

tated if one is armed with a bank draft. The member for West Perth raised this very point in a letter which he read and which appeared in "Hansard." It set out that a special manufacturing concern had excused the non-delivery of goods on the ground that it could not obtain permits to despatch them to Western Australia; shipping was not available. The Western Australian firm immediately got busy and arranged for the shipment. On the manufacturer being notified, he had to admit that he had sold the goods elsewhere and so they were not available.

When we investigated we found out where the trouble was, and I suppose we can put ourselves in the other fellow's place. There is a manufacturer with a product ready and a buyer comes in. He is right on the spot and takes delivery immediately. There is no responsibility on the part of the manufacturer to attend to delivery, or to have all the trouble of doing the shipping and attending to those details that the manufacturer is called upon to attend to for Western Australia, as distinct from what he has to do for Sydney or Melbourne where the sales are effected. It would be all right if we could get somebody resident in the various States to buy but that would be penalising the local consumers, because these costs have to be added. I think the whole matter requires just a little bit of close investigation on the part of the responsible Ministers.

Mr. Seward: That is sound reasoning for the appointment of a Select Committee.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: No. I think the Ministers could do it if they went into the matter, and I am raising my voice in this particular case because I know what I am speaking about. I received a report only within the last 48 hours with regard to one particular officer who went East, and got what he was told when he left here there was no chance of his getting. That shows the advantage of being on the spot. We have to try to overcome the difficulty and to make people in the Eastern States realise our isolation and our disability, and appreciate the fact that there are Western Australian concerns which are purely Western Australian, that they do not maintain an organisation in the Eastern States and that if they did so it would impose a special penalty on the consumers in this State.

If the matter is approached in that spirit, I believe the Commonwealth Ministers will realise the special circumstances and will certainly do better than is being done at the present time. I am prepared to admit the statement of the Minister for Industrial Development, which was again emphasised this afternoon by the Minister for Lands, that the position is better today than when the member for West Perth moved his motion. At the same time, a good deal more requires to be done before we can say that we are on anything like a comparable buying basis with concerns in the Eastern States that are right on the doorstep of the factories. The letters the member for West Perth read were a striking illustration of the disability we suffer because of our isolation, and I trust that as a result of this motion there will be a bigger improvement even than has taken place during the last few weeks.

Amendments (to insert words) put and passed.

Question put and passed; the motion, as amended, agreed to.

House adjourned at 6.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 5th November, 1942.

	PAGE
Betting, closing of S.P. premises, point of order	1168
Questions: Interest control, as to legislation	1169
Grasshopper menace, Government expenditure	1169
Colliery coal, as to prices	1169
Timber, as to export and treatment	1169
Motor vehicles, as to chassis replacements	1170
Soil erosion, as to combating, etc.	1170
Auditor General's report	1170
Censorship of speeches, remarks by Mr. Speaker	1170
Bills: West Australian Meat Export Works, 1A.	1170
Justices Act Amendment, 3B., passed	1170
Criminal Code Amendment (No. 1), 3B., passed	1170
Legislative Assembly Duration and General Election Postponement, remaining stages	
Point of order, Standing Orders suspension	1172
Congregational Church (Land.) Amendment, 2R.	1196

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

BETTING, CLOSING OF S.P. PREMISES.

Point of Order.

Mr. Needham: On a point of order! If a member, after making use of an of-

fensive term against another member refuses to withdraw it, and then leaves the House, can that member take part in the next day's proceedings without complying with the Speaker's request?

Mr. Speaker: I assume that the member for Perth is referring to what occurred yesterday between him and the member for Subiaco?

Mr. Needham: I am.

Mr. Speaker: It was an offence against the Chair and as far as I am concerned the incident is now closed.

Mr. Needham: When the member for Subiaco asked me to withdraw what she considered to be an offensive term, I did so, but she still refused to withdraw an offensive term which she used against me. The incident, so far as I am concerned, is not closed, nor should it be as far as the House is concerned!

QUESTIONS (6).

INTEREST CONTROL.

As to Legislation.

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Lands: 1, Has he arrived at a decision regarding legislation for the control of interest rates and other relief, requested by a deputation introduced by me on the 31st July last? 2, If so, will legislation for that purpose be introduced during this session of Parliament, and, if not, will he explain why no such legislation will be presented to Parliament?

The MINISTER replied: 1 and 2, This matter, together with other financial aspects affecting debts of all kinds, has been referred to appropriate authorities for comment, and advice is expected shortly.

GRASSHOPPER MENACE.

Government Expenditure.

Mr. BOYLE asked the Minister for Agriculture: What amounts were expended by the Government on locust destruction in the following years, respectively—(a) 1936, (b) 1937, (c) 1938, (d) 1939, (e) 1940, (f) 1941, (g) 1942?

The MINISTER replied: The following are the details of expenditure for the des-

truction of grasshoppers for the years 1935 to 1941 inclusive:—

Year.	Amount on Estimates.	Expenditure.
	£	£
1935-36	750
1936-37	3,843
1937-38	12,000	21,160
1938-39	11,000	8,486
1939-40	4,000	903
1940-41	4,000	289
1941-42	2,000	259
	£33,000	£35,690

COLLIE COAL.

As to Prices.

Mr. WILSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, What was the price of Collie coal, large and small coal separately (each mine separate), prior to the Walsh award in 1931? 2, What was the price of Collie coal, large and small coal separately (each mine separate), six months after the Walsh award? 3, What was the price of Collie coal, large and small coal separately (each mine separate), in September, 1940? 4, What is the price at present being paid for Collie coal, large and small coal separately (each mine separate)?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Minister for Railways) replied: 1, Large coal (per ton): Co-operative, 19s.; Proprietary, 18s. 2d.; Stockton, 17s. 9d.; Cardiff, 17s. 6d.; Griffin, 19s. Small coal (per ton): Amalgamated Collieries, 12s. 6d.; Griffin, 12s. 6d. 2, Large coal (per ton): Co-operative, 15s. 7½d.; Proprietary, 14s. 10½d.; Stockton, 14s. 6½d.; Cardiff, 14s. 1½d.; Griffin, 15s. 3½d. Small coal (per ton): Amalgamated Collieries, 9s. 1½d.; Griffin, 8s. 9½d. 3, Large coal (per ton): Co-operative, 15s. 10.95d.; Proprietary, 14s. 11.95d.; Stockton, 14s. 10.95d.; Cardiff, 14s. 4.95d.; Griffin, 14s. 5.14d. Small coal (per ton): Amalgamated Collieries, 10s. 11.32d.; Griffin, 9s. 11.42d. 4, Large coal (per ton): Co-operative, 19s. 3d.; Proprietary, 18s. 4d.; Stockton, 17s. 11d.; Cardiff, 17s. 8d.; Griffin, 16s. 0.67d. Small coal (per ton): Amalgamated Collieries, 15s. 9d.; Griffin, 13s. 7.61d.

TIMBER.

As to Export and Treatment.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Is it a fact that quantities of Western Australian timber are sent to the

Eastern States for treatment and then returned to this State for sale locally? 2, Has any attempt been made to save haulage by organising such work to be done locally?

The MINISTER replied: 1, Inquiries show that no timber is sent to the Eastern States specifically for treatment. It is understood that some timber exported in the ordinary course is made into articles of furniture and sent to W.A. for sale. 2, Yes, the State Shipping Priority Committee is taking action to prevent the transport of such material from the Eastern States to W.A.

MOTOR VEHICLES.

As to Chassis Replacements.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Works: 1, Has consideration been given by the Transport Board to the growing need for replacements of vehicles with new chassis as the war drags on? 2, To what extent can the position be met?

The MINISTER replied: 1, Yes. The position is emphasised by the demand on transport being much heavier than in normal times, and in a number of instances the board has taken action to urge and expedite the supply of new chassis and spare parts for essential services. 2, The extent to which the position can be met is entirely dependent on war conditions and the availability of supplies and shipping space.

SOIL EROSION.

As to Combating, etc.

Mr. NORTH asked the Minister for Forests: 1, Is soil erosion a danger in any part of Western Australia and if so where? 2, Does the State Government assume any or all responsibility for same? 3, Is any action being taken to combat it, and if so, what?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (for the Minister for Forests) replied: This question should properly be directed to the Minister for Lands, for which reason I will answer it. The reply is of necessity lengthy and is covered by a report which has been submitted to me, and which, together with the leaflet issued by the Government, I will lay on the Table of the House.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Ac-

counts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1942. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

CENSORSHIP OF SPEECHES.

Remarks by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: The State Publicity Censor has been in communication with me in regard to statements that have been made in the House which might be of value to our enemies. I would appreciate the co-operation of members in my endeavour to eliminate from our records any such statements. Should the Chief "Hansard" Reporter, or any other person, bring under my notice any such statement I propose, unless the House has any objection, to consult with the member concerned and, with his consent, excise such parts from "Hansard." I understand this procedure is also adopted in the Federal Houses.

Mr. Doney: What action will you take in the event of the member concerned raising objection to the deletion of the matter?

Mr. SPEAKER: I have no power to censor anything if the member concerned takes objection.

Mr. Sampson: Could the matter not be brought before the House?

BILL—WEST AUSTRALIAN MEAT EXPORT WORKS.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture and read a first time.

BILL—JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—CRIMINAL CODE AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Third Reading.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [2.24]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison): I shall not unduly delay the passage of the measure at this stage but I desire an assurance from the member for West Perth regarding its application. I want to know if its provisions will apply to all places or will the Bill be discriminatory in its application. If racecourses are to be excluded from the scope of the Bill, that discrimination will bring in its train much dissatisfaction. I agree that the definitions of "occupier" and "owner" are broad enough to include race-

courses, but I am doubtful, if ever the point arises for interpretation by lawyers in the courts, whether that will prove to be the ultimate effect. It is said that if the Bill is agreed to it will minimise an evil in our midst. I definitely disagree with that contention. It will not minimise it at all but will tend to bring further evils into existence, evils that no one will be able to detect except those in close touch with what is going on. It will certainly increase evils in various directions.

Mr. Raphael: We will have boys on bicycles at the game.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes, in other States children participate in the betting business. In almost every shop and hotel are to be found people engaged in betting. All the evils that we now know will be added to those that will be less apparent. Nevertheless I am prepared to give the amending legislation a trial. My opinions are well known on this subject. I shall not be a party to saying to certain individuals, "You cannot enjoy the right to gamble or to conduct premises in that given spot for the purposes of betting; but if you go over the river you will have carte blanche, and you will be able to do what you like." That would not be fair nor would it be sincere. There is no semblance of justice or fair play in such an attitude. Because certain individuals have influence—this is a case in point—they can get consideration from the legislature in their own interests, in consequence of which gambling can proceed with impunity. At the same time others, unable to wield influence in the proper directions, are told that gambling will not be permitted to continue. I hope that is not to be the position.

It will be remembered that when a somewhat similar Bill was before the House last year, I had my doubts about the measure and consulted the Crown Law authorities. They told me there was some doubt about the position, and they drafted an amendment for me to ensure that the legislation applied generally. I am sure that Tattersall's Club will be covered by the Bill now under consideration, but I am doubtful about racecourses. I am anxious to know from the sponsor of the measure whether the Bill will not discriminate between—to mention a couple of names—P. A. Connolly and John Wren as owners of proprietary courses, and other individuals who run S.P.

shops in the city or in the country. This legislation will not apply only to the metropolitan area but will be State-wide in its effect. I can see its application being fairly widespread and covering many activities. In the metropolitan area the racecourses are readily accessible to city-dwellers, but in the country districts racing events are of rare occurrence. People living in the metropolitan area will, by spending a few shillings, be able to go to racecourses—if this Bill does not have the effect of preventing that, of which I am rather doubtful—but the country people cannot enjoy a like privilege.

Mr. Withers: Is there any harm in that?

Mr. MARSHALL: There may not be any harm in it. What excellent judges we are of other people's faults! Some of the people who indulge in a little betting might be able to give the member for Bunbury directions in which he might reform. We are far too prone to judge the faults of others, implying that we have none. I do not bet; I never did and never will.

Mr. Thorn: What wrong have you done?

Mr. MARSHALL: Not much!

Mr. Sampson: Make a full confession!

Mr. MARSHALL: I might have done a lot more wrong. The people of the goldfields and country areas have no opportunity to visit racecourses and they are to be penalised to a greater extent than are the people of the metropolitan area who—if they do not care to go into the by-ways and alley-ways to make a bet—may, by paying a couple of shillings go to the racecourse where they can bet.

Mr. J. H. Smith: A couple of shillings! More like 15s.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know what the cost is. This is a concession to be granted to the people of the metropolitan area, but not to the people of the country and goldfields areas.

Mr. Raphael: Legislation has not stopped betting in Queensland.

Mr. MARSHALL: It has not stopped betting anywhere; it has only driven betting underground. My vote will never be cast in favour of the Queensland system under which the owners of proprietary racecourses pose as amateur clubs, this being possible because they are owned by influential individuals. I am not prepared to legalise betting on the racecourse and not off the racecourse under the pretence that

such action is directed to the eradication of some evil or other. If I find that the police do not prosecute the bookmakers on the racecourses as in the shops, I shall want to know why. If this Bill does not provide for that, I shall introduce a measure and see how consistent members are.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth—in reply): This Bill does not in any way affect the law as to the place or location at which betting is conducted. Its provisions are confined to the question of proof of ownership and of the person in charge of a betting place as occupier or owner. Therefore, I assure the member for Murchison that racecourses will not be one particle better off as regards liability to prosecution than they were before.

Mr. Needham: A very astute reply.

Mr. McDONALD: If they are liable to prosecution, it will be easier to prosecute them in future than it has been in the past. The Bill does not affect the locality at all; it merely affects the person in charge of the place as owner or occupier, and it will not extend any protection to racecourse owners beyond what they might have under the existing law.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DURATION AND GENERAL ELECTION POSTPONEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd November.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [2.35]: This is a Bill very similar to the one which was brought down in December of last year and from this seat was opposed, speaking for himself, by my predecessor, the Hon. C. G. Latham. I find myself today in a similar position to that described by the hon. gentleman, in that such remarks as I make are to express my own opinion, as my colleagues on these benches may, and doubtless will, express their views. I am opposed to the Bill and intend to vote against the second reading.

The arguments used by Hon. C. G. Latham 12 months ago are of greater validity today than they were then. At that time there was greater justification for a measure of this nature than there is at present. I feel that I could not vote for the Bill in its present form and con-

tinue to hold the seat I occupy in this House as representative of the Katanning district. I am satisfied that I would be doing wrong as the member for that district, and as the representative of the people of that district if I voted today, for an unconditional postponement of the State elections for the period contemplated by this Bill. Speaking for my own constituency in particular, I contend that my contract with the electors was for a period of three years, which has already been extended to a fourth year. I do not think that at this stage I would be justified in providing, by my own vote, that it be extended for a fifth year. I consider that the people of the Katanning district are entitled to ask me to answer for my stewardship and, because I believe that, it is impossible for me to support this measure in its present form.

Since last year's Bill became an Act, by-elections have been held in various parts of the State. One of them, although admittedly only for a Legislative Council seat, involved the whole of the North-West of this State. It was held about the middle of this year.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What percentage of the electors voted at that election?

Mr. WATTS: At present there is a by-election pending for the York district because we cannot escape it; nor could we escape a by-election for any seat which for any reason may become vacant during the ensuing period of 12 months. The Premier, in moving the second reading of the Bill, had something to say about the difficulties that would arise if an election were held and the deprivation of certain members of the Forces of the opportunity to vote. I appreciate the difficulty in which the hon. gentleman finds himself in that regard, and I am prepared at any time to do anything I can to put some reasonable proposal upon the statute-book to enable those soldiers who are absent from Western Australia to have their votes recorded. I cannot, however, appreciate the Premier's attitude in expressing his regret at the inability of electors, to the number of a few thousand votes only, to exercise their franchise, and at the same time telling all the people in Western Australia, "You shall not exercise your franchise because we, who ought to be re-elected by that franchise, say you shall not exercise it." We are to be the choice of ourselves, instead of that of the electors.

By the Bill we tell the electors exactly what they shall do, whereas it is their undoubted privilege to tell us what we shall do. That is where the difficulty arises.

Mr. J. H. Smith: What do you propose to do about the thousands who are disfranchised today?

Mr. WATTS: Why disfranchise hundreds of thousands because of a few thousand disfranchised at present? I admit that if there were an election a few thousand people would be disfranchised although, as I have already said, I am prepared to assist in overcoming that difficulty.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Do they not count in your mind?

Mr. WATTS: Certainly they count in my mind, but they count less than the whole of the electors because they are fewer than the whole of the electors. I would submit that if there is justification for the postponement of the State election in the circumstances existing today, then that justification may extend for a period of years of the number of which we have no knowledge. I cannot believe, and there is no evidence before us to show, that the conclusion of hostilities is likely to be reached within the period covered by the Bill. I foresee, then, another movement of this nature coming before us in 12 months' time. Personally I cannot conceive of the position being substantially better in 12 months' time than it is today. I am supported in that view by quite a number of people who know a little more about the subject than I do, people who are to be found in various portions of the metropolitan area. In my case any estimate might be a guess, and so it might be in other cases. Therefore I contend that at the present time there is no justification for taking the action proposed by the Bill.

I point out, too, that the Bill deprives the Legislative Assembly of a right which it has under the existing Act, the postponement measure of last year. Under that Act the Legislative Assembly until the 21st February next could have passed a resolution requiring an election notwithstanding the previous Act; but the last clause of this Bill simply seeks to destroy that privilege, and instead of the Legislative Assembly being able next week, or next month, or in January to hear, as suggested by the Premier, his report on the Canberra conference, instead of our being able then to

say, if we wish, that we will have an election, that right is withdrawn by the Bill until after the 21st February, 1942. So that the three-months' period during which we have a right to express our opinion under that Act is lost to us by the last clause of the present Bill.

We are told that we cannot express an opinion, should the Bill become law next week, until the 21st February, 1943; and to judge from my experience of Parliamentary government, in this State that means the 31st July, 1943. So whatever might be my views, even if I were not in opposition to the general principles of the measure, I would certainly be in opposition to that clause, contending that the right which the Legislative Assembly reserved to itself last year should be retained in its existing form, instead of the Act being superseded, as I say, under the Bill. I do not propose to address the House any longer. I have stated my reasons, as I am entitled to do, for opposing the Bill. If it passes the second reading I may submit to the House an amendment of which I have given notice; but I shall not support the second reading.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): In speaking on this Bill I, like the Leader of the Opposition, am expressing my own views. I consider it is a Bill on which essentially members are entitled, and indeed obliged, to form their own views. I agree with the Premier that there are difficulties, practical and of procedure, in the way of holding an election under existing conditions; but I have not been able to satisfy myself that those difficulties are insurmountable. Last year this House agreed to prolong the life of Parliament in effect for 12 months. I was a party in supporting that Bill. I think that at that time the House was well justified in the action it took. Japan had recently declared war, and we were faced by a situation of great danger and difficulty for the first time, and the House needed a period and an opportunity to adjust its thoughts to the new conditions, and at the same time to give the people an opportunity for the same purpose.

Now we come to a proposed second extension of the period of prolongation. Like the Leader of the Opposition I am compelled to ask myself what the situation will be if this war, as some people say it will be, is protracted for a further period of years.

It seems to me that if that is the case, if the war is protracted for a further period of years, the arguments in favour of extension of the life of Parliament this year will be equally applicable to subsequent extension in subsequent years. If we came to that pass, then we would be departing a long way from the principle of democratic government; and I think we are compelled to ask ourselves, in deciding on the measure now before us, to what position it will lead us if the war is prolonged for a further period of years. We have no precedent beyond our own precedent of last year for extending the life of Parliament.

There are two countries which have extended the lives of their Legislatures—Great Britain and New Zealand. Both those are exceptional cases. In each instance it has been thought proper, and in fact inevitable, that an extension of the operation of the Legislature should be accompanied by representation in the Government of the Opposition parties. In all other free countries, elections have been held in accordance with the usual constitutional principle. In Canada and the United State elections have been held comparatively recently. It is now three years since war was declared, and since then elections have been held in all the Australian States, except this State, and there has been an election for the Federal Parliament. Parliament is the trustee of the constitutional rights of the people. We cannot dispose of those rights without their approval. They are not ours, but the people's.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Would you class the men oversea as the people?

Mr. McDONALD: The constitutional right of the people is to have their Parliamentary representatives stand before them every three years to enable them to determine whether their representatives are to be re-elected or not. While we have government by party we must inevitably, if we are to preserve democratic principles, also observe the right of the people at prescribed periods to determine by the ballot box which party is to govern them. I believe that where it is thought necessary or desirable to extend the life of Parliament, and where the members sitting on the Opposition side are given a place in the Government—even a minority place—and the electors who elected the Opposition members are thus enabled, through those representa-

tives in an all-party Government, to take part in the administration of the State, in those circumstances there may be some ground for accepting a prolongation of the life of Parliament as being not completely inconsistent with democratic principles. But where those conditions do not obtain—and they do not obtain here—then, inevitably, while there is government by party, the people should have the right at the prescribed period to determine which party it is that shall govern them.

Mr. Raphael: You had a shot once in 18 years, and your Government made a mess of it.

Mr. McDONALD: I thought the Army was not allowed to take part in politics!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDONALD: Let us look at the realities of the situation for one moment. The Government, at the most, has not been elected by more than half the electors. In fact, I think figures have been produced which show that a minority of the electors returned the present Government, if we take into account the North-West and the Gold-fields, where an artificial system of counting is involved. To postpone the life of this Parliament means that one-half of the electors of the State are, by our decision and not by their own decision, to be allowed no opportunity to pronounce whether or not the party that shall govern the State shall take another form or complexion.

The whole essence of democratic principle, if we are to observe it, is that the personnel of Parliament—and particularly the personnel of the Government—should be determined by the people. In those circumstances, as far as I am concerned, I consider I should vote for that view which observes the accountability of Parliament and the Government to the people. I think we have in this State a sufficiently strong and responsible body of public opinion that feels the Government and Parliament should submit themselves to the electors, and that makes it impossible for me to vote for the Bill, which, if passed, will deprive them of what would be their normal constitutional right. I am unable to ignore what I think is a body of opinion which seeks and claims its constitutional rights, and for those reasons I am unable to support a Bill which would have the effect of withdrawing from them those rights which they are entitled to exercise under our Constitution.

MR. STUBBS (Wagin): I listened with interest to the speech made by the Premier when introducing the Bill. I feel that the members who have spoken since have lost sight of the fact that the whole British Empire is at the present moment being weighed in the balance. I intend to support the measure, and if I am wrong then my judges will decide that question on the hustings. I am not afraid to face my electors on the issue. My main reason for supporting the Bill is that, in my judgment, now is not the time to squander £30,000 of the taxpayers' money in order to decide whether the present Government—which was elected four years ago—should continue in office. I have yet to learn, from the remarks that have been made since the Premier introduced the Bill, that there are solid grounds at this juncture for holding an election to decide whether the present Government has failed to carry out the promises which it made, and whether it has given satisfaction to the people. That is quite beside the issue for the moment.

I represent some 4,000 or 5,000 electors, but I have traversed the greater part of my electorate during the past few weeks and not one elector has said anything to warrant my stating that the majority of the electors of my electorate desire an election to be held. And they are not Labour supporters; most of them are engaged in primary production. Had there been any doubt in the minds of my electors as to whether they wanted a change of Government, surely I, as their representative, would have been told. But I have not heard one elector in my electorate request that an election be held at this juncture, and that is my main objection to forcing an election.

Maybe the House will pass this measure, but I understand there are several of my Parliamentary colleagues in the Upper House who intend to vote against it. If this Chamber passes the measure and the Upper House throws it out, I intend to challenge every one of my Parliamentary colleagues there as to whether they have the right to make and unmake Governments. I say definitely that that is not their province. I shall stand or fall by the statements I have made here. In my judgment the Bill should be carried by both Houses and I hope it will be. I am not saying that the Government has done everything it promised to do but that is

not the point. Now is not the time to squander £30,000 of public money on fighting an election, when the very Empire is hanging in the balance. That is my reason for supporting the Bill.

MR. BOYLE (Avon): When a similar Bill was introduced last year members, by common consent, supported it. Conditions were very different from the circumstances prevailing today. At that period some of our electoral districts were actually under fire.

Mr. J. H. Smith: No, they were not.

MR. BOYLE: If my memory serve me rightly—

Mr. J. H. Smith: It is wrong.

MR. BOYLE:—I think it was about the time of the bombardment of Darwin. Broome was bombarded in February. The fact remains that members agreed with the action of the Premier in bringing down the Bill and we, as Parties more than as individuals, supported it. The present position is that at the 31st January next we shall have exceeded the time limit accorded us by our masters—that is, the electors of this State—by a period of 12 months. I sympathise with the difficulties of the Premier. In my opinion he has done right in giving the House an opportunity to exercise its vote on this matter and we shall all have to accept an individual responsibility. It is not the responsibility of the Government or of the different Parties in the House, but a personal responsibility. I am prepared to take that responsibility and I venture to say that other members are prepared to do likewise. The member for Nelson interjected a little while ago about the result of the by-election for the North province. As a matter of fact the figures show that 63.16 per cent. of the electors voted.

Mr. J. H. Smith: All absentees!

MR. BOYLE: No. I have the details in my hand. But even assuming there was a fair proportion of absentee votes, our law provides for that by a system of postal voting.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Only on a property qualification.

MR. BOYLE: I am answering the interjection of the member for Nelson merely in order to assure him that the figure of 63 per cent. is infinitely better than that for the last election for the East province, when electors voting did not exceed 50 per

cent. I am not referring to the Metropolitan-Suburban province but to the area surrounding Perth, and taking in eight of the electorates represented in this House. I find myself in the same position as other members. The member for Wagin mentioned £30,000 as being the cost of an election. The Premier gave the figure as £9,000.

The Premier: That is the Government expenditure.

Mr. BOYLE: Yes. Of course there will be the cost to individual members, but they would have to face that in any election. That is their personal business. Is it assumed that the money we spend on our own elections would be diverted to any other purpose? Is that proposed at any other time?

The Premier: We could put it into war loans.

Mr. BOYLE: Perhaps some members have not £100 to put into a war loan. Many of us cannot afford to spend £100 on an election. Some members go out and fight an election on a very small budget and they are returned to the House. The question of what it is going to cost us individually is a personal matter. I have heard of £3,000 being spent on a Legislative Council election, but I have never myself been in that happy financial position.

The opinions of electors have been quoted. I received a telegram from a portion of my electorate, signed by nine residents of one district, demanding that I oppose the Bill. Four of the nine had not taken the trouble to see that they were on the roll! I am not going to be over-persuaded by what such electors say. It is our job here.

Mr. Fox: They might want to have a shot at you.

Mr. BOYLE: The responsibility is an individual one. I accept my responsibilities and oppose the measure.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn-Coolgardie): I listened attentively to the speeches made on this measure by the Leader of the Opposition, the Leader of the National Party and the member for Avon, and I tried to find something of a convincing character in their utterances. I thought that in making out a case in opposition to the Bill some attempt would be made to justify the views expressed, and I am very disappointed that

that was not done. I have given a good deal of thought and consideration to this matter and studied the pros and cons very thoroughly. My prime motive for giving that consideration was the rights of the electors under the Constitution. I feel very reluctant to do other than give the electors their rights. Nevertheless I have come to the conclusion that a far greater issue faces Australia today than that of fighting or squabbling over a State election. While in my humble opinion many of the actions of the present Government have been excellent, on quite a number of occasions I have not been able to see eye to eye with it. A lot may be said on what the Government could have done in the past 12 months—that is during the period of extension. But to condemn the Government for lack of attention to some details, which charge has been levelled at it, and throw the country because of that personal feeling into the throes of an election is not right.

No member of this Chamber is justified in taking that action. The difficulty could have been easily overcome by the adoption of the proposal put forward in this House in December, 1941, for the formation of a composite or national Government. The action of the State Government in continuing to hold the reins of office, is to say the least of it very selfish, when its members represent, as one member pointed out, less than 50 per cent of the voting strength of Western Australia. The formation of a national Government would not only bring into use the intellect and brains of the members of the Opposition, but would give the people of Western Australia thorough confidence in the Government. By harnessing the full strength of the 50 sitting members of this House a much fuller effort could be obtained. The question of post-war reconstruction should have been dealt with long ago, because not only is it the duty of this Government to act in connection with the war, but also to plan for the peace to come—which has not been done.

A similar measure to this was passed in December last year, and the reason why members of the Opposition supported it was because of the entry of Japan into the war. Those were very troublous days for Western Australia, but they are no less troublous now. In fact, my contention is that the position has been intensified from the point of view of Australia, and particularly Western Aus-

tralia, during the intervening period. The dangers that existed in 1941 still exist; they have not been in any way minimised or reduced. On reference to "Hansard" I find that quite a number of members spoke when the measure was introduced 12 months ago, and expressed the opinion that the life of Parliament should be prolonged. If those members are in the least consistent, they must see that there is little, if any, alteration in the outlook today, and they should be of the same opinion now as they were then.

Mr. J. H. Smith: The position is much worse today!

Mr. KELLY: I have spoken of the Government, and I hold this view that, no matter what are the shortcomings of the Government today, we are not justified in going to the country with the possibility—and it is only a possibility—of having to witness the spectacle of the changing of our horses in mid-stream. The position is too dire at the present time for that to be contemplated. The knowledge that has been gained by the various members of the Ministry is something that Western Australia has had to pay for, and is a benefit to which the State is entitled.

Mr. Boyle: That is a doubtful compliment!

Mr. KELLY: Not at all. It would be a far more doubtful compliment if the Opposition were today to occupy the Ministerial benches. Another matter I consider to be wrong is that in this hour of Western Australia's greatest effort we hear at every turn that there must be no division of the people. Yet, from the speeches already made, it would seem that we are to go headlong into the matter of dividing the people when they should be united. If this division does take place in the form of an election, Nippon will be the very first to realise the disturbance into which we have thrown ourselves, and it will become an excellent structure upon which that country will undoubtedly stage an invasion.

A few remarks have been made on the point of disenfranchisement. I was sorry to hear those statements which more or less deprecated the position of the people being disenfranchised. I consider that those men, irrespective of what electorates they are in—and for security reasons we are not in a position to give that information—are justly entitled to have a say in the administration

of Western Australia. With the uncertainty of mails and the secrecy of the disposition of our Forces, which are scattered throughout the world, it is almost a physical impossibility for many of these men to record a vote. I venture to say that the figures that have been put forward in argument represent only a small proportion of the State and, as far as that proportion is concerned, it is probably in a minority compared with those we are prepared to disenfranchise. Are we to turn around in March or April, when the elections would ordinarily take place, and deprive these men of their franchise when they are away defending our freedom? It amounts to this, that they shall have no say in the government of the country for a further three years. It would be far better to reduce that period to one year and then reconsider the position.

I wish now to deal with the manpower aspect. The position in some districts may not be as acute as in others, but in many of the goldfields and outback towns where, in the past, registrars have had five or six men in their employ as office assistants, and where the compilation of the rolls is spread over a period of years between one election and another, the position today is very different. The task of compiling the rolls is of much greater magnitude at the present time because many of these offices have, for months, been depleted of their skilled assistants, and in many cases have been reduced to a staff consisting of the registrar and one junior assistant. We find, therefore, that because of the shortage of assistants the usual preparatory work on the rolls has not been done. When we have to get the rolls in order, unless we can supply a large number of assistants to help with their compilation, the task will be an almost impossible one if they are to be prepared in time. If the rolls are not in proper order we might as well not have them at all, because it is only on these rolls that an election can be fought.

The member for Avon stated in regard to the elections or by-elections that had been held during the last 12 months, that 63 per cent. of the electors voted in the last North Province election, but he did not say that over 50 per cent. of those votes were postal votes. The same position is likely to arise in connection with an election that may be held in the early part of next year.

Mr. Boyle: It was one-third.

Mr. KELLY: Many of the electors are away and it will be impossible for them to get their votes through in time by post, particularly those who are oversea. Another election was held some little time before the one I have just mentioned, and in that case between 20 per cent. and 25 per cent. only of the voters on the roll exercised their franchise. Again, early in October a by-election was held in Great Britain at which only 20 per cent. of the people exercised the franchise. That by-election was a little different from that which we are about to hold. At the British by-election, one of the candidates not only received the endorsement of the Prime Minister but was also furnished by Mr. Churchill with a letter for publication. In addition, the candidate received platform support from several Ministers of the Crown. Despite all that galaxy of stars of Ministerial rank, only 20 per cent. of the people saw fit to record their votes.

Then there is the aspect of the petrol that would be used in the course of the election campaign. I do not take into consideration the cost, which is apart from the question when we consider reasons why the general election should not be held. From the standpoint of the consumption of petrol, it is different. Between 20,000 and 25,000 gallons of petrol would probably be used in the course of the campaign, and other factors to be taken into consideration are the lubricating oil that would be consumed and the wear and tear on tyres and tubes. All that represents the consumption of commodities that neither the State nor the Commonwealth as a whole can afford to lose at this juncture. To use those essential and important commodities for such a purpose would be criminal.

My final reason for opposing the holding of the general election is centred in the precedent set in Great Britain itself. We were told by the Leader of the National Party that that furnishes no parallel, but the fact remains that between 1914 and 1918 the British Parliament decided not to hold elections, and that determination had the full support of the British people. During the present war—and the application of this point dates back to 1934—that precedent has been followed, and no general election has been held. As I have indicated, the people of Great Britain have not conducted a general election since 1934, and if that is

good enough for 40,000,000 people, it should be good enough for us. It certainly is good enough for me. I have one final comment to make. The Leader of the Opposition stated—

While this country is fighting for its very existence and people's minds are distracted by the war, it is in the highest degree improper to divide the nation on a highly controversial question.

Now the same gentleman gets up and says we should put this highly controversial question to the people and hold a general election during the coming year! I support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly): I do not intend to cast a silent vote on the Bill. With some of the arguments put forward by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie I am in full agreement. At the same time, as pointed out by other speakers, I do not regard the situation today as akin to that which confronted us when similar legislation was passed 12 months ago. In making that statement I do not take into account the good news we have heard today. When the Bill was passed last year, it was endorsed by all parties, but in agreeing to the postponement of the general election, members of the Opposition expressed the opinion that some effort should be made to form a composite Government, so that all parties in the House would have representation, have the fullest possible knowledge regarding the work being done within the State and, as far as possible, be fully acquainted with the position of the State.

When moving the second reading, the Premier said that if members agreed to the postponement of the general elections for not more than another 12 months, Parliament could be called together if necessary and a resolution passed asking His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor to issue the necessary writs for the holding of an election. That argument inclined me to support the Bill last year, but this year, in view of past experience, it cannot carry the same weight. It is true that we had two short sessions during the year, but they were not easy to obtain, and as soon as they commenced there was apparent an intense desire to reach the end of the sittings. From that point of view I cannot consent to giving the Government a blank cheque, as it were, for another 12 months. If the Bill had contained a clause somewhat similar to the amendment

appearing on the notice paper in the name of the Leader of the Opposition empowering His Excellency, after consultation with the military authorities, to issue writs for a general election on his being satisfied there was no immediate state of emergency existing—so far as was humanly possible for one holding his position to determine that point after close consultation with the military officers—

Mr. Hughes: That is pure Nazism—government by brass buttons!

Mr. SEWARD: If the Bill had contained a provision setting out that the legislation would operate for six months and could be subsequently extended for a further six months, it would have appealed to me more favourably. As the Bill seeks to give the Government the right to postpone the general election for 12 months, I cannot accord it my support. During the past 12 months strong criticism has been voiced to me by some of my constituents—I presume it represented their personal opinion only—concerning the action of Parliament last year in voting members a 12 months' extension of their occupancy of their seats. I took care to point out to those people that their assertion was not in accordance with facts, as the extension of the life of Parliament was for a period not exceeding 12 months, provision having been made for the calling together of Parliament, if necessary, to enable an election to be held. Be that as it may, the people were of opinion then—their opinion was possibly as good as mine—that the election should have been held. If that was so 12 months ago, and the position has not deteriorated from the point of view of national safety, then the necessity for holding the election is more urgent and important at the present juncture.

We had the assurance of the Premier, when he moved the second reading, that the Government has given its full co-operation in the war effort. We accept the Premier's assurance, but no opportunity has been given to the people most affected by the Government's actions during the past year to express an opinion whether they think the proper measures have been taken or not and, in view of the fact that some of those people are being made to suffer as a result of certain legislation, they have an undeniable right to express their opinion on the actions of the Government and say whether in their opinion those actions amount to

100 per cent. of the possibilities for aiding the war effort, or whether they consider the Government should be changed. If provision were made for the military chief to give an assurance that it is safe to embark on an election, provided the Governor is empowered immediately to cancel the election right up to polling day, if necessary, the measure would be much more acceptable to me and I could probably find myself in a position to support it.

The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie raised the question of the consumption of petrol and rubber in order to conduct an election. I agree that this is a very serious matter. The nation has been denied access to large supplies of these very necessary commodities, and it would be wrong to use either rubber or petrol wastefully. Still, I cannot close my eyes to what I see happening every day of the week. I see motorcars being driven about the city every morning and every night, each is occupied by only one person; I see petrol-driven cars being used by people to drive to business and back home; I see petrol-driven cars being used to go to and from the pictures. Therefore I can only conclude that the authorities charged with the duty of conserving our supplies of petrol and rubber are satisfied that it is safe to allow people to use them in the way they are being used in the city every day. This being so, I contend that the extra quantities necessary to enable members of Parliament to get into touch with their electors during an election could be provided.

Mr. Warner: That is a poor argument. Two wrongs do not make a right.

Mr. SEWARD: I am not saying that two wrongs make a right. I am not saying that a wrong exists.

Mr. Warner: You said it was wrong to use those commodities.

Mr. SEWARD: I did not. I said they are being used every day, and I took it that, if they were not available for such uses, the authorities would stop the supply.

Mr. Warner: Then why use more?

Mr. SEWARD: People can use petrol and rubber to drive into business or to the pictures, and the necessity for supplies to enable members to appear before their electors is greater than the need for such use in the metropolitan area as I have indicated. If we had a composite Government, the representatives from this side of the House would be able to meet the

members of various parties and keep them in touch with what has been and is being done. They could inform Opposition members of the reasons that prevented certain action from being taken. At present that right is denied us. When we meet our electors they want to know why a certain thing is done or not done, and we are unable to give the information. Consequently members of the Opposition are not able to assure the people that everything necessary is being done, and for these reasons I find myself unable to support the second reading.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin): The provisions of the Bill are entirely outside the scope of all party platforms and quite outside the scope of any pledges members may have given to the people, despite a claim to the contrary submitted by the Leader of the Opposition. Regarding the three members who thus far have spoken in opposition to the Bill, I noticed that each one very clearly refrained from making any major reference to the war.

Mr. Warner: It did not suit them to do so.

Mr. DONEY: I cannot help thinking that this omission surely was deliberate. I wonder whether those members consider the war to be a matter of insufficient importance to affect the issue in any material way. Or was it that they considered that their arguments might suffer if they mentioned the great conflict that is having such a disturbing effect upon the people and the public economy of this State? Surely there are issues other than the purely political that ought to be considered, and I am amazed that thus far they have not been mentioned by speakers who have announced their opposition to the second reading. I suppose that members, in submitting their views without reference to the war, considered their arguments were complete. Had they embodied a reference to the war in their arguments and demonstrated that the war did have no such effect, I would have been impressed by their views. The objections to the Bill seem to have been most unimpressive. If I listened to the urge in me, I would be all too ready for a fight to put the present Government out and put a better Government in.

Mr. Marshall: To do that would be a problem.

Mr. DONEY: I have decided—and I reached my decision without reference to my very loquacious friend who just interjected—to vote for the Bill for three reasons which I shall now give. The first reason is that our private desires must essentially, in these very grave times, give way to the needs of the far greater emergency created by the war. My second reason is that my electors have expressed themselves in no uncertain terms against the holding of a general election, and my third reason is that the electoral rolls are in such a sorry state as to render a reliable expression of opinion by the people upon public questions absolutely impossible. If the House will bear with me I should like to amplify in turn those three reasons, beginning with the second one. During the last few months, since the postponement of the general election has been a question of some public consequence, I have questioned the people whom I have met while moving about the Williams-Narrogin electorate as to the propriety of holding a general election. I may state that I did not give my own opinion as some guide to them, or with a secret hope of influencing their views. I said nothing at all as to what my view was. I merely wanted their views. I conducted a sort of private Gallup poll on this question, as it is my practice to do in relation to any public question concerning which I want an expression of opinion from my electors. There was one person who wanted a general election—absolutely not more than one. Against that one there were some half dozen who had no opinion at all worth offering.

Mr. Warner: That one was the man who wanted your seat!

Mr. DONEY: It was not, as a matter of fact; though I have no doubt that there are in my electorate, as in that of the hon. member interjecting, a few who consider, and perhaps with a good deal of justification too, that they could more adequately fill these seats than we do. The others were outspokenly opposed to the holding of a general election, and in each case for war reasons. I conceive it my duty to be guided by the opinions of those I represent.

Now with respect to my reason No. 3, I hold that in the present state of the rolls any result of a general election would be entirely misleading—altogether mischievous too, as I see it—and a wholly unreliable guide to public feeling and opinion upon

the question of which is best fitted, of the three parties here, to govern Western Australia. General elections are, of course, held for one purpose only—to ascertain the majority viewpoint within the State on public questions of importance. I ask whether a general election here at this time could possibly produce that effect. I unhesitatingly declare that it could not possibly have that result—in which case an election would be nothing more than a costly stupidity, and certainly would be a wicked waste of money which could be, as two or three members suggested, far more beneficially expended on war purposes.

I point out also that I am convinced—in fact, there can be no two opinions upon the point—that in electoral affairs the dice are certainly loaded against the party to which I belong. I am not alleging that that is any fault whatever of the Government. I merely state it as a factor which does undoubtedly exist. Further, I wish to mention that the railways furnish many of the names appearing on our electoral rolls. Railway men, I would say, generally vote in the ratio of 80 to 20 in favour of my friends on the opposite side of the Chamber. All members, I think, know that probably to an extent of 90 or 95 per cent. railway men have, and quite properly so, been manpowered from the several Fighting Forces to cope with highly important transport duties.

Mr. Hughes: Quite right; and a lot of them against their own wishes.

Mr. DONEY: Yes. In justice to them I ought to add, that they have been manpowered altogether against their own wishes. Now, that plainly is a point which would not favour this party at election time. There is the fact, too, that so far as enlistments go, the source from which members on these benches generally draw their support is affected by that circumstance. The largest proportion of enlistments has been from the farming areas. They would consist in the main of young farmers who for various economic reasons are fed-up with work on the land, or else are farmers' sons and so forth. It is well known that from those men we on these benches secure the major part of our support. They would be a dominant factor were a general election held. All the same, I am not using that as an argument of any consequence. I merely draw attention to it, by way of showing that the

farming districts to an increasing degree are being manned with elderly people who were formerly associated with the land. Should an election come, they would be altogether too tired to attend to the political question. Their work, naturally, would be vastly increased by the fact that they now have all the labours of the farm to perform.

There is this fact, too, that today the adult population of Western Australia is scattered over the whole continent, as well as overseas in the various theatres of war. Many of our soldiers, it is true, are still held in Western Australia; but a large proportion of these are unfortunately out of their electorates, in odd corners of the State. They are worried by the war, and I submit to the House that they are not in any way worried with regard to an election. Then there are thousands on the roll with sons and brothers and husbands and sweethearts fighting in the desert and on the islands, and in such a state of mind that to them election day would be little more than just another of the several nuisances that they have to contend with day by day. I submit that large numbers of our young men and our young girls have arrived at the age of 21 during the last three years—the three years of hostilities. They, of course, are not on the roll at all. A few of them may be, but generally speaking they are not on the roll. Very largely they would be in the Forces or, in some way, auxiliary to the Forces and, as members will agree, they are amongst the most deserving of our race. And they, too, would have no vote. Then there are the men who have been in the Forces, possibly during the last war—this applies to some members of this Chamber—and who have sons in the present Forces. I declare that not a single one of those men would be opposed to the postponement of the election.

I think I have discussed this matter with all such members as I have referred to, and their expressions of opinion have been invariably, so far as I can recall, favourable to the substance of the Bill submitted by the Government. Speaking from my own experience, a man in the front line, knowing that a vote was to be taken on a certain date, would not in more than 10 or 15 per cent. of cases trouble to exercise his franchise privilege. I recall that this was the case during the last war when the matter

of a referendum was referred to the Australian soldiers.

Mr. J. Hegney: That is different from what Billy Hughes said!

Mr. DONEY: I am not Billy Hughes. Although I was born and bred to politics, that was the attitude I adopted—too tired, I suppose, to think of any question at all except what the next meal would consist of. Might I say this, too, that if there does happen to be an election, that is, if the Government Bill does not succeed, it would not surprise me at all to find that no more than 50 per cent. of the electors on the roll—that is, those regarded as being effective voters—will go to the poll. It is rather a pity that we have not before us now the result of the York figures. I refer to the percentage of electors who will go to the poll. I make bold to suggest that the number would not be substantially above 50 per cent.

The Minister for Lands: There will be a good many votes for six candidates.

Mr. DONEY: The whipping-up that those six candidates will do will probably be effective in making voters go to the poll but, even so, I question whether the number voting will be much above 50 per cent. In the remarks I am making with respect to the electoral rolls, I want it to be quite understood that they must not be taken as reflecting in any way upon the Electoral Department.

Mr. Cross: People are shifting about so quickly now.

Mr. DONEY: I cannot hear what the hon. member is saying. I desire to emphasise that I hold views entirely to the contrary. In my opinion, the Electoral Department is very ably controlled and staffed; but it is tackling a job which I think is quite incapable of achievement in the grave circumstances existing today. My third reason implies that if we are to give all our energy, all our time, all our thought and all our money to war needs and purposes, then we very plainly cannot give up two months or more to the insatiable claims of a general election conducted on the basis of party politics; and I hope no member will so far forget himself as to attempt to dispute that conclusion. As far as is humanly possible—and humanity is notoriously frail where political matters are concerned—there should be today but one platform and but one plank in that platform. That plank obviously is

to defeat the enemy and secure peace. But the present Government—I hesitate not at all to say this—appears to be altogether too frail. That equally means to my mind that it is too selfish to accept that truth, more is the pity.

Manifestly, as I view the position, the method of government fairest and best for the people of the State—and for that matter for any State which happens to be involved in the war—is to pool all resources in money, men and material, and of course Parliamentary responsibility, in fact, everything. The British Government has set us a perfect example in that regard. It has been a source of deep disappointment to members on this side of the House that members sitting on the benches opposite have been deaf to our appeals to share responsibilities with them. Had they listened to what we said and thereafter taken practical steps to put our views into effect, the opposition to this Bill would have been completely non-existent. I say, too, without hesitation, that party divisions should have been completely taboo. The Government has limited the responsibility to its own few members and so has invited the opposition that is now being evidenced against its Bill. I say that that is very wrong indeed. The Government is too selfish and, I regret having to say so, altogether too soaked in party politics to do the wise and right thing. Without unity, it is absolutely impossible for us to have the oneness of heart and aim so necessary to victory.

I quite admit—I am thinking now of some claims put forward by my friend the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie—that the Government has done good in several patches—I will put it that way. I regret to say, however, that in my opinion it has not sought an even spread of benefits over all sections of the Western Australian people. The Government has been in some directions altogether too discriminative. There are other matters that I could have referred to, but I shall not take up the time of the House further, except to repeat, in closing, that I shall vote with the Government in favour of the Bill. Let me make this plain, however, that I shall do so with an ill-grace, certainly not with an underlying desire to keep the Government in power, but rather to put it out as soon as the emergencies of war and a reasonably reliable electoral roll make it timely to proceed with a general election.

MR. J. H. SMITH (Nelson): I support the Bill. In doing so, I shall be following in the footsteps of the member for Williams-Narrogin, who said that the members who have spoken against the measure had not taken thought of or in any way mentioned the war. All they seemed to be imbued with was a desire for a change of Government. Had I my way, and were things normal, I would do my utmost to put the Government out of office, because I think it is a bad Government and therefore not good for the people. I have made my position on this matter clear on two occasions. I have told the people that my first thought—and it should be the thought of all the people—is how best to win the war, to assist our lads at the Front and to provide them with the sinews of war. We cannot do that by party squabbles. I want to take the Leader of the Opposition to task, and ask him how he can reconcile the statements he made today with those he made 12 months ago.

Mr. Raphael: He was not then Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The position today is more serious than it was then, when our shores had not been bombarded. The position today, as I see it, is as bad as it can possibly be. I remind the House that only one member spoke against a similar measure last year, and that was the then Leader of the Opposition. I am afraid that history is repeating itself. Envious eyes are cast and a snap vote of the people is wanted. I am afraid the present occupant of the position has become swollen-headed, and has an ambition to be Premier of this State. Otherwise, why the remarks made today? Or is it that he feels he has a duty to a certain clique in another place that is clamouring for an election? Does he feel that he owes a duty to them to say here, "Let us have an election tomorrow and divide the people"? To show that my remarks are true and that there seems to be something underlying the matter, I will read a paragraph which appeared in the paper the other day and which everybody applauded. It was as follows:—

While this country is fighting for its very existence and people's minds are distracted by the war, it is in the highest degree improper to divide the nation by highly controversial questions. When the people are again leading normal lives free from the stress of war

emotions in a period of calm reasoning and clear thinking, a genuine verdict might be obtained.

Mr. North: Whose words were those?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: The Leader of the Opposition's!

Mr. Berry: In what connection were they used?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: In regard to the proposed Commonwealth referendum. Now the Leader of the Opposition proposes to divide the people on the question of a paltry State election. We are all imbued with the one desire of winning the war, but he wants us to fight a petty State election. He wants us to go out and complain that the Government has not paid 4s. a bushel for wheat, or that the tobacco-growers have not been given a fair deal.

Mr. Raphael: Does he reckon that the price of cigarettes is not high enough?

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I am not talking about the price of cigarettes, but about a great national subject. Then the Leader of the National Party followed in his footsteps. In effect, what did he say?

Mr. Berry: Nothing!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: He said in effect, "We do not want an election. The people do not want an election; but if there is going to be a division of this House, we are not going to be left in the soup. We are not going to be half off our horse. We are going to run with the hare and hunt with the hounds." He said, "Let the people decide." Did one of them mention Ruin Ridge and the men who have returned from oversea, and those who are still in the Middle East? Did any one of them mention what is happening in the Middle East or in New Guinea? Are they prepared to have a Parliament elected by the derelicts and the old people, the men and women who cannot serve oversea? Are they prepared to have a Parliament elected and to give no voice to the boys who will return in 12 months' time, as to who is going to govern the country and attend to the business of post-war re-organisation? Not one thought was given to that!

The Leader of the Opposition says he wants to face the people. Who are the people? Are they not the men who are fighting for our salvation and the liberty of our children? Are not they the people who count? Is it we who remain that count? Why the hypocrisy? These men who have opposed the measure say that if there is a

division they are going to remain where they are, that they are not going to vote with the Government, because they think Lloyd Thomas is right—Lloyd Thomas, a young man who should be in khaki serving his country, but who is preaching over the wireless! He would be better in New Guinea or in the Middle East. They are afraid of men like that, of "The West Australian," and of a few leading articles. The people that count do not matter to them. It does not matter to them if there is only a 50 per cent. vote.

Any man who wants an election is nothing but a downright hypocrite. What about the thousands of men who have gone from the North-West, and the goldfields and the country areas? Do they not count? Are they to be disfranchised? An attempt was made last year to give the lads oversea an opportunity to exercise their votes in the event of an election being held. When it was found to be impossible to effect that reform, what was done? The Government introduced a Bill to prolong the life of Parliament for 12 months. This House agreed to that without one dissentient voice. The Bill was agreed to on the voices, but today the Leader of the Country Party, or rather the Leader of the National Party said that if there were a composite Government he would agree to it.

Mr. Watts: I said no such thing.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I said the Leader of the National Party.

Mr. Watts: Make it clear what you mean.

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I said the Leader of the National Party stated that if there were a composite Government, he would agree to it. What difference does that make? Would the people have more say in getting what they required if there were a composite Government? Where is the reasoning in that? Is the Leader of the National Party looking for emoluments? Is he hoping to be made Attorney General? It would not matter one iota whether there was a composite Government or not; the people would have no more say than they have today.

Mr. Hughes: It looks as though there are not enough plums to go round!

Mr. J. H. SMITH: I do not know. Perhaps the member for East Perth may be looking for one. Perhaps there are not enough to go round. I support the measure. I ask members how it would be possible for the Electoral Department to compile rolls for an election in March. It does not matter

one iota to me whether there is an election or not, but if I am elected I want to be elected by the whole of my people. I want to be elected by the men and women who count, who are oversea trying to do their bit for our salvation and the preservation of the Empire. I do not want to be elected by a conservative crowd of old people, but by young people. I want those of a democratic turn of mind to say whether Jack Smith or somebody else is going to represent the Nelson electorate.

MR. MANN (Beverley): I support the Bill, and am pleased the Government introduced it. I am speaking on behalf of my electorate, the one in which I live, and with whose people I come in contact every day. I have not heard one of my constituents express a desire for an election in these times. The Beverley electorate has a remarkable war record in the matter of contributions to war loans and other patriotic ventures. Our one idea is to win the war. Whatever faults the present Government may have, the fact remains that the Commonwealth Government, under National Security Regulations, has more control than has the State Government. There appears to me to have been a certain amount of hypocrisy displayed in this matter. If members who oppose the Bill desire to defeat the Government, why did they not support the motion of no confidence recently moved by the member for East Perth? He gave this House an opportunity to defeat the Government, but his motion lapsed for want of a seconder.

Are we such hypocrites today as to seek to put this kind of stuff over the people of Western Australia? I do not care what the Press or anyone else says. I have had a fair run in politics. I am not afraid for my seat. If I were defeated, I would still have a farm to go back to. My only two sons are fighting for their country. Are we at such a time as this to introduce the petty question of State politics and divide our people? Of course not! The Commonwealth Government has no right to divide the people of Australia on a referendum. The Commonwealth Government has no right to defy the people of Western Australia. We have reduced ourselves, as members of Parliament, in the eyes of the public, to the lowest possible level. Today in this crisis—and Australia is not yet out of the mire—we have bigger issues than an election to face. I commend the Govern-

ment for bringing down this Bill. I support it, and hope that it will be passed. One of the wrongs of our State Parliament is that the elections of members to this House are controlled by another place. Are we to be controlled by another House; has it the right to decide what this Parliament must do? Let that place hold its own elections and look after its own affairs. Sometimes I question what it does do, or what members in the other place should do.

Mr. Raphael: They should jump into a great big lake!

Mr. MANN: Members who have opposed this Bill this afternoon are running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. If members are sincere in that desire they would have voted for the no-confidence motion moved a few days ago by the member for East Perth instead of now playing to the public. They want the Bill, but have not the pluck to vote for it. I hope it is carried.

MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex): I support the Bill and feel, therefore, that I must say a few words. I have spoken with a number of my electors, and the general opinion in at least one portion of the Sussex electorate is—definitely no election. One farmer said to me, "If there is an election I would sooner be fined £2 than waste my petrol and tyres in going to vote." That is the opinion, and rightly so, of a number of people. Twelve months ago when the elections were postponed Australia certainly was in danger, but I think today it is in far greater danger. There are many reasons why the elections should be postponed. The other day we agreed that we should not have our copies of "Hansard" bound in book form; yet we are now talking about having elections when all the paper used in the printing of circulars, posters and placards will be wasted.

It is definitely wrong to hold an election now, and I am sure that the majority of the people in Western Australia hold that view. The other point I was going to raise was in regard to petrol and the money that will be spent if we hold an election. We all know that a shortage of petrol and tyres exists at the present time. I frequently have to go to the Liquid Fuel Control Board to get more petrol for my electors. In many cases it is impossible for me to have that petrol released for them, yet we will need

far greater quantities of petrol if the elections are held. I support the Bill.

[Mr. Withers took the Chair.]

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore): About 12 months ago I took quite a prominent part in suggesting in this Chamber that the elections should be postponed. I say that because, over the air from the Primary Producers' Association and through the mouth of the person of the Leader of the Opposition, came definite criticism in connection with the action I took here, so I must have played an important part. I have not this year taken quite the same eager interest, but I have listened with considerable attention to what are, I think, the weakest arguments ever put up in opposition to a Bill. The Leader of the Opposition started off by glibly saying that he did not consider the position today to be improved on what it was 12 months ago, and that seemed to form the entire song sung by members who opposed this Bill. To me that is an amazing statement. On the 7th December last year Japan declared war on Australia and the Allied Nations. Actually this Parliament decided to postpone the elections before any portion of Australia suffered in the slightest degree from enemy action.

Mr. Cross: The Japs are a thousand miles nearer now.

Mr. BERRY: The member for Canning can have his shot later. After we postponed these elections—and the postponement was justified through the local Press—the war in the Pacific spread to Hong Kong, Singapore, Java and the Philippines, and through the Dutch East Indies, down to Broome, Port Hedland, Port Moresby, and to Townsville and Sydney. Those poor creatures who got up today and said that the position is no worse are poor indeed.

Mr. J. H. Smith: They are not interested in the war; they did not talk about it!

Mr. BERRY: That must show that there is some other motive underlying this decision to oppose the postponement of elections at a time like the present. One can only come to the conclusion that when the golden apple is dangled before certain people they feel it is a good opportunity to take a good mouthful. Like the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie, I feel that, as he said, to change horses in mid-stream is a type of wickedness in which we would not be justified in indulging at the present time. We

have a continuity of purpose in our present administration. Are we to break that now when the Japanese are hammering pretty hard at positions close to our shores? We received good news today; we heard that the Japanese are in full retreat and that their Navy has moved away.

Mr. Raphael: It is liable to move back in greater force!

Mr. BERRY: Ah! We will not be so elated if in a few days we hear that they are back again. That is a form of complacency peculiar to us, and under it we have made mistake after mistake. I am going to support this Bill, because the position in regard to a general State election now is infinitely more difficult than it was 12 months ago when we voted for the original postponement. It is a very odd circumstance, as observed by the member for Nelson—and also a curious fact—that a motion was moved here in definite terms and came from the very people who have adopted a contrary attitude today. In support of the motion it was urged that the referendum should be postponed and the Leader of the Opposition grandiloquently said—

While this country is fighting for its very existence and people's minds are distracted by the war, it is in the highest degree improper to divide the nation on a highly controversial question.

I take this opportunity of congratulating the Leader of the Opposition on his assertion. Never was a finer case put forward for the postponement of elections. I maintain the State general election should be postponed and that the Federal referendum should be postponed. When the soldiers come back they can determine whether we are to remain here as a Parliament, or are to go. The soldier who has gone away to fight is the Australian of tomorrow, and he is the man who should have the determining of such an issue. I shall not labour that phase because it has been mentioned by most members.

The whole point is that country electorates—I am not speaking of city electorates at all—are inundated with imported soldiers who presumably will have a vote after they have been here for six months. I am not sure on that point. If they have the right to the franchise after that period and an election is held, those soldiers may claim the right to vote. If that should happen, they might return a few Eastern

Statars to this House, and that might serve the Opposition right. Another odd circumstance in connection with the military aspect is that many of our individual electors have left the State altogether. In due course they may have the right to vote at Cairns, Townsville, Timbuctoo or somewhere else. The whole issue regarding the franchise is in such a state of disruption that it would be quite useless to hold a fair election at this stage. I am sure that if we do go to the people in all probability Opposition members may receive a surprise when the result of the polling is announced. That is not a prophecy—I leave the field of prophecy to the member for Canning—but a high possibility. I commend the Government for introducing the Bill, which I shall support.

Last year I mentioned, as has the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie today, the question of the consumption of petrol. If I could secure a positive assurance that the petrol we would waste in conducting an election campaign would not deprive the Army or Air Force of necessary supplies, I would be willing to embark upon the election—but I cannot get any such assurance. The weak statement by the member for Pingelly that he has seen people driving to picture shows in cars, and driving about the streets in Perth, could have been amplified by reference to the motor-cars outside Parliament House. Practically every individual car owner has had to resort to restricted use of his vehicle. Most cars are on blocks, or sold, or are moved only at specific times in order to keep the engine in order. That is because no adequate petrol supplies are available. I believe that is true. I would hate to see members of Parliament going to their electors throughout the country at such a time as the present, making absurd promises that they know they cannot keep, promising a bridge over the creek at Woopwoop, knowing full well that no money was available for that purpose. As the member for Nelson said, we require 100 per cent. organised war effort. Here we have heard expressions of opinion that would lead to disorganisation and dissension—on the part of people who should know a damned sight better!

MR. THORN (Toodyay): I support the Bill for the same reason that I cast my vote in favour of similar legislation 12 months

ago. I believe in consistency. I honestly believe that the war situation today has not improved and that it is no less precarious than it was some time back. I would like to think otherwise, but I cannot. As for the present Government, I, with other members of the Opposition, would be only too pleased to put it out of office tomorrow. I did not come to this Chamber for the good of my health. My object was to serve the people of Western Australia. My ambition and keen desire is to occupy a seat on the Treasury bench, because I am of the opinion that finance speaks all languages and if a member honestly wishes to serve his country he should strive to have some say in the handling of its finances. If there is anything I detest on the face of this earth it is to make use of the war for the purpose of gaining political advantage.

That is why I am, so wholeheartedly against the holding of the referendum suggested by the Commonwealth Government. That is why I say, if I am permitted to do so, that Dr. Evatt is nothing but a political intriguer. If he had the welfare of Australia at heart he would not seek to introduce the type of legislation he did at such a critical juncture in the history of the nation. We are strongly opposed to the holding of the Federal referendum and the Leader of the Opposition put up an excellent case in support of that point of view. I was proud of it, and I think every other member of the House, irrespective of party considerations, held a similar view. How can the Leader of the Opposition, however, claim consistency in his action today when contrasted with the wording of the motion he moved in opposition to the Commonwealth referendum proposals? I had intended to read the Leader of the Opposition's remarks that have already been placed several times before the House today. As they have been brought prominently before the notice of members, I shall not repeat them. The House is well informed on the point and knows what I mean. The motion accorded with my views, and what I believe in I will adhere to.

What is the position of the electors today? I admit candidly that I have no complete knowledge of the personnel of my electorate. The people there have been loyal to the nation in its time of stress. They have contributed largely to the war loans and to the solving of manpower prob-

lems. Hundreds of young men are absent from my electorate today. They are fighting in all the theatres of the war. I cannot see how the Government can possibly legislate so as to ensure that all those young men will have the right to exercise the franchise. It will be most difficult indeed. Then again, consider the position of the wives and families of those young men who have joined the Fighting Forces! They do not remain in the back country nor would we expect them to do so. We would not require them to remain on farms and live lonely and wretched lives while their husbands were away fighting for the safety of the Empire. Naturally they have left the country centres and live in the metropolitan area.

The whole position is so confused today we have no hope of securing a true reflection of public opinion on political issues. These are points that are exercising my mind. Some of the ambitious people in another place who are trying to interfere with the control of this Chamber might receive a very rude shock if they force this issue. There are many points associated with an election which I am afraid they have overlooked. If there is an election, one would expect the Government on the score of economy, to arrange for the election for both Houses to be held on the same day. Seeing that we have compulsory voting for the Legislative Assembly, some of the members of another place might not feel too happy if they also were subjected to a compulsory vote of the electors.

Mr. Warner: I think many would become ex-members.

Mr. THORN: I think so, too. Under the electoral law, all electors who do not register their vote on polling day are liable to a penalty of £2. Would the Government insist upon that penalty being imposed? If I had sons and daughters serving in this conflict, I know what I would do. I would refuse to waste time and petrol in going to the poll, and if I received any literature from a candidate, I would tear it to ribbons. It is entirely wrong to disturb the minds of the people—mothers, fathers and relatives who have dear ones away serving the country—by asking them to take part in a political fight, in which all sorts of trivial issues would be raised. If we are sincere in our desire not to cause a division amongst the people at a time like this, we will support the Bill.

MR. HUGHES (East Perth): To oppose this Bill is like walking into a den of lions. The member for Toodyay told us that if he had the opportunity, he would turn the Government out of office tomorrow. Why did not he help to turn the Government out yesterday? From yesterday to tomorrow is surely a very short span and there was an opportunity yesterday. But there is an explanation for everything.

Mr. Thorn: Why do not you state what I said?

Mr. HUGHES: The explanation of why my no-confidence motion did not receive any support is now quite public.

Mr. Thorn: You did not want any support. You said so. If you want support, you do not attack your supporters.

Mr. HUGHES: That is why I went to the trouble of submitting my motion to other members of the House, soliciting their support and seeking their co-operation in drafting it. I wanted it to be wide enough to satisfy all.

The Premier: Is that anything to do with this Bill?

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I was on the point of calling the hon. member's attention to that.

Mr. HUGHES: I wanted to enable those members to ride their own hobby-horses.

The Minister for Labour: It was a conspiracy?

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, a secret conspiracy. Arrangements were made from my right to torpedo the motion, but they were not kept secret.

The Premier: You ought to discuss this Bill. The other matter is long since past.

Mr. HUGHES: That is so, but I did not introduce the subject. I challenge the member for Pingelly to produce for the information of the public the amendments that were drawn to torpedo my motion—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HUGHES: And leave it to the public to judge.

Mr. Thorn: I wish someone would torpedo you.

Mr. HUGHES: Perhaps so, now. As you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did not raise objection when previous members spoke of Dr. Evatt, who is not here to defend himself, I should like an opportunity to reply to them.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member first of all to speak to the Bill, and any digression might be permitted.

Mr. HUGHES: I will revert to Dr. Evatt later.

Mr. Raphael: There is no definite promise that you may.

Mr. HUGHES: The introduction of this Bill seems to have engendered a good deal of heat. Accusations of hypocrisy and ambition have been thrown across the Chamber. Apparently members who have exercised their free right to support the Bill and state their reasons for so doing are not prepared to concede the same right to those who oppose it. Would it not be very mean on the part of us who are opposing the Bill if we suggested that those who support it are doing so purely to further their own personal interests? If any member opposing the Bill had stood up and said what many people are saying—that the supporters of the measure are not honest and are merely considering their own personal interests at the expense of the electors—he could have been accused of advancing a mean and miserable suggestion. Not one member who has spoken in opposition to the Bill has advanced any such suggestion. This being so, surely it was mean and miserable to suggest that those members who are opposed to the Bill are actuated by purely personal motives, and desirous of getting some filthy lucre for themselves.

Without having any inside information I venture to say that some members who are opposing the Bill would be no better off financially if they were elevated to the Treasury bench. They would have to give up occupations which bring them emoluments as great as those they would receive if they were on the Treasury bench.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Fox: Are not some of them poor farmers?

Mr. HUGHES: I believe there are some farmers enjoying substantial incomes. I do not consider that a Minister receives very substantial payment. Taking into account the responsibilities attaching to the office, the work he is required to perform and the hours he must work, I do not think he is paid an adequate remuneration. In comparison with men employed in commercial and other avenues of life, the salary paid to a Minister of the Crown is very poor indeed, because in any big establishment an executive officer holding a highly responsible and important position would be considered poorly

paid at £1,500 a year. I do not think the question of emoluments is the major factor. I believe that legal practitioners in the city earn decent incomes, but yet incomes small in comparison with those earned in country districts. So it cannot be purely a question of emoluments. However, the position is that the right to elect this Parliament triennially is a right belonging to the people.

Again, by remaining a member of Parliament one continues to draw emoluments from the State Treasury. Those emoluments are drawn by only one of the electors in a constituency at a time. Therefore when Parliament decides to continue its own life, it needs a substantial reason indeed for adopting that course, because it then decides that it will continue in office, and draw the salaries attaching to office, without the consent of the employer—that is to say, the electorate. I am sure that any employee who decides to continue in his employment and draw his remuneration in defiance of the employer, or without first consulting the employer, should have an excellent reason for his decision. I agree that there may be circumstances which would warrant members of this Chamber in voting for a prolongation of our tenure of office without an election; but the first question is, have those circumstances arisen at the present time? Like many members, I am not in a position to form an opinion on the mentality of the country in relation to the war. Naturally, inner information is not available to us; and very rightly so. However, there are certain people in possession of last-minute information as to the war situation.

If the Prime Minister of Australia had sent a message to this Parliament asking us to refrain from holding an election on the ground that it would distract the people from the war effort and so diminish it, I would accept his assurance and say, "Certainly we ought not to have an election." I understand that the Prime Minister has made no such suggestion as that a plebiscite or referendum would distract the people and diminish the war effort. On the contrary the Prime Minister proposes to hold a referendum of the whole of the Australian people on a very far-reaching and comprehensive subject. The hon. gentleman proposes to take to the Commonwealth Government full and absolute powers of government in respect of every subject that can come within the purview of legislation. The

Prime Minister and Dr. Evatt know that when that proposal was promulgated it stirred up strenuous opposition in all Australian State Parliaments. They knew that powerful commercial interests would be involved. They knew it would be a life-and-death struggle with the banks and financial institutions, because these will not allow the Commonwealth Government to obtain control as it would under its proposed Bill. In every State except one there is an Upper House to protect State interests, no matter what the Lower House does. Dr. Evatt is no fool, and the Prime Minister is no fool. They know they are about to advance proposals that will produce conflicts equal in bitterness and strenuousness to the fight over the referendum held during the last war.

The Prime Minister and his Government are setting an example to us who are opposing the postponement of a general election here. They say that a division of the people on contentious questions is of no importance and will not in any way diminish the war effort. Whether we agree with that view or not is another matter; but if I were to set myself up and say to the Commonwealth Government, "You are going to diminish the war effort by holding a referendum," the answer to me would be, "We know the facts, and you do not, and therefore your opinion is of no value. We have day-to-day inside information." I am afraid that the referendum is half defeated already, because one of the things Dr. Evatt sets out to do in his zeal, does not inspire one with much faith. I refer to what Dr. Evatt says regarding the Four Freedoms.

MR. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think the hon. member is in order in discussing the merits of some other Bill.

MR. HUGHES: Dr. Evatt has created an intense fear, the fear that we shall lose our jobs, that there will be no State Parliaments left. So we have the example of the Commonwealth Government proposing to take a referendum on a highly contentious question. And we have a second example from the Commonwealth Parliament. The Commonwealth Constitution provides that an election must be held at stated times, and that there is no power under the Commonwealth Constitution for the Government of the day to postpone an election. When the existing terms of Senators and of members of the House of Representatives expire, they will be automatically out of their seats; and without an amendment of the Constitution

the Government of Australia has no power to postpone an election.

Mr. Berry: That is why they have not done it!

Mr. HUGHES: That is not the reason. They have not done it because they did not intend to do it.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Which Bill are we discussing?

Mr. HUGHES: The Bill which probably will prevent Australia from discussing Bills in future! The Commonwealth Government does not propose to take power, or even to seek power by way of referendum, for postponement of a Federal election. The Commonwealth Government is in complete possession of all the facts, and if it decides that there shall be a highly contentious referendum, with an election to follow—if the Commonwealth Government, which is in a key position to decide the issue, is of that frame of mind—who in this Chamber can authoritatively say that an election, not in any way comparable to the referendum issue, will diminish the war effort? Therefore, members who have had the temerity to oppose the Bill may be quite in error. I admit that. Our arguments may not be sound and our facts may be weak; but, like other members, we have considered the war, notwithstanding the allegations that we have not done so.

For the second time this session I suggest it is time we "debunked" the war effort. Everybody who wants to do something to help himself or to further the interests of a group or of his friends, does it in the name of the war. Some people want to run other people's lives and they say it is all done in the name of the war. Frequently they are doing nothing more than helping themselves. We might well have left the war out of this debate. What difference will the holding of an election make to the war effort? It must be borne in mind that when Parliament is dissolved the Ministry does not go out of office. Ministers remain Ministers and carry on the business of the State until their successors are appointed or until they resign. Therefore, the Government goes on even after Parliament is dissolved. True, we may disfranchise some men who are oversea and other men who are in the Fighting Forces in Australia, but many of those men are merely boys between 18 and 21 years of age. They have not got

a vote and never had one, so cannot be disfranchised.

The Minister for Lands: Unfortunately, many of them will never vote.

Mr. HUGHES: That, of course, is most unfortunate, but it is an integral part of the war. It is not due to anything we can do or undo; I am sure every member of this Chamber, if he had the power to do so, would put an end to that situation tomorrow.

Member: Today!

Mr. HUGHES: Every member would stop the war and put an end to the contingency that unfortunate lads may never get a vote. On the other hand, I feel that the men in the Fighting Forces who have left relatives behind will be only too happy to allow their relatives, or their friends, to select a Parliament to carry on the affairs of the State during their absence. When introducing the Bill, the Premier gave as one of his reasons the fact that certain soldiers would be unable to vote. I happened to have a couple of soldiers at my home the other night—they were strangers to me—and I put this to them: "We are going to prolong the life of Parliament in your interests." They laughed. They inquired, "In whose interests?" That is the attitude adopted by many soldiers to this proposal. I am not saying that they are right. I concede to members who will vote for the postponement that they will be doing so because they think it right. Such members should concede to those voting against the measure the same motive.

I do not subscribe to the idea that it would be all right to prolong the life of Parliament if a composite Government were in power, because surely that does not affect the position. The question whether we should postpone the life of Parliament is a separate issue altogether. What could a composite Government do? I suggest it would be much better to have a unitary Government, with a healthy Opposition constructively criticising and giving help when necessary. With a composite Government, there would be a divided policy. There must of necessity be a divided policy. There would be one group prepared to take the responsibility, with no Opposition to criticise the Government. That merely amounts to gagging the Government.

Mr. Patrick: The Opposition in the British Parliament still criticises the Government.

Mr. HUGHES: I wish our Opposition would do a little more criticising.

Mr. Patrick: The British Government is a composite Government.

Mr. HUGHES: The member for Greenough must admit that the effectiveness of the Opposition in the House of Commons is seriously curtailed by the composite Government. Only a few members do any criticising of importance. My contention is that the composite Government is no remedy. I have yet to learn what there is to stop us from holding an election throughout the length and breadth of the State. People are going about their business as usual. As a matter of fact, an election is about to be held at York and nobody will be inconvenienced. People are taking as much interest—so I am informed—in that election as they have taken in any other.

Mr. Kelly: It is only a 63 per cent. vote.

Mr. HUGHES: I do not know how the hon. member can say that, because the election has not yet been held.

Mr. Kelly: The Press says so.

Mr. HUGHES: The Press is not in a position to say how many people will vote at York. As to Legislative Council elections, I believe as many voted at the last North-West election as voted usually.

Member: But they were residents of the metropolitan area.

Mr. HUGHES: On this occasion the voters distinguished themselves by passing a much more intelligent vote than they did on previous occasions.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think the result of that election has anything to do with the Bill.

Mr. HUGHES: On the question of votes, there was a vote of a normal type in the last Metropolitan-Suburban province election.

Mr. Cross: There was not.

Mr. HUGHES: Is that so?

Mr. Cross: It is.

Mr. HUGHES: The successful candidate received some 2,000 odd votes out of about 28,000, that is, about one in ten.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HUGHES: The votes cast, I understand, were about the average. During that campaign the member for Canning did a lot of running about and urging.

Mr. Cross: No, he did not.

Mr. HUGHES: No one interfered with him. He was not short of petrol.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is out of order in discussing on this Bill what the member for Canning did then.

Mr. HUGHES: Votes polled under those conditions are not a fair comparison. We must, for comparative purposes, take the voting for the Legislative Assembly, which is compulsory. With compulsory voting, one can make reliable comparisons. I would agree if the protagonists of this Bill said, "We are not going to have any elections at all," and if, when a member's seat became vacant, they would let the man who ran second at the previous election step into place. But they will not have that. They want it both ways. They say, "We should not have party squabbles at present." I agree that we should not. No elector at present should vote for any person who has any party allegiance. He should say definitely, "No, this is a special time, when our representatives must have allegiance only to the major purpose of winning the war."

Mr. Berry: Is this for the benefit of the York election?

Mr. HUGHES: If his allegiance is divided he cannot carry out the commendable instructions of the Country Party and think only of the war. That is good sound advice with which I find myself in strict agreement.

Mr. Wilson: To what party do you belong?

Mr. HUGHES: I think the Country Party—

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for East Perth is not in order. I must ask him to stick to the Bill. He has had a fair amount of latitude.

Mr. HUGHES: There is no reason for the rolls not being in good order. If there were an election there would be an announcement of the date of the return of the writ and people would be allowed to be enrolled. That happens on every election day. There is a stampede by people to get on the roll at the last minute. If the rolls are in that condition today what will they be like 12 months hence? The position will be worse because there will be further changes, and the case for a postponement of the election will be stronger. People should cling tenaciously to their right to

control those who govern them. They should not abandon one bit of their right unless there is a very strong reason for doing so.

Mr. SPEAKER: I must draw attention to the fact that hon. members must not pass between a speaker and the Chair.

Mr. HUGHES: People should cling tenaciously to their rights because that is really what the war is about. That is the fundamental basis of the war. I cannot see how it can be alleged against anyone, who wants to maintain the rights of the people, that he is not taking any heed of the war. The protagonists of the Bill have put forward their views with a good deal of heat and acrimony, but when those views are examined it will be found that they have not made out a very strong case. I propose to vote against the Bill.

MR. PATRICK (Greenough): I propose to define my views on this Bill very briefly. As the Leader of the Opposition said last year when speaking on a similar measure, this is a matter entirely at the discretion of each individual, and I intend to exercise my discretion and refuse to consider the Bill from a party point of view. Looking at the situation as a whole I consider it is substantially the same as when the other Bill was before us last year. It has not greatly altered. We have still a powerful enemy, with 80,000,000 people, menacing our shores and practically at our gates as they were last year, and it cannot be said that this country is in a reasonable state of safety until the enemy has been forced out of New Guinea and the Solomons and probably the island of Timor.

In many particulars Western Australia is not comparable with the other States, as the Minister for Lands pointed out yesterday, because we have a much higher percentage of enlistments than has any other State. Consequently a much bigger proportion of our electors are out of their electorates. The northern areas have been disturbed by the war and have lost a great deal of their population. The population of the Goldfields areas has been dispersed all over Australia and the farming areas have been largely depleted of people. Not only have we men in the army but women also have enlisted in various branches of the services. Great numbers of country women are residing in the city. As any

woman who has anything to do with the Country Women's Association could tell members, the number of country women who are residing in the city is astounding. Many of them are the wives of soldiers at the front. Evidently they prefer residing here while their husbands and other relatives are at the war.

These people are not entitled to be on the country rolls at all. Strictly speaking, if they have been here a month they could be struck off altogether. So an election in the present circumstances could in no way be considered a true reflection of the opinions of the electors of this State. The people who are left are not greatly interested today in political questions. I have heard that there is an urge on the part of people in the country districts for an election to be held, but people with whom I have spoken on the subject have said they are not considering politics at all at present. The war is the only question in their minds.

Like many others, I am not satisfied with the present Government. In many directions it is not doing work with which I am satisfied. At a time like this, however, I do not believe that there should be any party politics at all. All parties should be joined together with a view to helping the affairs of the country. That has been done by some State Governments and some Dominions. British Columbia is in a dangerous position on the Pacific coast. Immediately Japan declared war, the Government resigned and the two parties—Liberal and Conservative—formed a coalition Government, which is carrying on today. In all matters connected with the war, New Zealand has taken a much more realistic point of view than has Australia. Before Japan entered the war, New Zealand postponed the elections for a year. Since then, by arrangement between both parties, it has been decided to hold no election until the war is over. New Zealand has gone much farther than we propose to go. I think that even the member for East Perth will not deny that New Zealand is a democratic country, yet New Zealand has decided to postpone the election until after the war, as it considers the present is no time for an election.

Mr. Hughes: They have the right to do as they wish.

Mr. PATRICK: I have said an election now would not give a true expression of the people's views. It might even result in the return of the present Government for another three years. I do not know whether I would be too satisfied with that. I would sooner see it muddle along for a short period and then have an election when the people were in a better frame of mind and were back in their electorates.

Mr. Hughes: Your view is purely selfish.

Mr. PATRICK: Until conditions improve and people's minds are not distracted by war conditions as at present, there should not be an election. I intend to support the Bill.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan): I realise that the question before the House is a difficult one in connection with which a good deal can be said on either side. We must be careful in arriving at our decision not to be influenced by the thought of having to fight an election. The point is whether we are prepared to have the same Government for an indefinite period. No one can say that the present position will improve within any given time. It is utterly impossible for any prophet, however carefully he might prognosticate, to arrive at a dependable decision.

Mr. CROSS: They want an election at Swan.

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope that is not so. There is an adjoining electorate where an election might prove of advantage.

The Minister for Lands: The member for Swan would not know the views of the electors of Swan.

Mr. SAMPSON: Perhaps we should give our special attention to Swan for the moment. To contest the election for that district is a job I hope to undertake in the future, because I am certainly not supporting the Bill. The temptation is to take the easy way and say, "Well, matters are unusual and we should allow the position to drift on for another year." But a principle is involved, and I find myself unable to agree with that viewpoint. I feel that I am under an obligation to face the music, and to give to those who have been good enough to send me here the opportunity to return me again to this Chamber. That, I fully realise, is not the easy way. It involves the job of attending many meetings and so on. We are told that the

people are not concerned about politics. I do not know that we can accept that statement. If we attend meetings at the present time we find that the attendances are quite up to the average. I do not know of any meeting where the average attendance has not been equal to what it has been for as long as I can remember.

I am not taking a party view. I do not know that the party viewpoint affects me seriously. I have never taken a strong party viewpoint on any matter that has come before the House. Fairness to those we have the honour to represent is the principle to which I have given consideration, and I trust, therefore, that the measure will be defeated and that, in accordance with custom, an election will be held. When I say "in accordance with custom" I point out that we have already deferred the election for one year. I took no action regarding the Bill on that occasion, and I do feel, after consideration, that there is no justification for the adoption of that view now.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco): I wish to say only a few words. Two or three speakers have said that last year's Bill was passed without a dissentient voice. I want it placed on record that I was against the measure then, and am against this one. My reason is that the electors of Subiaco want an election; it may be in order to get rid of the member, but the member does not mind. It is the right of electors to have an election, and it should be held. It has been mentioned that the rolls are not in order. Members on this side of the House know full well that the first thing to be done when an election is imminent is to see to the rolls themselves: they cannot depend on the rolls as they are. As one member said, "Next year's roll will be worse than this year's, and it will be worse after that again." The population in my electorate has increased by 1,500 people during the last two or three years. A tremendous number of people have come into that district, but exactly where from I do not know. Many of them, I daresay, are country people whose husbands are serving with the Forces.

The position in the country seems to be quite different if one is to accept the statements of country members. Apparently an election is not required in their electorates,

but I do feel that in the city a decided voice has been raised in favour of holding the elections. A little while back we dealt with a Bill for the purpose of prolonging the life of municipalities and road boards. On that occasion one or two members who are in favour of this particular Bill spoke vehemently against that one. If you, Sir, remember, one particular member said he would not support the measure unless a proviso was included to the effect that if ten per cent. of the people in any particular municipality or road board wished to have an election, and they presented a bona fide petition, they could have one. The Government decided to include that provision in the Bill. What is good enough for the municipal elections should be good enough for those of the Assembly. If ten per cent. of the people of any particular electorate are discontented they should at least have the right to have an election. I do not support the Bill.

Question put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	29
Noes	11

Majority for	18
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AYES.

Mr. Berry	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Patrick ✓
Mr. Cross	Mr. Raphael
Mr. Doney	Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Fox	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Thorn
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Triat
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Warner
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Mann	Mr. Wise
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Withers
Mr. Millington	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Needham	

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Doyle	Mr. North
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Seward
Mr. Hughes	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Watts
Mr. McNeal	Mr. Sampson
Mr. McLarty	

(Teller.)

Mr. SPEAKER: As there is an absolute majority in favour of the Bill, I declare the second reading carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

Point of Order

Mr. Hughes: On a point of order, I ask for your ruling, Mr. Speaker, in respect of the division that has just taken place. I call your attention to Standing Order 196, and ask for a ruling whether some of the votes cast in favour of the Bill are in order.

Mr. Speaker: I rule that the voting was quite in order.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Present Legislative Assembly prolonged:

Mr. WATTS: I move an amendment—

That in line 15 the words "within the time specified by Section 5 of this Act" be struck out and the following provisos added:—

"Provided that within the period of twelve months computed from the twenty-first day of February, one thousand nine hundred and forty-two, the Governor shall issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Writs directing him to issue a writ for a general election for the Legislative Assembly to succeed the Legislative Assembly as at present constituted and existing unless the Governor as the result of consultation with the General Officer commanding the Military Forces in the State is of opinion that a state of grave emergency has arisen immediately threatening the safety of the inhabitants of the State and that as a consequence of the existence of such state of grave emergency it would be impracticable to hold such general election. In such event, notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the Electoral Act or in the Postponement Act or any other Act, it shall not be necessary for the Governor to issue his warrant to the Clerk of the Writs directing him to issue a writ for such general election within the period of twelve months computed from the twenty-first day of February, one thousand nine hundred and forty-two, but the Governor shall, subject as hereinafter provided, issue his said warrant to the Clerk of the Writs directing him to issue a writ for the said general election at a time which may be determined by the Governor but which shall be within six months computed from the twenty-first day of February, one thousand nine hundred and forty-three:

Provided further that if within such period of six months computed from the twenty-first day of February, one thousand nine hundred and forty-three, the Governor, after further consultation with the General Officer commanding the Military Forces in the State is of opinion that such a state of grave emergency as hereinbefore described still exists it shall not be necessary for the Governor to issue his said warrant to the Clerk of the Writs directing him to issue a writ for the said general election within the period of six months computed from the twenty-first day of February, one thousand nine hundred and forty-three, but the Governor shall issue his said warrant to the Clerk of the Writs directing him to issue a writ for the said general election at a time to be determined by the Governor but which shall be within six months computed from the twenty-first day of August, one thousand nine hundred and forty-three.

Any such decision of the Governor having the effect of extending the time within which

his said warrant shall issue shall be notified in the "Government Gazette."

Provided further that the Legislative Assembly may, at any time from the date of the passing of this Act, by resolution carried by an absolute majority recommend that the Governor issue his said warrant under Section sixty-three of the Electoral Act, for a general election for the Legislative Assembly, and the Governor shall give effect to such recommendation."

My intention is, if possible, to ascertain whether the real object of the presentation of the Bill to Parliament centres in the belief that there is a reasonable probability of a great emergency arising, or whether it is through the desire of the Government to prolong the life of the present Parliament and with it the life of the present Administration. The purpose of the amendments I propose to move—that which I have already placed before the Chair, forms the first—amounts to this: Prior to the 21st February next which, under the law as it stands today, would be the time for the issue of writs for the general election, the Governor is to be instructed by this House to issue the writs for that purpose unless, as a result of consultation with the General Officer Commanding the Military Forces in this State, His Excellency is of opinion that a state of grave emergency has arisen so that it would be impracticable to hold such general election.

If the Governor, on the advice of the General Officer Commanding, comes to that conclusion, he is then entitled, under the amendments I propose, not to issue the warrant for a period of six months from the 21st February, 1942. At the end of that time His Excellency has to issue the warrant for the general election unless he is satisfied, after further consultation, that the state of grave emergency previously described still exists, in which case he is entitled not to issue the writ for a further period of six months, making the postponement for 12 months in all. If it be that the real reason for bringing down the Bill is because it is believed there is likely to arise a grave emergency sufficient to deprive the people of this State of their right to deal with each one of us at the poll, then the amendment will enable the Governor-in-Council, having received the requisite advice, to take the necessary action.

My amendment shows, I believe, more confidence in the Government of the State

than is indicated by the Bill itself, because we all know that the Governor-in-Council is the Governor in Executive-Council, which body comprises the Ministers of the Crown. Consequently they would in effect, on the advice of the General Officer Commanding, make the decision as to whether there was a state of grave emergency that rendered an election impracticable and would accept the warrant of the Governor not to have an election. That would continue the situation now sought to be achieved by the Bill. The amendment proceeds to provide that the Assembly may at any time after the passing of the measure recommend by resolution that the Governor issue a warrant for an election, and the Government shall give effect to the recommendation. There is nothing new in that provision; it appeared in the measure passed last year.

I was not in favour of last year's Bill, but in the circumstances I preserved silence. I have not changed my views; I have no new views. Those associated with me know that I was reluctant to see passed the measure of last year. It is all very well to abuse members because they hold a contrary opinion. I have not done that. Any observations I made were those that could fittingly be made in any assembly and had no reference to the views of any other member. I believe every member holds his views honestly, and I concede him the right to express his views without my controverting them or descending to personalities of a very low and degrading type.

The CHAIRMAN: I want the Leader of the Opposition to avoid getting into a form of repetition. I admit that this clause really constitutes the Bill, but I hope the hon. member will not bring into the debate something that I shall have to rule out on the ground of tedious repetition.

Mr. WATTS: I will do my best, Mr. Chairman, and accept any reproof in the spirit in which you make it. On the motion concerning the Commonwealth referendum proposals, I said this was no time to divide the people on a controversial question of that nature, but I submit that the controversial question involved there is very different from that entailed in a State election. The one involves the casting aside of the Federal Constitution and the other the upholding of the Constitution of the State.

Therefore, when expressed in that way, there is room for a divergence of opinion.

The PREMIER: I am not prepared to accept the amendment; nor am I prepared to accept the hon. member's presumption that there is only one reason for the introduction of the Bill. We have been discussing the Bill for three hours and many reasons have been given, and the Leader of the Opposition is entirely out of step with the opinions expressed by many members. I oppose the principle contained in the words proposed to be inserted. I cannot find that this power has ever been handed over to the military authorities since the time of Cromwell. We are to accept without question the information given by a military officer, and he might determine in the way Cromwell did in 1653 when he went to the House of Commons and, referring to the mace, ordered the removal of "that bauble" and the dispersion of Parliament. We do not want to get back to those days.

Consider what happened at Broome eight or ten months ago. A few days beforehand no military officer could have told the Government that a horde of planes would sweep down on Broome killing 60 to 100 people. Fifty or 60 of those people have been buried in nameless graves. Elections cannot be arranged in two or three days; the preliminary formalities occupy weeks, and unfortunately, in time of war, anything may happen in two or three weeks. Even granted the best reconnaissance, I do not think any military authority would be in a position to know whether an assault was likely to be made tomorrow or a month hence. Who knew that Sydney would be shelled by a submarine three hours before it happened, much less three weeks or three months before?

Mr. Doney: In war it is always the unexpected that happens.

The PREMIER: Yes, it is the element of surprise that makes for success in war. Pearl Harbour was bombed before the Americans knew their country was involved in the war. Yet we are asked to take the advice of someone who has to be a successful prophet over a period of at least four weeks.

Mr. Withers: And he would not be allowed to tell us if he knew.

The PREMIER: The amendment is impracticable and should not be accepted.

Mr. WATTS: There is no suggestion in the amendment that any General Officer

Commanding the Forces should come to this Chamber and take any action regarding the mace, or anything else. To put it in that form, as the Premier did, was somewhat extraordinary. The amendment provides that unless the Governor, as a result of consultation with the General Officer Commanding is of opinion, etc. Thus the Governor, not the General Officer Commanding, has to be of the opinion.

The Premier: We would have to accept his opinion.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 6, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE PREMIER: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the third reading of this Bill to be taken forthwith.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House, and assured myself there is an absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (LANDS) AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS [5.45] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is introduced to give the Congregational Church Society power to transfer land to a purchaser free of any trust, and to mortgage lands so as to give the mortgagee the right to take action under his security as if the land was free of any trust. The Bill proposes to amend an old Ordinance of 1855. The Ordinance gave the Congregational Societies power to sell and to mortgage land, and also provided that money from the sale of any land should be used for the purchase of freehold property. The church authorities had, until recently, thought the Ordinance gave them power to grant a free title to a purchaser; but we discovered that this was not so. The Title of the Ordinance reads—

An Ordinance to enable the Denomination of Christians called Congregationalists or Inde-

pendents in the Colony of Western Australia to hold lands, to raise a sum or sums of money on the security of such lands, and for other purposes therein mentioned.

I should like also to read the Preamble, which states—

Whereas certain religious societies have been established in the Colony of Western Australia, called "Congregationalists or Independents," having for their object the diffusion of Christian Faith and Worship; and whereas the said religious societies have from time to time purchased and otherwise become seized of lands in the said Colony, and are desirous of selling, exchanging or raising money on such lands, for the purpose of erecting places of worship thereon, and otherwise promoting the objects of such societies; and whereas it is expedient that the said societies should receive all reasonable encouragement: Be it therefore enacted . . .

Lot 210, a quarter-acre block in Prinsep-street, Bunbury, not far from the Bunbury railway station, was granted to the Congregational Church in 1859 for church purposes. The present Congregational Church at Bunbury was built on other land otherwise acquired by the society. In 1906 the trustees of the church sold Lot 210 to the Bunbury Protestant Hall Company Limited, which subsequently, in 1913, re-sold the land. These conveyances were not under the Transfer of Land Act. Recently the present holder endeavoured to obtain a title under that Act; but the Commissioner of Titles ruled that Ordinance 18, *Victoriæ* No. 16, did not give the necessary authority to confer a clear title on this purchaser.

The present Bill is designed to overcome the difficulty and to enable the purchaser to obtain a satisfactory title to the land. The measure, as drafted, will enable the purchaser to obtain a title free of any trust. It will have the same effect in regard to other transactions entered into, whether sale, exchange or mortgage. It gives power to the societies to lease or sell land notwithstanding any trust. It also provides that where any land was originally granted to the societies by the Crown, no transfer, exchange, mortgage, or lease exceeding 21 years, shall be valid unless approved by the Governor.

Similar powers to these were granted to several other churches, for example—

The Church of England, by Act No. 10 of 1915,

The Roman Catholic Church, by Act No. 4 of 1916,

The Presbyterian Church, by Act No. 2 of 1908,

The Hebrew Congregation, by Act No. 25 of 1921,

The Baptist Union of Western Australia, by Act No. 3 of 1941.

The Bill is not introduced as a measure to enable the societies to do something specific, but as an amendment to an existing Ordinance. There can be no doubt the societies thought, when they made arrangements in 1906 to sell the lot in question in order to secure money to purchase another lot in a better situation, they had the right to grant a clear title. The same thing would apply almost certainly to any other similar transaction, such as a mortgage. All the societies desire is that they may use the money obtained from the lot sold to purchase other land. The Commissioner of Titles rules, however, that under the Ordinance which conferred certain powers on the societies to deal in land, authority was not given to transfer land free from any trust. The desire is to validate that transaction. Similar validation measures are the Roman Catholic Church Property Act Amendment Act, No. 4 of 1916, Section 5; and the Church of England Lands Act, 1915, Section 6.

I think members will agree that, since the Ordinance of 1855 did not make it clear that the lands which were either the subject of a grant or given in trust for the societies should be transferable or might be mortgaged free from any trust, it is very necessary to amend the Ordinance in order to give the purchaser a clear title. That is as clearly as I can explain the transaction. Ordinance 18 *Vict.*, No. 16, will be found at page 238 of Volume 1 of the Statutes of Western Australia, 1832 to 1882, should members desire to refer to it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Thorn, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.54 p.m.