

know the possibilities of Western Australia in the way of stock producing. I hope to live to see the day when we shall have millions of stock where we now have thousands. Travelling through the Eastern States during the last year or two, I found wherever I went that people were turning their attention to Western Australia more than ever before. That huge expanse, the wheat belt, is not yet developed to the extent of one-half, and Eastern agriculturists are turning their attention to it. I have had many discussions with Eastern farmers and squatters concerning Western Australia, and have convinced numbers of them that Western Australia is worthy of consideration. I have compared the average wheat yield here for 1924-25 with that of South Australia and the Eastern States. Some people took my statement with a grain of salt. Fortunately, however, I had the "Year Book of Australia" with me, and was able to refer the doubters to the official figures. I said to them, "Here are the figures of the average Western Australian yield of wheat." Numbers of people are coming here now from the Eastern States. Before many years are past we shall have a large population in Western Australia, and shall be able to retain all the money that now goes out of the country. We shall be able to produce all the requirements of Western Australia, and so have a large and prosperous population here. I am very pleased with the work which the Minister for Lands is doing in the South-West. I hope the Government will expedite that work. Undoubtedly Mr. Angwin is endeavouring to develop that part of our country. His not being an agriculturist is a drawback, but he has Sir James Mitchell's ideas and advice to go by. I hope that before long we shall see the whole of the South-West developed. Only two years ago a certain property in the South-West was offered to the Government. I believe it was originally offered to the Mitchell Government. I know that Sir James Mitchell and others have regretted that it was not purchased. It comprises about 50,000 acres running at a distance of ten miles from Bunbury up along the coast. A great deal of it is cleared. If it had been purchased, the Government could have placed from 100 to 150 farmers on it straight away, so much of the land being already developed. The estate was offered at a reasonable figure—27s. or 28s. per acre. It would merely require a little drainage. As

Mr. Maun stated, a drain from Harvey to Lake Preston would drain a large area of valuable country. I trust that the Government, if they can get it at a reasonable figure now, will purchase the estate in question and settle it as suggested. I thank hon. members for the attention they have given me, and I have much pleasure in supporting the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.53 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 25th August, 1926.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY—PRESENTATION.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have to announce that, accompanied by the mover and seconder of the Address-in-reply, I waited on His Excellency the Governor this morning and presented the Address-in-reply to His Excel-

lency's opening Speech. His Excellency was pleased to give an acknowledgment in the following terms:—

Mr. Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, I thank you for your expressions of loyalty to His Most Gracious Majesty the King and for your Address-in-reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament. (Sgd.) W. R. Campion, Governor.

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, FERTILISER FREIGHTS.

Mr. SAMPSON asked the Minister for Railways: 1, In view of the serious anomaly consequent on the varying charges for the transport of fertiliser to various districts, has consideration been given to the disabilities under which fruit and vegetable growers located in the hills district suffer? 2, Is it intended to revert to a schedule of charges whereby all fruit and vegetable growers will be able to secure the transport of fertiliser at the "manure" rate and thus give equal consideration to all?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, Fertilisers are carried at the following rates:—(a) To agricultural areas generally, special "manure" rate from 1st December to 31st March, and "Miscellaneous" class rate during other months; (b) to the wet areas in the South-West the special "manure" rate applies all the year round. The Government is not aware that any disabilities are imposed on fruit and vegetable growers in the hills areas who, by reason of their close proximity to the metropolitan market and port, have a considerable advantage over growers in more remote districts. 2, No alteration in the rates is contemplated at present.

QUESTION—HELENA RIVER BRIDGE, GUILDFORD.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Works: 1, Were tenders called for the supply of the ironwork used in the improvement of the Helena River bridge at Guildford? 2, If so, who was the successful tenderer? 3, Was the ironwork manufactured in the State? 4, If not, where was it prepared?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: 1, Quotes were obtained from firms doing business in Perth. 2, Tomlinson Brothers and Harris, Scarfe, & Sandovers, Limited. 3, Yes. 4, Answered by 3.

QUESTION—CO-OPERATIVE ORGANISATIONS. LEGISLATION.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Premier: Do the Government intend to introduce this session a Bill to provide for the registration of co-operative organisations?

The PREMIER replied: Yes.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Richardson, leave of absence for a fortnight granted to Mr. Angelo (Gascoyne) on the ground of urgent private business.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Federal Aid Roads Agreement.
 - 2, Agricultural Bank Act Amendment.
- Transmitted to the Council.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Government Savings Bank Act Amendment.
 - 2, Trust Funds Investment Act Amendment.
- Introduced by the Minister for Works.

RETURN—TRAFFIC ACT, REVENUE.

MR. GEORGE (Murray - Wellington) [4.41]: I move—

That a return be laid upon the Table showing—1, The total amount collected in the metropolitan area under the Traffic Act to the 30th June, 1925, by way of (a) fines for offences against the Act and regulations, (b) costs inflicted upon the convicted persons. 2, The total amount collected in the metropolitan area under the Traffic Act to 30th June, 1925, by way of (a) licenses for petrol propelled vehicles, (b) drivers' licenses.

I understand the Minister offers no opposition to the motion.

The Minister for Works: That is so.

Mr. GEORGE: Then there is no need for me to speak to the motion. My reason for asking for the information is that I am desirous that all the funds from these sources should be devoted to the repairing of roads. At present some of the funds can be used in that way and some cannot.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [4.43]: I move—

That it is resolved by the Legislative Assembly that a proclamation should be issued for the redivision of the State into electoral districts under the provisions of the Electoral Districts Act, 1923.

Members will realise that if the motion is carried, it will be necessary for the Government to issue a proclamation directing the Commission appointed under the Act of 1922 to make a redistribution of seats in order that Parliament might pass a Bill on the lines of the Commission's recommendations and bring about a very necessary redistribution. It will be recollected that in 1911 we did things in a different way. At that time a Bill was introduced into the House and the House dealt with it as it deals with all other measures. Members will be aware of all that happened in connection with the Bill of 1911. It was a perfectly good Bill, in spite of all that was said against it. Notwithstanding that my friends opposite have been in office for seven years out of the 15 which have elapsed since that Bill was enacted, they have not made a serious attempt to alter its provisions. When the measure was brought down, however, the Government of the day were accused of fixing boundaries to suit themselves and their supporters. In 1923 I submitted a Redistribution of Seats Bill to this Chamber—a very good Bill indeed. The boundaries fixed by the Commission under that measure were perhaps not altogether perfect, but they were as near perfection as any ordinary set of men would be likely to get.

Mr. J. H. Smith: No. There were rotten boundaries in that Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Perhaps there were some things to be disagreed with. The Bill was bad only because an additional seat was to be given to the South-West.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Not to the South-West.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I will say the southern part of the State. That seat was put in between Katanning and Albany, and might well have been considered as part of the South-West. The Commission in their wisdom determined that the additional seat should go into the southern area rather than into the South-West. Possibly they did not quite realise the development of the South-West, and the fact that the great addition to the rolls would be there

and not in the southern area. It was argued also that the outports and the larger centres, such as Northam, Geraldton, Bunbury and Albany, might have been given a greater quota of electors. The present Minister for Works was insistent that these centres ought to be brought into line with the metropolitan area. On the whole, however, the Bill was excellent. In a huge country like this, with a scattered population, there are natural barriers. For instance, between the Great Southern district and the South-West there is a considerable area of timber land which presents a barrier, as there are no means of communication over much of it and it does not carry many people. North of the Swan and Toodyay electorates away to the Murchison River the number of electors in each seat was rather smaller than we should have liked it to be. Again, however, that disadvantage could not be overcome. Taking the Bill all round, I doubt whether we shall get anything much better. I was told it was a wrong Bill, and ought not to pass; and there was so much objection that I could not get the statutory majority. Notwithstanding that failure, it is our duty to deal with the matter; and I hope it will be dealt with on non-party lines. After all, our duty is to the electors, and not to ourselves.

The Premier: Consistently with the duty which the electors have towards us, too.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think that party should be considered in this matter, or that individual sympathies should be considered. No redistribution of seats will suit members all round, and it is easy for each member to raise some argument against any proposal. It sometimes happens that electors whom a member has not met and does not know will be brought within his boundaries by the Bill, and that electors who know him and like him will be shut out by it. Alteration of boundaries must, however, be undertaken from time to time in any country. I suppose that applies even to England, where the population is more or less stationary. In a new country like Australia the boundaries cannot work fairly for many years together. Under the Federal system there are equal electorates, which involve constant change. Single electorates are a rough and ready means of securing representation, and in our young State we must frequently look into the matter of representation. Our gold-mining industry when at its best maintained a great many more people than it does now.

Not so many years ago it produced at the rate of $\$1\frac{1}{2}$ millions sterling annually, and then naturally could support far more people than it supports now, when the production of gold is less than two millions annually. Fortunately the people displaced from the gold-mining districts have in great part transferred themselves to the agricultural areas. However, they are not on the goldfields any more. In this Chamber we ought to do what is right. Parliament passed in 1922 the Electoral Districts Act, which provides for the fixing of boundaries by a Commission consisting of a judge of the Supreme Court, the Surveyor General, and the Chief Electoral Officer. My friends opposite, when they were in power from 1911 onwards, introduced a measure providing for the appointment of a Commission. The great difference between their Bill and the existing Act is that they themselves proposed to name the Commissioners, whereas the Commissioners were named in the Act passed in 1922. That Act did not provide for an equal number of electors in each electorate, and for obvious reasons. In the closely populated metropolitan area we provided twice the quota applying to the agricultural districts and to the central goldfields area. The agricultural districts and the central goldfields area were to have the same quota.

The Premier: Northam and Kalgoorlie and Boulder were to have the same quota, and that was one of the greatest defects of your measure. The Bill had no regard for the factor of distance from the seat of government.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I get on the train at daylight and arrive here at half-past nine. The Premier gets his train at six in the evening, sleeps comfortably in the train, and is joined by me at Northam. Where is the difference?

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition can motor to his town in two hours, whereas it would take me a day to motor to mine.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am afraid that if I motored 67 miles in two hours over the roads constructed by the Minister for Works, I should not live to occupy a seat in Parliament much longer.

Mr. Corboy: It is a recognised run of two hours to Northam.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: For joy riders like my young friend, no doubt; but I do not regard it as a safe undertaking. The Premier says distance from the capital

city was not taken into consideration in our Bill. However, it was. An allowance was made where necessary. The Commissioners had authority to allow one-fifth below the quota and to go 20 per cent. above the quota where that was thought advisable. Quite apart from the number of electors, other factors were considered. The Commissioners were given the right to have regard to community of interest, means of communication, distance from the capital city, physical features, and existing boundaries of districts. Thus they had a wide range. The measure provided that there should be four seats representing the North. The North, as the Premier will admit, is much further away than Boulder, and much more difficult of access. Wyndham is about 2,000 miles from Perth, and has a comparatively slow shipping service. Gascoyne is a long way off, and Roebourne is still farther. In view of the great distances involved, our measure provided that the North should be represented by four members. The Bill introduced by the Scaddan Government provided three seats for the North, Gascoyne and Murchison being to some extent joined. The four divisions provided by our measure were the metropolitan area, the agricultural area, the central goldfields, and the mining districts. For the agricultural area, including outports and the bigger towns, the quota was one-half of the quota for the metropolitan area. The central goldfields quota was the same as the agricultural quota. On the central goldfields the areas are comparatively small and compact. The electorate of my friend the Premier is not as big as the electorate of the member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale). The outer mining districts are scattered and cover an area extending from the Murchison to Ravensthorpe. Those districts receive special consideration. In 1923 there were in the metropolitan area 83,748 electors. Twelve seats were fixed for that area with an average number of electors of 6,979. As at the 31st December, 1925—these figures represent the latest I had when I arrived at these calculations—the number of electors in the metropolitan area totalled 103,878. There are a few more now, but not so very many. That showed an increase compared with 1923 of 19,130. Still 12 seats are available for the electors in that area, the average number of electors being 8,656. Under the provisions for a redistribution of seats, the metropolitan area, on these figures, would have 15 seats, or a gain of three,

the quota in that case being 6,742 electors. Coming to the agricultural areas, we find that in 1923 there were 66,838 electors, for the representation of whom there were 21 seats, the average number of electors per seat being 3,182. In December, 1925, the number of electors had risen to 81,674, or an increase in the 2½ years of 14,836. Still they have the 21 seats, but the average number of electors per seat at that time increased to 3,839. Under the proposed redistribution the agricultural districts would now be entitled to 24 seats or a gain of three, the new quota being 3,371. In the central goldfields districts there were in 1923, 11,184 electors with four seats and an average number of electors per seat of 2,796. On the 31st December last, there were 10,006 electors, a decrease of 1,118. There are still four seats provided, the average number of electors per seat being then 2,501. Under the redistribution of seats proposal, three seats would have been provided for the central goldfields areas, representing a loss of one seat, while the quota would have been fixed at 3,371. As a matter of fact, the division would have meant less than three, but as the House provided for a margin, the goldfields districts would have reaped the advantage.

The Premier: Are you calculating the exact quota without regard to the 20 per cent. margin?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, I cannot do other than that. I must take the exact figures. In the scattered mining areas the number of electors in 1923 was 7,517, with nine seats having an average number of electors of 834. On the 31st December last there were 7,648 electors, showing an increase of 131. There are still nine seats for those mining areas and the average number of electors stands at 849. Under the redistribution proposals, four seats would be allocated to the central mining areas on this basis and that would mean a loss of five seats. The new quota there would be 1,685. Thus the goldfields would lose six seats, of which three would be added to the metropolitan area and three to the country districts. That is because the number of electors has increased in those areas, whereas it decreased slightly in the goldfields districts. On the increase alone, and even had there been no decrease, the redistribution proposals would have provided for the alterations I have indicated. There is

another argument apart from that which I have used so far, which also points to the necessity for a redistribution of seats without delay. Inside the areas I have referred to, great anomalies abound. The member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale) who should be sitting on the Opposition side of the House, represented, as at the 31st December last—all the figures I will quote now refer to that date—the enormous number of electors, totalling 14,603.

Mr. Marshall: How much of his time each day must he devote to looking after their interests!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not say the hon. member does not do his work well.

Mr. Clydesdale: I agree with you.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: At the same time it is a load he should not be asked to carry, especially when we remember that he represents nine times as many electors as are to be found in the outer goldfields areas. He represents 45 times as many electors as are found in the Menzies constituency.

Mr. Panton: And he is just the man capable of doing it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have not suggested that he is 45 times as capable as the hon. member, nor do I suggest that because the member for Menzies (Mr. Panton) represents so few electors he is any less capable of assisting in the government of the country. I do suggest, however, that it is not right to allow this sort of thing to continue. The member for Canning represents three times as many electors as there are in the Fremantle electorate.

Mr. Clydesdale: I have indeed a load to carry.

Mr. Marshall: But what a load the people of Canning have to carry!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Again we find great disparities in the metropolitan area. Are these to continue? If we consider the electorate of Murray-Wellington, we find that the hon. member representing that constituency has to look after the interests of 4,600 electors. He represents as many as are to be found in the constituencies of Cue, Menzies, Mt. Leonora, Mt. Margaret and Roebourne added together. The member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) represents 5,443 electors, and the member for Beverley (Mr. C. P. Wansbrough) 2,232 electors, although both are agricultural con-

stituencies. The member for Forrest represents 2,995 electors as against twice that number in the Nelson electorate. After all, I suppose that is enough for any lady to look after!

Mr. Withers: Why not cut the Murray-Wellington constituency in half?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The electoral commission would do as they thought best regarding that point. Such a commission would require to give consideration to community of interests. Bunbury has 3,573 electors and that is a compact constituency. How does that compare with the 5,443 electors in the Nelson constituency, the 4,240 electors in the Sussex electorate, or the 4,296 electors in the Collie constituency? I do not think those disparities should be allowed to continue. When we come to the constituency of Geraldton, represented by the Minister for Railways, we realise that that centre is an important outport, where there is considerable trade. There are 2,745 electors in that constituency.

The Minister for Railways: But the number is growing very rapidly now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Geraldton gives promise of better things. Still, there are half as many electors in the Geraldton constituency as there are in the Nelson electorate which covers a scattered area. That is not right.

The Premier: What is the position regarding Northam?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There are 3,286 important people in the Northam electorate.

Mr. Withers: Northam has not so many as Bunbury.

The Premier: Why not compare Northam with some of the other seats?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not allow the Premier to make the choice for me. However, Northam is an important town and represents a compact constituency. Certainly, if one of the other electorates should have a quota of 5,000, it should be Northam, and not Nelson. Again, there are 2,200 more electors in the Nelson district than in the Northam electorate, and there are 1,300 fewer in Northam than in the Murray-Wellington constituency. There are in Northam, roughly, 1,000 fewer than in the Sussex electorate, 1,400 fewer than in Toodyay and 1,600 fewer than in Swan. I selected the Canning constituency as having the greatest number of electors in the metropolitan area, and I chose Nelson as the constituency hav-

ing the largest number of electors in the agricultural districts. Next to Nelson there is the Avon electorate with 5,037 electors. Naturally a comparison can be made only by taking the lower figures for comparison with the higher figures. Surely that is a fair thing. I could have taken the Leederville electorate with 11,923 electors instead of selecting the Canning seat with 14,603 electors. Before leaving the agricultural districts, I would mention that it often happens, while the growth of population has not been apparent in the country towns, it has been shown in the country districts. Because of that we find Albany having nearly 5,000 electors, Bunbury 3,500 electors, Geraldton 2,700 electors and Northam, 3,200. They are some amongst the agricultural electorates with lower numbers of electors. Coming to the goldfields, I have to congratulate you, Sir, on the energy displayed in your electorate. There the numbers have grown. At Boulder there are 2,790 electors, at Brown-Hill-Ivanhoe there are 3,426, at Hannans there are only 893 and at Kalgoorlie there are 3,968.

Hon. J. Cunningham: There are over 4,000 now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Even in those four seats the numbers vary from 893 to 3,968. Surely some adjustment ought to be made there! The boundaries cannot be where they ought to be, even if those four seats were to remain. It cannot be said that 893 electors in Hannans is the correct number, when Kalgoorlie has 3,968. All those divisions demand a readjustment of boundaries. On the outer goldfields, your electorate, Sir, has 1,341 electors.

Mr. Lutey: And it is growing.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of course it is. To-day it is largely an agricultural electorate. In Menzies there are 324 electors. So you, Sir, represent four times as many electors as are to be found in Menzies.

Mr. Panton: There are three more there now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Of those 324, two are represented by my friend and his wife.

The Premier: An increase of three may not be many, but it is a fair percentage increase on the total.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I admit it. At any rate, Sir, I do not for a moment suggest that you are not four times as capable as is the member for Menzies; certainly the fact remains that you represent four times

as many electors. Coolgardie has 1,108 electors, or twice as many as are in Cue. Leonora has 1,063 electors. There are 1,085 electors in Yilgarn, which is fast becoming an agricultural electorate. Murchison has 1,036 electors.

The Premier: How many did you say there are in Mt. Margaret?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I have been able to count them. Actually there are 459.

Hon. G. Taylor: No, over 500.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There are in Mt. Margaret 50 per cent. more than in Menzies.

The Premier: And 50 per cent. less than in Leonora.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the motion be passed and the necessary proclamation issued, a commission will set to work to fix boundaries in accordance with the provisions of the Act of 1922. The House agreed in 1922 that the Bill was a good Bill, and so it became law. Of course there was opposition to it, the Minister for Lands arguing that all votes should have an equal value.

The Premier: I think you have picked the wrong man.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know the Premier did not argue it. The member for Cue objected very strongly to it.

The Minister for Lands: If you want the opinion of the people, that is the only way to get it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is the view of a resident of the metropolitan area. But already the Premier has dispelled that argument, for he said there should be fewer in Kalgoorlie than in Northam.

The Premier: No, no; I did not say that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope it will be realized that if the motion be carried, a commission will be brought into being to fix the boundaries, after which the House will deal with the commission's recommendations. The passage of this motion will not alter boundaries at all; all it will do will be to say that the time has come for adjusting the boundaries. It will simply mean that a majority of members believe that the present divisions are not right. I hope no member will say the present divisions are right and should be allowed to stand. When the commission has done its work, that work will be submitted to the House.

The Minister for Lands interjected.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think the provision is right. If the 20 per cent be used, it can be used in respect of the central mining areas. You could not have a better Act. There, of course, the numbers have shrunk. I do not want to see the central goldfields represented by three members but we have said that even there the quota need be only one half that for the metropolitan area. I do not know that we could go any further. If the electors leave certain districts, it must follow that the representation will shrink. That is only fair. The gold mining industry will then be represented by seven seats. I am sorry I am not able to say that the representation ought to be increased. May the time come when it will have to be increased. But we have to deal with facts as they are, and we find that the numbers of the electors in the agricultural districts and in the metropolitan area have grown considerably during the past 2½ years, grown by 19,000 in the metropolitan area and by 14,800 in the agricultural districts. Those facts alone demand that we should give consideration to the representation in this House. I hope the House will deal with this matter on non-party lines. If when dealing with Mr. Wilson's Bill my friends opposite really were serious and believed what they said, they ought now to vote for the change. The same thing was said in 1922 when the Act was introduced, namely that a redistribution of seats was long overdue. I agree that it is so. May I say in reply to the Minister for Lands that if the Act of 1922 is not what he would like it to be, he has had two years and three months in which to amend it.

The Minister for Lands: I am quite satisfied with my own electorate.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister has reason to be. But is he serious in saying that the Act is not a good one? He has known all along that we ought to have a redistribution, yet he has sat for two years and three months without trying to amend the Act. His silence has shown that he approves of the Act. I hope the Premier will tell the House that the carrying of this motion will mean nothing more than the fixing of boundaries by a commission, whose work will come up for consideration by the House, and that nothing can happen until the House has approved of the boundaries fixed by the commission. That would be only a fair thing for the Premier to do.

The Premier: Under the Act, the boundaries cannot be altered until the commission's recommendations are approved by the House.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Well, the Premier cannot object.

The Premier: It is not a matter of my objecting.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I hope the Premier will tell the House that the motion can safely be passed; that it is right to pass it; reserving to himself perfect freedom to deal with the question when the commission's recommendations are before us.

The Premier: Perhaps, whilst approving of the boundaries, the commission and I could not get them through the House.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You will be in a much better position than I was when I sat there, for you will have the support of members sitting on this side.

The Minister for Lands: That will have to be decided by caucus.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There has never been a caucus on this side. In caucus the minority can be committed by the majority. We have never had a caucus all the time I have been in Parliament.

The Minister for Lands: There was a caucus over this.

Mr. Davy: It was not effective, because some of the minority did not abide by it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: At a caucus meeting the minority is compelled to abide by the vote of the majority. When we meet, every man is free to do as he wishes.

The Premier: On this matter, this party would be as free as yours.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Why were they not free on the last occasion?

The Premier: They were free.

Mr. Davy: They did not exercise their freedom.

The Premier: They did.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They were not free.

The Premier: Every member was free on that last occasion, and would be free again on this question, but the thing was so bad that we were unanimous in condemning it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Was the member for Canning (Mr. Clydesdale) free?

The Premier: He was absolutely free.

Mr. Richardson: Of course not.

Mr. Davy: They get so used to not being free that when they have their freedom they will not use it.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am pleased that this is to be treated as a non-party matter. I hope the Bill will also be placed in that category. I cannot ask for more than that; indeed I did not expect so much.

The Premier: The Government have no power to tie members down on this question.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am delighted to hear that. I shall expect the motion to go through without a division.

The Premier: Not necessarily.

Mr. Marshall: You are proposing to embarrass the Premier.

Mr. George: Do not expect too much.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I appeal to the House to consider well before voting against the motion.

Mr. Richardson: Don't be too optimistic about the non-party business.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The present boundaries are wrong. I am not concerned about the interests of this or that party, or of individual members. The time is long overdue for a redistribution of seats. We shall fail in our duty if we do not make the best possible effort to effect a redistribution during this session. There have been tremendous alterations in the electorates since 1911.

The Premier: Some of the movements of the population since then have rectified the iniquities of the Act.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is not so. Nothing could be worse than the position to-day. There are many inequalities now in respect of the numbers of persons within the divisions provided by the Act. If the same number of members is to remain in each of the divisions there might still be alterations in the boundaries. I have much pleasure in submitting the motion.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [5.35]: On behalf of the Country Party I have much pleasure in supporting the motion. I am sure there can be nothing of greater importance before Parliament than the question of seeing that the people are represented in a fair and equitable manner. The passing of this motion would bring that about. The Act, under which the proclamation would be issued, is a fair and proper measure, which has been duly approved by this Parliament.

The Premier: Not by this Parliament.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: By the last Parliament. It pays due and proper regard to the importance of country interests and to those outback who are engaged in primary industries, both pastoral and mining. The present boundaries are absolutely inequitable. I refuse to believe that a Government, such as we have in office at present, and claiming to represent the democratic sentiments of the people, would not desire a new and proper redistribution of seats before they go before the people.

The Minister for Lands: How many railways do you want in your district?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The position justifies the acceptance of this motion by the Ministry. If the Government accept it there is to be no political interference, and no political intrigue brought into operation concerning the redistribution of seats for the people's Parliament. We have only to pass this motion, and under the Act a proclamation is automatically issued. Automatically under the Act an independent commission, consisting of a judge of the Supreme Court as chairman, the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor General, set to work and redistribute the seats in a fearless and impartial manner.

The Premier: There is nothing wrong with the commission, but there is a lot wrong with the Act.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Labour Party first introduced the principle that the redistribution of seats should be carried out by an independent tribunal of this nature, with a judge as chairman. They can claim to have educated popular opinion on the subject at the time of the 1911 election. When, I think, the whole of the people were shocked by the jerrymandering Bill that was introduced.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It was a very good Bill.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: It was a very bad one and should be repealed.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: It is the first time in 15 years you have said so.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I have said it on every occasion when the subject has cropped up. When the Leader of the Opposition brought in a redistribution Bill I sat here night after night and supported a fair redistribution, but I opposed the boundaries that were introduced under political influence before my election to this House. I have opposed them on

every occasion since when I have had an opportunity of doing so. I have supported measures that tended to give a fairer and clearer redistribution, carried out by an impartial tribunal with a judge as chairman.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You ought to read your speeches.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: If I did so it would show the hon. member that he is wrong.

The Premier: The Leader of the Opposition was, I think, a member of the Government of that day.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: He was the Premier.

The Premier: I refer to the 1911 Bill. He was a member of the Government that brought in the Bill you now refer to as so shocking.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: For 15 years he has said nothing about it.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: That is incorrect. In 1913 the Premier of the day tried to get these boundaries altered. To-day we are making a similar effort. I should like to see the Premier assist us in altering them as he assisted in having them altered in 1913. The carrying of this motion will practically produce that effect. There are now many important differences in the quotas. This motion will give the Premier what he stood for, a fair and equitable distribution.

The Premier: It has no relationship to what I have stood for. I have never stood for this.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: So far as the tribunal affecting the distribution of seats is concerned, it will give the Premier what he requires. The quotas are not satisfactory, but far better quotas are provided for than those the Premier had in mind in the Bill of 1913.

The Premier: That is not my opinion.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I should very much like to see this Commission set to work. When we get their report I am sure, knowing the impartial men who would comprise that body, it will be of a nature such as this House would cordially approve, and the electors would be given a fair chance of returning whom they liked under the new redistribution. I have looked up some of the latest figures in the "Statistical Abstract" up to the 30th June last. In the Cne electorate, there are 562 electors; in Menzies 324; in Mt. Margaret, 459; in Mt.

Leonora 763; in Mt. Magnet 970; and in Yilgarn 1,085. This gives a total for the six seats with 4,163 electors. No one is more sorry than I that this decline has taken place in the gold-mining industry, which did so much for the State in the early days. But the population is now also diminished, and a redistribution of seats should be made to keep pace with that diminution. With regard to the agricultural districts, the Toodyay electorate has 4,646 electors, returning one member only.

Mr. Lindsay: There are more than that now.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Avon electorate has 5,037 electors returning only one member, and the Williams-Narrogin has 4,629 electors returning only one member. There is a great and unfair disproportion between many of the electorates in the farming districts and those outback.

The Minister for Lands: In my electorate there are about 8,000 electors.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: In the North-East Fremantle electorate there are 7,699 electors, in the Canning electorate 14,603, and in Leederville 11,923. These figures certainly call aloud for rectification. We remember the Redistribution of Seats Bill in 1911, and the map of the Collie seat that was framed on that occasion. I went over Western Australia with that map. Wherever it was shown people were shocked at a redistribution of that nature being carried into effect. These are the boundaries in existence today. They can be altered only by the carrying of this motion, or by the introduction of a fresh Redistribution of Seats Bill. The present Government would not attempt the redistribution themselves; after the experience of 1911 no such thing will ever be done in Western Australia. This will always be carried out by an impartial tribunal with a judge as chairman.

The Minister for Lands: A judge has nothing to do with politics.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: It is not a political matter. The chairman should be a judge.

The Minister for Lands: Not that I mistrust judges.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Act provides that the Commissioners in redistributing the seats shall not only have in mind the quotas fixed under the Act, which is one for the better representation of the people in Parliament, but it is also provided that the Commissioner shall take into

consideration (a) community of interests, (b) means of communication and distance from the capital, (c) physical features, (d) existing boundaries of electorates. These are most excellent principles. It is also provided that the portion of the State now comprised within the Kimberley, Roebourne, Pilbara and the Gascoyne districts, with such modifications of boundaries as the Commissioners may think fit, shall be divided into four electoral districts. So that, if the motion is carried, we shall have not only excellent representation in the agricultural areas, the pastoral areas, the central and outback mining areas, but a fair thing will be done to the metropolitan area and at the same time, four seats, as Parliament has agreed, will remain for the North-West, where the people in a tropical climate are doing so much for the State.

Mr. Marshall: Can you justify Carnarvon as being regarded as part of the North and Murchison being left out?

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The hon. member's electorate has direct railway communication, while Gascoyne has not. At the same time, if there was a flaw in that redistribution, the weakest point seems to me to have been the Murchison seat.

The Minister for Lands: Suppose Parliament agrees to hand over the North-West to the Commonwealth.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: That will be no reason why, in the meantime, we should not put the Murchison on the fairest possible basis. I support the motion and remind the House that, if it is carried, it will not commit the Government or Parliament to anything except to at once set the independent tribunal the task of working out a new redistribution on the basis of the Act. That basis is a fair and proper one and that is why I am supporting the motion moved by the Leader of the Opposition.

MR. PANTON (Menzies) [5.48]: It is not my intention to try to defend the present representation. As a matter of fact I disagree with the system of representation in Parliament as we have it in this State. If members opposite require my support, they can obtain it on a Bill to abolish the Legislative Council, and to reduce the number of members in this House. I have listened attentively to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Country Party. I was in doubt about the interpretation of the motion until I heard those

hon. members as to whether they really required Parliament, in carrying the motion, to confine it to the Electoral Districts Act, 1923. Both stated definitely that that was the intention. I do not know whether members of the present Parliament who were in the last Parliament have taken the trouble to read the debate that took place, not on the Bill itself when it was before the House, but on the recommendations made by the Commission. I have gone to the trouble of carefully reading the whole of that debate, and I was surprised to hear the Leader of the Opposition and the Deputy Leader of the Country Party coming forward to-night, after all the things that were said in the course of that debate and asking that the Commission should put up a recommendation under the Act under which they previously submitted their report which was turned down.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: By whom?

Mr. PANTON: By members of both sides of the House. If the hon. member reads it carefully he will feel sorry that he brought forward the motion.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have sandalwood in your mind.

Mr. PANTON: I have not got it in my mind, nor even in my nostrils. If the motion is carried, the House will be committed to the same Commission that we had before, namely, the Chief Justice—

Mr. E. B. Johnston: No, any judge.

Mr. PANTON: Or a judge of the Supreme Court, and I presume that the Chief Justice would be appointed. If I know anything of the judges, I know that if the Chief Justice did not accept the position, none of his colleagues would do so. The other two members of the Commission are to be the Chief Electoral Officer and the Surveyor General. Those three gentlemen would be appointed to submit a recommendation in accordance with the schedule of the Act. Reading the debate, the whole tone of it was that the Bill of that time tied the hands of the Commission and the Government of the day went so far as to send the recommendations that were submitted back to the Commission, and the Commission refused to have anything further to do with the matter. The Leader of the Opposition is now asking the House to request those same gentlemen to again consider the position and submit recommendations in accordance with the Act. Our friend has not advanced one argument, nor has the

Deputy Leader of the Country Party, to lead the House to believe that there has been a sufficient alteration of the population to induce the members of the Commission to submit new recommendations. The Leader of the Opposition advanced arguments that he would have used had he been bringing down an Electoral Districts Act but he has not used any argument to prove that the Commission will see any reason to alter their decision of 1923.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Of course, I have.

Mr. PANTON: The figures the hon. member has quoted merely prove that in some cases there has been a slight increase, and in other instances a slight decrease, in the numbers. He quoted the two extreme cases—Menzies and Canning. The increases or decreases were so infinitesimal as not to justify the Commission submitting a different recommendation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There is a 25 per cent. increase in the metropolitan area.

Mr. PANTON: Then the Leader of the Opposition should advocate decentralisation.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I am advocating a fair deal.

Mr. PANTON: So am I, and it would be an insult to the intelligence of the three gentlemen constituting the Commission to again ask them to submit recommendations to this House in face of the debate that took place on the previous occasion. Do not forget that those gentlemen were asked to read the debate that took place, as it was recorded in "Hansard." I ask hon. members who know those three gentlemen, whether it is likely that they would be anything but consistent. I would be surprised very much to find that any of those gentlemen would be influenced by speeches made from a personal or a party point of view. Something has been said about the matter being a party question. So far as I am concerned, it is not a party question. Evidently, in 1923 the Electoral Districts Bill which was then before the House became a party question, and the whole of the Government side voted for it. The same thing happened on the second reading, but when it got into Committee on Clause 5, which was the vital clause, the Chairman was moved out of the Chair and that motion was carried by 23 votes to 22. The 17 members of the Opposition and six members from the Government side crossed over. It is interesting to find, on going

brought the division list that, out of the 2 who voted in favour of the redistribution, only nine are in the House to-day. So fewer than 12 were defeated, and one did not stand for re-election. That shows the extent to which the electors worried over the matter. Now we have a motion submitted which ranks practically with a redistribution Bill. That is what I contend the motion amounts to. I repeat that if the three gentlemen are again to be asked to redistribute the seats, and they are consistent, they will submit to us the recommendations they sent before.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The previous recommendation was very good; the House was wrong.

Mr. PANTON: I am not finding any fault with the recommendation at the present time; I am merely trying to tell the House what Parliament did in 1923. Four of the six members who crossed the floor of the House in 1923 are here to-day. I do not know whether they have changed their minds; I venture to say they have not. There are many new members on this side, as well as on the opposite side of the House, and probably they will be induced to arrive at a decision by the debate that takes place on the motion. I have no desire that the House should be led astray by the Leader of the Opposition, or the Deputy Leader of the Country Party when they say that the carrying of the resolution will not mean anything, that it will simply mean that the commission will make a recommendation and that the matter will be decided subsequently. I tell members definitely that they may as well make up their minds that when they are voting for the motion, they will be voting either for or against recommendations similar to those brought down before. I know the Leader of the Opposition too well to suggest that he was not sincere when he submitted the motion. I think I can say, however, that he was not so serious about it. As a matter of fact, his argument was the poorest I have heard in advance on any question he desired to get through the House. I am inclined to think he was not quite serious.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: I will lend you my figures and you can use them.

Mr. PANTON: The hon. member can talk figures. He talked figures when the Electoral Districts Bill was before us, and the figures were then used in the right place. His figures, however, would not justify our

asking the Commission to bring down any recommendations other than those they brought down before. It is an insult to the intelligence of the House to ask that the Commission should function again, and it would be an insult to the intelligence of the Commission to say to them, "Although we defeated your recommendations and although you refused to reconsider them, we are now going to ask you to reconsider them once more."

Mr. George: How could that be when there has been a 20 per cent. increase in the number of electors?

Mr. PANTON: It is all very well to talk about a 20 per cent. increase, but if the numbers are spread over the different electorates, the quotas will not show a very great difference. There can be no alteration when it is a matter of only 2,000 or 3,000 voters. Also, it is idle to argue on the ground that there are 20 per cent. more electors in the metropolitan area than in the country districts. Such an increase, considering numbers alone, would entitle the metropolitan area to five more seats, but the Country Party would say, "Five more seats for the metropolitan area and no more for the country!" I see the member for Pingelly (Mr. Brown) looking concerned already.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: There would be three in the country and three in the metropolitan area.

Mr. PANTON: According to the recommendations on the last occasion, that would be so, but Parliament in 1923 disagreed with those recommendations.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: And was wrong in doing so.

Mr. PANTON: It might have been wrong.

The Minister for Lands: The Leader of the Opposition did not worry much about it at the time.

Mr. PANTON: And he is not worrying much now. The Parliament of 1923 was composed largely of present-day members. If the electors want anything, they want consistency and they cannot get that if we carry this motion. If the Leader of the Opposition had brought down an amendment to the Electoral Districts Act in order to give the Commission something more to work on, I would have believed he was serious.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Why have not the Government altered the Act? You cannot go forever without a redistribution.

Mr. PANTON: The Leader of the Opposition said there was nothing wrong with the Act.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is so.

Mr. PANTON: Then if we carried the motion we should have the same Commission, the same recommendations and the same debates, one of them probably extending over 29 hours as on the previous occasion. Then we should be asked to do what we did in 1923, namely, disagree with the recommendations of the Commission.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What would suit you or your party?

Mr. PANTON: I am speaking not for my party but solely for myself.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: What would it suit you to insert in the Act? Put it in! You have a majority.

Mr. PANTON: I am not discussing the Act. If I did so, I should be out of order, because it is not the question before the Chair.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You have been discussing the Act.

Mr. PANTON: No, I have been discussing the motion. I say to the Leader of the Opposition and to members on his side of the House that if they desire to be consistent and not to add insult to injury, they cannot support the motion.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [6.5]: I cannot be accused of having given a vote on this question previously. As a new member, I think I should express my views, particularly on the strength of electorates in various parts of the State. Figures have been quoted by previous speakers, but I wish to quote a statement from the Chief Electoral Officer bearing the date 13th August, 1926. Those figures show that nine goldfields seats, Kalgoorlie, Coolgardie, Menzies, Leonora, Mt. Margaret, Murchison, Yilgarn, Mt. Magnet and Cue have a total of 7,289 voters or an average of 810 votes per member. There are also four other goldfields seats which have a total of 10,218 voters or an average of 2,555 per member. Taking the 13 goldfields seats, they have a total of 17,507 voters or an average of 1,346 voters per member. The Act lays down certain definite quotas and it provides that the agricultural quota shall be half of the metro-

politan quota. There is also a slight difference for the outer goldfields. A good deal has been said about the number of voters in the metropolitan area, but no mention has been made of the North-West seats. I agree that the North-West should not have as many members as have the agricultural areas or the goldfields districts, but I find that the North-West seats have a total of 4,338 electors or an average of 864 electors per member.

Mr. Sleeman: You can put Roebourne amongst the others.

Mr. LINDSAY: Yes, I will agree to that. The Kimberleys are large districts, and area should be considered as well as the number of voters. At the same time I do not think that a large unoccupied area requires a great deal of attention, though some members would have us believe the contrary. The 13 agricultural seats have a total of 52,443 voters or an average of 4,034 voters per member.

The Minister for Lands: Do not forget there is a metropolitan seat like Swan in that.

Mr. LINDSAY: I do not regard Swan as a metropolitan seat.

The Minister for Lands: There are four agricultural areas in my district.

Mr. LINDSAY: There are 10 metropolitan seats having 87,420 voters, or an average per member of 8,740. For the metropolitan area, therefore, the quota approximates that laid down in the Act. The metropolitan area may be entitled to one more member. When we consider the goldfields, we find a glaring anomaly, and it seems to me that some alteration should be made. There we have 13 members with an average of only 1,356 voters each, and at least four of the seats are what may be described as metropolitan goldfields seats which, according to the Act, should be on the same basis as the agricultural areas. The four metropolitan goldfields seats have an average of 2,555 voters per member, whereas for the agricultural seats, an average of over 4,000 is required. In the outer goldfields the nine seats have an average of only 810 voters. That should not be permitted to continue. I notice that Canning has 15,116 voters, which number is altogether too great. Still, Canning is a small and compact area.

Mr. Clvedesdale: Is it?

Mr. LINDSAY: The member for Fremantle on the other hand has only 4,645 elec-

tors in his district. In other words, he has fewer electors than I have.

Mr. Sleeman: You ought to have another look at the figures.

Mr. LINDSAY: I am quoting from an official statement handed to me to-day. South Fremantle has 5,429 voters, which number is no greater than that of some of the agricultural constituencies. Claremont has 9,542 and Subiaco has 10,966, but West Perth presents another anomaly for it has only 5,928. No matter how we study the question, we must admit there are many metropolitan districts that should have some thousands of votes added to them, and there are other metropolitan districts that should have some thousands taken out. Again, there are some agricultural seats that have many thousand voters more than they should have, and there are many goldfields seats that should have thousands more than they have to-day. I intend to support the motion.

MR. BROWN (Pingeily) [6.12]: I, too, can disclaim having had anything to do with the Bill of 1923. I lived in the country at that time and thought the measure a very fair and equitable one. I studied the division closely, and found that the Bill was defeated in this House by only one vote. Since that time conditions have altered materially. The population of the agricultural areas has increased by leaps and bounds, while the population of the goldfields has declined considerably. During the last few months the decline of population on the goldfields has been more rapid than ever. At present there is a certain goldfields area with a member who represents only 307 electors. That is hardly fair.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: But what is the area?

Mr. BROWN: On the goldfields the people congregate in very small areas, whereas in the agricultural districts they are scattered over very wide areas. On the goldfields one can travel from one town to another quickly, but it requires considerably more time to call on electors in the bush as agricultural representatives have to do. Members should not regard the motion in the light of its effect upon their seats. They should consider the interests of the country generally. We have not got equal representation at present.

The Premier: Are you in favour of equal representation?

Mr. BROWN: Not as regards numbers. A metropolitan seat should require a bigger quota than a country district. On the goldfields I would not ask for districts of 4,000 electors, but districts there should comprise not fewer than 2,000 electors.

The Premier: Why 2,000?

Mr. BROWN: I said not fewer than 2,000.

The Premier: But why not fewer than 2,000?

Mr. George: Because the mining industry is over-represented.

Mr. BROWN: That is the margin to work on.

The Premier: Why not 3,000 electors or 1,500?

Mr. BROWN: If we made the quota 3,000 for the goldfields, there would be hardly any representatives of the goldfields in this House. So many mining members represent such small numbers of voters who are all congregated in the vicinity of Kalgoorlie—

The Premier: All of them?

Mr. BROWN: Well, a great many are.

The Premier: What, four out of 13 constituencies?

Mr. BROWN: Boulder, Kalgoorlie, Hannans, Brown Hill and Coolgardie are close together.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. BROWN: Before tea I was describing the boundaries of the goldfields seats. Kalgoorlie and Boulder are practically goldfields-metropolitan seats, not extending over large areas. I do not know what numbers of electors the goldfields constituencies had when they were first created, but at present the numbers are as follow: Coolgardie 1,102, Cue 543, Hannans 849, Menzies 307, Mt. Magnet 980, Mt. Margaret 441, Murchison 1,105, Yilgarn 1,175, and Mt. Leonora 747: a total of 7,289 electors for nine seats, averaging 810 electors.

Mr. Marshall: You are hundreds out on the Murchison figures.

Mr. BROWN: It may be argued that some of these electorates have great possibilities, although on present indications they are declining. True, there are great possibilities in Yilgarn, which has a large area of agricultural land extending from Southern Cross to Ravensthorpe. When that area becomes thickly settled, the number of electors in Yilgarn will be too great for one member to represent. As regards

the North-West, there are three seats with a total of 2,171 electors, the average being 724 voters per seat. This is another part of the State with great possibilities. Boundaries up there cannot be drawn on a population basis. When the Government are in a position to develop the North-West, it should carry large numbers of people. For that reason the representation of the North-West should not be interfered with. There are 13 agricultural seats with a total of 52,643 electors, an average of over 4,000 per seat. In comparison with the goldfields, this position is not altogether fair. Undoubtedly the population in the agricultural districts will grow. Towns are springing up there and developing rapidly. In the metropolitan area there are 10 seats with a total of 87,420 electors, an average of 8,742 electors per seat. This at the first glance seems altogether unfair; it appears as if metropolitan members were representing far too many electors. However, the limited area of each metropolitan district has to be taken into consideration. We know that the Constitution provides for fifty members. In order to give more seats to the metropolitan area, some goldfields seats would have to be obliterated. This prospect cannot be agreeable to goldfields members, but I have no doubt that the House, so far from putting self first, will study the interests of the country. If redistribution is going to be to the advantage of Western Australia, members will regard it in that light even if it means their political extinction. It seems to me peculiar that we cannot have straight lines along the meridians for our electoral boundaries. The present boundary lines are crooked, and turn and twist in all directions—for what reason I do not know. There are no clearly defined boundaries until one comes to such electorates as York, Beverley, Pingelly, Wagin, and Katanning. The member for Albany has too many electors and too large a territory, and the boundaries are not altogether straight, probably because it was desired to include in the electorate the right number of electors. My own desire is that community of interest should be obtained wherever possible. It does not obtain throughout the agricultural areas. The eastern people are not in accord with the western people, and as a consequence elections are run on parochial lines. I hope members will regard the motion in a non-party spirit. If the Commissioners make further inquiries, the result should be for

the benefit of the State. The member for Menzies (Mr. Pantou) said the Commissioners would not stultify themselves by changing their previous opinion. However, in a few years great alterations come about. To get the right number of electors in every district is most difficult. I again commend the motion for consideration in a non-party spirit.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

MOTION—RETIREMENT OF W. RIPPER.

To inquire by Select Committee.

MR. GRIFFITHS (Avon) [7.40]: I move—

That a select committee be appointed, with power to send for persons and papers, to inquire into the retirement of Mr. W. Ripper, late resident engineer in charge of the construction of the Southern Cross-Kalgoorlie railway, and the refusal to grant him a pension after 27 years' continuous service.

I hope to be able to show members that this is a case in which injustice has been meted out to a most worthy servant of the State. To my way of thinking, the action taken by the Public Service Commissioner under the prevailing rules is unworthy of any Government. It represents a mere subterfuge.

Hon. G. Taylor: Have you facts to bear out those statements?

MR. GRIFFITHS: Yes. Mr. Ripper is a worthy public servant of 27 years' standing, and functioned as engineer for railway construction in the early days. The member for Guildford (Hon. W. D. Johnson) and the late Minister for Works (Mr. George) know him very well. Mr. Ripper was also a familiar figure on the goldfields. I wish to quote to the House a letter I received from him after taking up his case some 12 months ago. I had a motion on the Notice Paper last session, but it was among the slaughtered innocents. Mr. Ripper writes—

There seems to be some misunderstanding in connection with the cases included in the appeal. Had I known that my name could have been included, I certainly would have had it put in, but being away from town I appear to have been out of touch with C.S.A. matters and apparently the false impression that I had agreed to accept a lump sum in lieu of pension (vide third paragraph in Mr. Stevens's communication to you) decided my non-inclusion. Re date of retirement. This was in April, 1918, as my file should show. I was notified near the end of 1917, but holidays due brought me into 1918 as above. Mr.

Stevens does not appear to have any record prior to 1896. I therefore give dates and occupation to that time as follows:—Joined the service in May, I think, of 1891, started work surveying deviations on the south-western line under the District Engineer, Mr. Harvey Bagnall, railway to Bunbury having been surveyed some years previously but not constructed. Had charge of survey camp on these deviations as far as Drakesbrook. On completion of these, I was in October, 1891, sent by the Engineer-in-Chief, the late Mr. C. Y. O'Connor, to take charge of camp on trial survey of portion of the Geraldton-Mullewa railway (Mullewa end), the late Mr. Pidgeon being in charge of the Geraldton end. Completed this survey in February, 1892, and returned to Perth. Was then sent to locate and survey portion of the Northam-Southern Cross line: this completed, was sent to Northam on January 1st, 1893, as assistant engineer on the construction of the Northam-Southern Cross railway. Under Mr. Dartnall senior for a few months when Mr. James Thompson, present Engineer-in-Chief, took charge as resident engineer. On completion of the line to Southern Cross in 1894, Mr. Thompson having been appointed engineer for railway construction, I was appointed resident engineer in charge of the construction of the Southern Cross-Kalgoorlie railway, and this position I retained up to the time of my retirement in April, 1918. I will be pleased if you can let Mr. Stevens see this record prior to 1896. I shall also be very pleased and grateful if you can obtain the semblance of justice in my case.

The Minister for Lands: Did the case go before the Appeal Board?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: I will give the House all that information.

[Resolved: That motions be continued.]

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That is Mr. Ripper's record of service and it is very creditable. It seems to be extraordinary that after a man has worked on railway construction for 27 years, it can be suggested by the Commissioner that he has not been engaged in an established position.

The Minister for Lands: The Government do not interfere with these matters. The position is governed by the Act.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Then this is a matter that should be taken up by the Government because there are other officers placed in a similar position.

The Minister for Lands: Several of them have had resort to the appeal board.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Strictly speaking, Mr. Ripper may not have any legal rights according to the regulations. If an injustice has been done it should be rectified by the Government without reference to the appeal

board, or else the Government themselves should refer this question to the board for consideration. When first Mr. Ripper took action regarding his position, it was argued that as he had accepted a lump sum as a retiring allowance in lieu of a pension, he had no case. The statement that he had accepted the allowance in lieu of a pension was absolutely untrue. I believe that the statement was made by the late member for Avon that as Mr. Ripper had been content to take the retiring allowance, it was no good putting up his case again because his action would be ultra vires. It seems most extraordinary that when a man has been engaged upon railway construction for 27 years and, God knows, we have another 27 years or more before us within which to construct additional railways to open up the country, it should be suggested that a man on such work is not engaged in an established position! It seems to me that the Commissioner has sheltered himself behind a technicality. Mr. Ripper in his letter to me says—

I was given a retiring allowance which I consider was absolutely unfair and without equity. The late appeal board recently upset their position and in the case of a recently retired officer from the same department as myself, they concluded that he would have been entitled to the pension if he had not been retired before the age of 60 years. Therefore, I take it that I was also eligible for it and that my case should be reconsidered.

He also stated—

When I was notified that I was to be retired a form was given to me to fill in, and in this form the question was asked whether I wished a pension or a retiring allowance. I said, "A pension." This form should be on my file and would upset the reply to Mr. Harrison. I am now 72 years of age and was retired in 1918. A pension from the time my retiring allowance was absorbed would now be very acceptable. I joined the service in 1891 and left in 1918 and when I retired I was receiving a salary of £528 per annum. According to my idea of justice the pension should be 27/60ths of that amount annually.

I put the case as clearly as I could before the Premier in November last year and also placed the facts before the Commissioner. The Premier stated that the case could not be reopened at that stage. Regarding the argument that the position held by Mr. Ripper was not an established one, the contention put up was that construction work was paid out of loan funds and maintenance works out of revenue, jobs done under the one being "established positions" and under the other, the reverse. Here is a letter I

received this year from Mr. Ripper when I made inquiries regarding his services—

When tenders were called for the Menzies-Leonora railway line, the Public Works Department also put in a tender, and this was accepted, and I was placed in charge to carry out the work as a contractor would do and as resident engineer. I have carried out other works since then in a similar way but quote this one on account of the traffic clause in the specification under which we were allowed to charge 6d. per ton per mile for goods, and 2d. and 3d. for passenger traffic. This, of course, was revenue. During the construction of the line (nearly 100 miles) I had a competent traffic staff under me and the money was coming in freely. Before completion, however, an agitation at Kookynie and districts induced the Government to reduce the rates by one-third. Even then we netted and placed to the credit of the Treasury about £45,000 which, if the contract had been let outside, would have gone into the pockets of the contractor plus the 33 per cent. reduction which, I estimated at the time, would have been about another £9,000. This I think is a record for the State in revenue where departmental railway construction work has been carried out. I am pointing this out merely to show that a great amount of responsibility and anxiety rested on my shoulders during the carrying out of this work, and should not this, with other responsible works I have carried out, have placed me on a sounder basis as far as pension is concerned? If handling revenue instead of loan money is one that fixes an officer's claim and fixes him in an established position or otherwise, then it cannot be contended that I have not handled revenue. Monthly traffic statements showing gross takings and expenditure were sent in by me and if not destroyed, should be either with the P.W.D. accounts office or at the Treasury to verify what I have said. I am not sure from memory whether this line was started in September 1900 or 1901. I do not wish to weary you, but there does not seem to be much justice meted out when those who have borne the heat and burden of the day in outback parts of the country doing the pioneering and laborious part of the country's work are treated differently to those who come in after and only maintain the work already done with revenue money.

Mr. George: He was a first class officer and no one would dream of denying that.

Hon. J. Cunningham: Why did you not provide for him then?

Mr. George: I did what I could.

Hon. G. Taylor: There is nothing wrong about it. The matter simply could not be done.

The Minister for Lands: It has been before the appeal board and been turned down.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Those who were on the goldfields in the early days will know what a bundle of live wire Mr. Ripper was.

Hon. G. Taylor: There was nothing wrong about him.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: As to his claim, there are others similarly situated. On the other hand I hear that Mr. Castilla, a former officer of the Public Works Department, is receiving a pension although he had broken time. Then again Mr. Stoddart was retired and is also receiving a pension. Mr. Ripper should be on the same basis. So far as I can see there is nothing in the Act to justify the payment of a retiring allowance in lieu of a pension. If a man has worked for 30 years or more, and it is then contended that he has not been in an established position, it is absurd.

Hon. G. Taylor: He is not the only officer similarly placed.

Mr. George: Mr. Rolland was treated in the same way. He had been acting as assistant Engineer-in-Chief, but unfortunately had not been gazetted in that position.

Mr. Mann: It might take years in pension payments to make up for what Mr. Ripper received as a retiring allowance.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: The man is over 70 years of age and it is wrong that he should be pushed off like this.

The Minister for Lands: Do not forget that hundreds are pushed out of the service without a penny.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: That may be, but it is not to the credit of the Government.

Mr. Mann: But the Government cannot get outside the Act.

Hon. G. Taylor: What is the good of passing an Act to govern such a position, if we do not follow it?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: What is the good of having a Parliament, if members do not see that such anomalies are corrected when they are discovered?

Mr. George: The Act dealing with these matters has been in existence for years.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Mr. Ripper says that he left the service in 1918 and he had long service leave extending into 1918. If that had brought him up to April of that year he would have completed 27 years of service and then, as he says, he should have been entitled to a pension of 27/60ths of £528 per annum.

Mr. Mann: If he got his pension now, the amount of the gratuity would have to be deducted.

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Undoubtedly.

Mr. Mann: It might not be worth while.

Mr. George: What did he get?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: Apparently I have not got the figures. I will conclude by reading the letter I sent to the Premier, for that will furnish a summing up of the case as I would put it before Parliament—

On behalf of Mr. William Ripper, I desire to make an appeal that his case be investigated, and that he be given justice in regard to his pension rights. Briefly stated, the case is this: "That after 27 years' service in a responsible position, Mr. Ripper was deemed not eligible for a pension on account, they stated, that the position was not a permanent one. He was, therefore, given a retiring allowance, which, Sir, I maintain was absolutely unfair and without equity. Note: The late Mr. Pidgeon and Mr. W. Ripper were in the same office and doing the same work. Mr. Pidgeon was transferred to working railways, and he eventually received a pension. Mr. W. Ripper remains in the construction branch. When he retires, pension is refused. He is told he can have a retiring allowance or nothing." The late member for Avon (Mr. T. H. Harrison) spoke to someone about Ripper's case, and he was told that Ripper was satisfied to take a retiring allowance. That is not so, as it was a retiring allowance or nothing according to the established position. This established position is a bogey, a most unjust discrimination and unworthy of any Government. When Mr. Ripper was notified that he was to be retired, a form was given to him to fill in, and in this form the question was asked whether he wished a pension of a retiring allowance, and he replied "PENSION." This form should be on the file, and upsets the reply given to Mr. Harrison, M.L.A. The late appeal board recently upset the position, and in the case of a recently retired officer from the same department as Mr. Ripper, they concluded that he would have been entitled to the pension if he had not been retired before the age of 60 years. It is, therefore, obvious, Mr. W. Ripper being well past 60, was entitled to it when retired, and his case should be reconsidered. Mr. Ripper is now 70 years of age, and was retired in 1918, and a pension from the time his retiring allowance was absorbed would be very acceptable to him in his old age. He joined the service in 1891, and left in 1918, and was receiving when retired a salary of £528 per annum, and according to my ideas of justice, the pension should be 27/60th of that amount annually. You will see from the record of service attached, that Mr. Ripper's positions have all along been responsible ones. The anomaly of calling a responsible position, the operations of which extending over all parts of the State, not a permanent one is absurd, particularly when one remembers that several lifetimes are in front of the West Australian people before we shall see any chance of slackening or ceasing to construct new railways, and remembering for 27 years his position existed, and there must still be an engineer in the construction department. To say a man's life work, such as this can be classed temporary, is clearly (as already stated) absurd. I appeal to you, Sir, in your honourable position as the Premier and to your

known broad-minded and fair views on all matters, to have the case dealt with in a spirit of moral justice and fairness. Mr. W. Ripper, who lives at Woolandra, stated to me that "there seems to have been some misunderstanding in connection with the cases included in the appeals. Had I known that my name could have been included, I certainly would have had it put in, but, being away from town, I have been out of touch with the Civil Service Association matters and apparently, the false impression that I had agreed to accept a lump sum in lieu of pension decided my non-inclusion."

Mr. George: He took the retiring allowance, did he not?

Mr. GRIFFITHS: He did, but what else could he do? Cases such as this should be dealt with on their merits. I appeal to members to support the motion. The members for Guildford and for Williams-Narrogin, and I think the Leader of the Opposition, each know something of this case, and I hope they will support me. I should like members to look at this, not as coming from a member of any party, but as an attempt to secure fair play and justice for an unfortunate man.

On motion by Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

BILL—HERDSMAN'S LAKE DRAINAGE ACT REPEAL.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. J. Cunningham—Kalgoorlie) [8.7] in moving the second reading said: This is but a short Bill, and it will not be necessary for me to take up a great deal of time in explaining it. The Herdsman's Lake Drainage Act of 1920 was introduced for the purpose of constructing a drain from Herdsman's Lake to the ocean, and to enable the department to rate the properties that would derive benefit from the Herdsman's Lake drain. It had been found that the Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Act, 1909, was not applicable, and further that the Land Drainage Act of 1900 was unsuitable because under it no works could be entered upon before a drainage area was constituted, and that could only be done by the petition of landholders who would be rated within the proposed drainage area. Until this Act is repealed, the provisions of the Land Drainage Act cannot be made to apply to the area drained by the Herdsman's Lake drain. It is intended to constitute a drainage district of the land drained, and con-

stitute a board, so that a rate may be levied to cover the cost of maintenance and repairs to the drains excavated within the area. Even if a district or a drainage board is not constituted, the Land Drainage Act gives the Minister the necessary powers to levy a rate. Section 9, Subsection 3, of the Act reads as follows:—

If any drain not within the boundaries of a drainage district is declared by an Order-in-Council to be a State drain, the Minister may exercise the powers and authorities and shall have the immunities of a board under Parts VI., VII., VIII., IX., X., and XI. of this Act within an area defined by the same or any subsequent Order-in-Council and declared to be lands that benefit by the construction of the drains, and such areas shall for such purposes be deemed a district within the meaning of the Act.

I may point out that the Herdsman's Lake area contains 1,000 acres, and that there are also 200 acres on the margin. This was purchased for the purpose of settling soldiers. Further, the watershed of the lake comprises about 6,200 acres, of which 3,700 acres cannot be rated, since they did not and will not receive any benefit from the drainage area. Of the balance, there are 500 acres already under storm water drainage conditions. That area is known as Jackadder Lake. The 1,200 acres included in the purchase for the returned soldiers, plus Jackadder Lake of 500 acres, equals 1,700 acres, leaving approximately 700 acres to be rated in return for the benefits that the drainage will confer on them. I do not know that it is necessary to explain the purposes of the Bill more fully. The Act to be repealed by the Bill is quite unnecessary in view of the amended legislation of 1925.

Hon. G. Taylor: How many settlers are there within the area?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am not sure. It is not my business as Minister controlling drainage to inquire how many settlers are settled, or are likely to be settled, within the area. I am not interested until the time arrives for collecting rates. Since this area has been drained and handed over to the Lands Department by the department I control, the question of settlement is in the hands of the Minister for Lands, who can explain to the House how many settlers are likely to be placed in that area.

Mr. Sampson: What is the production of the area?

The HONORARY MINISTER: That has nothing to do with the Bill, nor with me.

Hon. G. Taylor: Why has the Bill been presented?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I have already said that ample powers are provided under the Land Drainage Act of last year, and that therefore the Act that the Bill proposes to repeal is quite superfluous. No good can be done by allowing it to remain on the statute-book. Ample power and authority are already provided under the Land Drainage Act of last year.

Mr. Davy: Would any harm be done by leaving it?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Perhaps so in one way, seeing that Parliament has authorised an up-to-date Land Drainage Act. We are of opinion that the Act is comprehensive enough to cover the needs of all those parts of the State where drainage operations are required.

Mr. Sampson: Is that contradictory to this measure?

The HONORARY MINISTER: What a stupid remark to make! I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. Sir James Mitchell, debate adjourned.

BILL—SOLDIER LAND SETTLEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.17]: I have no opposition to offer to the Bill. The Minister for Lands said that every other State had made an agreement.

The Minister for Lands: I find I was in error about that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We thought the other arrangement would be better. I do not think the Federal Government should have cut off without notice the 12½ per cent. allowed on the borrowed money. If the Minister had had six months' notice of this, he could have given the soldiers who had qualified similar notice that he would close the list within a given period. I understand he did not know he was not to receive the 12½ per cent. discount on money borrowed until 12 months after it had been stopped by the Federal Government. That was unfair, and has meant a considerable loss to the State. The repatriation of soldiers was a Commonwealth matter, for which the whole of the people of Australia were responsible. From

this State we sent a greater percentage of soldiers than was sent from any other State, and naturally the work of repatriation was greater here. The Federal Government treated us well. Of the six million pounds expended, if there are to be losses, we have had about a million and a quarter to cover such losses. If there be further expenditure beyond the six millions, the State has to bear the loss. That is neither fair nor reasonable. The Minister has explained that we cannot do other than ratify this agreement. I do not know how many soldiers there are who have qualified.

The Minister for Lands: About 1,800.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Most of these will not now be available, and were not available when the Minister came into office. Some of the men want to take up special blocks and will have no other. Others are looking for properties that are not yet available and cannot get on the land. I do not think many of the 1,800 are now available.

The Minister for Lands: It is thought that £25,000 would cover those of the new men who are available.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: They think that £25,000 will be equal to the 12½ per cent. the Minister would get on the expenditure in connection with further settlement?

The Minister for Lands: I do not say that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I should think the amount was all too little, but we have to make the best of the position now. We shall have the interest reduced as from the 31st December, 1930. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.20]: We are in much the same position we were in last night when we were asked to ratify a Bill in connection with the Federal aid for our main roads. It is amazing to find that since 1918 we have been working under an agreement that we are asked to finalise to-day. That is to be regretted. If we had had the agreement signed and sealed, no doubt the statement made by the Minister for Lands last night would have been unnecessary, because the Government would have known when the agreement was to be finalised. It is strange to find that we have been working under an agreement 12 months after the Federal Government had ceased to give

us the rebate of 2½ per cent. for interest. On the whole the Federal Government have treated this State generously so far as the losses are concerned. I find that on the basis of the 2½ per cent. rebate we get a total rebate of £696,000.

The Minister for Lands: It is £683,000 altogether, when fully paid.

Mr. THOMSON: Then there is the sum of £796,000 that is being written off, according to the schedule. This means that the Federal Government have made us an allowance for the scheme of £1,492,000. They have, therefore, done their part in the matter. I do not think even the Minister thought we would be in a position to discuss the ratification of the agreement to-night. Members are not in possession of the figures the Minister supplied last night. Even the Press did not give a full report of the Minister's speech; it was very much condensed. We are, therefore, at a disadvantage. If it was not that we were merely ratifying an agreement that has been in existence for eight years, members would not now be disposing of this question so quickly. The agreement cannot be altered, and I have no intention of opposing the second reading of the Bill.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [8.25]: I congratulate the Minister for Lands on having effected this satisfactory agreement. It appears that in addition to a rebate amounting to £696,000, the Federal Government have now written £796,000 off the total indebtedness of the State on account of soldier settlement, or a total relief of £1,492,000. Considerable anxiety exists amongst the soldier settlers concerning the apportionment of the £796,000. It will be a great relief to Western Australia. In interest alone it means a saving of practically £50,000 a year, this being the interest on that amount.

The Minister for Lands: It will relieve the soldiers.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: Yes. I am sure it is the Minister's desire, as it is mine, that all the relief should be given to the soldiers who have taken up land, and it should not go into the Treasury. In districts west of the Great Southern line the soldiers have had a rough spin. The land there is mainly suitable for oat growing and the production of sheep and wool. Around the Williams there are some fine sheep-raising properties, notably Aber-

deen and Murdoch estates, but they have been cut up into areas that are generally speaking too small for closer settlement. The soldiers have not been able to keep enough sheep out of which to make a living, and meet their obligations to the Government at the price at which the land has been granted to them. The same thing applies to soldier settlers in the Narrogin and Darkan districts, and on the Noombling estate.

The Minister for Lands: The Noombling estate was written down 12 months before we assumed office.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I hope these settlers will get their full share of the relief afforded. They are a fine body of men, and do not earn the money that settlers make in the wheat belt. In the wheat belt some settlers have repaid the capital cost of their holdings within a few years. Now that this windfall of £796,000 has come along, I feel sure the Minister will see that all the soldier settlers receive adequate relief and that consideration which the value of their properties merits. I support the Bill.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.27]: I am delighted to know that this agreement is about to be ratified, and that the £796,000 is to be used in writing down the capital cost of the soldier settlement scheme. Particularly am I pleased that part of the money will be applied to those engaged in the production of fresh and dried fruits. Many soldiers are engaged in the dried fruit industry. In practically 100 per cent. of these instances generous treatment must be meted out to them or they will be forced of their holdings. I understand that a reappraisal has already been made, and I hope the final result will be satisfactory. Whatever is done with respect to writing down the value of these holdings will, to a large extent, be nullified unless there is introduced a measure to control the dried fruits industry. As has been mentioned here on many occasions, South Australia and Victoria have an Act in existence, but our dried fruit producers have not such an advantage.

Mr. Pantou: Whose fault is that?

Mr. SAMPSON: I am not blaming the Minister for Agriculture. I am hopeful that this session a Bill will be introduced which will give that assistance that is so necessary to the returned soldiers who are producing dried fruits.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have promised to submit a Bill for Cabinet consideration.

Mr. SAMPSON: I hope the Minister will find his colleagues sympathetic. They will be sympathetic if they realise the difficulties the producers have to face. Although the outlook for the fruitgrower is difficult, the assistance that will be rendered to returned soldiers engaged in this work by virtue of the agreement to be ratified to-night will be considerable. In the matter of fresh fruit I understand that the Minister has under consideration a Bill which has for its object the establishment of a fruit organisation board.

The Minister for Lands: That does not come into this Bill at all.

Mr. SAMPSON: I am aware of that. I appreciate the assistance that will be forthcoming under the agreement contained in the Bill, and therefore the measure has my cordial support.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle—in reply) [8.35]: I thank members for the support they have given to the Bill. When I raised the question of the payment of rebate as arranged by the previous Government I was under the impression that the Commonwealth Government had to pay the 2½ per cent., but my attention was drawn to the letter under which they are working and which concludes as follows:—

A similar rebate also to be allowed on any money raised and expended by the State for settlers, provided the approval of the Commonwealth Government is first obtained.

The system carried out was that a statement of the expenditure was forwarded every quarter to the Commonwealth Government and the money was paid. When I pointed out that we did not know that the rebate would not be continued my attention was drawn to the letter dated 28th July, 1920, and it was stated that no application was made for the Commonwealth Government's approval. It was the strict wording of the letter that they were working under.

Mr. Thomson: How is it that you received the money?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I explained last night that we found the money for soldier settlement from general loan.

Mr. Thomson: Was there any indication that the rebate would cease at a certain time?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: None whatever. The member for Katanning pointed out that the Federal Government

had done their part. No doubt they have done so and that it has cost them a good deal of money, but we should not forget that the settlement of the soldiers was entirely the work of the Federal Government.

Mr. Thomson: Unfortunately, the figures you quoted last night were not available to us. I think publicity should be given to that.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: The State gave a concession of £1,217,000 and that is increasing continuously. Land is given to soldiers under the same conditions as previously, and, as I stated last night, while there are 1,800 applications, the belief is held that only a small number will be able to go on the land. The applications were made some time ago. It was desired that the Government should purchase land, but it would not be right for the Government to do that, having a number of soldiers' holdings on their hands. We should get rid of those first, and therefore I could not agree to purchase other properties. We have, however, set aside £25,000 for the purpose of enabling other soldiers to be put on the land. Several estates have been purchased by the Government. I think Dardanus is one and most of the soldiers left it. An area near Serpentine was originally bought for soldier settlement. The soldier who went on it, left it. A number of estates have been written down on the advice of the committee appointed by the previous Government. There is no doubt that the State has done its share in this respect and I wish to repeat, for the information of members, that whilst soldiers will be notified that estates have been written down, the interest bill paid and liabilities reduced considerably by the Government, if the Bill we are now considering is not ratified by the Federal Parliament, in all probability at a later date we shall be called upon to pay. However, I have no fear about the Federal Parliament not ratifying the agreement. I have had nothing whatever to do with the writing down; that was entirely in the hands of the board and each case has been dealt with on its merits.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The soldiers will get the benefit of the whole £796,000.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is a good policy to put these men on land where they can carry on properly.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [8.45]: Very little exception can be taken to this Bill, though one or two points need explaining. It is very much better to collect this tax through the Taxation Department than by any other means. I thought we provided for that in the measure of last year, and doubtless the Minister thought so too.

The Minister for Agriculture: It is not convenient for the department to collect it unless it is made concurrent with their other work.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I thought we had done all things necessary for the department to collect the tax. The Bill contains a proposed new section which will give the owner or occupier of land fenced or intended to be fenced power to enter upon the land of an adjoining owner to erect, maintain, repair or renew a fence. Is that to apply to more than a boundary fence?

The Minister for Agriculture: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then the clause is not needed.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Because an adjoining owner has that right now.

The Minister for Agriculture: The Crown Law officials say he has not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then how are fences maintained between adjoining holdings at present?

The Minister for Agriculture: That is another matter.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, it is precisely the same matter. This clause may apply to a vermin fence, but it is still only a fence. Farming could not be carried on unless an owner had that right.

The Minister for Agriculture: The adjoining owner could prevent you from going on his land.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not see that the clause is necessary.

MR. SPEAKER: That is a matter for discussion in Committee.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Before the second reading is passed I should like the Minister to tell us why this new provision has been inserted. If the Bill had merely made provision for the collection of rates, it would have received my whole-hearted approval, but I want to know the effect of this new proposal. What has prompted the Minister to insert this provision?

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [8.48]: The Minister for Agriculture has acted wisely in deciding to collect this tax through the Taxation Department. It is a relief to find the Government utilising an existing agency instead of starting a new branch or sub-department. Every member will commend the Government for that. The new section proposes to give the owner of a block the right to go on to adjoining land for the purpose of erecting, maintaining, repairing or renewing a fence. That is a necessary power, but there should be some qualification. A man, before entering his neighbour's land for this purpose, should give him two or three days' notice in writing.

MR. SPEAKER: That is a matter for consideration in Committee.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON: I was going to suggest that, as a matter of principle, the Minister should consider the point.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The principle is as old as the hills.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON: I did not know that we would reach this Bill to-day; otherwise I should have put an amendment on the Notice Paper.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet—in reply) [8.50]: I am pleased with the manner in which the Bill has been accepted by the members who have spoken. The only question raised is that regarding the necessity for Clause 3. I am advised by the Crown Law Department that the clause is necessary. At present there is no provision to permit a settler to go on to the adjoining holding if he wants to repair his fence. We know that if a fence is repaired, the settler who does the work can charge half the cost to the adjoining holder, but there is no provision for him to enter the adjoining settler's block in order to do the work. A cantankerous neighbour might prevent a man from going on to his holding to do

such work. The provision would not have been introduced had not such instances occurred. I need not give names.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Where did they occur?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: In the wheat districts.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: But where?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not wish to give names, but I assure the hon. member there have been such cases. There is nothing objectionable in the provision. It will merely allow an owner to enter an adjoining holding to mend or repair the fence. I hope no objection will be taken to it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair: the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Right of Entry:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Under this clause an adjoining owner could, without consulting his neighbour, erect a vermin-proof fence and compel his neighbour to pay half cost. Under the Act it is not necessary to erect a vermin-proof fence.

The Minister for Agriculture: The neighbour would have to pay half cost when he joined up with him.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Under the Fencing Act, when the adjoining owner fences his block, he must pay half cost of the boundary fences. To-day such fences are limited to those capable of resisting big and small stock, and do not include vermin-proof fences. If this clause be passed a man would have to pay for a fence so erected whether he used it or not.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON: The clause contains no reference to paying.

Hon. G. Taylor: It merely gives an owner power to enter adjoining land.

The Minister for Agriculture: It will not give any power in respect to paying.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We want to know just what the Act provides. Evidently Section 81 of the Act is more or less inoperative because it would be trespass to enter an adjoining holding to erect or mend a fence. If we pass this clause shall we be committing an adjoining owner to cost that he may consider unnecessary? It is one thing to erect a fence to keep sheep and cattle in, and another thing to

erect a fence to keep vermin out. In practice there has never been much trouble. I am fearful that under this clause vermin-proof fencing may be forced upon land-owners where it is unnecessary, and perhaps merely at the whim of an adjoining holder who might adopt vermin-proof fencing before there was any need for it.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I have endeavoured to point out by way of interjection that the clause states exactly what is intended. The parent Act lays down the conditions, but apparently provision was not made for an owner to enter an adjoining holding.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Leader of the Opposition is reading into the clause something that it does not contain. The clause says nothing at all about payment. It merely gives the owner the right to go on an adjoining property. To repair a boundary fence without going on the adjoining property would be highly difficult.

Mr. C. P. Wansbrough: The question of payment does not arise until the other owner adjoins the fence.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The parent Act contains provision for fencing, and for contributions by adjoining owners.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is the point.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This clause only empowers one neighbour to repair the other neighbour's fence.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister knows that under the Act there must be some consultation. Owners must, under the Act, confer as to their liability for maintenance of a fence, and agree among themselves. This clause, however, proposes to give one or the other of adjoining owners the right to repair the fence without any previous consultation, and then to charge his neighbour. I do not know how a man could be trespassing while repairing a common fence.

The Minister for Agriculture: I have known a man to be threatened with a gun while repairing a fence.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister is endeavouring to alter a law which is a sufficient law. I do not know that much harm will come from the clause, but it may lead to the doing of unnecessary work.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The explanations given by the member for Mt. Margaret and the Minister regarding this clause ap-

pear to me quite satisfactory. However, I have an amendment to move—

That the following be added to the clause:—“Provided that reasonable notice in writing shall be given to the owner of the land proposed to be entered under this section.”

Mr. LINDSAY: From practical experience I regard this clause as entirely unobjectionable. It deals with maintenance, repair and renewal of fences as well as their erection. I am opposed to the amendment because it is hardly practicable to give notice as suggested. If I ride my boundaries once a week, I can do that while I am giving my neighbour notice. Moreover, my neighbour does not suffer any harm from my riding the boundaries.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I hope the member for Williams-Narrogin will not press his amendment, which I do not think is necessary.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—PLANT DISEASES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [9.16]: The Bill seeks to amend the section in the Plant Diseases Act dealing with the eradication of fruit fly. Inspection at present is largely centred at the markets, and to a small degree only have the orchards received attention. The work done is practically negatived because of the existence of fruit fly in what are known as week-end orchards. For weeks at a time those orchards remain unattended. The fruit ripens, becomes infected with the fly, and falls to the ground. Thus these orchards constitute a menace that is seriously increasing all the time. Again, in the metropolitan area the backyard orchard is equally dangerous. On top of these there is what is known as the non-commercial orchard. Possibly at an earlier stage the orchard was conducted as a business concern, but owing to a poor demand for the fruit or bad marketing arrangements, the orchard has fallen into disuse. The fruit-fly has an opportunity to multiply without

disturbance. The great difficulty confronting the eradication of the fruit fly is the insufficient number of inspectors.

Mr. Teesdale: A couple chased me the other day. There seems to be plenty of them.

Mr. SAMPSON: As there are not enough inspectors, many orchards are left for months at a time without receiving any attention. As all orchardists are not strictly conscientious regarding spraying, trapping and picking up fruit, many of them are not doing their duty in furthering the effort to stamp out the fruit fly. Community spraying has been tried in the Spearwood district with excellent results, but the difficulty is that unless 100 per cent. of the growers come into the scheme, the small minority may supply sufficient fruit fly to contaminate the orchards of those who join in the scheme. To be successful any such arrangement must include all those engaged in fruit production. A careless neighbour discourages those who endeavour to carry out their part of the work. By his indifference or neglect, the careless grower may allow his trees to become infested to such an extent that ultimately many other growers will be forced out of the industry. We are told that compulsion regarding spraying and trapping is in force, but as a matter of fact it is non-existent, because it cannot be carried out owing to the insufficient number of inspectors. Thus, there is no real compulsion about the work. Trapping should be carried on at present, and if it is not done now, it means that within a few weeks the fruit fly may be as bad as ever. Already fruit fly has been discovered in early loquats. Hon. members will realise that there is always some fruit or some growth that will carry over the fruit fly between seasons. One fly emerging at this period will mean many hundreds of flies by Christmas time. The method adopted to cope with the pest is the spraying of a mixture on the foliage. The aroma attracts the fly with the result that that fly will cause no further trouble. The life history of the fruit fly is interesting. After being hatched, it feeds for 10 days and then develops what may be termed growing pains. At that stage the fly looks for a host. I mention this to indicate how important it is that the work of inspectors shall be thorough and continuous. If that is not done, no good results will be achieved. Some time ago a

conference of Ministers of Agriculture was held in this State. I believe it was then decided that the Agricultural Department should take a census of the fruit trees in this State. I understand that the forms were actually printed, but for some reason were not sent out.

The Minister for Agriculture: Why not give notice of the question? I cannot discuss that matter at this stage.

Mr. SAMPSON: I mentioned this some time ago, but the Minister did not give me any information.

The Minister for Agriculture: I cannot give you that information during the discussion on this Bill.

Mr. SAMPSON: A census of the fruit trees in the different orchards would furnish great assistance to those interested in this matter. It would provide the knowledge necessary to enable them to cope with what is a very grave danger to the fruit industry. The danger is just as grave in other countries where similar climatic conditions prevail. A proposal to register all orchards was considered some time ago and I believe the registration was to be made mandatory. For some reason or other the proposal was abandoned and to-day there is no such registration insisted upon. The Minister seeks to have added powers furnished to his department. His proposal goes too far in one way and not far enough in another. I agree that power should be provided so that an inspector or a departmental officer could go on to an orchard and clean it up. That power should be exercised only with the approval of the Minister. It is too great a power to vest in the hands of various officers. To suggest we should make such a provision is to ask Parliament to go too far. Let us be strict and take every action necessary to preserve our fruit industry, but before agreeing to place such a provision as that suggested, on the statute book, the House should agree to an amendment setting out that the Minister's approval should first be obtained. When dealing with the Bill in Committee I will move an amendment along those lines.

Mr. Davy: Why not provide some notice?

Mr. SAMPSON: That would entail the waste of too much time.

The Minister for Agriculture: While notice is being given, what will happen?

Mr. SAMPSON: Exactly. I do not advocate giving any notice. If we provide that the Minister's approval must be ob-

tained before an officer is empowered to enter upon an orchard and clean it up, no lengthy period will elapse before the work is carried out. As it is, for many months some orchards are never inspected.

Mr. Davy: Then giving some notice would not matter!

Mr. SAMPSON: Recently I bought an orchard and when I took it over I discovered that it was teeming with fruit fly. The fly was not there singly and the punctures in the fruit were not here and there, but they existed by the thousands.

Mr. Marshall: Did they throw the flies in at the same price?

The Minister for Agriculture: When did you purchase the orchard?

Mr. SAMPSON: At the end of last year or early this year. It was when the pears were ripening. The orchard was not far from a made road so that it was possible for an inspector to get to the holding quite easily.

The Minister for Agriculture: Did you report the matter to the department?

Mr. SAMPSON: No, I had purchased the orchard and I cleaned it up.

Hon. G. Taylor: The department would have made the owner clean it up.

The Minister for Lands: But the member for Swan was the owner then!

Mr. SAMPSON: As I have already stated, there are many orchards that are not inspected for months at a time. The trouble is the insufficient number of inspectors. The fruit industry in Western Australia is never taken seriously. Our climate is similar to that of California, the leading fruit country of the world, notwithstanding which the disrespect with which the industry is here treated is most distressing. I presume the Minister has not the money necessary to warrant the appointment of a sufficient number of inspectors. The question remains how it is possible to secure from all fruitgrowers the action necessary to control the fruitfly. I am doubtful whether we shall ever solve this problem until spraying, trapping, and the regular picking up of fruit is made compulsory. I hesitate to suggest that the matter might be dealt with by a board with power to rate and to see that the work is carried out. While the position remains unchanged the industry can never advance. We have either to do something on the lines suggested, or to employ more inspectors. The Minister will not dispute the contention that there is an insufficient number of inspectors. The result is that,

generally, fruit is inspected in the markets.

The Minister for Agriculture: What about the prosecutions last year?

Mr. SAMPSON: They were largely the result of examinations in the market.

The Minister for Agriculture: No, in the orchards.

Mr. SAMPSON: Orchards are overlooked for months at a time, and in consequence the orchardist who is endeavouring to control fruitfly can never succeed. The Bill takes us a little further, but it does not go nearly far enough. If the Minister could go through the fruit districts, he would discover great dissatisfaction regarding the manner in which the industry is treated.

The Minister for Agriculture: There has been no complaint.

Mr. SAMPSON: Not touching the examination of orchards by inspectors?

The Minister for Agriculture: Oh yes, a few; there always are.

Mr. SAMPSON: If we had regular inspection of orchards the conscientious growers would be greatly encouraged in their work of keeping their properties clean. We must go farther than the Bill. I hope the Minister will agree to an amendment I propose to move when in Committee, and that in his reply to this debate he will give the growers an assurance that more inspectors will be appointed. I support the second reading.

MR. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [9.36]: From my experience I should think the member for Swan is not quite right about the insufficient number of inspections. Probably it is that they are not fairly distributed. Some years ago I was trustee for an estate in which there was a small orchard in the hills. True, it was situated on a main road and within a mile of an inspector's house. He inspected it so frequently and sent in so many orders to pick up fruit and clean off aphids or fly that I was very pleased to sell the property for about half its value. From my own knowledge of the little orchards in the hills, there is no doubt men get enthusiastic, go up there for a year or two, plant a couple of acres of trees, and then get tired of their week-end trips, with the result that their places are neglected, and when the inspector goes around he finds them regular breeding grounds for disease. It seems to me therefore, the department should have the power sought under the Bill. At the same time, it would require to be administered with discretion.

I commend the suggestion of the member for Swan that whilst the inspectors should have this power, it should be exercised only with the approval of the Minister. If the inspector arrives at an orchard and finds there fruit fly, if he can discover the owner, he should do so. That is the course that is always pursued. If the inspector knows the owner, he should see to it that the owner does the work; then if the owner refuses to carry out the instructions, the inspector should do the work and sue the owner. But if the inspector is to arrive on the orchard and without making inquiries simply put on someone to clean it up and afterwards send in the bill to the owner, it does not seem to me right, especially if the owner happens to have an idle son or two at home who could do the work. However, I shall be prepared to trust either the Minister for Agriculture or the Director of Agriculture to give power to the inspector to do it without notifying or consulting the owner in such instances as the Minister approves, where a proper case is made out for such action.

MR. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [9.40]: I have no objection to the Bill, but I should like the Minister, when replying, to tell the House what provision is made for destroying bulbs or plants adjudged by the department to be infected. It did not occur during the present Minister's time, but I once had a painful experience.

The Minister for Agriculture: I know of that.

Mr. TEESDALE: Yes, but I do not think you know the whole story. Finding myself in Holland, I went to a great deal of trouble to secure some choice valuable bulbs never previously introduced into Australia. Some of them cost me 48s. a dozen. They arrived out here in a zinc-lined case, every precaution having been taken to prevent the ingress of anything inimical to the bulbs. Just the same, the department declared that it found on the bulbs some minute insects. Two days afterwards I got notice that the case would be burnt by the department. I had no opportunity to go down and see whether or not it was burnt, but I am satisfied that some attempt was made to burn it. However, the carter who took the case down to the tip asked me a couple of days later if I would like a couple of the bulbs. He said he thought it pretty rotten that I

should not have some of them after all the trouble I had taken. I may say that to-day I have in my backyard a bulb that cost me over £14. Consequently the Minister may depend upon my looking after it very carefully. I should like to know from the Minister whether there is anything slipshod in the precautions taken to destroy valuable importations such as my case of bulbs. I assume that the carter who took that case to the tip where it was to be destroyed was accompanied by some departmental officer.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE

(Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet—in reply) [9.43]: The member for Swan complained about what he called the insufficient number of inspectors. I must say I do not see any real necessity for increasing their number. The orchardists have to take at least part of the responsibility themselves. Last year the Act was amended. Section 8 provides that the orchardist has to give, within 24 hours, notice of his discovery of any disease. The responsibility was on the orchardists to give notice when the disease appeared, but they did not do so. The neglect to which the member for Swan referred arose from that cause. The pest became widespread. Last year the parent Act was amended, and a new section was inserted as follows:—

Whenever any disease to which this section applies exists or appears in any orchard, the occupier of the orchard shall take or cause to be taken such steps, and adopt such measures, as are prescribed as appropriate steps to be taken, and measures to be adopted, in order to eradicate such disease and prevent the spread thereof: penalty £25.

Parliament placed the responsibility on the orchardist, and told him he must take steps immediately to eradicate the disease. The only disease to which the amended section applied was the fruit fly, which is well known to any child. Every orchardist knows it. In the amending Bill we merely say that if the orchardist does not do this work himself it shall be done for him. During the last year there have been 65 prosecutions. I do not know that any occurred before. This indicates that the department has been active. All we say is that if the orchardist fails to play his part we shall have power to do so. It is better for the department to clean up an orchard than to prosecute the owner. If the owner is prosecuted he is fined only 5s. for a first offence.

Mr. Thomson: And the fruit fly is still there.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: While the prosecution is going on the fruit fly is multiplying and spreading. We, therefore, say to the orchardist we will do the work he should have done, and he will have to pay the cost. I am surprised at the objection raised by the member for Swan. The law permits the Crown to do many things. If a person does not provide proper sanitation in his home the law can step in, and force him to provide it.

Mr. Davy: If he does not do it after being given proper notice.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We cannot give notice in this case. It takes time to do this, but meanwhile the fruit fly is spreading. I am surprised that the member for Swan does not insist we should have these powers, and that he should be willing to wait a moment while unoccupied orchards are causing the ruin of others.

Mr. Sampson: This power may be used tyrannically.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Not at all. Mr. Wickens, the head of the department, has the confidence of 99 per cent. of the people engaged in the fruit industry.

Mr. Sampson: Undoubtedly.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He is looked upon as a capable official.

Mr. Sampson I admit that.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I am not prepared to lay a charge of neglect at the door of the department. When the codlin moth broke out at Dandalup and Collie some time ago the officials of the department immediately went to the spot. If they had been neglectful they could not have done the work they did so quickly.

Mr. Sampson: Mr. Wickens is one of the best officers in the service.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: He is one of the best in the Commonwealth. Power ought to be given to inspectors to clean up these unoccupied orchards. Many of them are owned by men who took them on as week-end propositions, but, after a year or two, tired of them and practically left them. It would take a week or more to find the occupier of any of these places, because he could not be traced.

Mr. Davy: Why not have notice of service nailed to one of the trees or to the front gate of the orchard?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: But that would not prevent the fruit fly from spreading.

Mr. Davy: Give him 24 hours' notice.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is not practicable.

Mr. Davy: The ordinary person should be given at least 24 hours' notice.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The occupier may not visit the orchard once in three months. In the meantime the harm is being done. There is no chance of the department becoming tyrannical. The member for Swan will not be acting in the best interests of his constituents if he prevents inspectors from having this power. I warn him of the un wisdom of opposing this proposal. Unoccupied orchards should not exist unless the department has power to clean them up.

Mr. J. H. Smith: I do not think the hon. member will go on with his amendment.

Mr. Sampson: This power should not be given to the inspectors.

Mr. Davy: Does this proposal apply to any humble citizen who possesses a couple of fruit trees in his back yard? This gives power to the inspector to walk into my back yard and cut down my trees without my consent.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Bill says—

Whenever an inspector shall discover that a breach of this section has been committed he may take or cause to be taken all or any of the steps and adopt all or any of the measures aforesaid, and may also take and adopt any other step or measure which is authorised by the regulations, and the expenses of or incidental to any action taken by an inspector hereunder shall be recoverable from the person guilty of the breach.

If the inspector does destroy trees he will not do so without authority, or without some reason for doing so. Why should he not take these steps? If the hon. member neglects his back yard orchard he is a danger to the industry, and action should be taken against him.

Mr. Davy: I quite agree.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: At Spearwood the orchardists had a keen sense of their own responsibilities. They had a community spray which gave good results. The amendment passed last year was the result of the activities of these people. Spraying is not a difficult proposition. I am sorry to hear of the experience of the member for Roebourne. Section 5 of the Act and Section

6 of the parent Act give the officer of the department power to destroy any plant which may bring in disease.

Mr. Teesdale: Or bulbs?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

Yes. Apparently the bulbs brought in by the hon. member were specified as plants that produced a certain disease, and the department took steps accordingly. This occurred some years ago. I am not prepared to say that the department did not act without some reason.

Mr. Teesdale: It is usual for an officer to be present when plants are burnt?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE:

Yes, both in the case of plants and animals. No doubt there is a possibility of plants being destroyed when in quarantine, but these steps must be taken in the interests of the State. I hope the member for Swan will not move his amendment.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 9.57 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 26th August, 1926.

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

RESOLUTION—FINANCIAL RELATIONS, COMMONWEALTH AND STATES.

Debate resumed from 24th August on the motion by the Chief Secretary that the Council concur in the following resolution of the Assembly:—

That this House is of the opinion that there should be no departure from the basis upon which the financial relations of the Common-

wealth and States have vested without the fullest consideration at a constitutional session of the Federal Parliament and the approval of the people by referendum; and that no financial scheme should be assented to by the States which does not provide for their receiving from the Commonwealth Government an annual payment of not less than 25s. per head of population.

And on the following amendment moved by Hon. E. H. Harris: That all the words after "rested" in line five of the resolution be struck out, with a view to inserting the following words:—

Unless and until a convention has been summoned by the Prime Minister and held, at which an equal number of representatives of five States elected at joint sittings of both Houses, and a like number at a sitting of the Legislative Assembly of Queensland shall so resolve.

HON. J. E. DODD (South) [4.35]: I had not intended to speak upon the motion, but the amendment has raised one or two issues upon which I would like to say a few words. They will be very few. I will deal with that part of the amendment which seeks to delete the provision for the referendum. To be frank, I do not think that the referendum is the efficient instrument in legislation that I once thought it was. I am satisfied that in a State like Western Australia, with its sparse population and widely scattered centres, it is very difficult to get the proper opinion of the people by way of a referendum. Although I believe that, I am satisfied it would be unwise for this Chamber to delete the provision for the referendum. I once introduced a measure to provide for the introduction of the initiative and referendum and, although I am not satisfied now that that provision is the efficient instrument I once imagined, still, I am not satisfied that the referendum is an absolutely inefficient instrument. I would draw the attention of hon. members to the fact that the Commonwealth Parliament came into being by means of a referendum, and, further, that no Constitutional alteration can be made without a referendum. Those are two points we can well remember. Again, for other reasons, it would be unwise for the Council to delete the reference to the referendum. We are essentially a Chamber of review. I know perfectly well we have extensive powers, almost equal to those of another place. Despite that, however, we are essentially a Chamber of review. It seems to me, therefore, that to seek the deletion of the referendum would be doing something that might be used later to the