

forfeiture. The provisions were stringent; yet the clause would do much good to the State, and give satisfaction to those trying to develop our mines.

MR. TAYLOR: As to the Minister's story of certain leases on which £100,000 was expended, no man knew more about that mine than the warden, who was perfectly justified in refusing exemption. Probably there was not a shaft sunk deeper than 100 feet.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: What had been spent on cartage of machinery?

MR. TAYLOR: Ah! That was how the British capitalist was plundered. The money was spent on machinery before the mine was located. The machinery was bought in London to boom the show in Australia. Practically £100,000 was spent on machinery at a time when there was not on the lease a hole large enough for the burial of a man.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Who would have been the losers in the case of forfeiture?

MR. TAYLOR: Probably the people who had been plundered; but the man who plundered them should have suffered. It was owing to the warden's action that the extra £15,000 was forthcoming for development. There was absolutely no work done on the mine. The batteries had been standing still for the last 2½ years.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Last year the machinery started work.

MR. TAYLOR: The whole plant was standing idle nearly two years ago. The British capitalist was plundered by allowing men to import machinery for property which did not warrant the erection of a battery; hence injury to the industry and the necessity for restoring confidence. It was not that our wardens and our mining laws did not give sufficient exemption, but that capital invested was not judiciously expended.

MR. MORGANS: The property referred to was the Lake View mine; but the hon. member was in error in stating that £100,000 was spent on machinery. The prospectors of the mine received £25,000 in cash for the properties, which amount came out of the £100,000.

MR. EWING: Would this clause refer to coal-mining as well as gold-mining?

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes.

MR. EWING: In that case he asked the Minister to agree to report progress, so that the matter could be farther discussed. He could understand the explanation of the Minister in regard to gold-mining, that there would be four men for every 24 acres; but as far as coal-mining was concerned, the conditions were one man for every 30 acres, which would mean 200 or 300 men on one particular property. Supposing an industrial trouble occurred between the coal-miners and the mine owner, and the sum of money provided in the clause had been spent, the owner would be entitled to exemption. He as a coal owner was interested in getting all the protection he could for the industry, but he wished to take a fair-minded view of the question.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES, in moving that progress be reported, asked that greater progress should be made with the measure when again under consideration.

Progress reported, and leave granted to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 10:45 o'clock, until the next day.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 14th October, 1903.

	PAID
Bills: Redistribution of Seats, second reading moved (set of three Bills considered jointly): referred to select committee ...	1545
Constitution Act Amendment, second reading (resumed): referred to select committee ...	1547
Electoral Bill, second reading; referred to select committee ...	1568
Adjournment (one week) ...	1568

THE PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the COLONIAL SECRETARY: Report of Central Board of Health, 1902-3.

Ordered, to lie on the table.

REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS BILL.

SECOND READING.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. W. Kingsmill), in moving the second reading, said: I think we may congratulate ourselves upon having at last obtained from another place this Bill for which we have been waiting for some considerable time; and I would call attention to the fact that it is very evident from the prolonged consideration which another place has given the Bill, that members there have lavished on it a very fair amount of thought, and, as will have been noticed from the pages of *Hansard*, have undoubtedly debated it at great length. This Bill completes, if I may use the expression, the set of Bills dealing with the Constitution—the Constitution Bill, the Electoral Bill, and the Redistribution of Seats Bill—these having been introduced in pursuance of the promise given some time back by the predecessors of the present Government. The Bill now before us contains those conditions relating to this class of legislation which are perhaps the most variable; and, in my opinion, its provisions are those which have the least right to be included in the Constitution of Western Australia. For members must realise—and the history of the past few years will bring plainly before them—the fact that we are a community in a constantly changing condition; that we have not yet reached that normal level which it is of course the lot of all communities ultimately to reach; and that till such level is reached it would be an unwise proceeding to introduce into a Constitution—and I think it the function of Constitutions to be as immutable as possible—such conditions as would render it almost imperatively necessary time after time to alter some of the main provisions of that Constitution. It is likely that for some years to come, during the course of the next few Parliaments—indeed I may venture to hope that such will be the case—our improving conditions, and the development of mining, agricultural, and other industrial pursuits will render the

population of each district a constantly shifting quantity. And with that in view it has been decided by the Government not to include the provisions of this Bill in the Bill which amends the Constitution, which we are about to consider in conjunction with this and the Electoral Bill. Members will note that the gist of this Bill, as is the case with others of its class which have been introduced before, is really contained in the schedules. It is a Bill which depends for explanation, not so much upon second-reading speeches as upon the supply of returns and of plans which can be placed before the House. It is my aim—and I hope I shall be able to achieve it—to place before members as plainly as possible by means of plans and of returns, the subject which they have to deal with; and I am pleased to learn that the conclusion which has been arrived at outside the Chamber by the majority of members is that these three Bills should be referred to a select committee. If there ever was a Bill which demands greater and more deliberative comment than can be given to it in this Chamber, it is this Bill; and the functions of the select committee will, I take it, be to go thoroughly into the plans and the returns which I will endeavour to have furnished as fully as possible, in order that just conclusions may be arrived at as to the value of the three measures in question. Members will notice that since we last met several plans have been hung in this Chamber; and there are yet more to come. The entrance of the last one at this moment is very opportune. The first plan to which I have to call members' attention is one which I am afraid only those sitting on this (Ministerial) side of the House can see. It is on the wall behind the Ministerial bench, and shows the boundaries under the existing Act of the electoral districts and electoral provinces in the State. The other plans which members see around the Chamber are those which were produced in another place when this Bill was first introduced, and they show the proposals of the Government as the Bill stood before its amendment. The plans which are now being laid on the table show how far the Bill now before us has progressed, that is show the state of the boundaries of electoral divisions and pro-

vinces as they are set forth in the Bill which we are now considering. So I do not think members can want any more information with regard to those boundaries than is already before them. Again, as to the preparation of returns, I hope within a few minutes to be able to lay before members a set of returns which I think will be of considerable value in guiding their decisions in this connection. This set of returns will show the present division of the State into provinces, the number of electors on the Assembly roll and on the province roll, and the proportion of Council electors to Assembly electors, which I think is a fairly fixed quantity. So that when we get, as we have now in the first schedule to the Bill, the numbers and names of the electorates in each province, we shall be able to work out from the returns before us the number of electors for the provinces which will be comprised in this proposed subdivision. Members may have gathered from the *Hansard* reports that a fairly complete grouping has been made of the subdivisions of the present redistribution; and I shall be glad to give them my idea of the grouping as it occurs in the first schedule to this Bill. We find that it is proposed, for the purposes of election for the Legislative Council, to divide the State into 10 provinces named respectively the North-West, North, Metropolitan, Metropolitan-Suburban, West, South-West, Central, South-East, East, and North-East provinces; and in my opinion they may be divided up as follows. In the first place, taking into consideration the agricultural community, we have the South-West Province and the Central Province altogether agricultural, the North Province about half agricultural, and the North-West Province altogether agricultural. I think we shall be justified in treating the agricultural and the pastoral community as practically one for the purpose of dividing up the provinces of the State into the interests represented thereby; so that we have, if I may use the term for the purpose of the argument, three and a-half provinces representing the agricultural interest. Now, taking mining, we have the South-East Province, the East, and the North-East wholly concerned with mining; and with regard to the North Province, which

consists of the electorates of Cue, Geraldton, Greenough, Irwin, Mount Magnet, and Murchison, I think we shall be justified in treating that as practically half mining and half agricultural. [HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Much more.] I am expressing my own idea on the subject, so that I may conclude—I have no means of saying that other members will conclude—that we have three and a-half provinces representing mining. That accounts for seven of the ten provinces. We have as representing metropolitan interests—and by metropolitan we represent of course the industrial interests also—the Metropolitan-Suburban Province, the West Province, and the Metropolitan Province; so that, as I look at this subdivision, it resolves itself into three large heads—the representation of three and a-half for agriculture, three and a-half for mining, and three for metropolitan, or a total of 10 provinces as appears in the first schedule of the Bill. Dealing next with a question which somewhat affects this Chamber, although it is not of so much interest to this Chamber as to the Assembly, taking the grouping of the electorates for the Legislative Assembly, we find that under the present Act we have 15 votes for mining—under the Bill that number is proposed to be increased to 17; for metropolitan constituencies we have 13 votes under the present Act, and the same number is retained in the Bill before the House; for agricultural we have 14 votes—[MEMBER: Question?]
again I tell members I am expressing my own opinion on this matter, I say under the Bill it is proposed we shall have 13 members representing agriculture. But certain emendations are made in the boundaries, as in the case of “Forrest,” which now occupies a position by itself of a seat representing timber; and by that the position of the agriculturists is very largely strengthened by the greater certainty they have of gaining a seat, “Forrest” being a purely timber seat. The pastoral votes I have separated in considering the votes for the Assembly, but I maintain they can fairly be joined to the agricultural votes, their interests being so much akin. We have five pastoral seats under the present Act; and under the Bill it is proposed that three seats shall be their

portion. Again, a farther subdivision is made in the Assembly, but I have not thought it worth while in considering the constitution of the Council under the Bill to present it to members, that is the representation of the various ports on the coast have been considered. I do not refer to Fremantle, which goes into the metropolitan seats, but we have under the present Act three votes for ports, and under the Bill we have also three votes for ports. This accounts for 49 of the 50 electorates for the Assembly to be found in the Bill, and the remaining electorate (which I have already alluded to) is "Forrest," which comprises the sawmillers and timber bwers in the South-West. This cannot be called an agricultural electorate; but, as I have explained, the presence of the Forrest electorate renders the surrounding electorates more agricultural in tendency than hitherto. I have stated that I welcome, and I welcome very much, the decision which has formally been arrived at that the Bills shall be referred to a select committee; because in this Bill, and undoubtedly in the other Bills also, there are questions which depend to a large extent on the consideration of the plans and returns which I have already alluded to, which will, I hope, prove satisfactory to members, and which I have endeavoured to make as complete as possible. I may be allowed to hope that the result of referring these matters to a select committee will be that the debate may be considerably shortened. I take it the larger debate will not be on the second reading of the Bills, but on the consideration of the report of the select committee, which undoubtedly will settle, by the study of plans and returns, many of the vexed questions which lead to protracted and acrimonious debate if considered in the Chamber. I think we may invoke your clemency, Mr. President, to the extent of allowing members, when discussing one of these Bills, to allude in more or less general terms to the other two measures. If members adopt that course, which I think is a fairly reasonable one, there will be the happy result of having perhaps an extremely long debate curtailed. Taking into consideration the fact that we are to have a select committee on these Bills, there is very little more needed from me in introducing this

Bill, which is fairly explanatory in itself. I hope the committee will set at rest very many of the points which I believe, by the interjection of members, are at present somewhat in a state of doubt. I have much pleasure in moving the second reading of the Bill.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan): I beg to move that the debate on this Bill be taken after the consideration of the Constitution Act Amendment Bill and the Electoral Bill.

Motion passed, and the debate postponed.

THE PRESIDENT: I may state, in reference to the remarks made by the Colonial Secretary, that I think it would be a good plan for members, when speaking on the Constitution Bill, to refer to the other two measures, as they are practically all joined together. It is really one subject, and no doubt a great deal of time will be saved by adopting this course. It will not be irregular if members, in speaking, review the whole of the three Bills; as it will save a great deal of time, and at any rate will save three debates.

CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

SECOND READING.

Debate resumed from 29th September.

HON. J. W. HACKETT (South-West): I am sure we may congratulate the Government on not merely the tone in which the Colonial Secretary has introduced these Bills, but on the clear desire on the part of the Government to consider the wishes of this House, and to propose a measure which will excite the confidence of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. I presume that your ruling, Mr. President, on this occasion will be extended so as to speak of another place, not as of "another place," but as the Legislative Assembly. It is impossible to keep the phrase out of the debates, and so long as we speak in a respectful and parliamentary style we may, perhaps, be allowed to give its appellation as the Legislative Assembly. Following the example of the Colonial Secretary, I will deal with the Legislative Assembly as the Legislative Assembly. It is hardly necessary for me to draw the attention of the House to what took

place last session. All will remember how a Bill was presented to us which the House considered practically pulled down all defences which stood between the Legislative Council and extinction. It only required one or two more Ministries of the same bold and enterprising type as the James Ministry—but Mr. James, fortunately, has been gradually drawing himself in on constitutional matters—I say it only required a few more Ministries of active and ambitious temperament to bring in a measure which one may say would not allow an opportunity of preventing the powers which remained to the Council being taken away from them. The action which we took on that occasion, of setting aside the whole reform question—I use the boldest words—for that session, was one which had been taken on previous occasions in the other States; but it was unprecedented in this State, and it was intended as an intimation to the Ministry that any Bill brought forward in this House must be a Bill that there was some chance of passing, before members proceeded to waste their time in discussing the details of it. If we were asked for a justification of the action which we took on that occasion, we have it before us in the three Bills that have been laid on the table of the House, and the second reading of which has been moved by the Colonial Secretary. What we have now before us constitutes a measure of reform. The Bill of last session was an act of revolution, and as such we treated it. If members will examine this Bill they will find, almost without exception, that all the violent proposals contained in the Bill of last session have disappeared. For example, the double dissolution in case of a disagreement, the appeal to the country for both Houses, the joint sitting, these have all gone; and farther, that proposal which has perhaps more to say for itself than the others, I observe, is also wanting in the new Bill—the suggestion that Ministers should speak in either House—has disappeared. That suggestion amounted to this, that either on the one hand it would be a confession that our Minister should be dwarfed and depreciated by bringing in other Ministers to explain the work which it was his business to attend to; or the business of the House would be hung up while the

Colonial Secretary was in another place explaining the measures and Bills which it was the business of members of another place to attend to. It is an unworkable method, even though it does prevail I believe in some place in Africa, and in other parts of the world equally central. We are, I maintain, really under a debt of gratitude to the Government. There are many Governments—I can call one or two to mind in my own experience—who would have taken the action of the Legislative Council for what it was never intended to be, an act of defiance; who would have retorted by raising a war-cry, and by committing the country to turbulent scenes which, in my opinion, ought never to be associated with alterations in the Constitution. Before I go farther I should like to make reference to some charges brought against this House. Years ago it was the common complaint against Upper Houses that they blocked progress, that they stayed the people's will, and that there was no way of bringing them into accord with the progressive views of the nation. But it is exceedingly singular that within the last year or two the charge has been varied. We now learn from no less authority than the Premier of Victoria, that the chief complaint against Upper Houses is that they are useless because they invariably end by passing measures which at first they oppose. There is no attempt to explain the contradictory nature of these charges; but so far as we are concerned, and I believe so far as all other Legislative Councils are concerned, the matter is capable of a very different explanation. I would ask members to believe that the existence of a Legislative Council, of a second Chamber, a Chamber of review and of farther consideration, is responsible in the very highest degree for the non-passage in another place of mistaken measures and the non-introduction of mischievous clauses. Any member who reads the daily Press will be familiar with appeals made in the Legislative Assembly—many of them by the Premier—for the Assembly to consent to this or not to consent to that, in order to pave the way for the smooth and easy passage of a Bill through the Legislative Council. Now that really brings us to an explanation of why these mistaken Bills and mischievous clauses are

not seen on the Notice Paper of the Legislative Council. The veto of the Legislative Council is expressed; but it is expressed at a different period in the career of those Bills. The case is somewhat similar to that of the Crown. The Crown, according to constitutional theory, possesses an ample and complete power of veto. It can forbid the coming into operation of every law passed by the Imperial Parliament; but it has not exercised that power for some 200 years. The reason is well known. The veto is not exercised at the close of the debates on a Bill—a most inconvenient proceeding—but at the preliminary stage, before the Bill is introduced at all. It is the Crown's prerogative to be consulted on the measures which Ministers propose to bring before the Imperial Parliament, and any objection which the Crown is then prepared to make is considered, and (if found sufficient) prevails, and the Bill is not introduced. Those who are behind the scenes know of numerous cases of this sort in the history of the Imperial Parliament. And so it is with the Legislative Council. The very existence of this body, with its known conception of the duty it owes to its constituents, forbids measures of a revolutionary, extreme, or dangerous character being brought into Parliament with any chance of being passed. The consequence naturally is that Ministers think carefully over such matters, and bring in Bills, as we know from the debates we have read during the last two or three months, which they believe have a reasonable chance of receiving acceptance in the Upper House. I have one complaint to make, however, of a general character. I do most earnestly protest against the perpetual hammering in this State at the fabric of the Constitution. Within my experience no Act altering the Constitution has been given any chance of working itself out, or of showing how it will work. Both parties apparently believe that the Constitution is a sort of party football, and that it is their business and duty to see which of the two sides will kick it oftenest and will kick it farthest. To my mind an unstable Constitution makes an unstable people; and I do most earnestly entreat the Minister, if he holds office for many years longer, as I trust he will, to use his utmost endeavours to see

that the changes in the Constitution are given a fair chance; that we are allowed to accustom ourselves to them, to habituate ourselves to them, and to discover what they mean; that above all, he will put an end to the state of perpetual unrest which cannot be good for the politician, for the capitalist, or for the workman, which forbids our even dreaming from one year to another what the chances of a parliamentary session will bring forth. Even during the lifetime of the James Government we have had two proposals for constitutional reform placed before us which were of an absolutely contradictory character; and no doubt if these measures are laid aside, as I trust they will not be, we shall have a third body of proposals perhaps equally at variance with the other two. Now practically all that the country has called for, so far as it can be said to have called for anything—and it is only those who have had their hand on the pulse of public opinion who can say whether there was any call at all—the only two matters which seemed to me to awaken any real interest in the country were the question of redistribution and the question of plural voting for the two Houses. Those, I admit, the James Government were bound to deal with; but for the rest, I hope we shall have for the future as little tampering as possible with either the principles or the form of the Constitution, and that we shall devote ourselves to discovering what amount of progress, of social reform and of good administration, can be extracted from the large body of statutes on the table before us. There is one other remark I should like to make about a second Chamber. It is quite clear that the Legislative Council intends to live. I think its action last year was some evidence of that. It will insist upon holding the constitutional, the moderate position which is given to it, that of being a Chamber of revision, a Chamber of farther consideration, a Chamber if need be of delay, to give time to the country to digest and mature the Government proposals. But this House has one invaluable quality, the existence of which it seems to me will have to be in some way disproved—and it has not yet been disproved—before this House ever dreams of committing suicide. We are in the

blessed enjoyment of responsible government. I say no word against responsible government: it cost seven years of hard labour on my part to do the little I did to secure it; but it brings with it certain disadvantages and disqualifications, and one of these is found in connection with a single-Chamber Constitution. It is of course essential that the Legislative Assembly should be the Ministry-making and the Ministry-breaking House; in other words, the Assembly is inevitably, by the nature of its constitution, a party House. Now the result is to add another word to its dictionary—to add “loyalty” to the many duties of a member of the Legislative Assembly. That is to say, the Ministry holds office by virtue of the wish of the majority of the House; consequently the majority conceives it to be absolutely essential to be loyal to that Ministry; and if that Ministry is to carry its measures and to do any useful work, it must be sure of that loyalty. As members will see, that at once entails grave disadvantages. Now in our House that is not so. Each member speaks and votes fairly, independently, and impartially. We are allowed to substitute the word “community” for the word “party”; we are allowed to express the views of our constituents without being trammelled by any special consideration for the Ministry. We can vote as we please on any subject without the overhanging apprehension that the vote we give may imperil the existence of a Government which in all other respects we desire to maintain its hold on the seals of office. Therefore I think that if the second Chamber, the Chamber of review, the non-party Chamber is abolished, some steps will have to be taken to create a substitute, which will not be the same in name but must be considered the same in effectual action. The principles which it is sought to change in the present Constitution Bill—and I am speaking now of that trilogy of Bills which the Minister has introduced—are four in number. I take it for granted that Clause 4—that innocent little clause in the Constitution Bill to the effect that the Governor may at any time within three months after the commencement of this Act by proclamation dissolve the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly simultaneously, and

that thereupon the members thereof shall vacate their seats—will not be passed. I say with the utmost confidence that it will disappear from the Bill. If I remember rightly, and I think I do, the Minister appealed to members to recollect the continuity of the Legislative Council; and as there can be no break of continuity so serious as cutting it short altogether, or drawing the knife across its throat, I take it the Minister will himself move the elimination of that clause from the Constitution Bill when it is considered. [THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: No, no.] Then the hon. member will have to justify his former language. But I am quite satisfied that if somebody else moves it, the Minister will either support it or thank heaven when he finds that the removal of the clause is secured. That clause we may take it for granted will disappear, and will leave these four principles to which we shall have to address ourselves at a later stage—the question of the plural vote for both Houses, the question of the distribution of the provisions of the Constitution Act, the question of the lowering of the franchise for the Legislative Council, and finally the question of the redistribution of seats. With regard to the distribution of the provisions of the Constitution Act among three Bills, I am prepared to keep an open mind until I hear the Minister's arguments; but I think we have some reason to complain, because the Minister, when introducing these measures, gave us much explanation but no argument whatever. I was listening earnestly, in my researches for enlightenment, for some argument, for something to show that the Minister really believed in the Bills he was introducing; for some strong point that would lead us to decide it was a desirable step to take to burst up the old system of the State, and to take the Bills dealing with constitutional provisions and distribute these amongst other measures. No doubt what the Minister intends is that in the Committee stages we could go into these matters more particularly. But what I want to know is why such provisions—I am now looking at the Electoral Bill dealing with the disqualification and qualification of electors of the Council and the Assembly, surely one of the fundamental stones on which the Con-

stitution is built—are removed from the Constitution Bill and are found in another Bill which is purely a machinery measure. Of course, we all know what the argument will be, and I wish the Colonial Secretary would put it into words. I conceive its being something to the effect that these matters are of secondary importance; that they should not be hedged around by obstacles, and by being in the Constitution Act cannot be altered without interfering with the Constitution. And amongst these less important matters are the qualifications of electors and the redistribution of seats. There may be something said for the redistribution of seats being in a separate Bill—I see a good deal on both sides myself; but why the qualification of electors should be removed from the Constitution Bill the hon. member has not attempted to justify. We all know that under the Constitution all Bills that alter the provisions of the Constitution Act are required to have an absolute majority of members on both the second and third readings. That is a provision which in my experience has blocked more than one extreme measure that has been brought into Parliaments in other places. It means at all events that there must be an absolute majority of the representatives of the electors in favour of the Bill on its principles, and then in favour of the Bill on its details at the third reading, before it can become law. I for one—and I trust the House will be with me in this respect—object to so fundamental and primary a stone in the foundation of the Constitution as the qualification of electors finding a place anywhere except within the four corners of the Constitution Act. When an alteration of the Constitution Act is proposed, it is always left in the hands of the Government. That suggests one of the strongest reasons why this change should not be assented to. One reason is the publication to the world of the assent of a full half of both Houses to these important matters; and secondly, it invites the attack of every private member in Parliament upon these clauses. I trust the Minister will see his way, if not to propose, to assent to the transfer of the clauses dealing with the qualifications, back to their proper home, the Constitution Act. I am now coming to

the redistribution of seats. I can see some reason for transferring redistribution to a measure separate from the Constitution Act; but those reasons are not very strong and they are not strong enough, as far as my poor intelligence goes, to justify placing redistribution in a separate measure; but I was hoping that the Minister would give such strong reasons as to relieve my wavering and doubting mind, and set it at rest that I could go with him in supporting the Redistribution of Seats Bill. The reason which the Minister gave was that it was not wise to be always tinkering with the Constitution Act. I somewhat anticipated that argument, but I think it is not wise to be always tinkering with a redistribution of seats.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I did not use that argument.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: No doubt the hon. gentleman has his arguments up his sleeve, and we shall have the full force of them in the Committee stage. Let us look at the redistribution of seats for a moment. My impression is that the ruling principle in constitutional matters with any Government in Western Australia is that there should be a change, and therefore the Redistribution of Seats Bill may be carried as a separate measure amending the existing law. We have one consolation, that a Ministry in the far-distant future which may replace the Ministry now in office will put this back in the Constitution; but we ought not to wait so long as that may be, for I am sure it will be many, many years.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Is that adduced as an argument?

HON. J. W. HACKETT: An excellent reason. We might retain the distribution of seats in the Constitution Act until the successors of the hon. gentleman take their seats on the Treasury bench. The Bill is a short one; the clauses themselves would be about the size of a Constitution Act such as the Ministry would like to see it; but the first schedule would swell it to an extent disagreeably different from the size and proportions which the Government would like. I am at a loss to understand precisely the principles on which the first schedule has been drawn up. I presume the names are all right; but I congratulate the Ministry again on fulfilling to the utmost

the traditions of the constitutional history in Western Australia, that of changing whatever they could. I think they have changed all the names.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: A small proportion.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: What proportion has been left unchanged?

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Two provinces, the West and the Metropolitan.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: The hon. member must revert to that instinct that declares that the Constitution is there to receive the blows of a bludgeon. In regard to the two provinces, the Government have retained part of the name of one. It was the "West" Province previously, and to show that we are going ahead at a good pace they have changed it to "Western" Province. We are all human, and naturally I looked to see how I should be affected by the alteration in boundaries. I cannot quite understand it. I still am supposed to represent Bunbury, Collie, Forrest, Sussex, Murray, and Wellington, but why should I be asked to represent the Swan?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: It is a distinct compliment.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: It is a compliment; but I am one of those who prefer old relations and old friendships to "distinct compliments." I prefer to still stick to the people I have worked for during many years, and I trust I shall work for them many years in the future. The Swan is separated from the South-West Province by another province, as well as several districts of the Assembly. It is quite a long journey, about 300 miles from the southern part—and this is the settled part of the State—to the most northern. I would not object to that if I had not the humiliation of going through another member's province. I want to go from friend to friend.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The plans show the province is continuous.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: I did not notice the decorations on the walls. I see that my friend has given me a sort of back door by which I can get out of my old province into the new portion. I shall study that a little more fully.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have already explained that there are three sets of plans; one under the present Act,

those introduced with the Bill, and the third set which have been placed on the table, representing the intention set forth in the Bill itself.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: I was not present when the hon. member commenced his speech—I was in hope that he would give me a few minutes' grace. The Swan, I assume, is tacked on to the South-West Province because it is agricultural. That is an intelligible principle. But why was not that principle followed throughout the schedule? I am still left with a mining electorate which is called "Collie." If Swan is tacked on to the South-West because it is agricultural, why was not Collie tacked on to Kalgoorlie, which is mining? Will the hon. member accept an amendment to that effect? The Central Province runs from Albany to Northam: what connection is there between Albany and Northam? It has not been explained by the Minister. I venture to submit it will require some strong argument before the Northam people will like to be out-voted by the people of Albany, or that the Albany people will like to be out-voted by the Northam people. It would be more reasonable to connect Bunbury with Geraldton, because then one need not pass through another electorate, but take a trip by the steamer "Julia Percy." Altogether the redistribution of seats does not please me any more than the distribution of the various parts of the Constitution Act through three Bills. There is another point I would like to call attention to, and it is plural voting. Can the Minister say how many votes will be destroyed by abolishing the plural vote for the Council as well as to the Assembly? Is he prepared to say how many electors for the Council will be left in the North-West Province, which contains the electorates of Gascoyne, Kimberley, Pilbarra and Roebourne? Is he prepared to say how far the residue will represent the great industries in the North, especially the pastoral industry, of which the North-West Province is a special seat? And can he tell us how far Pilbarra will dominate, or will it dominate the other parts of the electorate and turn it into a mining province?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: To no extent.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: I come at once to the question of the lowering of the franchise. I find that the Government propose in the Electoral Bill the largest possible reductions in the franchise, short of altogether sweeping away a qualification. The £100 freehold is reduced to £50, the leasehold in possession and the dwelling-house qualifications are both reduced from £25 to £10; the Crown lease or license is left as before at £10. Now I want to know, and I hope the Minister in his reply to these remarks, if he thinks them worthy of reply, will inform us, why it was considered desirable to disturb the qualifications at all. That is a clear issue; and probably he will be able to convince us that the course taken was reasonable. I have been thirsting for reasons, but have received none, and my thirst is still unassuaged. When the qualifications were disturbed at all, why did he come down to £10? Why not £15? Why not £8 or £5? We want some reason why £10 was fixed on.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: A happy medium.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: But it is not a medium.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: You said it was an extreme.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: No; I did not use the word "extreme," or any word approaching to it in meaning. I am entirely in the position of a searcher for information. I am prepared to sit at the feet of the Minister as at the feet of Gamaliel, as a political pupil; and I promise to drink in all his words and arguments, and to answer them if I can. If I cannot answer them, I shall vote for them (as he puts it) to the extreme. But if the qualification had to be disturbed and it was a question of coming to something like finality, why did he not come down to bedrock and give us the ratepayers' roll? Will the Minister accept the ratepayers' roll, if that qualification is accepted by this House?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Now is not the time to state whether I will accept it.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Well, the hon. member can try to help me in my argument by a suggestion or two, showing the workings of his own mind on the question. I now come to a matter

wherein I have been anticipated by Sir Edward Wittenoom, that the probability of this House accepting the altered franchise entirely depends on the change it will make in the present rolls. Some time ago I asked the Minister to supply us with all the information he could. He has done so. I am certain he is prepared to give us all the assistance in his power or that he can get from the resources of others. But we are left absolutely in the dark as to the most important question of all—how the lowering of the franchise will affect future votes. Now why I say that is most important is that if we had those lists before us, this whole schedule might be shown to be a tissue of nonsense. The Minister may have created provinces with a very small percentage of voters; he may have other provinces with an enormous excess of voters; he may practically have given us the North-West province, that is Gascogne, Kimberley, Pilbarra, and Roebourne, with hardly any voters at all, or with all the voters congregated in one district. We want all those facts before us.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am sure the hon member appreciates the difficulty.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: I do; and I entirely accept the Minister's assurance that if he could have done it he would have done it.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I hope to be able to do it.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Well, that statement sets much of my anxiety at rest; and when the Minister does supply us with those figures, then I hope the House will go into the question of lowering the franchise, and not till then; because I must really protest most strongly against any attempt to tamper with the rolls, to rearrange the boundaries of provinces, or to apportion the members, unless we have the primarily necessary data before us, showing the difference which the changes will make in the existing rolls. And the Minister ought to be able to show us what would be the difference if the original proposal of the Government were accepted—which was I think a £15 qualification—to show how far that would be superior or inferior to the £10 roll, the £5 roll, or the ratepayers' roll. All these matters, I think, raise before us a vista which it

would be impossible for this House to face. I cannot understand how, with the meagre material before us, with the immense number of alterations which I am sure this House will desire, with the entire recasting of these Bills, as I venture to prophesy, as far as the Legislative Council is affected—I say with all these demands before us it seems to me impossible to deal with these measures in Committee of the whole, and that the suggestion thrown out, with which I understand the Minister concurs, is eminently desirable, to send the three Bills to a select committee. And I trust that the select committee, which will be a drafting committee more than anything else, will have all the assistance which the Crown Law officers can give. [The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Certainly.] I do not wish longer to delay the House. There are many smaller matters in the Bills which demand consideration. There is one amendment which I desire to propose, and which I am sure the Minister will accept. Its effect is that no poll of the people, or as the common word is, no referendum, shall be taken except in virtue of a Bill promoted in Parliament. I am sure the Government will see their way to indorse that suggestion and embody it in the Constitution Act. My object is to prevent a single resolution of either House casting a subject before the voters of the country, who are not prepared for it by proper discussion, or by the consideration which ought to be given to such matters; to prevent the possibility of obtaining a victory even though all those opposed to the proposition abstained from voting. The thing is practically illegal as well as unconstitutional, because it involves the expenditure of money without the consent of Parliament. But in other countries the project has been worked in an underhand fashion. Those who favour it say: "Take the poll at the time of the general election, when it will cost nothing." Of course it does cost something, and to that extent is illegal. But they say: "Take the poll at the time of the general election, and we shall know how we stand, because every elector is given an opportunity of declaring his views."

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think that has ever been done in this State.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: No; and I am certain that so long as the present Government remain in power it will not be done. Nevertheless, in the far future the Minister, when he is old and grey, may have to give place to another; and in any case everybody knows how easily a motion can be sprung upon a House—possibly upon a thin House—where the proposer is watching his opportunity to snatch a division to submit a matter to the country by means of a referendum. Now as the object of doing such a thing is to prepare a basis for a sweeping alteration in the Constitution, every question connected with the Constitution should go through certain constitutional paths; and I trust that the House will help me in insisting that such a matter as a referendum shall be confined to constitutional paths, and not be permitted to deviate therefrom. On one point the Minister will I am sure have the support of this House, and he has my warm congratulations. This is a farther proof of our wisdom, our almost prophetic wisdom, in laying aside the Constitution Bill of last year. This provision would not have found a place in it. I refer to the clause providing that a sinking fund must be established for every loan contracted by the State. That is the present practice, and an excellent practice. Of course I know well that sinking funds are open to great danger; that it depends on how they are managed, whether they are not a positive loss to the State. But if there is a loss, it is better to face that loss, for it will be small, and will but affect the State internally; whereas, in consequence of the sinking fund, the credit of the State will stand much higher in the London market. I am pleased to see this amendment in the Constitution Bill, though it has as little right to a place in such a Bill as the franchise clauses have in the Electoral Bill. There are one or two other matters, such as the quorum, with which I will not now trouble the House. The provision that absence for one month without leave shall vacate a seat is another. No doubt various arguments can be used in favour of that, but the case against it seems very strong. Lastly, we shall all probably agree that the abolition of the age limit for the Council is a provision which ought to be put in a Redistribution Bill or an Electoral Bill,

according to the Ministerial view, being of little importance. I have now mentioned most of the points worthy of being brought under members' notice; and I hope the three Bills will be sent to a select committee. I trust that when the select committee is appointed we shall go a little farther towards meeting one of the proposals of the Government made to us last year but omitted in the present Bill, that is a peripatetic bench of Ministers passing from Chamber to Chamber. At all events, I trust we shall in some degree approximate to that by inviting the attendance at the select committee—if the gentlemen will be so good as to come—of the Premier or any of his colleagues who may desire to give evidence. I trust we shall all work to improve these Bills. I will support the second reading of each. I hope the result of our labours will be such a representation of the people as will afford to all the assurance of an enlightened liberty, and of that progress which we desire to make, materially as well as constitutionally, both in our own interests and in the interests of those who are to succeed us. I have great pleasure in supporting the second reading.

HON. G. RANDELL (Metropolitan) : After the very clever and able speech of Dr. Hackett, little remains to be said. He has touched points on which many of us I am sure, if not all, feel very strongly, has put his finger on what we consider serious blots in the Bill, and has given us the history of the Bill sent to this House last session. To that I need not refer; but I think the House will follow the hon. member's argument in its entirety when he concludes that there is no need for a dissolution of this House, and that such dissolution would be mischievous to the country at large. I am not well up in the constitutional history of the States, and I do not remember for the moment whether there ever has been a dissolution of the Legislative Council or of any kindred body existing in the other States, whether nominee or elective. I think it would be highly prejudicial to the best interests of the country if such a thing should take place, apart from the act of injustice to members who have recently been elected. I draw attention to the fact that members of the Legislative Council are before

their constituents every two years, and the whole *personnel* of the Council may be changed, if the electors so desire, in six years. That seems to be an excellent provision, and insures to a great extent that the Legislative Council shall be in touch with the electors on all public questions. I do not know that there has been any agitation in the country or any very large expression of opinion, except in one particular circle, amongst the electors of the country for a change or a dissolution of this House, or for the lowering of the franchise or the qualification of members. I am inclined to think, from what I have read and heard, that the large body of electors in this country are becoming more and more aware of the value of the Legislative Council, especially under circumstances which have occurred during the last three or four years. They feel that a Legislative Council consisting of members of mature age and capacity, of business knowledge and public attainments, is highly desirable in the interests of the community at large. I shall very strongly object to Clauses 14 and 15 of the Electoral Bill as they appear. With regard to the qualification of electors, that should not be taken out of the Constitution Bill and placed in a separate Bill. I think with Dr. Hackett that it would be an invitation to politicians to meddle oftener with the qualifications of the electors for the Legislative Council. The argument used by the Colonial Secretary in favour of the redistribution of seats being separate from the Constitution was that it was very undesirable when an alteration, which was very likely to occur because of the changing nature of our population, was made that the Constitution Act should be interfered with, and it would be much better to place this matter in another Bill so as not to involve touching the Constitution. I think Dr. Hackett met that argument very fairly when he said that it would be an invitation to persons to interfere unnecessarily often with the redistribution of seats. I think myself very probably that it would have that effect. At the same time any politician or Minister with a due sense of regard for his office and responsibilities would hesitate before he interfered with the distribution of seats when it remains in the Constitution. With regard to the

lowering of the qualification, I am strongly against that. The probable effect of lowering the qualification to £10 would make a household franchise and bring it down, with the exception of residential electors, to the same as the Assembly. If this is to be a House of review for the careful and deliberate consideration of measures, I think it would be very objectionable if both Houses were returned virtually on the same franchise. The Legislative Council could then claim to have all the powers of members of another place over the finances of the country and in regard to questions of policy. There would be some good reason in making that claim, and the position would be unsatisfactory. I believe this House is satisfied to remain as at present, a House of review, and to leave to the Assembly the question of the finances, while retaining to ourselves a careful consideration of the Estimates or any other question sent to us touching on finances on which we may make suggestions. I am not inclined to seek after any more powers than we have which would be involved in having a franchise virtually on the same basis as that which returns members to the Legislative Assembly. I hope the House will see the necessity of restoring the clauses which have been taken from the Constitution Act, and placed in the Electoral Bill. I hope members will replace them where they ought to be, in the Constitution Act. I would like, before going farther, to say that I am very pleased with the way in which the leader of the House has met the wishes and desires of members, and the readiness with which he has fallen in with the view of sending these Bills to a select committee. I think the House ought to be thankful for the generous attitude the Minister has assumed, and also for the way in which he has introduced the measures to the consideration of the House. With regard to Clause 10—the qualification of a member of either House to be the same—I am entirely opposed to that alteration. I hold very strongly that no one should be allowed to exercise the privilege of a voter in the State until that person has resided 12 months in the State. The provision which obtains at the present time in the Constitution Act is really a valuable one. I need not labour the ques-

tion. Members see how easy it would be for a man who has resided here for six months, who has no personal interests, who may even be a visitor to the State, through some means to get on the roll to exercise a vote, and be gone again before the next six months expire. People who come here fail to understand the politics of the country and the interests of the country; therefore it is undesirable to admit people to the exercise of the franchise until they have resided here for 12 months. My opinion is that the two years' qualification for a member for the Council is a good provision, and he should be 30 years of age. I will not say that men younger than 30 years of age have not talents which would benefit the country, but we want men of some experience in the Legislative Council; therefore it is desirable to have an age limit. A sense of responsibility begins to creep on a man at 30 years of age which he does not possess at 21, 22, or even 23 years of age. I object to Clause 33, the reduction of the quorum. I cannot see why the Assembly should adhere to the rule that one-third of the members should form a quorum and deprive the Legislative Council of the same provision. I think it might possibly have a disastrous effect sometimes, an effect which is not anticipated by Ministers when they propose that the quorum for the Council should be one-half the members. I hope the provision may disappear from the Bill. I am not in accord with the endeavour to do away with plural voting. As Dr. Hackett has pointed out, in the case of the Kimberley district it may possibly have the effect of reducing the number of electors, and the change may be very appreciable. It may, perhaps, change the nature of the province altogether. I believe this House does represent interests; and if a man possesses property, that should give him a qualification, and he should be allowed to have that qualification and vote either personally or by post. I am quite in accord with the principle that no matter what the qualification of a voter may be in a province, he should only vote once in that province. If he holds half the province, he should only be allowed to vote once in that province. There are, as members say, some provisions in the Bill which we may congratulate the Govern-

ment upon. I am in accord with that view. I think the provisions in reference to the sinking fund should be embodied in an Act. There is another clause which I think it would be very desirable to have in a Constitution Bill. It now exists, I think, only in the Standing Orders of the Legislative Assembly. That clause says:—

The contributions to the sinking funds of all loans heretofore authorised shall continue to be paid, without reduction, as directed by the Acts now in force relating thereto.

I think that is a copy of a section of the Federal Constitution, and I think it is a good provision to have in the Bill.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: The present section of the Constitution Act does not go nearly so far.

HON. G. RANDELL: No; it does not go so far. I think it is intended to protect the contributions to the sinking funds that have already accumulated. That, also, I think a sensible and wise provision. As one who, in the early stages of our borrowing, strongly insisted upon the sinking fund, I am pleased to see that it is recognised by the present Government as a desirable and necessary feature in our system of borrowing, and that it has obtained a place in the Constitution Bill. I repeat that I think it would be inadvisable to reduce the franchise, to any appreciable extent at any rate. My own feeling is that it should not be reduced at all. I think the present is a very reasonable franchise for the Upper House, and that it should be retained in the interests of the country. There are many things in the Electoral Bill to which I should like to refer, but I feel there is no necessity for so doing in view of the fact that it will be sent to a select committee, and that light will be thrown upon all the problems contained in the three Bills; and especially is that necessary in connection with the Redistribution of Seats Bill. Dr. Hackett has humorously pointed out some of what he considers the incongruities of the grouping. Concerning that, I am not at the moment in a position to express an opinion. I am sorry that any necessity should have arisen for effecting redistribution; but I am sensible that in some parts of the country, at any rate, representation is very unequal. Causes of complaint have, I think, arisen; and there

is no reason to be surprised at the feeling in some quarters that there should be a more equal distribution of the voting power throughout the whole State. And while I think it impossible and not desirable to redistribute on a population basis, yet I have always held that to a certain extent population should be considered. That applies more particularly to the Legislative Assembly than to the Legislative Council. Therefore, I think the Government are bound to take up this question of redistribution of seats. But whether the arrangement arrived at after a good deal of controversy and of cross-firing in another place is a wise arrangement, I am unable to say. Fortunately, members in this House are acquainted with the different parts of the country; and from members in the aggregate I think we may safely assume that we shall obtain a knowledge of the circumstances of each of the provinces set out in the first schedule of this Bill. We have not had an opportunity of looking over the plans, especially the plans for redistribution in respect of the Bill as it left the Assembly. We have seen the old plans and those on the walls; but those that have just come in we cannot possibly have looked into.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: They have just been finished.

HON. G. RANDELL: I am unable to follow even the boundaries of Perth from the printed description in the Bill; and how much less easily can I follow the large country provinces mentioned here? I join with Dr. Hackett in saying that it is undesirable for us to be always contemplating changes and creating unrest. At the same time, I think that if necessity arises, the Parliament of the country is bound to take such questions into consideration to the best of its ability. If there are grievances or disadvantages under which any constituencies labour, I think it is the duty of Parliament to remove them as soon as possible, and to do so without regard to personal interest. I shall approach the questions contained in these three Bills quite without bias or prejudice and without any personal object in view. My time of service will expire in May next; and as I feel at the present moment, it will not be my intention to seek again the suffrages of the electors.

I do not say that I shall not do so, but I have no present intention of doing so; and I mention this to show members that I have no personal feeling in the matter. My only desire will be to see that no injustice is inflicted on this House and no injury inflicted on the country by the changes proposed in these Bills. I hope that with the wisdom of the Council and of the Assembly we shall be able to arrive at such conclusions as will be in the general interest.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM (North): I should like to preface my remarks by expressing sympathy for the Minister who represents the Government in this House, knowing what a hard position he occupies. I speak from experience, for I have often found that the feelings of members are not altogether in accord with my own; and therefore we can understand what a hard task the Minister has before him, and I say this to assure him that I will give him all the support I can. I should like also to congratulate Dr. Hackett on the admirable speech he made, which has no doubt saved much discussion, because he has put the chief points clearly and lucidly before the House, so that we can grasp them thoroughly. And I do not know anyone better fitted to undertake such a task; because I am sure his daily pursuits give him a grasp of the subject which few of us could hope to obtain without much study and research; and in these circumstances I think we are indebted to him for the admirably plain statement he made, which has cleared the way for debate on the subject. Even at the risk of repetition I feel that I must address myself to two or three subjects already touched on by previous speakers. And one of the first ideas which obtruded itself on my mind when I saw these three Bills was that it seemed to me almost a waste of time to take so much trouble with the Redistribution of Seats Bill before the two great principles contained in the preceding Bills introduced here had been settled—the lowering of the franchise, and plural voting. Because I think it must be obvious to the most superficial mind that these two conditions may materially alter the voting power of each district or province. If we are to reduce the qualification for the franchise by one-half, it is obvious

that in many provinces there will be double or more than double the number of voters. And, as has been pointed out, if plural voting is abolished, in some cases the number of voters may be very small. So that in these circumstances it seems to me extremely difficult to formulate a Redistribution of Seats Bill without having these two matters first settled; and I think much time, if nothing else, would have been saved had these principles been decided. Probably they will be decided as the Government suggest: I cannot say. But if they are, I do not know upon what ground the redistribution of seats has been based—whether on the supposition that the Bill will be carried out or on the present voting. In passing I will touch on two or three other subjects. One is the question of including some matters in a Constitution Bill instead of in a separate measure. I am one of those who think we should include as much disputatious matter as we possibly can in the Constitution Bill, so that such subjects may not be brought up from time to time at the cost of much trouble. By disputatious matter I mean subjects which any Government can bring forward at a time when they desire to occupy the minds of the voters with anything but what is best for the country. In these circumstances we know that in various parts of the world Governments have resorted to the device of bringing down a subject of contention which may probably end in smoke, while something that is not quite so pleasant to the Government is being worked off in some other way. I do not think for one moment that the present Government would do so; but when the report of the select committee is submitted to the House my vote will be in favour of the proposal which will include as much as possible in the Constitution Bill. With regard to the lowering of the franchise, as has already been stated no reasons have been given. I was not here when the second reading was moved, and therefore I have taken the trouble to get a copy of *Hansard* and to find out on what ground the Government proposed to reduce the franchise for the Upper House. We have heard no agitation in the country for a reduction of the franchise; but I believe a few people of extreme views have proposed and done all they

could to bring about the abolition of the Upper House. Now I think that is a sensible position to take up; because I am of opinion that any lower franchise than we now have would be about equivalent to the abolition of this House, for it would bring in such a number of voters that we should have two Houses elected on practically the same basis. And when two Houses are elected by the same class of electors, then I shall be on the side of the people who wish to have the country governed by one House, because two would then be only an absurdity and a needless expense. As far as I can understand, there has been no demand for the abolition of this House. The House I believe has worked well. I do not think its worst enemy can say that it has ever stood in the way of progress; while many of its best friends say that it has often been the saviour of the country. In view of these two opinions I think it only fair to allow the franchise to continue unaltered, instead of making an attempt at something fresh. Now I come to the question of plural voting; and I am absolutely opposed to abolishing the plural vote. Mr. Randell just now took exception to giving a vote to some people on so short a residence; but I thoroughly believe that every man in the country should have a vote. I think every man should have a say as to the class of Government which is to rule over him, and as to what taxes he shall pay. I say that every man has a right to that irrespective of qualification; but I say also, that those who have achieved positions for themselves by industry and steadiness should have practically more votes than other men; and as practically every man has a vote for the Assembly, this House should have a higher franchise in respect of its being representative of some of the industry and some of the intelligence of the country. In these circumstances I think plural voting should be allowed. I consider that any system which puts all men on the same basis cannot be good. Any system which allows the idle, the drunken, and the dissolute to be put on the same political footing as the industrious and the intelligent is a rotten system. And although I believe in every man having a vote, I think that those who do the best for the country, who help in its development, who put their

money into it and use their brains for it, should have a little more representation than the man who does nothing whatever for it at all. In these circumstances I think that plural voting should not be abolished. We must remember that there is a vast number included among those now known as adult voters who are irresponsible voters, who pay no taxes, who do nothing for the country at all; yet these people can vote just the same as can anyone who has done a great deal for the country. To give only one example, take the daughters of a family; there may be two or three daughters who have votes, having the same privileges of voting as the father or the mother; they pay no taxes, and yet they can out-vote the parents who pay everything for them. I think the people who are trying to develop the industries of the country should have more than one vote. The irresponsible voters are in a position to inflict hardships on the owners of property and capital: they may impose taxes which may become almost unbearable. There may be conditions in some other country that induce these irresponsible persons to go away, leaving others who have property to stick to the State and bear the burdens. Therefore those who have intelligence, property, and industry, should have more voting power than those who have not these qualifications. This House, it has been said before to-day, is generally considered a House of revision. [HON. G. RANDELL: Hear, hear.] I am glad Mr. Randell agrees with me, because he rather contradicted me one day when I said that I considered this House was a chamber of revision, and not one for originating legislation. I am of that opinion still. We are not a House which should originate important legislation. In my firm opinion legislation should come from another place, and we should give it the most careful consideration, looking at it impartially and passing it if we think it desirable.

HON. G. RANDELL: Acting under that principle we should have done no work this session, then.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: We are quite willing to do the work that is sent to us.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: We are giving it to another place.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: I think one-man-one-vote, as proposed in this Bill, is class legislation of the purest kind. We hear it stated everywhere, especially in another place, that whatever is done no legislation should be carried that affects one class. Anyone who reflects at all will see that one-man-one-vote, as I said before, is class legislation of the purest kind, for the reason that we know perfectly well the class who own property, and perhaps I may say the very best educated class, are in the minority; therefore any measures could be carried by those in the majority. I feel sure, as I have heard it put very well, that when we come to the question of one-man-one-vote, those who hold the balance of power would represent something else than experience and the trained intelligence of the people. Under these circumstances it would be wise to consider the clause very carefully before it is carried. I do not propose to detain the House longer. There are many matters in the Bill which one could go into, the dissolution of the Legislative Council, and many other matters; but I just thought that, as we were considering an important subject, it would be wise to place on record what our views are on the leading principles. I again reiterate that it is a matter of regret that the redistribution of seats has been gone into before the question of the lowering of the franchise and one-man-one-vote has been settled. I shall have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of these Bills.

HON. C. E. DEMPSTER (East): I feel sure that the House is indebted to Dr. Hackett for the very lucid explanation of these measures. He went into the matter very closely, and I can safely say his opinion, as expressed, is almost identical with the opinions of other members of the House. I feel satisfied that the members who are appointed on the select committee will deal with this question in a way which we wish and desire. But I regret in the first place that so much labour and trouble, and ability I could almost say, has been wasted in placing these amendments before us, which I do not think are necessary. They could have been dispensed with. The alteration of enactments so many times is not advisable. No sooner do we get into the way of understanding one enactment

than another overthrows it. This continual tinkering with past enactments is undesirable; this tinkering with the Constitution necessitates immense expenditure, and is not satisfactory in the end. I have not heard of any outcry throughout the country for an amendment of the Constitution, or an alteration of the boundaries of districts; therefore, why should there have been all this trouble about the matter? I concur in all that has been said on this question. I do not favour doing away with the present qualification for the Council. I think the qualification that has existed hitherto is moderate enough; and it is unwise in the interests of the country to alter the qualification in any way. I am sure the select committee will keep that in view. I also object to the idea that the country should be represented in this House by beardless boys of 21 years of age. Can a youth of 21 have had sufficient experience to take upon himself any responsibility in this Chamber? Fancy having a Legislative Council of boys 21 years of age! I am sure the country generally would never approve of representation by a number of inexperienced lads who, though they may be capable in many respects, have not the practical knowledge which is required, and have not had the experience to bring to bear on subjects the want of which renders them unfit to represent the country in the Legislative Council. I am sure the House will not approve of the qualification of both Houses being the same, and I hope members will adhere to the present qualification for this House. Plural voting is another matter which has often been discussed throughout the country. I can never agree to the abolition of plural voting. When a man by thrift and care has obtained property in one part of the State, where he may have some of the members of his family residing, although he may have moved to another part, it is unfair in cases of that kind to confine a person to one vote, to only give him the same right as another person who may have just come out of prison. I do not think this is asked for by the State in any way. The House should take exception to Clause 141, which refers to the cost of elections. What difference will it make to the Government? It would be impossible for a candidate for

an election to make an estimate of his expenses. We know it does cost a lot of money to fight an election, no matter how careful a candidate may be, but I do not know why the Government should wish to know what the expenses amount to. This seems to be a most inquisitorial clause to insert in the Bill. I do not wish to make a long speech; I do not think there is any necessity for it. I am satisfied that those members who will sit on the select committee will go into the various questions with care and caution, and we shall be safe in leaving the questions in their hands. I hope the committee will succeed in preparing amendments which may be acceptable to the country.

At 6.30, the PRESIDENT left the Chair.
At 7.30, Chair resumed.

HON. E. M. CLARKE (South-West): As to the existence of this Chamber, I think that is a subject we may very well leave alone. There has been in certain quarters some talk about doing away with this House; but I am perfectly certain that our constituencies one and all recognise the necessity for this Chamber, and it is a foregone conclusion that an Upper House must continue to exist. I have a few words to say with regard to the Bill now before us, though I wish to avoid going over any of the ground traversed by former speakers. No doubt Dr. Hackett has grasped the whole of the situation; but I notice that he did not in every instance give us a definite opinion as to what should be done. For that I listened very carefully. He put us in possession of all the facts, and possibly very wisely left it to us to make up our minds as to what we should do. One of the clauses proposes the dissolution of this Chamber; and having been sent here by our constituents certainly not to commit suicide, I say it would be folly for us to attempt such a thing. To pass Clause 4 in the Constitution Bill would be practically committing suicide; therefore that clause should certainly be expunged. Possibly someone will join issue with me as to plural voting. I have always held that the person who pays more in taxes than another should have the greater voting power. This principle is recognised in

municipalities. Well, if in a community of ratepayers, living close together, the principle is recognised that a man who pays a large sum in rates should have a greater voting power than a man who pays 3s. 6d., I unhesitatingly say that I am in favour of plural voting at parliamentary elections. In many instances a man has considerable property in two provinces. I fail to see why that man should be debarred from voting at Council elections in each province. I am perfectly willing to admit that each and every adult person should have one vote for the Assembly if such person has been a resident for a reasonable time—say, six or twelve months; but I do say that a man who has property, or is possibly employing some 40 or 50 men, in some province other than that in which he resides, should have a vote in that other province also. With regard to the qualifications, every member of this House speaks of what occurs in his district. I have no doubt some of my goldfield friends will find fault with me in this matter; but whatever they may say I shall always respect the opinion of every member, though he may differ from me, when he speaks of what has taken place in the province he represents. While I was roaming around looking for a few votes, I came across a number of men who were residents of some years' standing and had not quite the necessary qualifications as Council electors: they were probably worth £20 rental, that is to say they came within a few pounds of the necessary qualification. I hold that these men had as great an interest in the country as a man with a slightly larger rental; and while I shall not consent to the reduction of the qualification to £10, I should like to see it reduced considerably. I think it should be reduced, but not to the extent proposed in the Bill before us. Another question—and here I am sure I shall run against a terrible snag—is with regard to the quorum necessary for the conduct of business. I hold that it is the duty of every person who undertakes any responsibility, even though he may not be paid, to be at his post or else resign. If, in the case of a man who is not paid, it is admitted that he should be on hand to do what he can for those whom he represents, so much the more is it imperative for him to attend if he receives a salary.

Now there is, as one may say, only one fly in the ointment, that is, if another place had applied the quorum clause to both Houses, I should have voted for it every time; but unfortunately for us they have told us to amend our own manners, and that theirs can look after themselves. If the clause had provided that in each Chamber half of the members should constitute a quorum, I should have heartily supported it; but as it is, I shall not press the matter, though firmly holding the opinion that the members of either House should be at their posts. Another question in which I am vitally interested is in regard to the boundaries of the districts. Some of the provinces extend nearly across the State; and if it can be shown that the interests of all the electors embraced within one province are identical, one can naturally understand why such provinces are extended so far, as for instance from Karridale to the Moore River. I should say there was some reason for that, but I fail to see where the interests of the most northern portion of the Swan coincide with the interests of the Lower Blackwood. It appears to me, while I recognise that representation should not be altogether on a population basis, population should be considered to a very great extent; at the same time it is recognised in scattered districts that we cannot go altogether on a population basis and give the people there the same representation that would be given in thickly-populated places. I have no doubt when the Bill goes to the select committee, or when we get the report from the select committee, we shall thresh out these matters. There is another point I want to mention; it is in Clause 81 of the Electoral Act. So far as I read the Bill, writs having been issued for an election, no one takes any active interest in the contest except two candidates, and according to the Bill they can spend up to, I think, £200. These candidates are returned. Inasmuch as a third member is not returned, the two candidates have been put to all this trouble for nothing. I would like the Minister to explain that this is not the case, but as I read it, it is very hard for the successful candidate, through no fault of his own, to be put to the expense of the election again. Generally, I am

in sympathy with the Bill. I recognise there is some necessity for an alteration not only in boundaries but in qualification. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

HON. C. A. PIESSE (South-East): I desire to say a few words about the Bill. I think Dr. Hackett in placing his own views has given the views of other members, so that there is very little left to be said except wherein we disagree with the remarks made. There is one point in particular on which Dr. Hackett touched and on which I disagree with him, in common with other members, and that is with regard to the reduction of the qualification giving certain people votes and certain other people no votes because they have not the proper qualification. When before the electors a short time ago, I found numbers of men who had no vote.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Probably their own fault.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: No. I think the hon. member will agree that he could find many men in his own electorate who have no votes.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: Not many.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: I am sorry to see that so many people are disfranchised.

HON. W. T. LUTON: They had better increase their holdings, then.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: Take a special occupation holder. He will pay to the Crown £5 a year, £2 10s. for each 100 acres he holds. If he has selected first-class land he has a very good holding indeed and he may have developed it to a fair extent; I do not say that he has developed it to anything like the extent he should have done. I am referring to the new men who have gone on to the land, men who have been there sufficiently long to have a vote, but who have not sufficient land.

HON. J. D. CONNOLLY: A man need not improve his land much to make it worth £20 a year.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: That is where the hon. member goes astray. That man cannot have a vote under the Bill. He could not come under Subsection 4 of Section 15 of the present Constitution Act, which says:—

Holds a lease or license from the Crown to depasture, occupy, cultivate, or mine upon

Crown lands within the province at a rental of not less than ten pounds per annum.

Such a person as I have described is only paying £5 a year, but he is a good settler, and has an interest in the country equally with the man who pays £10 a year. It is a shame that such a man should be disfranchised.

HON. G. RANDELL: This Bill does not propose to alter that.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: I think it should. Such a man has a perfect right to a vote, but there is no provision under which he can vote in the present law. I hope members will hesitate before liberalising the qualifications in other directions.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Are you referring to a conditional purchase?

HON. C. A. PIESSE: Yes. Such a holder cannot vote under the present law. If a special clause is provided to deal with such cases, that will alter the matter, but at present such a man cannot get a vote.

SIR E. H. WITTENOOM: It is certainly a drawback to the man not qualified.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: At present the man cannot vote because he only pays £5 a year; Parliament has not been liberal enough. I want members not to forget that there is room for improvement, and I hope some consideration will be given to the settlers I have mentioned. Where is the sense of Tom Jones, who lives in a house worth £25 a year, having a vote, while Tom Brown, who lives in a house worth £15 a year, has no vote because he pays £10 a year less? There should be a limit, I admit, to keep this a property House, but we should not go to extremes. It is necessary that something should be done, and I trust the select committee will consider this matter before they consent to meet another place in regard to the qualifications.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: That is the proposition of another place.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: I am referring to the existing Act.

HON. W. T. LORON: It is the same in the Bill.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: I will seek in Committee to have something done in regard to that matter, and I trust I shall be supported by other members. In regard to plural voting, some members who have spoken said they do not desire that the Assembly should have this privilege. I think the Assembly is

entitled to it, and as far as the Assembly is concerned we can safely support the suggestion that plural voting should be abolished; but I am not prepared to go to the extreme of disfranchising voters for the Council. Dr. Hackett drew attention to the possible danger that existed in connection with this Bill, and he asked how many voters there would be in a certain province if we passed the Bill in its present form. I think about two-thirds of the number would be struck out in the province referred to, and only one-third be left. I am not prepared to go to that extreme as far as plural voting with regard to the Upper House is concerned; but we may allow the abolition of plural voting to apply to the Assembly, so that there will be no plural voting for members for the Assembly. No doubt the select committee will take into consideration the wishes of members and carefully consider the claims put forward. It appears from the maps which have been placed before members that the electorate of Plantagenet has been struck out. That electorate has been in existence for a number of years; it is a promising district and there is a population there double what it was a few years ago. It is a fortunate district and will continue to advance by leaps and bounds. It is proposed to do away with that electorate and merge it into Albany, which means that the residents of the township of Albany will out-vote those of Plantagenet, therefore the people in that district will be practically disfranchised. I say these few words on behalf of Plantagenet, for it is a district which should have separate representation. It is included in the South-East Province, and I certainly could not let this opportunity go by without protesting against striking out that district. The Colonial Secretary, in introducing the Redistribution of Seats Bill, stated that a number of districts were agricultural ones. I have no hesitation in saying his remarks in this respect were misleading. I do not say that he did this intentionally, but if the hon. member will follow me for a moment I will point out where he was quite wrong in regard to the agricultural districts. The Colonial Secretary included Bunbury as an agricultural district. Now Bunbury is not an agricultural district; it is a port.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I called Bunbury a port. I said the South-West Province was an agricultural province.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: The Colonial Secretary called Collie an agricultural district; it is nothing of the kind.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I said the South-West Province was an agricultural province.

HON. C. A. PIESSE: Yes; and the hon. member gave certain agricultural districts of which the province was made up, and the Colonial Secretary went so far as to cut one place in half and call it half an agricultural district. There are no half measures in a matter of this kind. The Colonial Secretary also called Albany an agricultural district, also Northam. With all due respect to Northam, it is not an agricultural district. Northam is ruled by the township. The population in the town has the greater voting power. Therefore we have Bunbury, Collie, Forrest, Albany, and Northam which are not agricultural places. As a matter of fact there are only nine electorates representing agricultural interests. I mention this because I do not like, as a farming member, to travel under false pretences or to be made to appear more powerful than I am. There are only nine districts that are truly agricultural districts. I may tell members, with regard to the provinces, that the Bill has only given to the backbone of the country three members to represent it. These important districts are amalgamated and given three representatives. The tract of country in question is practically the backbone of Western Australia; and the Bill seeks to give it three members instead of six. Anything else I have to say I shall leave till we are in Committee.

HON. B. C. O'BRIEN (Central): I am pleased that the three important measures we are now considering are likely to go to a select committee, to be dealt with in a manner which will be acceptable to all. Speaking for myself, I as one of the 30 members sent here to endeavour to place wise measures on the statute-book feel that we have before us three of the most important Bills which we have had under consideration for some time; and seeing that there is a likelihood of some finality being reached in respect of two at least of these measures,

I trust we shall all have another opportunity of fully discussing them; and I understand we shall get that on the presentation of the select committee's report.

THE PRESIDENT: Yes; when the Bills are in Committee of the whole House.

HON. B. C. O'BRIEN: Then I shall reserve most of my remarks for that occasion; but I should like to draw attention to one little matter in regard to the Redistribution of Seats Bill, for cruel injustice is being done to the Victoria district, one of the most important in the State. The Bill provides that one of the electorates, namely the Murchison, is to be taken away from that district. True there is a Murchison electorate appearing in the schedule; but that is practically North Murchison. I cannot understand why another place thought fit to rob that important district, a district which the Government themselves by their recent actions have admitted to be highly important; for they are now buying estates in that district for the purpose of closer settlement, and contemplate the construction of a line of railway from Mount Magnet to Lawlers, which will be the means of considerably increasing land settlement in the Victoria district, where they have recently spent various sums of money. Yet in the face of this they think fit for some reason to reduce the representation of that district by one member. The Victoria district is losing a member, and another district is gaining one. It must be admitted that in the past the Victoria district and the district farther to the north have not had a fair deal; yet now it is proposed to deprive them of one member. I consider this grossly unfair, and trust that the select committee when discussing the Bills will not lose sight of this matter. As to plural voting, my opinion is that the proposals of the Bill should be passed and plural voting abolished. I cannot for the life of me see why any man should have two votes against another man's one. One vote is the birthright of everybody. In this State we have adult suffrage; the women can vote as well as the men, and quite right too. It was pointed out this afternoon that two or three daughters can out-vote their father. But considering that the destinies of women are to a

large extent left in the hands of men, it is only fair and just that these women should have the vote and be allowed to work out their destinies in the best way possible. With all due respect to those members of the community who are thrifty, and who gain wealth by honest toil and the use of their brains, I cannot see how that is a justification for their having two votes, even though they have property in different provinces. We have ample provision in our Upper Chamber for the representation of property-owners. This Chamber should as far as possible be representative of men who have large stakes and interests in the country. If it were possible, I would have in another place representation on a strictly population basis, making it the population Chamber, while this House represented property. And seeing that in this State, with a population of a little over 220,000 people, we have two Chambers with an aggregate of 80 members, of whom 30 are in the Council, I think we have ample protection there; and even though some electors have properties in different provinces, I do not think they are entitled to two votes. With regard to the minimum age of candidates for the Council as fixed in the Electoral Bill, I think 21 is rather young. With all due respect to our ambitious young men—and it must be admitted that there are bright young men of 21—I hardly think that they are sufficiently matured to sit in judgment on measures submitted to us in this Chamber. I think a man of 31 years is young enough for the Council at any rate; and if younger men are ambitious, let them become candidates for the Assembly. I have every confidence in the members who, I think, will be on the select committee; and I trust that the loss of one member by the Victoria district will receive every consideration at their hands. I support the second reading.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (North-East): I do not propose to say much, as we shall have ample opportunity for speaking again when the select committee bring in their report. Several matters on which I intended to touch have already been dealt with, so I shall not repeat the remarks of previous speakers. As to the Electoral Bill, I will content myself by saying that I am distinctly opposed to taking the qualification of

electors out of the Constitution and putting it into a machinery Bill; and I shall vote for that provision being returned to the Constitution Bill. With respect to the Redistribution of Seats Bill, I cannot see in it the great faults which some members think it contains. My idea of a Redistribution of Seats Bill is entirely opposed to those of some members who say the provinces are too big. I think we should have Assembly representation as nearly as possible on a population basis—have the populous centres like Perth and Fremantle returning three or four, or if necessary five members, and the country seats single electorates. On the other hand I would have for the Upper House, not 10 provinces, but only three or four, or perhaps five. This House represents interests rather than the people; the other is the people's House. We are not elected and never can be on a population basis; and I think it would be much better to divide the State into three or four provinces—say, a metropolitan province returning six members, perhaps two agricultural provinces, a pastoral province, and a mining or perhaps two mining provinces. I believe we should then secure a better and a more intelligent class of member, and should altogether get rid of the parochial spirit. Local wants should not trouble members of the Upper House; and I maintain that the parochial spirit would be more easily eliminated by this than by any other method. It is idle to say that the provinces are too big. Take the Federal Senate, in which a member represents the whole State. When he has not to attend to local requirements, or to represent mining, agriculture, or some other particular interest or industry, what need is there for him to make the personal acquaintance of his electors? I have simply given my own idea of how the provinces should be allocated; but apart from that, I congratulate the Government upon a very equitable redistribution of seats as regards the Upper House. As has been pointed out by the Minister, there are three and a-half provinces for mining, three and a-half for agriculture, and three for the industrial centres of Perth and Fremantle. I maintain that we have four for agriculture and three for mining; because the present Central Province, which the Minister classes as

half mining and half agricultural—and which is called the North Province in the new Bill—is not wholly agricultural or wholly mining, though the agricultural vote is certainly in the majority and agricultural members will be returned. Mr. O'Brien can scarcely be called an agricultural member for that province; but I think his election was due rather to his personal popularity than to his being a mining man. I think the redistribution very fair and equitable. Surely we cannot give fewer than six members to the mining industry, an industry which carries almost half the population of the State; and while we give four provinces to agriculture, I think agriculturists are very liberally treated. I trust that with the exception of a few slight alterations the Bill will pass as it stands. I shall reserve any additional remarks until we have before us the report of the select committee.

HON. E. McLARTY (South-West): There are one or two matters I should like to express an opinion upon, and one is with regard to plural voting. I am somewhat surprised to find so many members of the House entertain the opinion that I have expressed here previously that it would be a grave injustice to do away with plural voting for this Chamber. Mr. O'Brien says that he fails to see why a person who has property should have two votes while the man who has no property should have only one vote. I can give a very good reason why this should be so. A man who has helped to develop the State, who has property, and who has spent the best years of his life in the State, and has expended all he has in it, is entitled to more consideration than the man who arrived here six or twelve months ago and has no responsibility in regard to whatever takes place. The new arrival has the right to vote, but as Sir Edward Wittenoom has said, if it does not suit his purpose to remain here he can pack up his traps and clear out. The man who holds property is not in that position, he is, so to speak, wedded to the country, therefore he has more claim to a vote than the man who has no interest in the place. If plural voting is done away with there will be scarcely any electors left in some of the districts in the North, because most of the people having

interests in the North live in the southern portion of the State, and if they vote in a southern district they will be debarred from voting where their largest interests lie. I have no hesitation in expressing my opinion that I am totally opposed to the abolition of plural voting, at any rate for this Chamber. I also fail to see the necessity for tacking on the Swan electorate to the South-West Province. At the present time the South-West Province is a very large one, extending pretty nearly from Perth to Point Nuyts, and I fail to see the necessity why that already very large province should be increased by adding the Swan electorate, which extends nearly to the Moore River. I am also opposed to lowering to any great extent the franchise for this Chamber. We are here to represent property as well as other interests in the country, and if we reduce the franchise to the extent proposed in the Bill we shall be almost on the same footing as the other Chamber. Mr. Piesse has certainly pointed out hardships and difficulties in which a lessee paying £5 a year will be placed, and it is difficult to overcome such a case. If we give a man who holds 200 acres and who is paying £5 a year rental to the Government a vote, then we might go on to say that the man who holds 100 acres and pays 50s. to the Government should also have a vote. It does not follow that the man who possesses the most money has the most brains. It is very difficult to arrange this matter. I think the franchise for this Chamber is as low as it should be fixed. I am pleased these Bills are to be referred to a select committee, because it is the opinion of every member that the most careful consideration should be given to all these measures. We desire to do what is right and best in the interests of the country on these important questions, but there has been no great necessity for bringing them forward at the present time. I have heard no great demand for an alteration of the Constitution or for a redistribution of seats, but the Bills having been brought forward our duty is to give them the most careful consideration. It is wise to refer these Bills to a select committee, who can inquire into the provisions and report to the House at a later date. We shall then hear what the committee has to say about them.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE (South): I fail to see the reason for the three Bills which are before the House, but they are here, and we have to deal with them. I have heard no outcry from the country that these Bills are required. I do not know why they are here; the necessity for them has never been shown, but as they are before us we have to consider them. With regard to the reduction of the franchise, I think there is something in what Mr. Piesse has said about farmers who have small holdings. I think any selector who takes up land should have a vote for the Legislative Council.

HON. G. RANDELL: If he has a house he can secure it.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: If there is any fault in the Bill with regard to a selector not having a vote, the Government might take care to have a provision inserted in the Electoral Bill. With regard to the Redistribution of Seats Bill, I am certainly opposed to some of the boundaries that have been fixed. For instance, Coolgardie and Yilgarn are now amalgamated.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mount Burges.

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: Well, the outskirts of Coolgardie and Yilgarn are amalgamated. The Government have underrated Yilgarn altogether. Southern Cross is now in a very promising way. There have been new finds there, and during the last six months 500 to 600 people have gone to the Cross. It is only three years since we altered the boundaries of electorates and rearranged the Constitution; yet in three years we are altering them again, and probably in the next three years we shall require another readjustment. This tinkering with the Constitution and the electoral districts should not take place in, say, less than six years. For that reason I think we should be careful how we divide the districts. Many centres are populated and depopulated, they flourish and go down, and in three years we cannot judge what they may turn out, but in six years we may have some idea. I am somewhat opposed to plural voting in the Lower Chamber, but Mr. McLarty has given a very good reason why it should be allowed, because there are many people in Perth and the surrounding districts who have

property in the northern areas, and if plural voting is abolished the consequence will be that the northern country will be left in the hands of the blacks. I do not agree with Mr. O'Brien in regard to the age at which a member can nominate for the Legislative Council. In these modern times, when children start their education at six years of age, if they have not learned sufficient of the world by the time they are 21 years of age they will be everlasting fools. I am willing to follow the dictates of the Federal Constitution, which permits a man of 21 years to enter the Senate or the House of Representatives.

HON. G. RANDELL: You think the electors would not be such fools as to elect them?

HON. T. F. O. BRIMAGE: They will use very good judgment. I think 21 years of age is quite old enough for a member of the Legislative Council.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

SELECT COMMITTEE, ELECTION.

THE PRESIDENT: The procedure in reference to a select committee is that after the second reading has been passed, unless some member moves that the Bill be referred to a select committee, the President shall put the question that the House resolve into Committee of the whole to consider the Bill.

HON. E. M. CLARKE: We are only dealing with the one Bill.

THE PRESIDENT: The House will have to deal with the three Bills separately.

HON. E. M. CLARKE: If we send this Bill to a select committee, does it follow that the others must go through the same channel?

THE PRESIDENT: That will be for the House to decide.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I beg to move that the House resolve into Committee of the whole to consider the Bill.

HON. G. RANDELL: I move as an amendment that the Bill be referred to a select committee, to consist of seven members.

Amendment put and passed.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Does the Minister wish to act on this committee?

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is my wish, and ought to be my duty.

Ballot taken, and a committee appointed comprising Hon. J. D. Connolly, Hon. J. W. Hackett, Hon. A. G. Jenkins, Hon. W. Kingsmill, Hon. W. T. Loton, Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom, and Hon. G. Randell as mover; with power to call for persons, papers, and records, and to sit during any adjournment; to report on the 27th October.

ELECTORAL BILL.

SECOND READING.

On motion previously made,
Bill read a second time.

THE PRESIDENT: *May* says:—

Sometimes a Bill is referred to a select committee to which other Bills have been committed, or to committees appointed to inquire into and consider other matters; or two or more Bills are referred to the same select committee.

Therefore a member can move that this Bill be referred to the same select committee as the Constitution Bill was referred to.

SELECT COMMITTEE.

On motion by **HON. G. RANDELL**, Bill referred to the select committee already appointed, with the same powers, and to report on the 27th October.

REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS BILL.

SECOND READING.

On motion previously made,
Bill read a second time.

THE COLONIAL SECRETARY: I do not think it is necessary for me to move that the President leave the Chair.

HON. J. W. HACKETT: Standing Order 246 is very clear.

SELECT COMMITTEE.

On motion by **HON. G. RANDELL**, Bill referred to the select committee already appointed, with the same powers, and to report on the same day.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at 14 minutes to 9 o'clock, until Tuesday, 27th October.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 14th October, 1903.

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THE SPEAKER took the Chair at 4:30 o'clock, p.m.

PRAYERS.

PAPER PRESENTED.

By the **PREMIER**: Return showing grants and subsidies to fire brigades, moved for by Mr. Holman. Report of Central Board of Health, 1902-3.

Ordered, to lie on the table.

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLY, CLAREMONT.

MR. PIGOTT asked the Minister for Works: 1, Whether he is aware that the Osborne Water Supply is to be shut off on the 10th inst. 2, What steps he intends taking in order to provide with water those people at Cottesloe and Claremont who at present are dependent on the Osborne Water Supply for drinking water, and whose premises are not yet connected with the new Government scheme.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, I understand that the shutting off is to take place on the 16th inst. 2, Arrangements are being made to connect the Osborne system with that of Claremont, and pumping from one to the other will commence on 16th inst.

QUESTION—RAILWAY FREE PASS.

MR. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, On whose authority Mr. C. Temperley was granted a free pass in a reserved carriage on the goldfields line. 2, What special consideration led the Government to grant this unusual favour.