

their house already carpeted, furnished and equipped with a wireless. They are prepared to face the hard way. All they are asking is for a reasonable opportunity.

The essential difference between the present and the last war scheme is that the early pioneers developed the country for the benefit of the State and had to carry the baby; they had to pay the whole bill. To-day it is only reasonable to say to the fellows, "The nation has carried out the early development and yours is the task of carrying it on, but even so it is going to be hard work. You are not going to be sure of earning a living and paying your rent and instalments if you are going to sit on the bones of your backside all day. You have to work, and that means the hard way." That is what is meant by that remark, and I believe it is necessary. There should be a greater degree of encouragement of the pioneering spirit which does not induce young fellows to look upon Governments and authorities as sources from whence their living and everything else is going to emanate for ever and aye, but to go out and search for avenues for themselves. They must be encouraged by the knowledge that they will be assisted in their search and that, when they have found the correct avenue, they will be rewarded.

I hope some of the difficulties in the matter of soldier settlement will be cleared up as the result of Mr. Fyfe's visit to the Eastern States. The proposition to put these men on to farms before the houses and so on are ready was discussed by us with Mr. Fyfe and the Minister early in the year, and was agreed to, though we did not like the idea, being fearful of Governments not keeping their promises—that applies to any Government. In this case we felt it was better to take that risk than to wait for years. I put up the same proposition to Mr. Dedman, in Canberra. As I said by way of interjection, Mr. McLaren, who seems to be the king-pin in this matter, agreed that there was merit in the proposition, but by the time it got to the Minister he said we must be bound by the letter of the law. I hope that as the result of Mr. Fyfe's visit we will be able to hoist the flag of victory that I mentioned earlier and say, "At last we have the first soldier settler on a farm." I hope the returned soldiers will have a Christmas box of hope this year.

There will be great rejoicing throughout the land when the first soldier settler is installed on a farm.

The Minister for Lands: It would be much better to be able to say that one soldier settler had been a success.

Mr. LESLIE: The danger is that there may be too many strings tied to it and that the men will be hamstrung to an extent where they cannot take advantage of the golden opportunity. There is a rule in the Army which is drilled into everyone, from the most senior officer to the lowest in the ranks. It is, "Do something, even if it is wrong, do it. You can remedy an error but cannot make up for lost opportunity."

The Minister for Lands: Perhaps that is why the Army had so many men killed.

Vote put and passed.

*Votes—Farmers' Debts Adjustment, £1,280; Rural and Industries Bank, £5—agreed to.*

Progress reported.

## ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne): I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till 4.30 p.m. on Thursday, the 10th October.

Question put and passed.

*House adjourned at 10.6 p.m.*

## Legislative Council.

*Thursday, 10th October, 1946.*

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

# **BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REFERENDUM.**

## *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 8th October.

**HON. V. HAMERSLEY** (East) [4.34]: This Bill is, in my opinion, a very important measure, and in view of the elections that have just taken place and the results in connection with the Federal Referendum, it strikes me that it would be a very dangerous proceeding were we to attempt to do anything in the direction suggested in the Bill at the present time and to refer such important matters to the people. To do so would be to court disaster. It is generally recognised that one of the principal planks in the platform of the Labour Party is one seeking to do away with the Legislative Council. There are various other organisations holding similar ideas. In view of the temper of the people—I suppose it is due to the effects of the war—there seems to be a tendency to smash things about.

Hon. G. Fraser: You are a bit afraid the referendum might be carried!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It would be foolish to submit a matter of such vital importance to the people. There may be good reasons for effecting alterations regarding the constitution of the Legislative Council, but to put the question proposed to the people at this juncture would be absolute folly on the part of any people who carefully consider the welfare of their country. At any rate, that is my opinion. I imagine that those associated with the Labour Party think that wisdom rests with them alone and that no-one else has a right to a different opinion. Obviously, they seek to gain full control. I certainly feel that the tendency all round today is to pull things down, whereas all my early training has led me throughout my life to be concerned rather with building up and trying to improve upon conditions that exist.

I seek to take notice of history and endeavour to learn from what has taken place in the past, thrusting aside anything that is unsuitable to our conditions. On the other hand, where any country has improved its position we could very well follow a similar procedure and stick rigidly to principles that have been found beneficial in the development of nations throughout the world. To

see this class of legislation introduced makes me very sad. In fact, I look upon it almost as playing with poison. Why put a knife into the hands of those who threaten to take away one's life, freedom or liberty? Why put a weapon in their hands to enable them to do so? Having said this much I trust I have conveyed to the House that I have no intention of voting for the Bill. I am definitely opposed to it, and I hope members will view it in the same light. We know the Old Country has adopted the bicameral system. During the period of her history she tried out various experiments and finally came to the conclusion that the second Chamber was necessary.

In Britain it is recognised that they must look to the second Chamber to protect the thrifty portion of the community and to ensure that the rank and file are not allowed to run about like children without any provision for studying or extending consideration to the interests of other than themselves. In America the single Chamber system was tried out and found unworkable. When the Constitution of the United States was framed the bicameral system was adopted and has been adhered to ever since. That applies not only to the nation as a whole but to the separate States as well. Why we should be monkeying about with our Constitution and, as it were, endeavouring to teach our grandmothers to suck eggs—bless my soul, it seems a waste of time and folly and a serious danger.

Hon. G. Fraser: What danger is there?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The danger of leading many young people astray. That is a very serious matter. We shall have much trouble ahead of us if we give votes to younger people and still younger people. My impression is that many of them have not yet cut their wisdom teeth and should be restrained until they have learnt some of the difficulties with which the country has to contend. They would thus have the advantage of experience before being allowed to vote and thus, perhaps, avoid putting the State on a wrong basis.

Hon. G. Fraser: You believe in people of the calibre you mention giving shopkeepers the right to keep their shops open on Saturday afternoons, but not the right to say what their governmental institutions shall be.

**Hon. V. HAMERSLEY:** I believe in giving people local option in that respect. They should have the right to decide a matter of that nature.

**Hon. G. Fraser:** But you would not give them the same opportunity on this question.

**Hon. V. HAMERSLEY:** Not the whole community, such as this measure contemplates. The Bill, if passed, would give the rank and file of the community who have not yet cut their wisdom teeth the right to vote on this important matter. We must take a lesson from the recent referendum. Large numbers of people, by the way they voted, showed that they had not studied the questions at all. A tremendous proportion of those votes were absolutely wasted. Those exercising the franchise in that way did not appreciate what the result of the vote would be, nor did they know what they were plunging themselves and others into. Therefore, I am not at all inclined to give such persons a vote to enable them to decide whether this Chamber is to be thrown to the winds, when the result of that determination might be that we would be governed by one Chamber. In every place where that system has been tried the people were sorry that they made the change.

**Hon. G. Fraser:** Queensland would not go back to two Chambers.

**Hon. V. HAMERSLEY:** A referendum was held in Queensland. The people voted for the Council's retention and I do not know by what scheme the Government there was able to induce the Governor to destroy the second Chamber. I think many people in Queensland are very sorry that it has not been restored. I understand that there are large numbers of people in Queensland who say that it would be very much better for the State if the Legislative Council were restored. One distinct advantage of the second Chamber is this: As Bills are introduced in the Lower House, the public learn of their contents for the first time. Very frequently, as a result of the discussions in the Assembly, the people come along to the Legislative Council and say, "We want you to look very carefully into the measures now before the other Chamber; we learn from the daily Press what it is suggested shall be done." The people who would be adversely affected by that legislation implore the Legislative Coun-

cil to get them out of their difficulty, because they say they will be in dire trouble if the proposals are agreed to. Very frequently those in charge of the measures in the Lower House say, "We applaud the second Chamber for the fact that new thoughts are brought before us of which we were not aware." The second Chamber has thus often been able to save the country from what otherwise might have been a disaster.

Our system of government works satisfactorily. It also works well in Great Britain, America and other countries. Why try to change it? We as a nation are still young. We certainly have had a wonderful example set before us by the Commonwealth Constitution. Although it is modelled to a great extent on the American Constitution, in my opinion the Senate can only be described as a rubber stamp. It is not carrying out what it was intended to do, namely, to act as the saviour of the States. It abandoned that function almost from its very commencement, and it is now only representative of one party. The second Chamber is not supposed to be a party House; it is supposed to protect the broader principles of government. As I say, I view the Senate as a rubber stamp for anything that the House of Representatives likes to bring forward. I have stated my views and do not wish to take up the time of the House further. I shall vote against the measure and hope there will be enough members in this Chamber to prevent the Bill from getting on the Statute Book.

**HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.49]:** I regret that, through illness, I have not been in my usual place in the House during this debate, nor was I even present to hear the Minister introduce the Bill. Unless the introduction was made in much more brilliant style than it reads, I am afraid it impresses me but little. As a matter of fact, I do not recall an occasion when so much piffing stuff was advanced that did not apply to the measure at all. Whoever prepared the speech ought to try again and put up something sound, something applicable to the measure, something dealing with the position, instead of introducing many matters that do not concern the state of this House. However, I have not the slightest intention of taking up the time of members in replying to the speech. I made some notes but mislaid them today and

it is probably a good job I did—for the Minister it is, anyway! If one considers the Bill one realises that it is a monument of hypocrisy by the present Government. In the first place the Bill emanates from a Government representing a majority of the people in the other Chamber. Does that Chamber, as a result of the condition it has been in for so many years, reflect credit upon the present Government? Is it fair representation of the people? We all know it is not, yet the Government continually drags a red herring across the trail by persistently referring to the Upper House and its minorities.

Hon. G. FRASER: The Government members in the Assembly represent a majority of the members of the State.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That may be so, but the Government members in the Assembly take mighty fine care that the rolls of this House are kept on the basis of a very low minority. It is unfortunate that the Legislative Council agreed to the Electoral Districts Act Amendment Bill of 1928. Under the 1923 Act, which that Bill amended, a reasonable basis was established. A large section of the community and a great portion of the State received something like proper consideration at that time, but under the 1928 amendment the position was brought about that the four principal Goldfields seats—where, under the 1923 Act, each elector represented one vote—were included in the mining and pastoral areas, and each vote counted as two for the quota. That has brought about an unreasonable situation. Then there was an alteration in the metropolitan area. Under the 1923 Act every three electors counted as one for the quota, and by the 1928 amendment every three electors counted as two.

That created the position under which the country has suffered a Labour Government for such a long period; a Government representing one section only. The Government is never tired—nor are its supporters—of prating about the minority in the Legislative Council. Mr. Fraser interjected a moment ago, but has he, or other supporters of the Government, ever done anything to try to improve that minority? The Chief Electoral Officer, in giving evidence before the Select Committee, said, in answer to a question, that his estimate was that only half of those entitled to have their names on the Legislative Council rolls were so

enrolled. Knowing that, the Chief Electoral Officer naturally wanted to improve the position. In answer to a further question he said that he had, time and again, approached the Government for funds to try to improve the Council rolls, and had received a point blank refusal each time. Yet the Government that refused his requests found money to deal with the Assembly rolls, for which enrolment is compulsory.

How can the Government, in view of that, have the effrontery to put a Bill of this nature before Parliament? Not only has the Government not attempted to improve the Legislative Council rolls, but it has set out to ensure that they were not improved. I will give my own case: In the early part of last year, 1945, I wrote to the Minister asking if the Government would print the rolls so that something could be done in the way of purifying them. I pointed out that I had been to the Chief Electoral Officer who had supplied me with a master roll, printed in 1943, a supplement to that roll, and 11 foolscap sheets closely typed with names for alterations to the roll. I was not prepared to try to clarify the rolls by dealing with the three documents and much less to ask my friends or agents in the country to take those documents in hand to try to improve the East Province roll. The reply I received was that the Government could not see its way clear to do it at the time.

Naturally I repeated my request and I got the answer that the Government would be printing the rolls at the end of the year: that is, at the end of 1945. The Government knew perfectly well that the Government Printer would be so busy with parliamentary work that there would be no chance of his printing these rolls before the first few weeks in January, or late in December at the earliest. Assuming that he got on to the job by the 1st January, what opportunity was there in the small period of time available to deal with the roll for a big province such as the East Province, quite apart from the others? In the metropolitan area, by the expenditure of a large amount of money, that could be done but not in a province of the magnitude of the one I represent. That province now contains the low number of 9,200 electors and the Chief Electoral Officer states that only 50 per cent. of those en-

titled to the franchise are on the roll. If the East Province roll included 100 per cent. of those entitled to be enrolled, there would be, to my knowledge, no less than 24,000 electors on it.

Yet here is the Government bringing down a Bill to hold a referendum because we represent such a low minority as compared with the numbers represented in the Assembly. The Government is not prepared to do anything to alter that minority and give to the people the representation that they are entitled to. It is a great reflection on the people of the State that they are not on the Legislative Council rolls. I have found that some who declaim against the Legislative Council are entitled to be enrolled but have not taken the trouble to do so, and the attitude of the Government does not encourage them to become enrolled—in fact, it discourages them.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Do you think that many of them do not understand the qualifications?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes, and I think also that they do not try to find out about these things, and they are not helped in any way by the Government, through the Electoral Department, to do so.

Hon. A. Thomson: They are finding out in the hon. member's province because he has sent a man out.

Hon. G. Fraser: The hon. member believes in the old adage that God helps those who help themselves, and that applies to the West Province.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The West Province is a pocket borough compared with the country provinces, and in that province there is a chance to do something in a period of three or four months; but there is no chance of doing anything in less than 12 or 18 months in a large country province. The Government shuts its eyes. It does not want any improvement to take place in the Council, but it finds money for enrolments for the Assembly although enrolment for that Chamber is compulsory and people are prosecuted if they do not obey the law in that respect. Could not the money spent on the Assembly rolls be better used on the Council rolls? The Government, however, will not spend money in that direction. The little that was spent prior to the recent elections for the Legis-

lative Council was not worth talking about. Notwithstanding that, this House is now asked to agree to a Bill to put a referendum before those poor people who were misled as to the value of the Legislative Council by reason of the action of the Government in not attempting to bring the rolls up to date.

The Government is also asking people to vote on a question about which they know nothing. A referendum at any time provides for a curious mixture of misunderstandings. Very few people know what a referendum is all about. Take the case of the Federal Referendum held recently! A vast number of people did not know what they were voting for nor did they understand how detrimental those questions were to the welfare of Western Australia. We find Labour supporters admitting that power should be taken from Western Australia, power to control industrial matters, and put into the hands of the Commonwealth Government. There is little doubt they will be cursed later on for voting in that direction, but that is another question. I intend to vote against the second reading of this Bill. The measure is entirely unjustified. There is no ground for the Government putting it before us, and no ground for asking the people to vote on so misleading a question about which they have so little knowledge owing to the fact that no attempt has been made by the Government to put the Legislative Council on a better footing.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [5.3]: As I do not wish to cast a silent vote on this question, I propose to make one or two observations. I have not had an opportunity to hear the earlier debates and I did not hear the remarks of the Honorary Minister when introducing the Bill. I presume it will be claimed that this measure envisages a certain amount of electoral reform. We all agree that in the course of time, whether it be on electoral matters or on other questions, circumstances may arise when a revision of our laws, and even of our Constitution, may be called for. I cannot make myself believe that the introduction of this particular Bill is a genuine attempt at electoral reform in this State.

On the other hand, I say boldly that it represents nothing more nor less than hum-

bug and hypocrisy on the part of the Government. Had the Government the courage it pretends to have, it would apply electoral reform to the whole State, but it has not the courage because, as Mr. Baxter said, it possesses a number of pocket boroughs that it would be fearful of losing. Consequently, in order to get a few more supporters, it brings up the question of electoral reform as regards the Upper House at various periods, knowing full well that most sensible people in Western Australia look upon its action as so much nonsense.

The Chief Secretary: Why not let the people have a say on the subject?

Hon. W. J. MANN: Why allow the Government to waste more money in doing unnecessary things? If the Government were really in earnest, it would bring down something the people would be glad to consider, something that members of this Chamber would be glad to consider. Possibly some people cannot give attention to anything that does not suit their particular line of thought, but I am talking about those who are a little more broadminded. I say that the people would gladly take an interest in real electoral reform if it were put up to them. My opinion is that we could do with fewer members of Parliament, but we are not going to get the right type of men to govern this country unless we are able to compensate them for the time they devote to their duties.

Hon. G. Fraser: I know where 30 of them could be cut out.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The 29 might be a loss, but I would not like to say anything about the thirtieth. I might go even further and say I knew where we could cut out 50 members of Parliament. We might well consider cutting out the Legislative Assembly, and converting the Legislative Council into the administrative body of this country, at the same time paying members an amount commensurate with the duties that would devolve upon them.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: How much would that be?

Hon. W. J. MANN: The hon. member knows what it costs to maintain the Legislative Assembly. He can apply that cost to the argument; that will do me to start with. I have not worked out the figure myself. If there is to be electoral reform in this country, it must be on broad lines, and the position

must be regarded in a broad way. There must be no tinkering with the idea of abolishing the Upper House by reason of the fact that this Chamber has so often been wrongly abused and blamed for dropping Government legislation. One only needs to look down the list year after year to see the infinitesimal number of measures that are thrown out by this House. That is a fact well known to all members. It is an old charge against this House on the part of its opponents, and it is indeed the only reason they can advance for the abolition of the Council.

I was one of the ten members who went before the electors in the early part of this year. I think I stated in the House that when I next had an opportunity of going before the electors I would make the question of whether they desired the abolition of the Legislative Council one of the features of my campaign. I did that. On every occasion when I spoke at 28 meetings there were very good attendances, and, with the exception of one drunken man who apologised afterwards, I did not meet one elector who, either by question or interjection at these meetings, or by discussion in the street before or after the election, ever advanced anything that could be construed into a desire to abolish this Chamber. On the other hand, there were dozens of men who said, "We are glad to have heard what you said about the Legislative Council; do not countenance any tinkering with that Chamber." That was the mandate given to me by the people who returned me by the biggest majority I have ever had. On that ground, as well as others that I have advanced, I shall be amongst those who will vote against the second reading of the Bill.

HON. G. BENNETTS (South) [5.12]: I did not intend to speak on this Bill, as I support it, but, after listening to the remarks made by Mr. Mann concerning the lack of interjectors at the meetings he attended, I feel I should relate my own experience. I made a house to house canvass prior to the election and I met not one person but dozens who were in favour of the abolition of this Chamber. That is a fact. During my campaign, both on the platform and elsewhere, it was put to me on every occasion, "Do you favour the abolition of the Legislative Council?"

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That was not very flattering to you.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: People said it was a big waste of the taxpayers' money to allow it to continue. Those were the statements put to me.

Hon. W. J. Mann: By people who did not understand the situation.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I believe that in all municipal and government affairs generally, people should be compelled to enrol.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: What did you tell the people?

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I said I was in favour of abolishing this Chamber. That was the position. I had to say I was prepared to go to work if this Chamber no longer existed. I support the Bill.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.14]: I think this may be regarded as a hardy annual. On previous occasions I have made myself quite clear as to my attitude on this question. It is essential that we should continue the bi-cameral system. I have always stood for that and I suppose I will continue to believe that that system is essential. We are asked to allow the people to vote on the question whether or not this House should be abolished so that there might be one Chamber only. Mr. Bennetts stated that hundreds of people have told him this House ought to be abolished. If he had asked the same question concerning the Legislative Assembly, I think they would also have agreed that it should be abolished.

Hon. G. Fraser: That is only supposition.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It is no more supposition than what I hear down the street day after day, people asking, "What is the use of any House of Parliament?" This question is probably asked thoughtlessly, but there are very few people who really appreciate what Parliament is and means and what it does. We may take people from any walk of life and find amongst them many who contend that it is simply a waste of money having a Parliament and ask, "Why not get one or two men to run the country?" To do that would not be democratic. I believe in democracy, though I do not believe in the present form of democracy. I do not approve of putting

questions before people who have no interest whatever in them, who do not know what they mean and have no desire to learn or understand their purport. Yet such people are to be forced under the pain and penalty of a fine to vote at the referendum.

The ordinary way in which such questions are put is to be reversed because it is well known when people are instructed to vote one, two, they do so, numbering the paper from the top downwards. So "Yes" is to be put on top and "No" below. Hence a large number of people who do not wish to vote will say, "Very well, we will just put the figures one and two in that order." I direct attention to the enormous number of informal votes at the recent Commonwealth Referendum when people had to mark their papers 1, 2. Does it not show that the people who voted informally on a question where they had only to indicate their desire as being "yes" or "no" are not qualified to decide what form of government they should have? They do not care; they do not worry. There are many people nowadays who are of the opinion that all they have to worry about is getting three meals a day and a bed. They are content to let somebody else worry about the future of the country. It is our duty to protect those people against themselves. I have said before, and I repeat, that a single House of Parliament constitutes a very grave danger. If we had only one Chamber, the party with the majority in that Chamber would form the Government.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What about the Commonwealth? How does that apply to the next three years?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am fearful and tremble to think of what is likely to happen in the next three years.

Hon. C. B. Williams: But that is your system. You were sticking up for it.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: No; what I wish to impress upon members is that I believe in democracy, but I do not believe in compelling people to vote when they do not take any interest in public questions and do not want to vote. We all know that the man whose name appears at the top of the ballot paper has a great advantage. No-one knows better than does the hon. member that in Labour circles when a selection ballot is being taken, lots are drawn by the candi-

dates to determine whose name shall be placed on top. Under the parliamentary system, the alphabetical order is adopted.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Not for the Senate.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: For the Senate, the position is even worse, because there we had three sections drawing lots to determine whose name would be placed at the top. It is a great advantage to have one's name at the top of the ballot paper, because so many people automatically mark their papers one, two, three, four, five, six, and so on, right down the list.

Hon. G. Fraser: The present referendum figures do not bear out that contention.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Evidently I must explain again that the referendum figures reveal an enormous number of informal votes, which shows how totally disinterested so many people are in the questions put to them.

Hon. G. Fraser: But you were speaking of people marking their papers, one, two, etc., from the top downwards. Look at the results of the Commonwealth Referendum.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: A large number of intelligent people did reverse the order by voting two and one.

Hon. G. Fraser: Your argument does not hold water.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must cease interjecting.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Even the Prime Minister has submitted that the system is wrong. Yet it is to be perpetuated in the referendum proposed under this Bill, and for what purpose? It has been said that this Bill does not represent a genuine desire on the part of the Government, and I must say I am forced to agree with the opinion that it is not an honest and genuine attempt on the part of the Government to bring about reform. If the Government were honest in this desire, the first thing for it to do would be to bring about a readjustment of the boundaries of the Assembly districts and Council provinces. Two colleagues and I, on the Legislative Council franchise and with voluntary enrolment, represent the same number of voters as do the whole of the members of the Ministry who have seats in the Assembly. Although three of us represent the equivalent number of voters of the whole of the Ministers in the Assembly,

this happens despite the fact that we have a so-called restricted franchise for this House.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Where would you give extra seats under a redistribution of the Legislative Council?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The power is in the hands of the people.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member must cease his interjections. He will have an opportunity to address himself to the Bill later.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Why pick me when you allow others to interject?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. C. B. Williams: You interjected enough when I was speaking.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Does the hon. member want to go outside?

Hon. C. B. Williams: You can go outside.

*Member Suspended.*

The President: As the hon. member will not behave, I name him.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Other members have interjected, and yet as soon as I interject, you jump down my neck.

The Chief Secretary: In view of the fact that you have named the hon. member, Mr. President, I have no option but to move—

That the hon. member be suspended for the remainder of this sitting.

Question put and passed.

(Hon. C. B. Williams left the Chamber remarking as he was going, "You interjected enough during my speech the other night and made it terribly hard for me.")

*Debate Resumed.*

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The redistribution of seats is not a matter that I can discuss on this Bill because to do so would be irrelevant, but until there is a redistribution, there is no guarantee that a Bill passed by the Legislative Assembly as at present constituted and under the existing franchise would be wholly reasonable. This Bill does not even give citizens the freedom to decide whether they will vote or not. It says, "You shall vote." Everybody over the age of 21 years, including soldiers who are out of the State and know nothing at all about Gov-



ernments or politics, are to be required to vote on a question such as this. To require that is not right.

I consider that I would not be carrying out the trust upon which I was elected if I supported such a measure. Mr. Bennetts stated that a number of people had told him that they wanted the Council to cease to exist, but he did not say whether those people had a vote for the Council. What is necessary to qualify for a vote for this Chamber? A person is required to have only a very small stake in the country. The qualification is designed so that a stake in the country amounts to no more than a married man's renting a house. I am quite aware of the statement that in the timber milling areas people occupy houses which are rented to them at such a low figure that they are not qualified to vote for this House. Have those people a stake in the country, or are they at liberty to pack their bags at any time and move elsewhere? The object of the Legislative Council franchise is to ensure some stability.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Whose idea was it?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It was the original idea when the Council was constituted over 100 years ago, and that idea has been carried into effect ever since, namely, that a voter should have a stake in the country. It was this Chamber that agreed to the coming into existence of another place on a franchise of manhood suffrage. This House also approved of a Bill making voting for another place compulsory. We have realised that error and perhaps two errors, but certainly the error of compelling people to vote. It may also be an error to allow the vote to people who have no stake in the country. This country was very well governed when there was only one Chamber.

I certainly believe that before any referendum is submitted to the people on the continuance of the Legislative Council, there should be a distribution of seats for the Assembly to ensure that the Constitution operates on a truly democratic basis. Further, we should abolish compulsory voting. We should allow people who take an interest in the government of the country to be those who are entitled to vote. The vote should be exercised by those people who desire to be enrolled; people should not be compelled to vote under the pain and penalty of a fine. Recently I asked some questions of

the Chief Secretary really to ascertain whether the Government was serious in putting forward these proposals.

Hon. G. Fraser: Why question the integrity of the Government all the time?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am not doing so.

Hon. G. Fraser: Then I could not have heard what you said.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am explaining that the reason I asked the questions was to test whether the Government was really serious in this matter. It is strange that the Government has no estimate of any sort, size or description as to what the taking of the referendum will cost. The Treasurer has already announced an anticipated deficit for the current financial year, and now he would put the people to the expense of a referendum without having any idea of what it will cost.

The Chief Secretary: The cost would depend upon when the referendum was taken.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: When I asked the question, the Premier had already said that the referendum would not be taken at the time of the general election, and so it would be a separate vote. Therefore I am forced to the conclusion that there is no really serious desire on the part of the Government to hold this referendum. For one thing it has no money to spend on a referendum, and, for another thing, it has not attempted to ascertain what the cost will be. For the reasons I have given, I am bound to vote against the second reading.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

HON. A. L. LOTON (South-East) [5.28] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is designed to amend the Road Districts Act for a specific purpose, namely, to enable road boards to spend their revenue or moneys raised by loan on the acquisition, erection and management of buildings suitable for the reception of school children. The Act at present gives no power to enable a local authority to spend money for such purposes. In this particular case, the Gnowangerup

Road Board desires to acquire a building for use as a hostel for children attending school at that centre. I believe two other centres have similar ideas in view if the Bill be passed. The Education Department has set a limit to the distance over which children may be conveyed to school by buses of 35 miles per trip.

There is a considerable number of children living on routes not traversed by buses and perhaps living a greater distance than 35 miles from a central school. If these hostels are established, such children will make use of them, boarding in the centre during the school week in some cases, and in other cases perhaps for the whole term, in order that they may attain a higher standard of education than would be available to them in the little outlying schools. Transport difficulties in many instances would prevent such children from travelling backwards and forwards. No road board would contemplate going ahead with the erection or acquisition of a building for a hostel unless satisfied that the area where such hostel was to be established was a central school district.

Gnowangerup is a very big centre and fulfils all the requirements of a central school. Ratepayers would have the right, if it were decided to proceed with the acquisition or erection of a hostel, to ask for a poll and if the proposition were not endorsed by the people, it would not be undertaken. At present no road board can submit such a proposal to its ratepayers because there is no justification and no legal right for it to do so under the Road Districts Act. Under Section 291 of that Act, the Gnowangerup Road Board sought ministerial approval to raise a loan of £2,000 to acquire a central hostel and was refused permission. I will read the letter to the road board. It is, in part, as follows:—

I refer to your letter of the 18th ultimo making application for ministerial approval for your board to proceed to raise a loan of £2,000 for the purpose of erecting a school-children's hostel . . . .

I would point out, also, that there is a further aspect in this case which your board will require to take into account in considering any proposition at Gnowangerup. A school children's hostel is not quoted specifically as a work on which a local authority can expend general revenue, and under Section 291 of the Road Districts Act, which provides authority for the borrowing of money for works and undertakings of the board, no specific mention is made of this or like works.

It is accepted as a general principle that Governor's approval to a work under Sub-clause (f) of this section ("any other works or undertakings whatsoever approved by the Governor") is not sought unless the board is authorised to expend general revenue on the work concerned. In view of this I am not prepared to recommend approval for the raising of a loan for this purpose.

Hon. A. Thomson: Who signed that?

Hon. A. L. LOTON: It is signed by the Under Secretary for Works. It is in order to overcome that obstacle in the Road Districts Act that this Bill is being introduced. If it is passed, a road board will have the right to approach the Governor for approval to acquire or erect a building as a hostel for school children and then to submit the matter to its ratepayers for approval. After the road board has acquired or erected a suitable building, there arises the question of maintenance. At present, under the Road Districts Act, no provision is made for maintenance or cost of alterations or extensions.

The first clause of the Bill seeks to amend Section 160 which deals with the expenditure of revenue by a road board and specifies the works and undertakings on which the board may expend revenue, by adding a new subsection to Section 160 authorising expenditure for the acquisition or construction of premises for hostel purposes, and their maintenance; and allowing road boards to co-operate in the provision of such hostels. The next clause, which embodies an amendment of Section 291 of the principal Act, is to give the road board the power to make by-laws regulating the establishment, maintenance and control of hostels. The third clause is to amend Section 291 which specifies the purpose for which a road board may raise loans. It seeks to give power for a loan to be floated by a road board for the construction or acquisition by purchase or otherwise of hostels for school children whether such hostels are within the road board's own district or in the adjoining district of another board or municipal council which has co-operated or intends to unite in the construction or acquisition of such a hostel.

That is the purpose of the Bill. As members a few days ago agreed to an amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act to enable the York council in particular to engage in the manufacture of bricks and the crushing of stone, I do not see how they can fail to give support to this measure because

the educational facilities in the country areas today are far behind what they should be. If a road board is prepared by way of a loan to acquire or erect hostels such as I have referred to, then its desire should have the blessing of this House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

**HON. H. TUCKEY** (South-West) [5.37]: I regret very much that I have to oppose this Bill for the reason that I hardly think the provision of school accommodation for country areas is a matter for local authorities. I do not believe Mr. Loton did his case very much good when he said that because the Chamber agreed that the York Municipal Council should be allowed to make bricks, it should now agree to Gnowangerup's request to be allowed to borrow money to provide accommodation for school children.

It seems to me that that is a matter for the Education Department. We have already seen how the thin end of the wedge can be used. If this measure is agreed to, the chances are that we will have further requisitions of some other kind before long. I cannot see that this Bill is necessary. I would far rather that the road board made a grant to the Government as a donation towards a hostel than that the board should be responsible for carrying out the work. There is not just one road board, but 127 road boards in this State and the Bill will apply to every part of Western Australia.

The Chief Secretary: There is nothing compulsory about it.

**Hon. H. TUCKEY:** No, but there are many ratepayers who will demand that their local authorities do work of this kind.

The Chief Secretary: Why should they not if they want to?

**Hon. H. TUCKEY:** My view is that it is an educational matter and the responsibility of the Government. I do not think it is a measure that this House should agree to.

On motion by **Hon. A. Thomson**, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—TOTALISATOR DUTY ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 8th October.

**HON. C. F. BAXTER** (East) [5.40]: There are only two provisions in the Bill. One I am very pleased to see; and that is the appointing of the Commissioner of Stamps to undertake the collection of totalisator duty. I think all members will agree to that. The other provision is to alter the dividend payments. At present they are paid to the nearest shilling and now it is proposed to pay them to the nearest 6d. I am not going to argue about how that applies to the metropolitan area, but I want to deal with its application to districts outside that part of the State. People in those outer areas have very little amusement. Except in a few places, they have only a race meeting occasionally or a trotting meeting, and all that is left to them apart from that is the playing of cricket or football when they can get teams.

There are struggling racing clubs and trotting clubs in the country that very seldom show a profit. Both those sports are responsible for the development of the horse-breeding industry, which has grown tremendously and has produced very good horses which are holding their own not only here but in the Eastern States as well. The great encouragement to the breeders is the local race meeting at which they can educate the horses. Tracks are provided both for trotting and galloping and those tracks have to be kept in order. All that costs money. I have studied the figures for many years and I find that even with fractions up to the nearest shilling, which makes a reasonable amount available to the clubs, the majority are losing money, and those concerned have to put their hands in their own pockets in order to maintain the sport.

I have placed amendments on the notice paper to exempt from this measure all clubs not in the metropolitan area. I have not had time to look into the matter, but it may be that a further amendment will be necessary to define what is the metropolitan area. Even if the measure is restricted to the metropolitan area, however, I find from an analysis of the figures, that the Fremantle Trotting Club would be put in an impossible position. A statement issued by the club

indicates that for the year ended the 31st December, 1940, there was a profit of £668, and for the year ended the 31st December, 1941, there was a profit of £140. That was at the time the military authorities took over the grounds. I have a full statement here, with which I shall not weary members, but which shows the position from 1940 up to date. It discloses that only six meetings out of a total of 26 would have returned a profit if totalisator fractions had not been available. In fact, the resultant net losses would have been: 1940, £644; 1941, £1,672; the 1st Jan. to the 31st March, 1942, £485. That would mean that if the fractions were taken away the loss, over that period, would be £1,776. It would mean that the Fremantle club could not resume trotting. It has not been racing since the war ended, and it will not attempt to resume under those conditions.

The Chief Secretary: They have been racing.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes, at headquarters, but this applies to the Fremantle ground. The Goldfields club, even after taking the fractions into consideration, made a loss in the period from October, 1945, to the 10th August, 1946, of £1,189, so if the fractions are taken away trotting will have to cease in that area, which would be a serious blow to racing there. As Mr. Williams said, the Goldfields courses are a credit to those concerned. I wish to see that the people in the country areas have some sport, but it is evident that if the Bill goes through without alteration, and without allowing the country districts to retain the fractions, as at present, they will not be able to carry on. After all, it does not mean a great loss of revenue to the Government, as only the fractions of a shilling are involved.

It has been said that the Kalgoorlie Racing Club could well do without the fractions, and that that view was justified on the score of members' subscriptions, but I am informed, in reply to an inquiry by telegram, that the number of members is 159 and that the fee is £5 5s. plus £2 2s., plus 14s. tax. Admission to ordinary meetings costs 5s. 6d. for gentlemen and 2s. 3d. for ladies, inclusive of tax. Even at that the results have not been good. The talk about cheap liquor supplied to members and cheap meetings on the Goldfields cannot

be substantiated, but what can be substantiated is the fact that if this Bill is passed and its operation extended outside the metropolitan area, it will be the death blow to racing and trotting in 90 per cent. of the centres where those sports are carried on today. People will not put their hands in their pockets all the time.

During the last few years the public have become tote-minded in those areas, and it is a pity that they are not more tote-minded in the metropolitan area, particularly when one hears of bookmakers netting a profit of £4,000 per year. I think people would be wiser to invest on the tote. I hope that when we come to the Committee stage members will take the view that it is not necessary for the operation of this legislation to be extended to the country areas. I hope an amendment to that effect will be agreed to.

**HON. H. L. ROCHE** (South-East) [5.50]: I do not see much purpose in passing the second reading of this Bill. Until now I have not heard, except in Government circles, anyone who wants the Bill or its provisions, or insists that they are necessary. The average person investing money on the totalisator does not know whether he is entitled to a fraction or not, and never seems to mind.

Hon. G. Fraser: Have you been amongst such people at all?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: A little. The extent of my betting is a ticket on the tote, and it has never worried me as to whether it should be 5s. or 5s. 11d., because it does not often happen. I sometimes wonder on what advice the Government institutes legislation of this kind. As to the Trotting Control Bill of last year, apparently in its judgment the Government thought that type of control should be placed on the industry here but, as the result of the action of this House, that proposition was not confirmed by the Royal Commission that was appointed, and I do not see any good purpose to be served by this measure. On the contrary I can foresee a lot of harm resulting.

We must accept the fact that the people will have this type of organised sport, whether trotting or galloping, and though some of us may not appreciate this portion of it, that we are going to have betting. If we took action to eliminate racing in this

State the people would still bet on races in other States or on dog racing or something else. At all events, it is certain that betting will continue. I do not think this measure will benefit anyone very much. The amount of money involved individually is small, but in the aggregate it reaches a considerable sum, which means a great deal to the racing and trotting clubs. Those organisations are no longer owned by proprietors, but are run for the benefit of the sport, of those who indulge in it, and of the public generally.

Without the support of the general public there could be no sport of that nature. The public, by their patronage, help both types of sport to a generous extent, and I do not want to see anything done that will weaken the position of those controlling the racing to such an extent that they will not be able to attract the public as they have been able to do in the past. Another reason why I am not very keen on this legislation is that, according to the Press, we may shortly be called upon to deal with a Bill to legalise off-the-course betting in this State. Should that measure become law it will weaken the clubs controlling trotting and galloping in Western Australia. Once it becomes legal for those who patronise what are now known as S.P. shops to do so lawfully, thousands of them will not take the trouble to attend race meetings and will not contribute their quota of gate money and percentages of investments on the totalisator, that now enables the clubs to finance their operations and—more particularly in regard to the trotting clubs—to support the horse breeding industry in this State and to help the country clubs.

If the House does agree to the second reading of the Bill I hope the country clubs will be removed from its scope. While the position here has been compared with that existing in certain of the Eastern States, I say our conditions are not comparable, and more particularly is that so in the case of the country areas, owing to the sparsity of population. Many country clubs are today providing the form of organised sport that the public demand. The people do not necessarily insist upon that form of sport but, as their patronage shows, they do demand forms of organised sport. This is one of the sports that they are patronising liberally. If the Bill becomes law and is applied

to the country districts, most country clubs will have the greatest difficulty in carrying on.

The Chief Secretary: To which clubs do you refer?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I refer to those at Narrogin, Wagin and Katanning. I have not the figures for all of them, but have some particulars relating to Wagin. Those clubs are not money-making concerns and all associated with them give their services in an honorary capacity, with the possible exception of a part-time secretary. Such profit as they make is used to improve their grounds or is utilised to provide greater inducement in the form of stake money. Up to date the profits have not been great. If we take this source of income from them, I have yet to hear of any other practical way in which they can raise the money necessary to carry on.

The Wagin club, for the four meetings held since the end of the war, has shown a total profit of £10 18s. 7d., which is not excessive, and that, too, in view of the fact that everyone concerned, with the possible exception of the secretary, has given service in an honorary capacity. That club's share of the tote fractions for the four meetings was £64 10s. 6d. I have not had an opportunity to get the figures for Narrogin and Katanning, but I think the particulars I have given should be sufficient. In the circumstances I feel there is not much to commend the Bill which, to some extent, anticipates other legislation that may be coming forward shortly for the purpose of legalising betting off the course, which will have a vital effect on the finances of racing clubs in this State. I imagine its effect will be much greater than that of the measure now before us.

At the moment, I think this legislation will have an adverse effect, particularly with regard to the sport of trotting and the breeding industry. I say that because the controlling body—I refer to the W.A. Trotting Association, which governs trotting in Western Australia—will not be in a position to maintain its subsidies on the same scale as it has been paying in the past. I am somewhat afraid that the standard of the sport may be reduced in consequence of any such reduction in the subsidy because there will not be the incentive to those engaged in the breeding industry. The measure is not one that I can view with any favour for the

reasons I have stated, and particularly because I think it should follow, rather than precede, the betting legislation that is to be introduced. Whatever the House does at the second reading stage, I trust that if the Bill is dealt with in Committee, an amendment will be moved to exclude the country areas from its operations.

**HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH** (Metropolitan) [6.2]: I cannot claim any special knowledge of the matters dealt with in the Bill, but I have a very strong feeling that both on and off racecourses gambling is indulged in to excess. I have no objection to a man having a bet here or a bet there, but I think betting is indulged in to excess, an excess that may well depreciate living standards in many instances and may possibly interfere with industry. Of course, we must recognise that so long as people have large sums of money at their disposal and no satisfactory method of spending it, the inclination to gamble will increase. In fact, it is bound to have that effect. All the same, I do not think we should pass legislation that is likely further to encourage or stimulate the tendency. I was rather amused to read a couple of items in one of the local newspapers the other day. There is this statement—

In normal times it has been hard to keep stakes at a level enabling owners to carry on without having to resort to methods that are unsatisfactory to the management and control.

I do not know exactly what that means. I hope I am wrong, and that it is my evil mind that suggests to me that the industry concerned is one in which it is difficult for people to be honest. As I say, I hope I am wrong.

**Hon. H. L. Roche**: Perhaps you are right.

**Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH**: That news item was followed immediately by another, which read—

Steps to protect native populations of South-West Pacific Islands from the "impact of civilisation" are to be taken at a Canberra conference next January.

I wonder if this is one of the "impacts of civilisation" from which it is desired to protect these poor native people. I think it was a visitor from China who described an Australian racecourse as a place where "loud-voiced gentlemen preyed upon the simple-minded." I went to the trouble this

morning to ascertain how a man would fare who bet with the bookmaker and also took tickets on the totalisator.

**Hon. G. Fraser**: He would lose, anyhow.

**Hon. A. L. Lotou**: You ought to know!

**Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH**: If a man put 5s. on the tote on the winner in each race at the Trots last night, he would have collected 281s. If he had made his bets with a bookmaker, he would have collected 190s. I know there are many other things to be taken into account, but I think it is generally admitted that the totalisator pays better than does the bookmaker. If we work it out, we must come to the conclusion that the totalisator returns in dividends to people who invest money in it 83 per cent. of the money they invest. Bookmakers certainly return less—shall we say, 75 per cent? The Charities sweeps return only 51 per cent. Thus, in trying to benefit the investors on the tote, we are actually conferring it upon the man who is really the best off of all punters.

**Hon. G. Fraser**: He does not think so.

**Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH**: That is the position.

**Hon. W. J. Mann**: You are not setting up a system, I hope.

**Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH**: Not quite. I sympathise with the friend of Mr. Williams who invested 5s. and received only 4s. back. What will the Bill, if passed, do for that man? The most he can get back under its provisions will be 4s. 6d. In many instances, he will still get only 4s. back because the fraction will be less than 6d. If we pass the legislation, the unfortunate punter will get, on an average, another 3d. Instead of losing 1s. on his bet, he will lose only 9d. A matter of 3d. may be worth bothering about, but I do not know that there is such a terrible lot in it.

**Hon. G. Fraser**: Only a few thousand pounds.

**Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH**: I hope that the Minister, when replying to the debate, will answer a question for me. He may find it difficult, because it has always been recognised that frequently Acts of Parliament have had different effects from those anticipated. I would like the Minister to answer this question: Will this Bill encourage and increase gambling on racecourses or will it

discourage and decrease gambling? His answer will help me a good deal in coming to a conclusion as to whether or not I can vote for the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 6.7 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Thursday, 10th October, 1946.*

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### LAND SALES.

##### *As to Basis for Prices.*

Mr. McLARTY asked the Premier:

1, In view of—

(a) the fact that the 10th February, 1942, was the time of the fall of Singapore and a general feeling of insecurity resulting in land sales being depressed, and

(b) the fact that since that time the purchasing power of the Australian £1 has depreciated,

does the Government consider that values at the 10th February, 1942 should now continue to be taken as the basis for sales consented to by the Sub-Treasury?

2. If not, what action has the Government taken, or will it take, to have this altered?

The PREMIER replied:

1, No.

2, A case was presented by me at the Premier's Conference asking for the date to be as at September, 1939, or to allow for this State at least a 15 per cent. variation on 1942 figures. I understand the matter is being considered by the Commonwealth Government.

### RAILWAYS.

#### *As to Wheat Haulage and Use of A.S.G. Engines.*

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Railways:

1, Is he aware that all wheat transported by rail in this State has been diverted to the flour mills, thus depriving stock owners of wheat to feed stock?

2, Is he aware that the wheat transported by the railways has fallen from 6,000 odd tons a week to a little over 3,000 tons a week?

3, Is this shrinkage caused by—

(a) lack of rolling stock?

(b) by the refusal of the employees to use the Garratt engines?

4, Of the Garratt engines on hand, how many are today—

(a) in actual use;

(b) in sheds or yards and not being used?

5, Have the alterations to make them serviceable as recommended by the Royal Commissioner been effected to any of the Garratt engines? If so, how many?

6. Is he aware that owing to the shrinkage in the amount of wheat being transported by the railways, countries to the north of Australia are faced with a flour famine?

7, Does he know that some of the flour mills have had to stop work through the lack of wheat to grist?

8, In view of the near approach of the harvest, what steps is the department taking to—

(a) Increase the rate of wheat haulage sufficiently to enable it to transport the present minimum requirements of 6,000 odd tons a week, and to provide—