

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 15th October, 1935.

	PAGE
Assent to Bills	1100
Bills: Financial Emergency Act Amendment, Sr.	1100
Electoral, Com.	1100
Brands Act Amendment, returned	1111
Droving Act Amendment, returned	1111
Annual Estimates, 1935-36: Votes and Items discussed ..	1111
Chief Secretary	1111

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

ASSENT TO BILLS.

Messages from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

- 1, Forests Act Amendment.
- 2, Cremation Act Amendment.
- 3, Land Tax and Income Tax.
- 4, Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment.
- 5, Fremantle (Skinner-street) Disused Cemetery Amendment.
- 6, Trustees' Powers Amendment.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ELECTORAL.

In Committee.

Resumed from the 10th October. Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; the Minister for Justice in charge of the Bill.

Clause 77—Voting in Absence:

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That the proviso to Subclause 2 be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—

“Provided that if the elector is physically incapable of signing the application or he is unable to write, then if such elector is an inmate of any public hospital or public institution the chief executive officer of such hospital or institution may at the request of such elector sign such application on his behalf, and shall indorse on such application the reason for so signing.

Provided further that if such elector is living at a place other than a public hospital or public institution then any postmaster, clergyman, justice of the peace, or member of the police force authorised to act in such capacity

by the Chief Electoral Officer may at the request of such elector sign such application on his behalf and shall indorse on such application the reasons for so signing.

One of the reasons for bringing down this Bill was to cure what had transpired in certain cases under the existing law in regard to voting by persons who were unable to attend the polling place. Our present system has been greatly abused. The proposal in the Bill, however, would leave the door open very wide to abuses, more so than it is to-day. It would mean that any person could, at the request of any elector who was physically incapable of signing an application for a postal vote, himself send on the application to the Chief Electoral Officer, and on receipt of the ballot paper could record his vote on behalf of the elector. Postal vote officers have in the past voted on behalf of electors in a manner that may be said to be fraudulent. That was possible because under the existing law there has not been a sufficiently strict supervision over those officers. If the law were carried out strictly there would be no abuse of it, but it must be admitted that the door is wide enough open to permit of abuses. In my amendment ample provision is made to deal with electors who are physically incapable of recording their own votes, to enable such electors to obtain the necessary ballot papers, and also to impose safeguards to prevent abuses.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This clause deals with applications by electors for postal votes which are then sent on to the responsible officer. A similar provision exists in the Commonwealth Act. If a man desires to record a postal vote he sends in an application. So that we may have some verification of the man who is asking for the ballot paper, we ensure that there shall be a witness to the signature of the applicant. I do not think we should circumscribe applications of this sort in the way proposed by the hon. member. The procedure must be made as simple as possible. If a person cannot record a postal vote he may apply for an absent voter's paper. Anyone who is an elector may witness the application. When the application is received by the Chief Electoral Officer he compares it with the claim card to see that the right person is making the application. If everything is in order the postal vote is sent back. That is the time when the vote is recorded.

If the amendment were agreed to, it might mean that men who were employed outback on well-sinking or fencing might have to go to town to attend to this business.

Mr. Doney: But that type of individual would not be physically incapable, and so would not be affected by the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But he might be illiterate.

Mr. Doney: That is possible, but I should say wholly unlikely.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The individual who would go outback on work of that description is more likely to be illiterate. That would not often apply, but a more highly educated person would probably follow some other avocation.

Mr. Patrick: Of course, this merely applies to applications.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: What is there wrong about a person who, for instance, lives in the same house as an old lady who cannot write or is incapable of writing through physical disabilities, signing an application form on behalf of that old lady? All the requisite restrictions will apply so that there will not be any dishonesty, fraud or illegality in connection with the submission of such an application. I do not know that a postmaster or a policeman would be in a position to visit various houses to sign application forms on behalf of individuals who would be affected. A justice of the peace might do so, because he fulfils public obligations.

Mr. Stubbs: A lot of justices of the peace have prostituted their position in the past and run around signing documents.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Perhaps they have. I do not know that there will be many such applications received. If there should be many of them, I do not see why private individuals should not witness the applications. A similar provision is embodied in the Commonwealth Act, and we have not heard anything about forgery or fraud in connection with it. We shall practically disfranchise at least some people if we do not make this process easy. It will not be done in a wholesale fashion as with postal votes.

Mr. NORTH: On a point of order: When the Committee dealt with the Bill previously, I had suggested an amendment to Subclause 1. I was not able to ascertain from the Minister what attitude he adopted regarding my proposal. I would like to know how he viewed it.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister may reply to the question, but we cannot go back at this stage to discuss any such amendment.

Mr. RODOREDA: I support the request of the member for Claremont. He had suggested the amendment, but had not actually moved it when progress was reported. I intended to move an amendment similar to that indicated by the member for Claremont, and I naturally thought the discussion on the Bill to-day would start from the point at which we left it.

The CHAIRMAN: When the member for Nedlands moved his amendment, he asked if any member desired to move an amendment to an earlier part of the clause, and no one responded. I remember that Mr. North did make some such suggestion to amend Subclause 1, but he cannot proceed with the matter unless the member for Nedlands withdraws his amendment. If that course is adopted, then we can proceed with the present amendment after we dispose of the matter to be raised by the member for Claremont.

Hon. N. Keenan: In those circumstances, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Mr. NORTH: I move an amendment—

That in line 10 of Subclause 1 "declaration of nominations" be struck out and the words "issue of the writ" inserted in lieu.

I shall not delay the Committee by discussing the amendment further. If the Minister does not agree, I shall not press it.

Mr. RODOREDA: I support the amendment. The intention of the Bill is that ballot papers shall not be issued until after the declaration of nominations, but that is not what it provides. All that is set out is that applications for ballot papers cannot be made until after the declaration of nominations, and that is quite different. A person who lives in an outback centre will have to write in to secure a form, which will have to be sent to him and he will then have to sign it and post it back. Then the ballot paper will be sent to him, and he will have to sign it and return it to the electoral officer. Even if the person resided on the spot, he could not write out his application form until nominations had closed. I hope the Minister will agree to the amendment. Unless he does so, there will be no time for a person outback to do what is necessary between nomination day and election day.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The intention is, as provision is made for preferential voting, that the elector shall be assured regarding the candidates who have actually nominated. Until he has that knowledge, there is not much possibility regarding postal voting.

Mr. Rodoreda: We do not ask for that.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I am aware of that. In order to obviate that difficulty, the Bill provides that up to 60 days may be allowed between nomination day and election day so that all formalities may be complied with. I do not see any reason for opposing the amendment, unless we have to alter the Bill in other directions. Until nominations are actually received, the electoral registrar will be unable to send out any postal vote papers with the necessary information attached, to inform the elector who are the nominated candidates.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment—

That the proviso to Subclause 2 be struck out and the following provisos inserted in lieu:—

“Provided that if the elector is physically incapable of signing the application or he is unable to write, then if such elector is an inmate of any public hospital or public institution the chief executive officer of such hospital or institution may at the request of such elector sign such application on his behalf, and shall indorse on such application the reason for so signing.

Provided further that if such elector is living at a place other than a public hospital or public institution then any postmaster, clergyman, justice of the peace, or member of the police force authorised to act in such capacity by the Chief Electoral Officer may at the request of such elector sign such application on his behalf and shall indorse on such application the reasons for so signing.”

The Minister has not followed me regarding the point I placed before him. As the Bill stands, if an elector is blind, or his sight is so impaired that he cannot sign the application, or he is unable to write or is otherwise physically incapable of signing the application, any person may, at the request of the elector, sign a form and forward it, with a certificate endorsed by him, to the Chief Electoral Officer. The man who sends along the application is the applicant.

The Minister for Justice: No; it is the man on whose behalf the application is made.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Subclause 8 shows that that is not so. Some man would apply for a postal vote paper in the name of John Smith, who is unable to apply for for it himself. He would get the ballot paper and, under Subclause 8, would proceed to vote. In the Federal Act there is no provision of that character. I do not wish to place any restriction on the exercise by any man of his electoral rights. We are merely endeavouring to prevent what has happened in the past. We want to have the position safeguarded. Take an inmate of the Perth Hospital, who wishes to apply for a ballot paper. The Chief Electoral Officer is always available, and surely he is the right man to make the application on behalf of the patient, and receive the postal vote on behalf of the patient. These infirm men are not likely to be found out in the backblocks or the bush, and therefore some justice of the peace or member of the police force will be available to help them. But I do object to leaving the matter so wide that any person can do all this; not people we have some reason for placing that trust in, but any person.

The Minister for Justice: I would not mind in regard to the voting, but the making of the application is not so important.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Surely the application should be made by the Chief Electoral Officer, for he is there for that purpose and has to do his job. I submit that the amendment is a perfectly reasonable one.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: All that the hon. member has said may be correct in regard to the actual recording of the vote; but this deals merely with an application for a ballot paper. I do not think we can reasonably ask a policeman to leave his beat to see about an application for a ballot paper, or ask a justice of the peace or postmaster to witness that application. What is important is the procedure after the application has been complied with and a ballot paper sent along. It is important to see that the recording of the vote is carried out by some responsible person. The making of the application is not an important matter at all, even if there were no witness, but the recording of the vote is highly important.

Hon. N. Keenan: Do you think the applicant is not the man who puts in the application?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Of course he is not; the applicant sends an application along by means of an agent for the reason that, owing to disability, he cannot make the application himself. But it is the disabled man who is the applicant, not his agent.

Hon. N. Keenan: But you are authorising this man to apply.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, he becomes the applicant on behalf of the applicant himself.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Could it not be made clearer by prescribing that the ballot paper shall be posted to the elector?

Mr. Patrick: But even when the ballot paper arrives, the elector himself cannot fill it in.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is dealt with in Subclause 8. This is merely the procedure in regard to the making of an application. Certainly the only person entitled to the vote should have the ballot paper forwarded to him. I would agree to an amendment ensuring that the person receiving the application for a postal vote form shall send it to the elector on whose behalf the application is made. That was the intention in the drafting of the clause.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I do not know why the member for Nedlands desires to make it difficult for a person suffering from disabilities to make application for his voting paper. All these unfortunate people are to be put to the inconvenience of getting special men to witness and make applications on their behalf. Why say that we shall not permit the electors to make application without putting them to special inconvenience? We have all experienced difficulty in regard to the two Commonwealth forms dealing with pensions. In my electorate it is very difficult, and frequently one has to procure a motor car to transport the applicants to the person who has to witness their signatures. I trust the Minister will not give way in this matter. I am definitely opposed to irritating these old people. God knows they have enough to put up with, without being exasperated with these details. I am surprised at the hon. member trying to place these restrictions in the way of applicants for ballot papers.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It depends on the interpretation of the words at the end of Subclause 3, "in time to per-

mit of its being acted on with practical effect." The practical effect of the application made on behalf of an elector would be that the elector would get the ballot paper.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: That is only commonsense.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, the ballot paper cannot go to the one who signs the application on behalf of the elector.

Amendment put and negatived.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I suggest that "applicant" in Subclause 4, paragraph (a), be struck out with a view to inserting "elector" to make certain what I conceive to be the correct construction.

The Minister for Justice: It means the elector making the application.

Hon. N. KEENAN: To make that clear, I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 4, paragraph (a), "applicant" be struck out and the words "elector on whose behalf the application is made" inserted in lieu.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: You are introducing unnecessary verbiage.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. RODOREDA: Now that the subclause has been altered to provide that application may be made after the issue of the writ, provision should be made for the date when ballot papers will be issued. Otherwise they might be issued at any time. I move an amendment—

That after "made" contained in the previous amendment, the words "immediately after the declaration of nominations" be inserted.

I do not agree with the idea of postponing the issue of ballot papers until after nominations have been declared, because people in the back country will not have sufficient time to have their applications "acted on with practical effect," as mentioned in Subclause 3.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I think the amendment should be inserted in subparagraph (i). Previously a person could not make application for a ballot paper until after nominations had been declared. Now he may make application at any time after the issue of the writ. As soon as nominations are declared, the ballot papers will be sent out.

Mr. RODOREDA: The words should be inserted at the end of paragraph (a) be-

cause they will govern the three succeeding subparagraphs.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: According to the proviso to Subclause 8, after a ballot paper has been sent to an elector who has made application, any person may record a vote on that ballot paper. I suggest that further consideration of the proviso be postponed to permit of a suitable amendment being framed.

The CHAIRMAN: The proviso cannot be postponed, and the clause, having been amended, cannot be postponed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Care is necessary to make the proviso clear. If the Minister undertakes to recommit the clause, we can discuss it later.

The Minister for Justice: I am prepared to do that.

Mr. MARSHALL: Why does the Minister wish to deviate from the proviso?

The Minister for Justice: I want to consider the point mentioned by the member for Nedlands.

Mr. MARSHALL: A person voting for an elector has to give his full name, address and occupation, comply with all the formalities, and give the reason for acting. What more does the member for Nedlands want? Will he not have some regard for the people in the back country?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: All that the member for Nedlands asked was for an opportunity to move his amendment on recommitment. I have not committed myself regarding any amendment he might move.

Hon. N. Keenan: That is so.

Mr. WITHERS: A person acting on behalf of an incapacitated elector could not merely use the ballot paper and send it to the registrar. He would have to be a representative of the elector and use the paper in the presence of the elector.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That the following subclause be inserted:—
“11. Any person so entrusted with such envelope and contents who neglects or fails so to send or deliver the same commits an offence. Penalty: Fifty pounds; or if the court is of opinion that such neglect or failure was wilful, it may impose imprisonment not exceeding six months in addition to any monetary penalty.”

Failure to deliver a vote actually recorded by an absent voter is as serious as, if not more so than, failure to deliver a claim card, and a similar penalty should be provided.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The clause dealing with penalties generally provides the penalty.

Mr. Watts: Not for this offence.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: For “any contravention of this Act” a penalty of £50 is provided. The case suggested by the member for Katanning would be a contravention of the Act. Therefore the amendment is not necessary.

Mr. Patrick: Under Clause 49 any person failing to transmit a claim card entrusted to him is liable to a penalty of £50, and, in addition, six months’ imprisonment.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: A severe penalty is imposed for a serious offence. What the amendment aims at is already provided.

Mr. WATTS: Which is the more important—the transmission of a claim card, or the transmission of a vote? In my opinion, the former.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I see some virtue in the amendment. The man who is entrusted with the ballot paper is entrusted with the vote, and it is of paramount importance that he should fulfil his trust. Therefore a special penalty should be provided.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: I take it that a special penalty is provided in connection with claim cards because they are so numerous, and are handled by thousands of persons, upon whom must be impressed not only the obligation to handle them but also the obligation to lodge them. The subject of the amendment is quite a limited affair. Certainly in the latter case a penalty should be imposed; and the clause as drafted provides it, under the general penalty. The amendment goes too far. The drafting of the Bill is well-balanced, and proportionate penalties are imposed.

Mr. THORN: I find it difficult to understand the argument of the previous speaker. If it is important that claim cards should be delivered, it is equally important that votes should be delivered.

Mr. Stubbs: Far more important.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Is not a £50 penalty sufficient? This matter does not apply so widely as the lodging of claim cards.

Mr. THORN: I am sorry to disagree with the member for Katanning.

Mr. MARSHALL: If it can be shown that an individual deliberately mislaid, or deliberately refrained from sending in, a vote, the person affected has the right to appeal to the Court of Disputed Returns.

Members: No.

Mr. MARSHALL: That redress is not available in respect of an application for enrolment which is not lodged.

The Minister for Justice: The Court of Disputed Returns does not deal with that aspect.

Mr. MARSHALL: There is no redress with respect to a claim card not sent in, and therefore a heavy penalty is imposed. Interference with a vote, however, would give the person affected a right of appeal.

Members: No.

Mr. STUBBS: Up to a certain point I follow the argument of the last speaker and the member for Guildford-Midland. However, the Committee have passed a clause which penalises a person who does not send in a claim card entrusted to him. Is it not equally an offence to fail to send in a vote?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: In the latter case a £50 fine is imposed.

Mr. STUBBS: Is not the failure to send in a vote cast more serious than to omit delivery of a claim card?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: A person who sends in a claim card has the opportunity to send in a second claim card.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: But he may not have that opportunity. Suppose he is a hundred miles away.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: On the other hand, a person can cast his vote only once. We should make it clear that we regard it as a serious offence to retain a ballot paper. Because it is done wholesale from one end of the State to the other, as the member for Guildford-Midland said, there is all the more reason why we should treat it seriously. But it seems that the more common the offence in the past the lighter has been the penalty. Therefore I hope the amendment will be agreed to. We should safeguard the elector as much as possible and we should regard it as a serious offence if a person gets hold of a vote and knowingly refrains from delivering it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Do you really think you will restrain such a person any more by sending him to gaol in addition to imposing a fine of £50?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do. I hope the amendment will be carried.

Mr. WATTS: My original intention was to move to have the paragraph struck out, but when I realised the difficulty that might be caused people outback, it occurred to me that the clause had better remain. It is all

very well for the member for Murchison to talk about going to the court of disputed returns. We do not want to encourage that court to operate; what we want to bring about is a fair election. In the absence of striking out the clause as I originally intended, I contend we should provide the penalty referred to in the amendment.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The penalty in itself is sufficiently serious to make anybody think twice before doing anything wrong. A person who commits an offence very seldom considers the offence until after he is caught. Something can be said about making the penalties uniform regarding offences and I do not know why in this case the draftsman made it different. In the clause the draftsman considered that the offender in this case would be guilty of a contravention of the Act. Instead of "contravention of the Act," we could provide "guilty of an offence," as provided in Clause 48. If the Committee desires to bring about uniformity, I suggest that the words "contravention of the Act" be struck out; and the other words inserted and the penalty provided.

The CHAIRMAN: At present a new subclause to stand as Subclause 11 is all that is before the Committee and in that subclause the words "contravention of the Act" do not appear.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Those words appear in Clause 77 of the Bill.

Mr. WANSBROUGH: I suggest that the member for Katanning withdraw his amendment so that the proposal of the Minister for Justice might be carried out.

Mr. WATTS: I have no desire to delay the Committee and neither do I desire to withdraw the amendment. I can see no necessity for striking out the words "contravention of the Act" as suggested. When I handed in the amendment, it was intended it should stand as subclause 10a.

The Minister for Justice: There is already a subclause 11 in the Bill.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member's amendment, if carried, automatically becomes Subclause 12.

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

Ayes	19
Noes	18
	—
Majority for	1
	—

AYES.	
Mr. Boyle	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Brockman	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Latham	Mr. Warner
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Watts
Mr. Needham	Mr. Welsh
Mr. North	Mr. Doney
Mr. Patrick	(Teller.)
NOES.	
Mr. Clothier	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Cross	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Willcock
Miss Holman	Mr. Wise
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Withers
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Marshall	(Teller.)
Mr. Millington	

Amendment thus passed.

Clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 78 to 89—agreed to.

Clause 90—Ballot papers:

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That a new subclause be added as follows:—
“Where two or more candidates have the same Christian and surnames, a photograph of each such candidate shall appear on the ballot paper.”

Mr. Cross: Why not have photographs of them all?

Mr. NEEDHAM: That may not be a recommendation in some cases. Instances have occurred where the similarity of surnames on the part of candidates has led to a complete misunderstanding on the part of electors. In certain cases the surnames may be spelt in the same way and pronounced differently, or there may be only a difference of the terminal vowel, as in the case of Green and Greene, or Brown and Browne. Sometimes candidates have the same surname as well as the same Christian name. The only way to avoid confusion in a case like that is for the ballot papers to have printed on them photographs of the candidates. My amendment will not lead to any cost to the department, but would prove very helpful to electors.

Mr. CROSS: Usually the electors associate candidates with the policy of the party to which they belong. I suggest that the difficulties referred to by the member for Perth would be overcome if, in the case of similarity of surnames, the party of each candidate was designated on the ballot paper.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 91 to 97—agreed to.

Clause 98—Voting at adjourned polling:

Hon. N. KEENAN: Will the Minister please explain the reason for this clause?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The wording of this clause is somewhat different from Section 132 of the Act. Strictly speaking, under the Act, any elector who could not vote when the right polling booth was open could do so anywhere else in the electorate. The proposal now is that the presiding officer shall have the right to say whether an elector shall vote at the adjourned polling place, or not.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 99 to 106—agreed to.

Clause 107—The polling:

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of paragraph (b) “seven” be struck out and “eight” inserted in lieu.

This has to do with the hours of polling. At a State election the poll is from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m., whereas at a Federal election the poll is open from 8 a.m. till 8 p.m. This lack of synchronisation between the two elections, Federal and State, leads to a great deal of confusion amongst electors. Thus at a Federal election many electors, thinking of the State hours and finding it is after 7 p.m., are convinced that they cannot vote, and so they remain away, whereas actually the poll is open until 8 o'clock. At a State election, on the other hand, many people, thinking the poll will be open until 8 o'clock, go along to find that it closed at 7 o'clock. If we cannot secure uniformity between Federal and State elections in any other way, we ought to be able to do it in regard to the hours of polling. We have not uniformity in the filling in of electoral claims Federal and State, nor have we uniformity in the boundaries of the electorates. Again, the poll should be open till 8 o'clock in order to give the fullest opportunity to people to record their votes. Many persons are engaged until nearly 7 o'clock in the evening, and so it is very difficult for them to cast their votes at a State election. The amendment merely aims at uniformity.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amendment makes for convenience. At Commonwealth elections and at State elections in Victoria and New South Wales polling lasts from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.; in Queensland the hours are from 8 a.m. to

6 p.m.; in Tasmania from 8.30 a.m. to 7 p.m., and in South Australia and Western Australia from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Undoubtedly it is desirable that we should have uniformity as between polling hours at Commonwealth and State elections, for in this regard the convenience of the people should be paramount. I have no objection to the amendment.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 108 to 116—agreed to.

Clause 117—Provision where voter is blind or disabled or cannot write:

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I move an amendment—

That all words after "shall," in line 5 of Subclause 1, be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

I desire to give a blind or illiterate elector, if he so desires, the right to take with him into the booth his wife or some friend to assist him with his vote. There are 350 blind people in Western Australia, of whom six are married. It is said to be a common occurrence at State elections that a blind or illiterate person, desiring to vote calls the chief polling clerk who, in turn calls all the scrutineers present who, advancing to the polling clerk, watch how the elector votes. That, of course, gives no secrecy at the ballot box.

Hon. N. Keenan: Strike it out.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The Federal Act provides that the voter may choose his own friend to go into the booth with him and actually vote for him. I have had a long experience of Federal elections yet I have never heard any complaint raised against that provision. There is no reason why it should not be embodied in the State Act. The Crown Law officials, in drafting my amendment, went a little further than I desired, and so I shall not complain if it be amended by the Committee.

Mr. CLOTHIER: The amendment is a step in the right direction. Some of our blind people are married, but at a State election their wives are not allowed to enter the polling booth with them. The amendment will place such persons on the same footing as they are on under the Commonwealth Act. Those who are disabled or are unable to write should come into the same category as blind people.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Mr. Speaker is not correct in stating that his amendment is on all fours with the Commonwealth Act. That Act only makes it possible for an elector whose sight is impaired to vote in the presence of an authorised witness. He cannot choose his own witness.

Mr. Marshall: That does away with the secrecy of the ballot.

Hon. N. KEENAN: If anyone is selected to vote on behalf of a disabled elector that person should be an official. Under the existing law it is provided that a witness can be present. That was an error which should no longer be allowed to remain in the Act. If an official were appointed as witness he would not be likely to reveal anything that was recorded on the ballot paper. I hope the Minister will allow me to delete that portion of the clause which invades the right of privacy enjoyed by electors.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following results:—

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

Majority for 4

AYES.

Mr. Clothier	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Needham
Mr. Cross	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Pantou
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Rodoreda
Miss Holman	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Wise
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Withers
Mr. Millington	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Moloney	

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Brockman	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Latham	Mr. Thorn
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Warner
Mr. North	Mr. Watts
Mr. Patrick	Mr. Welsh
Mr. Sampson	Mr. Doney
Mr. Seward	

(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I move—

That the following words be inserted in lieu of those struck out:—

"permit any person appointed by the elector to enter an unoccupied voting compartment with the elector and to mark, fold, and deposit the elector's ballot paper for him; or

(2) If the elector does not appoint another person under the preceding subsection then the presiding officer shall—

(a) together with any scrutineers who may be present and who may so desire retire with him into an unoccupied voting compartment and there mark the ballot paper according to

the instruction of the elector; and (b) sign his own name at the foot of the ballot paper and, if so required by the elector, allow the scrutineers to inspect the ballot paper before depositing it in the ballot box; and (c) thereupon deposit the ballot paper in the ballot box."

Mr. NEEDHAM: I am in sympathy with the objects of Mr. Speaker, but I think his amendment may lead to abuses. The secrecy of the ballot will be destroyed. Provision is also made for the scrutineers to overlook the voting.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That is already in the Act.

Mr. NEEDHAM: We should make sure that the vote is recorded in the manner required by the elector. To ensure that, the Committee might add after the word "elector" in line 3, the words "and in the presence of the presiding officer." In the case of elections for the House of Commons, polling agents, who are sworn to secrecy the night before the election, are appointed to see that the presiding officers mark the ballot papers in the manner directed by the electors.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amendment is too wide in its scope. Everything about the ballot box should be secret. In the case of blind people, and those who are otherwise incapacitated, I see no objection to the husband or wife or member of the family assisting in the recording of the vote. To provide that any person may supervise the voting is too general.

Hon. N. Keenan: Would you include cousins and uncles and aunts?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It would be sufficient to include the mother or father, brother or sister, son or daughter, or husband or wife. There is grave objection to anyone being the only privileged person to see how the elector is voting. Afflicted people are often suspicious about others, but they generally have confidence in members of the family. I move—

That the amendment be amended by striking out "any person" in line 1, and inserting in lieu:—"husband or wife, as the case may be, or brother, sister, son or daughter, of the elector, who have reached their majority."

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I have no objection to the Minister's proposal. Ninety per cent. of the persons affected are married, and the remainder mostly have a brother or a sister.

Amendment on the amendment put and passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment on the amendment—

That at the beginning of paragraph (a) of Subclause 1 the words "together with any scrutineers who may be present and who may so desire" be struck out.

I have already given my reasons for this amendment. I see no reason why the electoral officer should not carry out the elector's instructions without disclosing to other persons how the elector has voted.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Personally I have no objection to the amendment. I have always regarded it as a blot on our system that five or six people should crowd into a small box and witness what is done by an elector who is supposed to cast a secret vote. Electoral officers have the confidence of the people who attend to vote.

Mr. Patrick: I have never seen any scrutineer go into the box.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I have known of elections where there were six candidates and all their scrutineers trooped in.

Amendment on the amendment put and passed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I move an amendment on the amendment—

That in paragraph (b) the following words be struck out:—"and, if so required by the elector, allow the scrutineers to inspect the ballot paper before depositing it in the ballot box."

Amendment on the amendment put and passed.

Amendment, as amended, put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 118—Spoilt ballot papers:

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of the clause the words "there and then destroy the spoilt ballot paper" be struck out, with a view to the insertion of other words.

The words I propose should be inserted are "retain the spoilt ballot paper and forward it to the returning officer at the close of the poll." While other provisions of the Act make it certain that every ballot paper issued shall be accounted for, the law has so far allowed spoilt ballot papers to be destroyed without being accounted for. I do not suggest that the present system involves many opportunities for wrongdoing or fraud, but I do think the principle of accounting for every ballot paper should be preserved.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That at the end of the clause the words "retain the spoilt ballot paper and forward it to the returning officer at the close of the poll" be inserted.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I have not much objection to the amendment; but I consider it should contain words providing that any marks made on the spoilt ballot paper should be obliterated, so that other persons would not know how the elector was voting.

Mr. WATTS: I agree to the insertion of the words and move the amendment in the following form:—

That the following words be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—"retain the spoilt ballot paper, and after obliterating any marks made by the elector thereon, forward it to the returning officer at the close of the poll."

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 119—The close of the poll; duties of presiding officer:

Mr. NORTH: The presiding officer should be responsible for the boxes until the votes are counted, and there should be no loophole for substitution or error. I move an amendment—

That the following subclause be inserted:—" (4) The presiding officer shall be responsible for the custody of the ballot box or boxes from the commencement of the polling until the counting of votes is completed."

Hon. C. G. Latham: What would happen with boxes placed in a railway guard's van?

Mr. NORTH: The presiding officer would have to make the necessary provision.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I cannot accept the amendment, which would entirely alter the procedure and make it expensive and unworkable. Motor cars do a round trip picking up 20 or 30 boxes, while from places along railway lines, boxes are placed in charge of a guard. Each candidate may have a scrutineer at the polling booth to ensure that the boxes are sealed.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The number of votes has to be checked and to defraud would not be easy.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, it would be difficult. Sufficient precautions are already provided.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 120 to 154—agreed to.

Clause 155—Electoral expenses:

Mr. NORTH: I move an amendment—

That after "telegrams" the word "telephony" be inserted.

As postages and telegrams are exempted radio telephony should also be excluded.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amendment should not be accepted because it might be interpreted as including telephone calls. If members desire to include radio broadcasting, I have no objection.

Hon. C. G. Latham: One man with any amount of money could absolutely drown another speaker.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The amount devoted to publicity in a public way is not limited. A candidate may hire as many public halls as he likes, and the cost is not charged as an electoral expense. Yet, because radio is new, members do not approve of its exemption.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Why not include newspaper articles and advertising? They are all the same.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. NORTH: I move an amendment—

That in line 4, after "telegrams," the word "radio" be inserted.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. WATTS: Will the Minister explain the meaning of the words at the end of the clause reading: "Where expenses are incurred on behalf of a number of candidates each candidate shall for the purpose of this Part be responsible for a fair and reasonable proportion of such expenses."

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It may be that three or four candidates belong to one party and as all are standing for the same electorate they are permitted to share the cost of advertising. There may be a big hoarding on which three or four names may appear. The cost of that advertising would be shared; or it may be that a streamer is affixed to the side of a tramcar bearing the names of three or four candidates; the cost of that would be shared.

Hon. N. Keenan: At the last election you had streamers with the words "Collier will fight." How would you divide the expenses there?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That was a simple statement of fact and it was borne out by subsequent events. The object of the words in the clause is to enable candidates who are grouped to divide the cost.

Hon. N. KEENAN: This part of the clause will be quite unworkable. The sentence reads, "Where expenses are incurred"; it does not say anything about candidates joining together to share the costs. For instance, what amount would the member for Kimberley have to pay? Would any candidate, on making his return, declare that he was responsible for, say, £1 7s. 8d. of the total? It merely means placing candidates in a false position. I move an amendment—

That the words "Where expenses are incurred on behalf of a number of candidates each candidate shall, for the purpose of this Part, be responsible for a fair and reasonable proportion of such expenses" be struck out.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 156 to 162—agreed to.

Clause 163—Undue influence:

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Will the Minister explain the meaning of the proviso which reads, "Provided that in relation to any charge under Paragraph (d) no person shall be convicted if he prove that he had reasonable ground for believing and did in fact believe the defamatory statement to be true"?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This particular provision is taken from the Commonwealth Act and has been in force in that Act for many years.

Mr. Stubbs: Then I can stand on a platform and call you anything I like.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, if you had reasonable grounds for believing that what you were saying was true.

Mr. Stubbs: Would it be fair?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I am advised that it is fair. There may be people standing for public positions such as a seat in Parliament and it might be advisable to expose the character of those people. With this proviso a candidate's bad character could be exposed. When a man is standing for a public position his character is on trial and if there is anything against him it is right that the public should be aware of the fact. If action is taken the individual who made the statement has to prove that he had substantial reasons for believing that what he said was true. The point is that the accused must prove that he had reasonable grounds for believing the statement. If the judge were to decide that the grounds were unreasonable, he would be convicted.

Hon. N. Keenan: He could avoid a judge and get a jury.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The hon. member is not opposed to juries, surely!

Hon. N. Keenan: Not in some circumstances.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is sometimes better to have the case tried by 12 men.

Hon. N. KEENAN: When any man stands for public office and has to be elected he becomes a target for all the malicious tongues in the community. The Minister referred to libel in ordinary civil life. But it is not a defence in civil life to say that one believes a libel. What is easier than to condemn a man standing for public office by malicious and false statements? And who is going to settle what are reasonable grounds for believing a statement?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The jury.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The jury will not. If a man makes a true charge against another man standing for public office, I agree that that man has discharged a public duty, for he has prevented that other man from being elected; but if he makes an untrue charge he will also prevent him from being elected, if the charge is believed. A man who offers himself for public office should not be made a target for abuse and lies. If what is alleged against him be true, then let it be alleged far and wide, but if it is not true do not let us allow it to escape by a subterfuge such as this. I move an amendment—

That the proviso be struck out.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I hope the Committee will agree to strike out this proviso. I know we have taken it from the Federal Act, but we have not gone as far as is provided in that Act, for it is there laid down that any person making a false or defamatory statement may be restrained from repeating that statement. Of course I presume that even without that specific provision in the Bill, an application could be made to a judge for an injunction restraining any person from repeating a defamatory statement. I agree with the member for Nedlands that we have no right to excuse a person who comes along and defames another standing for election if the only intention is to do that person an injury.

The Minister for Justice: That is not done.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: But frequently it is done. We ought to protect ourselves, instead of putting up an excuse for the person who violates the law.

The Minister for Justice: But he must prove that he had reasonable ground for believing the statement to be true.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: What are reasonable grounds for believing? We have no right to provide an excuse that in common law would not be permitted. By this provision we are defeating the common law.

Amendment put and a division taken with the following results:—

Ayes	23
Noes	16

Majority for 7

AYES.

Mr. Boyle	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Brockman	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Seward
Mr. Cross	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Latham	Mr. Warner
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Waite
Mr. Needham	Mr. Welsh
Mr. North	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Nulsen	

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Clothier	Mr. Munie
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Wansborough
Miss Holman	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Wise
Mr. Lambert	Mr. Withers
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Millington	
Mr. Moloney	

(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 164 to 166—agreed to.

Clause 167—Illegal practices:

Mr. NORTH: Would it be an illegal expense to use a telephone in a committee room, or for the candidate to use the telephone in the course of his electioneering expenses? That is how it seems to me this Bill will apply.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not think for a moment it would be said that a telephone message from one person to another could be regarded as part of the electioneering expenses. Many things that are not specifically mentioned could not be regarded as illegal, but if a candidate were debarred by law from doing a thing, he would be liable if he did it.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I understand there is a great difference between our law and the Commonwealth law with regard to the distance from polling booths in which canvassers are allowed to operate. I believe in the case of the Commonwealth law the distance is 25 feet, but this Bill provides for a distance of 50 yards. I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (f) the word “yards” be struck out and “feet” inserted in lieu.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is undesirable that the doors of polling booths should be blocked by canvassers. If anything, the existing distance of 50 yards is too close.

Mr. WITHERS: The doors of polling booths should be kept clear. It may happen, however, that a committee room is a few yards within the prescribed distance from a polling booth. In such an event, would the candidate concerned be liable to a penalty?

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 168 to 172—agreed to.

Clause 173—Electoral offences:

Mr. STUBBS: I should like to know from the Minister if I would be liable to a fine of £50 if I bet a man a new hat or a few drinks that such and such a candidate would be unsuccessful.

The Minister for Justice: It would be an illegal practice.

Mr. STUBBS: In that case I guarantee every member of this House has contravened the Act.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 174 to 182—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Brands Act Amendment.
 - 2, Driving Act Amendment.
- With amendments.

ANNUAL ESTIMATES, 1935-36.

In Committee of Supply.

Resumed from the 10th October; Mr. Sleeman in the Chair.

Vote—Chief Secretary, £14,781 (partly considered):

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [9.20]: I am anxious to hear a Minister introduce these

Estimates of the Chief Secretary's Department. I would not like to presume to speak for the Chief Secretary.

Hon. C. G. Latham: There is a representative of the Chief Secretary in this Chamber, is there not? Who is representing the Chief Secretary? The Chief Secretary's representative should introduce these Votes.

Mr. SAMPSON: I desire to make my present remarks under a divisional heading.

The CHAIRMAN: I take it the hon. member is speaking generally?

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, speaking generally; but speaking particularly in regard to Registry and Friendly Societies. A most interesting report by the Registrar of Friendly Societies has been submitted to Parliament. The fact is known not only to hon. members but throughout the State that the work of friendly societies is of the highest advantage to the people of Western Australia. The Registrar's last report shows that there are 22,744 members of friendly societies in Western Australia. The work of the societies in the direction of medical and other care of their members must be of great assistance indeed to the Government. I feel it is a matter for regret that the hospital tax is chargeable even where members of the community belong to friendly societies. I am aware that payment of hospital tax does not connote that free hospital service is provided; but since probably most of those who belong to friendly societies are on the basic wage, they should not be called upon to pay hospital tax. The fact that they enter into an arrangement through some friendly society or other, in return for a certain weekly payment, to be provided with medical service and, to an extent, sick pay, should relieve them of payment of hospital tax. The weekly payments to the friendly societies certainly mean that the Government are not called upon to care for those people, who under present conditions are actually paying twice.

The Minister for Water Supplies: They do not all subscribe to a hospital fund, or for hospital accommodation.

Mr. SAMPSON: So far I have not referred to hospital accommodation.

The Minister for Water Supplies: What you refer to is a special payment, the hospital payment.

Mr. SAMPSON: The hospital tax is payable by all who are in receipt of revenue of £1 or over per week. They are due for an

amount of 1½d. in the pound, according to income. The hospital tax is levied on all members of the community in receipt of a certain income. Some 22,000 members of the community belong to friendly societies, and so care for themselves in sickness.

The Minister for Water Supplies: All the miners are paying twice. They must pay the hospital tax.

Mr. SAMPSON: That is the point. I do not think they should be called upon to pay a hospital tax, seeing that they are already taking care of themselves by the payment of amounts to friendly societies. Friendly society work should, in my opinion, be encouraged. I would very much appreciate it if the Chief Secretary, or the Minister representing the Chief Secretary here, would give his consideration to that aspect. People should be encouraged to be self-reliant. They should be encouraged to pay the small amount charged by friendly societies, and thus be placed in a position to care for themselves.

Mr. Wansbrough: What about the man who insures himself against accident and sickness?

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, the man who belongs to some medical fund; something might be said for him too. I realise that he also is looking after himself. On the timber mills, on the goldmines, and in various big industries an amount is paid into a medical fund providing certain services. Persons who make such payments should also receive consideration. The work of the Minister in charge of public health and hospitals would become much easier if a greater number of people belonged to friendly societies. I hope the Minister representing the Chief Secretary will give the Committee the advantage of the Government's views on this subject, which I regard as important.

[Mr. J. H. Smith took the Chair.]

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [9.22]: I object to the way in which these Votes are being thrown at the Committee—"Here you are; discuss them if you like." The Treasurer in making his Financial Statement gave an undertaking that Ministers would deal with their own departments. Here we have a Vote of no less than £191,005, and the Government say, "Here you are; take it or leave it; do as you like." I have been a member of this Assembly for quite a long while, and this is the first time

I have ever known a Vote of so large an amount to be thrown at the Committee in that manner.

The Minister for Water Supplies: I do not remember these Estimates being introduced previously.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Is the suggestion that they are never introduced? Of course they have been introduced in the past.

The Minister for Water Supplies: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then why does the hon. gentleman introduce the Estimates of his department? I repeat, these Estimates are always introduced. In point of fact, it is generally the Minister for Mines who introduces them. It seems to me a careless way to ask the Committee to agree to a Vote of some £190,000. Let us know what the activities of the department have been. Let us know what are the reasons for the increases shown. What is to be done with regard to the Aborigines Royal Commission's report? I have never attempted to hold up the work of Parliament, but I do object to the Government saying, "Here is a Vote of £191,005: do as you like."

The Minister for Water Supplies: I shall be glad to give the hon. gentleman information.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is about time we asked the Treasurer to introduce these Votes. The Treasurer, of course, in the past has touched generally on the various departments, leaving it to the individual Ministers controlling the departments to introduce their own Estimates. On this occasion members of the Committee are to be absolutely ignored.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Not a scrap!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am going to have something to say on these Estimates, though I have not prepared any matter. The Minister representing the Chief Secretary might tell me why there is an increase of £1,304 in the Chief Secretary's Department.

The Minister for Water Supplies: That is an item.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is not an item at all. What is proposed to be done with regard to the Aborigines Royal Commission report? Do the Government propose to introduce legislation based on that report? Are they going to provide the hospitals stated to be necessary? If so, how are the Government going to provide them? In those respects the Minister representing the Chief

Secretary might have given the Committee some information, seeing that the Chamber carried a resolution asking the Government to appoint the Royal Commission. All we have is the bald report of the Commission, without any intimation of the Government's intentions in regard to it. Very little provision is made on these Estimates for hospitals. I understand there is to be a leprosy lazarette built somewhere in the North, but that is Press information. Are members of this Committee in future to get their information from the newspapers, or are they to get it from Ministers? I protest against the manner in which these Estimates are being submitted. The Government desire simply to throw the Estimates at members and say, "Here you are, just take them." If that is the way Estimates are to be treated in future, the sooner the public realise how impossible it is for Opposition members to get explanations the better it will be. The Gaols Vote shows an increase of £831. One might have expected from the present Government some improvement in the control of short-term prisoners. However, apparently there is no improvement policy whatever in regard to the Gaols Department. Harbour and Light and Jetties show an increase of £1,544, and Mental Hospitals and Inebriates an increase of £3,710. If the Minister representing the Chief Secretary had introduced these Estimates and pointed out to the Committee what the increases mean, probably the Estimates would have got through a great deal more quickly than they will by simply saying, "Here you are; here are the Estimates: just do as you like." I protest against this so-called introduction of the Chief Secretary's Estimates. Are we going to have all the Estimates thrown at us like this? Will the Minister for Mines do the same with his Estimates? This is the only place where we can get information as to the departments, and that information ought to be proffered to us at such a time. Is this Department of the Chief Secretary a hopelessly stagnant one with nothing to report? Is there no progress to be recorded at all? This is the first time I have ever known Estimates to be thrown down in this way.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, it has been done before.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I will have "Hansard" turned up and show you that it has never been done before. The only informa-

tion we can get is that which we get from the public Press.

Mr. Raphael interjected.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, and put a man into prison simply because he told an untruth in order to get employment.

The CHAIRMAN: There is nothing about that in these Estimates.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know in whose department it is. Perhaps the Minister for Justice, now that he has returned to the Chamber, will tell us why these Estimates have not been introduced in the proper manner, and whether all the remaining Estimates are to be introduced like this.

The Minister for Justice: I would be disorderly if I interjected.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The reason why the Estimates are introduced in this House is because this House controls finance. Ever since I have been here, the Chief Secretary has been a member of another place, but has always had a spokesman in this House.

The Minister for Justice: Oh no. You can get all the information you require.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Well, I want to have it. Why has not the Minister for Agriculture informed us of the reason for these increases in the Estimates?

The Minister for Justice: Ask him for the reason.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not think he has it. Had I not seen that the whole of the front Government benches were unoccupied, with the sole exception of the seat of the Minister for Agriculture, I would not have known that that gentleman was in charge of the Chief Secretary's Estimates. What is to be done about the report of the Royal Commission on Aborigines, and where is the money to come from for the building of aborigines' hospitals in the North? Is that to come out of the hospital fund? The Minister in charge of these Estimates ought to have given us this information. If we are to have Estimates thrown at us in this way, the sooner the Government take complete control the better. A hospital in the North should not be built out of the hospital fund.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Did you build anything out of revenue when you were in power?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, because it took us all our time to find enough revenue with which to feed the people. But the policy laid down by the Loan Council was that hospitals and schools were not to be built out of loan funds.

The Minister for Justice: But that has been departed from.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, I know.

The Minister for Water Supplies: You did not spend revenue on the Harvey River Scheme.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, but that was to provide a drainage scheme.

Mr. Raphael: And at the first rains all the works were washed away.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: When that work was going on, the Estimates were not thrown to hon. members, but the whole scheme was fully explained to them. I want to know what is the Government's policy in respect to the report of the Royal Commission on Aborigines.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Well, ask the Minister in charge of the Estimates.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Why should I have to ask him, and thus help frame the Government's policy for them?

Mr. Raphael: You are talking now for electioneering purposes.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Of course, everything done on this side of the House is done for electioneering purposes. I want to know from the Minister in charge what is the policy of the Chief Secretary's Department. We on this side want a fulfilment of the undertaking given by the Treasurer that Ministers representing various departments would introduce their own estimates.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [9.38]: If the Leader of the Opposition will cease to act like a petulant child I shall be delighted to inform him on any particular point he may mention. Having accepted on behalf of the Chief Secretary the handling of his Estimates in this House, and having been assured that, the Chief Secretary not being in this House, it was not the custom formally to introduce these Estimates, I shall be pleased to inform the hon. member on any particular point not sufficiently well presented and explanatory in the printed Estimates. As to the points on which he specifically requested information, I will reply with pleasure and without any petulance.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I would not stress the petulance too much.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Obviously, it does not need stressing. Re-

garding the Aborigines Department, the activities of the Government and the added expenditure necessary in consequence of the new appointments are indicated. The estimated expenditure for 1935-36 is £26,835. The collections of the department are used to defray expenditure and a sum of £10,000 is voted under the Aborigines Act. The net result is that the estimated charge to Consolidated Revenue this year is £14,275, compared with £12,608 in 1934-35. This vote represents all the expenditure incidental to natives except that for Moola Bulla and Munja stations. The increase of £1,667 is made up of the salary of a new travelling doctor for the North-West, £1,000; salary of a married couple for the new native hospital at Wyndham, £125; increased remuneration of the visiting doctor to Moore River, £45; long-service leave to two officers, £169; grade increases and Financial Emergency Act remissions, £396; a total of £1,819. The contingencies include a car for the new travelling doctor, the upkeep of it and travelling expenses, and maintenance of the new native hospital at Wyndham. To be deducted from that is the non-recurring expenditure of £1,170, making a net increase of £150. There are certain revenues to be derived in the way of permits and agreements and sundry sales of produce from different mission stations, making a total of £2,558. As to the Government policy for the future of the aborigines, this, as was indicated by interjection by the Minister for Justice, is receiving the consideration of the Government. It is not a matter for direct discussion on these Estimates. As to gaols, there is a slight increase of £831, made up generally of certain replacements and reallocations of duties, and certain contingencies. There are small grade increases and a small amount for relief on the retirement of one officer, making a total of £131. I assure the hon. member that there was no intention of throwing the Estimates at the Chamber, as he was pleased to term it; nor was there any action to justify that statement. I am handling these Estimates on behalf of the Chief Secretary, and will be pleased to give information on any point I have and to convey to the Chief Secretary any request desired by the hon. member.

HON. P. D. FERGUSON (Irwin-Moore) [9.45]: I have no desire to enter into an

argument with the Minister as to whether he should introduce the Estimates or otherwise, but I would be glad if he would give for our information and for the information of the country certain details regarding activities included in the Chief Secretary's department. I have been greatly interested in the operations of the Pardelup prison farm and I would be glad if the Minister would tell us something of the operations of the institution, which I believe has been of considerable benefit to the good-conduct prisoners whom it was undesirable to retain in the Fremantle gaol, and whose services have been utilised at the prison farm. Will the Minister also give us some information regarding the payment to the Prison Gate Committee as indicated in the Estimates? Who are the Prison Gate Committee? What work do they undertake? What is the cost of the committee to the Government? What becomes of the funds that the Government make available to the committee? I should also like to know the cost of the upkeep of the motor car, whose motor car it is, and to what use it is put.

Mr. Wilson: You do not want to know anything at all!

HON. P. D. FERGUSON: I am seeking information that I believe will be of interest to different sections of the community. The investigation and report of the Royal Commissioner appointed to inquire into the conditions under which the aborigines live have aroused keen interest in the country. I venture to say that the Commissioner gave some information that has surprised a good many people in this State. Throughout the length and breadth of the country it is the general desire that the Government should do something more than has been done in past years to ameliorate the conditions under which the natives, and particularly the half-castes, live. I shall be glad to hear what the intentions of the Government are regarding the re-establishment of a station in the Great Southern district. Some years ago the station at Carrolup was closed.

Mr. Wilson: Who closed it?

HON. P. D. FERGUSON: I understand that the Government of the day closed it. Is it intended to re-establish that institution? Is it considered advisable to re-open it where I understand the land has been disposed of and where, if the Government wish to re-open it, they would have to resume the land probably at considerable cost to the

country? If it is thought advisable to re-establish a mission in the Great Southern, it might be more economical to adopt some other centre.

The Minister for Water Supplies: Who was responsible for the alteration?

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I am not in a position to say.

Mr. Raphael: You said your Government and then the present Government. Why not be sure of your facts?

The Minister for Water Supplies: The natives were shifted from the Great Southern to the Moore River.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I did not say which Government.

Mr. Raphael: You suggested that the present Government had done it.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I did not mention any Government.

Mr. Raphael: Tell the truth.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: I did not make any such assertion. The hon. member seems to go to sleep half the time.

Mr. Raphael: I was not asleep.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must keep order.

Mr. Raphael: Why not put me out?

The CHAIRMAN: If the hon. member desires to make a speech, he will have an opportunity later.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Do not ask him to do an impossibility.

Mr. Raphael interjected.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: It is a thousand pities that the hon. member does not sleep the other 50 per cent. of his time for he would then be serving the State better. I ask the Minister representing the Chief Secretary whether he will be good enough to investigate the transport of goods to native mission stations in the North-West. You, Mr. Chairman, will know that it is the practice on the State railways to carry goods, particularly from the fruit-growing areas, to charitable institutions in and around the metropolitan area free of cost, provided the fruit is made available as a gift. The Benedictine community at New Norcia are responsible for the native mission at Beagle Bay and they send a lot of goods from New Norcia to Beagle Bay, principally clothing made at the institution, and flour which is ground and gristed at New Norcia. All these things are sent to Beagle Bay mainly

by State steamers and a considerable charge is made for freight. If it is a fair thing to carry apples and other fruit for charitable institutions in the metropolitan area, it would be equally fair for the State Steamship Service to carry free of cost goods to the native missions in the North-West. No one makes any profit out of the manufacture or the growing of the goods to which I have referred. All are the product of New Norcia where most of the labour is given free by the Brothers there. It would be a friendly gesture on the part of the Government if they were to assist that organisation in the direction I have suggested, remembering that the Brothers are doing so much to ameliorate the condition of the natives in the Kimberleys and in that way are carrying out a laudable object, as well as saving the Government considerable expense.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Aborigines, £14,275:

Item, Chief Protector, etc., £1,180.

Mr. SAMPSON: Some information might be provided regarding the report of the Royal Commission.

The Minister for Agriculture: The information the hon. member requires will be given when the Government introduces the legislation.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Registry and Friendly Societies, £10,512:

Item, Salaries and allowances, etc., £7,830.

Mr. SAMPSON: This is the division about which I should like some information. Would it not be of advantage to Governments if consideration were given to those who look after themselves in this way? The work of the friendly societies should be encouraged, particularly in view of the fine report submitted by the Registrar of Friendly Societies, Mr. S. Bennett. The non-payment of hospital tax—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! There is no reference to hospital tax in this Vote and the hon. member is out of order.

Vote put and passed.

Vote—Gaols, £26,451:

Item, Salaries and allowances, etc., £15,021.

Mr. SAMPSON: There are certain trade instructors at the Fremantle gaol—

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member should have spoken generally at an earlier stage. He must confine his remarks to the item.

Mr. SAMPSON: The item includes payments to trade instructors, and I am advised that there are trade instructors who, in addition to carrying out work associated with the trade, are obliged to do sentry work and carry a rifle. They also have to work unusually long hours.

Mr. Raphael: It is 24 hours a day there.

Mr. SAMPSON: They have to work alternate Saturdays and Sundays. It is wrong that the teacher of a skilled trade should be called upon to act in that double capacity. If this is really so the Minister should stop it.

Mr. Coverley: Who is your informant?

Mr. SAMPSON: That does not matter. If it is true it should be altered. If it is not true I will withdraw any suggestion of improper treatment of these men.

Mr. Moloney: You are speaking from hearsay, are you?

Mr. SAMPSON: My information comes from a reliable source. Apparently the subject is not treated seriously. If the Minister cannot give me a reply I do not want to embarrass him.

Mr. Coverley: Why did you not alter all that while you were in office?

Mr. SAMPSON: It was not being done then. This is an innovation. I am sure the Minister himself would not stand for it, but he has been burdened with these Estimates at a moment's notice and cannot enlighten me on this subject.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON: Is it intended to extend the apple orchard at Pardelup, what has been the result of the experiments there, has the dairying been a success, and what has been the cost of producing butter?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am quite ready to give any information if it is sought in a serious way. I will endeavour to get from the Chief Secretary the information required by the member for Swan. The whole of the collections from the Pardelup farm for 1934-35 amounted to £1,057.

Vote put and passed.

Vote, Harbour and Light and Jetties, £21,374—agreed to.

Vote, Mental Hospitals and Inebriates, £101,928.

(Mr. Sleeman resumed the Chair.)

Mr. McLARTY: I should like to ask the Minister whether it is intended to carry on the developmental work at Whitby Home, which is capable of supplying a large proportion of the foodstuffs required at the various mental homes. It is a beautiful property and it would be wise to work it to its full capacity. If the Minister is able to give us any information as to the future policy, I should like to hear it.

Mr. NORTH: I should like to ask the Minister the reason for this increase of £2,000 in the Vote. Is it in any way due to the reduction of hours?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In reply to the member for Murray-Wellington, I may say the policy of the Government is to encourage as much as possible the self-supporting idea which has prevailed at the Whitby Home. Not only has the farm produced remarkable results, but it is hoped to extend along those lines. The Government are fostering that idea and they hope to carry the development a good deal farther. As to the question put by the member for Claremont, the amount is accounted for largely by the provision of 16 nurses for a full year in the new female ward, three new nurses for the male ward, three nurses at Lemnos, a man at Heathcote and remissions totalling £535 under the Financial Emergency Act.

Mr. SAMPSON: I should like to ask whether the policy inaugurated some years ago of supplying fruit to the inmates of the Hospital for Insane is being maintained?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have no information on that point, but I will see the Chief Secretary and advise the hon. member.

Vote put and passed.

Vote, Observatory, £1,681—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.