

The \$312 State allowance for children in fourth and fifth year, living above the 26th parallel, would then subsidise by about \$62 the Commonwealth grant.

Mr. Evans said that a decision would be made after clarifying the position with the Commonwealth.

I suggest the position has been clarified, and if the State Government continued the payments there would be no question of the State allowance being included in the family income of prospective applicants.

Mr. T. D. Evans: You had better examine that proposition, because it is not correct.

Mr. RIDGE: Let me develop my argument. I would like to refer to the gross income as defined in the application form for additional boarding allowance in 1973. In it the following appears—

My Gross income for the financial year from 1 July 1971 to 30 June 1972 was made up as follows:

- (i) Gross salary of wages as an employee of . . .
- (ii) Gross income from investments (including bank interest) . . .
- (iii) Gross income, from property . . .
- (iv) Gross income from a business . . .
- (v) Other income, including income from sources outside Australia. . .

I suggest that this allowance could only be included in the item "Other income". No-one can convince me that an allowance should be included under that item; in fact it makes no reference to allowances. In an effort to confirm whether or not my conclusion was correct I telephoned the Director-General of Education in Queensland (Mr. Guymer), and he advised me that the Queensland State Government will continue to pay the State allowance at the 1972 rate of entitlement. He also said that to his knowledge the payment would in no way subsidise the Commonwealth allowance. This contradicts the argument put forward by the Minister in the newspaper.

The Queensland Government will continue to pay the State allowance. As a point of interest it will cost \$661,000 a year.

Mr. T. D. Evans: What was Queensland paying previously?

Mr. RIDGE: It will continue paying the allowance at the rate applicable in 1972. The 1972 rate was as follows—

	\$
Primary children	160
Secondary children up to third year	200
Fourth and fifth year students	250

If Western Australia were to reintroduce its allowance, I contend it would cost less than half the Queensland figure. The Director-General of Education in Queensland said that in Queensland, as in Western Australia, there was considerable confusion over this matter when the Commonwealth's intention was first made known. In fact, it was announced in Queensland that the State Government's payments would be discontinued. However, he said there was such an outcry over the decision that Cabinet agreed to reinstate the allowance.

I was told by another person from Queensland that the Labor Party members there were extremely vocal in supporting the claim for the continuation of the allowance. I hope the same situation will prevail in this House, because the isolated people of Western Australia desperately need financial help. I believe this is a matter which should be considered on other than a party basis.

Debate adjourned, on motion by Mr. T. D. Evans (Minister for Education).

House adjourned at 10.34 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, the 12th April, 1973

The DEPUTY PRESIDENT (The Hon. N. E. Baxter) took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION WITHOUT NOTICE

AUCTIONEERS ACT

Consolidation with Sales by Auction Act

The Hon. I. G. MEDCALF, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) In view of the reference in the Governor's Speech to the Government's intention to amend the Auctioneers Act, has the Government, in the interests of simplifying the law for the public and those engaged in auction sales, given consideration to consolidating the Auctioneers Act and the Sales by Auction Act?
- (2) If the answer to question (1) is in the affirmative, may such legislation be anticipated in the current sitting?
- (3) If the answer is in the negative, will the Government initiate an inquiry into the desirability of such a consolidation?

The Hon. J. DOLAN replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Answered by (1).

- (3) An inquiry will be initiated into the desirability of consolidating the two Acts.

MINING ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

THE HON. R. H. C. STUBBS (South-East—Minister for Local Government) [2.40 p.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill before members is a short one to delete from the Mining Act discriminatory provisions against Asiatics and Africans which remain in that Act. Members will be well aware that during the term of the previous Commonwealth Government the implications of Australia becoming a party to the international convention on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination were being examined.

Australia signed this convention in 1966 but ratification has been delayed in the first instance by the need to remove elements of discriminatory legislation remaining in conflict with the convention. The present Commonwealth Government has asked that this action be expedited. Members will recall that similar discrimination was removed last year from the Gold Buyers Act.

While the Mining Bill, 1972, which contains no such racial provisions, is progressing, this brief measure is introduced in order to obviate further delay in removing racial discrimination from our outdated Mining Act.

I commend the Bill to the House.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. A. F. Griffith (Leader of the Opposition).

ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the 21st November.

THE HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (North Metropolitan—Leader of the Opposition) [2.42 p.m.]: The Bill before us was introduced into this Chamber in the latter part of the session which concluded in November, 1972, and it was presented on behalf of the Government by the then Leader of the House (The Hon. W. F. Willesee). Through you, Sir, I would like to have an indication from the Leader of the House whether he or one of his two ministerial colleagues is proposing to assume control of the Bill. If the Leader of the House could give me an indication, it would enable me to know to whom I am addressing my remarks, through you, Sir.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: Would you go a stage further and accept that the present Leader of the Government has the right of reply?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Goodness gracious me! The right of reply belongs to one person; that is, the member who introduced the Bill. The Leader of the House does not have to get up. All he has to do is tell me whether he is assuming control of the Bill.

The Hon. J. Dolan: Yes.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That is all I wanted to know. I do not know how old one must be before one can be judged or accredited as not having come down in the last shower.

The Hon. W. F. Willesee: We old ones tend to forget.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: There is a tendency on the part of the public to forget a Bill of this nature. It was introduced four or five months ago and has probably been completely forgotten by the public and, I venture to suggest, by many members of Parliament, until they saw the other day a motion for its restoration to the notice paper.

In order to clear up any doubts which might arise in the mind of the Minister who has assumed control of the Bill or in the mind of any other Minister or member of the House, I want to make it perfectly clear that I am opposed to this Bill. Having said that, I want to give a few reasons for my opposition to it.

Let us first have a look at the second reading speech which accompanied the introduction of the Bill last year. The first two paragraphs read—

This Bill emanates from an examination of the provisions of the Electoral Act and electoral matters, generally, by a Cabinet subcommittee appointed for that purpose, and the amendments sought are the outcome of that committee's recommendations.

Its main objects are to provide for the use of a circular ballot paper and for the method of voting to be changed from the existing one of preference to a system of what is usually referred to as "first-past-the-post."

The last four words are in quotation marks, with a full stop appearing at the end of the line.

That was the extent of the explanation of this Bill—two paragraphs which said the Government had appointed a subcommittee of its Cabinet to look into the Electoral Act and electoral matters. Not one solitary piece of information was contained in the speech other than in those two paragraphs.

The Hon. Clive Griffiths: What sort of extra information do you think we should be given?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I should reply to that interjection in the words used by the Leader of the House yesterday afternoon and say, "My name is not Dorothy Dix."

The rest of the speech described the operative clauses in the Bill. That is all we received by way of explanation. If a Government intends to reach out and change the system, are we not entitled, as members of the Parliament of Western Australia, to be given more information—even a bit of sketchy information—as to the purpose the Bill would fulfil?

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: Do you disregard the last half of it?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: As far as Mr. Claughton can understand, I am not disregarding any part of the speech. Why does Mr. Claughton make an interjection of that nature?

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: Because the last half gives some further reasons for introducing the Bill.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The rest of the speech does not go on to give reasons for the introduction of the Bill. As I was saying when the honourable member must have been deep in slumber, the speech goes on to say what clauses 3 to 12 seek to do, and then it reads—

I do not want it said that the Minister has not justified the reasons for bringing such proposals before the Parliament; but, at the same time, I feel that the arguments in favour of—and, doubtless, the arguments we will hear against—these proposals are well known, not only within this Chamber but certainly also within the community.

It then goes on to give the concept of the circular ballot paper. It mentions the fools who vote—or the donkey vote. As for the rest of it, the first-past-the-post system is explained in this way—

The other principle contained in the Bill is that of "first-past-the-post". Many arguments have been advanced for and against this proposition. It is a fact that where the parliamentary system of elections as we know it is held throughout the world, "First-past-the-post" vote is far more common than the preferential or any other system and I commend that we adopt this system.

I repeat that there was not a fabric of explanation of the first-past-the-post system. If Mr. Claughton wants to have another look at the comments of the Leader of the House I would be glad to make my copy available to him.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: I have a copy of the speech in front of me.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: We know that in the history of the State of Western Australia many attempts have been made, some of which have succeeded, to amend the Electoral Act. Over the last 50 to 60 years, Governments as well as private members have introduced Bills of one description or another to amend the Act. The

volumes I have in front of me relate what took place in the years 1910 and 1911. I will not bother to read all the accounts to the House, apart from one quotation from a speech made by the Colonial Secretary on the 27th September, 1910. I refer to page 803 of *Hansard* for that year where the Minister introducing the amendment to the Electoral Act said—

In addition to these amendments there are others that have been found necessary by the experience of the working of the Act during the past three years. The first of these is in regard to compulsory preferential voting. The Act provides that preferential voting is optional. The Bill seeks to make it compulsory. At the present time, of the members sitting in another House several have been returned on a minority vote. The latest example was at the Albany by-election held in September of last year. Out of 1,587 formal votes cast, 733 showed one preference only, 776 showed two preferences only, whilst only 58 votes showed three preferences. In other words 47½ per cent. of the votes cast showed only one preference, 49 per cent. showed two preferences, and 3½ per cent. showed three preferences. The result was that the successful candidate was declared elected on 745 votes, thus being 49 votes less than the absolute majority figure. It is thought advisable to prevent a repetition of that by making preferential voting compulsory so that an elector must use his full privilege and vote for the candidates 1, 2, 3, 4, etcetera, so that there will be no chance of a candidate being returned other than by a majority of the votes polled.

The Hon. Clive Griffiths: There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with that.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The honourable member cannot see anything wrong with that?

The Hon. Clive Griffiths: No.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The situation prior to 1910 was that we had a first-past-the-post system of voting, and we also had an optional preferential system of voting, which meant that an elector could vote 1 for the candidate of his choice if there were more than two candidates. If he wanted to, he could vote also for candidates 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6. Then the Government of the day found it necessary to amend the Electoral Act to provide that every elector should cast his preference votes down the ballot paper, rather than just record some of his preferences. This was done because the experience at that time was that people were being elected to Parliament by a minority vote.

As far as I can make out, the only time preference votes were counted when the preferential voting was optional was when a candidate exercised his right to have preferences. A candidate who received one vote out of a team of five candidates on the ballot paper received only one primary vote, but if the other candidates received preference votes then the preferences were counted.

However, in the year 1910 for the reasons explained by the Colonial Secretary of the day it was found undesirable to continue that practice, because some members were being elected by a minority of votes and not by a majority. I have always understood that one of the most important principles in our country is our democratic system of voting, and our democratic right to elect members of Parliament. As I proceed I will relate these remarks to the Bill before us at the moment.

As I said, various attempts have been made to amend the Electoral Act. I can remember Bills being introduced by the Labor Party—I think mainly by private members—to have the names of political parties placed against the names of the candidates on the ballot paper; and also Bills to introduce circular ballot papers.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: What is wrong with having party names on ballot papers?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: My experience of Mr. Dans is that he is capable of making a good speech of his own. I suggest he does that when I have finished.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I thought you might say that.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: In my experience of the honourable member I have found that if I ask him anything while he is making a speech he does not hear me unless he wants to. He has a strong voice and I find it extremely difficult to interject.

The Hon. L. D. Elliott: I will have to try that.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If Miss Elliott could only inculcate into Mr. Dans some of her graces I am sure he would be—

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: He would be suspect!

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I will continue. Members of the Labor Party also introduced Bills to allow party names to be exhibited in polling booths.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: An excellent idea.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The honourable member would think so.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: My word.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: A man grasping at a straw in deep water would think that.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: Anyone with good sense would think it.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: However, not one of the matters I have mentioned is included in this Bill, apart from the first-past-the-post principle and the principle of circular ballot papers. The explanation for the proposed introduction of circular ballot papers is to eliminate donkey votes. That is the reason given in the Minister's speech. I know what the donkey vote is supposed to be; it results from those who vote straight down the ballot paper without any regard for what they are doing. It has been said that if a candidate's name is on the top of the ballot paper he has a better chance of being elected because he will be elected by the donkeys rather than by those who cast an intelligent and purposeful vote. Frankly, I do not know what is the value of the donkey vote in relation to the number of votes cast.

The Hon. Clive Griffiths: What you are actually saying is that the Government suggests anyone who votes straight down the paper is a donkey.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Not necessarily; there is one exception. Under the present system candidates draw for positions on the ballot paper. If a Labor candidate found himself on the top of the paper he would not talk about donkeys.

The Hon. Clive Griffiths: I see; it suits the occasion.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Of course it does; we both know that. If we believe there is a donkey vote it is convenient to have one's name on the top of the paper.

The Hon. J. Dolan: Do you think we are the only ones who like to be on the top of the ballot paper?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: No, I do not think so.

The Hon. J. Dolan: That is what you are implying.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: To the contrary: At the last election my name was in the middle of the ballot paper.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: A very good place.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yet I received a majority vote. Mr. Claughton is intensely interested in this debate, though I do not know why he should be taking such an interest. I repeat, my name was in the middle of the ballot paper and I got a better result than I have had for a long time. Unlike some other members, I am not fortunate enough to be returned unopposed. I have never expected this, and I never expect to be opposed again.

The Hon. J. Dolan: Aren't you standing?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I said I never expect to be opposed again. The Leader of the House does not expect to be opposed again.

The Hon. J. Dolan: I am sure I will not.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: This Bill contains two points to which I have referred; it contains nothing else. If the Bill were passed it would, of course, introduce a completely new system for parliamentary elections across the board.

I know that under our system when we have two candidates up for election it is naturally a first-past-the-post result, because if there are only three in the contest who can secure votes—one could be candidate A, the other candidate B, and the third could be Mr. Informal; who would have no value attaching to his vote—there would be two only that really count.

By and large since 1910 the Australian people as a whole and certainly those in this State, have become accustomed to, have understood, and do understand in the main the preferential system of voting. In my opinion the preferential system of voting as we understand it is the democratic method of electing people to Parliament, whereas the first-past-the-post system is not the most democratic method of electing members to Parliament where there are more than two candidates.

I will demonstrate that in a simple way. Let us assume we have an electorate containing five people, 50 people, or perhaps 500 people or, to go to the other extreme, 50,000 people, and that for this electorate there are four candidates in the contest—there are candidates A, B, C, and D.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: You don't think that the U.K. has a democratic system of Parliament.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I thought that every student of politics accepted it for granted that the U.K. did not.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Excusing those members who happen to be absent today I cannot imagine any other member in this House, except Mr. Claughton, who would make an interjection of that nature.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: He is an intelligent man.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I have no doubt about that; I am merely commenting on his interjection. Mr. Claughton knows, because he has been told by somebody, that the United Kingdom adopts the system of first-past-the-post voting. I think the honourable member also knows that the United Kingdom system is a voluntary system and accordingly it takes on an entirely different complexion from one that is compulsory.

In 1910 the Parliament of Western Australia found that with a first-past-the-post system of voting and a method of

optional preferential voting the whole thing became a complete mess. As I have indicated from the book I have, because of this unsatisfactory state of affairs, Parliament changed the method to a system of compulsory voting. Anyhow I thank the honourable member for his interjection because it has enabled me to explain more clearly the fundamental difference.

I now get back to what I was saying. We could have candidates A, B, C, and D. Candidate A could secure two votes, 20 votes, 200 votes, 2,000 votes, or 20,000 votes, while the other three candidates—B, C, and D—receive only one vote each. Under the first-past-the-post system candidate A would be the candidate elected to Parliament.

I put it to the House, however, that candidate A would be elected to Parliament by a minority of people voting in that electorate. This is equally clear today, as it was in 1910 to the legislators of that day who found the system undesirable and changed it.

The Government now wants to go part of the way back to the unsatisfactory state of affairs that existed at that time. Not only does the Government want to make it a minority election to Parliament but it also wants to cut out the preferential system of voting altogether so that the majority does not have a say. Whilst I have nothing in front of me to indicate what the Cabinet sub-committee found I will bet that one of the things the sub-committee did find was that if this first-past-the-post system were adopted by Parliament the Labor Party would win more seats in Parliament.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I cannot see it myself.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: There is none so blind as they who will not see.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: In the valley of the blind the one-eyed man is God.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Despite the interjection made by Mr. Dans, he well knows that this is the situation. In the many years I have been in Parliament I have never known a Government to bring down a Bill that would be of benefit to the Opposition parties. Has any member ever known this to happen?

The Hon. J. Dolan: It was done in South Australia by Steele Hall when he brought down his own Government. He is the only man who has ever done it and I admire his courage for being democratic.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: That is plain stupidity.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I have almost reached the stage when I am unable to carry on.

The Hon. R. H. C. Stubbs: That should happen more often!

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That is quite a good interjection! We are told that Mr. Steele Hall, the Premier of South Australia, is the only person who has brought in legislation that would benefit the Opposition and in doing so he brought down his own Government. Does the Leader of the House think that when Mr. Steele Hall introduced his Bill for the redistribution of seats he knew he was going to bring his own Government down?

The Hon. J. Dolan: I can only tell you exactly what happened. That is what he did. He may not go on with the system.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am aware of what happened and I tell the Minister that I have yet to meet a Premier, an Attorney-General, or a Minister for Justice, who would deliberately bring down a Bill to amend the Electoral Act knowing it would bring about his defeat, unless he were both sides of a damned fool and all sides of an idiot. Fancy putting forward such a preposterous proposition—that Steele Hall did such a thing to bring down his own Government!

The Hon. J. Dolan: He did.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I know Mr. Steele Hall and I cannot imagine his bringing down a Bill that would bring about his own defeat. Can any member imagine him meeting his cabinet and saying to them, "Well, fellows, it is a far, far better thing that I go to do but as a result of my having introduced this Bill I am afraid that the Minister for Police will no longer be the Minister for Police after the next election because the Bill I am introducing will destroy our Government. I must, however, introduce the Bill"?

That would be a fairy tale. It is certainly a fairy tale to imagine that the Labor Government would bring down this Bill because it feels it will benefit the Liberal Party, the Country Party or the Democratic Labor Party. It may even think it will benefit the United Farmers and Grazers Party and a few other parties which emerged in the last State election.

What I think the Cabinet committee may have done is to say, "Look, fellows, there are quite a number of political parties emerging, and if we could slip this Bill through Parliament by some mischance we will certainly be a great deal better off after the next election."

I think that is the purpose of the Bill. It is a cheeky attempt on the part of the Government to achieve what it desires. I wondered whether I ought to call it a specious Bill or whether I ought to apply to it the word "devious". However, I thought I should not use either of those terms because we can see through the Bill far too easily. Nevertheless it is a blatant, arrogant, barefaced—and a lot of other adjectives I could use—attempt on the part of the Government to keep itself in office.

The other night I asked the Minister for Police—and I do so again: Does he really think that this Bill will get through the Legislative Council?

The Hon. J. Dolan: We will wait and see when the vote is taken.

The Hon. R. Thompson: We are very hopeful.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The new Minister for Community Welfare is very hopeful. Mr. Dans hides his face behind his Bill.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I am looking through the Bill.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If Mr. Dans would hold the Bill horizontally he could look through two holes.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I have tried it in every direction.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I wear trifocal glasses and if I took them off I would still be able to see through the Bill.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: You can see through only one eye.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I can see through Mr. Cloughton too! So Mr. Dans does not think the Bill will get through Parliament.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: I did not say that. I said I was looking through it.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Mr. Cloughton hopes it will get through Parliament. There is no comment from Mr. Cloughton this time.

The Hon. R. F. Cloughton: I will make my speech later.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Miss Elliott is looking very thoughtful.

The Hon. L. D. Elliott: I am just trying to decide whether I will speak and answer some of the statements you have made which I think are outrageous.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If I were Miss Elliott I would wait until the Minister has had a go, because she may have to fill in for him.

I repeat that this is not a fair Bill; it has one objective, and one objective only—or perhaps two. It certainly fulfils the policy of the Labor Party on parliamentary elections. However, there has been a change on the front bench recently. We congratulated the Ministers who now sit there, but I would like to ask Mr. Dolan how he was elected as Leader of the House. Was it on the first-past-the-post system or the preferential system?

The Hon. J. Dolan: I would not like to express an opinion because I do not know what the actual votes were. I may have had an absolute majority; I do not know.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: That has nothing to do with the system used.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister is a modest little fellow.

The Hon. J. Dolan: I am telling you what might have happened.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I thank the Minister for the explanation. Was Mr. Ron Thompson elected by an absolute majority?

The Hon. R. Thompson: Yes; unanimously.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Mr. Claughton is deputy chairman. Was he elected unanimously too?

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: Why the inquisition?

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The inquisition, as the honourable member calls it, is for one plain and simple reason—that I have very good reason to believe that the parliamentary leaders of the Labor Party are elected on a preferential system. Can any member of the Labor Party deny that?

Several members interjected.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Why the hedging to suggest that certain leaders might have been elected by an absolute majority?

The Hon. J. Dolan: You asked a different question. You asked me a direct question to which I gave a direct answer. Then you came at it a different way.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister gave me a very indirect answer.

The Hon. J. Dolan: No I did not.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister said that he may have been elected by an absolute majority.

The Hon. R. F. Claughton: The Leader of the Opposition is having trouble making his speech. He is looking for help.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Mr. Claughton may be assured that I would not ask him for help.

The Minister was kind enough to say he thought he may have been elected by an absolute majority. I do not know and I do not think he knows; but the fact remains that the method of electing the principal officers in the Government's party is, I understand, the preferential system. Despite that, the Government has introduced a Bill asking Parliament to change the system we have had for 60-odd years to one of first-past-the-post, thus reverting to a practice which was proved 60-odd years ago to be an unsatisfactory one for the reasons explained in the book I have in front of me.

I repeat that one of the things the members of the Cabinet subcommittee discovered was that if they got the legislation through Parliament they could win more seats. When we look at the results of

last election we know that this would be so. A considerable number of members in both this Chamber and in another place would have been elected by minorities and not by majorities.

You, Mr. Deputy President, are fortunate because you are not facing an election next year, and you are perhaps a little more fortunate still because in 1971 you received an absolute majority on the first count, did you not?

The Hon. L. A. Logan: He led on the first-past-the-post system.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: That is what I thought. However, I could point to others in the Chamber who did not.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: You, for one.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Members know the majorities they had. I say again that if this Bill were to pass through Parliament then all the minority parties could commence to write their own death sentence because many parliamentary members who belong to the Country Party would not be here after the 1973 election.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: Under the first-past-the-post system, you would not be here, either.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: No. I would have been defeated, and my opponent would have been elected by the minority of the 70,000-odd electors I represent. That would not be a desirable state of affairs. Those people who, for one reason or another desire to form themselves into small groups to start another political party—and that has been done as recently as the last Federal election—would quickly realise they would be wasting their time and money.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: They are wasting their time now.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Government wants to make sure about that; unless, of course, one of those parties sees fit to make an arrangement with the Labor Party. I have reason to believe that arrangements with the Labor Party existed for the last election although this was hotly denied later. The United Australia Party had an exchange of preferences with the Labor Party. I do not think the Liberals received any of their second preferences.

However, what I am saying is that under the Bill the small parties would die; and the democratic right of people to form other parties would be without avail.

Mr. Deputy President, I cannot see your party voting for this Bill because it would mean the end of many of its members. The present Government must be aware of this; but, nonetheless, it has the temerity to send a Bill to this Chamber, on a casting vote of the Speaker, which would almost entirely alter the system of voting in Western Australia.

If it were not for the composition of the Legislative Council the Bill would pass Parliament. If the Legislative Council were dissolved and Parliament no longer had a second Chamber, the Government of the day, on a majority of only one in the Legislative Assembly, would alter the law of the land. As time goes by we are seeing an even greater necessity for the existence of a second Chamber. The Legislative Council should have a say not only in its own destiny but in the destiny of the people of Western Australia.

To my mind this is one of the worst things which the present Government has attempted to do. If the Government feels that this is one of the most important planks in its platform, let it resign now. Straight away, the Government should say, "This is an important plank. We want the next election to be held on the first-past-the-post issue. We will resign now and go to an election." Then, let us see where we would stand. I cannot hear any comment at all from anywhere in the Chamber in respect of that suggestion.

I could go on and on. I will mention an article which appeared in the *Daily News* of the 14th March under the heading "Voting system won't alter yet". It says, in part—

Canberra, Today: There would be no change in the preferential voting system before the next election. Property and Services Minister, Mr. Daly, said.

The Federal Government will not attempt to change the system before the next election.

I also saw an article in *The West Australian* of the 5th February, 1973, under the heading, in big black print, "Election campaigns. All parties may get Government funds." I wonder whether this could, perhaps, go hand in hand with the Bill which is now before us.

I was pleased that the Premier of Western Australia came out in opposition to that suggestion. Mr. Young, the A.L.P. Federal Secretary, intended to recommend the proposal. He wanted the Federal Cabinet to examine a scheme under which the Government would give campaign grants to political parties based on the percentage of votes they received at the previous election.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: Very generous.

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Very generous indeed! He is suggesting that political parties should use the taxpayers' money to contest elections and the amount of that money would be based on the proportion of votes the parties received. What a how-do-you-do! I suppose that if first-past-the-post voting became the law the Government of the day would receive more campaign funds than the Opposition because it had more seats. By having more

seats, it would have more votes in the election in which it was successful. I close my remarks on that point. I do not treat seriously the last newspaper article to which I referred.

I do treat seriously the threat by the Commonwealth Government to introduce first-past-the-post voting. Apparently the Commonwealth Government also intends to reintroduce voluntary preferential voting for the reasons I have given.

I oppose this Bill with all the words I can find. For the third time, I say it is a blatant and arrogant attempt on the part of the Labor Party to stay in office at all costs if it can. I am sure that none of the Ministers on the front bench—or members of the Labor Party generally—expects the Bill to pass this Chamber. With my vote, I hope the Bill will be defeated.

THE HON. L. A. LOGAN (Upper West) [3.26 p.m.]: I was elected to this Chamber 26 years ago today and, consequently, I presume I am entitled to say something about amendments to the Electoral Act.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Many happy returns!

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not intend to say very much except that the Country Party bitterly opposes the legislation. It has two purposes. The first is to introduce a circular ballot paper and the second to introduce the system of first-past-the-post voting.

In respect of the circular ballot paper, the Bill states that the names will be placed clockwise according to the number of candidates. Nobody has told us what would happen if there were only two candidates and a circular ballot paper. Presumably the second candidate would be in the position of one minute past 12; in other words, the names would be alongside each other.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Their only concern would be to secure primary votes.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: A dozen names could run clockwise on a ballot paper. Let us see how that would work in conjunction with another system which some people are advocating; namely, to put the names of the candidates up in the polling booth. In fact, South Australia did that at the last election. Can members imagine a person entering a polling booth where the names are listed and trying to find these on a circular ballot paper with a dozen names on it?

The Hon. F. D. Willmott: He would be standing on his head.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: He would be certainly standing on his head or sideways.

The Hon. W. R. Withers: A chocolate wheel!

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: The legislation is ridiculous particularly when we consider some of the faults of a circular ballot paper.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: How would you fold it up?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not think we need worry about that provision in the Bill. A circular ballot paper would defeat its own purpose. I now come to the first-past-the-post system. Had the Government adopted the system of first-past-the-post when electing its Ministers, officers, Chairman of Committees, and Speaker, perhaps it would have been justified in bringing such a Bill to Parliament. The Government has not done this and is not likely to. Why should we take notice of what a Cabinet subcommittee has recommended to Cabinet?

I know many Labor members who have been elected on the preferential system. These same members were well down the list on the first count. Some of them have been very good members of Parliament. Had the first-past-the-post system applied they would never have been members of Parliament.

It is a little hypocritical for the Government to bring down legislation to alter the system when it will not alter its own system. I do not think members of the Labor Party can deny this if they care to study what has happened up to date in the election of their own officers. Even in Bunbury, one candidate had an absolute majority over the other two, but the candidate who contested the seat, did so as a result of the preferential system.

Mr. Ron Thompson said he was elected with an absolute majority. Apparently he was the only candidate. However, had there been one or two other nominations, the result would have been arrived at on a system of preferential voting. An exhausted ballot is in effect a preferential ballot. The man with the least votes is eliminated and his preference votes are then allocated to the other candidates. So an exhausted ballot is not first-past-the-post voting by any means.

At one stage the Queensland Government was elected by the first-past-the-post system. The Labor Party was in office for a long time, and it was not until there was a split in that party—two Labor candidates on one side and two on the other—that the Liberal Party could gain office. The only way to break such a nexus is by a split in the party in power.

Mr. Arthur Griffith used the example of an election with four candidates. I feel it is much easier to put forward an example of three candidates with 6,000 electors. In this case a person could be elected with 2,001 votes. The other two candidates may receive 2,000 and 1,999 respectively and yet the man who received

2,001 would be elected under the first-past-the-post system. How could anyone be stupid enough to suggest that is democratic? It is plain stupidity—not democracy. And yet, the legislation is brought to this House and the Government expects us to support it. If we are not expected to support it, why has it been brought here at all?

Parties such as the Democratic Labor Party, U.F.G.A.—which unfortunately was only a subsidiary of the Labor Party—and the Australia Party would be denied the opportunity to ever win a seat. It would not be impossible for the Country Party and the Liberal Party to win seats, as long as they did not fight for seats which they already held.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: As soon as an independent nominated in the country, there would be difficulties.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: This would leave elections wide open to skulduggery. I guarantee that people would nominate at a price just to take some votes away from a particular party in the case of a very close vote. Members can consider the Bunbury by-election if they like. I do not intend to talk about it, although other members may.

Members representing many of the electorates and provinces in Western Australia are elected by a fine margin. Under a system of first-past-the-post voting, it would only need an outsider to nominate and take away 200 or 300 votes from one party to let another party hold the seat. The system would be wide open to skulduggery, and members cannot deny that.

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: I have seen it work.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Elections have been conducted on a preferential system for a long while in this State. The system has served the State very well and in the main the people elected to Parliament have justified their election. Therefore I see no reason to alter the present set-up. I intended to interject earlier about the position in South Australia. Mr. Dolan said one man brought a Bill to Parliament knowing it would be defeated.

The Hon. J. Dolan: I did not say knowing it would be defeated. I said that he brought a Bill to Parliament which resulted in his defeat.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is true. All I wanted to say was that Mr. Steele Hall thought he would win under the redistribution. The other members did not think this.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: In fact I said, "Do you think any Government would bring in a Bill knowing it would defeat itself?" and the Minister said, "Steele Hall did."

The Hon. R. Thompson: If you did this and it brought the Labor Party down you would be the happiest person in Western Australia, wouldn't you?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Even with first-past-the-post voting, it would be possible to have a change of Government; but that is not the principle under which we work. I believe we could go to the next election under the first-past-the-post system and still see a change of Government. But members will realise this is not democracy when we consider my example of three candidates in an electoral roll of 6,000 people. The candidate who obtained 2,001 votes would win the seat. It is the principle we are worried about—not who will win the election.

The Hon. R. H. C. Stubbs: Watch your blood pressure!

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: Mine is as good as yours, or better.

The Hon. R. H. C. Stubbs: I don't know that it is as good as mine.

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I will race you over 100 yards outside any time you like.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: First-past-the-post, I hope!

The Hon. R. J. L. Williams: What sort of car would you be using?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I would not have to be towed behind any car.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Is there a doctor in the house?

The Hon. L. A. LOGAN: There is no reason to delay this measure. It has been brought before the House and everyone has had a chance to study it. I have expressed my own views and my party's views. I oppose the Bill.

THE HON. G. C. MacKINNON (Lower West) [3.36 p.m.]: I have just had occasion to study the Electoral Act fairly closely. I have been quite surprised at some of the statements made about its shortcomings. As a matter of fact, in view of some of the happenings recently, I wonder why some other amending Bills have not been brought forward. However, I will return to this subject later.

As I did not speak on the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-Reply, I would like to offer my condolences to the family of the late Sir Keith Watson. As a matter of fact, when I first entered the House I sat between him and the late Dr. Hislop. These gentlemen were very helpful to me at that time.

I would like to congratulate Mr. Dolan on his preferment, and Mr. Ron Thompson on his election. I would also like to congratulate Mr. Dans on his appointment to Government Whip. I deeply regret that

ill health has made it necessary for Mr. Willesee to relinquish the position of Leader of the House.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: All elected on a preferential system!

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: That was a point I would like to have raised, but Mr. Logan has already referred to it. I think the principle behind the present legislation can be defined as an immoral approach—

The Hon. R. Thompson: Can I ask you a question? How are your Ministers elected?

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: You know the answer to that.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I will come to that point in a moment. I believe this Bill is an immoral approach to politics parading under the guise of democracy. What we see happening today is shocking. Mr. Ron Thompson has been around Parliament long enough to know that Ministers in the Liberal Party are not elected—they are selected in this State. That is a very simple answer.

I do not believe in the long run—and I emphasise these words "in the long run"—that it really matters to the country whether we have proportional representation, modified proportional representation, preferential ballot, or first-past-the-post voting, as long as we are adjusted to it. Those of us who have kept an eye on politics in France have seen the difficulties associated with full proportional representation. A proliferation of political parties followed on the introduction of the full proportional representation system. However, it can be modified to overcome those difficulties.

Mr. Claughton asked whether the system in the United Kingdom was a democratic one. When anyone uses the word "democracy" I feel they should put both hands up in the air and waggle their two fingers each side to indicate that the word should always be in quotation marks.

What I mean by democracy is obviously quite different from what Mr. Claughton means. I can understand that because it is totally different when the Russians and the Chinese use it, or when it was used in ancient Athens. In such instances democracy seems to have been given a completely different connotation. I thought that every student of politics knew that the English electoral system of first-past-the-post is a fairly rough and ready one.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: The New Zealand system is the same.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: It has one tremendous advantage. Almost without exception it exaggerates the majority and in a country such as the United Kingdom this is found to be ideal, because a country such as the United Kingdom could not be administered—particularly up to

30 or 40 years ago when it was pre-eminently a world power—without a majority of sizeable proportions. Therefore it needs a system with an exaggerated majority, and this is what happens, almost invariably.

A few years ago in the United Kingdom when the Government had a majority of only about 30, which we would consider to be a fantastic majority, it was almost distraught as to how it would run the country, because of the problems surrounding the absence of Ministers and experts. So the United Kingdom system is a fairly rough and ready one. The result is an unsatisfactory parliamentary system. It will be noted that I did not say it was an unsatisfactory democratic system. We have long since departed from that, because we have representative government.

To say that the first-past-the-post system is more democratic or better is so much bunkum. The purpose of this Bill is to destroy the Country Party, and the hope is that the Liberals will fall for it. That is known here and also in Canberra. However, Mr. Whitlam has not done it as yet.

The Hon. D. K. Dans: That is not quite correct.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: That is a cast-iron, gold-plated, and 100 per cent. correct statement. The whole purpose of the Bill is to destroy the Country Party. The hope is that a wedge will be driven between the Country Party and the Liberal Party which will destroy the Country Party. That is the reason I was talking about the immorality of the proposition, because there is no other reason for the introduction of this Bill. The only way the preferential system of voting can work is to have more than two parties. It is utter bunkum to put up any other reason, because we will arrive at a situation where we must finish up with two parties if we do not adhere to the preferential system of voting.

Again I return to the moral side of the argument. We hear the submission that it is necessary to have a round ballot paper if we are to have the first-past-the-post system of voting. We would have to have only two parties putting up for election. I can just imagine the kind of conferences that would be held in, say, the Federal seat of Canning. When Mr. McNeill was a candidate for that seat he held the ballot on the first count, but Mr. Hallett won on that occasion on Labor preferences and we had all this switching around. If we had three parties putting up for the election it would result in all sorts of conferences. One party would say to the other, "You withdraw your candidate and possibly we could then win the election." We can all remember Charles Bolte who

put up against Mr. S. T. J. Thompson. Mr. Bolte won the first count, but Mr. Syd Thompson eventually won the election. Of course, when there were three candidates there would be some switching around, and one candidate would withdraw which would result in only two candidates standing for election. So what is all this nonsense about the round ballot paper?

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: Where would one start to write on a round ballot paper?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: One candidate's name would be on one side and another candidate's name on the other. The voter would have to turn the ballot paper 180 degrees to record his vote.

The Hon. I. G. Medcalf: Which candidate would be on top?

The Hon. Clive Griffiths: Would not one candidate's name be on one side and the name of the other candidate on the other? Then, to be fair, we could toss for it.

Sitting suspended from 3.45 to 4.02 p.m.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: Before the tea suspension I was asking how it would be possible to place names in a fair manner on a circular ballot paper. This brings me to another point relating to the general morality of this Bill. If we are to have a round ballot paper then the essential feature to be covered by the Bill is that each name appearing thereon should be the same number of degrees apart; so that if there are two candidates their names would be 180 degrees apart; if there are three candidates their names would be 120 degrees apart; and so on. If we adopted the circular ballot paper, and the names were separated by five degrees because there were many candidates, then we might as well use a square ballot paper as the names would be appearing next to each other or on top of each other.

The proper way to achieve this would be to use the rotating method of placing the names of candidates on ballot papers. If there are three candidates the first ballot paper should be printed in the order of 1, 2, and 3; the second ballot paper in the order of 2, 3, and 1; and the third ballot paper in the order of 3, 1, and 2. This is technically possible, and each ballot paper that is handed out will have a different order. However, this is ridiculous.

As regards the Liberal and Country Party members—and the D.L.P. is in the same category—the purpose of this Bill is to add to the statistics which are so dear to the hearts of some Labor members, and which they talk about at the hustings. The Bill before us will provide another instance for the Labor Party to say that the Legislative Council has defeated a Government Bill; and it will be defeated, because no self-respecting Legislative Council and no self-respecting Parliament should pass a Bill of this nature.

Let me hasten to assure people that the improper use of propaganda relating to the first-past-the-post and the equal voting system was rife throughout the Bunbury by-election, when not only Mr. Kirwan but other Labor Party members wrote to the newspapers saying how they should and could have won the seat. This is complete and utter bunkum, because the system we now operate under is the preferential system.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Did not someone say that the Bunbury electorate had been gerrymandered?

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: Yes. For instance, Mr. Kirwan said in respect of the Federal Bunbury district that he got 49 per cent. of the votes while the Liberal candidate got 36 per cent. of the votes. That is pretty correct, except that the Country Party candidate, the D.L.P. candidate, and the Australia Party candidate also got a percentage.

The method that is adopted in this country is a perfectly legal one; that is, the preferential system. It does not matter whether Mr. Kirwan received 49 per cent. of the votes; he lost the election not improperly, but properly, because we have not adopted the first-past-the-post system. If that system had been adopted at the time then many different things could have happened.

The approach adopted by the Labor Party to this matter is quite immoral, because the people I have mentioned have been implying that there is something wrong in a country which operates under the preferential system of voting. I say there is nothing wrong with that system; it has been the system used in this country for 70 years, and people have become accustomed to it. It is no more wrong than is the first-past-the-post system adopted in the United Kingdom.

We have heard a similar type of argument that the Bunbury seat has been gerrymandered. People who say that are casting a slur on the Chief Justice, the Surveyor-General, and the Chief Electoral Officer who comprised the Electoral Boundaries Commission. This seat has not been gerrymandered. Personally I was surprised that it was not split into two seats of Capel and Bunbury; however, the commissioners did not see fit to do that.

The Hon. L. D. Elliott: That person was not attacking the commissioners but was only criticising the system which enabled the electorate to be drawn up in that way.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I am delighted that Miss Elliott has seen fit to explain the fundamental principles of Mr. Kirwan, because I read with a great deal of interest and care every single word which he, Mr. Phillips, and Mr. Bryce wrote. I know precisely what was said and

what questions were asked of me at some 30 street corner meetings. Some of these questions had been planted among members of the group, and they referred to gerrymandering.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: That was in respect of the electorate of Bunbury.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: There was no doubt about the inference to be drawn from those statements. The inference was clear and unmistakable that the Liberal Government over its 12 years of office had drawn up the boundaries in such a way as to ensure that it would win the seat. I hastened to assure those people that if I had the opportunity which they suggested the Government had, I would make sure that we would win by more than 142 votes.

The Hon. F. D. Willmott: Furthermore, we would ensure that we won the State election.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: That is right. That sort of argument is groundless. However, it comes back to the same basic point: the Labor Party wants to denigrate the parliamentary system, as it has denigrated politicians and Cabinets. If people like the Kirwans and Bryces of this world believe the Liberal Party is capable of it then they will also think the Labor Party is capable of it. It is wrong for people to imply that the seat of Bunbury has been gerrymandered. That seat was won because electors voted for the Liberal candidates, and the Liberal candidates have held it successfully for 17 years.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: Under identically the same electoral law the seat was held by Labor for some years.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: This is an interesting point, and it relates to a matter raised by Mr. Logan. At one time when that seat was held by the Liberals there were two candidates. At the election the Liberal candidate won it, and subsequently he won it again. On another occasion, one gentleman who once before had stood as a Country Party candidate was standing as an Independent, and his preferences went to the Labor candidate, who was thus able to defeat the Liberal candidate. Of course such things will happen. Let people not hold any false idea that the first-past-the-post system is any better, more honest, or more efficient.

This Bill is purely and simply a stunt measure; it is nothing else. I am surprised that it does not contain a couple of other amendments to section 183 of the Act. If the Labor Party believes it is proper for candidates to place signs on their motor-cars for the purpose of soliciting votes, and to pick up voters and take them to polling booths to vote—again for the purpose of soliciting votes—it is strange that it has not included amendments in the Bill to enable this to be done. Furthermore, it

should amend another section of the Act to permit liquor to be drunk at public places.

The Hon. J. Dolan: People are not allowed to do that.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I am fully aware of that. In view of what the Minister has said I hope he will see fit to inform Labor candidates not to cart liquor around in their vehicles and serve it. I am bringing this matter up, because I did have a lot of explaining to do to those who were working for us at the booths. They were asking why we could not also supply them with liquor.

The Hon. L. A. Logan: We cannot afford to.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: It is not a case of not being able to afford it; we do not wish to break the law.

The Hon. R. Thompson: At election time in Fremantle I took cool drinks around and invariably I gave the Liberal candidate a drink.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: That is all right. There is no law against that.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: There is a law against providing cool drinks if the act is considered to influence a vote.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: A candidate is not permitted to take it around.

The Hon. R. Thompson: At the Fremantle polling places I took it around, and always I gave the Liberal voters a drink.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: Knowing the Minister I am sure he could do nothing else! I am sure he would not be taking it around for the purpose of soliciting votes.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: This is the second time in the last few years that the Minister has made the same interjection.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: In view of what I have said it is strange that the Labor Party has not included other amendments to section 183.

The Hon. A. F. Griffith: It is illegal under section 182 for people to take soft drinks around at election time.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: That applies to candidates.

The Hon. R. Thompson: I am aware of that.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I hope the Minister will tell Labor candidates about this in future.

The Hon. R. Thompson: In the last election Mr. Whyte, a Liberal candidate was standing against the Premier (Mr. J. T. Tonkin). He was handing out how-to-vote cards.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I am trying to give the Minister some advice.

The Hon. R. Thompson: I am giving you the advice as to what happened.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: I did not think we had a candidate named Whyte.

The Hon. R. Thompson: Yes, and he stood against Mr. Tonkin.

The Hon. G. C. MacKINNON: He should be allowed a handicap when he stands against Mr. Tonkin. These are some of the matters I wanted to bring up. I reiterate that in this country we work under a preferential system of voting. It is a perfectly honest and effective system.

There are cases where such a system would help the Labor Party, and cases where it would help the Liberal Party. It is morally wrong to keep writing letters to the papers implying that the preferential system is a cooked up stunt, and that it was brought in by the Liberal and Country Parties to suit their own ends, and nothing else.

There is another matter which I wanted to raise. We are running into a little trouble over the cross which is used by some people to mark their ballot papers. A ballot paper will be marked with a 1 and a 2 or a 1 and a cross. I think the cross dates back to the days of illiteracy when some people used it as a signature. I wonder whether it might not be better to use a tick because a cross usually indicates negation. Some ballot papers are marked with a 1 and a cross, indicating that the voter does not want the person against whom he has put the cross.

I have always considered that we should substitute a tick for a cross because the average person associates a cross with negation and a tick with approval.

I want to reiterate that the purpose of the Bill really has nothing to do with improving the electoral system. I believe its purpose is the elimination of the Country Party, the D.L.P., and all other minor parties. Above all, it will add one more statistic to those Bills which this Legislative Council has defeated. With that as its purpose I think the presentation of the Bill is disgraceful.

Debate adjourned, on motion by The Hon. D. K. Dans.

ACTS AMENDMENT (ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC) BILL

Receipt and First Reading

Bill received from the Assembly; and, on motion by The Hon. J. Dolan (Leader of the House), read a first time.

QUESTIONS (7): ON NOTICE

1.

DAIRYING

Transfer of Businesses

The Hon. G. C. MacKinnon for The Hon. N. McNEILL, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) How many applications were received by the Milk Board in the years 1971, 1972, and up to the present date in 1973, for the transfer of a dairy business?

- (2) How many of the applications have been approved in each of the periods referred to?
- (3) How many of the transfers—
 - (a) applied for;
 - (b) approved;
 were for the re-establishment of a dairy business?
- (4) How many applications for transfer are at present pending?

The Hon. J. DOLAN replied:

- (1) Year ended 30th June, 1971—35
 Year ended 30th June, 1972—35
 as at 1st April, 1973 —28
- (2) Year ended 30th June, 1971—19
 Year ended 30th June, 1972—21
 as at 1st April, 1973 —19
- (3) (a) 29
 (b) 13.
- (4) 20.

2. COUNTRY HIGH SCHOOL HOSTELS

Finances

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) At what date did the State Government cease to pay living-away-from-home allowances to children attending country high school hostels and other schools?
- (2) On what date were these hostels informed that this money was not available from the State?
- (3) Had the hostel committees sent out accounts to parents without realising that these usual State funds would not be available?
- (4) How many hostels are financially embarrassed and liable to close due to lack of funds and over-draft facilities?
- (5) Is it a fact that Esperance Hostel would normally have (a) received over \$5,000 from the State by this time, and (b) that they are unable to continue to pay wages and purchase food without security being found for additional borrowing from banking facilities?
- (6) Did the Federal Department of Education remove State records of their "boarding away from home allowance" payments?
- (7) If so, have these records been returned?
- (8) On what date did the Federal Government inform the States that they were taking over the responsibilities of payments to students under their Isolated Children Scheme?
- (9) Does the Federal Government expect States to continue with their subsidies?

- (10) Have other States such as Queensland, continued with their subsidies?
- (11) As the Country High School Hostels Association is unique to Western Australia—
 - (a) what provisions have been made by the State Government to overcome their special problems; and
 - (b) on what date were such provisions made?

The Hon. J. DOLAN replied:

- (1) 31/12/72.
- (2) Official notification was sent on the 4th April, 1973.
- (3) Information not available but it is probable that accounts had been issued.
- (4) None is likely to close because of financial difficulties.
- (5) (a) Yes.
 (b) Information not available.
- (6) No.
- (7) Answered by (6).
- (8) Official notification was given by letter from the Commonwealth Minister for Education on the 18th January, 1973.
- (9) No, the decision has been left entirely to the States.
- (10) As far as is known only Queensland is continuing to pay State allowances.
- (11) (a) and (b) In the past, special financial assistance has been provided by the Government as and when required.

3. TOWN PLANNING

Appointment of Minister

The Hon. F. R. WHITE, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) At what date was the present Minister for Town Planning appointed to that portfolio?
- (2) Between which dates did the previous Minister for Town Planning hold that portfolio?

The Hon. J. DOLAN replied:

- (1) and (2) This information is contained in the *Government Gazette* which is indexed annually.

4. *This question was postponed.*

5. ESPERANCE POLICE STATION

Staff

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) What is the present staff at the Esperance Police Station?

- (2) (a) Is this station under-staffed; and
(b) if so, to what extent?
- (3) If a station is under-staffed, are employees given overtime to carry out the extra work, or are other arrangements made to ensure that the police duties are carried out?
- (4) Do such organisations as Police and Citizens' Youth Clubs suffer when stations are under-staffed?
- (5) Is there a reasonable chance that the well patronised Esperance Club will fold because officers are no longer able to help with supervision for three hours on two nights weekly?

The Hon. J. DOLAN replied:

- (1) One Sergeant, seven Constables.
- (2) (a) Yes.
(b) One Constable currently undergoing a training course on vehicle examination before proceeding to Esperance.
- (3) Yes.
- (4) Not if it can be avoided.
- (5) No.

6.

COURTHOUSE

Esperance: Gardens

The Hon. D. J. WORDSWORTH, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) Are similar provisions made for the keeping of gardens at the Esperance Court House as at the various schools, the hospital and the Department of Agriculture?
- (2) Will the Minister look into ways of improving such provisions at the Court House so that the established gardens around the fine building are attractively maintained by experienced workmen?

The Hon. J. DOLAN replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) Yes.

7.

LIVE SHEEP

Restriction of Export

The Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH, to the Leader of the House:

- (1) Has the Leader of the House seen the headline on page 1 of the *Daily News* dated the 11th April, 1973, which states "Curb export of live sheep: TLC"?
- (2) Will he acquaint the House as soon as possible of the views of the Government in respect of the reported request of the Trades and Labor Council in view of the possibility of the loss of overseas markets?

The Hon. J. DOLAN replied:

- (1) Yes.
- (2) The Government believes that the export of live sheep would have a minimal impact on the price of meat.

House adjourned at 4.24 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, the 12th April, 1973

The SPEAKER (Mr. Norton) took the Chair at 11.00 a.m., and read prayers.

BILLS (4): INTRODUCTION AND FIRST READING

1. Fatal Accidents Act Amendment Bill.
2. Constitution Acts Amendment Bill.
3. Electoral Act Amendment Bill (No. 2).
4. Electoral Districts Act Amendment Bill.

Bills introduced, on motions by Mr. T. D. Evans (Attorney-General), and read a first time.

ACTS AMENDMENT (ROAD SAFETY AND TRAFFIC) BILL

Third Reading

MR. JAMIESON (Belmont—Minister for Traffic Safety) [11.05 a.m.]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. O'CONNOR (Mt. Lawley) [11.06 a.m.]: I rise very briefly to express my disappointment that the Government has given little or no consideration to the views put forward by the Opposition in relation to this legislation.

Irrespective of whether or not the submission put forward by the Opposition would have saved more lives than the provision outlined in the Bill, the Government gave it little consideration. Further fragmentation of the control of road traffic will achieve nothing, and will certainly not achieve the expressed desire of the Government to reduce the number of fatalities on the road. In my opinion the only way to do this is to bring control under one authority. For this reason I wish to express my disappointment at the third reading stage of the Bill.

MR. NALDER (Katanning) [11.07 a.m.]: Because of my actions on Tuesday night I feel it is necessary to take this opportunity to put my point clearly to the House. I believe the proposals outlined