

repairs due to the damage done by the tenant.

The Honorary Minister: Such a man does not come under the Act.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Tenants like that are numerous. They are the people who take full advantage of every opportunity that comes their way, and of any legislation of this kind that is put on the statute-book.

Hon. E. H. Gray: They could not get protection under this Act.

Hon. H. SEDDON: They do get protection, and take every advantage of any loophole in the law to obtain a house rent free, and to avoid paying any rent whatever if they can possibly do so.

Hon. C. B. Williams: What did the landlord charge the tenant per week? I suppose he charged as much as he could get.

Hon. H. SEDDON: In this case the rent charged was lower than the average rent charged for the same class of house on the goldfields. The tenant was getting a good deal, and this is how he repaid the consideration extended to him. I ask the Honorary Minister to justify the extension of this legislation for a further term. The figures given to me indicate that the law is a dead letter. It should not have been introduced in view of the figures that were available to the Government, but were not disclosed to members of either House until the answers were given to a direct question put by me in this House.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [8.28]: Perhaps I should not have risen except for the remarks of the last speaker who raised the point as to the necessity for this legislation. He has asked for a reply from the Honorary Minister. I do not know what is in the Minister's mind, but I will tell the House what is in my mind. The answers to the question asked by Mr. Seddon prove that this law is a dead letter. It has outlived its usefulness. To use an ordinary, everyday expression, the Act is as dead as Julius Caesar. What was the necessity for bringing down the Bill? We all know the Act is a dead letter and that it is inoperative, and the Government know that too. We also know that ten of our number in this House are going to the country in March next. It is evident that the Government want to place upon us the responsibility of putting out this Bill so that they can bring it up against us on the hustings. I am going

to vote for the second reading in order to defeat the objects they have in view.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.30 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 25th September, 1935.

	PAGE
Questions: Electoral, Assembly rolls	855
War Service homes	855
Agricultural Bank Commissioners, Lakes districts' inspection	856
Railways, traffic management	856
Motions: National insurance, representation to Commonwealth Government	856
Agricultural Bank Act, to disallow regulation	861
Bills: Workers' Homes Act Amendment, 1R.	856
Financial Emergency Act Amendment, 1R.	856
Industries Assistance Act Continuance, 1R.	856
Divorce Amendment, 1R.	856
Plant Diseases Act Amendment, returned	861
Land Tax and Income Tax, returned	861
Cremation Act Amendment, Council's amendments	863
Electoral, 2R.	864

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

QUESTION—ELECTORAL, ASSEMBLY ROLLS.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Is it intended to print the Legislative Assembly electoral rolls in the near future? 2, If so, will he state when the new rolls will be available?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE replied: 1, Yes. 2, During October and early in November.

QUESTION—WAR SERVICE HOMES.

Mr. CLOTHIER asked the Treasurer: 1, What is the annual premium for insuring a dwelling valued at £500 under the War Service Homes Insurance Scheme? 2, What is the approximate annual premium for insuring a State worker's home of the same value? 3, What were the additional risks carried by the War Service Homes Scheme, and the additional advantages of their policy com-

pared with other insurance policies of the same type of insurance? 4, Is it possible for the Workers' Homes Board to underwrite the insurance of its own securities on the same comprehensive basis as the Commonwealth?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (for the Treasurer) replied: 1, Metropolitan area—Fremantle to Midland Junction inclusive:—War Service Homes Commission: Brick, 9s.; wood (unlined), £1 13s.; wood (lined with lath and plaster, asbestos, fibro or the like), £1 5s. 2, Perth and Fremantle, Subiaco, North Perth, Mt. Lawley, Maylands—Associated Companies: Brick, £1 4s.; wood (unlined), £4; wood (lined as above), £2 12s. Stamp duty—as per Act. 3, Additional risks carried by War Service Homes Insurance—Flood, tempest, riot, civil commotion, strikes, labour disturbances, burglary or house-breaking, including any attempt thereat, bursting of boilers, hot water pipes or heating apparatus, aircraft. 4, There is no provision in the Workers' Homes Act for the insurance of Workers' Homes securities under its own insurance scheme similar to that contained in the War Service Homes Act.

QUESTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK COMMISSIONERS.

Lakes Districts—Inspection.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Did the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank visit the Lakes King, Varley, and Carmody districts recently? 2, If so, who composed the party? 3, What route was followed, what stops were made, and where and for what duration were the halts? 4, Were the settlers in those districts notified of the visit, and what notice was given them? 5, Were meetings arranged at which the Commissioners were able to meet the settlers, and, if so, at what places were the meetings held? 6, If no meetings were arranged, did the Commissioners meet any of the settlers; and, if so, whom?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS replied: 1, Yes. 2, Three Commissioners, Secretary, Senior Branch Manager, and Acting Branch Manager. 3, (a) Newdegate to Palarup Rocks, thence Mt. Madden, Lake Camm, Lake Varley, and Lake Carmody districts. (b) Each farm where linking proposals required inspection and explanation. (c) Halts not timed. 4, No. 5, No meetings were

arranged by the Commissioners or with their consent. It was their desire that settlers be interviewed on their holdings. 6, Answered by five.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT.

Hon. P. D. FERGUSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What was the time of arrival at Midland Junction of the Midland Railway Company's train ex Geraldton on 23rd inst.? 2, What was the time of departure of the said train for Perth? 3, What was the reason for the delay? 4, Is it a fact that whilst the passengers on the Geraldton train were held up at Midland Junction, a suburban passenger train for Perth, passed through that station? 5, Is it a fact that there was ample accommodation on the suburban train for the passengers ex the Midland Company's line? 6, If so, why were they not allowed to utilise it? 7, Is it the usual practice to put passengers who have travelled long distances to the inconvenience and discomfort of waiting lengthy periods at stations so that suburban passengers can enjoy rapid transit?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, 10.26 p.m. 2, 11.5 p.m. 3, Shunting out a special Midland Company's truck containing a corpse. 4, Yes. 5, Yes. 6, Passengers could have joined suburban train had they so desired. 7, No. Nor was the transit of suburban passengers an influencing factor in this instance.

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Workers' Homes Act Amendment.
- 2, Financial Emergency Act Amendment. Introduced by the Minister for Justice (for the Premier).
- 3, Industries Assistance Act Continuance. Introduced by the Minister for Lands.
- 4, Divorce Amendment. Introduced by Mr. Fox.

MOTION—NATIONAL INSURANCE.

Representations to Commonwealth Government.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [4.37]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House representations should be made to the Commonwealth Government to establish at the earliest possible

date national insurance covering unemployment, as the first step towards the establishment of a comprehensive national insurance scheme.

Unemployment is a growing social evil, and in all probability it is the greatest evil and menace to society existing in the present day. During the last few years more consideration has been given to the question of unemployment than probably in any other stage of history. There has been a good deal of consideration given to it during the last hundred years, but never so much as since 1929. One frequently hears or reads in the newspapers the opinion that hours should be shortened in order to cope with unemployment. The wonderful improvement made in machines during the last hundred years—and this no one will contradict—has been continuously displacing men from employment, notwithstanding that almost invariably the workers engaged in industry reap practically no benefit. This is a problem, not only for Western Australia or indeed for Australia, for it is a world-wide problem; the world over is faced with the same problem. Australia particularly is in a chaotic condition regarding unemployment. That is brought before members of the House practically every day, for most members, I know, have the same experience as I have: we have men coming to us every day, some of them on part-time, some not working at all. They come to us in the hope that one can help them to get a full-time job somewhere. Provision has been made in most of the States to relieve unemployment, but the measures taken up to date only ameliorate the position and do not cope with it nearly as effectively as has been done in some other countries. There are numbers of families in which, under the present system, the father may be in a full-time job, but may have two or three grown sons out of work and unable to obtain work or relief from the department, and in consequence those sons cannot contribute at all to the income enjoyed by the family. Under the present system the tendency is to assist the thriftless and penalise the thrifty. To illustrate my meaning, I point out that in the good years 1928 and 1929 there were numbers of men enjoying reasonably good wages but making no provision at all for a rainy day. They spent everything on the Saturday,

and on Monday morning they were broke. When relief measures were taken by the State those men were immediately assisted, but the man who had been thrifty and saved a few pounds and had perhaps started to purchase his own home was unable, and still is unable, to get any assistance until he is practically destitute. That is the existing position. It is generally recognised and admitted that in times of economic stress the Government must bear a considerable part of the cost of relief. The Government must meet the more or less incalculable deficit which must arise from the giving of that assistance or relief, which is granted for the simple reason that the community cannot and will not allow men, unable through no fault of their own to find employment, to fall by the wayside. Therefore the Government must take on the responsibility of a guardian and render support to the social organisation. This recognition of the right of the worker to maintenance on some minimum scale is not all in favour of the worker; obviously it is uneconomic from a national standpoint to allow a willing worker to starve. Order could be maintained only with very great difficulty if crowds of blameless unemployed could not obtain the means, or the work which would permit them to provide the means, of livelihood for their families. The community benefits by the provision of a measure of assistance and relief because the burden consequent upon the support of the poor is lightened. Those who are disabled because of invalidity, or through being sick, or for whom suitable work cannot be found, possess a well-founded claim to more ample relief on the part of the State than they have hitherto enjoyed. To devise the most appropriate means of making this provision, however difficult it may be, is one of the highest obligations of any community that is based on the principles of Christianity. I do not believe it is possible for any private insurance company or corporation to provide a definite, reasonable and safe means of insurance to cope with the position as it is.

Mr. North: This is a bad time in which to start a scheme.

Mr. CROSS: It is probably the right time. We are emerging from the depression, and it is as well that we should get

ready now. History proves that depressions of larger or smaller dimensions occur every few years. Such tremendous increases in unemployment can only be met by a rational scheme of national insurance. It is necessary since periods of depression of great unemployment recur that the risk shall be spread over a considerable time, so that there shall not be more risk applying to bad years than applies to good years. To carry on such a scheme, which would involve the borrowing of money to keep it going in bad times, would not be possible in the case of any private insurance company. The subject matter of my remarks does not concern in any way the insurance indulged in by private companies. The financial basis of any scheme cannot be calculated with such exactitude as is practicable in the case of life assurance or fire insurance. There is too much uncertainty about the risk. There is hardly any limit in unemployment to which it is possible to go that can be said to be the very worst it is possible to reach. From the insurance point of view there is no risk unless there is uncertainty. All risks are not equally subject to indemnification by means of insurance. The economic function of insurance is not the entire elimination of risk or loss, but rather the substitution of a small known loss for a larger unknown loss. Society benefits through the accumulation of capital and capital reserves, which make good the position and a proportion of the loss due to unemployment. Insurance is mutual. An essential characteristic of insurance is that the payments made by all participants assist each participant in case of need. The more individuals who share a risk, the more cheaply can they all be covered, protected and provided for. It is precisely because insurance is mutual that public opinion, even in States and other countries that are predominantly capitalistic, has almost universally caused Governments to change their opinions and abandon the theory of individual insurance in favour of compulsory insurance. That applies particularly to health and unemployment insurance. There are many countries overseas which have made a genuine effort to introduce schemes to alleviate the position caused by bad periods of unemployment. Great Britain, by the National Insurance Act of 1911, dealt with health insurance in one part, and with unemployment insurance in another. The unemployment section

applied first of all to the building and engineering trades, and catered for about $2\frac{1}{4}$ million people. By 1916, when the war had been on for a couple of years, some dissatisfaction arose among the munition workers, who started an agitation for the Act to be applied to them. They thought the war would end quickly, and they wondered what would happen to them when they were thrown out of employment. In 1916 the unemployment section of the Act was extended to include munition workers, metal, leather, indiarubber and chemical workers, and the ammunition trade. Prior to that year the Act did not apply to any of these. In 1920 a new Act was brought in extending compulsory insurance to all manual workers except those engaged in agriculture and domestic employment. There was a definite reason in Great Britain why the compulsory provisions in the Insurance Act were not extended to agricultural workers. For centuries past in that country there has existed a practice whereby agricultural workers, both married and single, enter into annual contracts. The married men make their contracts from Lady Day, which is a date in April, and in some parts of England from Michaelmas Day, which is a day in September, and single men who deal with the traction forces on the farm, the teamsters or waggoners as they are called, also make their annual contracts. They have a yearly rate of pay and are not paid until the end of the contract. It is difficult to get any money in advance from any of the farmers. The contracts of single men usually date from the 14th May and terminate on the 7th May in the following year. There is very little unemployment in the agricultural industry in Great Britain now. I know from private correspondence that, particularly in the Fenn country, and the sugar-growing counties, since sugar beet has become an industry, a new era has opened up for agricultural labour in the Old Country. I think it is because of the annual contract system that the Act has not applied in that direction. The last amendment to the British Act covered 12,000,000 workers. A very considerable amount of caution was exercised in the beginning, but the limitations in the early years provided a good experimental basis. There are many good provisions in the British Act. When Australia does adopt national insurance, as it

will eventually do, it will be found that the experimental processes evolved under the British Act will afford very good guidance. The British Act specified that an unemployed worker must be capable and available for work. He must be genuinely seeking work, but be unable to obtain suitable employment. It may be argued that if we had an insurance scheme people would not benefit until their resources were exhausted. The British Act definitely provided in the 1924 amendment that every insured person had an absolute right to unemployment benefits, which meant that the thrifty man was not penalised. By an amendment passed in 1922 increased benefits were given to heads of families. The Government sought to assist a man according to his needs, so that the head of a family received an extra 5s. a week. An amount was also granted for each child. Although the British scheme was started in 1911, quite a number of amendments have been made with a view to improving the original Act. One might be inclined to question the cost of such a scheme. While I know that the scale of payment and costs in Great Britain could not apply in the same way in Australia because of the difference in the currency, I should like to tell members what the scheme costs the workers and the different sections concerned in Great Britain. The highest amount paid by the worker is 9d. per week. The employer pays 10d. The State usually pays 6½d. I say "usually" because in the case of a man on low earnings special provision is permissible, the worker paying less, and the State paying correspondingly more.

Mr. North: Is not the scheme heavily in debt?

Mr. CROSS: It may have been; not so much now as it was years ago. At one time the scheme was £30,000,000 in debt. It had power to borrow money. It can, if necessary, borrow £50,000,000. When good times return, the borrowings will be repaid. There are many schemes of insurance against unemployment in the world to-day. Nearly every European country has a scheme, either contributory or voluntary. In every case of contributory insurance the cost is borne by three parties, except as regards Italy and Russia. The parties paying are the worker, the employer, and the public authorities. I have pointed out that in the early stages of the British scheme, considerable

caution was exercised. After the scheme has operated from 1911 to date, a period of 24 years, no one in Great Britain is game to advocate the repeal of that legislation. That is a point I want to stress. Repeal has never even been suggested, and this fact suggests to me that the legislation represents a great improvement on conditions obtaining earlier. Queensland has an insurance scheme which began in 1922. That scheme applies to all wage-earners whose wages are fixed either by collective agreement or by the Industrial Arbitration Court. It includes all public servants. In Europe, more than 10 years ago, Russia, Italy, Austria and Poland established schemes. If anyone doubts that statement, I have available here the dates on which the insurance laws of those countries came into operation. Previously France, Norway, the Netherlands, Finland, Spain and Belgium had established either contributory or compulsory schemes. The Geneva Labour Report of 1925, a copy of which I have here, in a review of unemployment insurance at that date, stated that the problem of unemployment insurance was ripe for international review. Meantime what has Australia done about unemployment insurance? In 1908 the Commonwealth Government sent Mr. G. H. Knibbs, the Commonwealth Statistician, to Europe to inquire and report. I have here a copy of the report Mr. Knibbs submitted to the Commonwealth Parliament on the 9th September, 1910. There have been Royal Commissions and other investigations since then. And that is as far as Australia has got up to the present. Just fits of lassitude, nothing at all done, no real action. A few days ago the "West Australian" published something on this subject. The scheme has been revived once more. In fact, yet another inquiry is in progress. Sir Frederick Stewart has been sent by the Commonwealth to make inquiries in Europe and America relative to national insurance, including unemployment insurance. In the "West Australian" of the 27th August there is the following comment:—

Proposals for the establishment of a system of national insurance will probably be discussed at one of the series of meetings of the Federal Cabinet which begin next week.

Four days later, on the 31st August, the same newspaper published an inspired state-

ment. I will read it to show how much is intended to be done—

National Insurance.

Commonwealth Proposals.

Care of Unemployed.

Transfer of State Taxes.

Sydney, Aug. 30.—It was stated in Federal Ministerial circles in Sydney yesterday that the proposed system of national insurance against unemployment and sickness would have far-reaching consequences. The draft plan has been completed and its main provisions are as follows:—

- (1) Transfer from the States to the Commonwealth of the unemployment relief taxes, aggregating £13,000,000 annually.
- (2) Allocation of relief to the unemployed on a variable basis.
- (3) Control of, and payment by, the Commonwealth of uniform pensions, including widows' pensions.
- (4) Control of superannuation schemes.
- (5) Uniform system of workers' compensation.
- (6) Creation of a new department to give effect to these proposals.

The Commonwealth Government proposes to convene an important conference of Premiers and Ministers from the States to discuss the scheme and to receive their co-operation. The object of the proposals is to supplant the State schemes which are now in operation.

The Premier (Mr. Stevens) and members of the New South Wales Cabinet have already expressed their approval of a national insurance scheme. At the last State elections a promise to establish a scheme of unemployment insurance was made and the State Government will preferably co-operate in a national scheme rather than establish a purely State one.

The Commonwealth authorities themselves did not make a statement: but so far as I am aware, they have not disavowed the "inspired" statement which I have just read. Let me express my opinion that the Commonwealth authorities know full well that the States will not agree to those proposals. My view is that those proposals have been put up so that the Commonwealth need not do anything for a few years. That is my considered opinion, and that is why I am moving the motion. We have been wasting time long enough. It is time something was actually done. If an insurance Bill embracing all kinds of things is introduced, there will be so much argument among the States that nothing will result. I hold that unemployment is the one thing for which some definite provision should be made. Another British Dominion, Canada, has this year introduced national insurance against unemployment.

Confirmation of that statement is to be found in the cable columns of the "West Australian" of the 5th September, where the Prime Minister of that Dominion, Mr. Bennett, is reported as having discussed the subject with Sir Frederick Stewart. The latter states that he found the Canadian authorities anxious for greater centralisation of unemployment relief, to which end was recently passed the Unemployment Insurance Act, largely based on the British Act. So Canada has done something. The "West Australian" of the 5th September published another comment on the British insurance scheme. That comment refers only to the health section of the British Act, but is especially illuminating as proving that the people of Great Britain do not desire to discard that section. The cablegram reads—

National Insurance.

British Scheme's Success.

(British Official Wireless.)

London, Sept. 3.—The report of the Ministry of Health for the year ended March 31 last gives an arresting survey of the chief developments during the 25 years of the King's reign in the Ministry's main services under the national health and pensions insurance scheme—"one of the most memorable developments of public health."

At present 16,450,000 persons are insured, and in the last 10 years more than £150,000,000 has been disbursed in statutory sickness and indemnity benefits, and more than £90,000,000 in medical benefit. Yet so soundly has the scheme proved to have been constructed that during the life of the scheme it has been found practicable to expend a total of over £53,000,000 in additional benefits.

Health expenditure is shown to be a long-term investment. Infant mortality in the first year, 1,000 live births, fell from 105 in 1910 to 64 in 1933.

In regard to housing, the report states that some 15,300,000 acres, or more than two-fifths of England and Wales, is now subject to some form of town planning control.

This proves that the health section of the British scheme of national insurance is doing excellent work. I hold that both sections of the Act are doing excellent work, but that the more important section for early introduction here is national insurance against unemployment. When that is established, the Act can be extended to include provision for health insurance. This problem is not a Western Australian problem. It is an all-Australian problem. Only on a broad basis can anything be achieved. Last night the member for Nedlands (Hon.

N. Keenan) said unemployment was an Australia-wide problem. I agree with the hon. member. I believe further, that national insurance against unemployment is an Australia-wide problem. To cope with it, an Australia-wide remedy is needed. I think the member for Nedlands will agree with me on that point. No one State can cope with the problem. The plain truth is that the longer the period a scheme embraces, and the greater the number of participants, the greater is the possibility of success. And not only that, but I honestly believe that only the provision of some such insurance scheme will enable Australia to put back its part-time workers into full time. In the community there are many men who might be termed unemployable. I refer to the type of men who at present cannot satisfy the Federal authorities of their fitness to receive invalid pensions. The Federal authorities declare that those men are not in bad enough health to entitle them to invalid pensions. The State authorities say those men are too sick to work. And that is the truth. I believe that a scheme of national insurance will enable us to put all our workers back into full time. Those for whom work could not be found, should receive unemployment benefits. I believe the scheme is required and is long overdue. When we come to think of it, there was a time when Australia was said to lead the world in its social legislation. To-day we are lagging behind. Nearly every country in Western Europe has provided schemes, and Australia is now well in the rear of other countries regarding social legislation. I hope the Commonwealth Government will take immediate steps to introduce a scheme, and I think it is quite possible to formulate one that will be suitable to our conditions. We could take from the British Act the parts that appeal to us, and I certainly think we shall be slipping if we cannot improve upon that measure. At least we should make a try. I hope there will be a fairly comprehensive debate on the motion. It is not a party matter, and the scheme is highly desirable. My idea in tabling the motion was to remind the Federal Government of all the inquiries that have been made in the past, and endeavour to secure some action to deal with the worst phase of insurance, that relating to unemployment. If we succeed in getting some-

thing done, I shall be satisfied. I have not moved the motion for any other reason than that I believe something must be done. In the circumstances, I have no apologies to offer for raising the subject. Before I conclude, I would like to draw the attention of members to a reference in the annual report of the Public Service Commissioner. In the course of his report the Commissioner said—

It is stated that Western Australia has the unenviable position of being the only British possession without a superannuation scheme.

That does not reflect much credit upon us, and Australia is the only large Dominion without an insurance scheme against unemployment.

On motion by Mr. Moloney, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

- 1, Plant Diseases Act Amendment.
With amendments.
- 2, Land Tax and Income Tax.
Without amendment.

MOTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT.

To Disallow Regulation.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [5.20]: I move—

That Regulation 23, made under the Agricultural Bank Act, 1934, published in the "Government Gazette" of the 6th September, 1935, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 17th September, 1935, be and is hereby disallowed.

Regulation 23 reads as follows:—

(a) All applications shall be accompanied by a fee of one per cent. of the amount applied for to cover the inspection and valuation.

(b) Such fees shall be retained by the Commissioners, whether the required advance or any part thereof is made or not, unless the Commissioners in their discretion otherwise direct.

It will be noticed that the amount of the fee to be lodged with any application for an advance is not very large, and it is not exactly on that account that I am protesting, but rather against the principle involved. The fee is said to be required to cover the cost of inspection and valuation. When a client makes an application to the Agricultural Bank for an advance, it is necessary for an officer to in-

spect the titles to ascertain if they are in order. In my opinion, that is part of the ordinary duties of an officer of the Bank, and there is no justification for passing the charge on to the client. It is not done by the Associated Banks. When a bank commences operations, it is necessary to establish various departments and of these the securities department will deal with securities. When an application is made for an advance, therefore, it merely becomes part of the ordinary work of the securities department to ascertain if the titles for the property concerned are in order. In those circumstances, it is not right that the cost of any such work shall be a charge against the client. Similarly the same position arises regarding valuations. Throughout the country the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank have their officers who are engaged on valuation work, which is merely part of the duties of such officers. Neither the securities clerk, nor the officer in the country who deals with valuations in a particular district, is employed full time on that work. They are engaged in other tasks on behalf of the bank. They are employed on what might be termed minor duties. Consequently the bank is getting from those officers work that is done more efficiently by them than if it were undertaken by a junior officer. The efficiency on one hand is counterbalanced by the work that the officers have to do in carrying out their ordinary functions. Another reason why I oppose the imposition of this charge is that when it is imposed in one place, it is regarded as a precedent for levying the charge in another place. For instance, when an application is made by a farmer for wire-netting he has to provide a deposit of one per cent. or one guinea. Even if his application is refused, the farmer has to forfeit that deposit. I see no justification whatever for the imposition of these extra charges to the clients of the bank. I have recently received a number of complaints from farmers because of the forfeiture of their deposits when applying for wire netting. Even when their applications for such were refused, they had to forfeit the fees to which I have drawn attention. That is my particular reason for opposing the regulation. The amount involved is not large, and the matter does not require much debating. It is merely a matter of principle

that I am dealing with, and I hope I shall receive the support of members generally in my desire to disallow the regulation. I confidently anticipate, if I may judge from the speeches I have heard from members sitting on the Government side of the House in reference to the large profits made by the banks, that I will receive their support in my endeavour to have the regulation set aside. Such charges as that to which I have drawn attention go to make up the profits of the banking institutions, and it is not fair to impose an extra charge for work done that should be undertaken in the ordinary course of an officer's duty.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [5.27]: There is nothing new about this regulation. It has been in existence ever since the Agricultural Bank was first established. It existed when members now in Opposition had the responsibility of carrying on the Government of the State. The regulation specifies that when an individual makes an application for a loan he must lodge a deposit of 1 per cent. That deposit is to cover inspection costs, because when an application is made for a loan, a special trip has to be made by an inspector of the Agricultural Bank to inspect the farm and report on the improvements that are intended to be carried out. Such a trip may involve a journey of more than a hundred miles, so that the fee of 1 per cent. cannot cover the cost of the inspector's work. I am surprised that members opposite should raise any objection to something that they did not take exception to during all the years their party were in office.

Mr. Thorn: You will not blame all of us for that.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are becoming rather tired of this continual cry of "Give." Who bears all this cost? Who must pay for all these concessions that some members urge these days? Those concessions are requested on behalf of one section of the community, but they will have to be paid for by other sections of the community who are not better off and whose future is probably not nearly so assured as is that of the section in whose interests the motion has been moved. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward) said that members on the Government side of the House would be impressed by the motion because of the profits

made by the banks. There is nothing in that suggestion. Certainly the banks make substantial profits, but what is the position regarding the Agricultural Bank? During the course of the Address-in-reply debate, I informed members that the arrears of interest that the farmers were not paying, or were not able to pay, amounted to £3,063,000, and in order to finance that leeway the general taxpayer had to find an extra £138,000 per year. Let members peruse the report of the Commissioner of Taxation and they will see that last year the farmers paid £3,000 only in income tax. They paid no emergency taxation because they had no income.

Mr. Patrick: That only shows the condition of the industry. It is not a good argument.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It shows that they ought to be reasonable. The poor fellows who are carrying their swags or who are working 3,000 or 4,000 feet below the surface are the ones who are paying it. The hon. member's proposition is a very unreasonable one. Does he realise that the arrears of water rates amount to £150,000? This year we will have paid £80,000 more to the Commonwealth Government for wire and wire netting than we have received from the persons to whom the wire was supplied. I regard the motion as a bit of political kite-flying. The hon. member evidently adopts the attitude, "If we can get the concession, it will not matter because it will not come out of our pockets." In the interests of a fair deal, I maintain that what was good enough for the Government in the past is good enough for the Government of the present or the future. In the past members who represent the National and Country Parties opposed the elimination of the fee. Now apparently they suggest that they were wrong, and insist that the fee be no longer imposed. Members opposite should realise that there is reason in all things. I have heard no farmer object to paying this application fee, and there is no reason why he should object. Would any member object to paying the fee if he were getting a loan? What astounds me is the utter lack of patriotism exhibited towards the State. All the energies of members opposite appear to be directed to getting from the State something for nothing. Last night I listened to a speech that was being delivered in another place, and it largely comprised

suggestions of what the State should do for the individual. Argument of that kind impresses me as being very unfair. I regret that I cannot possibly agree to the motion.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly—in reply) [5.32]: In briefly replying to the Minister, let me assure him that I am not going to accept any responsibility for what has been done in the past. I had nothing to do with it. Suppose it was done in the past, I remind the Minister that it is never too late to find out that something is wrong, and rectify it. Last session the Minister introduced the Agricultural Bank Bill and considered many alterations and revisions, which constituted an admission that the provisions in the past had been wrong. The imposition of the fee is wrong; there is no justification for it. The officers are paid to do the work, and there is no need to impose a further charge on clients to meet the cost of officers for doing that which they are already paid to do. Nothing was further from my mind than an attempt to make political capital out of the motion. So long as I occupy a seat in the House, if I find that charges are being unjustly levied, I will do my best to get an alteration, no matter what section of the community may be involved. The Minister quoted the arrears of interest and water rates. Those figures have nothing to do with the question; it is a matter of the administration of the Bank. If interest is allowed to fall into arrears, that is the responsibility of the Bank officials. The regulation permits of the Bank making a charge for which there is no justification, and that was my reason for moving that the regulation be disallowed.

Question put and negatived.

BILL—CREMATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Amendments.

Schedule of two amendments made by the Council now considered.

In Committee.

Mr. Sleeman in the Chair; Mr. Tonkin (for Mr. Hawke) in charge of the Bill.

No. 1. Clause 1:—Substitute the figures "1935" for the figures "1934" in line 7.

Mr. TONKIN: The Bill was originally introduced in 1934 and it is necessary that it should be dated 1935. I move—

That the amendment be agreed to.

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

No. 2. Clause 4:—Substitute the figures "1935" for the figures "1934" in line 40.

On motion by Mr. Tonkin, the foregoing amendment was agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—ELECTORAL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 17th September.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [5.37]:

This Bill, which is a very extensive one, can more effectively be dealt with in the Committee stage than on the second reading. As a matter of fact, it alters very little the principles contained in the original Act, which was introduced by the member for Nedlands some years ago.

The Minister for Justice: Did not the late Mr. Davy introduce it?

HON. C. G. LATHAM: I am not referring to Mr. Davy's Bill; I am referring to the original Act which was introduced when the member for Nedlands was Attorney General. No doubt that measure served its purpose well until certain individuals became very clever.

Mr. Marshall: They were not clever.

HON. C. G. LATHAM: By their cleverness they were able to defeat the object of the law. They obtained claim cards, and those that were satisfactory to them they forwarded to the Electoral Department, while those that they considered to be not in their interests were mislaid for the time being, and consequently only certain of the people who signed them got their names on the roll. Worse than that, probably, was the fact that this practice permitted the duplication of votes. An instance of that was revealed to us in a decision given by the court a little while ago in a contested case. Hence there was justification for amending the Act. While I am not sure that the proposed amendments will achieve all that we ought to do, it may be a good idea to test them out and ascertain whether they will obviate the abuses to which I have referred. The Bill has been the subject of a great deal of consideration by a joint select committee of the two Houses that was afterwards converted into an honorary Royal Commission. The

measure before us is almost identical with the Bill to which the Royal Commission agreed, with the exception pointed out by the Minister, namely the adoption of a claim card with a perforated portion which would constitute a receipt to the person who made the claim. I think it would have been a good idea had the Government adopted that proposal, because it might have aided the person making the claim in showing who had collected the card. The Government, however, have decided not to adopt that proposal. That seems to be the only difference between the recommendations of the Royal Commission and the Bill. The measure provides also for compulsory voting. I think it is agreed that if a person is compelled to have his name on the roll, he should afterwards exercise his vote. Compulsory voting is a departure from the existing law. There is one provision that I would have liked the Minister to include in the Bill and probably he will agree to adopt it. In the amendments we have followed fairly closely the provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act, and I think it would be wise to adopt the hours on polling day observed at Commonwealth elections. The Commonwealth hours for voting are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., while for a State election the hours are 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Frequently electors arrive at the poll a few minutes after 7 p.m., being under the impression that the poll would close at 8 p.m. Such an alteration would not have any political significance, and the Minister might well agree to the alteration. If the hours are made uniform, electors will have no reason for misunderstanding the position. The Electoral Act is not designed for the benefit of members of Parliament; it is for the benefit of the electors, and I am sure members will consider it entirely from that angle. It is intended in this democratic country to give the vote to every person over the age of 21 years, and we should give it to each elector in as easy a way as possible.

Mr. Moloney: What about the Upper House?

HON. C. G. LATHAM: At present I am speaking of this Chamber; I will deal with the other Chamber afterwards. The measure provides for each elector voting for representatives in this House one vote and one vote only. By subterfuges, some persons, it has been proved, have had more than one vote. This Bill will tend to obviate, or at

any rate lessen, that sort of illegal act, and members will have to regard the measure from the point of view of the electors. The main thing is to give them the right to have their names put on the roll in as simple a way as possible, with provision, of course, to prevent fraud. That was the object behind the recommendations of the commission. A second essential is to see that every elector has only one vote.

Mr. Cross: Does that apply to the Legislative Council?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The hon. member has made one speech this afternoon, and I would be glad if he waited for his turn to speak on this Bill. If he desired to speak, why did not he move the adjournment of the debate last week?

Mr. Marshall: Do not get annoyed.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Persistent interjecting by certain members is objectionable.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We on this side of the House do endeavour to permit other members to make their speeches without interruption. The Bill intends that every elector for this House shall have one vote and one vote only. It is the duty of every member to see that that privilege is not abused. I believe that members regard the law from that angle.

Mr. Sleeman: How do men get more than one vote?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We had proof recently that certain men had voted more than once.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: For the Legislative Council, not for this House.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Would the hon. member say it has never been done for this House?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I can say that, to my knowledge, it has never been done.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The hon. member professes to be very unsophisticated. He knows that it has been done.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: In voting for this House?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes. It has been proved that votes were recorded in the names of people who were dead.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: When did that happen?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It was proved conclusively enough to the Royal Commission. It was found also that people who were away from the State had recorded

their votes. It is the duty of every member to see that the public are not cheated, and that kind of thing is certainly cheating when one person has greater voting power than another. It defeats democracy and I hope the House will look at it from that point of view. After all, this is the people's law and a very important law. The Constitution Act, of course, is the most important, but the Electoral Act was originally part of the Constitution Act. Today it is equal in importance with the Constitution Act and therefore we should give it serious consideration and look at it not from our own point of view but from that of the electors. With regard to the franchise of the Legislative Council, no doubt another place will look after itself and will not require much assistance from this House. The Bill makes an alteration there. The recommendation of the Royal Commission was to extend the residential qualification and that is quite a departure from the old order of things. Previously, a person who had a lease, or was renting an office, was entitled to a vote. He would be on the ratepayers' list,—the roll of the municipality or road board. Under the Bill before us this is taken away. The member for Guildford-Midland said he had never heard of any person exercising more than one vote for this House, Legally, of course, no one is entitled to more than one vote, but illegally more votes than one have been recorded. In connection with the Legislative Council, a person is entitled to one vote for each province. Under the Bill the number of votes has been limited to four for any one property. We know that in the past, voting for the Upper House has been abused, and we had an instance of it at an election not long ago. Therefore we should tighten up our legislation to prevent cheating by certain people who imagine they can defeat the intentions of an Act of Parliament. The Royal Commission did their work very well and I ask members, when the Committee stage is reached, to go through the Bill clause by clause and subject all to the closest scrutiny. It is our duty to do so from the electors' point of view. We must see to it that the intention of the Act is carried out and that each vote shall have one value, instead of an individual, by improper means, voting twice.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You seem obsessed with the idea that people have voted twice. I do not know where you got it from; there have never been any prosecutions.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The trouble is to get evidence on which to prosecute, and the difficulty in the past has been that the Chief Electoral Officer has never been able to sheet it home to the individuals who voted in that way. When the Bill passes, we hope to have clean and up-to-date rolls, and so provide that every man shall have an equal right in respect of voting.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: If you cannot prove a thing, you have no right to assume it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know whether the hon. member has ever checked his rolls. I can give instances of votes having been recorded in the names of persons who were dead. In one instance there were two votes registered in the name of a person who was dead. Evidently, two different people knew that he was dead and they voted at two different polling places. I am telling the hon. member something that I know to be correct. I found it out by checking the roll.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The clerk at the polling booth may have made a mistake.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The votes were recorded in the names of persons who were either dead or were out of the State.

Mr. Wansbrough: It must have been a postal vote.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, the vote was recorded at a polling place. I told the member for Guildford-Midland that he was unsophisticated, and I am glad to know, that he is really innocent in this respect.

The Minister for Mines: I must be quite as unsophisticated as the member for Guildford-Midland because I have never heard of such a thing happening.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister has been away for so long and has enjoyed himself so much, and done such important work for the State, that he has quite forgotten what took place before his departure.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You are making a speech about something that has never happened. You are quite wrong.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I like that. If the hon. member wants proof, it can be supplied. As I said, members should make it their duty to go carefully through each clause when the Bill is in Committee and

see that the intentions of the Royal Commission are given effect to. The law was a very good law originally, and continued so until the dishonest person came along, and then we know what happened. He was not clever but unscrupulous. It is generally admitted to-day that the person who carries out criminal acts is more clever than he was a few years ago. At the same time, the authorities have developed the instinct for discovering the culprits. The Bill is one that every member should understand. It was proved recently in this House that certain members did not know that there were certain provisions in the law. After all, good government is decided by the members who represent the people in the Legislature, and so we should be careful to pass good laws. I hope the Bill will not be rushed through and that members will be given every opportunity to deal with it carefully.

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne) [5.55]: Although this is essentially a Committee Bill, I should like information from the Minister on one or two points before we get into Committee. When we are in Committee we know that once the Chairman gets into his stride, it is a difficult matter to keep pace with him. I am glad the Leader of the Opposition mentioned the qualifications essential for enrolment for the Council because that seems to have given the Royal Commission the greatest trouble. There seemed to have been a difficulty in the framing of qualifications that could readily be understood by the electors, qualifications upon which the Chief Electoral Officer could give a definite decision. That official seems to be a bit hazy on the matter at present, and I doubt whether he will be any less hazy when the new provision goes through. No doubt it is a hard matter to frame qualifications that can be understood. The remedy for this is very simple, that is to make the qualifications for the Council the same as those for the Assembly. There are one or two provisions in the Bill with which I am not at all enamoured. One is that a person is liable to a penalty up to £50 for not sending in forthwith a claim card that he accepts for transmission. In the course of his speech the Minister said that "forthwith" meant within two or three days. To me that is a new meaning. "Forthwith," I should say, meant what it said, that is, immediately.

Mr. Sleeman: As soon as possible.

Mr. RODOREDA: Then why does the Bill not say as soon as possible? If we declared "at the first possible opportunity," I would agree with that, but I certainly will not agree to "forthwith" and to the penalty of £50 if the claim card is not transmitted forthwith. The main object of the Bill is to alter the procedure in regard to postal voting. The existing provisions certainly leave room for fraud more than those proposed by the Bill. But it seems to me that this part of the Bill has been framed without regard to the fact that voting will be compulsory. We find that voting in absence—that, by the way, is a clumsy phrase—means that a man who is away from his electorate on polling day can vote at a polling booth where he may be, but only at a prescribed booth. That means he cannot go to any polling booth to vote; he must go to the polling booth prescribed by the Chief Electoral Officer. Probably in country electorates every polling booth will be prescribed, but I do not suppose they will be prescribed in city or suburban areas, otherwise there would be no necessity for this provision. If we are to have voting compulsory, we should make available every possible facility for electors to record their votes, and not tie them down to prescribed polling places. I can imagine an elector going to a booth and being informed that he cannot vote there, that he must go to one in another locality, for instance at Marquis-street or William-street. Why should an elector be put to all that trouble? We should alter that clause to provide that an elector may vote at any polling place. There is another clause, under which the returning officer at the close of nominations can send out ballot papers to people who have applied for them. That clause will disfranchise some of the electors, for there is no chance of the electors getting ballot papers sent out to them and being in a position to send them back again between nomination day and polling day. A lot of places in the North-West are 150 miles away from the end of the mail service, and the mail service may run only once a month. So what chance have those people to get ballot papers sent out to them and return them before polling day? I cannot see any reason why those ballot papers should not be sent out when the

writ is issued, instead of withholding them until nomination day.

The Minister for Justice: How could that be done before the candidates are known?

Mr. RODOREDA: The elector could hold the ballot paper till he learnt who the candidates were, by wireless or other means. Under the present postal vote system, as soon as the nominations are received the elector can go along the same day or the day after and record a postal vote. But under the proposed system the ballot paper will have to leave the returning officer on nomination day and do the return journey up to the elector and back before polling day, so much shorter time is being given for the electors to record their votes.

Mr. Sampson: Do they have to rely on the wireless to know the names of the candidates?

Mr. RODOREDA: Yes, and some of the electors have no wireless. At three stations which I visited ten days before the elections nobody knew who the candidates were!

Hon. C. G. Latham: We have had that in the city here.

Mr. RODOREDA: Maybe, but those people up there had no means of finding out who the candidates were. Those are the people to whom we should be anxious to give every voting facility.

Mr. Sampson: You must have the names of the candidates, because the voting is preferential.

Mr. RODOREDA: Again, under the Bill neither a candidate nor his agent can receive votes to be transmitted by him to the returning officer. That absolutely disfranchises a large number of people. At the last election I lodged votes for electors who, until I explained to them, did not know who the candidates were, and who had no other means of getting their votes along to the polling booth. I previously went out and told them who the candidates were, and they filled in their ballot papers at the station and handed them to me to be lodged. The position is that if a candidate or his agent cannot bring in those votes they certainly will not come in. I cannot see the harm in a candidate or his agent handling this type of vote. There was a possibility of fraud under the old

system, for a postal vote officer could open the envelope in which the ballot paper had been placed and could destroy the ballot paper or render it informal.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What is to prevent an unscrupulous candidate destroying half the ballot papers—those unfavourable to him—which he is carrying to the polling booth?

Mr. RODOREDA: But that could not be done, for he does not know how the votes have been cast. A very serious position would arise if one of the ballot papers was destroyed, as under the new system they will all be numbered.

Mr. Patrick: But a candidate should not be allowed to bring in those votes.

Mr. RODOREDA: There are no other means of getting them in, and so the candidate or his agent has always done it in the past.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They ought not to be allowed to do it.

Mr. RODOREDA: Under the old system there may have been abuses, both in the city and in the country, but I cannot see where abuses could arise under the new system. I have endeavoured to visualise what will happen at an election. We provide for three types of votes, namely the voter who votes at the booth in his own electorate on polling day, the voter who votes at a polling booth out of his own electorate, and the voter who votes in absence—the equivalent of the old postal votes. Under the new provision all the postal votes—if I may be permitted for convenience to call them by that name—will have to go to the Chief Electoral Officer in Perth and will be sorted out by him and counted. He will then telegraph the result of his first count to the returning officer in the outback electorate. If no candidate secures an absolute majority as the result of the first count, the Chief Electoral Officer will have to parcel up all those votes and send them to the outer returning officer to have further counts made. That will mean considerable delay, for the Chief Electoral Officer may have to wait until he receives ballot boxes from, say, Esperance and other equally distant places, because there may be some absentee votes or postal votes in those boxes. So the count in Perth will be delayed until boxes have been received from all voting centres.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The same as at a Federal election.

Mr. RODOREDA: But it means considerable delay. It will be a week or ten days after election day before the Chief Electoral Officer will be in a position to telegraph to the outer returning officer his first count, and if no candidate has an absolute majority as the result of that count, the Chief Electoral Officer will have to send out the ballot papers again to be counted. I cannot see why all votes should have to come to Perth. Of course when the secession referendum was taken all votes had to come to Perth, but on that occasion there was only the one count, and that was the end of it. What is the reason for having in the Bill provision that all country votes shall be sent to Perth to be counted, instead of being sent direct to the returning officer whom they concern? So, too, with the absentee or postal votes. Under the proposed new system the Chief Electoral Officer's office in Perth will become a giant clearing house for the whole State. The only reason I can see why ballot papers should be sent down here is so that the signatures on the application forms might be checked with the signatures on the claim cards. However, if that were to be done, it would be two months before the result of the election could be published.

Mr. Patrick: Not many of your electors will be unable to vote at their own booths.

Mr. RODOREDA: But it is not those electors alone, it is all those who will be absent on polling day. However, if that is the only reason for bringing in all the country votes, I do not think it is a valid reason for causing all the avoidable delay. We should give some consideration to that point. In the Bill, of course, the Chief Electoral Officer is not instructed to check the signatures on the ballot papers with those on claim cards, but only with those on application forms. I should like the Minister, when replying, to give some attention to the points I have raised, so that in Committee they can be dealt with.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [6.14]: I will support the second reading, because the Bill is undoubtedly a bona fide attempt to correct a number of things in the electoral law which require correction. Still there are one or two matters which I should like the Minister to deal with when replying to the debate. In Clause 18, dealing with Legislative Council electors, reference is made to

registered leaseholds or freeholds. I suggest that there are numbers of lease agreements which are never registered, nor protected by caveats, yet are perfectly bona fide. I should like the Minister to consider that.

The Minister for Justice: What if the elector did not have a lease at all?

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. WATTS: The member for Murchison asked if I could justify the qualifications required for the Legislative Council. I do not propose to attempt it; I will leave that to the hon. member. I was suggesting liberalisation with respect to leases, and I suggested that such leases should not require to be registered. Many leases are not registered, but perfectly bona fide documents could be produced to the registrar to satisfy him as to who the leaseholders are. I suggest that some provision should be made for that to be done. It is also provided that when objections are lodged the objector shall put up a fee of 2s. 6d. in respect of each objection. In the case of isolated objections that is perhaps a reasonable proposition. There was one case in the Katanning district some 2½ years ago when about 220 objections had to be lodged by one candidate. Of these 186 were allowed by the magistrate, and the remainder would have been allowed but for technical errors and mistakes in spelling. To ask the candidate to lodge 220 half-crowns, as set out in the Act, and as proposed in this Bill, is unreasonable. It should be sufficient to provide for a maximum of say £5 to cover all objections that are lodged. It would be within the power of the registrar to provide for the payment of costs if the objections were frivolous or were unsupported. In the case under review something like £30 had to be lodged to support objections which were perfectly bona fide, as is proved by the fact that the magistrate wrote off more than three-fourths of the names objected to. I wish to refer to Clause 51, paragraph 22A.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in discussing clauses of the Bill on the second reading.

Mr. WATTS: It is proposed that when an elector has been objected to and the objection has been lodged, and is still under consideration, he is to be allowed to vote in absentia but may not do so in person at the polling booth. I do not under-

stand why that is necessary, and I hope the Minister will afford some information on the point. A penalty is provided for failure to deliver a claim card when it is given to another elector to hand in. No penalty is provided in the case of absentee votes that are sent in through other electors to be brought into the final count. I suggest that opportunities for fraud are likely to arise through the handing over of a vote to a third party to be taken to the returning officer. I should like to know what underlies that proposition. It would be a great deal better, to avoid all prospective fraud, to disregard that proposal altogether.

The Minister for Justice: You would not debar a man from the right to vote, would you? Suppose the mail closed a week before polling day. What would happen to his vote?

Mr. WATTS: The man in the country who wants to vote usually knows all about the mail services. I suggest that at any rate there should be a penalty no different from that provided in the case of failure to deliver claim cards. It is more serious to fail to deliver a vote than it is to fail to deliver a claim card.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [7.35]: I support the second reading of the Bill. I agree that some reform in our electoral system is urgently required. During election time in recent years there have been many abuses, particularly of the postal vote system. I am reluctant to say I do not think this Bill will do justice to all.

The Minister for Justice: That is admitted.

Mr. MARSHALL: It will be a hardship, especially on those people who are far removed from centres of activity.

Mr. Raphael: Peak Hill, for instance.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not suppose any difficulty would occur there, because a polling both would be established at Peak Hill. Those who live in that town and close to it would probably be provided with facilities for voting at election time. Where is there provision for the circumstances I am about to relate? Assume there is no election in the Murchison district. It must not be forgotten that at the moment there are many people on the move both into and out of the outer goldfields areas. If there were no election for the Murchison electorate, those who migrated into it a few

weeks prior to the election would find themselves in the invidious position of being unable probably to act rapidly enough to comply with the law and to claim a vote. If there were no election there would be no polling both. It would, therefore, be impossible for the absentee voter to record his vote, and the only remaining facility left would be for him to send to the Chief Electoral Officer for a ballot paper.

The Minister for Justice: He would send to the nearest registrar.

Mr. MARSHALL: But that officer would not be provided with ballot papers if there were not an election.

The Minister for Justice: He would have something like postal vote forms, to be supplied on request.

Mr. MARSHALL: So long as provision of some sort is made one cannot speak in derogatory terms of the Bill. If there is one thing that has been omitted that is of more importance than those which have been included, it is any reference to altering the franchise of the Legislative Council. It is remarkable that in these days of alleged democracy, when other nations which are behind Australia in most reforms have long since abolished plural voting, that we retain it. In contradistinction to what is democratic we find that not only have we plural voting, and that is permissible under the Bill, but the qualification of bricks and mortar and broad acres takes precedence over the individual. The Government would have been well advised to convert the Legislative Council to an understanding that the time is long overdue when we should fall in with democratic ideas, and that if there is any necessity for two Chambers, both should at least exist upon democratic principles. There is one State in the Commonwealth that has been carrying on with a one-Chamber legislature.

Mr. Raphael: And doing well.

Mr. MARSHALL: Remarkably well, and better than other legislatures if the judgment of the electors of that State can be taken as a guide. At the last election in that State the Government were returned with a greater majority than ever.

Mr. Thorn: You are only expressing your opinion.

Mr. MARSHALL: I am telling the House exactly what happened.

Mr. Raphael: They nearly wiped out the Country Party there.

Mr. MARSHALL: It would have been a blessing to that State if that had happened, and it will be a blessing we shall experience here in the near future. In Queensland the Parliament consists of one Chamber. Even if the argument exists for the retention of two Houses of legislature in Western Australia, surely both should exist on a democratic basis. We have seen glaring spectacles in this State. About 220,000 electors return 50 representatives for this Chamber, which carries the whole responsibility of Government and administration, whilst in these alleged democratic days and in this modern age we find that approximately 60,000 people through their representatives in another place have equal rights with us. In other words, what 220,000 people say they want, 60,000 people say they shall not have. Then we are told we live in a democratic age, and that we believe in the greatest good for the greatest number. If it is necessary for the taxpayers to support a two-Chamber Legislature, surely they should have a say in how those two Chambers are made up. We find no distinction in the Federal arena. Those who vote for the House of Representatives also vote for the Senate. Will any member opposite say there is anything foul, unfair, drastic or abnormal about the voting system for the Federal Parliament? There is no distinction between the nature of the vote or the qualifications of the elector who shall record his vote for the House of Representatives and the Senate. And no one complains of the distinction in qualification for votes. My friends sitting opposite will say that this is one of the freest and most democratic countries the world has seen. May I remind those hon. members that in the 60,000 persons enrolled there is a percentage with plural votes. That percentage will have those plural votes under the Bill.

Mr. Rodoreda: One elector has ten votes.

Mr. MARSHALL: I can only suggest that the elector in question must have spread his investments throughout the State.

The Minister for Justice: There are three such electors.

Mr. MARSHALL: Three electors with a vote in every electoral province!

Hon. C. G. Latham: Those electors would represent mining investments.

Mr. MARSHALL: In spite of that, the principle remains wrong. I cannot con-

ceive anyone having mining investments in the Sussex district, for instance.

Hon. C. G. Latham: What about coal?

Mr. MARSHALL: There are three voters who have a maximum of ten votes. Is such a voter any wiser or more capable than other electors, or has he any physical superiority over them? Where is the democratic ideal in such a system as that?

Mr. Stubbs: Those three voters do not believe in keeping all their eggs in one basket.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not care where they keep their eggs. What troubles me is where they keep their votes. The Bill should include one or two clauses entirely abolishing the controversial qualification for the Upper House. What virtue is there in requiring a person to own £50 worth of real estate in order to qualify for a vote for the Upper House? A person paying not less than 6s. 9d. per week in rent gets the vote for the Legislative Council. If there is a rentpayer to the extent of at least 6s. 9d. weekly, the vote is his. On the other hand, if a person invests a million of money in Western Australia but lives at the Palace Hotel, he does not get a vote at all. He does not own landed property: he has invested his money in other ways. He might put a million pounds into a railway in Western Australia, but if he is living at the Palace Hotel he does not get a vote. The old system reeks with inequality and inconsistency. True, the Chief Electoral Officer has had difficulties, as have members of Parliament, in trying to assess exactly what premises qualify for a Legislative Council vote and what premises do not. But one may reasonably ask why the Bill does not contain a clause for abolishing all qualifications whatsoever. We are told that the two Houses of the Legislature are necessary because of the risk of hasty legislation. I think most members will agree that there is nothing more hastily executed, politically speaking, than legislation distasteful to members of another place. They do not spend two minutes on such legislation. It gets the political boot practically before it reaches them. Its political execution is foredoomed ere it reaches another place. Members there say, "We are a House of review, and we will see that another House does not pass hasty legislation."

Mr. North: There is only one House in Alberta.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not wish to introduce Alberta into a discussion of the electoral laws of Western Australia. Alberta may yet provide a great example for the rest of the world. Again, Alberta may not. In this allegedly enlightened age and in this so-called democratic State of Western Australia, it is hard to understand why Parliament should now be debating the question of bricks and mortar or broad acres taking precedence over the importance of the individual. It is remarkable that the same section of the community which argues on the lines I have just quoted, at no time hesitated to encourage every physically fit man to enlist in order to fight in defence of the State, and if need be spill his blood in doing so. The same persons contend, "Unless you have certain qualifications you shall not have a say in the making of the laws to which you will be subject for the rest of your life." Are we democratic? It is remarkable that men who have shouldered rifles to defend this land have not, upon their return, demanded from the Legislature the right to vote. I remember the present Premier moving, when on the other side of the Chamber, to permit such men to participate in elections for members of another place. His motion was defeated. The hon. gentleman also introduced legislation providing that right for men who had fought in defence of the country. Yet the Conservative element which held sway at that time, while eulogising the soldiers, and particularly the young soldiers, as heroes to be given all and everything that a democratic country could provide for them, upon their return decided that they were not qualified even to vote for who should rule them. My conviction is that if we do not try to remove the anomaly it will never be removed, and yet thousands believe that Western Australia provides a democratic Legislature. Nothing could be further from the truth. We are more Conservative than many older lands which long since have abolished the qualification and plural voting, and have put all men on an equal footing in that respect. It is left to this democratic country to perpetuate the possibility of a Conservative idea persisting. I enter my pro-

test in that regard. Certainly the Bill provides facilities for postal voting, subject to certain reservations and restrictions. One excellent feature of the measure is that it enables absentee votes to be cast. That is a good idea. Another good feature of the Bill is the provision that a person may apply for what could be termed nomadic enrolment. Such a person is to be provided with a ballot paper on the day of close of nominations, without having to make any application.

The Minister for Justice: That is standing enrolment.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. Under the Bill one could not, of course, roam from electorate to electorate, but one could become registered and by virtue of that registration be recognised by the returning officer. Such an elector would be furnished by the returning officer with a ballot paper immediately on the close of nominations. That system will facilitate voting. But the trouble is with the isolated people who will have to obtain absentee voting papers. They will experience more inconvenience than previously. Perhaps the Minister cannot overcome the difficulty, but as the representative of an electorate containing many such electors I am hard pressed to offer a suggestion which might get over the difficulty.

The Minister for Justice: Except the suggestion of reverting to the old system.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, but I do not want to do that. The providing of facilities for isolated voters would naturally leave the door open to abuses which have existed in the past, and which I do not wish to see recur in the event of the Bill becoming law.

Mr. Raphael: Would you agree to the Federal system?

Mr. MARSHALL: So far as postal voting is concerned, that system is on all fours with what the Bill proposes. In addition to the Federal features, the Bill contains something which represents a great advance on those features. It provides that one can be registered as the definite resident on a given spot, provided one is a certain distance away from a polling booth and without other facilities for voting.

Mr. Raphael: What about those men who are moving all the time?

Mr. MARSHALL: There is the difficulty, and we cannot get over it.

Mr. Raphael: The old way overcame it.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes; but the old way lent itself to such abuses that a change is warranted. The nomadic vote is impossible otherwise than by post, and that is the trouble. By the time the nomadic voter has seen the nearest registrar and applied for a ballot paper, and the ballot paper has reached the nomadic voter and been filled in by him, and then returned to the electoral officer, not less than six weeks would have elapsed in some parts of the State.

The Minister for Justice: Those are exceptional cases.

Mr. MARSHALL: I know that. However, I am loth to agree to a Bill which penalises even a small number of voters. In the Committee stage some means of overcoming these difficulties may be devised. At the moment I can offer no suggestion. There is one matter I want to impress upon the Minister. If the Bill be agreed to, I do not want any reduction in the number of polling places or booths.

The Minister for Justice: There will probably be more.

Mr. MARSHALL: I hope so. At the last election, for the first time in the history of Peak Hill, without any notification until the last minute, the polling booth at that centre was abolished and postal voting instituted. Quite a number of people went to Peak Hill that day to record their votes as they had been accustomed to do previously, only to be acquainted with the altered arrangements. In that instance, I was certainly the loser because of the inability of those people to record their votes. There is another point regarding the nomadic elector. If the Bill be agreed to, there will be compulsory voting, which will make it somewhat difficult for that type of elector, even though he should travel from place to place within one electorate only. He will probably be harassed with notifications from the Electoral Department asking him to explain why he did not exercise his vote. In most cases, the nomadic elector will probably neglect to reply and he will be inundated with a succession of such notifications. That will be the position if the departmental officers carry out their duties. I hope the Minister will endeavour to get over the difficulty, because that phase is not provided for in the Bill. We should frame some clause that will make it possible for such electors to come within the law and enable them to record their votes. Men of

that type do not know much about the law and do not rush to towns to secure legal advice. On the other hand, they are far more likely to be worried by the receipt of notices from the electoral authorities than would be occasioned by their search for gold or for kangaroos. It is not beyond the Minister to overcome that difficulty.

The Minister for Justice: I think there is a provision in the Bill that will provide for that contingency, but, in any event, there will be quite a lot of publicity with reference to the new conditions.

Mr. MARSHALL: The Bill, if agreed to, will govern the next general elections. At the same time we will have a new Chief Electoral Officer in control of the situation, and many of the electorates will be materially changed. The Chief Electoral Officer will have to be very active, and I am afraid he will be embarrassed before the election is concluded. I cannot see the necessity for sending absentee or postal votes to Perth for counting. In my opinion, they should be sent to the nearest chief returning officer. In most of the principal polling places, there are clerks and scrutineers who could provide an effective check on the counting of those votes. The ballot papers will always be available should a dispute arise with regard to any election. The procedure I suggest would expedite the concluding of the count. Then, again, is it always safe to send ballot papers over long distances to Perth? We cannot say what may happen to them when they have to be sent over such distances. At any rate, I cannot see the necessity for it. I understand that our electoral rolls will be compiled on much the same lines as the Federal rolls and, in that event, complete rolls could be sent to each returning officer to enable him to check the claims of those who desire to cast their vote in an electorate other than their own, and also to enable him to check enrolments generally. I prefer the more rapid method of dealing with absentee votes. I appreciate the efforts made by the Government to cure evils that have been apparent in our electoral laws.

Mr. Raphael: Unfortunately, they have left out the worst feature—the Upper House.

Mr. MARSHALL: Particularly in recent years, the Act has been abused. Nevertheless, in dealing with the problem, I trust we shall not penalise honest electors in the process.

MR. PATRICK (Greenough) [8.8]: It is generally agreed that an overhaul of the Electoral Act is necessary, and I believe the Royal Commission have carried out excellent work. That an overhaul was necessary has been recognised for years, and the late Mr. T. A. L. Davy, when Attorney General in the Mitchell Government, introduced a Bill that contained many features of the present measure. He intended to abolish the existing postal vote system and to substitute the Federal absentee method. In his Bill provision was also made for a receipt to be given for claim cards. I regret that one important feature that was embodied in Mr. Davy's Bill is not included in the Bill before us now, nor was the matter dealt with by the Royal Commission. I refer to the suggestion that the Chief Electoral Officer should be given an independent tenure of office. At present he is merely included in the Clerical Division under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General. In my opinion, such an important position as that of the Chief Electoral Officer of the State should be accorded a higher status, such as that associated with the Auditor General, who is appointed by Parliament and can be removed from his office by Parliament only. There can be nothing more important than the election of members of Parliament to govern the country, and I think that the man who is responsible for controlling such a department as that administering the electoral laws of the State, should not only be one of the highest paid officers of the State but should be absolutely independent in his office, as the judges are. It is regrettable, from a country point of view, that the postal voting system is to be abolished. The remarkable thing is that whereas that system was instituted in the interest of electors in isolated electorates, a far greater percentage of postal votes has always been recorded in the city than in the country. Those concerned seem to specialise in connection with the system in the city. I have a recollection of an occurrence in a small electorate in the northern part of the State. It happened some considerable time ago. One of the candidates secured the appointment of his bookkeeper as the postal vote officer for the electorate. In consequence, the bookkeeper went round and secured nearly all the available votes before the election was actually held.

Mr. Hegney: Was the man elected?

Mr. PATRICK: Yes.

Mr. Rodoreda: That happened in an electorate that was not too far north.

Mr. PATRICK: That is so. There were only two or three hundred voters in the whole electorate. It is a pity that, because of incidents of that description, the postal voting system has to be abolished. Many electors will be disfranchised under the system that obtains at Federal elections and is provided for in the Bill. It will be almost impossible for electors who are a great distance away from a returning officer to get in their votes in time. Of course the provision regarding the absentee vote will correct that difficulty to a great extent, but difficulties will arise in my own electorate. I would instance the position regarding the electors who are east of the Ajana line. Previously, all the electors had to vote by post because they were 30 miles away from the nearest polling place, which was at Greenough. Despite that, most of them resided only a few miles away from a polling place in the Geraldton electorate. Under the provisions of the Bill they will now be able to vote in Geraldton as absentee electors. As the member for Roebourne (Mr. Rodoreda) pointed out, there is a possibility of a hitch on occasions. I would suggest that in the Geraldton electorate, for instance, a candidate may be returned unopposed. The Bill provides that the Chief Electoral Officer may prescribe certain polling places. If there should be no election in the Geraldton constituency, under ordinary circumstances the polling places would not be required. If the Bill be agreed to, all the polling places in the Geraldton constituency should be opened just as if there were an election. I believe that is the position in Queensland. If we are to have compulsory voting, that is the only way by which the system can be made effective. In the circumstances I have suggested, if the polling places were closed, it would be impossible for many electors to secure their votes, and they would be practically disfranchised. It would be futile to open one polling booth in that area, as every polling booth would be required. The position is entirely different under the Federal system because, even though there should be no election for a particular seat in the House of Representatives, there is certain to be an election for the Senate, and so the whole of the polling booths are open for the election.

Another very good provision is that for subdivisioal rolls for the Council. As I interjected when the Minister was speaking, that system obtained 30 years ago. When I was in Cue, that town was a subdivision of the Central province. There was a separate roll for Cue electorate, a separate roll for Mt. Magnet electorate, and so forth. To have subdivisioal rolls gives a better check on the roll, because a returning officer sitting, say, in Geraldton has no knowledge of a claim sent in from several hundred miles away, while the subdivisioal officer, knowing the district and the claim, would probably be able to decide straight away whether it was valid. Regarding the challenging of votes and the marking of those votes on the roll, a good provision of the Bill is that compelling the giving of an absent vote, so that, if necessary, the vote may be challenged afterwards or taken before a magistrate previous to its being counted. Under the present system, the name of the elector is marked on the roll, and if he is voting at a Legislative Council election, he is asked to make a declaration. In most instances that is a farce, because the elector simply signs the form without reading it. On one occasion I was sitting in a polling booth and challenged about 26 electors. All of them made declarations. There was a Nationalist Government in power at the time and subsequently a policeman was sent to make inquiries. He reported that none of the electors possessed the slightest qualifications whatever, and yet no prosecution took place. It seems to me that there is a certain class of individual who will sign a declaration without bothering to ascertain whether or not there is any penalty for making a false statement. If an elector has to record his vote as an absent vote, and it is set aside and afterwards scrutinised by a magistrate, that will go a long way to overcome the disability. It is regrettable that we cannot have uniform Federal and State rolls. The Royal Commission dealt with that phase of the matter. Doubtless the Federal authorities have a big advantage in preparing their rolls in that they have command of the post offices. The postal officials have a knowledge of almost every individual in their respective districts on account of delivering the mails, and that knowledge is a big advantage when making up the roll. As the Leader of the Opposi-

tion stated, the hours of polling at Federal and State elections should be made uniform. Many electors do not distinguish between one election and another, just as, when filling in claims, they do not realise that they have to submit a Federal claim card and probably a couple of State cards. In the matter of the hours of polling, they think that because at a previous election they could vote up to 8 p.m., they may do likewise at a State election. The hours should certainly be made uniform. It is regrettable that some of the other recommendations of the Royal Commission could not be adopted, particularly the one regarding the redistribution of Council seats. That matter does not come within the compass of the Bill, but I consider it would be advantageous if, as in South Australia, and as mentioned by the member for Northam (Mr. Hawke), both Council and Assembly elections could be held on the same day. Next year we shall have Assembly elections probably in April and Council elections in May.

Mr. Marshall: What would be wrong with our all going out next May and returning for six years?

Mr. PATRICK: That would be a good idea. A similar set of officers will be necessary to take the votes at each of the two elections only a month apart. While it is almost impossible to arrange for compulsory voting at Council elections, we propose to adopt it for Assembly elections. In my opinion, that is a very proper thing to do. If the elections for both Houses were held on the same day, the practical result would be compulsory voting for the Council, because the electors would be at the booth to vote for the Assembly and doubtless would cast their votes for the Council at the same time. There is not much more that I wish to say at this stage. The Bill is chiefly a Committee measure. I hope the Minister will take notice of the points I have raised, particularly the one about keeping open polling places for absent voters, because we have such a number of unopposed elections that the position is entirely different from that which obtains in the Federal sphere.

On motion by Mr. McDonald, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 8.20 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 26th September, 1935.

	PAGE
Bills: Forests Act Amendment, 3R., passed	875
State Transport Co-ordination Act Amendment, 2R.	875
Rural Relief Fund, 2R.	878
Traffic Act Amendment, 2R.	882

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

BILL—FORESTS ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and *passed*.

BILL—STATE TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 18th September.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.37]: Mr. Thomson, under his Bill, seeks, among other things, to give a municipality or a road board power to grant a license to run a commercial goods vehicle. In other words, he presupposes that a municipality or road board may apply for a license for a commercial goods vehicle, and start carting merchandise for Jack, Bill, Tom and Harry at so much a ton.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is not the intention.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not know what the intention is, but I know what is the interpretation. Mr. Thomson is a little premature. Municipalities and road boards have no power at present to establish trading concerns of this sort, and their embarking on such enterprises in the future has not been contemplated by the Acts under which they are controlled. In Section 10, the State Transport Act provides, inter alia, that the board shall consider and determine all applications for licenses in respect of public vehicles, the assumption being that such applications would only be made by the owners of public vehicles and not by municipalities or road boards. In any case, an amendment of the Acts governing local authorities would be necessary before these bodies could enter into competition with private enterprise in the carriage of goods.