people were on the roll. I consider that a very fair enrolment. The total number of votes cast on that occasion was 7,538, or 25 per cent. of the people on the roll recorded a vote. The successful candidate was elected with 4,168 votes of the 7,000 odd polled. So, with 4,000 votes he is returned to the Legislative Council and represents 27,000 people. If that is not more than comparable with the position in which we find ourselves, on the figures quoted by members opposite relating to the Legislative Assembly, I do not know.

I take the matter further and show that for the North Province—the comparisons were made in the Assembly of the North-West seats, with those of Nedlands, Canning and one or two other places—792 people are on the roll. The Metropolitan-Suburban Province has an enrolment of 27,000 people, and the North Province 792 people. Nevertheless, the North Province gets the same representation in another place as does the Metropolitan-Suburban Province. The number of votes recorded in favour of the winning candidate on the last occasion was 236. So, we have 236 votes in the case of the North Province as against 4,000 odd

for the member representing the Metropolitan-Suburban Province. If members analyse the position they will find that although these people may be representing area as well as population, in the same way as do members of the Legislative Assembly, the figures are more against the Legislative Council than the Legislative Assembly. Let us take the position as we find it. In the Legislative Council 10 members, exclusive of the President, form a quorum. So that the three members representing the North Province, with an enrolment of 700, could be in a majority. If only 10 members were sitting in the House, six would form the majority and could throw out legislation sent from this Chamber. Three of those six could represent the North Province. I would like the members who quoted figures on representation in this House to see how they compare with the figures of the Legislative Council.

Mr. Berry: Two wrongs do not make a right.

Mr. WITHERS: "Two Wongs do not make a white," as the Chinaman said! We are quite justified in appealing to members to liberalise the franchise for the Legislative Council. The member for Boulder, who was at the time the Premier, introduced a measure some years ago for household suffrage, but it was rejected by the Legislative Council. It has been said, "If they won't pass a Bill for household qualification, how are we to get the adult franchise from the same Chamber?" We are justly entitled to adult franchise. At the present time we have no basis for making comparisons or quoting the make-up of the other Legislative Councils in Australia or elsewhere. Members will find that none of these places has any definite basis of representation. Figures have been quoted here, but I shall not deal with them again because many different statements have been made as to the way in which Victoria, New South Wales and other places elect their Legislative Council members. If some definite qualification were required, such as applies to the House of Lords in England, where members are those holding hereditary titles, and where there are appointees of the House of Lords who have seats in the House of Commons and watch the proceedings of that branch of the Legislature, then we would have something to go on.

Here we say that the man who pays 6s. 9d. a week as rent is not entitled to a vote for the Legislative Council, but the individual who pays 3d. more per week is entitled to that privilege. Where is the basis for such a privilege? Members can make it £10 a year—the basis is just the same. In the South-West, about 2,000 people employed in the timber industry are not entitled to be enrolled for the Legislative Council. That is due to the fact that the houses they live in were built by the timber combine or by the State Sawmills. The dwellings were erected out of timber available locally and were cheaply constructed. They are quite sufficient for the purpose, but hardly up to the standard one would normally desire in which to rear one's family. Those houses are not ratable by the local road board because they are built on Government property or on timber concessions. The houses are available at what would be regarded as very cheap rentals, and in the circumstances the timber workers who occupy them are debarred from exercising a vote for the Legislative Council. On the other hand, for a similar type of house on the Goldfields a miner would have to pay at least 16s. or 17s. a week in rent.

The Premier: For a one-roomed house and kitchen, 30s. a week has been paid on the Goldfields.

Mr. WITHERS: If a foreigner came to Western Australia, remained here for five years and became naturalised, he could take one of those houses—perhaps he might not even be a married man—and pay 30s. a week in rent or even, to give the lower figure I mentioned, 16s. or 17s. a week, and he would be entitled to a vote in the affairs of the country. At the same time, we deny men born in the country, where they have reared their families and have proved themselves good citizens, the right to exercise the franchise.

Mr. Marshall: They denied that right to men who have been fighting in defence of this country.

Mr. WITHERS: What comparison is there between the two classes of individual? Then again, to cite one instance I know of, a man bought a block of land worth £50 with a small shack on it. It is occupied by an old-age pensioner who pays 7s. a week in rent. I know that that man was reared by the State at the Swan Boys' Orphanage, and has never married. Now he is being

supported by the State as in his childhood he was reared by the State. Because he pays a rental of 7s. a week, he is entitled to a vote for the Legislative Council and so is the owner of the property. On the other hand, a married man living in a much better class of house close by, is not entitled to the vote because he does not pay a rental of 7s. a week.

The contention has been advanced that if a man pays £50 on the purchase of a block of land, he should be given the right to exercise a vote for the Legislative Council. Another man may invest £1,000 in war bonds. Should the latter not be entitled to a vote just as much as the man who perhaps has paid £50 for a piece of swamp land with which he will never do anything productive and on which not even a house has been erected? Surely it is time we got away from that sort of thing and placed the franchise on a better basis, such as giving the vote to everyone of adult age. I recollect strange situations that have arisen in connection with Legislative Council elections. I know of a happening that occurred on more than one occasion. The Premier will know of the incidents. A returning officer at one place had no vote in his province. The custom has grown up that, in the event of a tie, the returning officer gives the deciding vote in favour of the sitting member who has sought re-election. If both candidates happen to be new men who have not previously represented the province, then the returning officer, in the event of a tie, actually decides the election, although he is not entitled to the franchise himself. A man without a vote can thus decide an election!

The Premier: And perhaps the fate of a Government.

Mr. WITHERS: Are we to continue such an extraordinary state of affairs? We have had at least two ties in Legislative Council elections. I can recollect one in the East Province and another in the Central Province. Under the existing method of voting, we could have many such ties, seeing that neither enrolment nor voting is compulsory. On top of that, there is the meagre number of electors qualified to vote for the Council who actually exercise the franchise. In such circumstances anything could happen. In view of all the various anomalies in the present electoral arrangements dealing with the qualifications of a Legislative Council elector,

if we are to be fair to the State and to ourselves we should at least get down to a proper basis. The opinion of another place cannot be accepted as that of the people or their representatives. The extent to which the Legislative Council reflects the opinions of the people of Western Australia was indicated in the result of the recent Referendum. The Council turned down the proposals that had been submitted by the Premier, yet the soldiers to whom the Council had denied the right to exercise the franchise, voted by an overwhelming majority in favour of the powers sought by the Commonwealth. That showed that the Legislative Council does not represent the views of the men who are fighting for the safety of the nation.

The whole argument so far has been to direct attention to something that the Minister had said regarding this legislation, but members opposite have not given any clear indication as to whether they will support the Bill or be prepared to do other than was suggested by the Leader of the National Party and refer the legislation to a Select Committee or, as was suggested by the Leader of the Opposition, refer the matter to a referendum of the people. The Bill is before Parliament for the purpose of testing this out to determine whether we, as members of the Legislative Assembly, are prepared to place the Legislative Council on the same footing as this Chamber. It is a challenge not only to the Council but to the Assembly. It will demonstrate whether we in this House are prepared to stand by that democracy of which we speak so much and have fought for strenuously in the past

MR. W. HEGNEY (Pilbara): The first time I had the privilege of speaking in this Chamber I protested, as a representative of the Labour movement, against what I considered to be a constitutional injustice, and when speaking on the Address-in-reply on each occasion since I have, to the best of my ability, briefly dealt with what I then believed and still believe is making our democracy a sham and a delusion. The Bill simply provides for compulsory voting for Council elections, for the abolition of plural voting and for the introduction of adult franchise. It is closely allied to another Bill which will be before the House shortly.

The main objections to the Bill advanced by those who desire a continuation of the existing order may be classed in three or four categories. For many years when we have sought the reform of another place, we have been assured that it was constituted as a House of Review and a check upon what has generally been spoken of as hasty legislation. I find that a very influential organisation, more particularly at election times, namely the National Union, takes the view that the Legislative Council is Western Australia's safeguard against what it terms Trades Hall domination. It further contends that Labour desires to have the Council franchise broadened only because so many of its Bills are emasculated or rejected by that Chamber. When Labour Governments over a long period of years have sought to place legislation on the statute book designed to benefit the people, the Council has, on many occasions, emasculated those measures.

It has been claimed that the Legislative Council is a non-party House. This is told us by people who would have us believe that it is independent of party associations. I have a statement that appeared in "The West Australian" on the 28th April last referring to the Council elections set down for the 26th April, as follows:—

For the seven other provinces there are 18 candidates. For the North-East Province and the South-West Province there are four candidates each. The other five seats have only two contestants each. Although the Legislative Council is supposed to be a non-party House all of those candidates have party designations. There has been a fairly substantial decline in the number of electors on the Council rolls, mainly because of changes in the householder status of electors. In the 1936, 1938 and 1940 contests for the Upper House, polling was very poor. However, as it is known that in several provinces many Labour supporters have been enrolled, the vote tomorrow may be better than usual.

Then follows a list of the candidates. I do not propose to read the lot, but here are a few—

Cornell, James (Nat.).
Thomson, Alexander (C.P.).
Craig, Leslie (Nat.).
Wood, Garnet Barrington (C.P.).
Swift, Ida Emma (Ind. C.P.).

This brings me to the matter of the present vacancy in the Council. Yesterday an advertisement appeared in "The West Australian" as follows:—

Legislative Council, South-East Province.
Applications are invited from persons desirous

of contesting in the interests of the Country and Democratic League of W.A. (with which is incorporated the State Country Party) the vacancy in the abovenamed province caused by the death of Hon. H. V. Piessie. Nominations must be in the hands of the returning officer at the League's Office, Room 3, 2nd Floor, Bank of Adelaide Chambers, St. George's-terrace, Perth, at 3.30 p.m. on Wednesday, September 27. H. S. Seward, Returning Officer.

I mention this to show that the assertions that the Legislative Council is a non-party House will not bear the slightest investigation. Now I come to another objection that has been raised, directly or indirectly, to the Bill, and that is that the Government has no mandate from the people to introduce this reform. I say without fear of contradiction that the only party capable of forming a stable Government is the Labour Party. This party has 30 members in the Legislative Assembly. The constitution of the Country Party, which has now tacked the word "democratic" to its name, precludes its coalescing with any other party, and it has nine or ten members, while the members of the National Party and the Independents make up the remainder. The Premier, in his policy speech, dealt with the need for the reform of the Legislative Council, and every time I addressed a public meeting on current political questions and the Legislative Council was an appropriate subject, it was touched upon. Every time I addressed a meeting during the recent Referendum campaign I pointed out that if the masses of people were going to rely for a new order upon the Legislative Council, as now constituted, I would sooner see the power placed in the hands of the Commonwealth Government to ensure that the ex-servicemen receive justice.

MR. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in using offensive language towards another place.

MR. W. HEGNEY: I had no intention of using offensive language; my desire was to indicate that if the people of Western Australia wish to be assured of realizing the progress of which so much has been said, unless a radical alteration is made in the franchise of the Council, we would be likely to reach the millennium far quicker through Australia-wide action. The statement has been made that the set-up of the Assembly is not what it might be. Some years ago the Electoral Districts Act was

placed on the statute-book and was amended just before the 1930 election. In that measure provision was made for the appointment of a board of experienced men described as commissioners to determine district boundaries. Those boundaries were fixed and the Bill eventually became law. Those commissioners were independent men, and the whole of the adult population, without regard to property qualifications, were entitled to vote. Legislative Councillors in the various States number as follows: New South Wales 60, Victoria 64, Queensland nil, South Australia 20, Western Australia 30, and Tasmania 18. Figures were quoted recently to show that the Labour Party did not represent the will of the majority of the people of Western Australia.

I submit that this Government is constituted in a proper manner, and that Labour is the only party which can form a Government here and therefore does reflect the Western Australian people's will. The latest official figures dealing with the Parliamentary rolls of this State show that for the Legislative Assembly there are actually some 274,800 people entitled to vote, and that the votes recorded at the last general election numbered 183,781; that for the Legislative Council there are 46,515 electors enrolled for contested provinces; and that the votes recorded at the last Council elections totalled 23,017. No-one can assert that the wishes of the majority of the people of Western Australia should be thwarted by a minority holding unlimited power. In the sister State of South Australia there are 403,226 persons who have the right to vote for 59 members of what is called the Lower House, only 142,824 having the right to vote for 20 members in the Upper House. The Constitution of Victoria provides that such men as follow the professions of doctor or lawyer or officer of the Defence Forces have the right to vote for the Legislative Council, but does not confer that right on the lawyer's client or the doctor's patient or the private fighting in the same army as the officer. So that wherever we turn we find irregularities. There is no uniformity. Accordingly we now seek to have placed on the statute-book a measure which will provide adult franchise for the entire State. I maintain that we have a mandate from the people. I now propose to quote an extract from a newspaper, "The Sunday Times,"

whose editor, I understand, was at one time a member of the National Party. The following appeared in "The Sunday Times" just after the last general election:—

Electors have a right to look to the new Government to make reform of the Upper House an early part of the programme of the opening session of the new Parliament. Excuse that the Upper House will resist any attempt to reform it is not a very formidable one. After all, this is a democracy, and though the members of the Upper House may not look kindly upon an attempt to whittle away their privileges they cannot for long resist the will of the people. If the Government is determined to reform the Upper House, it will have the bulk of the people behind it, and even the stoutest diehard in the Chamber of Privilege would not for long be able to stand up against a storm of indignant public opinion. The Legislative Council is due for a reform, and the people have a right to look to the Government to put into effect at the earliest possible moment the promise it featured so much on its programme at the recent election.

That is a clear indication that the people were well aware that reform of another place would be in the forefront of legislation during this session of Parliament. Speeches can generally be placed in three categories; those one can listen to, those one cannot listen to at all, and those that one cannot help listening to. I place the utterances of the member for Nedlands in the third category. The hon. member generally has a lot of meat to put in his sandwich; but on Tuesday he endeavoured to put up a very strong argument on a very weak ground. The meat was rather stale. He got a few Country Party members hot under the collar and he touched upon many points, but not on the provisions of the Bill. I say openly that those members of the Legislative Assembly who form the Government are far more representative of the Western Australian people than are members of another place, who can at any time reject measures sent to them by this House. If there is not a change whereby this State will be freed from the necessity for bowing at all times to the Legislative Council, something will happen in the very near future. I have traced back Parliamentary history on this question for quite a number of years, and we all know that at various times efforts have been made to widen the Legislative Council franchise. Those efforts were continued by the Labour movement over a long term of years, but proved practically useless.

I have no doubt that in the future when we return to peace conditions, the Legislative Council, if it remains unreformed, will sooner or later have to be ended. The only way of improving it is to widen its franchise, and the only way of ending it is to take action through the British Parliament. I would far rather that the matter was finalised by ourselves, and that another place should reflect more truly the will of the people of Western Australia. The ground has been very well covered by previous speakers in regard to the wiping out of anomalies and injustices existing in the ranks of those who cannot have the vote for the Legislative Council as against those who can. Suffice it to say that the fight of the future, like the fight of the past, must be for the rights of the people against the rights of property. When we find that we have reached a position in which men are told that they cannot have a vote for one House because they do not own property, we know that our position is one that appertains to the dead past. So long as those injustices continue, I shall not cease to agitate for their removal. I hope that the people of Western Australia will realise the injustices being perpetrated on them, and will alter the set-up of another place. As a matter of fact I take the very definite view that the people generally look upon another place as more or less unnecessary. The percentage of voting which has taken place for many years in respect of the Upper House is an indication not only that electors entitled to vote are apathetic but also that to a great extent they ignore the second Chamber as something unnecessary. I am one who believes that there is just as much argument for a third Chamber as for a second Chamber. I have no faith in the bicameral system; I consider it an insult to the intelligence of the people, because every person, before voting, must be of sound mind and possess ordinary intelligence so as to determine who shall represent him in Parliament.

People are elected despite their political colour and the strongest party, or combination of parties, forms a Government. What for? To legislate in the interests of the people and to carry on by government and by administration the affairs of the country. The persons so elected are subject to recall every three years. Yet we find that we are

asked in these modern times to perpetuate the second Chamber, which has been handed down for hundreds of years. The question to be decided now is not the abolition of the Legislative Council. I am firmly convinced that if we maintain the present franchise for that Chamber, it will continue to mutilate the measures which the Assembly puts before it. It will continue to do so until this Bill, or some similar measure, is passed. I do not favour the appointment of the proposed Select Committee, as I consider it would be only a waste of time. The issue is whether the franchise for the Legislative Council shall be on the same basis as that for the Legislative Assembly. Surely that is not ultra-democratic. We talk about Western Australia being a democratic State, yet the Legislative Council has more power than has the British House of Lords; it is an absolute dictatorship and has been so for many years. I hope that a strong vote in favour of the Bill will have the effect of inducing members in another place to take cognisance of the wishes of the people as expressed in this Chamber and to meet them in a reasonable manner.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin): Members will have noticed from the nature of the interjections from this side of the House when the two previous speakers were on their feet that we are not particularly impressed by the reasons which they advanced in support of the measure before us.

Mr. J. Hegney: Are you supporting the Bill? Yes or no!

Mr. DONEY: The member for Middle Swan will probably learn later on what I intend to do.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DONEY: The remarks of the member for Pilbara were described to me by a colleague a few minutes ago in this way: "His reasons are like two grains of wheat in a ton of chaff. You search for and find them, but when you have found them they are not worth the search." I admit though that it is seldom indeed that such an uncomplimentary comment can be applied to the member for Pilbara. He mentioned that in the Legislative Assembly election held recently some 270,000 voters went to the poll, but that in the case of the Legislative Council elections only 46,000 went to the poll. This must be admitted to be a

disparity, but it is not unduly so when one reflects that in the case of the Legislative Council elections neither enrolment nor voting is compulsory, whereas in the case of Legislative Assembly elections both enrolment and voting are compulsory. For that matter, I think it would be very difficult indeed to find grounds for anticipating that greater interest would be taken in Council elections if the franchise were widened for that Chamber, as is sought under this Bill.

Mr. Triat: Compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting.

Mr. DONEY: Quite so. In his attack upon the bicameral system in vogue in this State, I consider the Minister tackled a big job in a very small way. His attitude was rather that of a tinker than that of a tradesman. In order to get the major amount of usefulness from the Legislative Council many changes are essential. We on this side of the House recognise this fact, but apparently the Minister—for tactical reasons I presume—aims at a change which, if effected, will not result in adding any real value to the second Chamber. The Minister made his appeal to the House on democratic grounds. Judging by his method of expressing himself, he evidently holds the view that political Labour and democracy mean precisely the same thing, and this same comment might be made on the remarks of the two members who have just resumed their seats. I contend that that attitude is entirely wrong and that the conclusions at which those gentlemen arrived are utterly fallacious, in the circumstances, anyhow. To me political Labour is no longer entitled to play that particular card. I admit that it had every right to do so away back in the days when those truly great men—and undoubtedly they were great—Joseph Arch, Will Crooks, John Burns, and of course at a slightly later date, Andrew Fisher, laid the foundations of the Labour movement.

Several members interjected.

Mr. J. Hegney: You have not mentioned Peter Lalor.

Mr. Wilson: What about Ned Kelly?

Mr. DONEY: I cannot imagine a man of such an independent nature as Ned Kelly ever associating himself with a retrograde movement such as I believe Federal Labour to be today.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DONEY: Anyhow, I am quite willing to concede this, that away back in the times I mentioned, when Labour's slogan was, "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity"—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Is the hon. member going to connect this up with the Bill?

Mr. DONEY: I am travelling, if I may say so, Sir, no farther wide of the question set out in the Bill than have the members to whom I am trying to reply. I thought I had already connected my remarks up with the Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Proceed for the time.

Mr. DONEY: I was about to say that it is an entirely different matter with political Labour today, which seems to be so closely allied with what is now known as Darginism, absenteeism and sectionalism.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That has nothing to do with the Bill at all. I must ask the hon. member to keep to the Bill.

Mr. Cross: You are adopting Ned Kelly tactics!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DONEY: I take it I should at least be allowed to refer to what has already been said.

Mr. SPEAKER: I take it the hon. member will obey the Chair and not talk about absenteeism, which has nothing to do with the Bill.

Mr. DONEY: I may say that other matters which have been mentioned have, in my opinion, nothing to do with the Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the hon. member is not going to obey the Chair, I must ask him to resume his seat.

The Premier: You always obey the Chair.

Mr. DONEY: I am always willing to obey the Chair, but I should like an equal measure of obedience exacted from other members who may from time to time be on their feet.

Mr. Cross: Do not reflect on the Speaker, because he is pretty impartial.

Mr. Thorn: You are trying to cause trouble.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DONEY: During his second reading speech the Minister expressed the view that the Upper House should be abolished. Bearing that in mind, I suggest it is illogical to endeavour to improve the standing and general usefulness of the Legislative Council by widening the franchise, the effect of which will be to

lengthen its life, thus lengthening the life of something the Minister tells us ought not to exist. I feel, therefore, I have a right to suggest to the hon. gentleman that he cannot be wholly satisfied with his own bona fides in this matter, or may be he is still under the influence of that ex-Labour Premier, a very able, popular and strong Labour Premier, the member for Boulder, who at one time said, "Thank God for the Legislative Council."

Mr. Withers: You were not here when he said that.

The Premier: He also said, "Thank God for a sense of humour."

Mr. DONEY: I have heard the hon. gentleman on quite a number of occasions give vent to that same expression of opinion. The question of humour does not enter into the matter. Impliedly the reference by the member for Boulder was, of course, to Bills—sent up by the Labour Government then in power—which had very conveniently for that Government been thrown out by another place.

The Minister for Works: Will you now give the views of the member for Williams-Narvagin on this Bill?

Mr. DONEY: I am now coming to the Bill. If anyone asked me whether I approved of the present franchise for the Upper House and certain of the powers it now possesses, I would answer in the negative. If I were asked whether I wanted a continuance of the Upper House as a Chamber of review, I should most certainly answer in the affirmative. Many is the time I have heard expressions of approval in respect of amendments made in another place, whether from members on the opposite side of this Chamber or those sitting on this side, that is to say, where members opposite have felt like expressing their own private views. I agree that it is certainly an irritation when, late in the session, Bills are returned to this Chamber riddled with amendments, but would point out that another place has its job to do. After all, it has generally been our own fault for sending to the Legislative Council various measures so late in the session. We have often had to disagree with its amendments, but on such occasions conferences have been held between the two Houses and compromises arrived at. As I see it, very much that is sent from this Chamber to another place I would not

like to see translated into the law of the land without amendment. Another place has doubtless a great deal more time than we have for an intensive examination of Bills, and—

Mr. Fox: That is a tall story!

Mr. DONEY: It may be regarded as constituting a fine deliberative body of men. It is natural that the Labour Party should sometimes feel sore because one of its Bills has either been declined by another place or heavily mutilated. Members opposite should, however, reflect that when in the years of long ago we on this side of the House formed the Government of the day, we had experiences pretty much along those same lines. I seem to remember a statement from the Ministerial bench to the effect that Australia was the most democratic of all countries. Quite recently, I think, the Premier said, and I believe his remark was repeated by the member for West Perth, that—

We sometimes hear people criticise local industries and social conditions, and contend that they are better than they should be. I am convinced that these critics, deep down in their hearts, are proud of the industrial conditions under which the workers in Western Australia are employed.

Mr. Fox: When was that said?

The Premier: During the debate on the Commonwealth Powers Bill.

Mr. DONEY: Yes. Whenever those sentiments were uttered, they amounted only to one thing, namely, that the Premier was so pleased with the industrial advancement, working conditions, etc., generally in Western Australia that he could not help boasting of them on that occasion.

The Premier: Of paying a tribute to the Government.

Mr. DONEY: That may have been so. It does not, however, do away with the fact that the Upper House passed the necessary legislation to enable this particularly satisfactory state of affairs to ensue.

The Premier: That was done by the Arbitration Court.

Mr. DONEY: It was further made possible by the passing of the necessary legislation in another place, and the acceptances of any amendments made by the Government. The Minister for Justice should be fair in his statements. He should count his blessings a little more and acknowledge his debt on occasions to another

place. I recall that he objected to an elector in Western Australia having ten votes. I also seem to recall his saying that he knew of those who had exercised ten votes.

The Minister for Justice: I said I knew of one who could do so.

Mr. DONEY: That is an entirely different thing. I thought he said he knew of a man who had exercised ten votes. I am not too sure about the position even now but, if there are such men, so far as I am concerned they can have their extra nine votes taken away. There would not be likely to be much, if any, opposition from this side of the House if the Government set out to accomplish that. I also believe, but am not sure, the Minister said he knew of Victoria Cross winners who were unable to exercise the franchise for the Upper House.

The Minister for Justice: I said it was possible for a V.C. winner to come back to Western Australia and not have a vote for the Legislative Council.

Mr. DONEY: In the circumstances, I cannot understand why the Minister should introduce the question of Victoria Cross winners, soldiers, and so on, into the argument for the purpose of bolstering up his case. That is his habit and he is not justified in doing it. I cannot believe that there could exist any Victoria Cross winner who was in such a position that he would not be paying at least the 6s. 10½d. required by way of rent to enable him to get a vote.

The Minister for Works: Can you not imagine some being single?

Mr. DONEY: Yes, quite easily. And there might be something in that objection. But so far as I am concerned—and I suppose this applies to all members in the House—I would not object to the winner of a V.C. having a vote. For that matter, any serviceman who has a decoration is entitled to a vote for the Upper House.

Mr. Thorn: They are not worrying about it.

Mr. DONEY: No, I do not suppose they are.

The Minister for Works: Most soldiers are single.

Mr. Thorn: No, they are not.

Mr. DONEY: I will come to that directly. In respect of the wives of those entitled to an Upper House vote, I would extend the franchise to them also. All these and many

other matters and many anomalies should be amply investigated and adjusted, but, although so many anomalies do exist, the Minister has satisfied himself with one poor little amendment to the Electoral Act. As to whether the minimum age should be 21 or 30, and whether we should copy the Upper House franchise in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, or Tasmania, and whether we should follow suggestions from a hundred directions—all these matters could be investigated and deliberated upon by some proper tribunal. With regard to the property qualification, we should remember that it is within the reach of every grown person, but there may be an odd exception here or there. There are those who would cut out the Legislative Council on the score that it is a carry-over from a bygone age. I look upon that idea as plain nonsense, and I do not see that it has any bearing at all on the quality or usefulness of the Council. To me, age is just as likely to be a qualification or a recommendation as a weakness, and I cannot help reflecting that the institutions of kingship, of Parliament itself, and of the Christian religion are survivals from the distant past and on one would dare to declare that they are any the less necessary to us on that account.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: They are not limited in scope. They apply to the universe.

Mr. DONEY: What?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Religion and Christian principles. This Bill applies to property.

Mr. DONEY: Of course it does. I forgot who it was, but I think it was the member for Perth, who derided quite a number of institutions because of their age. In reply, I am endeavouring to show that things do not necessarily approach uselessness because of age.

The Minister for Lands: They are not necessarily venerable, either.

Mr. DONEY: That is so.

The Minister for Works: This Bill deals with the franchise.

Mr. DONEY: I know that.

The Minister for Works: When are you going to tell us something about it?

Mr. DONEY: I think it might be proper to have a word or two with respect to the mandate that members opposite declare the Government received from the country.

This constant claim to a mandate is just a habit. Merely saying, as members opposite are prone to say, that they have a mandate does not actually give them one. I might just as insistently claim that they have no mandate. The position is that the Premier certainly did have a word or two to say about the Upper House towards the end of his policy speech, the delivery of which occupied something like an hour and a half. It was not a high-light of his speech. I do not think he pointedly featured it.

The Premier: Two lines in red ink!

Mr. DONEY: It might have been that way, but I am sure the newspapers treated it to no headlines.

The Premier: They did, as a matter of fact.

Mr. DONEY: I do not think they did.

The Premier: We will get "The West Australian."

Mr. DONEY: I have looked up the reference in the Press and to me it was a mere matter of mentioning it and passing on. I do not think the Premier can say that the people who voted for his party on that occasion did so because of the Premier's attitude towards the Upper House.

The Premier: They did not vote against us.

Mr. DONEY: No, but in order that the Premier's party might claim it has a mandate from the people in respect to any matter at all, it should have a clear and specific instruction from the people, leaving no room for the slightest doubt. The Premier's party did not get that.

The Premier: Those are the very words I used! You must have read my speech.

Mr. DONEY: That might quite easily be. The Premier cannot claim to have a mandate on any question at all unless there has been an election on that one question only. It is quite impossible to know which of the few score questions customarily dealt with by the Premier of the State happens to be the one—if there is any specific one—that influences any particular vote.

The Minister for Lands: Are you arguing that the Government would have had a greater majority if the Premier had not mentioned this matter?

Mr. DONEY: I am arguing that there is such a tangle of questions submitted to the people on the occasion of an election that it is impossible to pick out one as having

influenced the voters in any particular way. This was not a live question so far as I was personally concerned, and I should say that any Labour candidates who might have mentioned the matter during their election campaign probably did it more or less as a matter of habit. With regard to adult suffrage, I do not know that that is a panacea for all electoral ills, as members on the other side appear to believe. The Leader of the Opposition quoted Viscount Bryce. Perhaps I might do the same. Viscount Bryce said—

Would anyone suggest that the German Reichstag in 1930 was democratic merely because it was elected on a basis of adult suffrage?

I do not think anyone would say that.

Mr. Cross: We do not want to be compared with those people.

Mr. DONEY: No, but the comparison must be of some consequence otherwise so eminent a man as Viscount Bryce would not think it worth while mentioning it. Before I sit down I might refer to a certain manifestation in voting practice which, surely, everyone deplores. We all ought to, anyhow. I refer to the practice that has grown up of voting in the mass instead of the individual doing his own thinking and voting along individual lines. I am against the practice adopted by the unions while an election is in progress.

Mr. Cross: This has nothing to do with unions.

Mr. DONEY: The Speaker will quickly pull me up if I happen to transgress too far. I want to point out that a practice has grown up in the Labour Party of issuing instructions to union members as to how to vote during election time.

Mr. Cross: Are you not a paid whip for a mass party to see that the members vote correctly?

Mr. DONEY: No, I am not. When I sit down the hon. member may get up and say what he has to say in respect to that matter. This is a most deplorable practice. I am not deliberately fastening it upon this or any other Labour Government, but simply saying that there is a practice in Labour Governments and in particular among the unions, which applies right throughout the world. I am airing the matter here so that members opposite may join with me in feeling sorry that it should be so. Surely there must be something of value in the individual doing his

own thinking. That value is lost once we stop him from doing it and tell him, whenever an election is on, exactly how he must vote. Members cannot deny that if a union member votes contrary to the instruction and is found out punishment may await him.

Mr. W. Hegney: What form does the instruction take?

Mr. DONEY: That is better known to the hon. member than to me.

The Minister for Works: What is the wording of it?

Mr. DONEY: I do not know.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Williams-Narrogin must not mind interjections, but address the Chair.

Mr. DONEY: I heard an interjection—

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must address the Chair and take no notice of interjections.

Mr. DONEY: —to the effect that I am against unionism. Whoever made that interjection knows nothing about my feelings in this regard.

Mr. SPEAKER: We shall not deal with unionism.

Mr. DONEY: This subject has been referred to frequently in the course of the debate. I certainly have no objections to unionism. As a matter of fact I think it is one of the finest manifestations of the independence of bodies of people that has occurred during the last 70 or 80 years. It has the merit of being fair, and anything of this kind that is fair has my blessing. The time was when the labouring man was away down in the gutter. But when these three or four men, whom I mentioned a little while ago, conceived the idea of forming themselves into a union they did a very wise and desirable thing because they lifted themselves to a plane where they were able to argue the point on even terms with the boss.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We must get back to the Bill now.

Mr. DONEY: I have no reason for objecting to the existence of unionism—indeed, quite to the contrary—or to its rights and privileges when exercised along reasonable lines.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore): Mr. Speaker—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is too much noise.

Mr. BERRY: I am interrupted before I start. I imagine that is a record. I am actually in favour of this Bill, but it contains some anomalies I would like to see corrected. I regard this measure as, perhaps, the first shot in the skirmish to abolish the Upper House. Whether it should be abolished or not is not, at this precise moment, a question that is going to be dealt with by me. I think that universal suffrage should be given in connection with the Legislative Council as is asked for in the Bill. I think, too, that the voting should be compulsory. We have had masses of figures put up here showing that as far as the Council elections are concerned the people have shown a definite apathy. The member for Bunbury quoted one or two instances of percentages in the vicinity of 20 to 25 per cent. I recently went through these figures, and I had been through them previously, and arrived at the conclusion that approximately 50 per cent. may be an average for the Council election. But 50 per cent. shows a very small interest indeed in a Chamber of this sort, and so I favour compulsion. I was under the impression that it was compulsory to enrol for the Legislative Council, but I do not think that even this is so.

Members: No.

Mr. BERRY: It is not so. Apart from that I think there is a definite need for reformation in our Parliamentary system. This Bill evidences a certain amount of cheek in endeavouring to drag the mote out of the other fellow's eye without seeing the mote in its own. I was not present when the member for Nedlands spoke on this matter, but I have read his remarks and he said that seven members in this Assembly represent 11,000 voters. I know that to be the case because Mr. T. J. Hughes, when he was the member for East Perth, constantly referred to that fact. He made it very clear that that was a strange form of democracy. It seems to me, in regard to powers being whittled away from State Parliaments almost as an annual occurrence by the Commonwealth Government, that we are very much overstaffed both in the Upper House and in this Chamber. Each Country member of the Assembly has approximately 4,000 electors to care for. Such a member could possibly care for a great many more. In addition no less than three members are elected to the Upper

House to help in the care of those 4,000 people. That means, from an actual representative point of view, that we have one member for every 1,000 people in country districts of Western Australia. That, in my opinion, is a most expensive luxury. Why should we not alter that position?

The Premier: Your figures are not correct.

Mr. BERRY: At any rate, the figures do not make much difference. With the Legislative Council there would be four members for about 5,000 electors.

Mr. Marshall: What about the balance of the provinces?

Mr. BERRY: They would overlap. The same position would occur in the other electorates and provinces.

Mr. Leslie: There are other electors to be represented too.

Mr. BERRY: But that makes no difference.

The Premier: There are 80 members in both Houses and there are 480,000 people, which gives an average of 6,000 electors per member.

Mr. BERRY: That would be right; even so, the figure is extravagant. The point I am making is that, politically speaking, we are carrying too big a political population for the State, and as our powers are being whittled away the people are waking up to the fact. I have asked some members of Parliament why there is the necessity for three members representing each province. The answer I was given was that it was necessary for the sake of continuity. But the same necessity for continuity applies in this Chamber where we have a parliamentary life of three years—it should be five years. We have the same continuity. I was told on another occasion that perhaps some new political theme might invade the minds of the people and it would be bad if one member were elected to represent a province because he would bring back to the Council Chamber the new political theme. Even so, what is democracy for?

It is essential that we should go deeply into the question of electoral reform. Just to dispense with the Upper House willy-nilly would be wrong. The fact that a man has paid a few pounds to buy a property and is therefore said to have a stake in the country, furnishes no reason in itself why he alone should have a vote for the Upper House. It is not sufficient merely to say

that there is no reason why the man who has that stake in the country should have a vote, and the individual on the Esplanade who has only the stake against which he leans should not have one. However, I am not quarrelling about that. The Bill proposes to extend to both types equal franchise privileges. Nor do I quarrel about what has been said regarding the soldiers. I think the raising of the soldier aspect is a lot of silly hooey. When those men return from the war they will fit themselves into the scheme of things. The story that the Minister told about the V.C. winner was altogether peurile.

Mr. Fox: There will be thousands of soldiers who will not have a vote when they return—and you know it.

Mr. BERRY: And I am supporting the hon. member's Bill—and he knows it.

Mr. Fox: Munition workers come into the question too.

Mr. BERRY: Exactly. If we are to adopt a policy of adult franchise for the Legislative Council, why pick out the soldier in order to blaze the political track we want to traverse?

Mr. Fox: That was merely mentioned because the men had helped to save us from the Japanese and so on and had been refused a vote.

Mr. BERRY: What I am objecting to is the use of the soldier's name in all sorts of ways. The soldier is a very good man, and when he returns he will have rights equal to those enjoyed by everyone else under the provisions of the Bill. I object strongly to holding up the soldier constantly as the individual who should make us do this in order to blazen a desired political trail for others. I object to it strenuously. To return to my references to representation and the average number of electors per member, I regret that my calculations were not quite correct, and I am glad that the Premier put me right. The fact remains that we have too many members. I would like a reform instituted whereby there would be one member in the Legislative Council for each province. The member for Williams-Narrogin said something about "living in the lace age." I point out that in regard to our political institution we are still in the lace age, for we are constantly turning to a dear old darling named "May," who lived years ago,

in order that he may tell us what we should do in this year of grace, 1944.

In my opinion, we should have less representation in the Legislative Assembly and in the Legislative Council and we could then give the people greater service. It behoves us very definitely to render better service to the people—if we wish to retain the State Parliament. At present our stocks are indeed low. So long as we clutter up with our numbers an institution that the people regard as expensive—I do not; I think we are underpaid—and so long as we cumber it up with so many politicians, just so long will we not have the support of the electors generally. While I believe there should be fewer Assembly and Council members, I also believe that in the Federal sphere we have far too few members. Under existing conditions one member of the Federal Legislature tries to represent an average of 60,000 electors, and that is an absurdity. We should certainly have fewer members in the State Parliament and more members in the Commonwealth Parliament. Then, if our Federal members did not consider it *infra dig.* to collaborate with State members, quite a lot could be done in the interests of the people.

I have given considerable thought to the claim that the Government received a mandate from the people to bring in this legislation. If the Government considers it has a mandate from the people by virtue of the large majority it received at the recent elections, surely the Commonwealth Government, after the huge majority it got, could have claimed that it had a mandate to bring in legislation for the transfer of powers without the need for a referendum! Notwithstanding the large majority of the Commonwealth Government, the people of Australia said "No" to its request. I should like to see the straight-out question referred to the people, "Do you want an Upper House?" or "Do you not want an Upper House?" However, I am afraid that if we inflicted another referendum on the people at this stage, they would probably feel very angry. There is a measure of merit in the suggestion by the member for West Perth that an inquiry should be made into the whole matter. I would welcome such an inquiry, provided it were made with a view to having lesser representation in each of the two Houses.

I am afraid that if we merely provide for adult suffrage without reforming the Upper House, we might merely make the Council a replica of this House. If that were done, it would be a tragedy, because we would merely be adding to the expense and giving the people a further instalment of the appalling duplication found in so many departments that have sprung up during the war. I would be strongly against any reform that would merely make another place a duplication of this House. It might be argued that this Bill was brought down, not with an idea of making the Council a duplication of this House or for party interests, but with the object of abolishing the Upper House. Human nature being what it is, I suggest that a strange predicament would be created if a whole lot of Labour members were added to the Council with a view to voting it out of existence. I believe they would take many months to do anything along those lines.

Mr. Seward: They refused to do it in New South Wales.

The Premier: But what happened in Queensland?

Mr. BERRY: Human nature might be a little different there. This Bill has been extensively debated by the various speakers and there remains little for me to add. I propose to support the second reading.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet): It is not my intention to delay the House at any great length, but I would not like a Bill of this sort to go through with my casting merely a silent vote upon it. I have listened with great interest to every speaker on the subject, and I am bound to say that I could not imagine a speech of more substance or more force or one revealing greater ability than that delivered by the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe. Having listened to all that has been said, I am satisfied that his speech contained the meat and substance. He did not deal with the statements of other people; he dealt with the merits or demerits of the Bill. I have noticed that subsequent speakers have shown a tendency to deal rather with what somebody has said regarding a mandate to the Government to bring in the Bill.

I cannot understand why there should be any opposition to a measure of this sort from people who claim to be democratic. I believe that quite a number of members on

the opposite side of the House are just as democratic as are those on this side, but it is remarkable that whenever a question of property crops up, they immediately swerve from their democratic ideas. I am surprised that members opposite do not show the quality of democracy that they claim they believe in. This is definitely a democratic measure. It provides that the people shall have a right to vote for the representation in the Legislative Council. Yet men who claim to be democratic say, "No; it must be a property qualification." Anyone who adopts that attitude, in my opinion, ought not to claim to be a democrat. I heard the member for Williams-Narrogin make the statement that in his opinion the only people entitled to a vote for the Upper House are those who have a stake in the country.

Mr. Doney: No.

Mr. TRIAT: I took a note of it; it was a definite statement.

Mr. Doney: I did not say that.

Mr. TRIAT: That was the meaning of the hon. member's words.

Mr. Doney: No, that is not right.

Mr. TRIAT: Then the hon. member should refer to the report in "Hansard."

Mr. Doney: I said it was easy for any adult to obtain the wherewithal to entitle him to a vote for the Upper House.

Mr. TRIAT: I maintain that the right of a mother to a vote for the Council is greater than that of an individual who merely has a stake in the country. The hon. member does not assert that a mother should have the right to a vote.

Mr. Doney: There are many things I would give that are not included in the Bill.

Mr. TRIAT: All we are asking is that decent people shall have the right to a vote for the Council. There are some people who have probably no right to a vote at any time; generally those people are behind prison bars and cannot vote. Decent people, however, have a right to the vote, and the only way to bring about reform is by insisting upon a democratic vote for the people.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. TRIAT: During the speech of the member for Williams-Narrogin it appeared as if the Labour Party desired, by this Bill, to effect the abolition of the Legislative Council. I see in the Bill nothing having

reference to that aspect. The abolition, if such a thing is to take place, will require the consent of the Council; so I do not think there is much danger in that respect. The Council is not likely to abolish itself. The Bill makes no proposal whatever for abolition, but merely to extend the franchise of the Upper House. The member for West Perth definitely stated that the present Government had no mandate from the people. It seemed, from the figures that hon. member presented to the House, that no such desire existed. The hon. member's figures, however, struck me as peculiar and incorrect. The total number of electors in Western Australia, I ascertained from the authentic figures, who voted at the last general election was 212,736, in addition to 62,480 electors in uncontested seats. Therefore the seats accounted in all for 274,856 voters. In favour of Labour 87,124 votes were cast, and 92,109 for anti-Labour. On those votes there is a clear majority for anti-Labour. However, we must not forget that 11 Labour seats were uncontested, as also was one National seat. The uncontested National seat had a roll of 5,001 electors. Including that number there was a total of 97,110 anti-Labour electors. However, taking the actual majority gained in the 11 Labour seats at the 1939 election, the Labour majority was 10,607.

Labour's votes at last year's general election totalled 97,731, giving us an absolute majority. Any question as to Labour having received a sufficient majority on this occasion is totally wrong. The votes cast at the last general election, therefore, gave Labour a definite majority, sufficient to amount to a mandate. Comparing the voting strength of both Houses in 1940, the total number of electors for the Legislative Council was 86,343. Of these, 62,745 were males and 23,598 were females. As regards the Legislative Assembly, the females numbered 127,747, and thus there is a large difference between the figures of female electors for the two Houses. The 1944 figures show a slight decrease—56,029 males and 23,868 females. It will be seen, therefore, that approximately 104,000 females are disfranchised from voting for the Legislative Council, as against those having the right to vote for the Legislative Assembly. It is to be borne in mind, too, that in country districts children form the greater part of

the population. If anyone should have the right to vote, it is the married woman with a family. Strange to say, the year 1944 could be described as undemocratic in comparison with the years of half a century previous! When the Legislative Council franchise was first framed, much discussion arose as to qualification for Upper House electors. Half a century ago many people were strongly in favour of a reasonable franchise. True, manhood suffrage did not operate in Western Australia, but there was great anxiety shown for its adoption. I think it right to quote from "Hansard" of many years ago to show this. I wish to read an extract from the "Hansard" of 1888—56 years ago—on page 198—

With regard to the qualification of those who should elect the representatives of the people, my own view is in favour of manhood suffrage The reason I suggest manhood suffrage here is that there are many men, miners and others, in this colony who, though not householders, are yet entitled to representation. There are also lodgers. There are many men, for instance, up at Jarrahdale—about 200, I believe—living in small tenements, paying nominal or perhaps no rent at all, being workmen on the company's estate. Why should not these people have a vote?

Member: From what are you quoting?

Mr. TRIAT: The Parliamentary Debates.

Member: Who was the speaker?

Mr. TRIAT: Mr. Hensman, the member for Greenough. The debates continue—

With regard to the qualification of electors, then, I think we should adopt—as I believe has been done in nearly every one of the other colonies, as regards their Lower Houses—manhood suffrage.

Here we have a member of Parliament stating that he would extend the franchise for the Upper House to men living on estates at Jarrahdale—200 of them. That was 56 years ago. I heard the same thing quoted tonight. I shall make a further quotation from Mr. Hensman's remarks at page 201—

Sir, I pass away now to another point in this bill—the property qualification of members; and I hope that here, too, the people will insist upon doing away with the property qualification. There is no property qualification of members in England and why should there be here? How does the possession of property if a man is otherwise fit for a representative make him any better, or how does the non-possession of it make him any worse, intellectually or morally? It is a mere accident or incident attaching to the man. If a

man is a worthy man, how do you make him more worthy by providing that he should possess £500 or £1,000?

Mr. Holman: How many were paying rent at Jarrahdale?

Mr. TRIAT: I do not know.

Mr. Watts: Who was that good man?

Mr. TRIAT: Mr. Hensman.

The Premier: He was afterwards a judge.

Mr. TRIAT: In the same volume from which I have already quoted, Mr. Randell, at page 216, said—

With regard to the question of the franchise, I think that in this colony household suffrage is almost equivalent to manhood suffrage; it embraces every man that is really worthy of a vote, and I should be opposed to a lowering of the franchise in that direction. But while I would not be willing to lower the franchise I would be willing to broaden, in the direction of giving lodgers a vote.

This member would give lodgers a vote, persons who do not rent a house but who must have somewhere to live. The report continues—

But I think the question will have to be very carefully considered by this House, because there are dangers lurking behind the admission of lodgers into the franchise, dangers which we shall have to face, and be careful that we do not open the door so wide as to admit persons to the enjoyment of the franchise who cannot by any possibility have any interest in the welfare and progress of the colony.

As long as they had such an interest, Mr. Randell was of opinion they were entitled to a vote. He closes by saying—

They may safely in England abolish everything in the shape of property qualification for members, and still have some safeguard that the privilege will not be abused, because we know that the expenses of a contested election in England are so great that no poor man, at any rate, or a man of no substance—unless his expenses were subscribed by his constituents—could possibly hope to enter the House of Commons.

All he wanted, as far as he was concerned, was to prevent poor men from fighting an election. He did not want a poor man to be in Parliament. In 1889, when the Bill was being debated, Mr. Loton, the member for Greenough, had this to say—I quote from Parliamentary Debates, 1889, at page 46—

But I do think the franchise might fairly be extended to certain classes of lodgers, unmarried men who have no homes of their own, but who reside in lodgings, or on their employers' premises, and obtain board and lodging as part of their wages, such men as shepherds, ploughmen, and others living in the

country districts, who are thoroughly entitled to vote, both by their intelligence and otherwise. Beyond this, I don't think I should be inclined to go in the direction of extending the franchise further than this Bill proposes.

Mr. Loton, 56 years ago, was prepared to extend the franchise to lodgers and unmarried men who had no homes of their own. There was no hesitation on the part of that gentleman.

Mr. Watts: The vote was then worth something.

Mr. TRIAT: It is worth something now. It is worth more in this democratic age than it was 56 years ago.

Mr. Watts: People have to be compelled to vote nowadays.

Mr. TRIAT: Politicians were not afraid of Labour in those days, because there was then no Labour Party. I shall make one further quotation from the Parliamentary Debates of 1889, at page 223. It deals with the question of property qualification, and is as follows:—

(b) As a lodger, a room or rooms or lodgings of the clear annual rental, unfurnished, of Ten Pounds sterling.

That was one of the suggestions in the Bill which was considered 56 years ago and which was defeated. Mr. Randell submitted a motion which defeated it. Yet that was the attitude adopted by those legislators 56 years ago! We have at present a £50 property qualification or a clear annual rental of £17. Surely we have progressed in 56 years beyond that stage. Our people are reasonably educated and are possessed of sufficient intelligence to record a vote, yet many are disfranchised so far as the Council is concerned. I pointed out a few minutes ago that only 23,000 women out of 127,000 in Western Australia have the right to vote for the Council. Very few women have a vote for the Council; men have the majority of the votes. The member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe pointed out that it mattered not how a man came by property; so long as he held property he had the right to vote for the Council. A man may, he said, have £50,000 or £60,000 invested in war bonds and may live in an hotel; such a man could not vote for the Council. If he owned a shack or leased property the annual rental value of which was £17, he had a sufficient stake in the country to be given a vote for the Council, as my friends opposite have said. I sincerely believe that members opposite think

the franchise should be extended in the way suggested in this measure. I really believe that in my heart and soul. If members will peruse "Hansard" they will find that that is the attitude of members opposite towards the franchise for the Upper House.

Member: Did you hear any one of them say he would vote for the Bill?

Mr. TRIAT: I repeat that I honestly believe that is their attitude to the measure. I do not think there will be any heat over the matter.

Mr. Doney: We agree that there should be a more liberal franchise in certain directions.

Mr. TRIAT: We are putting up a proposition to the other side of the House and I ask those members to vote for it. We are not asking for the abolition of the Council; that may come later, but only at the wish and with the sanction of the Council itself. I support the second reading and sincerely hope the measure will pass.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall): I do not propose to detain the House at any length, but I feel I should say something on this measure. I particularly wish to remind members that the member for Katanning, when speaking to the Bill, told the House that, as nothing was provided in the platform of the Country and Democratic League with respect to the Legislative Council, members on this side of the House could decide the matter for themselves. It has therefore come rather as a surprise to me, in listening to the debate, to find on the opposite side of the House an anticipation of antagonism. I rather deplore that fact because I honestly cannot see where this side of the House has given any indication of such antagonism. Another matter upon which I wish to touch in order to make my own position clear is the question of a mandate of which we have heard so much during the debate. Let us follow that up to a logical conclusion. In the course of my election campaign, no question concerning the Upper House was raised by or to me in any way whatsoever. I confess I do not know whether it was raised by my Labour opponent. If it were, members opposite, on their own argument, must concede that in view of the result of the election I was directed to vote against this measure. That is a logical argument.

The Premier: You need not bother!

Mr. LESLIE: I contend, however, that in view of the fact that I did not, during my campaign, touch upon the position of the Upper House in any way, the electors have not directed me on an important matter such as this as to what they desire me to do. Therefore my intention is to support the second reading of the Bill, and also to support the proposal that the matter should be referred to the electors for their decision by referendum. I submit that in putting that forward as my opinion, I am merely following out to its logical conclusion the case which the other side of the House has submitted. I repeat that I mention that in order to make my own position perfectly clear and I feel that that would apply similarly to other members on this side of the House. I wish to associate myself with the remarks of the member for Irwin-Moore with regard to references made to votes for returned soldiers. I desire to thank the member for Perth for his references to what he described as my feeling appeal on behalf of soldiers in connection with another matter before the House. At the same time, I deplore the fact that the future interests of returned soldiers are being made a political plaything in other directions. We had some evidence of that not too long ago, and the less I say about that campaign the better, because I might say too much. I do, however, suggest that if members on both sides of the House are so concerned for the future of our returned soldiers who have done so much for them—

Mr. Fox: We are concerned for the future of all workers.

Mr. LESLIE: So am I, and so are my colleagues on this side of the House. But this matter of returned soldiers has been mentioned so often that I feel it is incumbent upon me to remind members that the question of securing for soldiers a vote for the Upper House is not all-important. As an appeal has been made to me to support this measure in the interests of returned soldiers I might suggest that I hope the concern that members on the other side of the House have expressed on behalf of returned soldiers will be indicated when the question of preference to returned men comes forward.

Mr. Needham: You need not worry about that.

Mr. LESLIE: That is a far more vital point than the question of providing them with a vote for the Upper House. I earnestly submit to members opposite that their own expressions of concern for the welfare of returned men could better be expressed along lines more tangible than asking the House to give soldiers a vote for another place. Whatever shape this Bill takes before becoming an Act, following a referendum of the people—if the Government sees fit to agree to that—I hope the constitution of the other place—the abolition of which the Ministry is not at present considering—will be such that, irrespective of what party may be in power, it will not become a mere echo of this place. That is most important. I propose to support the second reading of the Bill and, as the members on the other side of the House have firmly convinced me of the importance of the mandate, I must go further and support the proposal that the matter be referred to the electors by way of a referendum.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

To Refer to Select Committee.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): I move—

That the Bill be referred to a Select Committee.

I discussed this matter in the course of my remarks on the second reading and continue to ask the House to refer this measure to a Select Committee. It is quite clear that every member of the House is in favour of a review of our Constitution. I do not think there is a single member who does not feel that a review would be timely and in the interests of the people. What is at issue is that many of us think very strongly that the Constitution should be reviewed, not only as it affects the Legislative Council, but also as it affects the Legislative Assembly. That is to say, if we are going to deal with the Constitution, it should be the Constitution of the whole Parliament of Western Australia.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is not in this Bill, of course.

Mr. McDONALD: No, but while we feel that a constitutional revision is proper, the difference is that many of us believe that the revision should extend to the constitution of the whole Parliament, of both Houses and all aspects which may bear on the working of our Constitution. In addition, there are those of us who feel that a Bill of this kind should be referred to a Select Committee. I shall give one or two vital reasons why this should be done. There should be, if there are not, certain accepted conventions in dealings between the two Houses of the one Legislature. I would say that we in this House would feel that the Legislative Council was going rather beyond its province if it sought to amend the constitution of the Assembly without any reference to the Assembly or the views of the Assembly. I should think that a Bill brought down in the Legislative Council to reduce the number of members in the Legislative Assembly is something to which we would legitimately be entitled to take exception. And we might well say that before the Legislative Council introduced and passed measures to reduce the number of members in the Legislative Council, or otherwise alter the constitutional basis of our House, it should first provide some means of consultation between the two Houses to enable the House affected to express its views. That seems to me an obvious arrangement that should be followed in relation to constitutional matters between the two Houses of the Legislature. We, although I suggest there would be strong protests if the Legislative Council sought to affect radically the constitutional basis of the Assembly, propose to affect radically the constitutional basis of the Legislative Council without any reference to it.

The Premier: We ask the Council to agree to this Bill.

Mr. McDONALD: Yes, but before the Bill goes forward, the least we should do is to invite the Legislative Council, by some convenient means, to place its views before this Assembly. This side of the House has, for some time past, shown an interest in constitutional reform. The previous member for East Perth sought to make provision for resolving conflicts between the two Houses in favour of the view of the Assembly prevailing. I remember that three or four years ago the member for Nedlands

gave notice of a Bill to amend the districts in the Electoral Act with a view to making provision to overcome certain anomalies in the representation in this House of the people. But the member for Nedlands, although he felt that constitutional change demanded consideration by Parliament, did not proceed with the Bill because it was wartime and there was an agreement, honoured on the whole in this House, that controversial matters should not occupy the time of the House during the war period. So the hon. member, like the former member for East Perth and others on this side of the House, has had the matter of constitutional reform in view for many years past.

Now, although the war continues, the Government has introduced this measure. I do not propose, on the ground that it is still wartime, to suggest that it should be postponed for controversial reasons. Nor do I intend to traverse the various arguments that have been fully discussed before the House beyond saying that this is a measure, as the member for Nedlands pointed out, of very far-reaching importance and, unlike any other Constitution that I know of, it proposes to set up two popular Chambers based on the same franchise and having equal powers. When that takes place, quite apart from many other factors involved, I do not know what the position will be if the popular Chamber in the Legislative Council passes a Bill to abolish the Legislative Assembly, and it would be just as much entitled to do so as would the Legislative Assembly to introduce a Bill to abolish the Legislative Council, because they would both be popular Chambers and could both claim to represent the people, as a whole, equally. I impress this upon the House, and I do so more particularly when I recall the position which arose before the Parliament Act was passed in Great Britain.

When the controversy or discussion was taking place between the House of Lords and the House of Commons in Great Britain prior to 1911, Mr. Asquith, the then Prime Minister in the House that was pressing for the removal of the right of veto by the House of Lords, took this course: He set up a committee of eight, drawn from the leading men in the House of Lords and in the House of Commons. This committee held 21 conferences. It was accepted by members of both Houses that, in a matter of this kind

affecting the senior Chamber there, namely, the House of Lords, the proper course before introducing the Bill into the House of Commons was to have an exchange of views between the representatives of the two Houses, and that the House to be affected should have an opportunity of placing its views before the leaders of the House of Commons. Some 21 conferences were held on this subject of reforms between the two Houses. In the end they were not able to arrive at a basis of agreement, and the Parliament Bill proceeded. It was passed through the House of Commons and accepted by the House of Lords. One of the late editions of "May's Constitutional History of England" makes this reference to it—

Thus ended, to the general regret, though to the unconcealed satisfaction of the Irish Nationalists and of the left wing of the Radical party an interesting constitutional experiment. It is a grave defect in the party system that in times of crisis the first statesmen of the country should be found in conflict with one another instead of labouring together for the common good, and this is especially to be regretted when the question at issue concerns the constitution, since the constitution depends for its smooth working on a general acceptance.

A Constitution does, as May points out, beyond almost any other law depend for its smooth working upon its general acceptance by and satisfaction to the people. That does not mean merely the majority of the people. It is highly desirable that the acceptance should extend as far as possible to the great bulk of the people. If, therefore, some means can be found to devise a constitutional basis that will meet with more or less general acceptance, then an ideal has been attained which is well worth seeking. So, my motion is based upon what I feel should, on matters of constitutional alteration, be a recognition of the right attitude between two Houses in the same Legislature. The same provision and the same approach should be exercised by the Legislative Council towards this House as I now propose should be exercised by this House towards the Legislative Council. It is not, as I said before, a matter of opposing the reform, but of achieving the right reform that will meet with general acceptance. It is a matter of avoiding a type of bi-cameral system which, as far as I can learn, would be something quite new and which might result in the mere duplication of the two Houses

on a basis that would not be justified. So I put my proposal to the House.

Question put and negatived.

In Committee.

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

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE PREMIER: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Bill to be passed through its remaining stage at this sitting.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: Having counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present, and there being no dissentient voice, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE [8.17]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): We have now arrived at the stage with the Bill when some reconsideration is necessary as to what course I think—again speaking for myself—should be taken with regard to its further progress. I endeavoured to make myself perfectly clear when I spoke on the second reading I said I would support that reading upon one condition as to the further progress of the measure after the second reading had been agreed to. That condition was that the Government should be prepared to submit the measure to a referendum of the people of this State, to be passed by a majority of those qualified to vote for the Legislative Assembly. I said later on in the course of my speech—

So for the purposes of the present I shall support the second reading. My future action in the matter will depend on what happens subsequent to the second reading.

What has happened subsequent to the second reading? There has been no attempt whatever by the Government or by any member sitting on the ministerial seats of the House to amend the Bill so that it can be submitted to the electors qualified to vote for the Legislative Assembly in order that the Government

may, as I think it right the Government should, secure, if Ministers can obtain it, a mandate from a majority of those electors. Whatever may be the correct view regarding the figures that have been submitted to the House by the member for West Perth, the member for Mt. Magnet and others, there is nothing very clear to be gained from them with respect to the question of a mandate. One member arrives at one conclusion on the figures, and another member arrives at an entirely different conclusion on the self-same figures.

It is impossible for me to adjudicate between the two sets of conclusions. The only way that this matter can be settled to my satisfaction—as I indicated when I expressed my views on the second reading in the clearest possible form—is for the Government to take action to submit the question to a referendum of the people of the State qualified to vote for the Legislative Assembly. That has not been done. I am not able to do it. I cannot submit an amendment to the Bill that would provide for the taking of a referendum because, of course, it would involve an appropriation of revenue for the purposes of taking that referendum and you, Mr. Speaker, know what you would have ruled had I so moved. In the circumstances I am reduced to this position: I made a perfectly clear and frank offer to allow the matter to be submitted to the electors so that the Government could obtain their mandate in the clearest possible terms, and in the event of its securing that mandate to offer no exception to that mandate. My offer has been entirely ignored, so I can do nothing now but vote against the third reading.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	26
Noes	..	..	..	15
				—
Majority for	..	..	..	11
				—

AYES.

Mr. Collier	Mr. Millington
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Needham
Mr. Cross	Mr. Nuisen
Mr. Fox	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Graham	Mr. Sheara
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Smith
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Telfer
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Triat
Mr. Holman	Mr. Wilcock
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Wise
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Withers
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Owen
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Seward
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Mann	Mr. Watts
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Willmott
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Doney
Mr. North	

(Teller.)

Mr. SPEAKE : As there is an absolute majority voting with the "Ayes," I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th September.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [8.22]: This Bill, as the Minister said, is really consequential to the measure we have just been considering. Its object is to place in the Electoral Act certain provisions affecting the qualifications of electors of the Legislative Council that now appear in the Constitution Act. I submit that we have no right to proceed with this Bill at the present time. We are asked to take certain sections out of the Constitution for the purpose of inserting some provisions—we do not know what—in the Electoral Act.

The Premier: They have been put in so far as this House is concerned by the Bill just passed.

Mr. SEWARD: But the Bill just passed might not be agreed to by the other House. If that happened, we would be in the position of having taken something out of the Constitution Act without knowing what was to be put in the Electoral Act. We ought to wait until the fate of the electoral Bill has been decided in another place. When that measure has been passed by another place it will be time enough to proceed with this Bill. I do not feel inclined to support a Bill to take certain provisions out of the Constitution Act unless I know exactly what is going to be put into the Electoral Act. The matter should be held over for the time being.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (in reply): This is a small Bill, as I explained previously, consequential on the passing of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill. It is a matter of taking Sections 15, 16 and 17

out of the Constitution Act and putting them in the Electoral Act. This is what was done in 1907 as regards the qualifications of electors of the Assembly, and will merely bring the qualifications of electors of the Legislative Council into conformity. If the Electoral Act Amendment Bill does not pass another place, this measure will automatically lapse. There need be no fear on that score. If the Electoral Act Amendment Bill is passed by the Council, this measure will take effect.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: Having counted the House I declare the question duly passed by an absolute majority.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Repeal of various sections of principal Act:

Mr. WATTS: This is the clause that proposes to take Sections 15, 16 and 17 out of the Constitution Act. Those sections provide for the qualification of electors of members of the Legislative Council. It seems to me that there is substantial risk in presenting this Bill so close on the heels of the other. The proper time to proceed with this Bill is when we know the fate of the other. I mentioned on the second reading of the Electoral Act Amendment Bill that I was rather perplexed as to what the constitutional position would be in the event of another place rejecting that Bill and passing this measure. There would then be no provision in the Constitution Act or the Electoral Act for the qualification of electors of the Legislative Council, and we would find ourselves in the position of there being no-one to elect the Legislative Council. I do not know that the Minister has given attention to that aspect of the matter. For that reason, and for others, I consider it rather undue haste to proceed with this Bill immediately after the other. I suggest that progress be reported on this measure in order that we may see what progress is made with the other one by the Council.

The PREMIER: There is nothing unusual about two Bills having the same object going through Parliament at the same

time. We have to deal with the Constitution by a Bill dealing with the Constitution Act. No doubt the whole thing could have been done by inserting the two clauses of this Bill in the Electoral Act Amendment Bill. However, there is a well-established precedent for not allowing the Constitution Act to be amended in that way. The Government has no great objection to the present Bill being held over for some time if we can be assured that the Legislative Council will deal expeditiously with the other Bill; but the practice of the Council has been to postpone Bills of this nature time after time and, when the second Bill comes along to say, "We have not time to consider this measure." Therefore the Government's desire is to give the Council ample time to consider both Bills. In my opinion the Council would not pass one Bill and refuse to pass the consequential Bill, seeing that its members agree to both measures when agreeing to the principle contained in the first Bill. We cannot amend the Constitution Act by amending another Act. The Government has been often accused of bringing down important legislation in the last days of the session, but this time we have brought it forward in the earlier stage of the session so that the Council might have no opportunity to make excuses about the legislation being brought down too late. I see no reason why this Bill should not go to the Upper House simultaneously with the other measure.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE PREMIER: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as to enable the third reading of the Bill to be passed at this sitting.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: Having counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present, and there being no dissentient voice, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Third Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE [8.38]:

I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

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

Ayes	26
Noes	13
Majority for	13

AYES.

Mr. Collier	Mr. Millington
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Needham
Mr. Cross	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Fox	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Graham	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Smith
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Telfer
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Triat
Mr. Holman	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Wise
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Withers
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Owen
Mr. Doney	Mr. Seward
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Watts
Mr. Mann	Mr. Willmott
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Perkins
Mr. North	

(Teller.)

Mr. SPEAKER: As there is an absolute majority voting for the "Ayes," I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

MOTION—SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

As to Commonwealth Policy.

Debate resumed from the 6th September on the following motion by Mr. Thorn:—

That Parliament views with deep concern the failure of the Commonwealth Government to announce some definite policy in respect to soldier land settlement and what financial assistance will be available to assist ex-members of the Forces who desire to take up primary production. This apparent lack of policy is bringing hardship to many West Australian ex-servicemen and it is also against the best interests of Western Australia where there is so much suitable land available at moderate prices.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS [8.41]:

I regret I was not present when the member for Toodyay submitted his motion, but I have had an opportunity to peruse the report of the speeches made by members on the opposite side of the House. I am quite sure that the activities and actions of the Commonwealth Government since the motion was submitted furnish an opportunity at this stage to debate this subject, as it would be inadvisable for the House to carry a motion with no prospect of some effectual

action being taken. The motion is, in a way, a censure of the Commonwealth Government for not having taken action previously in announcing some definite policy to deal with the question of soldier land settlement. The motion also suggests that ex-servicemen are suffering hardship because of that lack of policy. At the time the motion was submitted, this subject had had considerable attention by the Commonwealth Government. For many months officers of the Treasury Department of the Commonwealth have been formulating plans, which they have since submitted to appropriate people for consideration. After much amendment and much discussion, plans were submitted by the Commonwealth to the Premiers of the various States and a conference of officers of all the States was called to discuss the principles of the Commonwealth proposals.

Mr. Leslie: To whom were they submitted in the first instance?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Commonwealth plans were formulated by officers of various departments and I know that one authority consulted was the Rural Reconstruction Commission. That Commission, I understand, gave to those officers certain advice on the practicability or otherwise of the proposals. There has not been very much publicity given to the principles being advocated by the Commonwealth; but much publicity has been given to certain defined principles which were outlined by the Prime Minister and which were part of a communication sent by him to the Premiers of the various States. The proposals of the Commonwealth, according to the Prime Minister's written and published statements, are based on certain essential principles, as follows:—

(1) That land settlement of servicemen should be undertaken only where economic prospects for the production concerned are reasonably sound; the number to be settled should be determined by settlement opportunities rather than the number of applicants.

(2) That servicemen should not be assisted to become settlers unless a competent authority is satisfied as to their suitability, qualifications and experience.

(3) That settlers should be allotted sufficient land to enable them to farm efficiently, and to earn a reasonable labour income.

(4) That lack of capital should not preclude a serviceman, otherwise suitable, from settlement.

(5) That all settlement financially assisted by the Commonwealth should be on a leasehold basis with option to purchase.

(6) That adequate guidance and technical advice should be available to settlers through agricultural extension services.

Those are the essential principles which the Commonwealth submitted to the Premiers for argument prior to the Premiers being requested to adopt any further proposals involving either a division of responsibility financially as between the Commonwealth and the States or involving the development of a plan and the responsibility attaching to the adoption of such a plan. This question should be approached first not so much on the basis as to whether land settlement is a good thing or whether it is the best avenue through which to absorb ex-servicemen, but rather on the basis of whether the responsibilities, financially, of repatriation in the case of land settlement programmes or plans should be, as are all other financial responsibilities associated with repatriation, the responsibility of the Commonwealth. That, so far as the State Governments are concerned, is a fundamental to be very quickly decided.

It has been widely advertised and readily acknowledged that the responsibilities attaching to repatriation are the responsibility of the Commonwealth, which has never endeavoured to avoid them so far as concerns the training of soldiers for professions or for vocations which require supplementary capital at a later stage. But it is a fact on this occasion that, I think inspired by Commonwealth Treasury officials, there is a desire that at least a portion—if not a substantial portion—of the cost shall be the responsibility of the States. If that point can be decided, the whole subject could then be approached in a national way; but until it is, until there is that confidence between Commonwealth and States that should exist in a matter such as this, there will not be that ready collaboration and co-operation which are so necessary and which, in a subject such as this, I think should be also a fundamental.

Mr. Leslie: Was that the chief bone of contention?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not intend at any stage during the course of my remarks to disclose anything which took place at the Premiers' Conference and has not been voluntarily published by the Commonwealth

Government. That conference stands adjourned. On resumption, it may decide that the Press be admitted. If so, all of the former decisions and discussions will certainly have some reiteration and will thereby obtain some publicity. I am quite sure that as the Commonwealth has acknowledged its responsibility for the training of ex-servicemen as doctors and for other professions and for the establishing of men in business, it has the same sort of responsibility if repatriation is to include the placing of returned soldiers on the land. But, in spite of the popular belief in some quarters that land settlement offers the best opportunity for the repatriation of ex-servicemen, I will try to show just how hazardous an undertaking is the endeavour to promote land settlement for ex-servicemen; and also that, in addition to the hazards of the initial establishment and development, there is the very great responsibility for losses associated with the years after establishment. To some extent we should peep into the past to learn some lessons from what took place in the last post-war period. In peeping into the past in connection with this subject, I can refer the House to no better authority than the report of Mr. Justice Pike on the losses associated with soldier land settlement. That report today is a very rare and valuable document.

Mr. Watts: The State Premiers' Bible!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It gives in this case an opportunity for the quotation of texts in connection with such matters as soldier settlement that even the Bible would find difficulty in vying with. Mr. Justice Pike was charged with a very great responsibility in endeavouring to prove whether claimant States were justified in their requests to the Commonwealth ten years after settlement had been established in regard to the losses the States claimed to have sustained. He had to report whether the writings-down suggested and those that, in fact, had taken place were justified and promised an opportunity for future success in soldier land settlement. He was asked to define the total losses sustained by the States, the principles on which a final adjustment in respect of losses should be made with the States, whether the State authorities concerned were satisfied that, as a result of the revaluations that had been made, the settlers could be reasonably expected to make good, and whether in his opinion the valuations had

been made on too low a basis, and if so, what sum was involved. I would draw attention to the very important fact that Mr. Justice Pike, reporting in 1929, while differing very little from the claims of the States, assessed the total loss at that time at £23,525,522. The loss up to 1929 of the last post-war soldier settlement scheme was in excess of £23,500,000. But the important point I wish to make is that although Mr. Justice Pike, in the year of above average prices, decided that £23,500,000 had been lost to that date, he also assumed that that would be the total loss associated with all soldier settlement undertaken after the last war. But what is the actual position?

Since 1929, the aggregation of writings-down of all the six States exceeds another £23,000,000, and the total loss to the States in regard to soldier settlement is at this stage in excess of £45,000,000 of public money. In addition to that, an equivalent sum has been lost in connection with the capital of the soldiers themselves, and money advanced by storekeepers and other firms, and that does not include losses on such undertakings as public works associated with development. So that we have in that a picture of the prospect if soldier settlement is launched under the same terms and conditions and with the same outlook as applied when soldier settlement was launched in 1918. A little over 35,000 soldiers went on the land after the last war. In some States a very small percentage remains. At a later stage, I will give details of the figures for this State. At the time of Mr. Justice Pike's report, 71 per cent. of the original settlers remained on the land. Today, even though writings-down occur of the magnitude I have mentioned, and subsequent losses have gone on to the extent of reaching £45,000,000 of public money, the percentage remaining on the land is greatly reduced. On the question whether there had been sufficient writing-down at that time, Mr. Justice Pike said—

I went fully into this question and inspected lands that have been revalued, and I am satisfied that in every State the authorities have been careful in their revaluations and have taken what, in my opinion, were the proper steps in order to see that those valuations were not carried out on too low a basis, and I am satisfied on the whole that they have not been carried out on too low a basis and that a fair and reasonable basis has been adopted for all revaluations.

That was his opinion when he was in possession of all the facts as a Royal Commissioner. He was able to assess what were the prospective losses, if any, for the future and the actual losses of the past. He recommended that £23,500,000 be written off. In spite of that, that sum has doubled since 1929. Victoria provides an instance of what can happen if public pressure is of such magnitude—as I expect it will be—on all Governments as to insist that there is some particular virtue in a widespread soldier settlement policy; that it is not only unavoidable but is a right to be demanded by all ex-servicemen. Victoria is paying £1,000,000 a year from its Budget as interest on losses on soldier settlement in that State. I have had the opportunity of taking evidence from dozens of returned men extending from Atherton in Queensland to this State. There is no doubt that some of their stories are very heartrending. These men, in spite of the concessional advantages given to them had, because of extraordinary circumstances, very little prospect from the start.

I intend to show just what some of the pitfalls associated with the previous attempts at settlement are, and also to show in an unqualified way that these pitfalls still remain. The fact that they are acknowledged does not overcome them. I fear that until and unless there is a saner and more realistic attitude in the public mind there will again be tragedies associated with soldier settlement. Let us take the experience in this State. Some 8,444 applications were received, 7,116 qualification certificates issued and 5,336 soldiers actually settled on the land. They were settled on various types of country. On repurchased estates 531 were settled; 2,797 on individual farms and 864 on virgin properties. They were engaged in various types of rural industry such as dairy farms, wheat farms, pastoral securities, orchards and small mixed farms. Out of the original number of 5,336, only 1,206 remain.

[*Mr. J. Hegney took the Chair.*]

Mr. Perkins: Some sold out at a profit. They did not all fail.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, but as the hon. member knows that is only a restricted number. Of the 1,362 former soldier settlement farms now occupied by

civilians, most have been occupied after abandonment and not after sale. There are 1,206 remaining. The total amount of finance originally provided by the Commonwealth Government for soldier settlement in this State was £5,463,000 and £2,095,000 was provided by this State. The sum of £1,492,000 has been written off by the Commonwealth. The losses by the State to the 1st March last year amounted to £1,258,000. So, if we anticipate, as I confidently expect, an equal number of soldiers anxious to adopt land settlement as their means of livelihood after this war it is very obvious that the State must take every safeguard to see that it has not the burden of finance imposed on it by reason of the costs that are inseparable from the establishment of settlers, particularly if the settlement is a forced one.

Mr. Doney: We are still paying interest on the loans.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: And we must continue to do so. It is doubtful whether all the overburden has been cleaned up even at this stage. I know that some of the estates repurchased by the Crown for settlement have only recently been adjusted by me in regard to land values and land rents in order to give the holders at least some prospect in the future of reaching success, even at this late stage.

Mr. Leslie: It is a pity that was not done before.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not going to enter into a discussion on one of the principles advocated by the Commonwealth in regard to soldier settlement, namely, the question of land tenure. This House could occupy itself for weeks if the subject were sufficiently studied by members, on the question of leasehold versus freehold tenure. There are certain principles being investigated at this moment by a Commonwealth authority which will give an authoritative view on that and allied subjects. But whatever is done in regard to the tenure of areas to be occupied by returned men, I submit that no new form of tenure should be introduced with which to experiment in the case of returned men. My view is, and I echo the view of this Government, that the existing land laws of this or any other State should be used in the settlement of returned men within this or any other State. Although it is an arguable point as to whether it is more or

less wise to establish men on the basis of freehold or leasehold there is something, even if it is a mythical something, in the claim that there is some benefit, under the terms of a freehold title, actually to own the land—

Mr. Leslie: But a perpetual leasehold has not been suggested.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member has already made three attempts to induce me to commit myself on something that took place, but has not been disclosed, at the conference.

Mr. Leslie: I am talking of the suggestion put forward.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not going to say what took place except that the suggested basis is a freehold basis. Further than that I shall not go because it would not be fair to the Commonwealth, and no matter what my criticism may be I will not be unfair in that criticism. I think the Commonwealth would have very little difficulty in getting the States to accept considerable financial responsibility in assisting with the preparation of lands and helping with surveys, also in connection with the acquisition of properties and their subdivision, and the supervision and development of any or all of the costs associated with the administration of the authority that will have to be set up to deal properly with this matter. To turn for a few moments to some of the initial problems, I would mention several of the difficulties associated with the classification and the training of applicants. If we remember that after the last war, with its number of enlistments, nearly 38,000 men were anxious to go on the land, we can imagine that there may be 50,000 on this occasion. Surely one fundamental question is this: What is Australia's capacity to absorb even 30,000 potential farmers in stated forms of rural activity? That potential can only be gauged on the basis of what internal and external markets are operating. Unless and until that question is solved on an international basis, great difficulty will face those who plan or implement a plan for soldier settlement to be launched with a minimum of risk.

Mr. McLarty: Do you think that can be solved?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do, and I will give reasons why I hold that belief. First, I will deal with the question

of applicants. There are several types of applicants that can be expected. There will be the applicant who is an experienced farmer, either as an employee or as an owner prior to enlistment. Then there will be the applicant with some experience but not fully qualified to assume farm ownership. There will also be the applicant with no farm experience, but who wishes to go on the land and take up country life. It may be that in all those categories there will be men who would be suitable as employees, but would be failures as owners or employers. In the last group, if Australia takes stock of her rural industry, as it has to some extent, there will be ample evidence that if the farmers have the opportunity within the price range of their commodities effectively to employ men, properly to house and pay them, there is an avenue of employment, without risk associated with the capital liability, for tens of thousands of men within this continent. All that is associated with the prospective markets for produce that can be marketed from any farm. I submit that insufficient attention is being given to guaranteeing an income for farm employees—if prices have to be adjusted internally and externally to meet that obligation.

Mr. Leslie: The farmers are willing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I believe that many farmers throughout Australia are willing, and if we consider to what extent farm assets have depreciated during the war period and to what extent machinery and other farm equipment have likewise depreciated, we must realise, I submit, the opportunity that exists for the replacement within Australia of millions of pounds worth of machinery and equipment; and that, in turn, will also furnish opportunities of employment in secondary industries and in industries allied to rural activities. I am wondering whether full consideration has been given to what will be the procedure even after successful applicants for qualification certificates have obtained those certificates.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Who will be responsible for that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: An authority will have to be set up.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Commonwealth or State?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There will have to be an authority set up within

the State to determine whether this man or that man is entitled to a certificate of qualification by experience that will entitle him to enter upon the hazardous undertaking of farming operations. That authority will require to be one with some courage, one not prepared to give way to the petty whims of individuals or their sponsors, one that will be prepared to conserve the welfare of the applicants themselves even to the extent of turning down their applications.

Mr. Mann: He will be doing a very beneficial act.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If there are 50,000 men to whom qualification certificates are issued, what will those men do until we can provide 50,000 farms?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Will the certificates be issued in this State?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: They will be issued throughout Australia. Then again, will the Commonwealth place men on the land on their own resources, or are we to provide for them? Are they to be given employment on farms, because it is on the farm only that farming experience can be gained? These are questions that I advance for consideration of members as being matters of merely minor importance, but still vital.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: They were the undoing of the previous land settlement scheme. The Commonwealth would not accept the responsibility of selection and the States were loaded with it. That will happen again if you do not watch out.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I anticipate that, whether married or single, if there are 50,000 applicants with qualification certificates and half of those men are placed in employment on farms, at least 25,000 homes, or other means of accommodation, will be necessary properly to house those people. Farm labour has to be attracted to farms if the farms are to be equipped with efficient labour. We must also attract married people. Involved in all this is another question. It is one that requires considerable investigation and I submit needs an answer before any such scheme as that under discussion is finally launched. There will be in the first two classes of applicants I refer to—those with some experience—some men who will require further training and the necessity will arise for the provision of long or short courses at some form of institution. It

may be that the States, through their agricultural institutions, will have to bear some burden of the cost of that work.

Mr. McLarty: How many men could be trained with the facilities available in Western Australia?

Mr. Leslie: I know of one man who was told to learn poultry farming and he has to go to New South Wales.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The Minister may proceed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: What will happen in regard to men in that category is now the subject of inquiry in the States and also in an interstate sense. In other words, the States are taking the census on behalf of the Commonwealth in order to ascertain what can be done with existing or temporary accommodation to take men through short courses to give them increased experience and enable them to finish off, as it were, the details lacking in their training. No matter where the training is carried out, the question of housing will arise. There again I ask members this question: If there are sufficient potential farmers in the first two classes of applicants—those now qualified by experience and those partly trained and partly experienced—are we to consider at all men who have had no farming experience and no farm training? Should the last-mentioned class be immediately refused the right to embark on a life on the land—except on their own resources? I submit that if the numbers grow to the magnitude some people suggest, there will be a surplus among those who possess experience or are partly experienced.

Mr. Doney: Have you yet any definition of "returned soldier"?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am coming to the point of eligibility and that gives rise to further questions. Is eligibility to be based on experience with regard to farming operations, or is it to be assessed because of war service? I put this further question to the House: Does the term "returned soldier" include men from the 1914-1918 war as well as those from the present war? Will it include only men of the A.I.F. and exclude the militia? I submit that many militia men have seen much more action during the war than have some A.I.F. men. Then there are many other branches of the services including sections of women. Are we to exclude women?

Mr. Leslie: I think that the question respecting many of them will settle itself before long.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Are we to exclude from the definition men who have been in charge of the garrisons? Are we to exclude the men of the V.D.C.? Are we also to exclude those heroes—the men of the Merchant Service? Or are we to include them? Where do we draw the line of distinction? The returned soldiers themselves have not solved the problem. I am asking questions; I am not bound to answer them.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Certainly it is not a State responsibility.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I were asked for a suggestion, it would be that I would make the service qualification as wide as possible, but I would make the experience and essential qualifications as rigid as possible.

Mr. Leslie: And capability?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I said experience and other requisite conditions. What discrimination are we to make? Are we to make a discrimination even within the certificate itself? Suppose applications were heard by a board, are we to say that the man with a distinction earned on the battlefield is to have preference over a man who has the service qualification though not of that quality? If it is to be decided by allotment and decision by a board rather than by ballot, cannot members see some very pretty problems arising which will actuate the applicant in his own favour and cause him to sponsor his own case the stronger, and create considerable worry for the persons who have to make the decision? Then there is also the question of eligibility from the point of view of the resources of the applicant. Are we to say that the man without money is to get the consideration given to a man who has a few hundred pounds of his own capital to invest and risk? What is to be done on that point? What is to be done in connection with the person who is eligible in all respects as an experienced farm hand pre-war, but has no capital to assist him in developing his land?

Mr. McLarty: Surely the lack of capital should not be a bar!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am speaking as a representative of the State Government submitting what I consider are

very vital problems and very vexed ones, too.

Mr. Thorn: But some of those questions should not arise.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No matter what sort of policy we have, these questions will arise and must be solved before successful settlement can be embarked upon.

Mr. Thorn: You would not debar a man because he did not have capital?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, I would not.

The Premier: But it might be a question of giving preference to one man over another.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There might be an area of such value and potential productive capacity that a stipulation would be made that a risk should be taken by the applicant. All those things are very vital. Then there are many questions associated with the preparation of land. Several types of land have to be considered. There are unimproved Crown lands; there are partly improved Crown lands, and there are private lands for repurchase and subdivision. I admit that land jobbers, although they do not approach one in that guise but come as patriots anxious to sell land because it might be suitable for closer settlement, are already busy in this State, anxious to submit glorious estates to be cut up for successful soldier settlement, but I think some of their patriotism is stimulated by considerations of what the increment to themselves might be.

The selection of land, whether Crown land unimproved or Crown land partly improved, or land to be re-purchased, is a question that will concern the State authority, I submit, if mistakes are to be avoided. The Commonwealth has no men of experience in land settlement after the last war, or even in the use of land. Consequently the State will have to accept some responsibility, as this State has done already, in soil surveys that will be necessary, in the classification of land and examination of areas that might be suitable for soldier settlement. To a considerable extent the Commonwealth in this matter will have to trust the States rather than set up for itself an independent authority.

With regard to unimproved Crown land, there are certain States of Australia, including Western Australia, wherein land settlement offers a very costly proposition from the development stage to the stage of taking

over on a productive value basis. Perhaps no State is worse situated than is Western Australia in this regard. Whether because of natural circumstances, of timber or other disabilities of that sort, the establishment of men on the land is going to be a costly matter. Is this State, in consequence, to be disadvantaged as against other States that have large areas of comparatively open country, easy to clear, cheap to establish and occupy?

Mr. Mann: Large areas of Crown land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, repurchased land; there is very little Crown land left in Australia. Although the opportunity offered 10 or 15 years ago in most States to take up such land, it is still unoccupied. Considerable thought must be given to the question whether it is worth while to endeavour to settle land that is in any way second class in regard to production. It was the President of the United States of America who said, in formulating the land policy for that country years ago, that it was very questionable whether any but the best land should be the subject of closer settlement. We in this State are placed in that position today. Some of the best land, perhaps not fully in production, is land that is already alienated from the Crown. This obtains in all States, and the worst land is that which creates the problem. The problem land—the marginal land in some respects, though not in respect of rainfall—represents much of the land that remains. It is land so costly of development that people with capital have been very tardy of attempting to settle it because the margins are not there after development costs have been met. There are very many points associated with the preparation of land to which I think the Commonwealth might give consideration, waiving certain factors and charges in the interests of cheapening settlement. I refer particularly to an ex-factory price for all sorts of implements and equipment rather than that two or three profits should be made before the article reaches the user, and the consideration of such matters as the tariff and sales tax and all sorts of things that would be very vital so far as the settler is concerned in lessening cost.

Western Australia has a particular case in regard to development costs with respect to her abandoned properties in the south-western areas especially. In those areas, in

which there are several hundred abandoned farms, perhaps 500 or 600 of them with a little improvement ready for immediate occupation, on which in the aggregate millions of pounds have been written off it will still take hundreds of pounds per property to develop them to such a state that their productive value is safe to maintain the settler from the time of occupation. There is a case in that point to this extent, whether this State is to share further losses in cost of development in those cases, having written off, as it has in some instances, up to £1,500 per property to this date. Those things are being considered, but I put this up as also a point that has to be considered when this State's case is being dealt with in respect of financial responsibility. We must, if we take the case of the soldier having no capital—and such soldiers being the ones in the majority—visualise the set of circumstances which arises if the soldier is allowed 100 per cent. advance in his enterprise, with no capital of his own.

I put it to the House, what is the prospect of success in any enterprise if all the capital has to be borrowed and interest thereon to be paid, and in addition all the carry-on money and the seasonal requirements for superphosphate, stock and all the things that are perishable and show depreciation, have to be financed to the extent of 100 per cent.? That is the prospect we are facing if the settler is to be given no equity at the start and all the money has to be found for him. That does not seem a very hopeful picture, even if prospects of prices were bright and markets were assured. If we are to consider that superphosphate, oil, feed and so forth have to be faced on a 100 per cent. advance after the property has been the subject of 100 per cent. advance, I submit that the State must face inevitable losses; and if we must face inevitable losses can we in any scheme presume that the settler can pay all his interest, all his rent, and perhaps some sinking fund payments on his capital debt, from the very inception of his establishment? Would the answer to that question be in the affirmative? I submit that the scheme would offer very little prospect except the prospect of serious attendant losses.

Therefore I submit that one of the important things in the consideration of this

involved problem is that there must be an opportunity from the very start for the settler to make a success; that is to say, that whatever can be anticipated to be an overburden upon which he cannot service a debt from his income, should be written off at the start; and that unless he gets an opportunity by either a concession over a period in his interest rates—which I submit is the soundest principle put up—or gets some cash consideration within the equity, he is not only going to be struggling from the start but to be a substantial failure from the start. I submit that if we are to regard land settlement as a prospect to give returned men something that they are entitled to, we must consider whether we are to give them any advantages over ordinary civilians; and when we have decided what advantages we will give them over ordinary civilians, we must also decide whether that is a sufficient concession to make to the soldier; and whether, if it is sufficient to make to the soldier, it is sufficient to ensure his success. No State except perhaps a very wealthy State with a very healthy budgetary position could face the prospect if the soldier is to be put on the land with a 100 per cent. debt to be financed by the State in the future. Can this State accept the responsibility of total future losses?

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Doney: Do you mean the State's responsibility to be proportionately the same, or will it be greater according to the wealth or otherwise in the State?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That depends entirely on the considerations I have submitted. I think it very wrong in principle to single out soldiers and leave them as marked sections of a community; that is to say, it is wrong in principle not to absorb the soldier into civilian life for him to become a civilian as quickly as possible, instead of having him segregated with certain perpetual concessional advantages which, if he fails even under the assistance, would enable him to become a unit of a very strong pressure group pulled hither and thither by interested persons, public and otherwise. That is a very bad principle to develop. It will be far preferable to give to the soldier all the concessions that the country can afford to give, with that section of the community aside from all others get-

ting concessional advantages in perpetuity, concessions which perhaps can be trafficked in and may give to the original man very little assistance. So that whatever is done, I consider the assistance should be given at the outset. We cannot afford to ignore the facts and perpetuate the mistakes of the past. The stage is all set for the same mistakes to be made again; and we shall not avoid those mistakes nor avoid expenditure by being niggardly at the start.

I hold that one of the worst things that could happen would be to give to the soldier a risky proposition at the start, for he must fail in those circumstances. There is one very important thing associated with potential markets that is deserving of special comment and considerable attention; but before dealing with that I would like to deal with the point of what can happen in Australia, if varying schemes are adopted in different States. Just imagine a State such as Victoria conceding to settlers a rate of interest—to submit a hypothetical case—of half of normal interest rates in perpetuity on the moneys owed. What would, for instance, the soldier forced to settle and reside in Western Australia think of a Western Australian Government that could not afford and give him the same terms? What sort of public as well as political problems will arise if States are permitted to vie with each other in giving concessional advantages that other States cannot afford to give? Unless there is a common policy, unless there is a scheme similar in advantages and in concessions in all the States, it is going to be a very difficult matter for States in a weak budgetary position if they fail to give all those concessions that are given by wealthy States.

Mr. Leslie: I am afraid you are disclosing some confidences.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not disclosing anything that I should not have disclosed. I mentioned at the outset the fundamental of ensuring markets. There are Commonwealth departments which have been associated with the making of international agreements in which there is a collection of evidence that should be the basis of the advice to the Commonwealth Government. It has not been difficult, even in wartime, to make agreements in respect of some commodities for post-war international trade, and the achievement of the International Wheat Agreement is an out-

standing example of that. But in spite of what Mr. Bankes Amery has said, or what any other authority has said, on the future prospects of trade internationally, there are aspects of British trade and British preference that will, I submit, give rise to considerable concern.

Since the Ottawa Conference gave to British Dominions and Colonies certain preferences for certain types of trade, Australia has profited particularly in regard to such commodities as dairy produce, dried fruit and sugar. But because there is more wheat and more wool produced within the Empire than the Empire needs, this must put Australia in a very bad position in attempting to trade with other countries with commodities to exchange, because we have given preference to Britain in commodities that those countries also need. I think we shall find that after the war Great Britain will be impoverished as regards cash and oversea investments and that she will consequently desire to retain a considerable proportion of her dominions' preference clauses and agreements. I may say that those clauses will present a very pretty problem to those endeavouring to negotiate with other countries for the commodities which this country has to sell.

Mr. Leslie: What about the Atlantic Charter?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That Charter, the Hot Springs conference, the Mutual Aid Agreement, and all those things run counter to some extent to British preferences. It is therefore foolish for people to say quickly, without examination of this problem, that the best method of repatriation of returned soldiers is to establish them on the land. Much must be known of the prospects of the particular rural activity in which they are to embark. Would it be fair, if we know that Australia could establish an additional 20,000 dairy farms, to allow those farms to be established in one State? Are we to allow the States to compete with each other in the establishment of what are now known to be potentially successful avenues in rural life, or is the Commonwealth to say that Western Australia, with its large areas undeveloped, shall have consideration over another State which has the wherewithal to expand its settlement immediately? I put that as a problem of an interstate character which it will not be easy to solve. I

have no doubt that if the Commonwealth faces its responsibility in this matter, and if the States on their part are anxious to share in any responsibility in which they should share, there is every reason to anticipate that close co-operation and collaboration can achieve a satisfactory result. But land settlement and production mean so much more to Western Australia than they do to any other State that Western Australia, if there is to be differentiation in treatment, should receive the most generous treatment.

Mr. Leslie: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Western Australia produced in the last recorded year £37 per head of population in exportable products. The Australian average was £20. New South Wales produced £16.7 per head of population. If we take the proportion of total production in New South Wales, primary production is represented by a very small percentage compared with Western Australia, and consequently the greater the expansion in that State the less the cost is likely to be per head of population of that State, no matter how largely it may launch on a soldier land settlement scheme. I submit, however, that the Commonwealth should experience no difficulty in ascertaining which States are anxious to co-operate. There are many instances of State co-operation with the Commonwealth. We have had such cases, involving millions of pounds, as the Farmers' Debt Adjustment Scheme and the Marginal Area Adjustment Scheme. We have had such experiences as the Murray River Commission, where a tripartite agreement between the States and the Commonwealth has worked out most advantageously. If it is a question of responsibility, the States can, I think, submit very quickly to the Commonwealth how far they should go, and no State should outbid another State in giving concessional advantages. If we adopt the policy that the first use of our land should be the best use of the better land, land which is served with amenities, land which is accessible, land which is in an assured rainfall district even where market prospects are obscure, our prospects of success will be greater.

Western Australia's attitude could be simply stated as this: We believe that repatriation with its attendant cost, is the responsibility of the Commonwealth; but

we are anxious to share with the Commonwealth in any reasonable proportion of cost associated with the administration, preparation and guidance of settlement. I think the Premier would say to the House that he is prepared to go much further than that in sharing in a portion of the costs of development if those costs exceed the productive value at the time of occupation. This State's attitude, too, could be very safely expressed by our wish to approach the matter in a national way. We do not wish to approach it in a Western Australian way. We wish that every soldier who enlisted, no matter from what State, if he desires to settle in this State, shall have the opportunity to do so, but that the States with the greatest potentialities for land settlement and development should get the maximum consideration. Above all, our greatest desire is to scrutinise very carefully some of those simple fundamentals I have stated, so that if anyone has to suffer, whether it be the State finances or the State taxpayers, the returned men should suffer least of all.

Members: Hear, hear!

On motion by Mr. McLarty, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 26th September, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (4).

TRAMWAYS.

As to Staff Shortages and Holidays.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many employees of the traffic branch of the tramway service are overdue for annual holidays—

- (a) The number of males.
- (b) The number of females.
- (c) The period overdue in each case?

(2) How many employees have left the service since the 1st January, 1944—

- (a) Males,
- (b) Females?

(3) To what extent is the service understaffed?

(4) What representations, if any, have been made to the military or manpower authorities, or both, to obtain releases sufficient to make up the shortage in staff?

(5) With what result?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) Seven for two years; 199 for one year.

(b) Five for one year.

(c) See (a) and (b).

(2) (a) 100.

(b) 72.

(3) 61.

(4) The Deputy Director-General of Manpower has been written to and the position explained. A list of motormen, trolleybus drivers and motorbus drivers who it is requested should be released from the Forces to meet the present situation has been supplied to him.

(5) The matter is receiving the consideration of the manpower authorities.

TROLLEYBUSES.

As to Duplicating Wires.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Is there any difficulty at peak periods in operating trolleybuses due to one not being able to pass another?

(2) Is a duplicate set of wires impracticable?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) Yes.

COLLIE COAL.

As to Production and Stocks.

Mr. GRAHAM asked the Minister for Mines:

(1) What was the average production of coal in Western Australia during the last five years?

(2) What is the present annual output?

(3) What stocks of Western Australian coal are normally on hand?

(4) What quantity of Western Australian coal is at present on hand?