# Legislative Council,

*Tuesday, 27th November, 1928.*



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

## ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

1, Police Offences (Drugs).

2, Jury Act Amendment.

## METROPOLITAN MARKET TRUST REPORT.

The PRESIDENT: In accordance with Section 21 of the Metropolitan Market Act, 1926, I have received a copy of the accounts of the Metropolitan Market Trust, together with the Auditor-General's report thereon, for the year ended the 30th June, 1928 The report will be laid on the Table of the House.

## BILL—GROUP SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

*Recommittal.*

On motion by the Chief Secretary, Bill recommitted for the further consideration of Clause 2.

*In Committee.*

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

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 3:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That the words "amount so apportioned and the amount which" be struck out, and the words "expenditure as the board may think fit, so far as such expenditure" inserted in lieu.

The Parliamentary Draftsman writes—

This Bill as printed does not, it seems to me, express the intention. The idea is that the board should have power, in apportioning the amount chargeable to settlers, to write off portion of the actual expenditure. I think it desirable for further recommittal to make the amendment as shown.

That portion of the clause will then read—

with power to the board, at its discretion, to fix the amount chargeable and to be apportioned to each parcel of land within the group settlement area at such sum below the actual expenditure as the board may think fit, so far as such expenditure shall be found by the board to be in excess of the capitalisation which each group settler's area can reasonably bear, having regard to the prospective income derivable therefrom.

The clause does not give sufficient power to the board to write off expenditure.

Hon. A. Lovekin: That is what I have been contending all along.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I think the amendment is in accordance with what I suggested to the Committee. I previously sought to secure an amendment to cover not only the amount apportioned but also the amount expended, and the alteration now proposed should meet the case.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: I understand that none of the group settlers can make a success of their holdings if they are charged the actual cost, and the object of the Bill is to permit of the cost being reduced so that settlers will be able to pay their interest bills and make a success of their holdings. I should like to know whether the Government wish to be empowered to reduce the liability of the group settlers as low as possible, or whether it is the wish of members to limit the powers of the Government to reduce the capitalisation. Provided we have the right men to apportion the amounts, I think we should leave it in their hands.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: The amendment seems to meet the case and we now get back to where we started. The starting point was that no group settler should be asked to remain on his holding if it carried a capitalisation that would involve the payment of more interest than he could earn from working the holding. In order to do that we must give the board wide powers to determine what is a fair capitalisation. Subject to seeing the amendment in print, I think we might feel satisfied with our three weeks' labour on this clause.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: I heard a remark that some members were afraid to trust the board. I think we should leave it to the Government to put the group settlers in such a position that they can earn a good living. We should not restrict the powers of the Government in the matter of reducing the amounts.

Hon. A. Lovekin: We only say that the Government should take the responsibility.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: I merely wish to make myself clear.

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

Bill again reported with a further amendment.

## BILL—SUPPLY (No. 3) £1,000,000.

*Standing Orders Suspension.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.44]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Supply Bill (No. 3) to be put through its remaining stages in one sitting.

Question put and passed.

*Second Reading.*

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.56] in moving the second reading said: The amount applied for under this Bill is £1,000,000, being £650,000 from Consolidated Revenue Fund, £300,000 from General Loan Fund, and £50,000 from Government Property Sales Fund. It is approximately one month's supply, and is considered sufficient to carry on until the Estimates have been passed.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Did you say one month's supply?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That is £12,000,000 a year.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Previous supplies granted were £2,860,500, being £1,700,000 from Consolidated Revenue Fund, £1,100,000 from General Loan Fund, and £60,500 from Government Property Sales Fund. The expenditure against these supplies to the end of October was £2,746,318. The result of four months' operations to the end of October shows a deficiency of £508,644. The deficiency for the corresponding period of last year was £352,999. Thus there is an increase this year of £155,645. The expenditure for the same period exceeds that of last year by £181,999, and the revenue by £26,354, the result being a net increase in the deficiency of £155,645, as I have stated. The growth of expenditure is due in a measure to increased payments on account of interest and sinking fund amounting to £76,932. There are a number of increases on departments. Revenue also shows an increase, but not to the same extent as expenditure. The revenue position during the four months has been very adversely affected by the shipping strike. The Railway Department alone estimate their losses to date at about £100,000. Harbour revenue has also suffered severely, and other sources of revenue have been affected to a lesser extent. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*In Committee, etc.*

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

Read a third time and passed.

## BILL—EDUCATION.

*Assembly's Amendments.*

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

No. 1.—Clause 7, Subclause (2). Add at the end the words "subject to the regulations relating to the Board of Classifiers."

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

This refers to transfer of teachers. Through an oversight recognition of the board of classifiers was omitted. One member of that board represents the Minister for Education, another the Director of Education, and the third the Teachers' Union. Promotions are decided by the board.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment agreed to.

No. 2.—Clause 7, Subclause (3). Strike out the words "shall not be," and insert the words "are not" in lieu thereof.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

The matter is already provided for in the Public Service Act, and the Parliamentary Draftsman suggests that the clause should be made simply declaratory.

Question put and passed: the Assembly's amendment agreed to.

No. 3.—Clause 17. Strike out Subclause (4).

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

This refers to the sending of a notice by post, instead of the serving of a summons. The provision is strongly opposed by the Crown Law Department, who say it should appear in the Justices Act.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I hope the Committee will not agree to the Assembly's amendment. Hon. members will recollect that some two or three years ago I endeavoured to get a similar amendment into the State Children Act, to enable notices to be sent to the parents of delinquent children, in place of the service of summonses, which are costly and oppressive. The Crown Solicitor then stated that the proper place for the amendment was not in the State Children Act, but in the Education Act. The State Children Act contains a similar provision referring to traffic cases, notices being sent by post instead of summonses. I did not press for incorporation of the amendment in the State Children Act, because I realised that every Act should be self-contained as far as possible. The present provision is part and parcel of the Education Act itself, and ought to be in that Act. The Justices Act deals with summonses and complaints generally. It seems to me unwise to make an exception in the Justices Act, when we can get direct to the point in the Education Act, where it belongs. To lodge a complaint and issue a summons against every parent whose child becomes a truant, is oppressive. It is only poor parents whose children attend school irregularly. To me it seems monstrous that a court should be compelled to impose a fine of 5s. and 3s. costs in every such case. There is frequently the excuse that the parent has neglected to inform the Education Department of the child's illness. The 3s. costs are made up of 2s. for the summons and 1s. for service. When the order for costs is made, it automatically becomes 7s. 6d., because a distress warrant follows, and if there are no goods and chattels another warrant follows, with more costs. In many instances there are mileage fees at the rate of 1s. per mile. In the case of a parent residing at Wanneroo, that would mean 14s. The parent could be summoned by a notice posted, costs thus being avoided. The Director of Education is in favour of this principle. The Minister has just told us that the Crown Law Department, too, are in favour of the principle, but that they consider the amendment should be made in the Justices Act. Those who administer the Education Act, the bench of magistrates and the clerks of courts, are in favour of the amendment, and I think the amendment is in its proper place in this Bill. There are numerous cases of hardships. Only with in the last fortnight in the Children's Court there were several such cases. One man was fined 5s. with 3s. costs and he said, "You will have to give me time to pay because I am an invalid pensioner, and I have to keep myself and my boy on the pension, and sometimes I am sick and I am compelled to keep him at home." I cancelled the fine that I had imposed and I told the man he need not worry any more about the costs. I got a receipt for the costs and that ended the matter. When I was leaving the court that day the clerk presented to me for signature a distress warrant for 15s. I looked into it and found that the woman concerned was in receipt of State relief and had been fined 5s. with 3s. costs and the amount had got up to 15s. I had not the heart to allow that warrant to go out and in that case, too, I secured the receipt for the amount and ended the matter.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Are those not exceptional cases?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: No, there are dozens of them. I have paid the costs many times since I have been associated with the court. Under the Traffic Act delinquents are brought to the court by notice sent through the post. The same practice could be followed in connection with these cases. In 99 cases out of a hundred the children are absent from school on account of sickness of the parents. All the officers of the court are in favour of the amendment and the Chief Secretary must agree that it is

in this measure that such an amendment should appear and not in the Justices Act.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: I intend to support Mr. Lovekin's amendment. The principle is agreed to and it is merely a question of the statute in which it should appear. It seems quite reasonable that it should be inserted in the Bill before us. Let me relate a little incident that occurred in connection with an amendment I moved when I was a much younger member of this House. In an amendment to the Health Act I moved to insert a provision to give the coroner power to order a post mortem examination in certain cases where persons were suspected of having died of some virulent contagious disease. The amendment was inserted and it went to another place. To my astonishment it was objected to by Mr. Angwin, who succeeded in convincing another place that the amendment should appear in the Coroners Act. I waited my time and after the lapse of some years a Bill to amend the Coroners Act came before this House and I seized the opportunity to get the amendment inserted. It went to another place and again to my astonishment the same people objected to the amendment and said it should have been inserted in the Health Act Amendment Bill. Fortunately, however, that very wise provision was accepted as an amendment to the Coroners Act. Mr. Lovekin has convinced us of the wisdom of the amendment and, as I consider it should appear in the Bill we are now discussing, I shall support its retention.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I intend to support the retention of the amendment in the Bill because I have known cases where a set of circumstances have operated similar to those outlined by Mr. Lovekin. The Education Bill in my opinion is the Bill in which the amendment should appear.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I agree with what Mr. Lovekin says and at an early stage I told him that I was not opposed to the amendment. I have no desire to see the Bill jeopardised because it is important that we should get this consolidating Bill through because, at the present time, the Act is pasted all over with amendments and regulations.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I have no wish to jeopardise the prospects of getting the Bill through because I know the Chief Secretary has taken a great interest in it, but I really think we should send the amendment back to another place since members do now understand the position, whereas they did not understand it before. It is quite open for another place to ask for a conference, and I have no doubt that if the conference takes place, the managers of another place can be convinced that this is the Bill in which the amendment should appear. The Government should take some heed of those who are administering these Acts, and I assure the House that I would not bring anything forward unless I knew that the department and the officers concurred. Last session I submitted an amendment to the State Children Act to enable proceedings to be transferred from Perth to Albany, Broome, Geraldton or Port Hedland to save bench warrants being issued from Perth for the arrest of defaulters in those distant towns, and so incurring the expenditure of perhaps £15, taking the defaulters away from jobs, only to find on their arrival in Perth that they had no funds, and that having been removed from their positions there was then less possibility to recover the amount than if the delinquents had been permitted to remain in their jobs. The clerk of the court who made the suggestion to me was carpeted for having done so. Hon. members here were good enough to adopt the suggestion I made and we passed it to another place. The amendment was objected to and eventually a conference took place and the managers from another place gave way to this House. The result of that amendment in a few months was the saving of £180 to the department by way of expenses that would have been incurred in bringing men in from the back blocks for not complying with maintenance orders. But for that amendment to the Act, it would have meant taking 11 men out of jobs. Those men were permited to remain where they were and the existence of the amendment led to the recovery of a good deal of the maintenance money. The amendment we are now considering is somewhat similar and I hope the Committee will be with me in insisting on its retention. I am sure another place will yet see the necessity for it.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I have given due consideration to the position in which the Chief Secretary finds himself, but I know also the great interest Mr. Lovekin takes in the Children's Court and therefore intend to support the retention of the amendment.

The least we can do is to try to meet the wishes of Mr. Lovekin in this matter.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am pleased to hear the spirited case put up by Mr. Lovekin in support of the amendment which he secured to this Bill. Perhaps, however, if the matter were deferred for a day or two a compromise might be effected between him and the Solicitor-General. In any event, I intend to vote against the Assembly's amendment.

Question put and negatived; the Assembly's amendment not agreed to.

A Committee consisting of the Chief Secretary, Hon. A. Lovekin and Hon. A. J. H. Saw drew up reasons for not agreeing to amendment No. 3 made by the Assembly.

Reasons adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

## MOTION—COLLIE POWER SCHEME.

Debate resumed from the 18th October on the following motion by the Hon. J. Ewing:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should forthwith proceed to establish in the Collie coalfields area a generating plant capable of supplying electrical current for lighting and motive power throughout the whole or the greater portion of the State.

**HON. J. EWING** (South-West—in reply) [5.30]: I had anticipated that some hon. members would have continued the discussion of my motion. I think it would be wrong to take up the time of the House at any great length in replying to the debate. I would like to read what the manager of the Electricity Supply Department stated when referring to his previous recommendation for the extension of the generating plant at the East Perth power house. In the course of his remarks, Mr. Taylor stressed the necessity for early action. He stated:—

It was estimated by the end of next year the whole of the present boiler house plant would be in operation. If the continually growing load was to be carried, it was essential that additional plant be ordered, and a start made with the foundations. The time was coming when the load would have increased to such an extent that it would be impossible to take any plant out of commission except on Sundays, which would not permit of overhauling.

I know that the case put up by the Minister in reply to my speech was almost entirely prepared by the manager of the Electricity Department. I want hon. members to look upon this question not as one between the East Perth power station and Collie, but simply as a national scheme out of which much good and great advantage must accrue to Western Australia. I could go into the whole question at great length in order to answer the points raised by the Minister and other hon. members, but I do not think it would be wise to do so. Hon. members have made up their minds that something should be done to put the generation of electric power on a national basis. I think they are quite satisfied on that point. I recognise that the reply of the Minister indicated the attitude of the Government for the time being. I believe, however, if Ministers were to go into the question thoroughly, they would realise that many inaccuracies advanced against my motion by the Chief Secretary at the instance of the manager of the Electricity Department, could be set aside in the interests of the Collie scheme. At some future time, I may take advantage of an opportunity to discount the statements made by the Minister. For the moment I will content myself with mentioning one or two points, which should be sufficient to convince the Minister that the explanation made to the House, as the result of the information supplied by Mr. Taylor, represented nothing more than a hoax or a farce. The Chief Secretary told us that the capitalisation of the East Perth power station amounted to £807,651, while the transmission lines, substations, etc., including the fifth unit, represented another £312,611, making a total capitalisation of £1,120,262. If anybody were to go into the question thoroughly, they would agree with me that the capital expenditure, according to the departmental report for the last financial year, disclosed that the amount debited to the capital account in respect of the power station was £922,395, although the Minister gave us the figures as £807,651. I want hon. members to peruse the report issued by the Commissioner of Railways in which the capital expenditure on the power station is given as £922,395. There is a footnote indicating that that amount excludes £239,724, £193,200, £3,194 and £144, all of which represented expenditure incurred in connection with the erection of the fifth unit. I maintain that those amounts should have been added to the capitalisation of the scheme for the year ended the 30th June last. Had that been done, the Electricity Department would have shown a loss, instead of a profit of £11,000. As the years

go by, that loss will go on increasing. The capitalisation of the plant to-day is £1,460,713, whereas the Chief Secretary said it was £1,120,262, showing a variation of £340,451. The capital expenditure represents an interest charge per unit of .17d., or, on the real capital, of .277d., which would mean a selling price of 1.03d. The average selling price is .96d., so a loss has been made on that account already; that is to say, the loss would have been made had the full amount of the capital cost been debited against the scheme. I maintain that the interest charges on the whole of the capital expenditure should have been against the figures for the financial year ended on 30th June last, and not for the current financial year. The report I have referred to shows that the loss has been much greater during the latest quarter than for the corresponding period of the previous year. Had the full amount of the capital been taken into account, the position would have been worse to the extent I have indicated. I want to emphasise the point that it is evidently the intention of the Government to extend the scheme, and they will have to do so over a period of ten years. By that time the capacity of the East Perth power station will be 2½ times what it is at present. I agree that the sixth unit must be constructed, and that will mean the addition of another £538,318 to the capitalisation of the scheme, because we can take it that the amount involved in the installation of the sixth unit will be not less than the amount spent in connection with the fifth unit. If that is so, it will mean that the capitalisation of the power house will be just on £2,000,000. Thus I do not think it possible to argue against my motion for the adoption of the Collie scheme. My argument is that this is a national scheme, whereas the East Perth power station can supply only the requirements of the districts within a radius of 27 miles of the city, and can never be regarded as a scheme capable of supplying the requirements of the State. What we want is a power scheme that will provide for the requirements of all the people. The Minister said that it was my policy to close down the East Perth power station. My policy is nothing of the kind. What I desire is to allow it to continue until we reach a similar position to that attained in Victoria where, at Yallourn, power is being generated at the cheapest rates possible in sufficient quantities to supply not only Melbourne but the whole of Victoria. If we go in for a scheme of developing power at the source of coal supplies, the same thing should apply here as applies in Victoria. The East Perth scheme then could form a portion of the bigger scheme that would be centralised at Collie. I will not say any more, because I believe hon. members have made up their minds as to what should be done. The East Perth power house, which is not a national scheme, is heavily capitalised, and the time is not far distant when the capitalisation will be in the vicinity of £3,000,000. If that is the determined policy of the Government, they are welcome to it, because it will not be in the interests of the people generally. It is the desire of people living in other parts of the State to have the advantage of cheap electricity supplies, just as it is the desire of people living in the metropolis. The people in the outer districts cannot get those supplies from the East Perth power station, and the House should agree to an extension if not at Collie, at any rate at some other centre where power will be generated cheaper than is possible at East Perth to-day. I maintain that an enormous saving would be effected if the Collie scheme were to be adopted. Hon. members can appreciate for themselves that the present is the time when opportunity should be taken to get on with that scheme. As to Mr. Taylor, the manager and engineer in charge of the Electricity Department, I do not take exception to what he has done. On the other hand, Mr. Taylor is not progressive, and does not look far enough ahead. I think the advice he has given to the Government is very bad indeed, and I believe that if he were to deal with the subject in accordance with his knowledge and the dictates of his own heart, he would move in the direction outlined in my motion at once. I think we should have some expert to go into the whole question. Sir John Monash is well known to all of us. He has done wonders at Yallourn where he has produced the cheapest electric power in the world. Why should we not avail ourselves of the expert advice of Sir John Monash to ascertain whether the scheme I advocate is a reasonable one or not. I hope hon. members will vote for the motion, and that they will agree to transmit it to the Legislative Assembly for its concurrence. I hope the matter will be dealt with in that house this session. Then something will have been accomplished along

lines I have been advocating for many years past.

Question put and passed.

On motion by Hon. J. Ewing, resolution transmitted by message to the Legislative Assembly, for its concurrence.

## BILL—ELECTORAL DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 22nd November.

**HON. SIR WILLIAM LATHLAIN** (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.45]: I rise with a great deal of trepidation to speak on the Bill because, after the doleful, dismal remarks of Mr. Hamersley, I wonder whether, as a humble metropolitan representative, I have any right to speak at all on the Bill or to express any opinion upon it. When the hon. member was speaking to the Bill the other night, he disclaimed the right of the bootmaker and of the agricultural implement maker to any serious consideration whatever.

The Honorary Minister: He said he would not allow the agricultural implement maker a vote.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: Metropolitan members representing so very many electors are to be cast into utter oblivion. That is what Mr. Hamersley would have. I have always thought that many industries were being carried on in the metropolitan area entirely for the benefit of the primary producer. Amongst those are the superphosphate works, in which a considerable number of men are employed. But Mr. Hamersley declares that the bootmaker and the agricultural implement maker have no rights at all. The only logical conclusion one can come to is that the man engaged in the manufacture of superphosphate also has no rights. I am well aware that wheat was grown in Western Australia before superphosphate was introduced on anything like a big scale. But I think even Mr. Hamersley will agree that with the use of superphosphates millions of acres of land in Western Australia have been brought under cultivation which, without superphosphates, would have been comparatively useless. Yet the hon. member would give to all those engaged in the manufacture of superphosphates little or no representation at all. I should have thought that a man like Dr. Saw, one of my esteemed colleagues, who has given so much of his time to the curing of ailments, not only of residents of the metropolitan area, but also of country people, would be entitled to some consideration. Then there is my other colleague, Mr. Stephenson. He has occupied the whole of his time in selling primary products to the residents of the city and therefore rendering a benefit to those engaged in the primary industries. Surely he should be deserving of some consideration. As for me, unfortunately I am one of the parasites, for my principal occupation is the selling of socks. That is not of much good to the people of the country areas, because probably they do not wear socks. In my experience in this House I have never heard a greater lack of sympathy towards the representatives of the metropolitan people as a whole than I heard from Mr. Hamersley when he was speaking to this Bill the other evening.

The Honorary Minister: And he resides in the metropolitan area.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: It is a shame; he ought to be made live in the country. But apart from that, one would imagine that those country representatives, in their ambition to do the best for the men on the land, were actually supermen.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Some of them are.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: But I am referring to Mr. Hamersley. One can only assume that when we go to our long rest there will be a special place prepared for these supermen.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It will be a warmer place than for the others.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: No; not for the hon. member. When he goes to his supreme resting place he will be met by the Angel Gabriel who, on hearing the knock on the door will say, "Who is there?" The answer will be "Hamersley, of the Country Party." He will be admitted with all pomp and ceremony, placed on a high dais and given a golden harp. All I can say is that in my opinion a flute would be very much more appropriate.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you think the people there will wear socks?

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: I do not know.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: I see nothing of this in the Bill.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: No, but Mr. Hamersley could. Members representing agricultural areas have had a great deal more than their fair share of representation in every Cabinet we have had during the past 10 or 15 years.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That quite disproves the claim you are putting up.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: No; it does not. In the Mitchell Government the whole of the metropolitan area had but one member, and when Mr. Draper retired there was no metropolitan representative left in the Cabinet. During the first three years of the regime of the present Government there was but one metropolitan member in the Cabinet, and even now there are but two. It is the first time for many years that the people of the metropolitan area have had two representatives in the Cabinet.

Hon. W. T. Glasheen: You seem to get all you want without representation there.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: I agree with the contention of Mr. Harris respecting the mining and pastoral areas In all probability Boulder, Brown Hill-Ivanhoe, Hannans and Kalgoorlie will constitute four seats. In my opinion the quota there should be raised to about the same as that for agricultural areas, and a further seat should be given to the outer goldfields areas, which spread over so large a territory. Mr. Hamersley said that because the population had increased throughout the agricultural areas in about the same proportion as it had increased in the metropolitan area, he felt that the metropolitan area was not entitled to five extra seats, and on the other hand the country areas should be given some preference. In my view the quota proposed for the agricultural areas is a fair and reasonable one. If their population has increased in the same proportion as that of the metropolitan area, all I can say is they must have had more than their fair share of representation under the previous redistribution of about 18 years ago.

Hon. W. T. Glasheen: It is not always a question of population.

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: No. Take the Federal electorate represented by Mr. Green; it covers more than one-third, nearly one-half of Western Australia. But I really think that under the Bill the agricultural areas are to have fair and just representation. Regarding the measure as a whole, the Government are to be congratulated upon having brought down so fair and reasonable a proposal. There might easily have been in the Bill many things which might not have been acceptable to a majority in this House. The Government have proposed a fair and reasonable distribution in regard to the people as a whole, irrespective of whether they reside in the metropolitan area or in any of the agricultural areas. In all probability the Government, when they allotted a quota of 4,000 to the agricultural areas and a quota of 6,400 to the metropolitan area, recognised the higher intelligence of metropolitan members and concluded that they could safely be given a larger quota of electors to look after.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Is it the higher intelligence that has prevented them from being included in successive Cabinets?

Hon. Sir WILLIAM LATHLAIN: No, it is the modesty of metropolitan members that precludes their being included in Cabinets, and that is a quality unknown in any but metropolitan members. I will support the Bill because the proposed distribution is in the best interests of the people as a whole, irrespective of section; and after all, it is the people who have the right to representation and it is the people who will be the judges of what is to take place. The quota allotted to the metropolitan area is fair and reasonable and so, too, is that allotted to the agricultural areas. The only objection I can see in the Bill is as to the central goldfields area. The quota allotted to those seats is too small. Still we have to realise that any Government bringing down a Bill of this sort could not fail to have it in mind that charity begins at home and that self-preservation is the first law of nature. However that may be, the Bill is a fair and reasonable one, and I will support the second reading.

**HON. H. SEDDON** (North-East) [5.57]: In rising to support the Bill I may say it is long overdue. When we heard that the Government were bringing down the Bill, naturally we were curious to see exactly what lines they had been working upon. It is now quite evident that the result of the Bill will be to transfer five seats from the goldfields areas to the metropolitan area. But apart from that, it is clear there

has been an attempt to recognise a somewhat smaller quota than was proposed in the Bill previously before Parliament, and an attempt to apply the principle of community of interests in determining the divisions in which the electorates are to be placed. One point arises there, namely, just exactly the way in which the Bill will link up with the Electoral Act Amendment Bill, providing for joint rolls. Because it is evident, having regard to the principle in the Bill before us, that it will be impossible to arrange for coterminal boundaries between the State and the Federal divisions. That being so, I contend that the framing of this Bill along the lines followed is an effective answer to the query raised by Mr. Harris and other members as to the ability to make the previous measure a workable one. I think the principle laid down and taken under this Bill clearly demonstrates the impracticability of making the joint rolls scheme workable.

Hon. E. H. Harris: But this will make it far worse than it is now.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I contend that the Government, unless they have information unknown to us at the present time, should withdraw that measure and bring down a more practicable Bill. There are one or two points arising out of the present measure to which I should like to direct the attention of the Chief Secretary because they are matters that require explaining. It may be of interest to members to know that the Federal rolls upon which the recent election was held contain for the State of Western Australia a total of 203,146 electors. As is well known, the Federal authorities have means of keeping their rolls up to date that certainly are not available to the State authorities. One would therefore expect to find the Federal rolls up to date, seeing that they have been specially prepared for an election. It must be borne in mind that in both instances we have a system of compulsory enrolment. Having that principle and a similar franchise, one would expect to find that the total number of electors on the Federal rolls would compare with those on the State rolls. As a matter of fact they do not compare at all. While the Federal rolls show a total enrolment of 203,146, the State rolls show 214,689 electors. That is a difference of 11,543 in the total enrolments, although we have the same franchise in both instances.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The State rolls were compiled at practically the same date.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I understand that is so because the desire of the Government is to have the rolls as nearly complete as possible when they refer the matter of district boundaries to the Commission. It is up to the Government to explain why the State rolls contain 11,543 more names than are to be found on the Federal rolls made up to practically the same date.

The Honorary Minister: Is it not up to the Federal Government to explain their rolls?

Hon. H. SEDDON: I pointed out that the Federal Government have facilities for revising their rolls that are not available to the State and they have just revised their rolls for the election. The State Government have revised their rolls, and yet we find that though the two rolls have been revised to practically the same date, there is a disparity of over 11,000 electors. The Chief Secretary should make a note of it in order that he might give the House an explanation when he replies to the debate. A point touched upon by previous speakers and elaborated by Sir William Lathlain is the discrimination being made by the Government between the central goldfields seats and the outer goldfields seats. Members are aware that the previous basis upon which representation was to be made provided a special arrangement for the outer goldfields as against the central goldfields. Under this Bill the Government propose to treat them all alike. The effect will be that while we have in the North-East Province an area of 143,211 square miles, the portion of the province contained in the central goldfields area covers an area of only 86½ square miles. Thus we shall have in the outer goldfields 143,125 square miles which, under the basis of representation laid down by the Bill, will have one Assembly seat. In the circumstances there is adequate ground for drawing the attention of the Government to the proposed quota because it appears to me that by consolidating, as they will consolidate, the representation in that comparatively narrow area known as the central goldfields area, and allowing the whole of the rest of the goldfields to be represented by only one member, they will be instituting a state of affairs similar to

that in the district represented by Mr. Green in the House of Representatives.

Hon. E. H. Harris: There would be one more member for the Murchison.

Hon. H. SEDDON: There will be only eight seats for the whole of the present goldfields, whereas under the Bill introduced by the Mitchell Government provision was made for nine seats. Yet a tremendous storm of indignation was raised on the goldfields in 1922 at what was described as an attempt to rob the goldfields of representation. This Bill will reduce the goldfields representation by one more seat than was proposed by the Mitchell Government, and still we hear practically no protest from the goldfields members.

The Honorary Minister: How many seats would you have got under the Mitchell scheme with the present enrolment?

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am glad the Honorary Minister has raised that question because I have certain figures that will be illuminating, as they illustrate the difference between the enrolment at the present time and the enrolment when the Mitchell Bill was introduced. In 1922 the central goldfields area contained 11,184 electors and the outer goldfields area 7,517 electors. The 11,184 electors would have been represented by four members and the 7,517 electors by nine members under the Mitchell Bill. At present there are 8,395 electors in the four central goldfields districts, a decreased of 2,789 since 1922. The outer goldfields districts, which contained 7,517 in 1922, now contain 7,441 electors, or a decrease of 76 electors. Yet it is proposed that the central goldfields area, which has lost 2,789 electors, should still retain the same basis of representation, namely four seats, while the outer goldfields area, which has lost only 76 electors, should be allowed only four seats out of the nine existing at the present time.

Hon. E. H. Harris: That is the point.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Those figures speak for themselves.

The Honorary Minister: They do not answer my question.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Those figures are sufficient answer to any query as to the basis of representation under the two measures. There is another point to which I wish to direct the attention of the House, and that is to the state of affairs which existed when the previous measure was introduced. Into the debates in another place was imported a spirit that in my opinion was most undesirable, a spirit that reflected very little credit upon the representatives there owing to the way in which they attacked the personnel of the Commission appointed to arrange the boundaries for the redistribution of seats. Members may recollect the strong criticism that was offered when the report of the Commission was tabled. Attacks were made on the personnel of the Commission that from this stage I think most members will deplore. Unless the Government are very careful, they will produce a similar state of affairs which, in fairness to the gentlemen to be appointed to carry out this work, they should endeavour to avoid. The gentlemen to be entrusted with the responsibility of re-allocating the boundaries are a judge of the Supreme Court, the Surveyor General and the Chief Electoral Officer.

Hon. E. H. Harris: The people who were roundly abused on the previous occasion.

Hon. H. SEDDON: They certainly came in for very severe criticism on that occasion. In order to avert a repetition of that sort of thing and to avoid placing members of Parliament in an unfair position, the Government should take steps to provide that, on the report of the Commission being completed, it should become law without further discussion. We have to recognise that as a result of the efforts of those gentlemen, certain seats will be wiped out. It is only to be expected of human nature that there will be expressions of disapproval, not only from members of Parliament but also from the districts concerned, when it is found that two or three seats are to be merged into one. Opportunities will be available to members to protest against the report of the Commission. We have to recognise that the members of the Commission are gentlemen above suspicion. I am firmly convinced they are above suspicion and will carry out their duties in accordance with the principles laid down in the measure.

The Honorary Minister: Have you considered the constitutional aspect of that question?

Hon. H. SEDDON: I have found no reason why such a procedure should not be adopted if it was introduced in due form to Parliament.

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: It was not introduced when the Mitchell Government's Bill was brought in.

Hon. H. SEDDON: That is so, and the result in another place was a stone-wall of 28 hours, whereby the Labour Party saved the situation as far as they themselves were concerned. Another point regarding the Commission should be brought under the notice of the Government. The members of the Commission have their time occupied in carrying out their routine duties, and they are to be given a job that will take a good deal of their time and will expose them to searching criticism both in and out of Parliament. I should be glad to learn that the Government are prepared to make some recognition of the work of the Commission. Special work in that or any other direction should be specially recognised, and I should be glad to have an indication that the Government will recognise the responsible and onerous duties that the members of the Commission will be undertaking in re-allocating the representation of the people. In conclusion, I wish to urge on the Government once more the desirability of keeping the Commission's report out of the arena of political debate and accepting the findings of the Commission by arranging that they be adopted without debate and without affording an opportunity for the acrimonious discussion that occurred on the previous occasion. Having directed attention to certain disabilities that I contend will exist under the present measure, I support the Bill.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.14 p.m.*

# Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 27th November, 1928.*



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

## ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the undermentioned Bills:—

1, Police Offences (Drugs).

2, Jury Act Amendment.

## PETITION—TEXAS COMPANY (AUSTRALASIA) LIMITED.

Mr. ROWE (North-East Fremantle) presented a petition from the Texas Company (Australasia), Ltd., praying for the introduction of a Bill to provide powers for the storage and supply of oil, liquid fuel, petroleum, spirits, kero-ene and petroleum products and for other purposes.

Petition received, and the prayer of the petitioners granted.

## BILL—TEXAS COMPANY (AUSTRALASIA) LIMITED (PRIVATE.)

Introduced by Mr. Rowe and read a first time.

*Referred to Select Committee.*

On motion by Mr. Rowe, Bill referred to a select committee consisting of Messrs. Lindsay, Marshall, North, Sleeman and the mover, with power to call for persons and