

The member for North-East Fremantle says I am asking for too much money. It may be so. But if we can get the labour, there is no reason why a considerable proportion of what I ask for should not be spent. It is better to have the returned soldiers settled quickly, than to have them waiting about. In this House there have been complaints of delay.

Mr. Harrison: A long time ago.

The PREMIER: Yes; and we shall hear them to the end of time. It has been said that we ought to have been perfectly ready for these men. However, we were not, and in consequence there have been delays. But the delays would have been much greater if Mr. McLarty had not been in charge of the scheme during the last few months. During the past week we settled sixty odd soldiers, and that in itself is a fair amount of settlement. If any member will go to an agricultural district and travel over sixty farms he will find that he has journeyed a long way. Complaint is easy, but performance is something different. I have quite recently appointed additional inspectors in order that delays may be avoided, but it is very difficult to get men suitable for making valuations. This scheme of settlement is not an ordinary one, because we are doing so much more for the soldier than for the ordinary settler. The ordinary settler went upon Crown lands, and he went at a much slower rate. His mortgage to the Agricultural Bank averaged little over £300, as compared with over £600 for the soldier. The expenditure authorised for soldier settlement is already £994,000; and that will not be all.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: That includes repurchase of land.

The PREMIER: Yes, but it is of advantage just the same. I have explained that settling men on Crown lands is cheaper than settling them repurchased estates, although in the latter case a man can get to work straight away. I have also explained that very little money is being expended on ordinary public works this year. We have down a small item for railways, but we shall not be able to carry on any railway construction work for a time, at any rate not until rails become cheaper.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There is an amount of £46,000 down for tramways. You can do without that.

The PREMIER: We have determined that railway construction work will have to wait for a few months.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You will not settle many soldiers by building tram lines.

The PREMIER: I want to make the hon. member understand that ordinary loan expenditure on public works this year will be very low.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Why do you not sell the trams to the local authorities?

The PREMIER: The Government would be very glad to sell the trams if the local authorities would pay enough for them. My duty to-night is to tell hon. members what this expenditure means, and I want the fact kept in mind that the general revenue will pay a very small amount indeed in interest and sinking fund on these loans. There never was a time before when we could come to the House and ask for expenditure on land settlement which would cost the State practically nothing. It certainly will not cost the revenue anything for

years to come. That is an ideal condition of affairs and should not be objected to by anybody.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I am a little pessimistic about that.

The PREMIER: So long as the hon. member keeps his pessimism to himself I shall not mind. The whole House has agreed that the soldiers shall be settled on the land in these circumstances and since that is the case, the House must vote the money and complete the job.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We will get on to the items later on.

The PREMIER: In connection with a matter of this sort it is the general discussion that counts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I do not see more than £1,000 for any big work in my district.

The PREMIER: There is a little for the hon. member's district.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: We have a railway bridge that is not safe.

The PREMIER: The hon. member has everything and no place has had so much. I move the first item.

[The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.]

Progress reported.

BILL—DIVORCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message received from the Council notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Assembly.

House adjourned at 12.37 a.m. (Saturday).

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 2nd December, 1919.

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

QUESTION—NORTH-WEST COAST SHIPPING.

Hon. G. J. G. W. MILES (without notice) asked the Minister for Education: 1, Are the Government aware that the Royal assent has been given to the Commonwealth Navigation Act and that the Prime Minister has announced that the Act will be proclaimed and brought into force immediately? 2, If so, will the Government take immediate steps to induce the Federal Government to exempt the North-West coast from the provisions of the Act until an adequate service has been provided, seeing that the Federal Government have the power, under an amending Act passed in October last, to do so?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied: By an Act of the Commonwealth Parliament passed last session the Commonwealth Government are empowered to proclaim any provision or part or schedule of the Navigation Act of 1912. The Government well recognise the importance of the present position to Western Australia and, chiefly to deal with this matter and the question of shipping on the North-West coast generally, the Minister is proceeding to Melbourne almost immediately.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Will it not be necessary to wire this?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No.

QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAY DEPARTMENT.

Policy Regarding Returned Soldiers.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Minister for Education:—1, In view of the recent statement made by the Minister for Railways, appearing in the "West Australian" of the 28th November, 1919, "The Commissioner had said, 'I know the policy of the Returned Soldiers' Association, and I know my policy in the administration of the Railway Department,' can he inform the House whether the Minister or the Commissioner of Railways is conversant with the declaration of policy in regard to preference to returned soldiers, forwarded by the Premier to the recent returned soldiers' conference? 2, Can the Minister or the Commissioner of Railways override the Premier's declaration of policy made to the returned soldiers' conference?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:—1, Yes. 2, The Premier's declaration of policy was not overridden in this case as the qualifications were not equal.

Appointment of Mr. Backshall.

Hon. J. CORNELL asked the Minister for Education:—1, Can he inform the House if the position of officer in charge of operations and inspection, recently filled by Mr. E. G. Backshall, was advertised in any newspaper? If so, in what paper, 2, If the position was not advertised, what are the reasons for not advertising, and what method was adopted in calling for applications? 3, How many applicants applied for the position?

4, Did any returned soldiers with railway qualifications and experience apply for the position? If so, how many? 5, Did the successful applicant, prior to his leaving the railway service, obtain higher qualifications and higher grade than any or all of the returned soldier applicants? If so, to what extent? 6, At what date did the successful applicant sever his connection with the railway service, and what grade had he attained at that date? 7, Had any of the unsuccessful applicants attained a higher grade in the railway service than had the successful applicant at the date of his appointment? 8, As the Government decided to appoint a returned soldier as Acting Commissioner, why was this course not given a trial in filling the position now held by Mr. Backshall?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:—1, No. 2, The position was advertised through the recognised official channel, viz., "The Weekly Notice." 3, Twenty-seven. 4, Yes; five. 5, No; his qualifications were obtained prior to and subsequent to his leaving the department. 6, 21st June, 1910; first class loco. engine-driver. 7, Yes. 8, In appointing an Acting Commissioner of Railways the decision of the Government was based on the qualifications of the applicants from a railway point of view, and there was no decision to appoint a returned soldier. In filling the position of officer-in-charge of operations and inspection the same principle was followed and the applicant was appointed who, in the opinion of the Acting Commissioner possessed in the highest degree the special qualifications necessary for the position.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 27th November.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON (North-East) [4.37]: I wish, in the first place, to offer a few remarks of a general character. Those speaking to the second reading have to an extent contended that the present Constitution is, if not obsolete, at all events more conservative than any other in Australia. The number of amendments contained in the Bill deal with six or seven different matters, showing that the Government of the day are attempting a general clean up of questions that for a long time have remained in abeyance. When the Assembly desire amendments to the Constitution, particularly on matters which affect this Chamber, there is only one way I know of in which they can make their wishes and desires law. They have taken the only method available, have considered the matters from all points of view, representing as they do the whole of the people of the State, and in this measure they have requested the Council to take into consideration certain amendments directly affecting this Chamber. It appears to me the

alteration of the Constitution is in many respects the job of this Council. We have the power to reject the measure, to pass it, or to amend it. It has often been pointed out that, irrespective of diverse opinions, the Council has power to do certain things. I remember on one occasion, in respect of a money Bill, an hon. member was reminded that an amendment he moved might be against the Constitution, that we had not power to delete an item from the Estimates. "Well," said he, "we are going to do it." In regard to anything this Council does, there is no judiciary that can disagree. What is passed by this Council goes. Several members in debating the second reading have assumed that the Bill is an attempt to abolish the Council, to take away certain rights given to the Council under the Constitution. The abolition of the Council, and the institution of adult suffrage, are each a most interesting question, but neither has anything whatever to do with the amendments contained in the Bill. If it had, the debate would have been very different. If, for instance, it were a question of the abolition of the Council, arguments entirely different from those we have heard would have to be used to justify the passing of the measure. Again, if it were a question of the institution of adult franchise for the Council, although some of the arguments heard during the debate would hold good, still since this is a measure merely to amend in one respect the franchise, and in other respects to define the powers of the Council, many of the arguments used have nothing whatever to do with the question before us. If we had to substantiate the right of every elector for the Assembly to have a vote for the Council, an entirely different set of arguments would have to be used. As we claim to be a democracy, we ought to give to an elector for the Assembly a vote for this Chamber. But that has nothing to do with the measure before us, and therefore I do not propose to touch upon it at length. I took the House into my confidence the first time I spoke in regard to the utility of this Chamber. Again, that has nothing to do with the measure before us. What we have to consider is whether, since we have the power, we have not also a responsibility placed upon us, and whether the main amendment contained in the Bill cannot be justified.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Did you say some slight amendments?

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: I maintain that, in contradistinction to the arguments put up by Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Holmes, who protested against an attempt to abolish this Council and the attempt to establish adult franchise, these are slight amendments. When I come to the question of the alteration of the franchise, I think it will be easy to show that very little alteration will take place in the roll so far as that is concerned. The franchise for soldiers is another question. I would like to deal particularly with the extended qualification, which in my opinion is not an extended qualification, but rather a clearer definition in order that there

shall be no doubt as to those who are entitled to vote under the heading of household franchise. With regard to the opinion of the general public—and I think we have respect for their opinion—there has been only one occasion when the public of Australia have had an opportunity of expressing one. It has been pointed out that even on that occasion the admittedly able men who drafted the Commonwealth Constitution saw that it was necessary, advisable, and justifiable to give every adult a vote in Australia for the Commonwealth Parliament. That is the only time when the people of Australia have passed an opinion as to what the voters' qualification should be. Again, speaking also in general terms, although there is a good deal of talk to-day about State rights and this Legislative Council representing the last trench of the State righters, I believe that the people to-day realise that if they are to have a respect for law, and are to be expected to obey the law, they are entitled to have some say in electing those who represent them, whether it be in the Legislative Council or the Legislative Assembly. Not only in Australia, but I believe throughout the world, it has become generally admitted that the people have a right to say who shall represent them in any given Parliament. As a matter of fact, the people, no matter what law is passed, are expected to obey it. As I said last week on another matter, I believe that, so far as the generality of people is concerned, the average Australian has a good deal of respect for law and order. Anything that can be done to strengthen, rather than weaken it, should be done. In this Council we have placed before us a measure which proposes to extend slightly the qualification so far as the householder is concerned. The responsibility rests with us as to whether we shall remove this disability or, in plain language, make it definite and clear as to who are qualified under the present Constitution to vote for this House. The reason why I am particularly interested in this matter is because of the experience we had at the last elections for the Legislative Council. We found then that under the Constitution there was a doubt as to the qualification of the householder. This measure, if passed, will make that definite and plain. I have said before that I am not going to attempt to give anyone any advice with regard to getting on the roll on the householder's qualification unless this is made plain. I have an objection to misleading anyone or to getting anyone into trouble needlessly. On the advice that is given them, people who are honest, straightforward, and law-abiding citizens, and many of them women, have got into trouble in the past, and have been haled before the court on a charge of having made a false statement on account of the filling in of claim cards on the householder qualification. I am never going to advise anyone or assist in getting anyone on the roll on the householder qualification until it is made definite and plain as to who are entitled under the qualification to be enrolled. We consulted the Electoral Department particularly just be-

fore the election. The opinion was held that certain prosecutions were going to take place on account of wrongful enrolments. I am not going to say anything in regard to that on this occasion, but desire to bring before hon. members the attitude we adopted and that adopted by the department. If the department controlling the Act cannot interpret the law, I ask how the average citizen in the general community can be expected to do so. So far as we are concerned, as a Chamber, and as law-makers, I say it is our business and duty to make a law which affects the general community so plain that the average citizen will be able to understand it. Every law dealing with this matter should be workable before a court of law, and should be one of those laws which is a plain direction to people who are not versed in the law so that they may understand whether or not they are entitled to be franchised. There is sufficient capacity in this Chamber to make that clear. Therefore I welcome the measure before us. If hon. members will see that whatever law is made on this occasion is made plain, we can reasonably expect people to abide by its provisions. As I indicated, we referred a particular case to the Electoral Department but could get no satisfaction. On the eastern goldfields there are many houses in which families reside, men earning fair wages and rearing a fair-sized family. Under the road board valuation the properties do not come up to the £17 clear annual value. They are houses which are presumably fit for human habitation and in which many families on the goldfields are reared, and these are valued from £10, a great number are at £12, others at £14 and others at £15 and £16. It is unusual in some districts for the £17 clear annual value to be reached. When the case came before the court the road board assessor was called as a witness to declare the value of a given dwelling. He took it on the road board valuation. That was the difficulty. I know of one case in particular where a man has a very fair weatherboard house at Trafalgar, rated by the road board at £16 per annum. He is rearing a family of six children and is earning good money. He asked me if I thought it was safe for him to vote and I told him I could not advise him in the matter. The case we actually referred to the Electoral Department was in connection with a dwelling-house valued at £12 per annum. There were four rooms in it, the walls were hessian, it was lined with paper inside, and was a neat place with an iron roof. We wished to know the position in order that we might advise the people who were depending upon us what the view of the department was. I will read the telegrams I sent to the Chief Electoral Officer and his replies. The first one is as follows:—

To Stenberg, Chief Electoral Officer, Perth. Please wire reply to following question: Is an elector enrolled on the household qualification ineligible to vote because property for which claim is made is rated by a municipality or road board at less than £17 annual value?

That is a plain question, but this is the reply of the Chief Electoral Officer—

H. Millington. Cannot give categorical reply to question asked as household qualifications not governed by municipal rating values in same manner as ratepayers' qualifications. See Constitution Act Amendment Act, Section 15.

We did not get on very well with that and we tried again. Before sending this wire we consulted a solicitor, for we wanted to know really how the department interpreted this particular law. I again wired as follows:—

Please wire your opinion in regard to following specific case: A man who is a householder occupying a dwelling-house which he considers is worth to him 7s. 6d. per week is on roll for North-East province, but is rated at £12 annual value by road board. Is he entitled to sign declaration if challenged and exercise his vote?

There was a clear case that we sent to the Electoral Department, for that was the department which should have been able to decide. The reply is as follows:—

I can only give explanation of electoral provisions but no legal opinion. As I have already told you, a person's own opinion does not constitute proof of value, but if dwelling is of the clear annual value of £17 the elector would in my opinion if he still retains the qualification be entitled to vote independent of road board valuation.

The Chief Electoral Officer says that in some way, which he cannot explain, the road board valuation does not govern this clause with regard to the household qualification, and yet when we asked him how it could be defined, that was the reply we got. He says it is not his function to give legal advice, although we went to the man who we considered would be able to definitely decide the point. It can readily be seen by his wire that he refused to commit himself. Now we see the position of the average citizen who does not know the intricacies of the Electoral Act. Members will readily understand how easily the average citizen can be mistaken and misled in regard to his qualification. I have consulted the Crown Law Department since then on several occasions, but they cannot give me a definition. The late Attorney General, Mr. Robinson, said that his advice to me was to refer a case to the court, and that the court decides and no one else. Do hon. members think that people are going to the trouble of getting on the roll, if they are to get their claims assessed by the court? First of all, they have to get into trouble and commit an offence, and be charged with wilfully making a false statement, and then they have to find out whether they are entitled to be put on the roll on the household qualification. Surely this Chamber can devise some means of overcoming the difficulty by drafting a regulation so that anyone with average intelligence can understand definitely whether

he is entitled under a given qualification to be enrolled or not. That is what I wish to be done on this occasion.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh: I cannot find it in this Bill anyhow.

Hon. H. MILLINGTON: If we cannot do that when it is our job to do it and the people expect us to do it, and if we cannot turn out something which is quite plain, and put in something which is a direction to the people who expect us to give that direction, then we shall fail to solve a problem that it is our duty to solve. If we cannot do that we had better give the game up. No one likes to see honest people get into trouble over matters of this description. People who have never been near a court before were so scared over this that many who did possess the qualification were afraid to go to the poll to vote, and they said, never again will we get ourselves into a trouble like this. There are plenty of people who do possess the qualification, but it will be found that it will be difficult to persuade them to have their names enrolled. If the qualification does exist we expect people to take advantage of it. One woman who was fined on the goldfields stated that only a few days before she was fined at the instance of the Commonwealth authorities for not enrolling. On one day she got into trouble for not placing her name on the roll, and on the next she got into trouble for having her name on the State roll. Although some of the fines were not particularly high, the difficulty was that in each instance a lawyer was employed, and the costs amounted to something that was very serious to a working man or woman. In any case, in regard to a law of this description, there should be no divergence of opinion. Even the Attorney General himself stated he could not definitely declare who would be entitled to go on the roll under the householder qualification. He said to me that the only way to decide the matter would be to take it before a court of law. All we require is to have this question definitely set out. In the measure before us provision is made for a householder qualification, and I think the householder qualification can be justified, even on the grounds taken up by Sir Edward Wittenoom and Mr. Holmes. I have noticed that there is an objection to the adult franchise being extended to those who are not householders, and who are not taxpayers in the full sense of the word, but they are all the same citizens of the State. Hon. members know the value that a married man is to the State. He is rearing a family and he takes upon himself the full responsibility of citizenship. I believe it is recognised that such a man is of value to the community. The citizen of value to the State is particularly the man who is in the back-blocks, not exactly away from civilisation, but he who is attempting to rear a family in the outback districts. He is the man who assumes the full responsibility of citizenship. It is to that man that we are asking that the franchise shall

be extended. In assessing the value of a citizen, there are many here who probably would be considered conservative, but there is not one in this Chamber who will say that a single man who happens to own a block of land valued at £50 is a better citizen or more entitled to vote than the man who is working at Lancefield and rearing a family and assuming the full responsibility of citizenship. Who is of greater value to the State? From any point it is the citizen who is rearing a family, and he is the man who should be encouraged. Such a man cannot be called a carpet bagger, because, having a family he cannot very easily shift about. It is such people who go to make up our useful population, and it is on these that our traders depend more than on any other. We should endeavour in every way to encourage the man who is prepared in any part of the State to make a home for himself and rear a family. Because it is so difficult to arrive at what is the value of a house owned by an individual, it is necessary that the qualification provided in the Bill should become law. Where an occupier pays rent and can produce evidence to show that a certain rent is paid, that should be clear enough proof so far as the value of the property is concerned. Even though a man may say that a house is worth 7s. 6d. to him, that does not constitute sufficient value, because a municipal or a road board assessor may come along and place a lower value on the property. There are many people in the State who as worthy citizens are entitled to vote, but who have not the means of proving their right to do so. So far as the proposed qualification is concerned, it is not an innovation. Mr. Allen quoted the qualifications which exist in certain other States and he mentioned the South Australian householder qualification. As a matter of fact the clause in the Bill is similar to Section 17 of the South Australian Constitution Further Amendment Act, 1913, which says—

“Any person who is an inhabitant occupier, as owner or tenant, of any dwelling house; provided that no person shall be entitled to vote by reason of being a joint occupier of any dwelling house.”

Subsection 4 of the same section sets out the meaning of “dwelling house” as follows:—

“In this section the term dwelling house means any structure of a permanent character, being a fixture to the soil, which is ordinarily capable of being used for human habitation, and includes part of a building when that part is separately occupied as a dwelling.”

So that to those who follow precedent it can be shown that what is now proposed is in operation in some other part of the civilised world. Mr. Ardagh stated that it was impossible to make this clear. There appears to be no difficulty in South Australia, and I do not anticipate that there would be any here, particularly as the officials of the de-

partment have the right to examine all claim cards and claims, and I know none who would have a possibility of getting on the roll unless they possessed the qualification provided by the Act. I would like to mention that to a certain extent this measure will affect the goldfields more than any other part of the State. Those who have been through the country know the class of house that many people on the goldfields are forced to live in, particularly in places such as Gwalia and Lancefield and in the suburban areas of Kalgoorlie. Yet the occupants of those houses are exactly the same class of people who are earning perhaps more money than the workmen who live in Perth, and who have the qualification provided by the Act. And those men in the metropolitan area, with all the advantages which follow living close to the larger centres of population have no difficulty in qualifying for enrolment. Those people who are prepared to go out back and develop the country should be encouraged rather than discouraged. It is the same thing in regard to houses in the farming communities. The people there are living as pioneers, and under very much the same conditions as those who are in the distant goldfields districts. I offer no excuses whatever for advocating the cause of those worthy citizens who have taken upon themselves the responsibility of endeavouring to establish a home for themselves and rear a family under difficult and trying conditions. When we examine the Bill before us we find it has nothing to do with adult franchise, and it has nothing to do with the abolition of the Council. After all is said and done, I do not know that the passing of this particular clause would affect any given district so far as its representation was concerned. It would, however, have the effect of making it clear who would be entitled to enrolment. So far as the metropolitan area is concerned, there would be no difference whatever. It would affect the North-East Province, the South Province, and I believe the Central Province, as the latter includes a goldfields population. There is every justification for introducing the measure and making it absolutely clear who are entitled to enrolment under this qualification. In my remarks, I have not cast aspersions upon those responsible for the prosecutions in the recent goldfields cases. I do not wish to revive that matter. The difficulty having cropped up, we should so amend the law that there will be no danger of a recurrence. Instead of dwelling upon the past and creating no end of difficulties between sections of the community, we should endeavour to frame a law which will not give rise to such difficulties. The responsibility is upon this Chamber to so alter the law, not to extend the franchise but to make it clear who are entitled to enrol under this qualification. Sir Edward Wittenoom inferred that the passing of this amendment would interfere with the other qualifications, and the leader of the House interjected that this was not so. The passing of this amendment will not very

materially affect the roll or the numbers to be enrolled. All the other qualifications remain. This one will be slightly extended or made slightly clearer. Clause 3 proposes to insert in the Act—

Provided, however, that no elector, being the inhabitant occupier of more than one dwelling-house within the State, shall be entitled to be registered for any province other than that in which his principal place of residence is situated.

This will not bar a man from holding a qualification in all the other electorates. It will restrict him to the household qualification in one particular electorate, but he might hold the qualification in other electorates. That is why I stated at the outset of my remarks that, from this point of view, there will be very little alteration and practically no extension of the franchise, considering the State as a whole. Regarding the extension of the privilege to women to sit in Parliament, I am not going to labour that question. I favour the proposal. Regarding the proposed extension of the franchise to returned soldiers, I heartily congratulate Sir Edward Wittenoom, Mr. Holmes, Mr. Allen and Mr. Sanderson on their very plain statements and straightforward attitude. It is time people spoke their minds on questions affecting returned soldiers. I favour this extension of the franchise, but not from the point of view of those who were responsible for including it in the measure. The returned soldier is entitled to a vote just as are his father and mother, and I would extend the privilege to his sisters, cousins, and aunts. I believe in the adult franchise, and, therefore, I cannot conscientiously vote against any man having a vote for this Chamber. I can understand advocates of the restricted franchise objecting to this. I do not know how they can consistently vote for the enfranchisement of a returned soldier and vote against the enfranchisement of his relatives. Those who believe in the restricted franchise have spoken in a logical manner, and I give them credit for standing up against public opinion and stating their views fearlessly. I am going to make it clear also that, when I start chasing the returned soldier vote, I deserve to be kicked out of public life. I am not going to do that, nor am I going to use it against any man who is opposed to this principle. Last year I tried to make my position clear, and feeling then ran considerably higher than it is now. I refused to withdraw an amendment, which sought to give all those engaged in the hewing industry the right to re-engage after the war, for one of preference to returned soldiers. I think I have made my position clear. I am voting for this provision just as I should vote for any extension of the franchise which comes before this Chamber, and not for the reason that those to be benefited are returned soldiers. On the other hand, when we try to establish who is entitled to full citizen rights, I think the returned soldier can put up a pretty strong case. He has es-

established his claim just as those men for whom I have been speaking have established their claim. Each is entitled to consideration. The same claim could also be established for the whole of those people who have the qualification for the Legislative Assembly, but that is not the subject-matter of this Bill. The other proposed amendments are important, particularly the one seeking to define the relative powers of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. These are most interesting and debatable questions, and will probably be discussed so long as there are two Houses of Parliament. I welcome this attempt to define by Act of Parliament exactly what the powers of the two Houses are; therefore, I shall support the clause. To insist on members going before their constituents prior to accepting Ministerial office is a safeguard. I do not know that I am wedded to this; we know there are advantages, but the advantages might be outweighed by the disadvantages and the expense to this State. I hold no strong views, but I think it a safeguard that members should be under an obligation to go before their constituents before accepting office. Regarding the proposed extension of the life of Parliament, I take the same view as Mr. Cornell. That is a matter in which we are certainly interested, but the responsibility for it rests with another place. If they are advocating something of which the people do not approve, they themselves will be the sufferers. They are prepared to take that responsibility and they consider that the proposal is justifiable; therefore, I am prepared to support it. There are other matters dealt with in the Bill, but at present I am endeavouring to justify the alteration to the household franchise, and I hold with those who are anxious that the law should be made clear. I hope the measure will pass the second reading, and that we shall have an opportunity to deal more elaborately in Committee with the many important questions which admittedly should have been dealt with long ago. The fact that this Bill contains six or seven distinct proposals shows there is dissatisfaction, and a need for a clear definition of various matters affecting the Constitution. I support the second reading, and I think members will recognise their responsibilities by passing the second reading.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [5.27]: I was in somewhat of a quandary with regard to the Bill now before the House. It has taken me a considerable time to make up my mind as to the way in which I should vote on the second reading. There are certain clauses which have my approval. There are other clauses to which I am very much opposed. These considerations I have weighed carefully before coming to a decision as to whether I should take the responsibility of voting against the second reading of the Bill. The various questions include the right of women to sit in Parliament. I am indifferent as to that. Any

alteration of the franchise I am opposed to. The soldiers' vote I intend to support. The question of contracts I am opposed to. The abolition of the need for the re-election of members before accepting Ministerial office, I am opposed to also. The money clauses of the Bill I favour, and the proposed extension of the life of the Assembly I favour too. Therefore I am pretty equally divided in my opinions. I have decided, however, that this House being a non-party Chamber, should give full consideration to legislation coming from another place, and therefore I shall record my vote in favour of the second reading. I shall do this with considerable regret, because it would have been very much better if the Government had introduced a small Bill with regard to the one particular matter required, namely, the extension of the life of Parliament. If that had been done, we should not have had these controversial questions to consider. Such enormous and vital issues to this Chamber are involved in the Bill that I should not wonder if the Bill were defeated on the second reading. I am not at all in accord with the proposal that women should be eligible to sit in Parliament. They have been made justices of the peace and, on account of their wonderful work during the war, they have been given a good many privileges which they did not enjoy before. But the rough and tumble of Parliament was never intended for women. They have their own vocations in life; they have their functions to perform, and these functions are in the home. I am not going to raise any objection to that, however. So far as I can judge, a majority of the members are in accord with the proposal to make them eligible for seats in Parliament, and I do not think the proposal will meet with very much opposition. The clause to which numerous members have taken exception is that which proposes the extension of the franchise for this House. I am satisfied that the franchise is liberal enough at the present time. The last speaker was very much concerned regarding the real definition of the franchise. At present any man who has property of the rental value of £17 per annum is entitled to the franchise. The difficulty seems to have arisen on the goldfields and also on the South-Western timber mills as to what valuation should be taken. I fail to see why we as a deliberative assembly should not be able to solve that difficulty and make quite clear that the actual value of 6s. 6d. per week should entitle a man to vote for the Legislative Council. It may be argued that 6s. 6d. per week is a low enough rental value as a qualification for a vote. The property qualification of a householder seems to me so indefinite in this Bill as to extend the vote practically to every person who has even a hessian tent on four poles. That is what the qualification is going to be, for, "dwelling-house" means "any structure of a permanent character being fixed to the soil which is ordinarily capable of being used for human habitation." One has only to go to the goldfields or the South-West, or

into some of the rural districts, to learn how difficult it will be to exclude any habitation from this definition. The definition will make the Upper House franchise practically universal. I am satisfied that the people of this State will have no time for a Legislative Council that is not based upon some property qualification. We have evidence of that throughout Australasia. I consider that a man who has grit and determination, and who acquires a certain amount of wealth and responsibility, is entitled to more consideration than the nomadic population moving from place to place. Therefore I am totally opposed to this so-called household suffrage. When I was before my electors some years ago, I made it part of my platform that I would oppose a reduction of the Council franchise. Since then I have been before my electors again, and have been returned to this Chamber for six years. I did not alter my views on this point when I went up for re-election, but said that I was totally opposed to extension of the franchise. Is there any outcry in Western Australia for the reduction of the Council franchise? That it is not the policy of the present Government to reduce that franchise is well known. The reduction from £17 annual rental value to a weekly rental of 6s. 6d., which is practically the same thing—is proposed in order to overcome the difficulty which exists on the gold-fields and on the timber mills of the South-West. I am prepared to assist the Government in that respect. With regard to municipal valuations and road board valuations, there is frequently difference of opinion. The municipal or road board valuation may be too low to enable a man to secure a vote under this Bill. But the measure can be amended so as to overcome that difficulty, through the court of appeal which exists. The leader of the House has told us that we should move with the spirit of the times, and he referred to statesmen who "take occasion by the hand," and all the rest of it. We must all realise that the times are moving somewhat rapidly. If we are going to broaden our ideas in accordance with every popular cry, we are going to get into very serious difficulties. I am prepared to move with the times, but I am not prepared to hand over to one section of the community that which they should not possess. Rather than allow the franchise to be reduced as this Bill proposes, I would prefer to have the Council abolished altogether. Under the franchise proposed by this Bill we should be simply a repetition of the Assembly. Hon. members will recollect that not very long ago in Queensland, which is supposed to be a great Labour State and the Premier of which thought he was right on the top of the wave and could do just as he liked, and in which there is a nominee Upper House not half so liberal or democratic as this Chamber, a referendum was held on the question of the abolition of the Legislative Council. Mr. Ryan said, "This Upper Chamber is preventing the passage of

legislation which I desire to pass. I will get over the difficulty by taking a referendum. I will see what the people of Queensland have to say regarding the Upper House." He took the referendum on the basis of the franchise for the Lower House. We all know what the result was. The proposal was turned down by many thousands of votes. In that democratic State of Queensland, with the Labour party on the crest of the wave, the people nevertheless took the sound, common sense view of the position. They knew there, as the people know here, that the Upper House is the bulwark of the Constitution and the safety of those who have invested their money. Mr. Cornell said that the Federal Constitution provided exactly the same franchise for the Senate as for the House of Representatives, and that everything had worked smoothly and well. But we know that everything has not gone smoothly and well as regards the Federal Senate. Federal senators were elected to look after State rights. For a time they did work in that direction, but of late years we have found those gentlemen acting as a party machine. They simply represent in the Senate the dominant party in the House of Representatives. That being so, of what use are they? If what is proposed by the Government in the Lower House is simply repeated in the Upper House, that in itself is justification for the abolition of the Upper House. If we are going to have only one House of Parliament in Western Australia, let it be the Legislative Assembly. I do not know whether I am justified in touching on the Federal question, but I think it has a great bearing on this Bill. The trend of one section of this community is towards Australian unification, and unification means the abolition of this Chamber.

Hon. J. Duffell: And of the other places too.

Hon. J. EWING: We have before us now a proposal to alter the Constitution of the Federal Parliament. I am sorry that we have not a lead from the Government in this connection. Readers of the newspapers will have observed that in Victoria Mr. Lawson and his supporters are at variance on the question. His supporters are urging him to take the platform and fight against the proposals of the Federal Government.

Hon. J. Duffell: The Premier advised us to vote against the extension of Federal powers.

The Minister for Education: This Government is the only State Government in Australia that has expressed an opinion on the subject.

Hon. J. EWING: In that case I very much regret the remark I made, and withdraw it. I have been so much in the country that I have lost touch with matters. Mr. Watt, the Federal Treasurer, says he is out to help us to maintain State rights. On the one hand we have the clear determination of the Ryan party in Federal politics to obtain unification. I do not suppose I am trans-

gressing in making these references to Federal politics. The Ryan party have stated their determination. We want the Government of Western Australia to assist us in preventing unification. We want a lead from the Government in that connection.

The PRESIDENT: I do not think the hon. member is quite in order.

Hon. J. EWING: If, Sir, you will permit me just to finish what I have to say—

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must not finish what he intends to say on that subject.

Hon. J. EWING: In a speech made a few days ago Mr. Watt said—

The PRESIDENT: I am sorry to have to call the hon. member to order again.

Hon. J. EWING: Am I not permitted to deal with that subject then?

The PRESIDENT: I do not see that it has anything to do with the subject matter of this Bill.

Hon. J. EWING: I thought it had.

The PRESIDENT: There is no question of the abolition of the Upper House.

Hon. J. EWING: I will get the rest of this in when another measure is before the House. The last speaker, referring to the soldier vote, said he was not prepared to give the soldier in that respect anything that he would not give to the ordinary citizen. Sir Edward Wittenoom and other members have expressed themselves as totally opposed to the extension of the Upper House franchise to the soldier. When I was fighting my election three or four years ago, the same question was raised. We had not then the full experience of what the war meant and what sacrifices it involved. But on a certain platform I was asked the direct question whether I would give the returned soldier a vote for the Legislative Council. I answered in exactly the same way as hon. members have spoken here on this Bill. I said that the returned soldier would have the opportunity of getting a house, or going upon the land, with Government assistance, and thus qualifying for the Legislative Council vote. My audience were quite satisfied with my answer. Since the war has involved very much greater sacrifices than was thought three or four years ago, I feel that if I am prepared to give the franchise to those who are thrifty and industrious, I must also be prepared to give it to those men who have done more than others have done. If the Council franchise is any good to them, I say, let them have it. They will then have something that those who did not go to the Front will have to get by the ordinary process. That is why I am going to vote for it. It is little enough to give the soldiers, merely something which those who did not go to the Front cannot get. Mr. Cornell spoke of differentiating between the soldiers who went to the Front and those who did not get an opportunity for going. Personally, I think every man who enlisted and decided to go to the war deserves what we can do for him. As for the making of contracts with the Crown, ample provision is to be

found in the Constitution Act for any member or body of members who wish to trade with the Government forming a limited liability company 20 in number, which then has the right to make any necessary contracts. Therefore, I do not think we require to amend that provision in any way. I will oppose the provision for doing away with the re-election of Ministers, because such a course would open the door to the breaking of election pledges. There is some excuse for the system in the Federal Parliament, owing to the great distance which would have to be travelled by a newly appointed Minister if he had to go back to his electors, but within the State there is no such excuse. I am pleased that the Government should be clearing up the position in regard to money Bills. I will support that provision. As for the extension of the life of the Assembly, I think the proposed adjustment is reasonable, and I will support it. I hope the Bill will pass the second reading, although in Committee I will speak and vote against those principles which I object to. I think we should pass the second reading in order to provide opportunity for further discussion, but, as I say, when in Committee I will do my utmost to have the Bill amended. It is hardly fair that the Government in another place should unanimously agree to household suffrage for the Council. I understand that, first of all, adult suffrage was proposed in another place, and was very nearly carried. If the Government will not fight in another place for what they believe to be right, then the responsibility is on our shoulders, and I for one will not shirk that responsibility.

Hon. H. CARSON (Central) [5.50]: The Bill proposes to vitally amend the Constitution in several directions. Seeing that it has met with strenuous opposition in certain quarters, I wish to express my view of the measure before voting on the second reading. I am not in accord with all the provisions, but I will support the second reading. Clause 2 provides for women being elected to Parliament. When dealing with the Justices Act I pointed out that if we granted the franchise to women we should also grant them full citizenship, the right to sit in Parliament. I am not greatly alarmed at what might happen if this be agreed upon, because I recognise that it will be many years before women are elected to the Parliament of Western Australia, for I feel sure that the majority of their own sex are against women taking seats in Parliament.

Hon. A. H. Panton: That might not apply to the manhood of the country.

Hon. H. CARSON: If there is anything in the hon. member's suggestion, we might frame an amendment providing that the age of a woman candidate shall exceed 40 or 45. Personally, I should not like to see women sitting in Parliament; at the same time I do not think we ought to withhold that right from them, since they have the

vote. There has been a good deal of opposition to Clause 3, which amends the franchise. In my opinion the provision does not materially widen the franchise. All will remember the great trouble there has been over the existing qualification, which is practically 6s. 6d. per week rental. Surely any habitable house should be worth this amount. I will support this provision, for I do not think it materially affects the existing franchise. There has been a great deal of opposition to the proposed extension of the franchise to soldiers. While I am not in accord with the clause as printed, I should be agreeable to giving the franchise to soldiers who have fought for the country. There are bound to be anomalies, but I hold that if we grant the franchise to those who enlisted but did not leave our shores to fight, we should grant it also to those who endeavoured to enlist. I do not think the franchise should be the same for both Houses of Parliament. While we have a bi-cameral system we should certainly have a higher qualification for the second Chamber, otherwise we might just as well do away with that Chamber. An attempt has been made to compare our franchise with that of the Senate. But we cannot make any such comparison, for the Senate was created for a specific purpose, certainly as a house of review, but more particularly as a States' House. As showing the difference that obtains, it must be remembered that the vote of an individual in Western Australia is quite equal to five or six in Victoria or New South Wales. Therefore, it is not possible to set up a comparison along those lines. Clause 5, I am afraid, is dangerous. It looks as though it had been placed in the Bill for some specific purpose. I hope that is not the case, but I intend to oppose the provision on the score that it is dangerous. There are those who say that a member of Parliament cannot buy a tram ticket for his wife, or an agricultural implement from the State Implement Works. Of course that is carrying it a little too far. I myself have bought some machinery from the State Implement Works without any action having been taken, nor do I think action is likely to be taken. I do not intend to support the provision for doing away with the present necessity for newly appointed Ministers returning to their electors, unless indeed that provision is modified to the extent of making an exception in the case of a Minister appointed before say, nine months have elapsed since he was last before his constituents. I will support Clause 7, since it is the result of a conference between select committees representing both Chambers, and will lead to smoother working. Clause 8 is really a matter for members of another place. I think we should agree to it and leave the responsibility on those members of another place. I will support the second reading.

like Mr. Holmes, who stated that he was not pledged to agree to any extension of the franchise, I was returned pledged to the extension of the franchise with a view to the abolition of this House. That is why I propose to support any extension whatever of our franchise. The only way to abolish this Chamber is to so extend the franchise that it will be unnecessary to have the House at all. It is just as well to be candid in this matter. Mr. Holmes stated that the policy of the Labour party was to abolish this Chamber. I am quite prepared to admit that. The first plank of the platform of the Labour party is the abolition of the Council, and as a member of that party I propose to put that policy into operation at every available opportunity. Sir Edward Wittenoom stated that hundreds of people in the State paid no taxes to the Government of Western Australia, and that they were not entitled to a vote for this particular House. I would point out that although there are hundreds of people in this State who are not actually paying direct taxes to the Government, they are assisting in the production of the wealth of this country, and this should make them eligible to vote in each one of the provinces concerned for this House. There are many men who are working in the timber mills, for instance. Large sections of the community down there, married men who are rearing families, do not live in homes of their own because of the necessity for shifting camp so often, and they therefore do not come within the householder qualification and are disfranchised for the Upper House. Surely these men who are assisting so much in producing the wealth of the country should have the same right as a man who is living in Perth and paying over 6s. 6d. per week rent, and who is not producing wealth for the country. Mr. Millington referred to a man who, with his wife and six children, was living in a house on the goldfields. Hon. members have continually stated that if a man is living in a house he is entitled to vote owing to the fact that the valuation of that house would be at least 6s. 6d. per week. If a man intended to rent a house from someone else he would probably have to pay more than 6s. 6d. a week to the landlord. Many men have been living on the goldfields for the last 25 years and rearing their families there, and living in premises which belong to them, but the rateable value of these premises so far as the road board and municipality are concerned does not amount to £17 a year. Mr. Millington has already shown that a man is not allowed to state what he considers is the actual value of the property in which he lives. A man may be prepared to say that a house is worth more than £17 a year to him, and more than 7s. 6d. a week, but because the valuation by the local authority is less than £17 a year, he is disfranchised. If he takes a risk and registers his vote for an election for the Legislative Council, he may be prosecuted and fined. I should like to point out to Sir

Hon. A. H. PANTON (West) [6.0]: I propose to support the second reading. Un-

Edward Wittenoom that it is not altogether necessary for a man to own a house or a block of land to have a stake in the country. If a man is assisting in producing wealth and is abiding by the laws of the country, he has a right to say who shall come to this House and make the laws which he himself has to obey. Notwithstanding any argument which may be used against the rights of women to face the electors, and their usefulness or otherwise as legislators, the fact remains that women also have to obey the laws of the land. Up to date, the laws that we have in this State have been man-made. Many Bills come before both Houses of Parliament in which the womanhood of Western Australia is concerned, as well as the welfare of the children, and I am of opinion that it would often be well if we had the advice of at least one or two women, or probably more, upon these matters, whether in this House or another place or in both Houses. Hon. members will agree if we get into Committee that it will be a good thing for the womanhood of this State if some women are elected to Parliament. A clause which has come in for a good deal of discussion is that which proposes to give the returned soldier a vote in this House. I disagree with Mr. Cornell when he states that the returned soldiers at their association congress, when this particular question was dealt with, only dealt with it from the soldiers' point of view, because they had no right to deal with it from any other point of view. These congresses are looked upon as the parliaments of these particular associations, and they generally deal with matters concerning the members of those associations. That was the position so far as the returned soldiers' association was concerned. There were representatives at this congress from all parts of the State. At the last two congresses that I attended it was definitely declared to be the desire of members to have a vote in this House, simply on the qualification of being returned soldiers. In view of that fact I propose, although I am not now a member of the association, to support the clause which will give them the right to vote for the Council. Mr. Holmes stated that if the soldier wanted a vote he should go on the land or take unto himself a wife. I do not know that either course would give him much incentive to get a vote for this Chamber. Even if he took unto himself a wife and went to a timber mill to work, it is possible that he would not get the vote, although he had the wife. Mr. Allen made a most remarkable statement, to the effect that the men who had made sacrifices in the war were buried on the battle front where the fighting had taken place. In my opinion the men who have made the greatest sacrifices in the war are those who have come back permanently disabled, and are unable to follow their occupations. No greater sacrifice has been made in the war than on the part of those young men who have come back with the loss of their sight, and there are three or four such cases in this State. If there is any greater sacrifice than that, I have yet to hear it. I think that

every soldier in the front line would prefer to have been buried there than to have come back without his sight. Even these men, notwithstanding the sacrifices they have made, have not a vote for this House. If members are true to their promises they are certainly going to pass this clause. Mr. Holmes stated that the Government ought to make good their promises, and that they did not promise to give a vote to the soldiers for this House. As a returned soldier myself I do not think any soldier went to the war because a promise had been made. I venture to say that very few men considered the promises that were being made when they went to the Front. They went there for a definite purpose. They have fulfilled that object, and the returned soldiers through their congress have definitely declared that they think they are justified in having a vote for this House, irrespective of any other qualification they may possess. Having said that, I hope that hon. members will listen to it, and not consider whether this was promised before the men went to the Front or not. With regard to Ministers going before their electors, I have an open mind on the question. The remarks that have fallen from members hitherto have not convinced me either way. If the Bill gets into Committee, I shall be open to conviction as to whether this should be adopted or not. I agree that the question of prolonging the life of Parliament is one for the Legislative Assembly to decide. If that Chamber has decided that it is better to have the general elections at a more suitable date, then we in this Chamber should be satisfied. The question will not affect the Council. I trust hon. members will allow this Bill to go into Committee. If it is voted out on the second reading, there is no possibility of doing anything in the way of making it a decent Bill in Committee. If it does get into Committee, I think we can make such amendments as will suit some of those hon. members who are now bitterly opposing it. If the Bill is defeated on the second reading, it will simply be another nail in the coffin of this House. Even if the household franchise is widened in the way proposed, I do not think it will make much difference to many of the provinces. The only provinces likely to be affected are those in which the timber mills are situated and one or two in which reside men engaged in work on the goldfields, who are also helping to produce the wealth of this country. It is not only a question of taxation; it is a question of abiding by the laws as well as paying the taxation. Hon. members have said that this House had nothing to do with taxation. The people I have indicated have a right to vote for members of the House which deals with taxation measures. But a broader question than that is involved. Those men who have to abide by the laws of the country have a right to say who shall come to this House to make those laws.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30. p.m.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM (South) [7.30]: It is not my intention to speak at any great length on this Bill. With the exception of Clause 6 the Bill has my entire sympathy, and, when it reaches the Committee stage, I shall have some remarks to offer in detail on the clauses. After hearing the debate so far as it has gone, it will be generally admitted that something should be done in the direction of simplifying Section 2 of the Constitution Act, which deals with the householder qualification. Clause 3 of the Bill proposes to make the qualification of inhabitant occupier more definite than it is in the existing Act. I am afraid that some members are inclined to view this Bill with a great deal of suspicion. No doubt they are of opinion that by broadening the Constitution on the lines set out in Clause 3 it will do something which will be of a drastic nature in connection with the franchise of this Chamber. We know that during the past three or four years it has been pointed out repeatedly that the old order would have to go, that men and women would not be satisfied to continue to live under the old condition of things. I take it that the Bill is an effort on the part of the Government in the direction of bringing about some change that will at least have a material effect in the direction of satisfying those people who, at the present time, consider that they are qualified to vote for the Legislative Council. The Bill will make the position clear and definite. I know that during the past two years there has been considerable discussion in connection with the householder qualification of the Legislative Council, and I agree with Mr. Millington that something should be done in the direction of amending the Constitution so as to enable those people on whom the Constitution confers the franchise to exercise the franchise without fear of prosecution on the ground that they have perhaps signed a false declaration. We know of the prosecutions which took place on the goldfields about twelve months ago. A number of people were proceeded against for having made false declarations in connection with the Legislative Council enrolments. Those people pleaded guilty. When they signed the declaration they were honestly of the opinion that they were entitled to enrolment, but, for the purpose of saving expense, and getting out of the position as cheaply as possible, and because, I have no doubt they were advised by their solicitors, they pleaded guilty, and they were fined from £2 to £5 or £6. That kind of thing should not be tolerated, and an effort should be made to eliminate from the Constitution Act anything which renders a section of the community liable to prosecution for some act quite honestly performed. A clause has been inserted in the Bill to get over that difficulty. The Chief Electoral Officer could not give any satisfactory advice on that question, but all the same the people were prosecuted, and the responsibility of arriving at the valuation of a property for which these people claimed they had the right to vote was thrown upon the

resident magistrate, and he in turn shifted the responsibility on to the valuator of the road board or municipality in the district. I remember having a conversation with the Chief Electoral Officer with reference to this matter. I asked him, in the event of these prosecutions coming on, who would be appointed to set out the values when the case was before the court, and the Chief Electoral Officer replied that he could not tell me unless, of course, the magistrate called in a valuator, but, who that valuator was to be he could not say. That being so our Constitution Act, as it exists at the present time, has been handed over to valutors of road boards or municipalities for the purpose of interpreting this particular qualification. The result is that people have not only been prosecuted, but, when elections have taken place, electors have been intimidated and prevented from going to the polling booth. As a matter of fact, in connection with one election I found it necessary, when people approached me, to advise them not to go to the polling booth, and in that way they would keep out of any trouble they might have got into innocently when they signed the declaration believing that they were qualified to vote for the Legislative Council. Therefore, I welcome the introduction of the Bill, and I desire to see it pass the second reading and reach the Committee stage. It will then be possible to amend it in any direction hon. members may deem necessary. At the same time I desire to make my position clear. The policy of the party I represent is well known. We are out to broaden the franchise of the Legislative Council with a view to enabling the people who are not now qualified to become electors for this Chamber, and ultimately by a gradual process, to educate the people in the direction of abolishing this second House altogether.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Never!

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: That may be so. I know it has taken a number of years' strenuous fighting to get representatives of the labour movement into this Chamber, and at the rate we are moving it will be quite a number of years yet before we can realise the object of the labour movement, which is to abolish the Upper House. We have a population in Australia of something under 5 millions of people, and we have no fewer than 668 legislators, including 68 Cabinet Ministers, 14 houses of Parliament, and 7 Governors. Whether a majority of hon. members will agree with me or not as to the desirableness of abolishing the Legislative Council, they must agree with me that we are over-governed. I am of the opinion that the Bill will not broaden the franchise to such an extent as to make any material difference so far as representation in this House is concerned. I do not look upon it as anything in the nature of a revolutionary movement for the purpose of getting greater representation for the people. All that the Bill will do is to make the position clear, and enable the people who are enrolled to go to the polling booth without fear of being

prosecuted. That is not the position at the present time. Just now people have been intimidated, and, as election after election comes along, they will continue to be intimidated, and they will refrain from casting their votes on polling day. Mr. Holmes pointed out that those who pay the piper shall call the tune. Mr. Holmes and I do not agree as to who pays the piper. To my way of thinking we are all workers in this State and we all add to the wealth production of the country. That being the case, all the workers pay the piper, and, therefore, all should have the right to call the tune. Mr. Fwing made reference to people living in camps and small houses of hessian or iron. In some of the small hessian houses on the goldfields, families have been reared and the boys enlisted and took their share in the defence of Australia. The parents of such boys under this measure would be entitled to a vote but, if the Bill is defeated, such people will continue to suffer an injustice. When people accept the full responsibility of citizenship, the size of the dwelling or the material of which it is built should not be considered. It is sufficient that they have accepted the responsibility of citizenship and have reared families, many of whom have done their part to defend Australia. Clause 6 would be a dangerous departure from our present system, and in Committee I shall vote against the clause. I hope the good sense of a majority of the members will prevail and that the second reading will be carried.

Hon. J. A. GREIG (South-West). [7.47]: I oppose the Bill. It has too many of the finger prints of the professional politician in it. It seems to be a measure compiled in another place by persons desirous of abolishing this Chamber. Clause 2 gives the right to women to sit in Parliament. We have given women the right to sit as justices of the peace and this proposal is only in keeping with that action. I have always been opposed to women having a vote or being justices of the peace, and I am opposed to their sitting in Parliament. Although women have had that right in the Federal Parliament for a number of years and several have nominated on different occasions, not one has yet been returned. Recently women became eligible to sit in the British House of Commons, and I believe one woman has already been returned to the membership of that House. Clause 3, which seeks to broaden the franchise and define the term "dwelling-house," will cause more confusion and expense than ever. The existing Act has been in force for a considerable time. It is more easy to define the annual rental value than it would be to define a dwelling-house. The old fishermen living on the Swan River near the Causeway in places about 8 by 10 feet built of scrap iron picked from the rubbish heaps of Perth may claim to have permanent dwellings and, under this Bill, such men would be entitled to a vote. I do not say that they as men are not entitled to vote, but the qualification pro-

posed is such that it would be difficult to draw a line between those who should have the vote and those who should not. Paragraph (c) of Subclause 2 provides—

Where a person inhabits a dwelling-house by virtue of any office, service, or employment, and the dwelling-house is not inhabited by anyone under whom such person serves in such office, service, or employment, such person shall be deemed to be an inhabitant occupier of such dwelling-house as a tenant.

Under that provision a man working on a farm and living in a hut would have a vote for this Chamber; likewise the boundary rider living in a hut on a sheep station. Then we have a clause that all returned soldiers shall have a vote for this House. I am prepared to give the returned soldiers every consideration. I am prepared to give them the right to qualify for the existing franchise but, when it is proposed to give every returned soldier the right to vote for this House, the man who will never qualify will have the same right as the deserving man. Under the soldier settlement scheme, every soldier has an opportunity to qualify and the majority of them will qualify as electors for this House; but it is just that minority who will not qualify that I desire to see precluded from having a vote for this Chamber. It is that small minority who are causing trouble throughout Australia, a minority who will not take the responsibilities of citizenship and who will not take their places as citizens. If we give the returned soldiers a vote, what about the man who was just as loyal and patriotic, the man who volunteered and was turned down?

Hon. H. Millington: Give him a vote too.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Then we should follow that up by giving a vote to the parents and relatives of the returned soldier, and this would lead to the abolition of this Chamber. If a vote were taken of the whole of the people of Western Australia as to whether the franchise for this Chamber should be abolished, I am satisfied the result would be an emphatic "No." In Queensland the people turned it down by a thumping majority. If the qualification were reduced, we may as well do away with all qualifications, and that would mean the abolition of this House. If we give soldiers a vote, it will be a personal vote. A soldier might enrol in one province and move to another province, and again enrol there, and who is to say that he shall have his name struck off the first roll? So a soldier may move from province to province, and at an election he may have ten votes. His will be a personal vote; there will be no qualification, and it will be impossible to trace him. When we recollect that we sent close on 40,000 soldiers from Western Australia and that only 19,000 electors voted at a recent by-election for this House, we can realise that, allowing for those who were previously qualified, we shall be adding about 20,000 additional voters to this Chamber. This would make a very considerable difference.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It will make it a military House.

The Honorary Minister: Were not many of them qualified?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I am allowing 50 per cent. as having been qualified previously. Yet we are told this Bill will make very little difference to the franchise of this House. I object to giving the vote to the small minority of ne'er-do-wells and thriftless men who desire representation without responsibility.

The Honorary Minister: You cannot say that when they went away to fight for their country.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: A good many of them went away without any intention of fighting. They never smelt powder; they were an expense to the country and, from what I can see, they will be an expense to the country for the rest of their lives. Clause 7 is of some value, and I do not object to Clause 8. I object to the rest of the Bill, and for that reason I shall vote against the second reading.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY (Central) [7.56]: I support the second reading. I recognise that many changes would be effected by the passing of this Bill. I have objections to certain clauses, but in Committee we shall have an opportunity to express our opinions and probably to make amendments. I am rather surprised at the tone of the debate. The general experience is that, when a measure is brought before this Chamber, members are given an opportunity to consider it thoroughly by passing the second reading stage and dealing with it in Committee. I am pleased that the Government have included a clause to make women eligible to sit in Parliament. Objections have been raised to women in the capacity of legislators but, right along the line, women have taken an important, if not a prominent, part in the legislation of most countries. In almost every walk of life their influence for good is felt. In this State, there are hardly any institutions that have not women on their boards of management. Women are connected with our children's court; they are eligible to become justices of the peace, and there is hardly an institution in which women do not exert their influence.

The Honorary Minister: Very creditably too.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: In most instances that I know of.

The Honorary Minister: In all that I know of.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: Their work has been appreciated. The women did great work during the war, and many of them even went to the war. The history of the war makes interesting reading because we find that many women faced almost the same perils as did the men. Women are eminently fitted to occupy seats in Parliament, and their influence might tend to the uplifting of Parliamentary debates, and have a good influ-

ence on the legislation of the country. The bone of contention in the Bill is the proposal regarding the franchise. I thought the Government would have certainly made some alteration in connection with the franchise. When the leader of the Opposition in another place introduced a measure for the extension of the franchise for this Chamber he was told by opponents that the Bill did not go far enough. I do not know what the opinions of those hon. members are regarding this clause which, however, differs little from the corresponding clause in the previous Bill. The only real difference is that this clause will prevent a repetition of a position which obtained last year on the goldfields and elsewhere disfranchising a large section of the community. Members are familiar with the position, and with the prosecutions which resulted from it. Moreover, many people were afraid to go to the poll. In the Central Province electors in many cases did not vote, being advised by members of Parliament to refrain. Mr. Carson has on two or three occasions remarked that voters in his province were living on leases. I know the people concerned, and I know the houses which are their homes. Those people are worthy citizens, and their homes, though not mansions, are frequently four-roomed structures. In many cases I know they are situated on leases. But the children of these people are born and reared in those homes. Frequently such a house represents the savings of a man's lifetime. Such a man is entitled to a vote, and we will have an opportunity of giving him a vote under this Bill. Without casting any reflection on Mr. Mills, who defeated Mr. Drew, I say that had this particular clause been law when that election was fought Mr. Drew would have been sitting here to-day. There were enough electors in the Murchison district alone to put Mr. Drew in if they had all gone to the poll. However, the threats issued on the Eastern goldfields intimidated them from voting. At the same time I do not think there would have been much opportunity for successful prosecution on the Murchison. Almost every one of the electors there is, in my opinion, entitled to be on the roll. No doubt extreme cases may be instanced of men living in tents or camps having got on the roll. However, the basis of this clause is a home which is a permanent structure. Mr. Ewing referred to cases where voters could qualify for the Legislative Council by paying another 1s. a week rent. The hon. member was referring to the South-West Province. Let me point out, however, that the Forrest electorate has 4,000 electors for the Assembly and only about half a hundred for this Chamber. That electorate sent about 1,500 men to the Front; and it is safe to say that not one in every 50 of those soldiers had a vote for the Upper House, and neither did their fathers and mothers. However, cutting out the soldier element altogether, I urge that men who took the full responsibility of citizenship ought to have a vote for the Council. With regard to the

men who took arms in defence of the country—

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: But every man ought to have done that.

Hon. J. W. HICKEY: That may be so. Possibly other men did as much in other directions as the hon. member interjecting did towards winning the war. I say that without reflecting on what the hon. member has done. Still, other members may have done quite as much as he did, and without saying anything about it. I am prepared to support the soldier vote for the Chamber, and I agree with the leader of the House that every man who took up arms should receive consideration for that reason alone. I had the privilege of visiting the South-West some time ago and of speaking at some of the timber mills. At one place I was told that I was the first member of the Legislative Council who had been seen on the camp for 10 years. I hope I am not uncharitable when I say that that part of the country would receive more consideration from members of this House if the people there had more votes for the Legislative Council. The homes they have are in many cases the only homes they have ever lived in. Those homes are really part of their wages. Every right-thinking person will agree that such men are entitled to a vote, and if this Bill is passed they will have a vote for the Legislative Council. I sincerely trust the measure will receive the consideration which it deserves. There is something wrong when the total number of electors for the Legislative Council is about 60,000, while for the Legislative Assembly 150,000 persons are entitled to vote. The figures prove that a large proportion of the people of Western Australia are disfranchised as regards this Chamber and have no voice in the finalising of legislation. Certainly another place initiates most of the legislation, but this Chamber has the function of finalising legislation; and so large a proportion of the people ought not to be deprived of a final voice in the making of the laws under which they live. We have now an opportunity of rectifying the existing state of affairs, and I hope advantage will be taken of that opportunity. The same position is being created in the farming districts, where men raising families on homesteads which are quite as good as many suburban cottages have not a vote for the Legislative Council. Under this Bill such men will have votes. If for no other reason than that the approaching Legislative Council elections may prove satisfactory, I trust that this Bill will receive due consideration here. Possibly the measure may be amended in Committee. I have heard suggestions for making the vital clause of the Bill more definite. I trust it will be so amended as to state definitely who is to be the final arbiter to say whether a man shall be on the roll or not. At present there is no final arbiter. At the last election exception was taken to certain qualifications. In the past the Chief Electoral Officer was always in a position to give a ruling, and his ruling in this connec-

tion always was that if a place was worth £17 a year to the owner he had a perfect right to be on the roll. It was pointed out to the Chief Electoral Officer that on the gold-fields men were living on leases with the permission of the mine manager. The people were led to believe that wherever they had a home they also had a vote. This Bill should definitely state who is to have the final say in the matter—the Chief Electoral Officer or the court. Surely we can frame legislation that will finalise such a question once and for all. Unless we pass such a provision the same deplorable state of affairs will occur at the next Legislative Council elections and many men who have homes and are rearing families will not venture to place their names on the roll, so that this House, instead of representing even 60,000 electors as it is doing to-day will represent not half that number. I trust hon. members will not view this as tampering with the franchise to any great extent. I can see very little difference between the new provision and the old, except that the new will serve to finalise the question. I will oppose the provision for deleting that section of the Constitution which makes it compulsory for a newly appointed Minister to go back to his electors on assuming Cabinet rank. Clause 5 is a very dangerous provision. Still, if we go on as we are going, it will presently be very difficult to remain in this State without having some sort of so-called contract with the Government. I will support the second reading, and I hope it will be carried.

The PRESIDENT: I call the attention of hon. members to the fact that "May" makes some very pertinent remarks in connection with second reading debates. On page 445 "May" says this—

The second reading is the most important stage through which the Bill is required to pass; for its whole principle is then at issue, and is affirmed or denied by a vote of the House; though it is not regular on this occasion to discuss, in detail, its several clauses.

I recognise that to prohibit the discussion of the clauses in the Bill before us would to a great extent burke debate, but I do ask hon. members that, as they refrain from making second reading speeches in Committee, so, too, they shall refrain from making Committee speeches on the second reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. COLBATCH—East—in reply) [8.19]: When Mr. Ewing was addressing the House he made reference to the attitude of the different Governments in regard to the proposal submitted to the people by the Federal Government. I interjected at the time that the Western Australian Government were the only State Government in the Commonwealth that had given a definite pronouncement on this question. I make reference to the matter now because, on thinking the point over, I am inclined to believe that the South Australian Government also made a recommendation to the people of that State, and I should not like

an interjection made by me somewhat hurriedly to be open to misunderstanding. Coming to the Bill, I cannot help thinking that some of its opponents have approached it with a good deal more vehemence than argument. I hope I shall be able to avoid the possibility of any such charge being made against me. The first speaker, Mr. Sanderson, devoted some time to a suggestion of his in favour of elective Ministries, a matter in no way connected with the Bill, and he threw out the idea that this House should elect a Minister who should be quite independent of another place and quite independent of the Government. I merely refer to this to indicate to hon. members that any such proposal would require a far more drastic amendment of the Constitution than anything suggested in the Bill. From the foundation, not of our Constitution, but of the Constitution from which it was framed, it has been the right of the Chamber elected on the popular vote of the people to make and unmake Ministries, and I am sure that any proposal to interfere with that right, in favour of giving this Chamber the right to elect a Minister of its own, would be resisted very vigorously, not only in another place, but throughout the country. The hon. member made another suggestion, perhaps more pertinent in the Bill, in regard to the franchise for the Council. He desired that for our existing qualifications we should substitute one qualification, namely, that of age, that no one should be qualified to vote for the Council until 30 years of age, and presumably that everyone 30 years of age and over should have a vote for the Council. Mr. Cornell adopted the same argument, and perhaps there is something to be said in favour of it. This is a House of review, and it might be argued that the work of review should be entrusted to men "ripe with all the hoarded thoughtfulness of earnest years." But Mr. Cornell saw what Mr. Sanderson did not see. We cannot put back the hands of the clock. We are not framing a new Constitution, either for the State or for the Council. We are merely dealing with the Constitution as it stands, and it would be entirely impracticable, even if it were thought desirable, to adopt any amendment that would have the effect of taking away the franchise from anyone who at present enjoys it. One other feature of Mr. Sanderson's remarks was his quotation from a speech I made in regard to restoring the authority of Parliament over the finances of the country. I say without hesitation that a potent factor in removing from Parliamentary control the finances of the country has been the alteration of the date of the election; for the simple reason that it has made it not only possible, but practically inevitable, that once in every three years the consideration of the Estimates—and it is only on the consideration of the Estimates that Parliament can exercise authority over the finances of the country—should be deferred until the year was practically concluded.

Hon. J. Duffell: What about the two years without any election?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The hon. member's thoughts move so hurriedly that he anticipates me. I was going to proceed to point out that not only does that affect the immediate session in which it happens, but it inevitably affects the following session; because Parliament does not rise until February or March, and so there is no decent opportunity for the Government to prepare their Estimates in proper time for the following session. If we are going to have this disturbance of the opportunity for properly considering the Estimates once in every three years, we shall drift into that set of circumstances even in what might be termed the normal session. Mr. Holmes, in his opposition to the Bill, was something more than vehement. I do not take the least exception to the hon. member's attack on me. It sounded very venomous, but I am sure there was no malice behind it. The only thing I do take exception to is his misquoting of my remarks and his unintentional misrepresentation of my attitude. I told the House that I advocated household suffrage. I also told the House of the proposal that the Government had submitted, which was household suffrage, with a definition of rental value of 6s. 6d. weekly, a clear definition as opposed to the definition we have at present which is not clear and which, it has been pointed out, has led to a great deal of confusion. Having done that, I informed the House of amendments made in another place, and said it would be the duty of this Chamber to see whether they considered those amendments sufficiently definite—which, I may say, I do not consider them to be—whether they consider them satisfactory from that point of view and satisfactorily also in principle. That was as far as I went. For the hon. member to say that I was instructed to support those amendments, and that I supported them against my judgment because instructed to do so, was to say something contrary to fact.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I do not think I ever said it.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Yes. The hon. member said I was instructed to support the amendments, and that I did so against my judgment because I was so instructed. I say the Government introduced in the Bill a provision, which was satisfactory, to secure household suffrage. It was amended in another place, and it has come here for this Chamber to consider, whether to adopt it or to amend it in the direction in which the Government originally introduced it, or in any other direction. It is not fair to say that I have been instructed to support it as it stands, or that I do necessarily support it. I say the clause as it stands needs amendment, if only in order to make it clear. I want to touch upon the question of the soldiers' vote. Mr. Holmes said the soldiers had not asked for the vote. Mr. Cornell and Mr. Panton, both of whom are entitled to speak on behalf of the returned soldiers, tell us that the soldiers have asked

for the vote. We are fortunate in having in the Chamber three members who have seen service with the soldiers in the field, and I am going to take the view of those three members as to what the soldiers want, in preference to the view of those other members not qualified to speak as directly representative of the returned soldiers.

Hon. J. A. Grieg: The soldiers have not asked for the vote.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: They have asked for it. They have asked for it at each of their conferences. It is all very well to talk about bidding for the soldiers' votes and pandering to the soldiers. I ask hon. members who read history, and I suppose we all do, to carry their minds back, and ask themselves what happened to the soldiers even in our British community after previous wars. History, song and story all tell us the same tale, a tale of neglect, a tale of refusal on the part of the taxpayer, to provide the money required to re-establish the soldier in civil life, to provide properly for the dependants of the fallen, and to make reasonable happy lives of those who have been maimed and to some extent have lost their earning power. What is the best method of reassuring the soldier who because of the experience of the past is fearful that the time may come when his services may not be assessed as highly as when the fight was on? What better assurance can we give him than to tell him that as a soldier he will be qualified to vote for the Parliament of his country, not only for one branch but for both branches of it? That is a sufficient reason for the soldier asking for the franchise for the Legislative Council, and the soldier has done so. Mr. Greig just now said that if we are going to enfranchise the soldier why should we not enfranchise the rejected men and the relatives of soldiers? Is there any basis for such an argument? We might just as well ask, why not enfranchise the men who were too old to serve?

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: Certainly you might.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Does the hon. member think that the soldiers' relatives who did not go to the Front, the rejected soldiers and those who were too old to volunteer, who, because of the efforts of our soldiers and because of their sacrifices, were permitted to go on living their full, easy lives at home while the soldiers were undergoing the risks they did undergo and the intolerable hardships of war, are entitled to the same consideration? Consider also the case of the soldier, who because of the injuries he has received at the war finds his earning capacity affected and may find it difficult to qualify as an elector for this Chamber.

Hon. J. Duffell: What about the soldier's widow?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: This is not a question of who should not be allowed to vote, but it is a question of

who should be allowed to vote. There may be many people who are not enumerated in the Bill, who should be qualified to have a vote for the Legislative Council. If any hon. member thinks that there should be conditions made for those and that certain other people also ought to be given the franchise, I have no doubt that this Chamber will be able to consider any claim they may put forward on their behalf. Mr. Allen said that amongst the returned soldiers there were some who were not worthy to exercise the franchise for this Chamber. That is very likely, because amongst the 40,000 men who went from this State there will undoubtedly be found some who are not worthy citizens. I might even go further and say that, amongst the 50,000 people who are qualified as electors for the Legislative Council, there are some who are unworthy whether they are judged from the mental or the moral points of view. There are disqualification clauses in our Constitution which say whether a man is worthy or not. If the returned soldier can survive these disqualification clauses we have no more right to question his worthiness as a citizen than we have to question the worthiness of a man who has qualified merely because he owns £50 worth of land, or pays £10 for a lease of land from the State, or occupies a house of a certain value. If people do not come under the disqualification clauses they are entitled to vote whether they are worthy or not. The same thing should apply to our returned soldiers. Mr. Allen also quoted the Legislative Council franchise of other places. I think he did so thoughtlessly and without full consideration. He was obviously non-plussed to discover that in South Australia the householder qualification for the elector was practically the same as is proposed in this Bill. He neglected to tell us that in South Australia the soldier had the franchise for the Legislative Council. I do not suggest for a moment that the hon. member withheld this information deliberately from this Chamber. I am satisfied to believe that he did not know it. I am simply mentioning it to supply this omission, as I intend to supply other omissions from the hon. member's speech at a later stage. It is a fact that in South Australia the returned soldier was enfranchised and the Bill was assented to on the 27th November of last year. That Bill passed through the Parliament of South Australia before the Armistice was signed. I am inclined to think that probably had this Bill been submitted here before the Armistice was signed, when we were fully cognisant not only of our indebtedness to, but our absolute dependence upon, the soldier, it would have had an easier passage than it has had on the present occasion. I now come to the remarks of Sir Edward Wittenoom. That hon. member said he agreed with some portions of the Bill but disagreed with others. I take it that is a position in which we constantly find ourselves. It is very seldom that a Bill is presented that meets with our entire satisfaction and approval.

I am at liberty to say that as Minister it sometimes falls to my lot to introduce a Bill which does not meet with my entire approval in every clause and every line. If there are good things in a Bill, those good things are worthy of being preserved. If there are bad things in it, these things can be cast out. I am very confident that I shall get Sir Edward Wittenoom's vote on the second reading of this Bill for the reason that he admitted there was something in it with which he agreed. He is one who always takes up a businesslike and common sense attitude, and I am sure he will not destroy the good that is in the Bill because there is something he does not agree with and which he can have altered at the Committee stage. I am asking for his vote on the ground of his own argument. The hon. member contends that as there should be no taxation without representation, the converse of the proposition should apply that there should be no representation without taxation. That is a very sound argument. I do not quarrel with it. It is on the basis of that argument I propose to claim his vote. He contended that as practically all of our indirect taxation went for Federal purposes only those who paid direct taxation should be considered as having a right to vote for the Legislative Council. From that he proceeded to argue that, as direct taxation was not imposed on anyone receiving less than £5 per week in wages, and such person might reasonably be assumed to be able to qualify under the existing clauses of the Constitution, consequently everyone who was taxed was able to obtain representation in the Legislative Council. That was the hon. member's argument.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: No, it was not.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The hon. member apparently forgot that a year ago we amended the Income Tax Assessment Act, so that every person with an income of over £156 a year or over £3 a week was liable to income tax; and every person who is not married or maintaining some other person and is earning as much as £2 a week is liable to an income tax.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I said that I was referring to the Legislative Assembly.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: On that ground the hon. member refuses representation to those who pay direct taxation in this State. His whole argument was that direct taxation goes to the Commonwealth; therefore, full representation in both Houses of this Parliament should only be given to those who pay direct taxation. This Bill does not go as far as that.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I spoke about the Assembly and not this House.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The hon. member spoke about both Houses.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I did not.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: He said that everyone was entitled to a vote for the Assembly, but that for the Council only

those who paid direct taxation to the State should be qualified to vote.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I did not say that.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: If the hon. member will look up his speech he will find that these are his remarks, because I took a careful note of them at the time; otherwise I do not see what point there can be in the hon. member's assertion.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: I did not make that assertion.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I should like the hon. member to look up his speech.

Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom: If you will give me a quarter on an hour, I will tell you what I did say.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The fact of the matter is that we do impose taxation on people who are householders, and who both directly and indirectly pay State taxation. Consequently, if it is a fair argument that there should be no taxation without representation, then it is fair that these householders who pay both direct and indirect taxation should be enfranchised and should enjoy the full privilege of citizenship. The argument used that we are providing free lunatic asylums has no more bearing on the question than to say the air we breathe is free to us. I would remind the hon. member and Mr. Holmes, as well as Mr. Miles, whose vote I hope to get as he has not expressed himself in opposition to the Bill, that they occupy a position of peculiar privilege, a position for which there is no parallel in any country in the world. There is no country in the world where 750 electors, probably half of those being resident in the metropolitan area, have the privilege of sending three members to this House and electing one-tenth of the Legislative Council. I do not say that is wrong, and I do not say I am opposed to it. A little while ago there was a proposal before this House, contained in a Redistribution of Seats Bill, which attempted to reduce the number of members for the North-West. I was the first to oppose that proposal. I would oppose any similar proposal for the reason that I believe the Constitution of the country should be fitted to the needs of the country. I also believe it is fitted to the needs of the country that this great territory of the North-West should have adequate representation. I suggest that these being the facts, and it being a matter of policy and expediency, it does not altogether become them to argue on strict constitutional lines as to who should be enfranchised and who should not. If we come down to the bedrock of political representation we cannot find a parallel anywhere in the world to this position of privilege enjoyed by these three hon. members.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: And you cannot find a parallel for the way in which this country in the North has been neglected by this Parliament.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I hope that is no reflection upon those who represent it. To return to the speech of Mr. Allen, I must say that it was a speech strongly at variance with the logical and well reasoned utterances that we are accustomed to hear from him. One would think that he wanted to abolish the Legislative Council as at present constituted, and set up in its stead a nominee Chamber. He tells us that there are two States in the Commonwealth which have a nominee Chamber, namely, New South Wales and Queensland, and that these have promulgated the most progressive legislation of any State of the Commonwealth.

Hon. J. F. Allen: I said it was claimed that this was so.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think that when the hon. member used the word "progressive" he meant extreme legislation, unwise legislation and contrary to the best interests of the State. No doubt that is what he meant. It is not one bit surprising that the States which have less freedom from the Constitutional point of view in the election to their Parliaments should be the most extreme both in the matter of legislation and administration. It is a common experience. What do we find in the old world to-day? In our own country the constitutional monarch stands just where he stood before the war, enthroned in the hearts of the people, whilst mighty emperors and autocratic czars have been driven to abdication or to death. It is always a case of extremes leading to extremes, and therefore it is not surprising that in the States in which the people have no voice in the election of one branch of the Legislature, that they should rush to extremes, and I am rather anxious that unless something is done in Western Australia to meet the very proper aspirations of these people who have done all they can to establish homes for themselves—unless something is done to meet their desires to be clothed with all the responsibility of citizenship, we may see things rushing to extremes in Western Australia also. It may surprise Mr. Allen and other members to learn that four States—Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, and Western Australia, are the only English-speaking countries in the world that have an elective Legislative Council on a restricted franchise. In Great Britain as is well known, the House of Lords is not elective. We know the limitations that have been imposed upon the powers of the House of Lords, and it is not necessary for me to offer any prediction as to the alterations that are certain to be made in regard to the English Constitution before long. In Canada the Dominion Senate is composed of members nominated for life by the Governor General. In regard to the provincial Senate, out of the nine provinces, only Quebec, and Nova Scotia have two branches of the Legislature and in both cases the members

of the Senate are nominated for life by the Crown.

Hon. G. J. G. W. Miles: Do you believe in that principle?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No, and it is a principle that will not stand, but I am only pointing out to hon. members that excepting in the four States I have mentioned in no place where the nominee principle does not prevail is the election carried out on a restricted franchise. In South Africa the first election for the Senate prior to the establishment of the union was made by the two Houses of each of the four colonial Legislatures sitting as one body. The constitution of the Senate after ten years may be provided for by Parliament, but if no such provision is made the arrangements made in the South African Act will continue. That is to say, they are elected by Parliament until otherwise provided for. The South African provisional Legislatures consist of one Chamber only. When we come to the United States of America, we find that the Senate is elected on the general franchise for the election of the House of Representatives. In every one of the States the Upper House is elected on the same franchise as that of the State House of Representatives. Both bodies are elected on the same franchise. In New Zealand the Legislative Council of the Dominion consists of nominated members. Those nominated prior to September, 1891, are appointed for life, and those nominated after that date are appointed for a period of seven years. By the Legislative Council Act of 1914, as amended in 1916, the members of the Legislative Council will in future be elected by electors qualified for the House of Representatives franchise, and the first election under the new qualifications will be held at the first election of members to the House of Representatives after the 1st January, 1920. So that New Zealand has abandoned the nominee principle and has adopted the elective principle, and in that elective principle has given the same franchise for the election of the Upper House as that which prevails for the election of members of the Lower House. So far as the Commonwealth of Australia is concerned, the position is well known to hon. members. It is not necessary for me to deal with this matter further, except to point out that in South Australia the franchise is practically the same as it is proposed to provide in the Bill before us now. I do not know that it is necessary for me to read the clause. If we come to debate the question in Committee the South Australian Act can be considered in conjunction with our Bill. The qualification is household franchise practically on all-fours with the proposal in the Bill, with this difference, that in South Australia no person, no matter how much wealth he possesses, can vote in more than one province. The qualifications are freehold, leasehold, and residence, the same as they will be here if we pass the Bill, with this striking difference, that the vote can be exercised in one province only. I was not quite sure from reading the Vic-

torian Act whether a person qualified in more than one province in that State could exercise the vote in more than one province, and I sent a telegram to the Premier of Victoria asking that question, and the wired back—

No alteration in Legislative Council franchise; if qualified, elector may claim enrolment in more than one province and may vote in person in each province for which he is enrolled.

I have read the Victorian Act, and I am inclined to think that in Victoria a man with a qualification in each province can vote exactly as he can here. The Act there makes provision for postal voting. I referred it to the Solicitor General, and he takes the view that an elector can vote there in each of the provinces in which he has a qualification, and therefore I do not attach much importance to the words "in person" contained in the telegram from the Premier of Victoria. In Tasmania there is the same privilege in connection with voting in the different provinces as exists here. In Tasmania and in Victoria also they have certain scholastic qualifications which are not recognised in this State. We come to the point, therefore, that in the English-speaking world there are only four communities that elect their Legislative Councils on a restricted franchise, and of those four Western Australia is from some points of view the most restricted of the lot. If Mr. Allen had carried his comparisons further he would have found that in this State the proportion of Legislative Council electors to Assembly electors is lower than in any other State of the Commonwealth, that the percentage of votes cast in contested seats is also considerably lower here.

Hon. J. P. Allen: We have wider areas.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Do wider areas prevent people voting? Does the hon. member suggest that the Metropolitan and Metropolitan-Suburban Provinces are not fairly compact areas? Yet the people who go to the polls in those provinces usually represent about 40 per cent. of the electors on the roll. I do not know whether Sir Edward Wittenoom is satisfied—I should like to satisfy him, because I have every reason to hope that he will vote for the Bill. He quoted the second paragraph of Clause 3, which reads—

Is an inhabitant occupier as owner or tenant of a dwelling-house within the province: Provided, however, that no elector, being the inhabitant occupier of more than one dwelling-house within the State, shall be entitled to be registered for any province other than that in which his principal place of residence is situated.

The hon. member seemed to be under the impression that this would mean the abolition of qualifications in other provinces. I can assure him it does nothing of the kind. The clause reads—

Section 15 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, is hereby amended by omitting paragraph (2) and inserting in its place—

So that the only qualification affected is the household qualification and all that the proviso says is that a person cannot exercise a household qualification in more than one province. If he owned a house in one province and occupied a house in another he could vote as the occupier of one and the owner of the other. As I have already said, I do not think the clause as it stands is sufficiently clear and definite, and when the Bill is in Committee I will be quite prepared to consider any amendment advanced with the view of making it perfectly clear. I do not disguise my own feeling that the amendment as introduced by the Government was clear and definite, and I do not think it was too high. It would have enfranchised many people who are disfranchised now; and my own reason for claiming that there should be a liberalisation of the franchise is that I am firmly convinced that there are at present in different parts of this State householders who are both direct and indirect taxpayers who should be qualified as electors of the Legislative Council, but who are not qualified. Consequently, they have grievances which it would be an act of justice no less than an act of policy to remove. To the other clauses of the Bill the opposition has been comparatively slight, and it is not necessary for me to dwell upon them at any length. Mr. Holmes in his opposition to the right of women to sit in Parliament showed—I hope he will pardon me for using the term—a characteristically reactionary spirit. The hon. member said that the province of women, and presumably their sole province, was to increase, multiply, and replenish the earth. That might be applied with equal force against giving women votes at all, and I have no doubt if the hon. member had his way the women would quickly be deprived of that privilege and restored to the condition of complete dependence on man that marked the position of women through the dark ages. Curiously enough, whilst the hon. member was expounding those antiquated ideas, a woman was being elected to sit in the Mother of Parliaments, and probably before this she has been sworn in as a member of the House of Commons.

Hon. A. H. Panton: To take her husband's place.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION:

Yes. I am not going to suggest that women in Western Australia should take the places of their husbands in Parliament, but I do say that the electors should not be hampered in their choice, that they should have the right to send women to Parliament if they want to do so. As to the question of whether or not Ministers should go before their constituents on assuming office, I say at once that personally I do not care two straws what decision may be arrived at. I recognise that there is ground for argument both ways, and so far as I am concerned I intend to vote for the clause, but if it is thrown out I shall not lose any sleep over it. If an amendment such as has been suggested by Mr. Carson is

proposed, that this privilege of not going before the electors should apply only within a certain time after a general election, I shall have no objection to it. My feelings are not sufficiently strong to waste any time over it. Then we have the question of contracts. I do not know who advised Mr. Holmes in this matter and above all things I want to view this matter impersonally. The hon. member told us about the big profits he made out of State steamships a year before he became a member of Parliament. What do we care about the profits the hon. member made out of State steamships? That has nothing to do with the Bill. We know and he knows that in the year he made those big profits, the taxpayers made a big loss, and all I can say is I am very glad it was so worthy a citizen as the hon. member who made the profit. This is the section in the Constitution—

Any person who shall directly or indirectly, himself or by any person whomsoever in trust for him, or for his use or benefit, or on his account, undertake, execute, hold, or enjoy in the whole or in part any contract, agreement or commission made or entered into with, under, or from any person whomsoever, for or on account of the Government of the colony; or shall knowingly furnish or provide in pursuance of any such contract, agreement, or commission any money to be remitted abroad, or any goods whatsoever to be used or employed in the service of the public; and any member of any company, and any person holding any office or position in any company formed for the construction of any railway or other public work, the payment for which, or the interest on the cost of which has been promised or guaranteed by the Government of the colony; shall be disqualified from being a member of the Legislative Council or Legislative Assembly.

The wording of the clause is remarkably clear and there are only three exemptions. These exemptions relate to persons contributing towards any loan for public purposes, to contracts, agreements or commissions made, entered into or accepted by any incorporated company consisting of more than 20 persons, or in respect to any lease, license, or agreement for the sale or occupation of Crown lands. I say distinctly that clause was never intended to meet conditions such as we have at present when, because of the establishment of a large number of trading concerns, it becomes almost inevitable from time to time that the State shall enter into contracts with all citizens who are in a big way of business. Only two years ago Mr. Boan forfeited his seat because the firm with which he was connected was carrying on an agency of the State Savings Bank. That hon. member took not merely a straightforward but I think a quixotic course. He not only resigned without being asked, but he refunded all the Parliamentary allowance he had drawn from the day of his election. No one could have taken

a more straightforward or honourable course than Mr. Boan did on that occasion. What happened next? Mr. Boan turned his business into a limited liability company. It is quite open to the presumption that he may to-day have just as big an interest in the business as ever and be just as much the dominating factor, and yet it would now be competent for him, if elected, not only to carry on an agency of the Savings Bank but to make any contract he liked with the Government. To the clause relating to money Bills, practically no opposition has been offered, although some members in their eagerness to defeat the whole Bill have suggested that very little trouble has arisen in the past and that very little trouble is likely to arise in future. Even those members who have been in this House only a comparatively short period—speaking for myself I have been here 7½ years—know that serious difficulties have arisen between the two Houses and there has been danger of losing Bills, important not only to the Government but to the people, because of a disagreement over measures that were termed money Bills. Do members think that this House and another place would have gone to the trouble of appointing their Standing Orders Committees to jointly consider the matter if difficulty had not arisen? Difficulty has arisen and will continue to arise in future. The committee, thanks to your own helpful suggestions, Mr. President, arrived at an agreement, and the agreement is embodied in this Bill, an agreement acceptable to both Houses, and one which is of peculiar advantage to the Legislative Council because it will prevent the practice which has been adopted in the past, and may be adopted in future, of practically muzzling this House by introducing Bills with certain money proposals and making them money Bills and putting in a number of other clauses which are not money clauses and in regard to which our privileges are limited in a way that they ought not to be limited. The final provision regarding the date of the elections also seems to meet with general approval, but the suggestion has been thrown out that, as an alternative, we should ask the Governor to dissolve Parliament nine months before the period has expired. It is extraordinary that members of this House should be so jealous of all the rights and privileges of this Chamber and so careless and reckless in regard not merely to the privileges, but the obvious rights of members of another place. Members of this House are called upon to face their constituents once in six years. Members of another place have to face their constituents once every three years. The burden imposed upon members of another place to fight elections once in every three years is no light one, and it is unreasonable that because this difficulty has arisen they should be called upon to shorten their political lives by nine months. Suppose the Governor, for no good reason, could be persuaded to reduce the life of this Parliament by nine months, a Parliament in which the Government in power have a sufficient majority to carry on the business

of the country: such a provision would only meet the present emergency and a similar case might arise at any time in future. A similar difficulty arose in South Australia a good many years ago, and they met it by an exactly similar clause as we have in this Bill. The provision in the Bill will apply for all time and will automatically shorten or extend the life of Parliament according to the date of the elections, the simple process being to shorten or extend in accordance with the principle of causing the least possible variation to the three-year period. If the life of the Parliament would be two years and seven months, five months would be tacked on. If it exceeded the three-year period, the time would be taken off. The least possible interference would be made with the three-year period and we should get back automatically to the right date for holding the elections. If this clause is not passed, we shall have to prepare for a hurried session next year under the shadow of a general election, a session in which it will be impossible to do much useful work, a session in which it will be quite impracticable to submit and discuss Estimates of revenue and expenditure, with the result that some time in November next a new Parliament will meet and a few months later will be asked to consider a Budget for a year that has almost expired. The Government will be faced with a broken recess and will not have a proper opportunity to prepare measures for the following session. The limitation imposed on the usefulness of the next session will be imposed upon the usefulness of the Government during the recess. Mr. Sanderson spoke of the all important question of State and Federal taxation. I should like to know what opportunity Ministers have to grapple with questions of that kind under the conditions of broken sessions and broken recesses which we have had, at any rate, since I have been a member of the Government. This session is almost the only clear run we have had and it cannot be denied that this session has been rich in useful legislation. We have cleaned up an enormous accumulation of recent years and, if this Bill is passed and we get back to our normal sessions, the public will have far less reason to complain that Bills that should be enacted are passed over year after year because there is not time to deal with them. Parliament will then have time to consider the proper requirements of the people and the Government will have an opportunity to put the financial position of the country before the people in a proper way. We must restore efficiency to the Parliamentary machine before we can expect good results. In conclusion I would repeat two observations I made in presenting this Bill on the second reading. The first is that, for the reason the Bill contains a proposal for the broadening of the franchise for this Chamber, the country is entitled to expect and will expect this House to give that clause fair consideration. I am not going to quarrel with Sir Edward Wittentoon's statement that the Legislative Council of Western Australia will compare

more than favourably with any other Assembly in the world. There is nothing like having a good conceit of ourselves, but it is rather a mistake to set ourselves up on a pedestal and say we are beyond improvement and beyond reform, and will not consider any proposal submitted for improvement. I say it is a mistake to adopt that attitude without suggesting for a moment that the hon. member was wrong in his assumption regarding the high quality of this Chamber. Secondly I urge that, whilst the broadening of the franchise is one of the principles of the Bill, it is not the only one. There are others which are well worthy of consideration even if the House in its wisdom rejects, or as I think will be the far better course, amends the franchise clause in the direction of setting up a clearer qualification for household suffrage.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It is not very clear now.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: No, I made that remark when I moved the second reading and I have repeated it during the course of my reply. But it is not beyond the capacity of this Chamber to make it clear, particularly as this Chamber compares so favourably with any other Chamber of its kind in the world. A suggestion has been thrown out that this Bill is agreeable to the wishes of those who would like to see the Legislative Council abolished, and therefore it should be rejected. I make this prediction that if at any time the power and prestige of this House appears to wane, if at any time its usefulness is called into question, if at any time it ceases to be an influence for good in the legislation of Western Australia, it will not be because of the action of those who, when the occasion arose, endeavoured to meet the spirit of the times and steadily to broaden the Constitution of this House. It will rather be because of the action of those, who learning nothing and forgetting nothing both in political and industrial matters, will always stick tight to what they have got, never being prepared to give way a single jot, never being prepared to act in a spirit of reasonableness and amity and, because of that attitude, force the pendulum to swing violently to the other side. I appeal to members very earnestly to pass this Bill and to subject its clauses in Committee to that consideration which their importance demands.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	13
Noes	..	..	..	..	13
A tie	..	..	..	..	0

AYES.

Hon. R. G. Ardagh	Hon. J. W. Kirwan
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. H. Millington
Hon. H. Carson	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. H. Stewart
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. J. Ewing
Hon. J. W. Hickey	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. J. F. Allen	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. Duffell	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. J. A. Greig	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. A. Lovett	Hon. Sir E. H. Wittenoom
Hon. R. J. Lynn	Hon. J. J. Holmes
Hon. C. McKenzie	(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: In order to allow of further consideration, I give my casting vote with the ayes. I would call attention, however, to the fact that to pass a Bill amending the Constitution it is necessary, under Standing Order 234, for an absolute majority of the House as at present constituted to vote in favour of the Bill. The House as at present constituted consists of 30 members. An absolute majority is 16 members. As, therefore, the necessary number of members have not voted in favour of the Bill, it must be laid aside.

Bill thus laid aside.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

The PRESIDENT: I have to inform the House that I have received the Auditor General's report for the year ended the 30th June, 1919, with a covering letter reading as follows:—

In pursuance of Section 53 of the Audit Act, 1904, I have the honour to transmit, for presentation to the Legislative Council, a copy of the Hon. the Colonial Treasurer's statement of the public accounts of the State of Western Australia for the financial year ended 30th June, 1919, together with my report thereon. As the Government Printer was unable to print the report within the time required, owing to stress of other work, I considered it advisable, in order to avoid delay, to submit it to Parliament typewritten.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Discharged Soldiers Settlement Act Amendment.

2, Loan, £3,339,000.

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—PUBLIC EDUCATION ACTS
AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous sitting.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [9.25]: This Bill was put forward so strongly by the leader of the House that it would appear a great hardship for any member to say anything in opposition to it. The Bill, we are told, is intended to do some good for the blind, deaf, and mute. I take it the measure means the creating of further institutions.

The Minister for Education: The institutions are already established. The Bill will save money.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: If I get the assurance of the leader of the House that this Bill is not going to create further expense, I shall be only too glad to vote for the second reading. If, however, the measure is going to add to the already prodigious expenditure of the Education Department, I must oppose it. No doubt there are many institutions which might be established and which would be productive of considerable good; but we are at the end of our means for the moment, and our deficits come with unfailing regularity. I make these remarks with a view to obtaining from the leader of the House an explanation of his statement that the Bill will save money and not cause the expenditure of it.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East—in reply) [9.26]: When I interjected that the Bill was going to save money, I was alluding more particularly to the provisions which I explained at some length on the second reading, whereby one school could be established to take the place of two or three schools existing at present. In regard to the education of blind, deaf, and mute children, the position is that there are at present institutions established and carrying on this work. Their chief difficulty is that they do not get the children young enough. It may happen that some expenditure will be involved because there may be cases where the parents of children sent to the institution will not have the means to pay for their maintenance there. In such cases, which should not be more than a few, it may be necessary for the Government to pay something towards the maintenance of the children at this institution. I assure hon. members that there is no intention whatever of establishing additional institutions, and that the expenditure on the upkeep of children will be confined entirely to the payment of weekly sums in cases where the parents are absolutely unable to pay for the maintenance. The Bill should cause savings in other directions, to which I have referred. I may add that the clauses referring to blind, deaf, and mute children were passed by large majorities in this House two sessions ago.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. F. Allen in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Blind, deaf, and mute children:

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: This clause provides that in certain circumstances the parents may be required to pay for the education of these defective children. The policy of this country is to give free education.

We give free education from the primary schools right through to the University. Is not this clause, then, a departure from the usual policy of the Government?

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The clause is not in any way a departure from the policy of free education. Our policy of free education, however, does not at present contemplate the maintenance of scholars; and in connection with the teaching of children at this institution it is necessary that they should be boarded and bedded at the institution.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: But why mention the word "education" so frequently in addition to "maintenance"? That is what struck me.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The largest amount that can be charged is 10s. per week; and that covers board and lodging, and education as well.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 2 of the Public Education Amendment Act 1907.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: This clause has my cordial support, because it carries education to people outback. But I see that the Minister is to be the sole judge of whether the conveyance is satisfactory. What sort of a conveyance is contemplated?

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Horse-drawn vehicles. Later on, when the roads are suitable, it may be economical to have motor vehicles.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—agreed to.

Clause 5—Substitution of new section for Section 12 of the Public Education Act, 1899.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM: This, if carried out in its entirety, might be a little drastic. It provides among other things that no child is to be employed before 6 o'clock in the morning. On a farm in summer time that provision might be quite unreasonable.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

[The President resumed the Chair.]

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Resumed from 28th November.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [9.34]: I moved the adjournment in order to consider certain points raised by Mr. Lynn on Clause 4. There is no need to share the fear expressed by Mr. Lynn as to the effect of that clause. It may be necessary when in

Committee to make that clause a little clearer and so remove any possible doubt. Under Clauses 2 and 3, the powers of the board will be considerably enlarged, and the board will be able to carry out arrangements they have made with certain merchants to take over the hire purchase agreements entered into with various farmers who are receiving assistance from the board at present. The only question is, has the Minister made a careful examination of the goods which are the subject matter of those agreements? If the Government have satisfied themselves of the value of those goods, it would appear that the Government have made a very good bargain with the merchants. I hope that the farmers interested will receive some extra consideration from the board. I will support the second reading.

Hon. J. MILLS (Central) [9.37]: Clause 3 is seeking to validate something done, namely, to pay to a machinery firm £18,000 in satisfaction of a debt alleged to be £25,000. It is very doubtful whether the bargain has been a good one. The Minister said that another firm was offering a £77,000 debt for £22,000. The difference between the £18,000 paid and the £25,000 claimed is, I think, entirely interest and compound interest; so the firm has made no loss of capital on the transaction. It is probable the firm raked up a lot of old accounts, written off years ago, to build up that claim against the board.

Hon. A. Sanderson: What is your authority for that statement?

Hon. J. Ewing: It is a terrible statement.

Hon. J. MILLS: I have no authority.

The Honorary Minister: Have you any proof?

Hon. J. MILLS: None whatever, but probably something of the sort has occurred.

The Honorary Minister: It would be of no use for them to do so.

Hon. J. MILLS: Since the operation of the moratorium the I.A.B. settlers have not been supplied with machines by those firms without the authority of the board. The life of a machine depends largely upon the country in which it is used. New land, owing to stones and stumps, is very injurious to the machines. Again, many of the settlers have very uneven teams, which also injures the machines. In these circumstances, the life of a machine would be limited to five or six years at the outside. The machines paid for by the board were acquired prior to 1914, and, therefore, a great many of them are now on the scrap heap. That is one of the reasons why I do not think the board has made a good bargain. Whether the farmer will receive any benefit from the transaction is problematical, because the board will have to satisfy themselves that the assets are there. In my opinion they are not there. The Minister responsible for this was

Mr. R. T. Robinson who, I think, made a blunder, which however is not likely to be repeated under the administration of the present Premier. The proper procedure would have been to have the whole of the machines valued by the inspectors. This would not have cost anything, because the farms are visited each month, and it would have been much wiser than to have given so large a sum for articles which have not been valued. When Mr. Mitchell was Minister for Industries he instituted a system of payments monthly by inspectors on the farm, and evolved order out of chaos, saving hundreds of thousands of pounds to the State, for which he should be commended. There is an impression abroad that every farmer is receiving 9s. a day. Of course, that is not so; it is only the man with 100 acres cleared who receives that sum. I hope that idea will be dispelled. Under Clause 4 all stock, implements, machinery and plant not secured by mortgage are to be taken over by the department. I think the farmer should be first consulted, because there are many men nearly free from the board, and it is hardly fair that their machinery should be taken as security. They have their children to educate, and out of their monthly allowance it is impossible to do much in that direction. Generally, the Bill should meet with favour. I will support the second reading.

Hon. A. SANDERSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [9.45]: Some reference has been made to the promise which this House received from the Government with regard to the discussion on these most important matters. The amount involved in this Bill is very considerable. I much regret that the amendment which I proposed last year was not carried, because it would have brought this Bill before us compulsorily much earlier in the session. I proposed an amendment last year that instead of the Bill being extended until March, 1920, it should be extended to the 30th September, 1919, in order that we should have plenty of time in which to consider it. I defy anyone to give an intelligent opinion on this Industries Assistance Board until they have carefully studied this report of the Industries Assistance Board, to the 30th June, 1919. There is only one copy of this available, I believe.

Hon. J. Ewing: We cannot have it if you have got it.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I should have thought it would have been printed and circulated so that members might carefully consider the matter. There seems to be at stake something between a million and a half and two millions of public money. The whole object of the Industries Assistance Board apparently was to help and stimulate and assist the agricultural industry. All that we can see is that according to the official report the crop has dropped from 4,954,000 bushels of wheat, or, roughly, five million bushels in 1915-16, to 2½ million bushels, or to be accurate, 2,510,000 bushels, in 1918-19. It

has, therefore, been reduced by one half, but I still maintain that while it was possible to justify this Bill in 1915—in any case it is useless to discuss it now—the only sound policy now is to announce to the country that with regard to this assistance by the Industries Assistance Board, at the earliest possible opportunity it should be stopped. I would not deal severely with anything which was done in 1915, shortly after war was declared.

Hon. H. Stewart: And a drought was on.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: At all events we were faced with unprecedented conditions. Now is the time for the Government to consider carefully and without any pressure what policy is going to be carried out in the future. So far from this being a Bill to deal particularly with the wheat, it was a Bill to enable seed wheat and other commodities to be supplied to settlers and advances to be made on guarantee by the Government for the purpose of assisting persons engaged in farming, mining, and other industries. It was purely a Labour Bill carrying out one of the principal platforms of the Labour party. It has now been turned into an Act, and dealt with as such, for assisting one section of the community alone. The whole future of this country has, so to speak, been mortgaged for the benefit of this one section of the community, and what effect, I ask, has that had upon our finances? I am not going through the whole of the report, but I would call attention to one or two of the tables placed here. One is a return of Government indebtedness paid by the Industries Assistance Board on behalf of sundry assisted settlers to the 30th June, 1919. We find that £270,000 has been handed over to the Lands Department as rent for these properties. That is a most illegitimate use, and most misleading so far as our finances are concerned. This sum should have been treated as revenue and should never have been paid out at all. It represents capital. The same may be said with regard to the Agricultural Bank interest, £245,000, which is paid out of loan money.

Hon. H. Stewart: Are you sure these payments are not from solvent clients of the Industries Assistance Board?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Whether they are solvent or insolvent the money has been improperly used and should not have been paid away in the manner in which it has been paid. The money has been borrowed. It is capital expended, and to pay land rates to swell our ordinary revenue and pay Agricultural Bank interest of £245,000, which is roughly speaking half a million, is highly improper.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: For what period?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: From 1914 to 1919. I am aware that it may be asked of what use is it to bring this matter up. It seems to me to be the bounden duty of members to protest against this method of conducting the business of the country. If this system of conducting the business had been successful it would have been open to most severe criticism, but it has been most un-

successful, and is one of the causes of the position in which we find ourselves to-day. We quite recognise that, and say we are going to pass over what has already happened, and are going to indicate to the country the policy for the future. So far as I can make out through the Bill, and through the attitude of Ministers, this is going to become a permanent department in Western Australia. Let us be perfectly sure that this method of developing the country is agreed upon, and if the majority of the people decide in that way I do not know that much has to be said. It is most unfair to the public to start this Industries Assistance Board as the method of helping at a most difficult time, namely, 1914-15, the agricultural, mining, and other industries, and then at a later stage to permanently establish it in our statute-book and in our public departments as a wheat farmers' assistance board. The difficulty of the present position appears to be that the great industry is exploiting the Government. We ought to know the difficulties we are labouring under now. Without any exaggeration we must all admit the difficult circumstances in which we find ourselves. What makes the position intolerable? It is the feeling of injustice. If every other industry was fairly treated I do not know that anyone could make any serious complaint, but there is an important section of the community which we are treating most unfairly.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Who is that?

Hon. A. SANDERSON: The whole body of the taxpayers is being treated unfairly. I will give an individual instance of the industries which are being treated unfairly. Let us take the question of the pig man, the poultry man, and the dairyman. Under this system of the wheat pool these men are being treated most unfairly. It is the sense of injustice that is so dangerous at a time like this. Presumably we have to pass this Bill, and to pass it with our Standing Orders suspended. I regret that the hon. member who spoke just now made a very serious charge, but on his own showing—

Hon. J. Mills: I did not make any charge.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: Then the hon. member made a suggestion. But when pressed on the point he tells us that he has no proof whatever for making it. These are the kind of things that do him and us, who are opposed to this system of conducting business, very little good. If there was anything in the statement he made it should be investigated. As it is he gives the Honorary Minister the one opportunity he wishes to have, and that is to fix upon some weak spot. Instead of taking the strong point of the case, the tactics of the Government are to attack the weak points of the case, just as we had that extraordinary explosion over the twopenny-halfpenny Fruit Cases Bill. If this does not stop him, reference will be made to the charge which fell to the ground when the hon. member was asked to give some authority for it.

Hon. J. Mills: It was not a charge.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I have withdrawn that and said it was a suggestion. He made the suggestion, and directly I heard his remarks I pricked up my ears, realising how important this was, and asked what authority he had, but he replied that he had no authority. Instead of pinning down the Honorary Minister and the Government to the question as to the policy in regard to the future of the Industries Assistance Board, it will give the Honorary Minister an opportunity of dealing, with a great deal of heat and with little light, with the really weak point of the case. I ventured to suggest at the time, realising the difficulties we had to face in this country, that the sound policy of dealing with the difficulty which unquestionably arises was to have given the Agricultural Bank a million of money. Let them take the responsibility of financing the institution. They are withdrawing their support from individual settlers. If there were individual settlers whom the bank refused to carry on and private banks refused to carry on—I do not think there will be a great many of these—let them deal with the people who are in that position quite severely. Under present conditions I learn from this report that the settlers are not anxious to get off the Industries Assistance Board. This is an interesting and valuable report, as it must be when it bears the name of Mr. Richardson. He specially refers to settlers who are not anxious to leave this board, and that is one of the significant passages of the report.

Hon. J. A. GREIG (South-East) [10.0]: I support the second reading of the Bill. Personally I regret that the conditions were such that it was necessary for the Government to be compelled to form the Industries Assistance Board for the purpose of saving a particular industry. As Mr. Sanderson has pointed out, the board was formed to assist more than one industry, and I presume had other industries claimed the right of assistance as the farming industry did, they would have had that assistance given to them under the Act. There are, however, a few other industries which have been assisted, but they have not been able to put up as good a case as the agricultural industry.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: And they have not had a sympathetic Minister.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: There may be something in that and also the fact that there was a strong party behind that industry to advance its claims. I am satisfied that the board has been a good thing for Western Australia. It has saved the industry. My recent trip through the wheat belt convinced me more than ever that the Industries Assistance Board has been a good thing for Western Australia and also a good thing for the men who were on the board. The object of the Bill before us is to ratify what the Government have done and to give further powers with regard to the purchase of machinery debts. We were told the other night that the Government had purchased

the debts of two firms and now have the offer from George Wills & Co. of debts amounting to £77,000 which can be purchased for £22,000. If the Government think it is good business to purchase those debts I am prepared to allow them to do so. It may be that this is just the opportunity when the Government can come in and purchase those debts to the advantage of the State and to the machinery firms.

Hon. J. Cornell: They are not worth any more or Wills' would not sell them at that price.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: Perhaps it is a good deal on the part of the Government. Probably the machinery firms have not as much faith in the country or in the farmers as the Government have. Some 18 months ago a scheme was propounded which in my opinion would have afforded a good opportunity for purchasing not only the machinery debts, but the whole of the debts. It seems to me it is rather giving preferential treatment to the machinery firms that the Government should purchase their debts when the storekeeper is also prepared to accept a compromise in the pound. If the Government had made a valuation of the properties, stock, implements, goods and chattels of all creditors and found out just what all were worth, and obtained a valuation of each individual holding and asked the storekeepers, merchants and machinery agents whether they were prepared to take a certain amount in the pound, they would have been agreeable to do so. I am convinced the Government would not have lost by the transaction and the farmers would have been left as free men when they became clear of the board. Mr. Sanderson said he was of the opinion that these men were not anxious to get off the board. I agree with that. I was surprised to find that some of the men who had the opportunity of getting off the board and becoming free, refused to do so.

Member: There are some men who are in credit on the board.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: And the Government are paying them interest on their money. I said to one man whom I met that I was surprised to hear that he was not anxious to get off the board and I asked him for what reason he wanted to remain on the board. He replied that he was nearly starved several years before he could get on the board, and after he got on the board an inspector was sent out once a month to tell him what to do. He carried out the instructions that were given to him and he had never regretted what he had done. That inspector visited him once a month and he was like an honorary managing director; all the time he was gaining experience and was prepared to continue under his management for a few years longer. It seems to me that it would be a good thing if the board were made a permanent institution, remembering the number of returned soldiers who are going on the land at the present time, many of them with very little experience. We would thus have practical men as inspectors trav-

elling around as they are doing now, giving valuable advice which would be appreciated. We spend a certain amount of money in agricultural colleges and in delivering lectures in agricultural centres and in other ways. I consider in the interests of the industry and of the State it would be a good proposition to have a man travelling round instructing farmers how to manage their properties. With regard to the Bill before the House hon. members will probably remember that some three years ago when a similar measure was before this Chamber, there was a clause in it asking that we should give the board power to take a lien over all goods and chattels of the clients on the board, that is, the goods and chattels not included in the mortgage. The Council saw fit to delete that clause. Since that time the same clause was introduced again and it was thrown out once more. Now I find it in the present Bill. It seems to have become a hardy annual. In Clause 4 of the Bill we have the clause which asks that the Government shall automatically by the passing of this Bill take a mortgage over those goods and chattels which were not on the farm originally but which a farmer has purchased since from money received from other sources. It is my intention when the Bill reaches the committee stage to move that that clause be deleted.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Is that not a recommendation from the Industries Assistance Board?

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I do not know. There are farmers who perhaps a couple of years ago owed the board £2,000, and who to-day may be owing the board only £200. By the passing of this clause the board will automatically take a lien over all their goods and chattels which were not included in the original mortgage and this will be done without their consent. It will be establishing a very dangerous precedent if by Act of Parliament we permit this kind of thing. Section 15 of the principal Act states what the board has power to take a mortgage over. It reads—

Upon all lands held by the applicant for agricultural, farming, or grazing purposes, and owned by the applicant, and all such lands held by him under contract for the purchase thereof, or under conditional purchase or other lease, or as a homestead farm, at the time when such advance was made, or the commodity in respect of which such advance is deemed to have been made was supplied, under this Act.

I am quite prepared that the Government shall have all that. In some cases farmers' wives have received gifts from their parents. Some may have received legacies and they may have purchased stock or implements over which the board would have no mortgage, but by the passing of the clause now in the Bill the board will automatically take a lien over those things whether the farmer is agreeable or not. The reason the Honorary Minister will probably advance for this is

that there are some farmers on the board who are trying to take down the Government.

The Honorary Minister: I never said such a thing.

Hon. J. A. GREIG: I said the Minister would probably advance that argument. Anyhow we will see what reasons he will advance. To ask farmers to give a mortgage over these chattels is one thing and to take a mortgage over them by Act of Parliament is quite another thing. If the Government said, "Our security is not good enough; unless you give us a mortgage over the additional stock and chattels, we shall not assist you any longer," that would be business, but I do not want to see these men, who have been struggling hard to clear themselves and have nearly succeeded, hampered and not allowed to buy or sell. On the trip to the wheat belt, we saw a man who had bought a train load of cattle and brought them down and turned them out to grass, and it was probable that he would make a thousand pounds on his deal. If he was under the board, he would have to obtain permission from the board to do that and, while he was getting permission, the deal would probably be declared off. These men who are under the board should be allowed some freedom to make good and, while the Government should be protected, they should obtain protection without such a drastic clause as this.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [10.16]: I quite agree with what Mr. Sanderson said on this Bill. We ought to make the board a permanent institution or wind it up as soon as possible. This Bill is a hardy annual. It is like another Bill which comes before us with painful regularity—the Treasury Bonds Deficiency Bill. This Bill comes up for re-enactment year after year and it is more annoying when one remembers the circumstances under which it was originally introduced.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I looked up the preamble to the original Bill and the preamble is altogether inconsistent with what has since been done. It reads—

An Act to enable seed wheat and other commodities to be supplied to settlers, and advances to be made or guaranteed by the Government for the assistance of persons engaged in farming, mining, and other industries, and for purposes incidental thereto and consequent thereon.

I remember the speech which was made when the Bill was introduced. No one in the House for a moment thought that the Industries Assistance Board would grow into the institution it is to-day. We never expected it would involve the enormous amount of money which has been involved, or that it would last so long as it has lasted. I turned up the "Hansard" report of the debate when the Minister was introducing the Bill, and one of the things he particularly stressed was that this was a Bill to assist agriculture, mining, pearling, and other industries. We

all know that it is a Bill almost purely for the agricultural industry, and that the few instances when it has been extended to mining are hardly worth referring to. When I said that the reason the farmers had received so much assistance was due to a sympathetic Minister, Mr. Greig said the mining industry had not a party similar to the farming industry to advance the interests of the miners in the same way as the Country party had advanced the welfare of those upon the land. I am a representative of a goldfields district and I do not advocate the interests of the goldfields, or the expenditure of money, with a total disregard of the national interests. I have some sense of responsibility to the State, and I have always endeavoured to show that what I have advocated would be reproductive. I do not believe—in a political sense—in being out for loot on behalf of those I represent. A good deal more attention might be paid to mining, and a good deal more money should be spent on the industry. If money were spent on mining even to a limited extent compared with the expenditure on agriculture, the State would be in a better financial position to-day and we would not have the fearful mess we see associated with some of the institutions connected with the farming industry. When the then Colonial Secretary, Mr. Drew, was introducing the original Bill, which we understood was a temporary measure, he said, according to the "Hansard" report—

The Bill specially mentions agriculture and mining; but it is not limited to those industries. Mining and co-ordinate industries have become unsettled owing to the war, and help to the agricultural industry is needed as a result of the bad season. It will be remembered that immediately after war was declared, the copper, lead and tin mining industries became disorganised, and were threatened with cessation. They would have been closed down had not the Government come to their assistance in the way they did. We were also desirous of doing something for the pearling industry but, owing to the fact that at present there is no market for pearl shell, we had to act with caution.

When the Bill was in Committee, he further emphasised that this Bill was purely a temporary measure to tide over a temporary condition of affairs. Mr. Colebatch, now leader of the House, moved to limit the duration of the Bill by a proviso which reads—

Provided that no commodity shall be supplied or money advanced under the Act after the 31st day of December, 1915. In the course of his remarks, Mr. Colebatch said—

I am sure it is not the intention of this House that legislation of this class should be permanent in character. In other words, he limited the operation of the Bill to a date that expired four years ago, and yet here we are with this Bill before us for re-enactment. Furthermore, the

Bill seeks to enlarge and extend the provisions of the Act and in a most dangerous direction. We do not know to what financial extent we will be involved if we pass the Bill. The proposal is to permit the board to purchase debts, and the Honorary Minister spoke of debts having been acquired from the International Harvester Company and Harris, Scarfe & Co. Has this been done with or without Parliamentary authority? If without parliamentary authority—and I have no recollection of anything of that nature—it was a decidedly wrong procedure.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Hear, hear!

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: It involves the sum of £25,000 and, if the Minister is permitted to expend money to this extent in connection with a Bill that was to be of a temporary nature only, we want to know where it will all end. It is altogether contrary to constitutional practice for any Minister or Government to expend money to the extent of £25,000 and make an entirely new departure in connection with a Bill of a temporary nature. The action of the Government, I say, has been entirely wrong and unconstitutional.

Hon. J. Ewing: There is another debt, too.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I understood George Wills & Co.'s was only a proposal, but that the other two transactions had been completed without the authority of Parliament. That is what I am objecting to. If this unconstitutional procedure is permitted in this case, where will it end? I have not sufficient confidence in the Industries Assistance Board, or in the financial genius of the present Government to believe that they have got the better of those men managing such firms as the International Harvester Company, Harris, Scarfe & Co., or George Wills & Co. When those firms made offers of this description, I should be very much surprised if they did not get the better of the deal.

The Honorary Minister: You will be surprised.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: It will be quite a novel experience if a Government department or board could show greater financial ability than private firms such as those I have mentioned. From the statement of the Honorary Minister, I understand that the amount of the liabilities of the board is £1,759,000, but that if the harvest realises one million pounds, the board's indebtedness will be £759,000. That is an example of the enormous figures involved. It is all based upon an estimate, and we know that Government estimates are rarely realised. I suggest that the House proceed with considerable caution before giving the board the authority asked for under this Bill. I certainly shall divide the House on Clause 3 and, if I am alone in my opinion, I shall have the satisfaction of voting against the clause. I know what it will mean if that clause is passed. We shall be led on as we have been so often led before and involved in all sorts of financial transactions, and the position will become even worse than it is to-

day. Furthermore, the farmers are paying 7 per cent. for their money. It would be interesting to know how much the Government will have to pay for the money.

The Honorary Minister: An average of 5.3 per cent.

Hon. J. Cornell: They have lent some for less than 7 per cent.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: There is a further provision which this Bill ought to contain. In connection with the last re-enactment of the Industries Assistance Act, Mr. Sanderson was instrumental in inserting the following proviso:—

A report and balance-sheet of the operations of the board shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament, by the Minister in charge of the department, on or before the thirtieth day of September, 1919. I saw that report, and I presume it was laid on the Table before the 30th September.

Hon. A. Sanderson: On the 30th September.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I think it is rather disappointing that the report has not been printed, so that it might be in the possession of members when this Bill is before the House. I had only an opportunity of glancing through the report. Presumably it will be printed later on, when its usefulness will have passed away, because this Bill will in the meantime have been carried. A report of that nature, if it is to be printed at all, should be printed as early as possible. I trust that certain amendments will be made in this Bill during the Committee stage, and I do hope that the clause giving the board power to purchase debts will not pass. If it be necessary, the Government can bring in a validating Bill for what has already been done; but I at any rate wish to be able subsequently to say that I protested against the giving of this power to the board.

Hon. Sir E. H. WITTENOOM (North) [10.33]: For the few words I have to offer on this Bill, I take for my text the remark that dropped from Mr. Sanderson that the Industries Assistance Board should be ended at the earliest possible opportunity. I fully recognise that in the past the board was necessary, and I am also aware that it has done a great deal of good. No doubt there have been unpreventable abuses in connection with its operations; but, taken altogether, the board proved of much assistance to the farmers. The time has arrived, however, when the board should cease. During the debate on the Address-in-reply I had the temerity to suggest that a sum of 5s. per bushel should be guaranteed to the farmers for their wheat on the understanding that there should be little or no assistance from the board after a year or so, and that all those farmers who could not make wheat growing pay at 5s. per bushel should be left to abandon farming on their own account. It was always argued that at the previous prices of 3s. 6d., 4s., and 4s. 4d., it was impossible with the average return of wheat obtained in this State to make farming pay. A consequence of those prices was that the

board was either losing money or accumulating debts on all sides. We have now succeeded in getting the Government to guarantee a price of 5s. per bushel, and in view of that fact I think the operations of the board should be curtailed gradually, not suddenly.

Any farmer who cannot make wheat growing pay at 5s. per bushel cash should go out of farming on his own account and work for somebody who does understand the business. The time is past for giving so much assistance to farmers, especially in view of the fact that various organisations are now looking after the large number of returned soldiers who have been or are being placed upon the land. This fact in itself would lessen the work of the Industries Assistance Board very considerably. As for the clause referred to by Mr. Greig, if I understand the position correctly, it is to the advantage of the Government to be able to take a mortgage over everything there is on a farm. I have always understood that the Government were at a disadvantage inasmuch as they had a mortgage over only a certain portion of what was on the farm, and not over the rest. I may be wrong, but it seems to me that the Government would be in a stronger position if they had a mortgage over everything on the farm. I cannot say whether it is better to arrive at that position through an Act of Parliament or by arrangement with the assisted farmer. Probably, if the farmer wanted to sell certain implements, he would not consent to give the Government security over everything. That is the point about it. Mr. Kirwan has drawn attention to certain features of the Bill, and I await the explanations of the Honorary Minister. It does seem as if the Government had taken up rather a strong position in concluding the purchase of various debts without the authority of Parliament. That is almost on a par with making a contract for the handling of the wheat through the Westralian Farmers Ltd. and then, after the contract had been definitely made, coming to Parliament to confirm it. However, I have no intention of opposing the second reading, and I have little doubt that after hearing the able explanations of the Honorary Minister, and his lucid replies to all the interrogatories put up, I shall easily be able to support the measure through its remaining stages.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [10.38]: As one who was in this Chamber when the original Industries Assistance Act was passed I contend that various Governments have so altered and garbled the measure that to-day we have arrived at a position which the framers of the parent Act never contemplated. Following on the drought and on the outbreak of war, the agricultural settlers of this State were being financed by private institutions outside the Agricultural Bank. Many farmers, however, became so encumbered that private enterprise definitely said that the prospects did not warrant carrying on those farmers at all. Then there was nothing left except for the State to step in and

take up the obligation. This the State did by the passing of the original Industries Assistance Act. Those farmers who were least in debt to private enterprise did not come under the provisions of that Act, which applied only to the worst cases—cases which no one but the Government would assist. Section 9 of the principal Act limits the assistance to be granted to farmers to seed wheat and other cereals, fertilisers, hay, chaff, implements, and so forth; in fact, to the essentials of farming. The proviso to that section lays it down that no commodities shall be supplied or monetary assistance granted after the 31st December, 1916. My reading of the proviso is that Government assistance to these farmers, whether in the form of commodities or money, should cease at the close of the year 1916. I say unhesitatingly, it was never intended that the operation of that Act should extend beyond the close of 1916. But what is the position we find to-day? The Honorary Minister says that the Industries Assistance Board have bought up various debts. Such a proceeding was never contemplated. When the original Act was passed we were faced with the position that those to whom the farmer owed money would not carry him on any further.

Hon. V. Hammersley: Could not.

Hon. J. CORNELL: In some cases would not. What with the drought and the war, the outlook was bad. But now we have a proposal that the original Act shall be so stretched—in fact, it has been so stretched already—as to empower the Government to pay debts owing by the farmer to firms who could not or would not carry him on when he was in his direst need. My vote will never be cast in favour of such a proposal. Let the farmer settle with those firms when he is out of the wood. The Industries Assistance Board, we are told, have bought up certain debts. The original debts may be much greater than the amount the Government are paying to acquire them. But evidently the firms to whom these debts are owing feel satisfied that they got a better deal from the Government than they could obtain from the farmer. By what authority of any description have the Government purchased these debts? In the Committee stage I intend to use my vote against any extension of the Industries Assistance Act, and more particularly extension in the direction of purchase of debts incurred by the farmer before the passing of the original Act. I do not think anyone in this Chamber will accuse me of ever having shown a want of sympathy for the struggling settler. I have at all times exercised my vote in a benevolent spirit towards him. But I am not going to ask the Government to take over the liability of individuals who in the dark hour would not go on with the job. Mr. Greig has said that the parent Act covers other industries. I admit it covers the mining industry, according to Section 24; but that section stands by itself. Even if the parent Act does liberally provide for the assistance of other industries, it has not been carried out. All the energies and

95 per cent. of the money spent has gone to the farming industry. I have no objection to any assistance rendered to the farmer, but I have obligations to other industries. The only agriculturists in my province do not come within the provisions of the Act. I have this also to consider: there are 30,000 Council electors in my province, and I must have due consideration for their position. They are taxed to pay whatever shortage there may be as a result of the operations of the Act. I trust the House will decide to continue the Industries Assistance Act, but I say let the House consider well to what extent it will extend the Act beyond its original functions. The Honorary Minister admits that the debts he proposes to take over were incurred prior to the passing of the Act. That in itself is sufficient justification for rejecting this provision. I ask, is not the farmer to-day in an infinitely better position to meet his obligations to George Wills & Co. than he was before the passing of the Act? If not, it is a condemnation of the Act. This House has taken a serious responsibility on its shoulders. If it is not prepared to give a more liberal franchise for the Council, I trust it will at least give a little more liberal consideration to the taxpayers than is proposed in the Bill.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [10.51]: I have not read the report to which Mr. Sanderson drew attention to-night. Had that report been printed I certainly should have read it. It is remarkable that any exception should be taken to the action of the Government as submitted in Clause 3. Mr. Kirwan and others are anxious to conserve the interests of the State and prevent the Government from doing illegal things. In some cases the law is more honoured in the breach than in the observance. This is a case in point. When Mr. Robinson, then Minister for Industries, took the opportunity to purchase on behalf of the farmer the debt he owed to the merchant, Mr. Robinson was doing good work for the farmer.

Hon. J. A. Greig: The farmer does not get any advantage; he has to pay his 20s. in the pound.

Hon. J. EWING: I thank the hon. member for his interjection. I want to know where the storekeeper is to come in. Hundreds of storekeepers in this country have been ruined, notwithstanding which the farmer has survived. Who is to get the benefit from this Bill? Are the Government out to make huge profits? We are told that a large debt has been purchased for a relatively small sum, and that it is proposed to buy up another large debt.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Why is George Wills selling?

Hon. J. EWING: I do not know, but I know that George Wills gave the farmers a quid pro quo for the £77,000.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: That is not the point.

Hon. J. EWING: Now it is found that Wills & Co. cannot realise on their securities. Mr. Cornell said that because the merchants

could not carry the farmer on any longer they should have no consideration. All the merchants have rendered invaluable service to the farmer, but they reached a point beyond which they could not go. Now, in consequence of a statute they cannot collect their debts, which alternatively they offered to the Government at a tempting price. I want the Minister to answer this: if the Government buy £77,000 worth of debts for £22,500, what are they going to get out of the farmer? Are they going to charge him only £22,500 plus interest? Is the farmer going to get the benefit or are the Government going to charge him the full amount? If so I am opposed to the Bill. If the farmer gets the benefit, I will support the Bill. If the Government in times of prosperity come upon the farmers to pay their debts there is not much in it for the farmers, and the Government will be making a profit out of them to which they will not be entitled. It will be a matter for Parliament, when the time comes, to determine whether it is in the best interests of the State that this Industries Assistance Board should be continued or not. We shall have an opportunity to discuss it each year. We can then do as we like. I am anxious to know the position in which we stand. I must also take exception to Mr. Cornell's statement that when a debt has been incurred, because the man who advances the money will not go any further there should be repudiation.

Hon. J. Cornell: I did not say that.

Hon. J. EWING: The position is that the farmer cannot pay.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Do you suggest that the Government could not do it?

Hon. J. EWING: The Government are clearing the farmers of the debts I have mentioned.

Hon. J. Cornell: To whom have they paid the money?

Hon. J. EWING: A considerable sum of money has been paid to creditors against the law, and hon. members have made out their case on that point. The Government intend to do this to an even greater extent if the Bill is passed. We want to know that the Government will not take undue advantage of the farmer. On that understanding I am willing to support the Bill.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [11.2]: I would not have spoken but for the reference of hon. members to the financial institutions that are likely to benefit from this action on the part of the Government. They have conveyed to me the impression that they are somewhat averse to these firms being relieved of the debts which have been owed to them by the farmers for many years. This position has been brought about first by the action of the electors of the State in bringing about a change of Government at a time when these firms were induced to advance a great deal of machinery, and give a considerable amount of financial assistance to the farmers. Many of the storekeepers all over the inland areas were advancing food

and clothing and tools of trade to these men to help them in the development of their land. The banks, too, were advancing them money to enable them to carry out their obligations to the Crown. After the change of Government Mr. Bath, when he became Minister for Lands, issued his notorious regulations, which knocked the bottom out of the securities held by those people who were rendering this assistance. When the security represented in the land was gone, seeing that the Crown held the whole of the securities, the Government alone were in a position to give the necessary financial backing to the farmers. Up to that time the securities had been looked upon as safe and sound, because hitherto they had always been honoured. When the banks found that a Government was in power which practically repudiated that which had been looked upon as a sound security, they had to call up their clients and announce that they could no longer finance them.

Hon. J. Ewing: A good point.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The storekeepers also found that they could no longer finance these men, and the firms which had been advancing machinery to the farmers could no longer continue to carry their debts. Coincident with this came the war. The moratorium was then passed, and these financial houses have been without their interest for many years and have had no chance of recovering the money due to them. The Government took over the financing of the man on the land through the Industries Assistance Act. They have been very tardy in recognising what the settlers owed to these financial houses and firms who had carried them over such a long period, and who had received no interest on their outlay. We should recognise that the Crown holds the land, which has not been paid for. The Crown retains the right to the principal security held by those who in the past were helping the farmers, and these have helped the Crown in the development of the security. Men on the land are also doing their share. This money is not given to the farmer, for he has to return every penny of it. The position is very different to that in connection with the money which has been advanced for the gold-mining industry. For many years past enormous sums of money have been expended out of the Mines Development Vote on the goldfields. We have never complained about that, for it was the right thing to do. We want to see this country developed, and it is necessary for the Government to take a risk. I do not know that much of the money advanced in this direction has been returned, or that the Crown has very much security for the money they have advanced for the development of mines. In comparison with this, the money advanced to the man on the land is advanced against a good asset. The farmers have been developing their holdings, and whatever money has been sunk into them will I think be taken out of them again as a result of the improvements effected. I am sorry that Mr.

Sanderson has joined with Mr. Cornell in becoming a socialist. Those men who have been producing wheat have conferred the utmost benefit upon Australia throughout the war. Attention has been called to the fact that the wheat production has fallen somewhat during the last few years.

Hon. A. Sanderson: It has fallen by half.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: This is to a certain extent due to those men who have not been receiving assistance from the Industries Assistance Board. Instead of using the money of the board they have had to drop out of wheat growing owing to the difficulty of securing the services of the men necessary to carry on the work of the farm. There is great difficulty in inducing men to take on farm labouring, and those who have been independent of the I.A.B. have not been able to grow wheat to the same extent as hitherto. On the other hand those who have benefited from the I.A.B. moneys have been growing the lion's share of wheat during the past two years. I am satisfied that, with our improved prospects and the increased area under cultivation, and with the increased attention that is being given to the land, and the improved security thus afforded, it will not be more than 12 months before we see our wheat production quadrupled. I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. Cunningham the debate adjourned.

BILL—ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL COMPANY, LTD. (Private).

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption of the debate on the second reading of this Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. A. Greig, the debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [11.10] in moving the second reading said: This Bill provides for the compulsory enrolment of electors for the Legislative Assembly, and rectifies certain errors in the Electoral Act. The second clause of the Bill repeals Section 38 of the principal Act, and makes certain provisions in lieu thereof. The object of the Bill is to reduce expenditure in connection with the Electoral Department, and to provide for a more complete enrolment. It applies only to the Legislative Assembly electors, it being considered that the different qualifications for the Council are such that it would be difficult to enforce the provision of compulsory enrolment for that Chamber.

Hon. J. Cornell: It ought to go out on the second reading for that reason.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The present cost of compiling the new rolls is very considerable. The Commonwealth for some time past have made provision for compulsory enrolment. It is thought that by substituting compulsory enrolment for the present principle of taking a census, a very considerable reduction in expenditure will be effected, and it will also make our rolls more complete than they are at present. Penalties are provided for failure to enrol, but they are not heavy. The maximum penalty is £2, the same as in the case of the Commonwealth Electoral Act. The Bill also prescribes that electors on changing their residence must notify the authorities, and have their electoral qualification altered to the new roll. Provision is being made that whenever an application is sent into the Electoral Department under the provisions of this clause a receipt shall be forwarded by the department to the applicants. The whole question so far as these clauses are concerned simply embraces this one principle only—is it preferable that we should have compulsory enrolment as exists at present in connection with the Commonwealth Electoral roll, or should we go on with the present expensive system of making an electoral canvass when a new roll has to be prepared? There can be no question that the proposed new method of compulsory enrolment is justifiable. It is much to be regretted that we have not been able to come to an arrangement with the Federal authorities whereby one application might suffice for both the Federal and State authorities. The chief difficulty in doing this is that the boundaries of the different electorates are not coterminous, and up to the present no scheme has been devised whereby this difficulty can be overcome.

Hon. H. Stewart: Cannot the Government devise a scheme?

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: The trouble is that in connection with every attempt that has been made we have found a difficulty in inducing the Commonwealth people to do anything except provide that they shall prepare the rolls and that we shall accept what they do. I do not think that would be a satisfactory course for us to adopt. I do not know that the question arises with the present Bill because, whether it is or it is not desirable that we should have one form of enrolment for both State and Commonwealth electorates, that question may be discussed apart from whether or not we should have compulsory enrolment as against our present method of canvassing for the preparation of new rolls. There is also a schedule attached to this Bill which makes many amendments to the existing Act and I can assure hon. members that each of these alterations is either a correction of an error or else an alteration in regard to which I will give a complete explanation. For instance, it is proposed to strike out the words

“or candidates” from Section 86 of the principal Act, which states—

The returning officer shall declare the candidate or candidates nominated to be duly elected if no greater number are nominated than are required to be elected, but otherwise the proceedings shall stand adjourned till the following day.

The words “or candidate” are meaningless because there can only be one successful candidate. In respect of the Legislative Council, if it should happen that there are two vacancies, one would be an ordinary vacancy and one an extraordinary vacancy, for which there would have to be distinct nominations. The principal sections referred to in the schedule of the Bill have regard to ballot boxes. I have ballot boxes here and hon. members will be able to see exactly what I mean. The existing section provides for a ballot box having an inner and an outer cover with a lock and key to each and with a cleft in the inner cover for receiving the ballot papers. The Commonwealth ballot box has no inner cover. It has a metal cover and there is a slit in the box in which the ballot papers are placed. I have no doubt the system is satisfactory, but the position is that we have to make use of the Commonwealth boxes and they must use ours. At the present time the use of the Commonwealth boxes is contrary to the wording of our Act and the proposal is to alter the wording of our Act so that either box can be used.

Hon. A. Sanderson: On a point of order, is the Minister in order in producing the ballot boxes here as exhibits?

THE PRESIDENT: Certainly.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I am merely producing these boxes in order that hon. members may clearly understand what I mean. Bills have at times been introduced and one hon. member in particular has been most strenuous in his opposition to voting on anything that he did not understand. I can assure the hon. member that in bringing the ballot boxes here I have no other motive except that hon. members shall clearly understand what is intended. It is proposed to amend Section 129 by striking out “and mark the word ‘cancelled’ on the butt corresponding to such ballot paper.” At the time that section was inserted our ballot papers had a butt; at the present time they have no butt. It is proposed also to amend Section 135 of the principal Act by striking out “the outer cover of” in the two places in which those words occur in the section. The section provides that before adjourning, the ballot papers, etc., are to be sealed in boxes. The omission of those words will enable us to use the Commonwealth boxes. Section 141, which deals with the count of the votes by the deputy and assistant returning officers, is to be amended by striking out “butts of ballot papers.” That is to be made because there are no longer butts to our ballot papers. Section 143, which deals with the counting of votes

by returning officers is to be amended by striking out the words "unless exhausted." The words are quite meaningless because at that stage it would be impossible for ballot papers to be exhausted. Section 146, which relates to the declaration of the poll and the return of writs, is to be amended by striking out the words "or candidates." I have already explained there cannot be more than one successful candidate in any election. Section 190 is to be amended by striking out the words "or application for a postal ballot paper." This section provides that a witness to an application must satisfy himself of the truth of the statements contained in that application. The reason for the amendment is that a person witnessing an application will have no opportunity of satisfying himself that the claim is true, but the person to whom the application goes will have an opportunity of satisfying himself whether it is true or not. Clause 6 of the Bill merely provides that the printing of the Acts shall be in conformity with the measure. In the last clause of the Bill provision is made for a slight amendment to the Act passed in 1908 regarding the making of false statements. The words used in that Act were "make any untrue" and it is proposed to strike out those words and insert "knowingly or wilfully makes a false." These are the only provisions contained in the Bill. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. Cornell, debate adjourned.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 28th November.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [11.25]: Before I support the second reading of this Bill I desire to have some further information from the hon. member who moved it. The Bill is a private one and was introduced in another place by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Angwin) and by Mr. Pantou in this House. The first amendment in the Bill so far as I can see removes the disqualification from women occupying the position of mayor of a town or the position of councillor. The leader of the House smiles, I have no doubt because here is another opportunity for women to fill positions which were hitherto forbidden to them. Whilst we may permit womenfolk to participate in discussions in this Chamber, I certainly do not think we would be wise in making provision for members of the other sex to fill the post of mayor in any one of our principal towns, or, in fact, anywhere. The Act provided that a person shall not be entitled to be enrolled as an elector unless he has paid his current rates not later than the 30th October. The Bill before us proposes to strike out these words and to permit of a person being registered as an elector, even though he has not paid his rates. That is not a wise provision. The least a

ratepayer can do is to pay his rates in order that he may qualify himself to vote as an elector, and if he fails to pay his rates, a penalty should be imposed, but that penalty should not be one which will permit him to vote. Clause 5 amends Section 392 of the principal Act. This section provides that no rates in any one year shall exceed 1s. 6d. in the pound. The clause in the Bill provides for an increase to 2s. 6d., that is, giving the local authority power to almost double the rate if they so desire. I do not think that is a wise provision. Clause 6 of this Bill proposes to empower the Minister to write off arrears of rates. So long as a property exists and it is of some value, and so long as it is in the name of a ratepayer, that ratepayer should be compelled to pay rates. I offer no objection to Clause 7 relating to the division of allotments. Clause 8 provides for preferential voting for the election of mayor and councillors. I am not clear whether the preferential system can be applied as in the case of Parliamentary elections and I should like to have further information on the point. Clause 9 proposes to amend Section 109 of the Act. Hitherto an elector could obtain a ballot paper prior to nominations being received. Under the amendment, an elector will be unable to obtain a ballot paper until after nominations have been received. This is about the only wise provision in the Bill. I know what has happened in connection with the indiscriminate distribution of ballot papers before nomination day and, if the Bill contained only this one clause, it would be deserving of support. I understand the Government propose to bring down next session a Municipal Corporations Act Amendment Bill on a comprehensive scale. These amendments could well wait and be embodied in that measure. We should not be asked to consider such amendments at this late stage of the session or at this late hour of the night. I shall reserve the right to vote for or against the second reading of the Bill after I have received additional information from the member who introduced the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. H. P. Colebatch—East) [11.32]: Although this is not a Government measure, I should like to indicate my attitude towards it. I take the same attitude on this Bill as I should have liked members to adopt towards another measure which was before us this evening. This Bill contains a number of excellent provisions, and I hope it will be passed. The provisions to which I refer are those in Clauses 7, 8 and 9. As Mr. Holmes has stated, the present system of voting by post is open to very great abuse, and it is an absurdity that a man should be able to obtain a ballot paper before nominations have been received. The provisions of Clause 8 relating to preferential voting are necessary. We have adopted preferential voting in connection with Parliamentary elections, and the Federal Parliament has now seen the necessity for adopting the same system in connection with their elections. The present

municipal system is inadequate and behind the times and might admit of a minority candidate being elected. Clause 7, relating to the subdivision of property, is in the same spirit if not the same words as a clause in the Road Districts Bill. The clause stipulating that an elector should not forfeit his vote merely because the rates on the property are unpaid is also in conformity with a clause in the Road Districts Bill. Although I admit there is room for a difference of opinion, I am prepared to agree to this clause because good arguments can be advanced on both sides. A tenant who pays his rent, and is not supposed to pay the rates, should not be disfranchised and deprived of his rights as an elector, because the landlord has neglected to pay the rates. Still, there is much to be said in favour of the existing law. A clause which should receive earnest consideration is Clause 5. I am inclined to think there is abundant reason for increasing the rating powers of municipalities, but it is open to grave question whether it would be wise to make so large an increase as is contemplated by this measure. At present the municipalities have the right to rate up to 1s. 6d., but this Bill proposes to increase their powers to 2s. 6d. That is a very large increase indeed and it is worthy of consideration whether we should not take a middle course and increase their rating power to, say, 2s. I intend to support the second reading of the Bill, because of the many necessary and excellent provisions it contains.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.36 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 2nd December, 1919.

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

QUESTION—ARBITRATION COURT AGENT:

Mr. O'LOGHLEN asked the Premier: 1, What public departments have retained Mr. Alcock during the past two years as agent or advocate before the Arbitration Court? 2, What amount has been paid to Mr. Alcock during that period?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Railway Department, Public Works, Metropolitan Water Supply, State Saw Mills. 2, £1,766 5s. 8d.

Mr. O'Loghlen: You ought to resign as Premier and take on that job.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT, STATE SAWMILLS.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Mitchell—Northam) [4.38]: With the permission of the House, I should like to make a statement regarding the State Sawmills. On Friday last I promised hon. members that they would be given an opportunity to discuss the question of the sale of the State Sawmills before the session closed. I now have to inform the House of the position of affairs. A Bill to authorise the sale of the State Sawmills will not be brought down this session because the terms of the contract have not been carried out. The parties negotiating for the purchase of the State Sawmills had until the 30th November to put up £15,000 sterling. That was not put up to the satisfaction of the Government and, for this reason, the Bill will not be introduced.

Hon. T. Walker: It is off then?