

for the purpose of enlarging a dwelling house of which he is the owner" from paragraph (4) to paragraph (3), so that the paragraphs may be in accordance with subparagraphs (i) and (ii.) of paragraph (b) of Section 9 of the Commonwealth Housing Act 1927 as amended by the Act No. 10 of 1928. If members will peruse the circulated copies of the amendment passed last session, they will see that this amendment now before them is a very small one, but is necessary in order to bring our legislation into line with the Commonwealth housing scheme. I move—

That the Bill now be read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. Lovekin, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 5.50 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Tuesday, 26th March, 1929.*

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

### QUESTION—LAND CLASSIFICATION, SOUTH-WEST.

Mr. RICHARDSON (for Mr. J. H. Smith) asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it a fact that a large area of land, approximately 1,000,000 acres, is being dedicated to forestry in the South-West? 2, If so, has the Minister received any classification from his land surveyors? 3, If not, will he have a classification made

by land surveyors before handing over the area to the Forest Department?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE 1, Yes. 2, Yes. 3, Answered by No. 2.

### QUESTION—AGRICULTURE, ASSISTANCE TO SETTLERS.

Mr. THOMSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: In view of the serious position of many settlers in the new areas, will he indicate what steps have been taken to provide the necessary seed, super., and financial assistance to tide them over until next harvest?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: The Trustees of the Agricultural Bank have been authorised to approve of such as they consider necessary to meet the situation. Each application will be dealt with on its merits. All applications received to date for super. have been dealt with by the Trustees.

### QUESTION—WHITE CITY.

Mr. FERGUSON asked the Premier: 1, What rent is received by the Government from the users of White City? 2, What amount has been received during the past two years? 3, Are any figures available to indicate the extent to which charitable institutions and other deserving objects have benefited as a result of the operations at White City? 4, If so, will the Premier supply the information to the House?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Nil. 2, Answered by No. 1. 3, This information should be secured from the institutions concerned; its compilation is not a Government responsibility. 4, Answered by No. 3.

### QUESTION—VERMIN BONUS.

Mr. FERGUSON asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Is it the policy of the Department of Agriculture to prevent local vermin boards from supplementing the bonus of £2, paid by the Central Board, for dingo scalps beyond the amount of 10s. per scalp? 2, If so, is it considered by the Department that such a policy is in the best interests of dingo extermination?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, No. 2, Answered by No. 1.

**QUESTION—WILUNA RAILWAY.***Absorbing Unemployed.*

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Works: 1, How many men are at present employed on the Wiluna railway? 2, How many were transferred from other jobs? 3, How many were engaged at Meekatharra? 4, How many were engaged in the metropolitan area? 5, How many men will be required on this railway work? 6, Will he recommend that the unemployed in the metropolitan area shall do as they were told, namely, on no account to go to Meekatharra "on spec"? 7, If so, will he see that the unemployed in the metropolitan area get their share of this work?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, 153. 2, 20, approximately. 3, The difference, viz., 133. 4, Nil. 5, Approximately, 300. 6, Yes. 7, When further men are engaged the claims of the men out of work throughout the State will be considered.

**PERSONAL EXPLANATION.**

*Hon. W. D. Johnson and the "West Australian."*

**HON. W. D. JOHNSON** (Guildford) [4.41]: Before the motions, of which notice has been given, are dealt with, I desire to make a personal explanation. In the ordinary course I could move in another way, seeing that the matter refers to a report in the "West Australian" of portion of my remarks in the House on Thursday last. The "West Australian" credits me with having conveyed to the House my opinion that the 3,500 farms scheme was too ambitious, thereby presenting to the public, as well as to the House, the suggestion that I thought the scheme too big and too pretentious. I conveyed nothing of the kind; nothing was further from my thoughts. I have never given expression to such an opinion and never will. My utterance was confined to the hope that the Government would realise this scheme may become unpopular because of hasty advancement, and I referred to the fact that already settlers were 60 miles out from an existing railway, and there was the liability of their becoming heart-broken before adequate or suitable railway communication could be provided for them. I do not wish to be misrepresented. It is rather a serious matter

to accuse one of holding views that he does not in fact entertain, and it would be wrong to tell the public that I believed the 3,500 farms scheme was too ambitious. I simply make this personal explanation, feeling sure that the newspaper will make my position clear. Members have means of protection provided in Standing Order 139, but the course of action outlined in that Standing Order is rather drastic and I do not desire to take it. Having made this personal explanation, I hope the "West Australian" will see that proper prominence is given to it.

**SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.**

On motion by the Premier, ordered: That the House, unless otherwise ordered, shall meet for the despatch of business on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays at 4.30 p.m., and shall sit until 6.15 p.m., if necessary, and, if requisite, from 7.30 p.m. onwards.

**GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.**

On motion by the Premier, ordered: That during this session Government business shall take precedence of all Notices and Orders of the Day.

**BILL—REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.**

*As to Point of Order.*

Mr. Lambert: Before the Premier proceeds to move the second reading I am going to ask you, Mr. Speaker, to order the Bill to be withdrawn. I shall state my reasons. I submit that this Bill is not properly before the House and should therefore be withdrawn for the reason that it is not framed in accordance with the Electoral Districts Act of 1923 and the amending Act of 1928. I submit that this Bill has no other basis than the Acts I have mentioned and the proclamation issued under them, and that if it does not include all the provisions laid down in those Acts, it will, when passed, be invalid and liable to be upset by the courts. The defect I point out is in Section 9 of the Electoral Districts Act, 1923, which provides that on the tabling of the Commissioners' report "a Bill shall be introduced for the redistribution of seats at Parlia-

mentary elections in accordance therewith and for the readjustment of the boundaries of the electoral provinces." So far from providing for a readjustment of the boundaries of the electoral provinces, the present Bill expressly states that they "shall continue and be unaffected by this Act." I submit that failure to comply with the directions of the Act with regard to the electoral provinces is as fatal to the Bill as would have been failure to comply with the directions of the Act as to the electoral districts. It cannot be doubted that if the schedule were found to be inconsistent with the report of the Commission, you, Mr. Speaker, would order that the Bill be withdrawn. In view of the importance of your ruling and the possibility that it may be the subject of an application to the courts for an injunction, I would expect you to give your ruling not to-day but at some future period of the sitting during the second reading debate.

Mr. Speaker: Is the hon. member simply giving notice? If so, the time for notices has passed. Or is he taking the point?

Mr. Lambert: I am taking the point that the Bill is not properly before the House.

Mr. Speaker: In the circumstances it will be necessary to dispose of the point.

Mr. Lambert: I thought your ruling might be postponed.

Mr. Speaker: If the hon. member is taking the point now, it will necessitate my disposing of it at once.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Stick to your point.

Mr. Lambert: That is the attitude I take up. I thought this was the only time to bring the point forward. There is no possibility of giving notice of motion and I am asking only for your ruling. I do not desire that your ruling should be given hastily or off-handedly, as I realise it will possibly take some little time to consider it. I do not know what the Premier's attitude is, or whether he desires to proceed with the debate.

The Premier: I have given consideration to the question involved in Section 9 of the Electoral Districts Act, 1923. The point raised by the member for Coolgardie seems to turn entirely upon the interpretation of the word "readjustment." The section says that a Bill shall be introduced for the redistribution of seats at Parliamentary elections in accordance therewith and for the readjustment of the boundaries of the electoral provinces. I have gone into this mat-

ter with other authorities and I contend that the word "readjustment" does not necessarily mean that we must make an alteration of the boundaries of the electoral provinces. The fact that we put forward the same boundaries could constitute a readjustment. What is meant by "readjustment" of the boundaries? If it is meant that we must make an alteration, then the Act itself is altogether lacking in clearness. When dealing with the Bill I was going to say that the Commissioners themselves—one of whom is a Supreme Court judge—did not make any recommendation whatever regarding the boundaries of the electoral provinces because they held they had no instructions or authority to do so.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Under the Commission or under the Act?

The Premier: Under the Act. There was no recommendation at all in their first report, they having taken the stand that they had no authority. The Act gave them no authority whatever. If we examine the Act closely we will realise it is quite clear that nowhere in its provisions does it instruct the Commissioners to deal with the boundaries or in any way consider the boundaries of the electoral provinces, and of course they did not do so. If we were to include in this Bill a readjustment, meaning an alteration of the boundaries of the electoral provinces, it could be done only by the Government, and it was clearly intended by the whole of the provisions of the Electoral Districts Act that no Government should have any say whatever in the arrangement of the boundaries regarding the Assembly districts. If it would be improper or wrong for a Government to determine the boundaries of Assembly districts, it would be equally wrong for a Government to decide upon the boundaries of the electoral provinces. I have consulted the Solicitor General carefully on this provision, because at first sight it appeared to me to be compulsory and essential that there should be included in this Bill an alteration of the boundaries of the electoral provinces. I am sure that is not so, and I agree with the view that a Bill introduced for the readjustment of the province boundaries does not necessarily mean that the Bill must alter the boundaries. If the Act itself and those responsible for it contemplated that any alteration of the Assembly boundaries must of necessity imply or compel an alteration of the province boundaries, then the Act did not

go far enough. It should have laid down the condition upon which the province boundaries should be determined.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is where the Act is somewhat vague.

The Premier: It makes no provision as to the lines on which anybody should proceed. The Commissioners say they have no power to deal with the boundaries of the electoral provinces, and we say it is not our duty and that it would be improper for the Government to decide the province boundaries, just as it would be improper for the Government to decide the district boundaries.

Mr. Latham: You will notice that the previous Commission did so.

The Premier: They did.

Mr. Latham: In the first schedule.

The Premier: That is so, but the present Commission took the other view.

Mr. Latham: Were the instructions the same?

The Premier: They were; the Commission operated under the Act. They were asked to distribute the boundaries in accordance with the provisions of the Act.

Mr. Lambert: There is nothing in the terms of reference?

The Minister for Justice: The terms of the commission were the same.

The Premier: Of course the terms of the commission were the same, but the present commission said they could not deal with the boundaries of the electoral provinces.

Mr. Lambert: They are unfortunately mistaken.

The Premier: They are not. Whether the contention of the member for Coolgardie is correct or not, there is not one word in the Electoral Districts Act which asks the Commissioners to deal with the electoral boundaries of provinces or indicates that the Commissioners must do so. There is not one word in the Act mentioning the boundaries of the electoral provinces. Consequently, it was quite clear to my mind that the Commissioners acted rightly in not going outside the provisions of the Act and in making no reference to the boundaries of the electoral provinces. My contention is that a readjustment, in accordance with Section 9, does not mean it is absolutely necessary and compulsory that we should include in this Bill an alteration of the boundaries of Council provinces.

Hon. G. Taylor: Would the Premier say that leaving the boundaries as they are would constitute a readjustment?

Mr. Panton: I think that would be a good readjustment.

Hon. G. Taylor: The word must mean something.

The Premier: Evidently the section does not say enough. It could have said that there should be a readjustment on the lines of the new boundaries for the electoral districts. That is the view I take after having discussed the matter with the Solicitor General.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The Commission did not feel disposed to alter the boundaries of electoral provinces.

The Premier: The Commission did not deal with them at all.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: They were asked to advise.

The Premier: Yes. They did not deal with the boundaries of the provinces at all in their first report and they were asked to advise what the boundaries might be.

Mr. Lambert: I did not know that the Premier intended to reply. If you, Mr. Speaker, intend to decide the point, I wish to say that I have had no opportunity to state my case.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You have the right of reply.

Hon. G. Taylor: But the hon. member desires to make out his case.

Mr. Lambert: I was only asking, Mr. Speaker, whether you would give a ruling at once, or whether the debate should proceed and you would give a ruling at a later stage.

Mr. Speaker: Strictly speaking, until the Bill is introduced, I cannot tell with what it actually deals. I think we ought to have the matter clearly stated before the House, and the point can then be raised at a subsequent stage of the debate after the Bill has been properly introduced on the second reading. I call upon the Premier to proceed.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I take it the member for Coolgardie will have another opportunity to raise his point.

Mr. Speaker: He, or any other member.

Mr. Lambert: That is, after the Bill has been introduced by the Premier.

Hon. G. Taylor: It has passed the first reading, and the Bill is before the House.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It can easily be rectified.

*Second Reading.*

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.59] in moving the second reading said: I hope that this little prelude does not indicate any stormy passage for the Bill—

Mr. Thomson: It sounds like it.

The **PREMIER**: And I hope I am not commencing what might prove to be the swan song of any member of this House. For my own part, notwithstanding the very great alterations that have been made in the boundaries, I hope the result will be that every member of the present House will be returned at the next elections to fill the places they occupy to-day.

Hon. G. Taylor: Not too bad for you.

The **PREMIER**: I was about to explain that the Bill does not contain the provision that was in the Bill introduced by the Leader of the Opposition with regard to the alteration of the boundaries of the provinces. In presenting their report, the Commissioners did not touch on the boundaries of the provinces, holding that the Electoral Districts Act gave them no authority to do so. The fact now is that the Bill before us leaves the boundaries of the provinces as they are, but it is the intention of the Government to amend the Electoral Districts Act next session, or to introduce another Bill to provide a basis upon which the boundaries of the provinces shall be determined.

Hon. G. Taylor: By a Commission?

The **PREMIER**: A Commission similar to that which dealt with the Assembly electorates. After all, the boundaries of the provinces are perhaps just as important as the boundaries of the Assembly electorates, and we should have an Act laying down some basis to guide the Commission, just as has been done in connection with the Assembly boundaries. As I have said, it is the intention of the Government during next session to introduce such a Bill on those lines. I am saying that the Commissioners, subsequent to the presentation of their report on the electoral districts, were asked to advise the Government as to what the boundaries of the provinces should be. Having no authority or no guiding instructions from Parliament on the matter, such as they had with regard to the Assembly districts, the Commissioners allowed the same voting power to remain in the districts whose voting strength had been con-

siderably diminished and no increased voting power was given to the districts whose voting strength had been greatly increased. That, of course, cannot be accepted by this House, because the great movement of population that has taken place and has rendered necessary alterations of the boundaries of the Assembly also renders necessary alterations of the boundaries of the Legislative Council provinces. So we find the Bill as it is, and it will be our purpose to make provision for the alteration of the boundaries of the provinces during next session. This matter was overlooked in the Act introduced by the Leader of the Opposition and also in the Electoral Districts Act passed last session.

Mr. Teesdale: We will not say anything about it.

The **PREMIER**: It does seem clear that when we set out in our Electoral Act to lay down conditions under which the boundaries of the Assembly should be defined, we should also have laid down conditions to govern the alteration of the boundaries of the provinces. But that was not done. The work of the Commissioners requires very little explanation. Members have been in possession of the report, which is the Bill, and they have had the opportunity to view the maps that are hanging on the walls of the Chamber, and to study the proposed boundaries in relation to the existing boundaries. There is nothing that is known to me in regard to the proposals that is not also known to hon. members who have studied the recommendations of the Commissioners. It is only fair to say that the Commissioners have done their work well. It is recognised that their task was difficult having regard to the great extent of territory they had to deal with.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And the feelings of members.

The **PREMIER**: Yes, and the limitations and restrictions imposed by the Electoral Districts Act. Having regard to that Act and the instructions contained in it, I venture to say it would be rather difficult to improve upon the work carried out by the Commissioners. Certainly they have adhered very closely to the instructions of Parliament as contained in the Act of last year. They have kept remarkably close to the quotas in the several areas, set out in the Act, and although some of the boundaries may not suit all of us, having regard for the

movement of population in recent years, we have to realise that some portions of the electoral districts had to be enlarged and the number of members reduced, and others, where the population had become more dense, had to be reduced in size, with a consequent increase in the number of seats. However, that might be, we would not have been justified, in order to get greater representation for the outlying parts of the State, to depart from the quota and voting power to any greater extent than was provided in the Electoral Districts Act of last year. In the metropolitan area we find that the Commissioners have not altered the boundaries of the area. Under the Act they had power to do so, but the boundaries as between the metropolitan area and the agricultural area remain the same. The only guide the Commissioners had was the enrolment at the end of December of last year. If it should be found, when the new rolls are made out, that there is a considerable discrepancy between the enrolments in the new districts and those put forward in the report of the Commissioners, it will be because the rolls were not in a perfect state. That is always likely to be the case two years after an election has taken place, because then electors become slack in regard to enrolment. Thus it might prove to be that when the new rolls are printed some of them will contain the names of hundreds of electors more than was anticipated in the report of the Commissioners.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It always will be so.

The PREMIER: It will be a self-sacrificing man who will fight the Leader of the Opposition under the new boundaries of his electorate. The quota of the metropolitan area is 6,531 and in the whole of the 17 seats—this will show how closely the Commissioners kept to the quota—the difference between the highest number of electors in any one electorate and the lowest is only 701. That is to say, the Commissioners divided the metropolitan area into 17 seats with, as nearly as possible, equal enrolment.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That was their job.

The PREMIER: But it is not always easy to do it. The Commissioners adhered to the provisions of the Act and had in mind community of interest, means of communication, and distance from capital, physical features, and existing boundaries. Those

four conditions always had to be borne in mind even though the Commissioners were anxious to keep to the quota. The greatest number above the quota is in Perth and it is only 332; the lowest enrolment would be at Mt. Hawthorn, which is only 461 below. In the agricultural area there has been a slight alteration of the boundaries of the area, that is, between the agricultural area and the mining-pastoral area. A few hundred have been transferred from the present agricultural area to the mining-pastoral at one end, and a few hundred have been transferred the opposite way, from the mining-pastoral to the agricultural area. With that slight exception the boundaries of the area between agricultural and mining-pastoral remain the same.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The Commissioners made a mistake in the Nelson district; that is not so there.

The PREMIER: The Nelson district would be most difficult to handle at any time, and I should not be surprised at any set of men making a mistake there. The agricultural area quota is 4,074 and the greatest number of electors in any one of the 21 districts is 4,704—only 630 above the quota. Whilst it may have been a comparatively easy matter to keep close to the quota in the metropolitan area, it would be much more difficult to do so in the agricultural area, having regard for means of communication, etc. I think they have done very well in going only 630 above the quota in the highest enrolment in any one of those districts. The honour belongs to the Swan district, represented by the hon. member, Mr. Sampson. The lowest is in the case of Pingelly with an enrolment of 3,643, or 431 below the quota.

Mr. Brown: But look at the territory!

The PREMIER: I have quoted these figures to show that in the case of the seats nearer to the centre of government, and having easier means of communication, such as we find in the Swan district, the Commissioners have gone nearly up to the maximum. In the case of the Pingelly district, having regard to the distance, although that, after all, is not so great, and to the great area of the proposed electorate, extending as it does nearly to the southern ocean, the Commissioners have provided for the minimum number of electors.

Mr. Brown: But a thousand farmers are going in there.

The PREMIER: In the case of the mining and pastoral districts, where the quota has been 2,005, the Commissioners have given Kalgoorlie 2,344 electors. That is a condensed area, and has the largest number of electors, namely, 239 above the quota. In the case of the Murchison, with 1,637 electors, this district is 368 below the quota. It will therefore be seen that the Commissioners have throughout adhered very closely to the provisions of the Act. That being so, if any considerable amount of dissatisfaction should exist with regard to the proposed boundaries, it will not be the fault of the Commissioners, but rather of the conditions laid down in the Act under which they had to work. I do not propose to detain the House any longer in regard to the matter. I am sure the whole position has been closely studied by members, as much, I should say, as is done in the case of most Bills that come down to us.

The Minister for Railways: You would not say more so, I suppose?

The PREMIER: I would not say more. I am sure members are well acquainted with the whole position. It is, I think, the duty of the House to accept the report of the Commissioners, and to carry the Bill. It certainly is the responsibility of this Parliament, and more particularly of this House, to make alterations to the existing boundaries. That being the case, I cannot see any conceivable set of circumstances which would point to our getting a better rearrangement of the boundaries than is contained in the report of the Commissioners and in this Bill. I therefore move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

#### *Point of Order.*

Mr. Lambert: I understand, Mr. Speaker, that you will now allow me to state certain points concerning the question whether this Bill is properly before the House.

Mr. Speaker: The hon. member can raise the point later on, seeing that the Leader of the Opposition has already risen in his place to speak on the second reading.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: If any points are to be raised, I think they should be raised as soon as possible.

Mr. Lambert: Then, Sir, I am going to ask that you order this Bill to be withdrawn. The Premier dealt with Section 9 of the Electoral Districts Act, 1923. This speaks

about the appointment of Commissioners, and after they have been appointed, and have investigated the districts, it proceeds on these lines—

The report shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament forthwith after the making thereof, if Parliament is then in session, and if not forthwith after the next meeting of Parliament, and a Bill shall be introduced for the redistribution of seats at Parliamentary elections in accordance therewith.

This means "in accordance with the report." It also says "and for the readjustment of the boundaries of the electoral provinces." That is also in accordance with the report of the Commissioners.

And such Bill, if duly passed and assented to, shall come into operation as an Act on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

The Act further deals with the position of members of the Legislative Assembly, and those of the Legislative Council, with a contemplated alteration in the boundaries. Subsection 2 states—

The Bill shall provide that notwithstanding the alteration of boundaries of any Electoral Province, every member of the Legislative Council shall continue to represent in Parliament the province for which he was elected, but with the boundaries so assigned to it by the Act.

The Premier: That is a necessary precaution in any case.

Mr. Lambert: That would not be so if it were not contemplated that the electoral provinces would be altered or affected in any way as to their boundaries by the Act.

The Premier: It would have been quite possible that some of the boundaries would have been altered.

Mr. Lambert: The Premier makes a pointed admission that in the first place the Commissioners considered they were not empowered by the Electoral Act, 1923, to deal with the boundaries of the electoral provinces. I contend they were so empowered.

The Premier: Where?

Mr. Lambert: Under Section 9 they are called upon to readjust the boundaries of these provinces.

The Premier: They were not.

Mr. Davy: The Commissioners were not called upon to do that.

Mr. Lambert: Yes.

Mr. Davy: No. The persons responsible for the introduction of the Bill were called upon to do that.

The Premier: It is the duty of the Commissioners to divide the State into 50 dis-

tricts for the election of members for the Legislative Assembly. The Act does not deal with the Council.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Turn out the Government if you are not satisfied.

Mr. Lambert: I think it was contemplated by every member of this House, and by the Premier himself, that, when the Act was referred to the Commissioners, they would readjust the boundaries of the Legislative Council provinces. So much was this so that apparently the Premier afterwards asked the Commissioners to furnish a report.

The Premier: To advise.

Mr. Lambert: To advise the Government. He said the Government did not desire to adjust the boundaries of the provinces as was done by the Wilson Government in 1911. That Government fixed their own boundaries. Apparently the Premier did not desire to do that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And you want to fix your own.

Mr. Lambert: Mine is fixed all right. I am well satisfied, but I intend to see whether this Bill is properly before the House. For the moment I am only concerned about that. The Premier states he is going to introduce at a subsequent date legislation to deal with the boundaries of the electoral provinces. He says he asked the Commissioners to submit a report, but apparently this was not acceptable. Even if there was nothing mandatory in the 1923 Act calling upon the Commissioners to readjust the boundaries of the provinces, it was mandatory for the Government to have included by way of a schedule the boundaries of these provinces. That was a fatal error. It is equally true, as the Premier states, that there was no basis upon which the Commissioners could proceed to readjust the boundaries of the provinces. There is nothing mandatory in the 1923 Act to call upon the Commissioners to readjust the boundaries of the provinces, or to advise the Government concerning such readjustments. Apparently, they did this merely at the request of the Government, who rightly desired to be non-partisan in this matter, and to have someone independent to do this. No quotas were laid down, and there was no basis upon which they could proceed. The moment the report was presented, it became mandatory under Section 9 of the 1923 Act, no matter who had decided upon the boundaries of the electoral provinces, to include a readjust-

ment of those boundaries. All the machinery is set up, and provision is made for it in the Electoral Districts Act. Not only does Clause 3 of the Bill ignore the instructions contained in Section 9 of the Act, but the adjustment of the electoral provinces is taken away from the scope of the Bill. Under Clause 9 the Commissioners have to submit a report, after which a Bill shall be introduced for the redistribution of seats at Parliamentary elections in accordance therewith, and for the readjustment of the boundaries of the electoral provinces.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: A Bill has been introduced.

Mr. Lambert: The report should contain provision for that.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: No fear.

Mr. Lambert: Would anyone say that the Government have a right to take the Commissioners' report piecemeal, and to introduce legislation affecting only the portions they had accepted? Would it be right for them to take the goldfields seats and say, "We are satisfied with them, and will introduce legislation covering the redistribution of seats there, but we are not satisfied with the redistribution covering the metropolitan area." They could also say, "We are not satisfied with the readjustment of the electoral boundaries, therefore these will be eliminated from the Bill, and we promise to introduce legislation to deal with them at some subsequent sitting of Parliament." They not only do that, but they go further. Notwithstanding the express instruction contained in Section 9, followed by machinery sections dealing with the Council, they provide in Section 3 that the ten electoral provinces shall be designated by the names stated in Section 6 of the Constitution Amendment Act. I say at once that had the Government, by way of report and by way of schedule, set the boundaries as has been done in the schedule relating to the Legislative Assembly, the Bill would have been quite in order; but any provision whatever for readjusting the boundaries of the provinces is omitted, even if one accepts the suggestion of the Premier that one can readjust boundaries by not altering them at all. If the Premier is right in placing the most elastic interpretation possible on the meaning of the word "adjust," I hardly understand the English language. If I understand the Eng-



lish language, to readjust a boundary means to alter it. However, assuming that that is not so, assuming that one is permitted to place so elastic an interpretation on the word "readjust," the fact that there is no mention whatever in the schedule of the electoral provinces is fatal to the Bill.

Mr. Latham: They must be altered simultaneously.

The Minister for Works: Why?

Mr. Latham: Certainly.

The Minister for Works: There is no reason for it.

Mr. Lambert: Even conceding that the word "readjusting" may mean leaving a boundary exactly where it is, I say it is fatal to the Bill that the Government have not included in the schedule the boundaries of the ten electoral provinces; whether they have been adjusted by not being altered or adjusted by alteration makes no difference to the point I have taken, which is fatal to the Bill.

The Premier: Where does the Act say that such a schedule must be presented?

Mr. Lambert: It does not say that a schedule must be presented.

The Premier: The hon. member is now taking the point that nevertheless a schedule should have been attached to the Bill showing those boundaries.

Mr. Lambert: The Commissioners are not responsible for the introduction of this legislation, but, the Bill having been introduced, it is quite clear to my mind that the measure should have included the readjustment of the Council provinces.

The Premier: What does "readjustment" mean?

Mr. Griffiths: Putting in order.

The Premier: The boundaries are in order already, as they are.

Mr. Lambert: For the moment I am not concerned about the virtues of the Commissioners' report. I think it is a very fair report. I am not here to argue whether a mistake has been made or not been made. It is quite possible that we shall see the point I have raised made the subject of an injunction. We can then decide, or others will decide, whether we are right in proceeding along these lines. I submit it is fatal to the Bill that there is no provision for a readjustment of the electoral provinces. Not only should I like to draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to this matter; but apparently

an error has been made, because Clause 3 of the Bill provides—

The ten electoral provinces shall be designated, as heretofore, by the names stated in Section 6 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, and the existing boundaries of such provinces at the date of the passing of this Act, as determined by the Redistribution of Seats Act, 1911, shall, until otherwise determined by Parliament, continue and be unaffected by this Act, or the proclamation whereby it is brought into operation.

Notwithstanding, it is expressly set out that when this report comes before Parliament, it shall embody the two. The clause is not qualified in the slightest, and anyone who can read any qualification into it has more elasticity of mind than I possess. It is expressly stated what the report has to contain. It must contain two things.

Mr. Davy: It does not say that the report has to contain two things. It says it has to contain one thing, and one thing only.

Mr. Lambert: I mean the Bill, not the report. I made a slip. It is laid down that the Bill must contain, shall contain, two things. I do not see how anyone reading Section 9 can get away from the fact that it was contemplated by Parliament that the boundaries would be adjusted by Parliament.

The Premier: The readjustment is contained in Clause 3 of the Bill.

Mr. Lambert: That dealing with provinces?

The Premier: The one you read. That complies with the Act.

Mr. Lambert: I submit that if the Premier thinks he can totally exclude a redistribution of the electoral provinces by that provision, when there is an express direction that a Bill shall contain provisions dealing with the Legislative Assembly boundaries and the Legislative Council boundaries, he is in error. Clause 3 of the present Bill expressly excludes the boundaries of the provinces, and therefore the Bill is out of order and is not properly before the House in accordance with the Electoral Districts Act. I therefore ask that you, Sir, direct that the Bill be withdrawn.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: I can decide the matter.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Surely we should discuss the matter.

Mr. Speaker: Not necessarily. The hon. member may proceed.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I want to support the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) to a certain extent. I do not wish to go deeply into the question of defining "readjustment," but personally I have no hesitation in saying Parliament understood that as the electoral districts were altered, so the boundaries of the provinces would be readjusted.

Mr. Davy: Automatically?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Automatically to fit in with the altered division of Assembly electorates. I do not want to labour that point; I think it is perfectly clear. But I claim that the member for Coolgardie is right on one point with regard to which we ought to be particularly careful. It is whether the Bill is correctly introduced as provided by the Electoral Districts Act. There is no question that Section 9 of the 1923 Act states that forthwith the Government shall introduce a Bill for the redistribution of seats at Parliamentary elections in accordance therewith, and for the readjustment of the boundaries of the electoral provinces. There is no question that this Bill is not in order unless it provides for a readjustment of the boundaries of the provinces as well as an alteration of the electoral districts. To that extent I wish to support the member for Coolgardie. I think the hon. member has rendered a service in protecting us against making such a mistake as he points out. The matter should be viewed very seriously, and should be debated by members so that we may have a clear understanding of the views of Parliament regarding the matter. Then we shall be less likely to make a mistake.

Mr. Thomson rose.

Mr. Speaker: Does the hon. member wish to speak?

Mr. Thomson: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am ready to settle the point. We do not want to prolong the discussion, unless the hon. member can throw additional light on the matter.

Mr. Thomson: Members have not had an opportunity of going into the matter fully. I would like to draw attention to the fact that since 1889, whenever the Constitution was altered—

Mr. Speaker: What is the hon. member referring to?

Mr. Thomson: Since the Constitution, which was framed in 1889, and the Constitution Amendment Act of 1899, every

alteration or redistribution has provided for automatic adjustment by the submission of a schedule dealing effectively with the Legislative Council provinces. May I draw your attention, Mr. Speaker, to the fact that in 1904 provision was made for automatically amending the districts comprising the provinces in accordance with the redistribution. The same procedure is to be found in the Electoral Districts Act Amendment Act introduced by the member for Northam.

The Premier: It does not follow that the new procedure is out of order.

Mr. Thomson: I am sorry to say that in my opinion the position is that the Government have unfortunately omitted something that is necessary. I think they would be wise to withdraw the Bill.

The Premier: No; we will go on with it.

Mr. Thomson: The direction or instruction given to the Commissioners by the Mitchell Administration is shown in the following extract from the report of that Commission:—

We submit, also with our report:—

(a) A map (in two parts) duly signed by us, showing thereon, in red, the boundaries of each proposed District, and, in blue, the boundaries of each existing District.

(b) The technical description of the boundaries of each proposed District.

(c) The name of each proposed District, and the number of electors therein as nearly as can be ascertained.

The Premier: That is all right; that is a different thing.

Mr. Thomson: That is so, regarding the instructions given to the latest Royal Commission. But the Royal Commission I refer to had the instructions I have read, and also this instruction, which was omitted from the instructions given to the recent Royal Commission—

(d) The names of the several Electoral Provinces with the names of the Districts respectively proposed to be comprised therein.

I contend that the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) is perfectly correct in doing his duty by drawing the attention of members to the position and asking for a ruling as to whether the Bill is properly before the House. I maintain he has made out a good case, and I feel I must support the arguments advanced by the member for Coolgardie.

Mr. Latham: Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Speaker: I think I have heard sufficient on the point of order.

Mr. Latham: Very well.

Mr. Speaker: I wish hon. members first of all to notice that the point has been raised under the Electoral Districts Act. The Royal Commission that sat recently and presented a report upon which the Bill has been framed, had their instructions through the Act itself. The only instruction of a definite character—and it is imperative—is that contained in Section 3, which reads—

It shall be the duty of the Commissioners to divide the State of Western Australia into 50 districts for the election of members of the Legislative Assembly.

The Commission granted to them was under the Electoral Districts Act of 1923, and the instructions to the Royal Commission were given under that Act. Section 3 governs the whole position. The Commissioners are to divide the State of Western Australia into fifty districts for the election of members of the Legislative Assembly. The point that has arisen is in respect of the interpretation to be placed on Section 9, which the member for Coolgardie read. It is as follows:—

The report shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament forthwith after the making thereof, if Parliament is then in session,—which has been done—

—and, if not, forthwith after the next meeting of Parliament, and a Bill shall be introduced for the redistribution of seats at Parliamentary elections in accordance therewith, and for the readjustment of the boundaries of the Electoral Provinces, and such Bill, if duly passed and assented to, shall come into operation as an Act on a day to be fixed by proclamation.

The whole matter that gives anything like cause for confusion is to be found in the words "and for the readjustment of the boundaries of the electoral provinces." That is really no part of the duties placed upon the Commissioners by the Act itself, but it is presumed that there be necessity for the alteration of the boundaries of provinces. As has been pointed out by the Premier, it may or may not be necessary to alter those boundaries, based upon the report of the Royal Commissioners. It is optional. The Government may consider the existing boundaries sufficient. But the Bill does deal with the electoral pro-

vinces, although not in the way the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) considers will be necessary, if his interpretation of the word "readjustment" is the correct one. Clause 3 of the Bill reads—

The ten Electoral Provinces shall be designated, as heretofore—

They are not omitted; they are included in the Bill—

—by the names stated in Section 6 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, and the existing boundaries of such provinces at the date of the passing of this Act, as determined by the Redistribution of Seats Act, 1911, shall, unless otherwise determined by Parliament, continue and be unaffected by this Act, and the proclamation whereby it is brought into operation.

Therefore the question of the electoral provinces and their boundaries is dealt with in the Bill. But it may be urged that that does not amount to a readjustment. On the other hand, it is quite possible, from the interpretation placed upon the word "readjustment" in the lexicon I have before me, that what is set out in Clause 3 is a readjustment.

The Premier: That is, Webster's International Dictionary.

Mr. Speaker: Under "readjustment," Webster sets out that to readjust means "to adjust or settle again."

The Premier: It is settled the same way!

Mr. Speaker: They have again settled the point. Surely it is a different adjustment in its relationship to the existing electorates if the new electoral boundaries are not to have any effect upon the boundaries of the electoral provinces. Surely that is a strong re-settlement of the boundaries. Those boundaries are settled again and therefore to that extent, according to the meaning of the word "readjustment," there is another settlement of those boundaries so far as their relationship to the electorates is concerned, and so far as those boundaries are affected by the Bill. On that score, therefore, the point raised by the member for Coolgardie, in my opinion, must fail. But even if it did not fail on that score, Parliament is not going to stultify itself. The member for Coolgardie referred to the possibility of legal procedure being resorted to in order to prevent this legislation operating, but I wish to refer him to one of the highest legal authorities. I refer to Broom's "Legal Maxims," wherein it is stated—

The legislature which possesses the supreme power in the State, possesses, as incidental

thereto, the right to change, modify, and abrogate the existing laws.

Then there are these words, to which I wish to draw the attention of the hon. member especially—

It is, then, an elementary rule, that an earlier Act must give place to a later, if the two cannot be reconciled—*lex posterior derogat priori*.

Hon. G. Taylor: That clears up the whole matter.

Mr. Speaker: In these circumstances, therefore, I cannot accept the suggestion of the member for Coolgardie that I should disallow the further consideration of the Bill.

*Debate resumed.*

**HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL** (Northam) [5.55]: I shall occupy very little time in dealing with the Bill that has been placed before us by the Premier. It is unthinkable that exception could be taken to the Bill. In 1923 a Bill was introduced in this House and was strenuously opposed. Following upon that, another Bill was introduced, strenuously opposed, and defeated. Last session, the Government asked that the Electoral Districts Act should be amended and the Bill that was introduced and passed then, led to the fixing of the electoral boundaries by the Royal Commission. At that time we said to the Premier, "Very well, have it your way." We accepted the Bill, and reported it. Very little exception was taken to the measure from any part of the House, and we agreed to the proposal to alter the Act of 1923, and to agree to the boundaries being fixed again. When the amending legislation was before us last session, we should have raised objections, if we had any. As it is, we have agreed to raise the quota fixed in my measure, and the quota for the agricultural areas is greater now than it was in my proposal. There is a difference regarding the goldfields too. Had we wished to take exception to the proposed quota, we should have done so when the legislation was introduced last year. On the other hand, we supported that measure and to-day we have the work of the Commission before us. I agree with the Premier that we can take very little exception to the way in which the work has been carried out. Each one of us may feel perfectly convinced that we could undertake the job and do it a great deal better than

the Commissioners. On the other hand, we would not be quite so disinterested as were the members of the Royal Commission. At any rate, we should not have been able to achieve anything like as satisfactory a result. We must accept the Bill or go to the electors on the basis of the old electoral boundaries. It is not thinkable that any hon. member could agree for one moment that we should go to the electors on the old basis of 19,221 voters in the Canning electorate as against 279 voters for the Menzies electorate!

The Minister for Works: Why mention Menzies? How many are there at Roebourne?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then we have the Canning electorate with its 19,221 electors as against Fremantle with its 4,063 electors.

The Minister for Works: There have been some deaths at Roebourne, but have there been any births?

Mr. Teesdale: Yes, two the other day.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: As against Canning's 19,221, we have 16,000 electors in the goldfields electorates represented by 13 members. If we add to the goldfields votes those cast in the North-West, we find that there are 17 representatives of electorates representing precisely the same number of voters as does the member for Canning!

The Premier: That great man from the Canning!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: He may be a great man, and is a great man, but can we agree for one moment that it is right to ask this House to endorse a proposal that the present electoral boundaries shall stand? Of course we cannot. I venture to assert that the electors of this State are to-day very insistent that something shall be done, and the law amended in that direction. It is impossible to criticise this measure seeing that it is what we asked for and that it represents what we agreed should be done. I think members must be fairly well satisfied. They would not have the change in the way of the 1923 Bill, but would have it in their own way. I am quite willing that they should have it in their own way. This which we are dealing with is the proposal of the Government. We agree with it, and so too do most of the people of the State. When the Electoral Districts Act Amend-

ment Bill was before the House last session, I pointed out it was not all we believed it should be. However, it was a vast improvement on what we have got. By passing the Bill before us we shall do a measure of justice to the electors. What does it matter about our own miserable skins? What does it matter if we never see the inside of Parliament again? We shall have done our duty by the electors in passing the Bill. Is it right that any member should object to doing that? If there are any who object to a redistribution of seats, possibly they will be remembered by the electors when the opportunity offers. It is not a matter of making seats safe for members here, but of doing justice to the electors. Can that justice be done while the member for Canning continues to have in his electorate as many voters as there are in 17 electorates farther afield? What has been done is to make the number for the 17 Perth electorates fairly even. To some extent the Commissioners have used their right to vary the number of voters by 20 per cent. above or 20 per cent. below the quota, but not to any great extent. The Perth electorate has a greater number of voters than have some of the others in the metropolitan area, but on the whole they have been kept to fairly even numbers, which is perfectly right. Can it be contended that in the agricultural districts the quota has been varied very much? I might argue that there are some of those electorates that should have as many voters as I find in Northam. But I could not justify the argument, because I could not point out in what respect the work of the Commission could be improved. We have either to accept or reject the Bill. If criticism is levelled at the Bill, members will mention some of the electorates and say their boundaries are wrong. That is about all they can do. When the previous Redistribution of Seats Bill was before us, the discussion that took place was very interesting. I read it all again quite recently. On that occasion I brought down a Bill which called for some criticism. As I said before, we shall be doing a measure of justice to the electors by passing the Bill now under consideration, and we shall be doing a much greater injustice to the electors if we reject the Bill. I do not know that I need say very much more. I have no serious criticism to offer, since I intend to support the Bill. I believe it will receive the support of the majority

of members of the House. When the Electoral Districts Act Amendment Bill was before us, I did say that I did not think we were treating the agricultural districts quite fairly. I still agree with that measure becoming law, and I urge that our duty is to improve the position. I hope members generally will see that it is their duty to pass this measure in the form in which it is, agreeing to the boundaries and in that way doing some measure of justice to the electors.

**MR. THOMSON** (Katanning) [6.5]: The hon. member who has just sat down says we must accept this measure because the Electoral Districts Act Amendment Bill was passed by this House. I contend that it might just as logically and reasonably be argued that, having fought and endeavoured to defeat the measure from which this Bill has arisen—

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Who did that?

The Premier: There was no division in this House.

**Mr. THOMSON**: I still say that those who opposed it have an equal right, if they think fit, to oppose the measure now before us. The Leader of the Opposition said it was unthinkable that we should oppose it. It has also been stated that public opinion demands that we should accept the findings of the Royal Commission. I am quite sure that on occasions public opinion can be manufactured to suit the wishes of a certain section, if it is so desired. It is true that the present position is full of anomalies, owing, unfortunately, to a declining industry in the districts that once carried large wealth-producing populations. By that I mean the mining industry, which unfortunately has very much decreased. While public opinion may or may not condone or condemn, as one realising his responsibility to the State, I say I must hesitate before I finally commit the State to a principle which gives 34 per cent. of the representation in Parliament to what might be termed a pinpoint on the map of Western Australia. We have, crying out for population and development an area estimated at 900,000 square miles. Ever since I have been in Parliament those who have studied politics have found that every Government and every Parliament in Australia has condemned the evils of centralisation and announced its determination to send the people out into our vast vacant

spaces. I should like to draw the attention of the House, and incidentally of the country, to the fact that we have spent on group settlement over six millions of money, and that we have advanced through the Agricultural Bank for the development of our vacant areas over 5½ millions of money to assist the man on the land. We have incurred a great loan responsibility in order that we might construct roads and railways for the transportation to the world's markets of the goods produced in those districts. For the years 1927 and 1928 this House authorised the construction of the following railways, the cost of which all comes out of loan, the whole of the money to be spent in those country areas:—Meekatharra-Wiluna railway, at an estimated cost of £324,000; Kulja-eastward railway, £322,000; Lake Grace-Karlgarin railway, £200,000, or a total of £846,000, which this House deemed it advisable to borrow for the development of those areas. Let me say here that in my remarks on this question I am merely voicing my own opinions. I ask those who have studied politics, what is the cause of a great many of the troubles Australia has upon her shoulders to-day?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The high tariff.

Mr. THOMSON: Why are the primary industries being strangled by a high tariff?

The Premier: Because Page's party will not agree to the reducing of that tariff.

Mr. THOMSON: Simply because the Commonwealth electoral law is so constructed that it provides for the thickly populated centres of Sydney and Melbourne dominating and dictating the policy of Australia. Why are our timber industry and coal industry in their present parlous position? Simply because we have gone contrary to the laws of economics. Because of the preponderance of voting strength in the Federal and State Parliaments, these and other industries have been able to impose onerous conditions on the people of Australia, who have had to pay increased prices for their commodities. I wish to draw attention to the position. When the coal industry comes to be considered—and it is up against the competition of the world—what do we find? We find that the Federal Government are offering a bonus of 1s. a ton on coal which will be exported. But the State of New South Wales has to agree to a reduction of 2s. per ton in its railage rate, with the idea of fostering and building up the export trade.

The Minister for Mines: But you must have another 2s. from somewhere. Where does the other two bob come from?

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member knows that the other section is not at present prepared to accept its share of the responsibility. However, I do not want to deal with that now. I want to draw attention to our primary industries. When Senator Lynch asked in the Senate whether the Government would be prepared to give 1s. per bushel bonus on the production of wheat, he was told it was not practicable, that it was economically unsound. I go farther and say that one reason why the Governments are considering the advisability of giving a bonus and so assisting the coal industry is because it has such a preponderance of voting power in the Commonwealth. That is why the farming community, apparently, are not getting that consideration which they should receive. I have gone very carefully into the Bill, and I say the principle it is introducing is not in the best interests of the State.

Mr. Davy: Are you speaking as leader of your party?

Mr. THOMSON: If the hon. member had been paying attention to what I was saying, instead of trying to put in something that he knows might possibly be detrimental to this section, he would not need to ask the question. I said distinctly that I was giving voice to my own opinions. I want that to be clearly understood. I am hoping that not only members behind me, but members on both sides of the House, will give the Bill very careful consideration before casting their votes.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Mr. THOMSON: My concluding sentence prior to tea was that I hoped members would give the matter grave consideration before casting their votes. I am hoping that before I sit down I shall have proved to the House the desirability of giving further consideration to this important measure that will have such far-reaching effects. The Leader of the Opposition said that we should accept the Bill and that it was unthinkable anyone should turn it down. I wish to direct the attention of the House to the position in which that hon. gentleman found himself in 1923, when he introduced a measure for a redistribution of seats.

Members now on the Government side objected strongly to the report then submitted by the Commission and to the provisions of the Bill then presented to Parliament. The measure we are now discussing was the result of a Bill introduced into this House on a Tuesday and passed through the Committee stage on the following Thursday. Thus a very important measure which is going to affect the representation of the State was dealt with by this House in three sittings. Now compare the attitude of members sponsoring this Bill to the redistribution of seats measure in 1923. From the time that Bill was introduced until it was discharged from the Notice Paper—you, Mr. Speaker, took a very important part in the discussion on that occasion—exactly 15 weeks elapsed. That gives me encouragement to hope for something from members sitting on the Government side of the House to-day, who opposed the 1923 measure honestly believing it was not in the interests of the people they represented. It also gives me justification for the stand I am taking when I say I cannot accept the redistribution now proposed. I do not intend to deal with the quotas for the various districts. Figures supplied me by the Statistical Department, however, show that in 1924 the adult population of the metropolitan area, which means the voting population, totalled 100,731, while on the 31st December, 1928, the number had increased to 112,025, an increase of 11,294 in the four years. The adult population in the other part of the State on the 31st December, 1924, was 107,119 and in 1928 it was 119,157, an increase of 12,038. I want members to note those figures. The metropolitan area in four years increased its population by 11,294, while the rest of the State increased its population by 12,038. Yet the redistribution now before us will give the metropolitan area five additional seats, despite the fact that the increase of population in the country has been slightly greater than that in the city. I should like to know whence the demand has emanated for five new seats to be given to the metropolitan area. Later I shall quote figures that will cause members gravely to consider the justice of the proposed redistribution. What justification is there for giving the metropolitan area five additional seats? It is argued that on a population

basis the metropolitan area is entitled to greater representation. I contend that the measure before us follows the old vicious system of centralisation. In my opinion the Commissioners started at the wrong end. It seems that they started from the Town Hall and worked outwards, and the further they went into the country the greater became the area and the greater—if I may use the term—the maximum quota given. I have devoted considerable time to reading the "Hansard" reports of the debates that took place on the Bill introduced by the present Leader of the Opposition in 1923. On that occasion the following statement was made by the present Minister for Works:—

It is argued that if we want development of the country and advancement for the man outback we must give the country districts more representation here. . . . The presence here of an extra representative of the country districts will not promote the development of the country.

I want members carefully to note the statement made by the member for South Fremantle when he occupied a seat on the cross-benches.

Mr. Richardson: He has travelled since then.

Mr. THOMSON: He added—

My experience here has been comparatively short, extending over only 2½ years, but my district being half town and half rural, ranging from Fremantle towards Mandurah, possibly my experience is typical. It is argued here that city electors have the ear of their member and can easily get grievances remedied and wants attended to. In reply to that I say that those of my electors who live in or near the town have given me very little work indeed. City electors do not look to the Government for nursing and spoon-feeding. But those of my electors who are situated further out have meant easily more than half of my work as a member of Parliament, although they do not number one-tenth of the total of my electors.

On that statement one might logically claim the support of the Minister for Works for better representation of the country districts than we are getting under the Bill now before us.

The Minister for Works: That has nothing to do with what is before us.

Mr. THOMSON: I maintain that it has.

The Minister for Works: You should have been in Parliament attending to the Bill instead of being away attending to your own business.

Mr. THOMSON: I was away attending not to my own business, but to public business.

The Minister for Works: It was your place to be here.

Mr. THOMSON: My place is here and I am doing my duty to the State now. On the motion for the third reading I endeavoured to get the House to take action, but was not successful. I appeal to the Minister's sense of fairness. Considering the time that similar debates have occupied in the past, did anyone believe that the Electoral Districts Act Amendment Bill would pass its first and second reading and Committee stages in three sittings? If the hon. member and his supporters had been on this side of the House and opposing the Bill as they opposed the measure of 1923—

The Premier: Any Bill so unfair as that should not be binding on you.

The Minister for Works: You are not in order in discussing that.

Mr. THOMSON: I am proving that the Bill before us is not fair, and I feel confident that the Minister for Works will agree with me.

The Minister for Works: This Bill is the result of the Commission's recommendations. You are not in order in discussing the other matter.

Mr. THOMSON: I am discussing the attitude adopted by the Minister when a Bill of a similar character was before the House in 1923. I advise the hon. member to read "Hansard." I have carefully perused the whole of the debates of 1923 and it took a considerable time to do so. It was not an easy task to read through the whole of the debates, but I assure members that I read every word and I feel I am justified in quoting the remarks made by the present Minister for Works on that occasion. The Act of 1923 meted out some measure of justice to the country districts. A good deal of the argument which had taken place in connection with the matter occurred over the Plantagenet seat. Considerable opposition was shown to a new seat being provided for along the Great Southern line. I ask any fair-minded member who has examined the map to say whether the decision of the Commissioners is in the best interests of the Great Southern. I am not cavilling at the area which is to make up my electorate, or at the decision of the Commissioners. No doubt they did their duty to the best of their ability on the figures supplied to them by

the Electoral Department. This year we are celebrating the centenary of the State. We are told that the centenary dates from the period when the Swan settlement took place. The proper date from which to mark these celebrations should be the date when Captain Lockyer hoisted the flag at Albany. I wish to show why I consider this distribution is not fair to the southern portions of the State. Anyone looking at the map must be convinced that the Commissioners started at the Perth town hall, and as they got away from that centre increased the size of the districts.

Mr. Davy: Are you criticising the Commissioners' work.

Mr. THOMSON: I am criticising the Bill. If that is not plain enough for the hon. member I cannot be more distinct.

Mr. Davy: You can make yourself much plainer.

Mr. THOMSON: Let us agree to differ, and each do what he thinks best for the State. It was at Albany that the British flag was first hoisted. I can cast my mind back to the time when Albany was the principal port of the State, and when vested interests in the metropolitan area were responsible for the transfer of the mail boats to Fremantle. One of the reasons why we came into being as a movement was to contest the policy of centralisation. Every Government has said it has no desire to foster centralisation, and that it is in favour of decentralisation. It is remarkable, however, that practically all legislative enactments appear to foster the idea of bringing the greatest number of persons into the metropolitan area. That principle is revealed in the Bill now before us, and in the report of the Commissioners. Under the Bill brought down by the Mitchell Government it was decided that the Great Southern was entitled to an additional seat. I maintain that because of the population in that part of the State and the enormous development that has taken place there, the Commissioners of to-day have not given to that part of the State the consideration and justice to which it is entitled. Let me take the position of that portion of my district east of Pingrup. That will be thrown into Wagin. I am sure the hon. member for that district will agree that enormous development has taken place there. In addition to including in Wagin portion of my electorate, the Commissioners have extended the Wagin electorate towards Albany. I am not speaking in any parochial



way, but because this method of redistribution does not mete out justice to that portion of the State. The people thought that at least a new seat would be given to the Plantagenet district, but as a fact, the same line of demarcation between the two electorates has been adopted as was adopted in 1923 for Albany. How the Commissioners could have arrived at their decision in this matter I cannot comprehend. Without doubt the matter requires further examination. Under the old rolls, my electorate had an enrolment of 4,395. After carefully doubling my area, the Commissioners have given me 4,495. They have also taken away one of the older settled portions of my district and put it into Wagin. The number of my electors has increased by 100, so that I have very nearly been brought up to the maximum. I must protest against this Bill. Unfortunately, we have suffered a good deal by the resignation of the State Chief Electoral Officer. In his place the Government appointed a gentleman who, in my judgment, was apparently more concerned about making the various electorates co-terminus with the Federal divisions than he was in giving justice to the electors in that part of the State.

The Premier: That is a most unfair charge to make.

Mr. THOMSON: It is only a matter of opinion, but, judging from the results, that seems to have been the case.

Mr. Clydesdale: Only one man would think that.

Mr. THOMSON: I wish to refer to what the Premier himself said in discussing the Bill of 1923. I am entitled to claim his support and that of his followers from the remarks he made on the 4th September of that year. He said—

The very genesis of the Act of last year providing for the redistribution of the boundaries of electorates was an up-to-date roll. How could the Government ask men to rearrange the boundaries along certain lines, giving quotas to various districts, without taking steps to see that a reasonably up-to-date roll was provided.

Later on he said—

A decent roll cannot be obtained without a house-to-house canvass. This has been the position during the last 20 years.

Mr. Angwin, then Deputy Leader of the Opposition, made this statement—

A proper roll should be prepared from which a redistribution of seats could be arranged.

A new Bill should then be brought down in accordance with the number of electors in each electorate and after a proper canvass has been made.

The member for Kalgoorlie (Hon. J. Cunningham) said—

There is a substantial reason why the Bill should not be passed. What is the use of saying we have a measure for the better redistribution of the people when we know the very foundation of the measure is faulty? In the interests of the people the Premier should withdraw the Bill, have the rolls cleansed, and see that all eligible voters are enrolled.

The hon. members, whose speeches I have quoted, indicated, when opposing the passage of the measure, that the only way to get a fair and just redistribution of seats was by having a proper and up-to-date roll. I therefore claim that the Government or the Electoral Office, by failing to provide the Commissioners with up-to-date and properly cleansed rolls, were lacking in their duty. The figures I shall quote will clearly demonstrate that. I want these figures to sink into the minds of members and of the public. I am sure no one wants anything unfair or unjust. Let me take the figures on which the Commissioners based the proposed boundaries. The report shows that on the 31st December last the following figures were worked on: agricultural area 85,556, mining and pastoral 16,037, and the northern districts 3,259, making a total of 104,852 adults on the roll. That was the basis upon which the Commission subdivided the State and submitted the present boundaries. I wrote to the Statistical Department for further information. Mr. Bennett, in supplying me with certain figures for 1924 and 1928, said that they were only estimates based on the census figures of 1921. He supplied me with figures showing that the adult population, that is the voting population, in the agricultural districts on the 31st December last was 119,157. This shows a discrepancy between the figures on which the Commissioners worked and those supplied by the Statistical Department of 14,305. Now let us come to the metropolitan area. The Commissioners based their division on a total of 111,027 voters in the metropolitan area. Figures supplied to me by the Government Statistician show that the metropolitan area has 112,025 voters. There is a difference of only 998 voters between the figures on which the Commission-

ers based their division in the case of the metropolitan area, as against a difference of 14,305 in the country districts. We have every justification in asking that the report be referred back to the Commissioners for further consideration with the help of a clean roll. In view of the seriousness of the position I am justified in moving the following amendment, which I hope will have the concurrence of hon. members:—

That all the words after "That" be struck out, and the following inserted in lieu:—"in the opinion of this House the report should be referred back to the Commissioners for further consideration when the electoral rolls have been brought up to date by a proper house-to-house canvass."

The figures I have quoted show that there is every reason to ask for further consideration. By a house-to-house canvass in the metropolitan area the Electoral Department can bring their figures within 998 of those of the Government Statistician, whereas in the country districts, without a house-to-house canvass, there is a difference of 14,305. I appeal to the House, and particularly to country members, to give consideration to that phase of the question. The figures I have submitted prove conclusively, in my opinion, that the Commissioners were not supplied with sufficient data. There is another matter I wish to refer to. We have stated frequently, and I make no apology for repeating it, that where a farming community starts, a town ultimately follows to supply the requirements of those who develop our vast vacant spaces. Sooner than accept the electoral districts proposed by the Bill, I shall do all in my power to defeat the measure. I believe that the proposal to give five new seats to the metropolitan area is not in the best interests of the State. Let us compare the duties of metropolitan members with the duties of members representing country constituencies. No one knows that difference better than you, Mr. Speaker, as you represent a country constituency. Those who are fortunate enough to represent metropolitan constituencies have, according to the Minister for Works, nothing to do.

Mr. Richardson: That is all bunkum. Try it!

Mr. THOMSON: One-tenth the number of a metropolitan member's electors take up far more of the time of a country member because they are in the scattered areas.

Those who represent metropolitan constituencies are in the fortunate position of being able to attend to their business in the day time and then come here. To use the words of one hon. member, to them being a member of Parliament is practically a pastime. The Commissioners were supposed to take into consideration community of interest and, according to the Premier, also distance from the seat of government and difficulty of communication. I say unhesitatingly that a metropolitan member can have twice as many electors to represent as a country member without having to travel a hundredth part of the area the latter has to traverse. A metropolitan representative can go home to tea and stroll round any part of his electorate. Indeed, it would not take him more than half an hour to go from the central portion of his electorate to its outer boundary. Compare that with the work of a country member. To reach one portion of my electorate I have to travel 95 miles by car. I do not object to that; I accept it as part of my duties. But I have to provide a car. I have to travel by motor all over my district, and so must every other country member if he is not in the fortunate position of finding someone to motor him. Compare that with the tramway and bus facilities in the metropolitan area. No one has asked for five new members to represent the metropolitan area. It is practically making a present of five members to that area and placing a greater burden upon those who, after all, are producing the real wealth of the State in the country districts. In this matter I claim the vote of the Minister for Justice, as I am entitled to do in view of statements made by him in 1923. In fact, if members of the Cabinet are consistent now with the arguments they put up here in 1923, they must support my amendment, though possibly I am optimistic in expecting that. Here is what the present Minister for Justice said in 1923, speaking of the country districts—

I have cited the Murchison district as an instance. . . . Now take the agricultural constituencies. In framing a report of this description, we expect the Commissioners to exercise common sense. They are men holding high positions; they are men of intelligence. I do not deny that they possess intelligence, but they certainly have not used it.

The Premier: They will feel much obliged to you for that.

Mr. Willcock: I am not speaking derogatorily of them, but I contend that they have not used their intelligence. The second set

of factors specified in the Act was community of interest, means of communication, and distance from the capital. The Commissioners when fixing the new boundaries should have considered the possibility or probability of rise and fall in population.

I agree entirely with the Minister for Justice. The present Commissioners have failed to give consideration to that factor.

Mr. Davy: Now you are criticising the work of the Commissioners.

Mr. THOMSON: The hon. member can do so as much as he likes.

Mr. Davy: I will not do so.

Mr. THOMSON: No, because the present proposal suits the hon. member very well. I am fighting for the people I represent.

Mr. Teesdale: You have not said a word about Katanning.

The Premier: That reveals the nigger in the woodpile.

Mr. THOMSON: Katanning does not worry me.

Mr. Davy: Why set on to me?

Mr. THOMSON: Because the hon. member keeps on interjecting. The report of the speech of the present Minister for Justice continues—

As the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) pointed out with regard to the metropolitan constituencies, places likely to increase in population should be given a lower quota than the closely settled districts.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And the metropolitan area should have them. In that area are most of the people who pay most of the taxes, and yet they have very small representation.

The Premier: As somebody said, what does it matter what people thought yesterday?

Mr. THOMSON: On this occasion I am claiming the vote of the Minister for Justice.

The Premier: I shall have to watch him.

Mr. THOMSON: The present Minister for Justice on that occasion also said—

We cannot lay claim, as can the metropolitan area, to having 50 per cent. of the population of the State doing practically nothing but distributing and other parasitical occupations for the producers of the country. That is a disgrace to the State. . . . Regarding the agricultural constituencies, the Commissioners should have shown common sense and considered the places likely to increase or decrease in population, and set the quota accordingly. . . . The places far removed from the capital, and with poor means of communication, have a considerably greater number of electors than the districts in the immediate vicinity of Perth.

The Premier: We have had a good Minister for Railways since those days.

Mr. THOMSON: I am only quoting the arguments used formerly by hon. gentlemen who now sponsor this Bill, and who tell us to-night that we should accept it because it is the best proposal available. I concur with those hon. gentlemen in their fight against a Bill in which they did not believe. They are now in the happy position of placing before the people of Western Australia a Bill in which those hon. gentlemen do believe. For my part I contend that the representatives of the country districts are justified in opposing a Bill which they do not consider just to the country districts. I hope we shall be successful in defeating this measure, so that on a future occasion we may be in the happy position of introducing a Bill that will give justice to the country districts which create the wealth of the State, and for the development of which Western Australia is spending so much.

MR. LATHAM (York) [8.16]: I second the amendment.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.17]: I do not propose to offer any criticism regarding the arguments advanced by different members.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must confine himself to the amendment, which alone is before the House.

Mr. SAMPSON: I realise that it is futile at this juncture to discuss the principles of the Bill. As I understand the position, what is before us is the report of the Commission, plus the Bill that is the result of that report. As I observed previously, it is not my desire to criticise the opinions expressed by hon. members, who have a right to their own views. I am very definitely of the opinion that we should confine ourselves to the Bill, the whole principle having been discussed by the House and approved by members last session.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member discussing the amendment?

Mr. SAMPSON: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The attitude adopted by Parliament last session has been endorsed by the people. While saying that, I can also agree with the remarks of the Leader of the Country Party when he asserted that there was abroad a feeling that it would be in the interests of the State if greater representation were given to the country electorates, and if a more favourable quota were applied to those parts of the State. It is futile to discuss that phase of the problem now, and it

is not my intention to support the amendment. I am sure that you, Mr. Speaker, would readily agree and prove in a scathing manner that the existing boundaries are a disgrace to the State. The fact that at long last there is a possibility of an improvement being brought about should be gratifying to all. The work of the Commission calls for expressions of satisfaction. I am of the opinion that the members of the Royal Commission exercised much sagacity in carrying out their work. At the same time, it is possible for every hon. member individually to advance some reason why part of the work might have been carried out a little differently. I hope members will not think that I am taking up the attitude of the man who was prepared to sacrifice all his wife's relatives during the war, because my words may indicate that I am prepared to sacrifice some members who may seem to be faced with a difficult time owing to the re-allocation of the electoral boundaries. I have a high respect for the sincerity of my fellow members.

Mr. Teesdale: Hear, hear!

Mr. SAMPSON: It is my belief, which has grown by experience and a greater knowledge of members individually, that they are sincere in their labours in this House. I am quite certain that although we may differ in our opinions, seldom, if ever is their regard for individual wishes or desires on the part of members themselves. On the other hand, they have always before them that which they consider is in the best interests of the State. That is always what claims their first consideration. I am aware that in this House there are members who possibly are justified in feeling that they may suffer injury at a forthcoming election if the Bill be agreed to. At the same time I have yet to hear of any member who would place his personal interests before those of the State. I feel that the vote that will be taken, will be such as will approve of the work of the Royal Commission and be an indication of the keen desire of members that the scandalous position that exists regarding the State electoral boundaries should be removed. Perhaps members are inclined to regard constituencies as their property.

Mr. Panton: Why look at me?

Mr. SAMPSON: Perhaps because the hon. member represents the most dreadful

example of lack of constituents in an electorate.

Mr. Teesdale: He should commit harakiri!

Mr. SAMPSON: We are temporary representatives only, and it is a mere conceit on our part to talk of "our electorates." When we submit ourselves to the electors, it is in their hands to determine whether we shall be returned to Parliament again. Some hon. members, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, have been successful election after election, but all of us must face the day, which is hard to contemplate, when we must meet our Waterloo.

Mr. Teesdale: Don't get the wind up too quickly, for God's sake!

Mr. SAMPSON: When we entered this Chamber, we were sworn to do our duty to our King. Our first duty is to see that the people have fair representation in Parliament. I regret that the agricultural industry has not received a greater number of representatives under the provisions of the Bill, because it is to the country that we must look for our future. If we look after the country, the towns will look after themselves. Half a loaf is better than no bread and the position that will be created when the Bill is passed, will be a great improvement on that which has existed for some years past. I hope that the Bill will be agreed to and that the amendment will be defeated.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson) [8.25]: I regret that I cannot support the amendment moved by the member for Katanning (Mr. Thomson), despite the fact that he advanced a very strong case to prove his claim that greater representation should be granted to the agricultural industry. The point is that our opportunity to do that has gone. I feel that anything is better than the present system, and it is for each individual member to decide that which he considers is in the best interests of Western Australia.

Mr. Thomson: And so I am!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Yes, but we have no alternative! Once before we agreed to send a report back to a Royal Commission that dealt with this matter, and the Bill was lost.

Mr. Thomson: That was referred back by the Premier: this will be referred back by Parliament.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It may be said that the time to do this will be after the general election, but my idea is that anything will be better than that. There are certain anomalies that have been created by the Royal Commission. We can all point to them. When I spoke about anomalies, the Premier twitted me about the Nelson electorate. I regret that the Commissioners made a mistake of 1,000 votes in my electorate.

Mr. Thomson: That was because they did not have proper rolls.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: That was the fault of the Government who introduced the Bill, and of Parliament, too. The Government should have sent the members of the Commission throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia so that the element of community of interests might be better established than it is now. The Premier said that the considerations to be taken into account by the Commissioners were to be proximity to railways, marketing facilities and other such matters, but we find that the Bill before us is a mass of anomalies. Many of the country electorates far away from the metropolitan area have a greater number of electors than some of the pocket boroughs around Perth.

Mr. Sampson: That is not true.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: It is true. I would mention the Pingelly electorate, for instance. I am not referring to the Swan electorate! The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) thinks he is the only pebble on the beach! In my opinion a mistake was made by the Commissioners when they started their distribution from the north instead of from the south. It is unquestionable that the undeveloped parts of the South West will greatly add to the population of Western Australia. Those parts that are now being developed are making strides by leaps and bounds, as the Minister for Agriculture and others will agree. Instead of starting the distribution from the south and working north, the Commissioners started in the north and worked south, with the result that they find themselves now in a holy muddle and mess. Anyone with intelligence can peruse the distribution and see what has happened. I would refer to the Forrest electorate. As the result of the redistribution of 1911, we had what was referred to as the member for Collie's "goose-neck." Under

this redistribution the member for Forrest (Miss Holman) will have to zig-zag her way from Armadale down to Donnybrook and further still.

Mr. Panton: She had to get her hair cut to get through the trees!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: In my opinion the distribution there is not a good one. The South-West has been badly neglected, particularly in respect of railways and the Commissioners have lost sight of the fact that 1,000 electors have been left out.

The Premier: Where are those 1,000 electors?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: If the Premier will look at the figures he gave to the Commissioners, upon which they were to base their distribution, he will see that the number of electors in the Nelson electorate was given as 4,888. Looking at the electorate's boundary he will see that it takes in the mouth of the Donnelly River and the mouth of the Frankland River, and 1,000 electors have been cut off and no one knows where they are.

Mr. Latham: Then support us in having it sent back.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: To confirm those figures and to be sure of it, I got into touch with the Electoral Department, and they told me I was quite right, that a number of electors in the Nelson electorate had not been accounted for.

Mr. Thomson: A very good reason why you should support the amendment.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: If the hon. member had put up an alternative, I might have done so. But to leave it until after the next election will mean that the same old conditions will apply.

Mr. Latham: We are only asking that the report shall be referred back.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: We cannot do that. The opposition offered to the Bill is on account of the metropolitan area having a great advantage over the agricultural areas. I agree with that. But what is the solution? If the member for Katanning had given me any solution at all, I would have supported it.

Mr. Thomson: The solution is to have a clean roll for the Commissioners to work upon.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The opportunity has gone. I have these discouraging figures, showing 4,800 electors. They are what the Commissioners distributed on.

The Premier: I do not quite follow you in this.

Hon. G. Taylor: They based his figures on 4,800 electors.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: While there are 5,750 electors on the official roll. The latest roll shows 5,750 electors.

Mr. Davy: The roll they quoted is dated 31st December, 1928.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: These figures are for October. I have confirmed this with the Electoral Department, and I find their figures are the same as mine.

Hon. G. Taylor: The figures used by the Commissioners are a thousand out.

The Premier: The figures used by the Commissioners were obtained from the Electoral Department.

Hon. G. Taylor: But they made a mistake of a thousand.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: We have to accept the Bill, and I hope the House will pass it by an absolute majority. To alter the Constitution it is necessary that we should have an absolute majority vote. I realise that I am sacrificing some of my best constituents, but to my mind the question is that of Western Australia as against any single person. Members will remember the last Redistribution of Seats Bill, when I presented to the House a monster petition almost covering the Table. Virtually all those signatures are in Nelson to-day. Evidently the Commissioners were not impressed with the prayers that were sent along, for they have done the same thing again. They have not considered community of interest. They have extended Collie right down to the agricultural centres, which are in my electorate. They have brought it right down to Balingup, within a few miles of Bridgetown. I can understand where the mistake occurred. When they got down that far they realised they had made a bloomer by distributing from the north, and so they had to do something. That is why Collie has been extended down so far.

The Minister for Justice: Why should they distribute from the south instead of from the north?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: Well, take Geraldton, with only 2,500 on the roll. Then there are Greenough with 3,000, Beverley with 2,000, and Pingelly with a little over 2,000. Pass on down to Albany and you will see why they should have distributed from the south. Albany has 5,522 electors on the roll. Nelson has 5,750, and Collie, Busselton and Sussex

are a long way over the 12,000. The Commissioners should have distributed from there and put in a new seat. I think every fair-minded man who knows anything of Western Australia will agree that the Commissioners should have put in a new seat between Albany and Nelson, taking in the group settlements, Denmark and all down that area. Then there would have been no difficulty about securing community of interest. However, there is now no alternative to the Bill, and we have to accept the proposals even though we do it with a bad grace. On some future occasion, when another redistribution of seats is made, and other Commissioners are appointed, perhaps they will realise that it might be advisable to go right throughout Western Australia and get into contact with people who know all about these things.

The Premier: Do you say the Surveyor-General does not travel the State?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I say that apparently he has not done so.

The Premier: Nonsense! Who knows the State better than he does?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: One of the Commissioners has no knowledge of the country; he only sits and dispenses justice. Unfortunately we lost the State Chief Electoral Officer and had to appoint in his place the Federal Electoral Officer, who, probably, does not understand the State electoral boundaries. However, I will oppose the amendment.

The Premier: Then you have been speaking in support of the Bill, have you?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I have not been speaking in support of you; that is a certainty.

Mr. Maley: He is speaking against the Bill and is going to support it.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I believe it will be in the best interests of Western Australia to pass the Bill, and therefore I am compelled reluctantly to vote against the amendment because it offers no alternative.

Mr. SPEAKER: Since the hon. member handed up his amendment to me, I have had consultation with the authorities bearing upon this subject and in consequence I am prepared to rule the amendment out of order. The Act creates Commissioners with a certain duty to perform, and when that duty is performed the Commission has ceased to exist, it functions no further. We cannot therefore refer the matter back to

the Commissioners. Members who were present during the discussion of a similar Bill will remember that an attempt was made to send it back to the Chief Justice, then the chairman of the Commissioners. It was a useless course, for no results came from it.

Hon. G. Taylor: It was not done by Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: It was not done by Parliament, it is true, but whether it was done by Parliament or by the Government, it would be contrary to the Act to send this measure back to what is already a Commission which has ceased to function.

Mr. LAMBERT: If you, Sir, will permit me to say it with all due deference, the Commission appointed in 1923 continued as Royal Commissioners under the Act.

Mr. SPEAKER: Does the hon. member dispute my ruling?

Mr. LAMBERT: No.

#### *Dissent from Ruling.*

Mr. Thomson: Do I understand, Sir, that you rule my amendment out of order?

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

The Premier: Something like that, I think.

Mr. Thomson: Well, I must respectfully move to dissent from your ruling, because the Act which gives power for the appointment of a Commission does not say that the Commission shall perform its functions and cease. I take it that it is a permanent Commission.

Hon. G. Taylor: No, you are quite wrong.

Mr. Thomson: That is a matter of opinion. There is no comparison between the action of the Premier in referring back the report to the Commissioners for further consideration, and the action of Parliament in doing the same. I take it Parliament is supreme and that if we are desirous of having the matter further considered in view of the glaring anomalies to be found in the figures supplied to the Commissioners, we are justified in asking that it shall be further considered by them. Let me quote the Act under which this Commission was appointed. Section 2 reads—

The Governor may appoint three electoral Commissioners, one of whom shall be a judge of the Supreme Court and shall be chairman, and the other Commissioners shall be the Surveyor General and the Chief Electoral Officer. The Governor may in the absence of the chairman appoint some other judge to act as

a Commissioner in his place and may appoint another fit person to act temporarily as Commissioner in the place of the Surveyor General or of the Chief Electoral Officer. The Commissioners shall have the powers of a Royal Commission appointed under the Royal Commissioners' Powers Act, 1902.

I should like to see what the duties of a Commission are under that Act. But I say these Commissioners have not completed their duty in accordance with the Act under which they were appointed. With all due respect to the ruling you, Sir, have given, logically it could be argued that they have not completed their duty, in that they did not submit a readjustment of the boundaries of the electoral provinces. So, as I say, it could be argued they have not completed their duties. In view of the fact that it would be considered necessary to make a readjustment of those boundaries, I should like to ask who is going to do the work of adjusting the boundaries of the provinces?

The Minister for Justice: Another Commission will be appointed for that work.

Mr. Thomson: That will not be done under the Act. I take it the Commissioners who were appointed by the Governor must automatically deal with the boundaries of the provinces.

The Premier: I said it was the intention of the Government to bring down another Bill for that.

Mr. Thomson: Whatever may be the intention of the Government is not concerning me at present. What I am dealing with is the Act of last year. Most respectfully, Sir, I move—

That the House dissents from the Speaker's ruling.

Mr. Latham: I understand that the previous Electoral Commission was appointed on the 13th June, 1923. If we turn to the "Government Gazette" of the 4th January, 1929, we find that appointment was revoked by an Order-in-Council. I have the "Gazette" here and I will hand it up to you, Sir. So you will find that the Commission that was last appointed must still be in existence. I scarcely believe that the Governor-in-Council has seen fit to revoke their appointment. The notice in the "Government Gazette" of the 4th January, 1929, is as follows:—

It is hereby notified for public information that His Excellency the Governor in Executive Council has been pleased to revoke the

appointment, dated the 13th June, 1923, of electoral Commissioners under the Electoral Districts Act, 1922, and under the powers conferred by the said Act.

Then follows the appointment of the present Commission. Until that is revoked, that Commission must remain in existence. Furthermore, the Act sets out that the Commissioners are appointed under that Act and shall function whenever called upon by Parliament or by the Chief Electoral Officer. The Chief Electoral Officer has power to vary the electorates as the necessity arises.

The Minister for Justice: No.

Mr. Latham: Then I shall read Section 10 of the Act which states—

(1) The State may be wholly or partially re-divided into electoral districts by the Commissioners in manner hereinbefore provided whenever directed by the Governor by proclamation.

(2) Such proclamation shall be issued (a) on a resolution being passed by the Legislative Assembly in that behalf; or (b) If in the report by the Chief Electoral Officer to the Minister to whom the administration of the Electoral Act, 1907, is for the time being committed, as to the state of the rolls made up for any triennial election it appears that the enrolment in not less than five electoral districts falls short of or exceeds by 20 per centum the quota as ascertained for such districts under this Act.

Hon. G. Taylor: That is contingent on the recommendations being adopted.

Mr. Davy: And that is very important.

Mr. Latham: If the Chief Electoral Officer reports to the Minister that five districts are above or below their quota, automatically the Commission come into existence to determine the readjustment of boundaries.

Mr. Lambert: The Commission have been in existence all along.

Mr. Latham: Unless something has happened since the Commission were appointed, they will remain in existence until countermanded.

The Minister for Justice: No, the Commission have to be created by the Governor-in-Council on a report.

Mr. Latham: The Commission appointed by the Mitchell Government were in existence until the 3rd January, 1929, as shown by the notice in the "Government Gazette."

Mr. Lambert: Only the personal element is altered.

Mr. Latham: Therefore, the present Commission must still be in existence, and

this House would be qualified to send back the report for further consideration. I hand up for your information, Mr. Speaker, this copy of the "Government Gazette."

Hon. G. Taylor: I cannot support the motion disagreeing with your ruling, because I take it the Commission have ceased to function. The Commission appointed under the Act submitted their report to the Governor, and a Bill was brought down to this House in conformity with the report. We are now discussing the report. The Commission could act only if certain things eventuated after the Bill was passed and became law. Section 10 indicates the way in which the Commission would function, provided we adopted the recommendations in the form of a Bill and the Bill became an Act of Parliament. In 12 months, two years or five years, if similar circumstances arose necessitating a redistribution, the Chief Electoral Officer could ask the Commission to act.

The Minister for Justice: Not even then. The Governor in Council could do so.

Hon. G. Taylor: If the Bill is not passed, the Commission cannot function. If the report were sent back, the Commission could not function.

Mr. Davy: And we should get the snub we deserved.

Hon. G. Taylor: A judge of the Supreme Court is guided only by the Act of Parliament, and he has completed what the Act of Parliament asked or authorised him to do.

Mr. Lambert: He is supposed to have done so.

Hon. G. Taylor: He has done so. The report of the Commission concludes with the following paragraph:—

In forwarding our report, we feel that, after taking into consideration the very many difficulties which arise through the uneven distribution of the population throughout the State, we are submitting proposals in full accord with the Electoral Districts Act of 1923. We have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient servants, J. A. Northmore, Judge of the Supreme Court, Chairman; John P. Camm, Surveyor General; H. B. Way, Commonwealth Electoral Officer.

They have done the work that the Act of 1923 gave them power to do. In my opinion your ruling, Mr. Speaker, is perfectly sound.

Mr. Speaker: Before members vote, I should like to take some notice of the contentions of the mover and seconder of the



motion. By way of suggesting that the Commissioners have not ceased to function upon the matter under consideration, I have had handed to me a copy of the "Government Gazette" of the 4th January, 1929, in which the following is found:—

It is hereby notified for public information that His Excellency the Governor in Executive Council has been pleased to revoke the appointment dated the 13th June, 1923, of Electoral Commissioners under the Electoral Districts Act, 1922, and under the powers conferred by the said Act (1) To appoint the Hon. John Alfred Northmore, a Judge of the Supreme Court; John Percy Camm, Surveyor General, and Harry Richard Way, Commonwealth Electoral Officer for Western Australia, as Electoral Commissioners under and for the purposes of the said Electoral Districts Act, 1922;

That is the important point so far as this motion is concerned.

(2) To fix the 14th day of February, 1929, as the date on or before which the Commissioners shall forward their report to the Minister to whom the administration of the Electoral Act, 1907, is for the time being committed.

Their work and its duration were fixed by the authority handed to me by the seconder of the motion. The report was made and according to Section 9 of the Electoral Districts Act—

(1) The report shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament forthwith after the making thereof if Parliament is then in session, and, if not, forthwith after the next meeting of Parliament, and a Bill shall be introduced for the redistribution of seats at Parliamentary elections in accordance therewith and for the readjustment of the boundaries, etc.

That has been done. In the circumstances, I do not think I need say more. It is true the Commission may be appointed permanently, but they could never be revived, except by the Governor-in-Council in a manner similar to that of the appointment contained in the "Gazette" that has been handed to me. I hope members will realise how foolish it would be to go back on everything that has been done and to set aside not only the authority issued to the Commissioners, but the Act of Parliament itself under which they were created.

Mr. Thomson: May I ask when the report was submitted? You read from the "Gazette" that it had to be submitted on or before the 14th February.

Mr. Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Thomson: I should like to know whether the report was submitted to the Governor-in-Council on the 14th February. According to your ruling, if they functioned after the 14th February, their action was null and void.

The Premier: The 14th March.

Mr. Thomson: I am quoting the statement read out by the Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I am not in a position to state exactly when the report was submitted, but I take it everything was done strictly in accordance with the provisions of the Commission and the law.

Motion (dissent) put and negatived.

*Debate resumed.*

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [8.56]: You, Mr. Speaker, have just given the House a ruling on one phase of the Bill, and I think it would be advisable if we got a ruling on another portion of it. After reading the Electoral Districts Act, it appears to me that a discussion on this Bill, which has nothing at all to do with the Act, must be very limited. Under this measure I do not think we can deal with principles, which should have been discussed when the Electoral Districts Act Amendment Bill was before us. The House passed that Bill, in opposition to the wishes of members on the crossbenches. We expressed the view that the quotas laid down were unjust. During the debate on the Address-in-reply last year and on other occasions I have referred to the number of people in my electorate whose names should have been on the roll, but were not. When the elections were taking place, 35 people arrived to vote at Dowerin, 50 at Wyalcatchem, and 17 at Korrellocking whose names were not on the roll. At Nembudin, where only 17 people voted, 17 others arrived and found that their names were not on the roll. Before we have a redistribution of seats, we should ascertain the exact number of electors. I believe a great wrong was done to country districts by not doing that before the Commission began their work. In justice to all portions of the State, the rolls should be kept up-to-date, and the people should be given representation, not as provided for in the Bill, but in accordance with the number resident in the respective districts. The Government did not do the fair thing by the country districts—the agricultural and mining districts—through fail-

ing to arrange for a canvass before the Commission were appointed. Therefore, I say, the Government did not do their duty in that respect. According to the statistics, there are over 14,000 adults in the country districts whose names are not on the roll, whereas there are only 900 odd in the metropolitan area who are not enrolled. That means that 14,000 country people will have no representation under this measure. However, the question we are here to discuss to-night is whether the Commission carried out the instructions contained in the Electoral Districts Act. So far as I can judge, they have done their work reasonably well. Doubtless every member would say he could have done the job better for his own electorate. I certainly could have done it better for mine. Still, we appointed the Commission and gave them the Electoral Districts Act to work on. It was not for them to consider whether the people entitled to enrolment were enrolled. I assume that that was the work of the Electoral Department. I assume they could not have done it unless the Treasurer had given them the money with which to do it. It is evident he did not provide the funds to enable the rolls to be brought up to date, and we therefore cannot blame the Commissioners. The three gentlemen concerned have carried out their duties reasonably well. They have made subdivisions on the lines laid down in the Act. We should have opposed the Bill more bitterly and strenuously than we did, and have followed the example set to us by the Labour Party when members thereof kept the House held up for weeks at a time. That opportunity has now gone by.

Mr. Thomson: They held it up on a Bill similar to this.

Mr. LINDSAY: They should not have been allowed to do so. If you, Sir, had kept to the strict letter of debate, we should only have been allowed to deal with the report of the Commissioners. There is no question as to the number of electors in the various districts, for that was all provided for in the Act. When the House passed that Act it gave the Commissioners instructions to the effect that where there were six electors in the metropolitan area there should be four in the agricultural areas and two in the goldfields areas. The Commissioners were afterwards appointed to carry out the Act on the lines laid down, and the question before us is whether they have done rightly or

wrongly. I have not heard any member say the Commissioners have not done their duty, and I do not therefore intend to oppose the second reading of the Bill.

MR. DAVY (West Perth) [9.2]: I am glad to have heard the member for Toodyay speak as he did. His attitude appears to be the correct one to adopt. Particularly is that so in view of the fact that the opposition to the Bill seems to be coming from members of the Country Party, and also in view of the remarks made by members sitting there and the attitude they adopted when the principles upon which this Bill is founded were being debated last session. The deputy Leader of the Country Party (Mr. Latham) opened his remarks by saying that he would not oppose the second reading of that Bill, and that its provisions were far and away better than the existing state of affairs regarding the representation of the people.

Mr. Thomson: That is not saying much, is it?

Mr. DAVY: I think it is saying a good deal. The member for Toodyay took up the attitude he has adopted to-night, and said, "I will support the second reading for the reason that the Bill is a lot better than the existing position."

Mr. Thomson: That was not the attitude of the present Government when members of that party opposed the present Bill.

Mr. DAVY: I am not concerned about the attitude of the present Government when sitting in Opposition. I was not here then. I am afraid that when they were in Opposition they were sometimes more vigorous in their denunciation of a measure than their feeling justified. There is no doubt that when members find themselves faced with the responsibility of government, their attitude is inclined to change.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You become more decent sometimes.

Mr. DAVY: The member for Avon (Mr. Griffiths) said he too would support the second reading. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) said he agreed in common with other members that the Bill was long overdue. "Ever since I have been a member of Parliament," he said, "it has been the aim of the Country Party to secure a redistribution of seats." Who would imagine that, after hearing the speech of the Leader of the Country Party to-night? The member

for Pingelly went on to say he did not know, that he was particularly keen on the Bill because it was not altogether to his liking.

Mr. Thomson: He said it was not to his liking. That is satisfactory.

Mr. Latham: Do not read too much. You may give the show away!

Mr. DAVY: The hon. member also said that half a loaf was better than no bread and that therefore they had better accept the Bill as it was. The member for Wagin said that anyone who had studied the map of Western Australia would agree that it was extremely difficult for one man to adjust the boundaries without creating anomalies. He believed that the Government were honestly attempting to adjust the boundaries, and that therefore he intended to support the Bill.

Mr. Stubbs: And I have not altered that opinion. I am going to vote for the Bill.

Mr. DAVY: I have heard that is the intention of the hon. member. The Leader of the Country Party was not present at the second reading of the Bill. I understand he had engagements elsewhere. He was not present when the Bill went into Committee.

Mr. Thomson: It was brought in on Tuesday and was passed on Thursday.

Mr. DAVY: When we got into Committee, the deputy Leader of the Country Party (Mr. Latham) moved an amendment that in line 2 of paragraph (a) of the proposed section, the word "three" be struck out and "four" inserted in lieu. That would have altered the quota in respect to country members.

Mr. Sleeman: He was not a member of the Country Party then, was he?

Mr. DAVY: I believe so. No one supported the member for York. He merely moved his amendment and spoke ten lines. The Premier remarked that the particular clause was the whole essence of the Bill, and that he had nothing to add to what he had said on the second reading. The amendment was put and negatived, and no division was called for.

The Premier: A very lame old cry.

Mr. DAVY: The only other mention of criticism of the Bill was an amendment which I moved, designed to make the finding of the Commission final. I believe that was the right thing to do. I am more than ever of that opinion after what has happened to-night. You, sir, in your wisdom ruled me out of order. That was the whole of

the criticism. I have read every pertinent word of criticism of the Bill on the second reading and in the Committee stage.

Mr. Thomson: Have you read what took place on the third reading?

Mr. DAVY: Yes. The Leader of the Country Party—

The Premier: Made a bit of a show.

Mr. DAVY: Moved that the Bill be read that day six months. This was an attempt to shelve it. The only criticism of the Bill of a destructive nature was the attempt to prevent the passage of the Bill in its original form, as I have recited to-night. For some reason this House decided, firstly in 1923, and secondly, last session, that an independent Commission was the right body to carry out the very difficult work of redistributing the electoral boundaries. I believe every member presumed that the reason why we adopted that course was that we could not trust ourselves to do the work impartially. We were too intimately concerned in the results. If we had attempted to do it ourselves, we would have been appointing ourselves judges in our own court. In our wisdom, therefore, we decided to appoint other persons to judge as to what was fair and proper for ourselves, and in the interests of the people of the State. Now that the Commissioners have made their report, it amounts almost to political indecency to criticise it.

Mr. Latham: Are they infallible?

Mr. DAVY: If the Commissioners are not infallible, a thousand times more are the members of this House not infallible. When we find that our view of the thing falls differently from the view of those three gentlemen who made up the Commission, we had better take a look at ourselves, and consider whether we are not biassed by our own interests.

Mr. Thomson: You are biassed. You are not game to say what you actually think.

Mr. DAVY: The member for Katanning, in reply to an interjection of mine, showed what must be in his mind when he said, "The Bill does not matter to you. The Commission has made no difference to you."

The Premier: It suits you.

Mr. DAVY: Is that the point of view from which to attack this problem, which affects the proper representation of the voters of Western Australia?

Mr. Thomson: It is a very improper suggestion to make.

Mr. DAVY: It was a very improper suggestion of the hon. member to make to me.

Mr. Thomson: It is very improper of you to cast such an innuendo.

Mr. DAVY: When all the members of the House are agreed that the present state of our electoral boundaries—I do not attempt to apportion the blame for the present position—is a public disgrace, and when we find that every newspaper in Australia has been laughing at the State electoral boundaries in Western Australia for years, and when members of the Country Party admit that anything, even this Bill is better than the present state of affairs, what sort of figures are we going to cut in the eyes of our own community if we turn down the Bill, because in our wisdom we think we can do better than a judge of the Supreme Court, the Surveyor-General, and the Chief Commonwealth Electoral Officer?

Mr. Lambert: What about the shocking boundaries of the Legislative Council?

Mr. DAVY: That is entirely beside the question.

The Premier: We are not dealing with them in the Bill.

Mr. DAVY: I have never studied them. We are asked to alter the boundaries of the electoral districts for the election of members to this House. How are we concerned about the boundaries for the Legislative Council? The Premier has given the word of the Government that next session he will bring down the machinery for rectifying that position.

Mr. Lambert: Do you think members of the Legislative Council will agree to amend their boundaries?

Mr. DAVY: I do not know. If they had been amended by this Bill, would they have agreed? I am not concerned about what happens to them. I want to see our own House put in order, a House which all agree is now in a shocking state of untidiness. Every member of the Country Party has said so.

Mr. Latham: Many have not yet spoken.

Mr. DAVY: All have said so. I do not assume that any member of the Country Party is going to vote against the measure, but it is a common thing when the leader of a party takes a certain line that at least some of his followers will vote in the same way.

Mr. Thomson: That is what you people do, I suppose.

Mr. DAVY: Yes, we happen to have the greatest respect for our leader, and sometimes allow our judgment to be swayed by his. It is a very proper thing, too.

Mr. Teesdale: Hear, hear!

Mr. DAVY: It has been agreed by everybody in this House and out of it that our boundaries are in a shocking state.

Mr. Thomson: When you say "everybody," you do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. Lambert: He means members of the Consultative Council who have been harping about it. That is all that concerns him.

Mr. DAVY: I think I can say with safety that no man or woman entitled to vote in this State, and who thought about the matter, considered that the representation in this House was at the last elections anything approaching a fair one.

Hon. G. Taylor: They did not know anything about it.

Mr. DAVY: Why should the member for Coolgardie endeavour to make political capital out of this debate?

Mr. Teesdale: Do not worry about him.

Mr. DAVY: It has been agreed on all sides that the redistribution of seats is a matter of non-party significance. I hope we are going to attack the matter on those lines, and that we shall be brave enough to ignore our own interests and to leave in the hands of an extremely able and impartial Commission the work we placed in their hands to do, because we thought they could do it far better than we could.

**MR LAMBERT** (Coolgardie) [9.15]: I quite agree with the previous speaker, that the matter of readjusting electoral boundaries should be treated slightly above the ordinary hickering of political debate. After all is said and done, if one casts one's mind back over the long term it has taken to evolve the present instrument of government, one must recognise that we should have a little reverence for it, and a little respect. But I disagree with the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) when he lashes himself into a violent fury and empties the vials of his wrath upon the Leader of the Country Party because that hon. member dares for a moment to question the judgment of a member of the Supreme Court Bench. From the Press it appears that day by day members of the legal profession

question, not the honour and integrity, but the judgment of members of the Supreme Court Bench. Therefore I do not know that if the Leader of the Country Party, for sound and logical reasons—

Mr. Teesdale: This is a change in you.

The Premier: The Bill has brought it about.

Mr. Teesdale: You must be ill.

Mr. LAMBERT: If the Leader of the Country Party has questioned for a moment the judgment of certain distinguished gentlemen, one of them a judge of the Supreme Court, still he is not to be attacked on that score. In no sense is the hon. member to be denied a desire to do what is right by the people of this State. The Bill represents a most reasonable attempt on the part of the Commissioners to readjust boundaries on better lines than those existing now. It is only right that that should be acknowledged. But it is quite another thing to lash oneself into a fury merely because it is questioned whether the most mature judgment has been exercised in this all-important matter. I must express the deepest possible disappointment at the fact that the Bill does not deal with another branch of the Legislature, as I thought was intended by another measure. If one casts one's mind back over the growth of our Parliamentary system, one finds it a most engrossing subject. From the 12th century to the present day it is full of history of the greatest moment, not alone to past civilisations but to the present civilisation. Unquestionably it is a serious matter to tinker with the instrument of government, as to some extent this Bill does. In some countries such tinkering has resulted in revolution, in the overthrow of constitutional government and the appointment of dictators. I am absolutely convinced that a Redistribution of Seats Bill, even on the altered boundaries, if it does not in some intangible but practical way tackle the other branch of the Legislature, will be just as fantastic and ridiculous as the system of election recently adopted by Mussolini, the dictator of Italy. The other place is a branch of this Legislature, part of the organism of the instrument of government: and for that reason I cannot understand why men who have a knowledge of the instrument by which the people govern themselves should not see fit, when dealing with the very foundation of one

branch of our Legislature, to deal with the foundation of the other branch also. People may think that the re-allocation of the boundaries of another branch of the Legislature counts for nothing. I think it counts for much. It is not right for us to deal piece-meal with the Legislature. It is our duty to the people who have entrusted us with the right to govern, to see at least that if one branch of the Legislature is dealt with, the other branch shall be dealt with also. I do deeply regret the apparent omission. Not for one moment do I think the Leader of the House, when introducing the legislation creating certain powers, knew that such an omission marked the Bill.

Mr. Thomson: Look at the startling reverse of the figures, which shows that there has not been a clean roll.

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not think the Leader of the House for one moment thought otherwise than most of us thought, that adjustment of the boundaries of the Legislative Council provinces was equally necessary. In accordance with your ruling, Mr. Speaker, that is not so; and we must bow to the ruling. Then what is the position? If we pass the Bill and it goes to another place and becomes an Act, the boundaries of the Legislative Assembly electorates will be readjusted. The Leader of the House has promised to put up legislation dealing with the boundaries of the provinces of another place. When dealing with the boundaries of the provinces, one is dealing, in essence, with the very status of another place. Take, for instance, the Metropolitan Province. What justification is there, in the name of common sense, for a small area in the metropolitan district being mapped out as a Metropolitan Province with 7,000 or 8,000 electors? All round it there is the Metropolitan-Suburban Province with 21,000 or 22,000 electors. What diversity of interest is there between the two provinces? Where is the line of demarcation?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Where is the line anywhere at all, you might ask.

Mr. LAMBERT: It should be drawn only on principles of equity, and there should be some regard for the number of voters entitled to vote for a province in another place if regard is paid to the number of voters for a Legislative Assembly district. But we find a total disregard for the number entitled to vote for the Legislative

Council. The member for West Perth is much concerned because he fancies that the world is laughing at us by reason of two or three districts which have gone down in numbers while other districts have had their numbers inflated. But who is crying out? I have heard no great cry other than that raised by a partisan Press which fancies a political advantage is to be gained by one party if boundaries are readjusted. I do not think readjustment would change the personnel of the House much. At least, it would not be greatly changed in essence by the passage of half a dozen Redistribution of Seats Bill. What does it matter if, for instance, the electorates of the member for Moore and the member for Irwin are amalgamated, or the electorates of the member for Coolgardie and the member for Yilgarn? I do not think the effect would be to change the personnel of the Chamber to any great extent.

Mr. Davy: Does it matter that one man should have 17 times as much voting power as another?

Mr. LAMBERT: No. I think that on equitable terms we should have reasonable regard for numbers, but I could point out defects if the member for West Perth is not too sensitive to listen to the sins of omission of the Commissioners, and if he has not completely lashed himself into the belief that a judge of the Supreme Court is absolutely infallible. At the expense of my colleague, the member for Hannans (Hon. S. W. Munsie), let me point out that in the central goldfields district there are four seats—Kalgoorlie, Boulder, Ivanhoe-Brown Hill and Hannans. Well, Hannans had only about 500 electors, while Coolgardie had about 900; and the Commissioners, though they attacked those frightful four pocket boroughs in the central goldfields district, extended the Coolgardie-Yilgarn seat from Kurrawang, eight miles west of Kalgoorlie, to Burracoppin, 30 miles east of Merredin, and made it 150 miles north by 150 miles south.

Mr. Davy: They increased the votes in Hannans from 578 to 1,868.

Mr. LAMBERT: Yes, just about 200 over the minimum. While retaining the Hannans constituency, they increased the Coolgardie-Yilgarn to 600 or 700 over the minimum and ran it 200 or 300 miles further in distance. If the member for West Perth still considers that even an honour-

able man like a judge of the Supreme Court is infallible, he is slightly mistaken.

Mr. Davy: The Commissioners acted strictly in accordance with what we told them to do.

Mr. LAMBERT: No.

Mr. Davy: I think they have acted inside the line.

Mr. LAMBERT: They had a fair margin to work upon. I am only giving the hon. member that as an illustration why he should have a slight doubt, and not because I wish to mention the Hannans electorate.

Mr. Teesdale: If you sit down now, you are all right.

Mr. LAMBERT: Before I do, I shall possibly turn my attention to the North-West seats.

Mr. Teesdale: You cannot touch them; they are all right; they are in the bag!

Mr. LAMBERT: I do not know that the hon. member's smug satisfaction can be quite justified, now that the hon. member has reminded me that he is on the earth.

Mr. Teesdale: And Roebourne is on the map still!

Mr. LAMBERT: Under the Electoral Districts Act of 1923 we allowed the four seats in the North-West to remain.

Mr. Teesdale: We have always been objects for sympathy.

Mr. LAMBERT: The Commission had power to readjust the boundaries of those four seats.

Hon. G. Taylor: According to Webster's dictionary, the Commission did readjust the boundaries.

Mr. LAMBERT: That is so, but it seems to me an omission that is hardly pardonable, if I may so. I regret that the Commission did not see fit to readjust those boundaries along something like equitable lines and thereby give the members affected a proportionate fraction over the small number of electors they are called upon to represent. I think the member for Roebourne (Mr. Teesdale) has the colossal number of 500 electors to represent!

Mr. Teesdale: Five hundred odd. The number is 560, and there was a birth the other day!

Mr. Mann: What colour?

Mr. LAMBERT: If my memory serves me aright, I think there were 350 electors who voted there last time. Thus, when the

member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) is so awfully sensitive about what people in other parts of Australia may think of the disparity between electorates here, is it small wonder that the disparity existing in connection with the North-West seats is not borne in mind? Apparently, the Commissioners, one of whom is a judge of the Supreme Court, forgot all about the North-West!

Mr. Teesdale: Even your crowd have been a bit generous and sympathetic towards the North-West; they have always given us four seats.

Mr. LAMBERT: That is so.

Mr. Davy: But the Commission had very little power in respect of those seats.

Mr. LAMBERT: They had power to readjust the boundaries.

Mr. Davy: What could they have done? They could have increased the number of electors in the Roebourne constituency by 300, but they gave good reasons for not doing so.

Mr. LAMBERT: Had they done that, they would have given the member for Roebourne something more to do than interject when I am speaking. I deeply regret the omission to which I have drawn attention. I have been struck with the generally high tone of the debate so far as it has proceeded. I do not think it right that we should discuss a Bill of this description, which is of great moment not only from the point of view of to-day but of to-morrow, in any other way. Caution should be our watchword in dealing with a measure that affects Parliament itself, and we must be true to ourselves as well as to the people of the State. If we are to do that, we must try to keep the representation in the country districts. It is more important to represent a thousand men who are battling outback, whether in the mining industry, in the pastoral industry, or in farming pursuits, and there is a nobler duty to be performed in representing their interests, than is involved in the representation of 20,000 people in a metropolitan constituency.

Mr. Teesdale: When did you buy a farm?

Mr. LAMBERT: I would like to do so to-morrow morning, for I deem it a far greater honour to represent those who are battling outback than to represent constituents in the metropolitan area. It is better to represent those who are developing our industries in the face of diverse difficulties

in the outback areas of the State than to represent a small compact area in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Teesdale: Are you putting in a bit for Yilgarn.

Mr. LAMBERT: My friend the member for Yilgarn (Mr. Corboy) is not present just now. I desire to give notice of my intention, when the Bill is in Committee, to move an amendment to Clause 1, which reads:—

This Act may be cited as the Redistribution of Seats Act, 1929, and shall come into operation on a date to be fixed by proclamation.

My amendment will be added to that clause and will read as follows:

Provided, however, that no such proclamation shall be made until such time as the existing boundaries of the 10 electoral provinces, as determined by the Redistribution of Seats Act, 1911, shall have been adjusted.

With the addition of my amendment, it will make the passage of the Bill in this House and in another place contingent upon a proclamation being issued along the lines indicated. It would be a shocking state of affairs if this branch of the Legislature did not take steps to rectify what, I believe all parties agree, has been an obvious mistake. I hope that when I have an opportunity to move my amendment, it will be accepted and thus we shall preserve for all time and safeguard the prestige and status of this branch of the Legislature. By doing so we shall secure an equitable readjustment of the boundaries of the Legislative Council provinces before the Bill becomes operative.

MR. LATHAM (York) [9.39]: In view of the fact that we debated this matter some time ago and appointed a Commissioner to undertake certain work for the better distribution of the electors, I consider the advice of hon. members who advocated that a complete roll should be provided before any redistribution took place, should have been followed. I should have thought that one of the first things the Commission would have required was the provision of a proper systematic canvass so as to ensure that the electoral rolls were in order. I am going to criticise the Commission where I think the work they did warrants criticism. After all, the members of the Royal Commission are the servants of this House, and so long as I am in order and use fitting language, I consider I am quite within my rights in criticising them as I consider necessary. In

the first place, I think they should be criticised because they did not see to it that the rolls were in order. If it was not the duty of the Commissioners to see that they were in order, then it was the duty of the Minister to safeguard that position. In view of the debates that took place in this House some five years ago, I should have thought, from the remarks made by the Minister when he was sitting in Opposition, that he at least would have seen to it that the rolls were in order. The second point I wish to complain about is that the House appointed the Commission and instructed them to report to the House through the Minister for Justice. Recently we picked up our newspaper and found therein a statement about the report of the Commission having been handed in to the Premier's office, and indicating that it would be considered by Cabinet. I do not know whether the Commissioners' report was considered by Cabinet, or that there was any necessity for Cabinet to consider it. It was to be handed to the Minister for Justice, not to Cabinet. I do not know how the Government came into it at all. Further than that, I want to know how the information contained in the report came to be given to the Press at that stage. In matters of this description we should see to it that reports of Royal Commissions are presented direct to the House and not made available to the public through the Press before that is done.

The Premier: What information was given to the Press?

Mr. LATHAM: The Press published a report regarding the recommendations of the Commissioners and indicated that the Moore electorate was a bit bent or had ceased to exist. There was quite a lot of information about the findings and there was a good deal of truth in the statements that were published.

The Premier: There are many ways in which information leaks out and the Press get it.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know how the information could leak out.

The Premier: How would you stop it?

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Join the Press and we will let you know how it is done!

Mr. Davy: The hon. member could hardly blame the members of the Commission for that.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not doing so.

Mr. Davy: That is part of your criticism.

Mr. LATHAM: Nothing of the sort. If the member for West Perth cannot detect

any difference between criticism of the Commission and of officials—

The Premier: Who are you criticising?

Mr. LATHAM: Officials who must have given the information.

The Minister for Works: How could you prove that?

The Premier: Reports pass through many hands.

Mr. LATHAM: Then they are apparently unreliable hands.

Mr. Angelo: At any rate, the Press did not get much.

Mr. LATHAM: They got enough to advise the people of what they could expect.

Mr. Angelo: They guessed at it.

Mr. LATHAM: I want to make perfectly clear my position regarding Press statements. I do not know whether the Press publish statements in their leading articles to direct members as to how they should act, but I am one who will not take any notice of what the Press care to write about the subdivision of electorates throughout this State. I intend to oppose the Bill on the same grounds as before, despite the fact that the member for West Perth (Mr. Davy) was good enough to read certain quotations from my speech. He said that I had stated I would support the second reading of the Bill. I did say so, and I pointed out that it was necessary to reach the second reading stage in order to move my amendment, which would have had a very different effect on the Bill. I tried to get that amendment passed so as to alter "four" to "three."

Mr. Davy: You said that the provisions of the Bill were vastly better than those of the old Act.

Mr. LATHAM: And I admit to-day that they are better.

Mr. Davy: Because you could not get all that you wanted—

Mr. LATHAM: The Bill does not contain what I desire to-day. I am not prepared to give five additional seats to the metropolitan area without some opposition. I am not of the same opinion as is the member for West Perth. I would like to remind that hon. member of what he said in this House on the 1st November, 1928. On that occasion he said—

It is of no use people coming to us and telling us the farmer should have more votes than the city man. He ought not to have anything of the sort. We ought all to have the same representation in Parliament.

That represents the views of the member for West Perth, hence the reason for lashing



himself into a fury, and expressing himself as he did in the House to-night. The member for Canning represents more electors in this House than does any other member and a good deal more than several other members combined. I live in his electorate at the present time, and I venture to say that no complaints are to be heard about his services to his electors. I suggest that it is far easier for the member for Canning to represent his 20,000 electors than it is for the member for Menzies to represent a few hundred in his distant and sparsely populated electorate.

Mr. Clydesdale: Of course it is not. There are about 15 local bodies in my electorate, to start with.

Mr. LATHAM: And those 15 local bodies are easy to satisfy, or alternatively the member for Canning must have a great capacity for satisfying them. For the same reason that I opposed the Bill that brought into existence this report, I propose to oppose the Bill before us to-night. Anybody looking at that big map on the wall will see a very small area marked "see inset," a tiny little area drawn to scale exactly the same as the map alongside it. And that very small area, I think it is 380 miles from Perth, has four members. When you, Sir, come to look at the seat you yourself represent, Kanowna, and the seat to the north of it, Murchison, I ask is it fair to give to that small compact area the same representation as is given to those on the north and east of it. Those are the kind of things that lead me to oppose this measure. I say it is much easier for one man to represent the whole of that small area than it is to represent either of those two larger areas.

The Minister for Mines: Anyhow, they are all on this side of the House.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, and so are the four representing that small area. Those members I have heard referred to as the big four. They are the big four. It is unfair to ask us to pass a Bill that gives the same representation to that tiny area as it does to the vast Murchison area. I am well aware that the Commissioners are not responsible for that. We instructed them regarding that area, and our instructions were very bad.

The Premier: Nevertheless you did not consider it worth while to divide the House on the second reading.

Mr. LATHAM: No, for after all we all make mistakes.

The Premier: You did not make a fight for it at all.

Mr. Davy: Indeed, the hon. member said it was vastly better than the present state of affairs.

Mr. LATHAM: And so it is. If I were to assist in getting this Bill through, we would have no opportunity for countering those people who hold the same views as does the member for West Perth.

Mr. Davy: It is a pity you do not quote more accurately when you quote from "Hansard." You are careful to take only a small piece of its exact context. Read the paragraph immediately following that which you read a few minutes ago.

Mr. LATHAM: Probably the explanation would not have been made but for an interjection. The hon. member's words were—

It is of no use people coming to us and telling us that the farmer should have more votes than the city man. He ought not to have anything of the sort. We ought all to have the same representation in Parliament.

Mr. Davy: Read the next paragraph.

Mr. LATHAM: Very well. Mr. Lambert interjected, "The same value of representation." Then the hon. member continued in this strain—

The representation of each of us ought to be equally effective. I admit that in a State like Western Australia we cannot get that representation equally effective.

Mr. Davy: Go on.

Mr. LATHAM: No, I will not finish it. I will do exactly the same as did the member for West Perth, and be as unfair to him as he was unfair to us.

Mr. Davy: Show me how I was unfair to you.

Mr. LATHAM: You were unfair in that you took out certain parts of speeches, parts that suited you, and quoted those only.

The Premier: But you cannot say he was misrepresenting you by his quotations.

Mr. Davy: On a point of order, Sir. Shall I be permitted to finish the paragraph that the member for York started to read?

Mr. SPEAKER: Only by permission of the hon. member. An hon. member cannot interrupt another member while he is speaking.

Mr. LATHAM: If we went through the speeches of all members, probably we should find that some of the concluding sentences of their speeches were contradictory to the introductory sentences. I am not going to quote the hon. member's speech to that extent. If we are going to make quotations from each other's speeches, let us not pick out simply the parts that suit us.

Mr. Richardson: Evidently you picked out a good one.

Mr. LATHAM: I picked out the one I wanted.

Mr. Kenneally: And you knew when to stop.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes. The reason why I am opposing the Bill is because if we give five additional seats to the metropolitan area, we shall have no hope of getting better representation for the people of the agricultural areas afterwards. It is of no use some members saying that a change of Government will bring about all sorts of things and that we can then amend the Act, for I know it is not so easy to amend existing Acts.

Hon. G. Taylor: The first Redistribution of Seats Bill in 1911 was supposed to be the most scandalous measure ever passed.

Mr. LATHAM: And it is still in existence. In 1923 a Bill that was entirely to my liking was introduced in this Chamber, and I supported it. I have to-day no reason to vary my feelings towards that measure. And even that measure would have given to Perth three additional seats. But it was not as unfair as is this one. When I look at the vast areas so far distant from the seat of government, I feel I am justified in advocating holding things over until we can get a redistribution of seats that will be fairer to the people outback. I say again that the member for Canning can represent his electors more easily and acquire a more thorough knowledge of their difficulties than can the member for Menzies with his small number of electors.

Mr. Clydesdale: I am sorry I cannot agree with you.

Mr. LATHAM: Well, the hon. member does not get very thin as the result of his additional amount of work. It might have been necessary to put through an amending Bill in order to refer back the report to the Commissioners; but one reason why it should have been done is to be found in the

discrepancy of 14,305 adults between the figures supplied by the Electoral Department and those of the Government Statistician. That discrepancy is in the agricultural area, whereas the discrepancy in the metropolitan area is only 998.

Mr. Griffiths: Less than 1,000.

Mr. LATHAM: If those figures are correct—and I have no reason to doubt them—it is about time we inquired into the source of the figures supplied from the Electoral Department to the Commission, on the basis of which we are having a redistribution. Those 14,305 electors would give us three additional seats.

The Minister for Mines: If all the people on the goldfields had votes, we would have at least another seat up there.

Mr. LATHAM: I would give you another seat on the goldfields. I still want to see those five goldfields seats left, rather than have them go to the metropolitan area.

The Minister for Mines: If your people were not so fond of employing other than your own countrymen, you would have more representation.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know what the hon. member means; I have no idea at all; I am not even prepared to guess at his meaning.

The Minister for Mines: At Narembeen the other day I saw 500 people, of whom at least 400 were foreigners, not eligible to be on the roll.

Mr. LATHAM: Were any of them employed by me?

The Minister for Mines: Not so far as I know. I was not referring to the hon. member.

Mr. LATHAM: However, I am not going to get on to that question.

Mr. Thomson: Is it suggested that the 14,305 are all foreigners? We have not that many foreigners in the country.

The Premier: Of course we have. They are not eligible to be on the roll, but they are numbered in the population, and that accounts for your figures.

Member: There are not many of them in the metropolitan area.

Mr. LATHAM: There are plenty in Leederville.

The Premier: Not so many.

The Minister for Mines: Go down to the timber areas and you will see plenty of foreigners, all included in the population.

The Premier: And therefore in the statistician's figures.

Mr. LATHAM: Are they anxious to be come naturalised?

The Minister for Agriculture: Many of them have been in the State as long as you have been, and are naturalised.

Mr. LATHAM: Having travelled abroad recently, I can quite appreciate what it means to be a foreigner in a foreign land, and so I have no desire to be hard on those chaps. I am sorry I cannot support the measure. I have given jolly good reasons for withholding my support. Until we can get a Government entertaining views somewhat similar to our own, it would be just as well to let the goldfields country districts have the additional five seats. I would prefer that to taking the five seats from them and giving them to the metropolitan area. Mr. Gladstone, when Prime Minister of England, during a redistribution of seats answered complaints by telling the people of London that if they had no other representation at all, they would still have six times the representation that one district in Scotland had. And it is very true. For six months in the year Perth has 80 members and the people have the ear of those 80 members. One can scarcely travel in a tram but people pick him out, and they always have a grievance. So I contend that the people of Perth are exceptionally well represented in Parliament. Moreover, the departments are here in Perth.

Mr. Clydesdale: Do not the people of the country receive more consideration than the people of the metropolitan area?

Mr. LATHAM: I know that my friends at York always have a good word for the hon. member, and I believe he must get some support there.

Mr. Clydesdale: Leave York out of it.

Mr. LATHAM: I can speak only for my own electorate. I admit that we get a good deal of consideration, but we do not get all the consideration we ought to have. When members say that one vote in the metropolitan area should equal one and a half votes in the agricultural areas, I say that something is radically wrong. It is much easier to represent a city seat. The departments are here and the heads of departments are always ready to listen to grievances, whereas people in the country have to travel if they wish to interview the head

of a department. I am not prepared to take away five seats from the outside areas and give them to the metropolitan area when the outside areas are entitled to more representation than they are likely to get.

#### *Personal Explanation.*

Mr. DAVY: On a point of explanation: I ask leave to complete the passage from "Hansard" read by the member for York. Have I permission to do so?

Mr. SPEAKER: As a personal explanation, yes.

Mr. DAVY: The passage reads--

It is of no use people coming to us and telling us the farmer should have more votes than the city man. He ought not to have anything of the sort. We ought all to have the same representation in Parliament. The representation of each of us ought to be equally effective. I admit that in a State like Western Australia we cannot get that representation equally effective without making provision for fewer people being represented by one man in some parts of the State than in others.

Mr. Thomson: You admitted that your opinion was one man one vote.

Mr. DAVY: What I endeavoured to show was that the logical basis must be one man one vote or rather one vote one value, and I admitted that in order to achieve one vote one value in a State like Western Australia far more people must be represented by one man in some parts of the State than in others. It is not a fair representation of the view I expressed to pick out the first portion of what I said.

The Premier: Most unfair.

#### *Debate resumed.*

MR. BROWN (Pingelly) [10.1]: In view of the member for West Perth having quoted my remarks when the Bill was before the House I suppose members will think it very hard for me to say anything for or against the Bill.

The Premier: You can quote something in the middle.

Mr. BROWN: The member for West Perth was careful to quote nothing of what I said in the middle of my speech.

The Premier: I think the meat was there.

Mr. BROWN: It was there all right. When the Bill was introduced by the Premier I hailed it with satisfaction because I conscientiously believed it would be a good

thing for the country to have a redistribution of seats. At that time no critical objection was raised by members either on the Government or on this side of the House. I think every member believed that a redistribution of seats was long overdue. But when we see the results of the Commission's determinations, the shoe pinches. There is not the slightest doubt that some of the members on the Government side do not approve of the Commission's determinations. I quite agree that the Commission have done good work because they had no alternative to adopting this quota for the country. A quota of 4,000 for country districts is too high. Compare the duties of a country member and the distances he has to travel with those of a city member. I should like to see some of the town members try for a month to represent some of the country districts.

Mr. Thomson: Hear, hear!

Mr. BROWN: I often wonder what city members have to do. Although they may represent 10,000 or 12,000 people, what are their duties? Of course, they come to this House and discuss legislation and help to pass Bills, but their duties in connection with roads and bridges are as nothing. All that work is done by the City Council.

Member: Very simple.

Mr. BROWN: It is. Take Canning with its 18,000 or 19,000 electors. We do not hear a growl from those people, and it shows the member for Canning is doing good work.

The Premier: We are not all Clydesdales.

Mr. BROWN: No, some may be of the racehorse breed. He is doing good work. Although a Clydesdale may be slow, he gets over the ground. All that a town member has to do is to look pleasant, move among his constituents, admire the babies and kiss them if necessary, and he is considered a jolly good fellow. What have we in the country to do?

Mr. Panton: Kiss the babies twice there.

Mr. BROWN: The Pingelly electorate was about 150 miles long. According to the map before us, it is proposed to make it 200 miles long, and much of the distance will have to be traversed by motor car because it is not served by railways. I was in my electorate the other day when heavy rain fell, and my car became bogged. I could have got away by train, but it would have meant waiting two or three days. With the

new boundaries, which will mean an extension of 60 or 70 miles further east, members can imagine the difficulty attached to representing that part of the State. The population of country districts is growing. Ministers and members who support them go into the country, swell out their chests and tell the farmers what they have done for them. They claim to have done more than anyone else. I am going to tell the people what the Government are doing for the country under this measure. In 1923 when a previous Government introduced a Bill for a redistribution of seats the wheat yield of the State was about 13 million bushels. Now, eight or nine years later, it is 34 or 35 million bushels. It stands to reason that settlement has extended greatly into the far-distant parts of the State. Yet the Government say, "You do not require more than 21 seats. That number is quite sufficient for you." Is that a fair and equitable basis? Certainly not. The Premier, as Treasurer, is in a position to know that the whole of the prosperity of the State depends upon the settlers in those districts. Yet the country is to have only 21 seats. I admit that I am now discussing the principles of the electoral districts measure, and those are facts I pointed out in my speech. I regret that the Government could not see their way to give the country districts at least two or three additional seats. The population of the country must increase. If we are going to encourage people to leave the towns, there must be an increase of population in the rural districts, and those are the people who should be given as much representation as possible. We have looked forward to a redistribution of seats for many years. If the Government could have arranged for an adjustment of the boundaries somewhat differently, I do not think there would have been much opposition from this side of the House. In the body of my speech I pointed out that it would have been better to amalgamate Beverley and Pingelly and to amalgamate Williams-Narrogin and Wagin. The Premier said there was no community of interest among the people along the Great Southern and those in the outlying districts. What has happened in my electorate? The Commission have added to it portion of the Forrest electorate. I believe that the little corner which has been added to my electorate comprises mainly farmers and sheep raisers, and no doubt they feel extremely pleased at being brought into the Pingelly district. At the same time, there is no community of

interest between the people in that corner and those of Pingelly. I do not think it is a timber area: the timber area is farther west.

Miss Holman: What part are you referring to?

Mr. BROWN: Marradong.

Miss Holman: Marradong never belonged to the Forrest electorate.

The Premier: It is nobody's child.

Mr. BROWN: However, I think it is a nice little corner, and I hope that when I visit it I shall be able to convince the electors that I am the best man to represent them.

Miss Holman: It belonged to Williams-Narrogin.

Mr. BROWN: I thought it belonged to Forrest.

Mr. Panton: From what are you quoting, a race card?

The Premier: A trotting card, I think.

Mr. BROWN: It is regrettable that the whole of the eligible electors are not enrolled. I believe the Commission worked on a roll that was compiled 12 months ago. If we compare the State and Federal rolls, we find that there are many more electors for a given locality on the Federal roll than on the State roll. We have compulsory enrolment, but it is not strictly enforced or the rolls would be approximately the same. If there is a larger number of voters on the Federal rolls, something must be wrong with our own. As time goes on, the population in the rural constituencies must increase. Perth is developing by leaps and bounds. The only way we can get community of interest is to take into consideration railway facilities and the natural ports. Marradong and Bannister have no connection with my electorate. The people use the railway that runs to Pinjarra. They do not come to the eastern part. The electorate extends almost to Lake Grace. The railway I have been fighting for, which is to come into Kondinin, will now be in the Pingelly electorate. We can imagine the reception I will get there. I hope the Government will go on with that railway before the next election. No doubt the member for Wagin is very interested in it. He may be touching on my preserves if he mentions anything about it. The Beverley electorate is to take in a great deal of the York electorate and also to extend a certain distance eastwards. The member rep-

resenting that electorate will find he will not have the same community of interest to the east as he has to the west. I am pleased that these constituencies are farming districts. What is one man's interests will, to a certain extent, also be the other man's interests. I have nothing to cavil at with regard to that, but would like to have seen a new electorate created on the eastern side of Pingelly, Beverley and Narrogin. If it can be arranged, the merging of Pingelly and Beverley into one would give greater satisfaction to those who now reside within the present boundaries. I regret that the Commissioners could not see their way clear to adjust the boundaries differently from what they have done. I appreciate the work they have carried out. They had to find the quota laid down in the Act, and bring it out as near as possible to 4,000 voters. The difficulty was to find that quota. Long narrow electorates are not in the best interests of the people living in those districts. If the electorates could have been divided into squares and community of interest had been more closely studied, it would have been better for the people of the State in general. The member for West Perth said I preferred half a loaf to no bread. Sometimes I still hold that opinion. After hearing the figures quoted by my leader, I am, however, forced to a different conclusion. The figures are correct. He pointed out conclusively that the country districts are not getting a fair deal. If the Bill becomes law, how long will it be before we get another opportunity to secure a redistribution of seats? This is a large State, and these readjustments ought to take place more frequently than has been the case in the past. Unfortunately, under a system of party politics, we have to depend to a certain extent on the policy of the Government. It puts me in mind of a big dog fighting a little dog. The big dog will get the little one down, and will try to keep him down, in his own interests. It may be a hard thing to say, but it seems to me to be like that with party politics. There ought to be no party politics in this matter. Unfortunately we can come to no other conclusion than that to a certain extent there is a little of party politics in this. Nine years ago the Government believed that the country districts should have 24 seats. Now that the rural population has increased and our products

have increased, the present Government say we ought to have only 21 seats. Is that fair?

**MR. STUBBS** (Wagin) [10.15]: I cannot give a silent vote on this Bill. The Premier said it had been decided that this should be a non-party matter. I quite agree with him. I honestly believe the Government are making a serious attempt to remove some of the extraordinary conditions under which we have suffered. I decided last session to support this procedure, for the reason that during the last 15 or 20 years the conditions on the goldfields have altered to such an extent that a readjustment of the boundaries was warranted. The Government went into facts and figures relating to the number of persons in the metropolitan area. Can any member point to any of the cities of Australia where the boundaries of the electorates have not been adjusted in accordance with the growth of population. Have they ever been adjusted in accordance with the views expressed by the Leader of the Country Party? I think the Government are justified in allotting five extra seats to the metropolitan area.

The Premier: This House provided for that when the Bill was passed last year.

Mr. Thomson: But we opposed it.

The Premier: You say you opposed it, but you did not divide the House.

**MR. STUBBS**: This is an honest attempt to improve the present position, which has caused us to be a laughing stock from one end of the State to the other. The population of the country districts is increasing rapidly, and there is nothing to hinder a subsequent Parliament from again adjusting the boundaries. To talk about sending this Bill back to the Commissioners is ridiculous. That would mean going to the country on the old boundaries.

Hon. G. Taylor: It would suit me.

**MR. STUBBS**: Members who brought that about would have something to answer for. If the Leader of the Opposition, when Premier, had made the redistribution of seats one of the planks of his platform, he would not have been in opposition so soon after 1918. His Bill was thrown out in Committee on the first vote. I remember the instance well. He made the mistake of his political life when he did not say, "I am going to stand or fall by a Redistribution of

Seats Bill." I may be wrong, but that is my humble opinion. So long as I am in this House I intend to voice my opinions, irrespective of whether, in doing so, I trample on someone's corns. If any man has a right to complain about the new boundaries in the agricultural districts, it is the member for Wagin. My territory has been extended nearly 100 miles to the east, and a good many miles to the South-West. I feel sure that about 2,000 names will be added to the Wagin roll before the next election. I feel sure also that if the rolls had been in the hands of the Commissioners when fixing the new boundaries, better results would have been obtained. About every three months I receive from the Electoral Department an amended roll. I do not know who is responsible for those amended rolls, showing certain names added and other names struck off. Since the last general election I have had sent to me no fewer than four amended rolls. This shows that at all events an honest attempt is being made by the Electoral Department to keep the rolls up to date.

Hon. G. Taylor: Those rolls are signed by the district electoral officer.

**MR. STUBBS**: Yes. I am convinced that the police, when going round to collect agricultural statistics from the farmers, get to know the names of people to be added to the rolls, with the result that cards are sent to them, while other people, who have left the district, are in turn struck off. It is a thousand pities that time should have been wasted on this evening's discussion as to sending back the report to the Commissioners.

Hon. G. Taylor: What about your Leader?

**MR. STUBBS**: I hope the Bill will be carried by an absolute majority, because it is in the best interests of the whole of Western Australia.

On motion by Mr. Griffiths, debate adjourned.

## LAPSED BILLS.

### *Council's Message.*

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to resume the discussion of a Bill for an Act to establish a hospital fund and for the administration thereof and also a Bill for an Act to

impose and fix the rate of contributions to the hospital fund under the provisions of the Standing Orders of the two Houses relating to lapsed Bills.

*House adjourned at 10.24 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Wednesday, 27th March, 1929.*

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

### BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

#### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [4.33]: I moved the adjournment of the debate in order that I might have an opportunity to look through the Bill. I do not like to be a party to passing Bills the contents of which I have not grasped. Having looked through the Bill, I find that the amendment is quite necessary and that the Bill is justified.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

Hon. J. Cornell in the Chair; the Honorary Minister in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 44 (b):

The HONORARY MINISTER: I desire to move an amendment to Clause 2. It has been suggested by the Solicitor-General for the purpose of making sure that there will be no delay regarding the operations of the

measure. In his minute the Solicitor-General suggests the addition of the following words at the end of the clause:—

and the words "which advances the board, as a State authority, is hereby authorised to accept, under and subject to the provisions of that Act," are inserted in the third line of the said Section 44 (b) between the figures "1928" and the word "may."

The Solicitor-General further says—

These words are no doubt implied by Section 44 (b) as enacted by the Act No. 35 of last session. But in the South Australian Advances for Homes Act No. 1876, as passed in November last, in Part IV. dealing with advances under the Commonwealth housing scheme, the South Australian Bank, as a "State authority" is by Section 47 expressly authorised to accept advances, and the omission of similar words in our Section 44 (b) might give rise to some question and delay; and it is most essential that the operations of the Workers' Homes Board should not be suspended. It is therefore desirable to insert the words.

In other words, the amendment suggested by the Solicitor-General is merely for the purpose of making it clear that our Workers' Homes Board is a State authority within the meaning of the Commonwealth housing scheme. I move an amendment—

That at the end of the clause the following words be added:—"and the words 'which advances the board, as a State authority, is hereby authorised to accept, under and subject to the provisions of that Act,' are inserted in the third line of the said Section 44 (b), between the figures '1928' and the word 'may'."

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I suggest to the Honorary Minister that he should place his amendment on the Notice Paper. The Crown Solicitor has had plenty of time to put the Bill in order, and now at the eleventh hour a further amendment is placed before us. I do not like dealing with amendments that I have not seen, and I suggest that progress be reported in order that we may scrutinise the amendment and deal with it to-morrow.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not object to postponing the further consideration of the amendment until to-morrow, but I can assure Mr. Lovekin that it is quite innocuous. It will merely avoid delay should someone raise a question as to whether the Workers' Homes Board is a State authority within the meaning of the Commonwealth scheme.

Hon. A. Lovekin: Will one day make any difference?