

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 5th October, 1916.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Attorney General: Report of the Department of Land Titles from 1st July, 1915, to 30th June, 1916.

By the Minister for Lands: Return showing particulars *re* Yandanooka estate— (Ordered on motion by Mr. Veryard.)

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received the following communication from the Auditor General—

5th October, 1916. Sir, In November last, the first, and major portion, of my report to 30th June, 1915, was duly presented to Parliament. I now enclose the balance of the report. (Sgd.) C. S. Toppin, Auditor General.
I place the paper on the Table.

QUESTION — "YANKALILLA" CARGO TRANSHIPPED.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Attorney General: 1, Did any member of the deputation who waited on him on Wednesday last, the 27th ultimo, *in camera re* pillaging of cargo at Fremantle inform him that a quantity of cargo was transhipped from the s.s. "Yankalilla," which left the port of Fremantle on 6th August without the said cargo being entered on the inward manifest, and on which no harbour dues were paid at the time of transhipment? 2, Was the representative of

the owners of the "Yankalilla" present at the deputation which made complaints *re* pillaging of cargo? 3, If so, what was his name? 4, Does he consider it necessary to make inquiries regarding complaints *re* pillaging of cargo made by a representative of the company who attempted to evade harbour dues? 5, Was it stated that the cargo transhipped was ship's stores? 6, If so, are golf balls considered ship's stores, and on what part of the ship is golf played? 7, If the harbour regulations have not been complied with *re* transhipment of this cargo, will he see that the regulations and all penalties, attached thereto are enforced and paid?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL replied: 1, No. 2, Yes. 3, Mr. Moxon, manager, Adelaide Steamship Co., and local agent for the owners of the "Yankalilla," was present. 4, Yes. Both pillaging and evasion of harbour dues are offences, and on representation showing the probability of either taking place, inquiry is necessary. 5, No; no mention was made of transhipped stores. 6, Answered by Nos. 1 and 5. 7, Yes. Should knowledge of such practices be obtained it would be referred to the proper department for action.

BILL—FRANCHISE.

In Committee.

Mr. Holman in the Chair, the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Preservation of Franchise:

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: During the discussion on the second reading attention was drawn to the fact that no provision is made in the Bill for the transfer of soldiers from one electorate to another, if they should desire it. Instances were given of the wives of soldiers moving to new districts on the enlistment of their husbands, and it was shown that in these circumstances we should have the husband enrolled for one district and the wife for another. In view of this, the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker) gave notice of an amendment. In his absence I now move the amendment—

That the following words be added to subclause 1:—"Unless at any time during

such service he claims to be transferred to another constituency in which he has resided for at least one month."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member is under a misapprehension as to the objects of the Bill. It is not desirable that a soldier, when on active service, should be moved about from electorate to electorate. He should be deemed to continue to live in the electorate in which he enlisted. The idea is not to prevent soldiers from doing anything wrong, because it may reasonably be assumed that when a man enlists he leaves politics behind him. However, it must be admitted that there are in every community many persons very keen on getting voters on the roll. Imagine that 1,200 soldiers are stationed in Bunbury for four or five weeks. Under the law as it exists they would be permitted to transfer to the Bunbury roll. It will be seen that such a voting power would be quite sufficient to interfere with an election in Bunbury. It was never intended that soldiers should be used as though they were permanent residents, when, as a matter of fact, they are merely temporarily stationed in a given district for military purposes. It is impossible to say where a man will take up his permanent residence at the conclusion of his military service. When a man leaves, say, Leonora to join the military forces he has no thought of where he is going to live when he returns. Such a man should be allowed to remain on the roll for the electorate in which he previously lived. It is highly objectionable that any body of people should be able to invade a military camp and cajole soldiers into allowing themselves to be enrolled for the district in which the camp is situated.

Mr. Bolton: The purpose of the Bill, then, is to disfranchise a man.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No; it preserves him to his own electorate. The principle embodied in the amendment would be highly objectionable. On our railway trains we see the vast number of soldiers who are moving about from place to place and taking advantage of their leave. The amendment would permit a soldier who has his permanent home at York but who is in camp at Blackboy to enrol on the Swan roll. I propose to resist any intention to alter the Bill in the way suggested. The amendment

would mean that wholesale alterations in regard to the electors might be brought about by anyone within the control of the military forces. The amendment would destroy the Bill entirely, and raise up amongst our soldiers a politician class which would be entirely undesirable. I oppose the amendment.

Mr. CARPENTER: In moving the second reading of the Bill the Attorney General treated those who had spoken on it with contemptuous silence. I understand now why he made no reply. He was afraid of telling members what he has told them now.

The Attorney General: I have unmasked your amendment.

Mr. CARPENTER: He did not tell members that the principle of the Bill was to restrict the franchise of soldiers. We have it from him that it is undesirable for soldiers to be moved from place to place.

The Attorney General: I did not use such words.

Mr. CARPENTER: Apparently the purpose of the Bill is that a soldier who has once enlisted from his place of residence has no longer the freedom of the ordinary elector, and can no longer exercise the power given him by the Electoral Act and be transferred from another district. He asks the Committee to believe that a man who still has his home in a particular part of the State and would visit that home when he could, would want a transfer from that district to another. That man could not transfer, and the Attorney General is simply throwing dust in the eyes of the Committee. A man can only transfer from one district to another under the conditions laid down in the principal Act, and must sign a declaration that he has bona fide changed his residence.

The Attorney General: Would living in a camp constitute a change of residence?

Mr. CARPENTER: The Attorney General says that a man who still retains his home would want a transfer to the electorate in which he was encamped.

The Attorney General: I did not say anything of the sort.

Mr. CARPENTER: The Attorney General also says that his object is to prevent a man who goes home for a couple of days from transferring, whereas he could not transfer so long as his home is in a certain

locality and he has not actually changed his place of residence.

The Premier: If you put in this amendment, he could do so.

Mr. CARPENTER: Not unless it was a bona fide change.

The Premier: Why do you want the amendment?

Mr. CARPENTER: A number of men who have returned from the Front, and are now at the Base Hospital or becoming convalescent, prior to enlistment were engaged on farms in various parts of the country. They left their work and the district and many of them do not want to return to it. A State officer who went round the hospitals to compile a new roll found many men in that position, and men who wanted to be put on the roll for the electorate in which they were then living. They might even want to go to some other electorate. The Attorney General, however, says that they shall not enjoy any electoral rights outside the district from which they originally came. The man who has been away for three months from a district has lost his right to vote in that district.

The Minister for Railways: That is preserved as a right.

Mr. CARPENTER: It is contrary to the existing law. The Attorney General tells him to go back to the place he came from. The thing is so presumptuous that I cannot understand the Attorney General bringing it forward.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Soldiers have not lost their right to vote anywhere else.

Mr. CARPENTER: According to the Bill they have.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): This makes it certain that they have not.

Mr. Underwood: They are struck off the roll.

Mr. A. A. Wilson: Would you give them a vote in the trenches?

The Premier: This gives it to them.

Mr. CARPENTER: What right has the Attorney General to say to an elector because he happens to be a soldier that he shall not transfer whether he wants to or not? Surely a soldier has a right to say whether he shall be transferred or not. The

proposal is an unheard of one, and I hope the Committee will insist upon giving the soldier the same political freedom that we give to every elector in the land.

Mr. BOLTON: If the Attorney General is sincere in what he says, all he wants to do is to preserve the right of the soldier to vote. There is, however, something more dangerous in the Bill. At this time when conscription is almost upon us and men will be congregated in various centres, the Attorney General seeks to say whether these men shall remain enrolled upon certain electoral rolls. There are many men who are in the forces for home defence, and who will never leave Australia, and who have been on home defence duties for nearly two years. The homes of many of these men have been moved to the places where they are now doing military work, and the old homes have been broken up. Surely the wives and daughters of these men are entitled to be enrolled for the places where they are now living. As to the men, the Attorney General says that they are to remain on their original rolls until discharged from the forces, and that in cases where they have absolutely moved their places of abode to new centres and have no intention of returning to the old centres, they are to be forced to have their names retained upon the roll for the old centre. This Bill means to all intents and purposes that these men are to be denied the right to vote. Instead of our soldiers being given fewer privileges, they should be given more. If it is brought under the notice of the men who are now congregated in big camps that for the future they will not have the right to transfer as they desire, and that they are to have a disability placed upon them which is not placed upon any other man or woman in the State who is 21, they will see how much the Government are trying to put them out of court. If the Bill is carried without the amendment they will no longer retain the right of ordinary citizens. A soldier should not be removed from the rolls because he has enlisted and left the State. That is all that hon. members have asked for and all that the soldiers want. But the principle introduced into the Bill is dangerous. The asterisk will be placed against the soldier's name whether he has left the State or remains within it. The Attorney General's remarks

show the Bill to be unnecessary, except insofar as it places the soldier under disabilities. I hope the amendment will be carried.

Mr. UNDERWOOD: The best place for this Bill would be the waste paper basket. The measure purports to be intended to give soldiers better electoral facilities, but it actually places them in a worse position. There is no need for special legislation for soldiers, who should be treated as, and have the same rights as, other Australian citizens. I can understand the desire to give soldiers the right to vote, even when out of the State, though that is impracticable. But, without this amendment, the soldier will be treated as inferior to the ordinary citizen of Australia. The Attorney General should realise the soldier's absolute right to a vote for the district in which he resides. Thousands of men who have enlisted will never return to the district in which they resided at the time of enlistment. The restriction under this clause is absolutely unwarranted, and to the soldier it is utterly unjust. I trust the Attorney General will either accept the amendment or withdraw the Bill, preferably the latter.

Mr. WALKER: From what I have heard since moving the amendment, I have gathered that there is objection taken by the Government to letting it pass. The ground of objection is that some inconvenience will be occasioned to the Electoral Department. In no other respect can I possibly see what difference the amendment makes to the ordinary course of things under the Electoral Act. As it stands, the clause prevents a soldier from registering in the district in which he lives and for which he is qualified to register. So far, no one with a desire to help the soldier has ever thought of hobbling him in that fashion. To give an instance: on my own farm at Trayning I have had three or four men employed, who have gone to the war. These three or four men could not return to my place. In all probability they will not see Trayning again, though I certainly hope they will come back to this State. However, so long as they remain soldiers they will be unable to register for any other district whatsoever. They will be debarred from a right which every other citizen of the State has. Why this

distinction against the soldier? I guarantee that hon. members sitting opposite know of case after case of the same kind. Are returned soldiers in hospital to be unable to obtain a vote except for a district in which they may have lost all interest, of which they may have lost practically all knowledge?

The Attorney General: For what district would you suggest they should apply?

Mr. WALKER: For the district for which they are qualified by residence.

The Attorney General: Suppose they are not residing in any place?

Mr. WALKER: Do not the soldiers reside at the camp?

The Attorney General: That, then, is your amendment?

Mr. WALKER: Undoubtedly it is my amendment.

The Attorney General: And you want to have all the men in camp enrolled for the electoral district in which the camp is situated?

Mr. WALKER: Is not that done with all other classes of citizens?

The Attorney General: No.

Mr. WALKER: Are not the men working on the Trans-Australian Railway registered for that district?

The Attorney General: But they are really living there.

Mr. WALKER: The spot in which they live alters in the course of a few months by hundreds of miles.

Mr. Bolton: The wives and families of those men live in Fremantle, and the men's homes are there now.

Mr. WALKER: Undoubtedly. The workers on the Trans-Australian Railway live in camps and tents exactly in the same way as the soldiers at Blackboy. The Electoral Act says that after one has qualified by residence for a certain time at a certain place—

The Attorney General: But you do not call that residence?

Mr. WALKER: There is no other definition of residence.

The Attorney General: The soldiers go home every week.

Mr. WALKER: They do not.

The Minister for Railways: A lot of them do.

Mr. WALKER: Their other residence is lost. What becomes of the men who left my farm and spent six months here in the metropolitan area?

The Attorney General: They are making good soldiers.

Mr. WALKER: Undoubtedly; but is not that evading the question?

The Attorney General: They are on your roll. What roll would you put them on?

Mr. WALKER: On the roll to which they are entitled, under the Electoral Act, to claim by residence.

Mr. Allen: Suppose the soldiers were shifted from Blackboy to Claremont after six weeks?

Mr. WALKER: Do they reside in Claremont for the requisite time? Are not citizens always changing their places of residence?

Mr. Allen: Not every six weeks.

Mr. WALKER: Is not that one of the difficulties of compilation under the Electoral Act? Is it not one of the chief causes of discontent to the officers in compiling the roll?

Mr. Allen: We do not want to encourage that sort of thing.

Mr. WALKER: The member for West Perth (Mr. Allen) is entitled to a new electoral registration every time he removes his residence. Why should not the soldier have the same right?

The Attorney General: You would make politicians of our soldiers.

Mr. WALKER: Some of them would make better politicians than hon. members sitting opposite. Is not that a glorious expression of the Attorney General? I would make every citizen interested in the government of the country, and in the affairs of the State, and I would make every soldier interested in shaping the destinies of the country for which he is fighting.

The Attorney General: They can do that in their own electorate.

Mr. WALKER: No; they cannot. The soldiers have a right to be bound and governed by the law that binds and governs every other citizen of the State. If a man, by inadvertence, allows his name to be re-

tained on the roll of a district in which he no longer resides, he can be objected to and disqualified, after three months' absence from the district. That is quite right, because we require to know where the seats of political power are throughout the State. The Bill is ostensibly to continue the rights of soldiers as citizens.

The Attorney General: To preserve their rights.

Mr. WALKER: In reality it is a Bill to deprive soldiers of the right to vote. We have sent soldiers from every organisation for the well-being of the State, and the Attorney General says, "Make them politicians," as if that were a degradation of the soldier. He is a soldier because he is a citizen, he is a soldier because he loves the laws of the State and the welfare of the State, and because he has an interest in the progress and in the stability of the State. That is what has sent all our volunteers to the front to fight for our institutions, our privileges, and our rights in this part of the Empire. And the hon. member sneers at me for desiring to preserve to them the rights which every such citizen enjoys. I cannot understand, after the platform fireworks which have gone on, that the hon. member should father a Bill like this which makes an absolute farce of the Electoral Act.

The Attorney General: You are making it a farce.

Mr. WALKER: I do not value the hon. member's opinion one iota. It is a farce because it gives to certain people of the State certain rights and privileges, and the very opposite to soldiers, whilst attempting to put all on an equal footing. I trust the Committee will not consent to allow the measure to go through without the amendments which have been proposed.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The Attorney General has raised only one argument and he fears that if we extend to the soldier the right to transfer, when a camp is created say at Bunbury, all soldiers who are transferred to Bunbury will be enrolled for that place, and, when there is an election, such transfers will have an undesirable influence there. In other words, the transferred soldiers will not be genuine residents there. I

am prepared to admit that if that were likely to happen it would be undesirable, but I do not think it is likely to occur. I do not believe that any political body would stoop to that sort of thing, and certainly soldiers would not be a party to it. Because the hon. member fears that which is not likely to occur, he will be doing an injury to others who are genuinely transferring to other electorates. For instance, on the Trans-Australian Railway there were hundreds of men employed who are now in camp. They were electors on that line and they have no intention whatever of going back. Therefore, they were not genuine residents there. Owing to the Electoral Act they were compelled to enfranchise themselves for the Kanowna electorate, which embraces the country through which the railway line is being constructed. It is possible also that at the time they were there their homes were at Fremantle. Under the Bill, we would compel them to remain electors at Kanowna. What we want to do is to give the man who at the time of enlisting was resident on the route of the Trans-Australian railway, the right to transfer to the electorate where his people are. Quite a number, perhaps thousands, have enlisted from different parts of the State remote from the city. For instance, men may have come from Broome or Wyndham, broken up their homes there and gone into camp. Their wives and families have perhaps come to reside in the metropolitan area. Under the Electoral Act, the wife would be compelled to register in the electorate in which her new home was situated, while the husband would remain on the roll of the district from which he had come. The injustice can readily be admitted.

Mr. Nairn: That happens now.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: It does not.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Where does the hardship come in if a man has his name on the roll of, say, Kimberley instead of Perth?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Why should we not give a soldier the same right as anyone else? It seems to me that instead of doing something for the soldier we are taking something from him. The Bill will not be of any value if we do not amend it in the direction which has been suggested. The only

way in which we can make it of value is, if the soldier desires to transfer, he should have the right to transfer when he re-establishes his home in another electorate. A great injustice would be done if all soldiers at Blackboy registered for the Guildford electorate. That has not occurred, and it is not likely to occur. The only men who have enrolled from Blackboy are chiefly the officers and those permanently domiciled there. The Attorney General will know that very few were registered for the Belmont camp during the recent election. Both political parties made attempts to get soldiers to enrol, but the number enrolled was very few indeed. Our experience to-day is that the soldier does not respond to overtures of that description.

Mr. NAIRN: I am seeking information in this matter because no one desires to do an injury to soldiers. It is unfortunate that the member for Kanowna did not approach the question without, as usual, making innuendoes. This is a fair and honest attempt to preserve to the soldier his citizen rights.

Mr. Bolton: I say it is not; and that is not an innuendo.

Mr. NAIRN: Our present Act makes it compulsory for a person residing in an electorate and who removes to another electorate to, within one month or immediately afterwards, enrol in the constituency to which he has removed. We will either compel a soldier to enrol in a new electorate, or we give him the alternative of being enrolled in two.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: No.

Mr. NAIRN: We give him the choice of two constituencies.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: That is not so.

Mr. NAIRN: It seems to me that the soldier will get a privilege which no other citizen enjoys.

Mr. Underwood: Drop the Bill altogether, and that will get over the difficulty.

Mr. NAIRN: This is an honest attempt to retain to the soldier an interest in the place to which in all probability he will return. No opportunity should be given politicians to intrude their opinions into soldiers' camps. If you do so you will have men of every party using their influence and exciting the men in regard to political issues. This Bill makes it clear that a soldier shall retain his

interest in the constituency in which he resides. The present electoral Act, I may point out, separates man and wife, providing they do not live in the same constituency. How many thousands of men are earning their living in the city while their families reside elsewhere? The proposal contained in the amendment would defeat the ends of the Bill, and would not in any way bestow favour on the soldier.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: It is not a matter of favour, but of right.

Mr. NAIRN: And at the same time, the amendment would give an opportunity for political action to members of every party.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: It would do nothing of the kind.

Mr. Walker: That is where your innuendo comes in.

Mr. NAIRN: The hon. member unfortunately has a monopoly of innuendo.

The PREMIER: I trust the Committee will not be carried away by the fireworks of the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker). It is evident that the hon. member has not kept himself in touch with the question, he never does. He accuses the Government of trying to do something, and in great indignation asks what interest a returned soldier could have in the district in which the hon. member's farm is situated. Supposing a returned soldier is in the base hospital at Fremantle. Where would his interests lie? Would they be around the base hospital, or would they rather be in the hon. member's farm where he had formerly resided for a year or two? That is where the local knowledge comes in which the hon. member says a man should have in order to be entitled to the franchise. The foundation, the fundamental principle, of the Electoral Act is that a man shall vote where he is domiciled; in other words, where his home is. With the exception of hon. members of both Houses and their wives, every man in the State must, under the Electoral Act, vote in the electorate in which they dwell.

Member: Now there comes in the argument about the Transcontinental railway.

The PREMIER: The domicile of a soldier is where his home is, and it is not right that he should be compelled to change his electorate merely because he goes into camp. If his wife and family reside in Perth, Perth

is his domicile, and he would not be struck off the roll for Perth. It must be remembered that soldiers are called up, or else they volunteer, for active service; they are sent to Blackboy Hill and after being there a few weeks may be removed to Bunbury or Rockingham, and then brought back again to Blackboy Hill. Are they going to take the trouble to apply for an alteration of their electorate every time they have to shift camp? They do not go to these different places of their own volition, but under orders; they are given orders and they are bound to obey.

Member: So are the men on the Transcontinental railway.

Mr. Thomson: But there is this difference, that the men on the Transcontinental railway may leave if they so desire.

The PREMIER: Hon. members opposite have shown the cloven hoof properly in this matter. They want the right to go into military camps and persuade large numbers of soldiers to be enrolled for the electorate in which they are camped for the time being. The Government would be pleased to have politics excluded when it is a question of our soldiers on active service.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Soldiers are above that sort of thing; you should not cast reflections on them.

The PREMIER: You have quite enough to do to look after yourself in that regard; I can behave myself, the hon. member cannot.

Mr. Walker: That is an example of the calm, deliberate language you say should be used in this House.

The PREMIER: It is not the heroics of my hon. friend opposite who raises his voice in violent indignation and claims that the Government is desirous of doing an injustice to our soldiers, that we wish to disfranchise them. He would tear the heavens asunder if he had the power in order to do justice to those men. But what is the true position? We want to preserve the rights of soldiers.

Mr. Underwood: You want to restrict the soldiers.

The PREMIER: I should like to restrict the hon. member.

Mr. Underwood: I know you would, but you cannot, any more than you can restrict the soldiers.

The PREMIER: We desire to retain for the soldier all the privileges he enjoyed previous to enlisting. We want to preserve those rights during the time he is away on active service, and until after he has completed his active service, he returns to this country. Hon. members opposite suggest that this Bill might be thrown into the waste paper basket. What would be the position then?—that those of our soldiers now in camp would probably be disfranchised altogether, because it might be said that as they had been away from their district for three months their names should be struck off the roll.

Mr. Carpenter: Is that being done now? It is not, and you know it.

The PREMIER: I can quite realise it would be possible under the amendment for a hundred new electors to be put on the roll for the hon. member's district about election time. I say there is an absolute danger of our soldiers being disfranchised altogether if the amendment be passed. It would be a very easy matter for them to be disfranchised even though they were still in their own country in camp. The party to which hon. members opposite belong never misses an opportunity for enrolling any one thought to be a supporter; that has been in evidence. The member for Guildford (Mr. W. D. Johnson) or some one else on the other side referred to the Canning election in this connection. Beyond doubt, a considerable number of soldiers were enrolled for Canning, something like 150, and if the election had occurred six weeks later it is quite possible the Labour party would have added 800 names.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Both sides added names.

The PREMIER: That is so. I repeat that the proposal in the amendment would encourage political turmoil. I do not want to see anything of that sort. There is another aspect. Camps are being established at Geraldton, Bunbury, Guildford, Albany, and Northam—

Mr. Bolton: Is there to be a camp at Northam? That probably explains the Bill.

The PREMIER: And around the metropolitan area. The Commonwealth Government is calling up men for home service, and we shall shortly have thousands of men in

camp. Do hon. members opposite wish to upset the franchise of the whole of those men?

Mr. Walker: Certainly not.

Mr. Bolton: Your Bill does that.

The PREMIER: It does not. The Bill preserves their right to vote. Can a military camp be called a home?

Mr. Bolton: Yes.

The PREMIER: It cannot. The soldiers themselves come away from camp to their homes at every opportunity. The place in which their home is situated is the place where their interests lie. When a soldier goes on active service, he is here to-day and gone to another place to-morrow.

Mr. Walker: He is one of the nomads you speak of.

The PREMIER: He is a nomad.

Mr. Walker: Then he has no right to a vote.

The PREMIER: The purpose of this Bill is to retain for those men all their rights as electors.

Mr. Underwood: You are robbing them of those rights.

The PREMIER: During the period between enlistment and discharge, we preserve to the soldier all the rights he had prior to enlisting. If the Bill is not passed, all these men will be disfranchised. We are doing these soldiers a good turn by introducing the Bill but our opponents are to be condemned for seeking to insert amendments that would upset the whole principle of our Electoral Act, which is that a man shall vote where he has his domicile and his interests. Under the Bill, if there should be an election in a soldier's electorate on the day he returns to it, he will be free to vote at that election, for the Bill preserves his right as an elector. I hope the Bill will be passed as an act of justice to our brave boys on military service.

Mr. MUNSIE: According to the Attorney General, it does not matter how long a man may be away on active service, he will on return be entitled to vote for the electorate in which he is enrolled. Except in regard to the returned soldier and the man who has enlisted for home service, and is residing in a new district, I do not see much hardship in the Bill. If the Bill be passed with-

out amendment, the man who, because of his military employment on home service is residing in a new district, will have to vote for his old district, notwithstanding that he is permanently established in another district. I think the Attorney General should accept some amendment to provide for returned soldiers who have not gone back to their original districts. I know of one man who returned with the first home-coming troopship, and who has not yet been discharged. His permanent home to-day is in Perth, and he should be given a vote for his new electorate, irrespective of whether or not he is discharged. Certainly we want some Bill. I understand that definite instructions were issued by the Electoral Department that soldiers' names were not to be struck off the rolls, notwithstanding which they have been and are being struck off. In any case, under the existing law if a man has been away from his electorate for more than three months he could not vote, even though his name still remained on the roll. The Attorney General should make provision for returned soldiers and for men enlisted for home service. As for the men enlisted in the usual way, I think it would be decidedly wrong to afford opportunity for the transference of a considerable number of voters from the country districts merely because they have joined the military forces and are living temporarily in the metropolitan area. It would be inadvisable to allow an immense number of men to transfer from country rolls, particularly in view of the fact that we are likely to get a Redistribution of Seats Bill based on the condition of the rolls.

Mr. BOLTON: The Premier says the camp is not a man's domicile. Take the case of a soldier who reaches his 21st birthday while in camp. For which district is he to enrol—that in which the camp is situated or the district he came from?

The Attorney General: In that respect, I propose to agree to an amendment of which notice has been given by the member for Guildford (Mr. W. D. Johnson).

Mr. BOLTON: I know of two men who, having secured work at the Naval Base, took their wives and families to reside at South Fremantle. After two months down there both the men enlisted. The name of one

of them still remains on the Northam roll yet he has definitely and permanently shifted his home to South Fremantle, where his wife is now residing.

The Attorney General: That man could transfer under Clause 2.

Mr. BOLTON: If I could be sure of that, my opposition to the Bill would cease. The clause states definitely that he shall be deemed to continue to reside in the Northam district. Yet unquestionably his home to-day, like that of the other man, is at South Fremantle. Most certainly he should have the right to transfer, because in all probability he will never go back to Northam, the district for which he is enrolled. Take the case of another man, an elector of Menzies, whose wife, for health reasons, has been living at Fremantle for the past three years. That man is in camp to-day and is to go away this week, yet his name is to be retained on the Menzies roll.

The Attorney General: I am convinced that the cases you have mentioned are covered by Clause 2.

Mr. BOLTON: I wish I could see how the clause applies to those cases.

The Attorney General: I am assuming that the amendment of the member for Guildford (Mr. W. D. Johnson) is made.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: If it is, you must then rub out Subclause 1.

Mr. CARPENTER: It is arguable whether it is desirable for men in camps to transfer, for the time being, to that particular locality. I want to emphasise the case of a returned soldier who has been for 12 months or more in the base hospital, and for 12 months or more away from the district which he left when he enlisted, and who, under this Bill, would still be compelled to keep his name on the roll for the district which he left two years ago, and to which he does not intend returning.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): How do you know he intends to live in the district in which the base hospital is located?

Mr. CARPENTER: He is there to-day and is likely to remain there for the next six months. There is no argument in the sneer of the Premier that because the base hospital happens to be in Fremantle I am trying to get some advantage for the men

who are there. I have come in contact with these men because they are there, and because I have visited them to see how they were getting on. The men who have permanent homes and who are in the hospital will not enrol for Fremantle. When appealed to by the officer a few months ago they practically all stated their desire to remain on the rolls for the places at which their homes were. The single men, however, who have left their old districts to enlist, and who will for many months to come be invalided at either the base hospital, the barracks, or the convalescent home, have no domicile at all other than that at which they are now living. The Premier says a man can only be enrolled for the place where he is domiciled. These men are domiciled at these convalescent centres and will be domiciled there for some time to come. They have no other home.

The Attorney General: Would a man be domiciled in a camp?

Mr. CARPENTER: That is open to question. The Bill is doing a serious injustice to the returned soldier who is now in the convalescent home or base hospital.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Do you think you are conferring a greater privilege upon them by giving them the franchise for Fremantle instead of for say, Kanowna?

Mr. CARPENTER: It is not a question of privilege, for the men have a right which no Government should take from them.

The Attorney General: You do not suggest that a man is disfranchised now that he is in the base hospital?

Mr. CARPENTER: Practically he is.

The Attorney General: Why? He would be on the roll for, say, Kanowna, or Toodyay.

Mr. CARPENTER: But he has no further interest in that part of the State. He says so.

Mr. Walker: Give him the right to decide.

Mr. CARPENTER: Who has the right to tell him what he must do? I hope the Committee will see that this injustice is not done.

Mr. FOLEY: The Bill is unnecessary in its present form. Soldiers do not want any privileges, only their rights. Under the

present conditions, if a man leaves the electorate for which he is enrolled, and is away from it for one month, he has a right to transfer; but if he is away from it for three months, according to the Electoral Act, he must transfer or else is disfranchised altogether. Under the present Act a soldier is domiciled in Blackboy, because he lives there and has no other domicile.

Mr. Nairn: He has the choice of two.

Mr. FOLEY: He has not.

Mr. Nairn: Anyone has that privilege after three months.

Mr. FOLEY: If a man comes down from Leonora and goes into camp at Blackboy, he has after a month the right to transfer. If he is away from Leonora for three months in the A.I.F., and does not transfer, he is then disfranchised. This clause does not give any other guarantee. The Attorney General says he wants to place the soldiers above politics.

Mr. Nairn: He said he wants to place camps outside political influence.

Mr. FOLEY: He said that soldiers should be placed right above politics altogether. How is he going to do that? He could do it by a system of militarism such as obtains in other countries, but I am positive he does not wish to do that.

The Attorney General: Certainly not.

Mr. FOLEY: Then what will he do?

The Attorney General: Cut out the word "above."

Mr. FOLEY: The Attorney General must do that himself.

The Attorney General: Say "outside of." They should have nothing to do with it.

Mr. FOLEY: He said that soldiers should be above politics. We want to discuss this question in a broad-minded manner, and do not need such references as the Premier made to the member for Fremantle (Mr. Carpenter). A soldier has no other domicile in the State than the camp in which he is living. In many cases his camp is better than that which he left in the country, where he enjoyed the ordinary rights of citizens. We do not want to take away something from the soldier, when it is apparently the intention of the Government to give him something. If a man has been living in the hospital for two years, and has his family in the neighbourhood, I contend that he

knows more about that particular electorate than he does about the one which he left two years before.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am always prepared to listen in a reasonable way to reasonable criticisms, as it is a Minister's duty to do; but I am not prepared to listen to arguments put forward in a dictatorial, dogmatic, and abusive fashion, since they prove nothing. The arguments of the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) have appealed to me as being reasonable. I agree that it is desirable to make some provision in this measure to deal with the returned soldier, who may continue on service, so to speak, for two years after his return, and thus, under this clause as it stands, would not be able to obtain a vote during that period except for the district from which he enlisted. I have an amendment in accordance with the suggestion of the member for Hannans, which amendment I would be prepared to move if the amendment suggested by the other side was withdrawn. My amendment would, I think, meet the cases put forward by the members for South Fremantle (Mr. Bolton), and Fremantle (Mr. Carpenter), and the leader of the Opposition (Mr. W. D. Johnson).

Mr. W. D. Johnson: I do not think so; but I am prepared to take half a loaf if I cannot get the whole loaf.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is merely a question of what is reasonable. I would suggest the addition of a proviso to the effect that a returned soldier who has bona fide changed his domicile to another electoral district, and has otherwise complied with the provisions of the principal Act, may claim to be transferred to such other electoral district. That proviso would cover the ground of all members who have spoken other than the member for Kanowna (Mr. Walker). After listening to the debate, I have come to the conclusion that members generally consider the contention of the member for Kanowna, that the camps in which soldiers are trained should be considered as their domicile, is wrong; and I do not think I need take up the time of the

Committee in combating the hon. member's arguments.

Mr. Carpenter: The word "domicile" has various meanings.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It has a well-defined meaning.

Mr. Walker: How do you define it?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The member for Kanowna knows perfectly well.

Mr. Walker: Do not be rude. I ask a civil question.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I would say that the domicile of a man is the place where he or his family lives.

Mr. Walker: That is rather vague.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The word "live" is not vague, because it is the word used in the principal Act. The last Electoral Act used the word "reside," which caused some trouble, and therefore was altered to "live." Where a man is living, in the ordinary acceptance of the term, he should be domiciled; unless he is living there merely temporarily, like a soldier in camp, or a man on a visit to a place for a month's change.

Mr. Hudson: The qualification of an elector is that he has resided for a certain period in the district for which he claims to be enrolled. The principal Act uses the word "reside" right through; your Bill uses the word "live."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not object to the word "reside." I myself would prefer that word to "live." But I saw the word "live" in the other statute, and that is why I use it here.

The CHAIRMAN: The word "reside" is used in the existing Electoral Act.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the word "domicile" is not clear to hon. members, I do not object to its being replaced by the word "residence." I am perfectly sure I can point out the word "live" in the principal Act, because I saw it there a few days ago. I would be quite satisfied to substitute the word "residence" for "domicile."

Mr. Smith: Your amendment only applies to returned soldiers.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes.

Mr. Smith: What about the soldier who has just gone into camp and shifts his residence?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We cannot provide a statute for everybody. If a man is going to shift his residence before he goes into camp, that can be done, and his people can apply for enrolment under the principal Act.

Mr. Walker: Leave out the word "returned" before "soldier" and I will support you.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The object of the Bill is to do what it says, namely, preserve the franchise of the electors who are on service. The amendment of the member for Kanowna will entirely nullify the effect that I have in my mind in bringing forward this Bill, and, to use his own words, it would give the opportunity to electors who were soldiers in a camp to qualify for and apply for registration for the particular district where that camp was. When I said I thought politics and war should not be mixed up, I did not in any way, as suggested by the member for Kanowna, sneer at the soldiers. I think that when a man becomes a soldier he should forget politics and should not take one side or the other. We do not want to deprive him of any of his rights, and under the law as it exists to-day, when a soldier goes from the constituency where he resides for a period beyond three months, his name is liable to be struck off the roll. By a departmental regulation, which is simply an act of administration, the name is not now struck off. In the strict letter of the law, however, it should be struck off. The Bill will provide that the name shall remain on the roll as a matter of right, in the constituency the soldier comes from.

Mr. WALKER: I would willingly comply with the request of the Attorney General if he would make one alteration, and that is to provide that it should apply to other than "returned" soldiers. There is an invidious distinction there that I think is not justified. The member for North Perth (Mr. Smith) pointed out cases where an injustice would be done by making such a distinction. It will be remembered that we passed a measure in this Chamber, and it became law, preserving the civil rights of those who went to the front. What has been pictured as likely to occur has already been prevented and will always be prevented by

military discipline. I remember whilst preliminaries were going on, in anticipation of a general election a little while ago, there were certain political agents who were anxious to get into Blackboy camp and carry on wholesale canvassing. They were, however, stopped, not by the civil authorities, but by the Defence Department. When a man enlists he should not lose any right he had the day before he enlisted. His rights should be preserved to him all the way through his service, and if we are anxious to do that, we must give him the right that every other citizen has. If we allow every soldier, who has bona fide changed his residence, to make a claim to be registered on the roll for his new constituency, we shall preserve to him his rights and keep him on the same level as other citizens. If the proposal is confined to returned soldiers, what becomes of all those who have never been sent on active service? I know men at Blackboy whose homes are in Perth, and there are many people who have been on active service as citizen soldiers. They are in the service, and they have as much right as any other person to be placed on the roll in the place where they have made permanent homes.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I regret that I cannot fall in with the view of the hon. member. If I did it would mean that residence in camp for a month would be a qualification for enrolment. I shall again confer with the Solicitor General on the subject, and if he does not agree with the view I take, I will see that an alteration is made in another place. The first paragraph deals with a man who is already on the roll, while the second paragraph deals with a man not on the roll, but who is entitled to be there. Is that clear?

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: That is so. Paragraph 2, as the hon. member has told us, provides for the man who has a right to enrolment if his name is not already on the roll, but only to enrolment for the district in which he resided immediately preceding enlistment. That is the injustice of it. Some of these camps exist for a long while, unfortunately too long, and we may expect from experience, so far as Blackboy is concerned, there would be few applications for transfer. Few of the persons enrolled at

Guildford reside at Blackboy, although there have been thousands of soldiers there at times. We have also had experience that both political parties attempted to secure the enrolment of men in camp during the Canning election. That is why I said just now that the Premier was unfair in stating the amendment was desired for political party purposes. The amendment suggested by the hon. member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie), which has been accepted by the Attorney General, has been so accepted merely because it is a half measure. I will explain to him how it is a half measure. On the Transcontinental railway it has happened that many men are engaged who have their permanent homes in Perth, but they have been compelled to become enrolled for the Kanowna electorate.

The Attorney General: That is very questionable.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: Seeing that they will have resided more than three months outside the metropolitan area, unless they enrol at Kanowna they must become disfranchised.

The Premier: No.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: What is the use of the Premier trying to mislead the Committee in that way? According to my reading of the Electoral Act it says distinctly that those men must transfer after they have been three months out of the electorate in which they are enrolled.

The Attorney General: But their permanent residence is still in Perth.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The position then is that a man is compelled to enrol for Kanowna; he enlists from the Trans-Australian railway, and under this Bill and also under the hon. member's proposed amendment, that man, who enlisted in the Kanowna electorate, would be compelled to retain his vote for Kanowna while his home is in the metropolitan area. That is not fair. Take the point raised just now by the member for Kanowna. A man is transferred from one portion of the State to another after enlistment, and ultimately becomes practically a permanent resident in a particular camp. He brings his family to the metropolitan area. His home is undoubtedly changed, and his wife would be compelled to change her name from the roll she was previously

on to the new roll. But the husband would be compelled to retain his name on the old roll. There you have separation of man and wife. All that is asked in the amendment is that the Attorney General shall take a broad view and treat the soldiers on active service fairly. The Attorney General has got the idea into his head that this is a loaded amendment, introduced for the purpose of enabling men immediately they go into camp to transfer their names. I can assure him that the men have no desire to do that. I do not think soldiers would be a party to applying for transfers from an ulterior motive. I appeal to the hon. member to take a broader view of this question.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The leader of the Opposition has quoted the case of a man whose home is in Perth and who goes to work on the Transcontinental railway, and argued that although he is only there temporarily he is bound to register for the district in which the railway is. Subsection 2 of Section 17 of the Electoral Act reads—

For the purposes of this Act a person shall be deemed to have resided within the district wherein he has his usual place of abode, notwithstanding his occasional absence from such district.

A man whose home is in Perth and who works on a shifting railway cannot be said to have changed his place of residence. It is admitted that possibly such man may have a preference for enrolment on a particular roll. Some very nice distinctions have to be drawn under the Electoral Act and it is difficult at times to know what is the correct interpretation. The leader of the Opposition has raised an academic point. Take the case of a man resident in Toodyay who enlists. He is brought down first to Belmont temporarily, then to Blackboy and afterwards to Bunbury. Can it be said that he is not still a bona fide resident of Toodyay?

Mr. W. D. Johnson: That is so.

Mr. Walker: No.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There you are; one agrees with me and the other does not. It shows how difficult the point is to decide.

Mr. Foley: Take the case which recently occurred at Coolgardie, in which men shifted

just over the boundary of one electorate into another, and the point was taken that they were not entitled to vote in the Coolgardie district.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That was not a temporary residence. A man submits his qualification when he makes an electoral claim and states that he resides in a certain place. He bases his claim on the place of residence given and he is not entitled to vote in a district if his residence is over the boundary. In the case quoted, in my opinion the Electoral Registrar took a very fair course, inasmuch as every facility was afforded these men of discovering in which electorate they resided. I have not heard anyone say that there was anything wrong about that.

Mr. Walker: Take the case of a man who lives in Perth and goes to work on the Transcontinental railway. He remains there two or three years, and visits Perth only on an occasional holiday—where does he live?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: His domicile is Perth.

Mr. Walker: Is it not a fact that the man in such circumstances would be illegally enrolled for Perth?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: He does not reside at any one point on the transcontinental railway for longer than a week.

Mr. Walker: But he may be all the time in one constituency.

Mr. Bolton: He would have been out of Perth for longer than three months.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: These points might be taken as they arise. There are several problems in connection with the Franchise Bill, but I do not propose saying anything further on it at this stage.

Mr. WALKER: I would sooner the Bill were withdrawn than that the amendment in its suggested form should be carried. I repeat, that under the provisions of this clause soldiers will be restricted insofar as the franchise is concerned. Under the suggested amendment those soldiers who, though on active service and have their homes here, have never gone to the Front would be practically disfranchised except they were enrolled in districts in which they bona fide resided. I am desirous of accepting the amendment as a compromise, providing we eliminate the one word objected to. I hope

the Attorney General will not take up an unreasonable attitude.

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

Ayes	13
Noes	19

Majority against	..	6
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AYES.

Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Taylor
Mr. Chesson	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Foley	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Walker
Mr. W. D. Johnson	Mr. A. A. Wilson
Mr. Mullany	Mr. Bolton
Mr. O'Loughlin	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Allen	Mr. Munstie
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Connolly	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Robinson
Mr. George	Mr. Smith
Mr. Hardwick	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. Willmott
Mr. Harrison	Mr. F. Wilson
Mr. Lefroy	Mr. Male
Mr. Mitchell	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to Subclause 2:—"Provided that a returned soldier, who has bona fide changed his residence to another electoral district, and has otherwise complied with the provisions of the principal Act, may claim to be transferred to such electoral district."

Amendment passed.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 2 of Subclause 2 the words "at the commencement of such service was" be struck out, and "is" inserted in lieu.

The object is to allow any soldier who reaches maturity after enlistment to be enrolled, although not qualified for enrolment at the time of enlistment.

Amendment passed.

Mr. WALKER: I move an amendment—

That Subclause 5 be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—" (5) A person on active service shall have the right to vote at any election in any province or district for which he is enrolled."

The placing of an asterisk against any name on the roll will merely single out a man as a soldier on active service. It is a useless distinction. Of course it may be of some value to the Electoral Department, but surely it is not essential.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is not an electorate in the State which has not on its rolls the names of many men who are serving with the colours. There is always a difficulty about cleansing the rolls, a process which is going on like an endless belt from day to day. If in a large electorate there are on the roll the names of 1,000 soldiers, what a difficulty presents itself to the electoral registrar! It is to meet this that provision is made for the asterisk, which will enable the registrar to see at a glance that certain men are soldiers. The suggestion is not mine; it came from the Electoral Department. And, apart altogether from the simplification of the rolls, it is wise to afford the registrar some means of keeping tally of these names. Provision ought to be made, perhaps by regulation, for the registrar receiving notification of all deaths in the community, and also, from the military office, of all deaths among soldiers enrolled as electors.

Mr. Walker: There is a provision of that kind.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: But it is very difficult to carry it into effect. However, the chief object of the subclause is to distinguish those who are soldiers. In addition it will be of great advantage to the returning officer, who very often has to use a discrimination in the polling booth. Even in Western Australia there have been cases of impersonation, and if we have an asterisk against the names of soldiers it will prevent all chance of impersonation in respect to those names. Moreover, the asterisk will effectually prevent a name being struck off the roll, which is, of course, one of the chief objects of the Bill. Inadvertently a few names of soldiers have already been struck off. Many soldiers are struck off wrongly. If these names had a star against them and the officers' report came in, these names would remain.

Amendment put and negatived; the clause as amended agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—POSTPONEMENT OF DEBTS CONTINUATION.

Second Reading.

The PREMIER (Hon. Frank Wilson—Sussex) [8.33] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill which is necessary in order to extend the operations of the Postponement of Debts Act which was passed on 22nd September, 1914. The main Act authorised the Governor, on the advice of a Royal Commission, to postpone the payment of all debts then due or accruing within the period mentioned in such proclamation, or it postponed any specified proportion of such debts. There was a provision made that in cases of hardship creditors had the right to appeal to a judge, or in the case of an amount not exceeding the jurisdiction of the local court, namely, £100, to the local magistrate. Up the present we have postponed only the debts of farmers who are in receipt of assistance under the Industries Assistance Act, whereby a scheme is provided for distributing their surplus assets amongst their creditors. Hon. members will agree with me that the result has been beneficial. This Act expires on the 31st October, and it must therefore be extended on that date. The present Bill was drafted by my predecessor in office and would have been introduced by him had he been in power. The sole object of the Bill is to extend the term until the 31st September of next year, with power to the Governor, by proclamation, in the meantime, as is the case in the principal Act, to put an end to it. The opportunity is being taken to remove the ambiguity of the expression "debts of the classes specified in the proclamation," and this has been done by inserting in Clause 2, of this Bill, after the words "of the classes specified" the following words "or of persons of the classes specified." There are many classes of debts, which I need hardly take up the time of the House to explain, because members know what they are for themselves. But the debts of assisted farmers under the Industries Assistance Act, it was the intention of the House, should be

deemed a class, inasmuch as there are statutory provisions for their liquidation. The proclamation so far issued under the Postponement of Debts Act was only extended to the debts of assisted farmers, which in due course would be liquidated under the provisions of the Act. The necessity has arisen for the amendment because the proclamation was challenged by a creditor of an assisted farmer on the ground that it was not within the power of the Governor in Council to postpone the debts of farmers whose affairs were in liquidation under the Act as a class. The case was one which perhaps hon. members may have heard of, namely, that of *Stoneham versus Linahan*. Mr. Justice Burnside held in Chambers that the proclamation was valid. The case, however, was carried to appeal, and although the Chief Justice agreed with Mr. Justice Burnside and held that the proclamation was valid and that the debts of assisted farmers which were sought to be postponed were a class within the meaning of the Act, nevertheless the Chief Justice was overruled by the other two Judges, Mr. Justice Rooth and Mr. Justice Northmore. This brought about the peculiar position that an outside creditor can hold aloof and practically force the Government to pay him in full, in preference to the other creditors, by the simple expedient of selling the equity of redemption of the claim, and thus forcing the farmer off his holding. The object of the previous Government was, and of the present Government is, to keep the farmer on his holding to enable him to carry on operations. It is quite true that, if the equity of redemption be sold, the security stands, but the whole object of assisting the farmer would fall to the ground if that position was maintained. As both Houses will not meet until the 31st October and as I want to have this measure passed, if hon. members are agreeable, so that it may be the first taken into consideration when Parliament meets again on that date, and passed by the Legislative Council and then receive the assent of the Governor so that the principal Act may be continued, I propose, after we have gone through Committee, to move for the suspension of the Standing Orders to enable the Bill to pass through its remaining stages during the present sitting. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [S.40]: The Premier, I think, has covered the ground correctly and sufficiently extensively. The measure is necessary. It has fulfilled a very desirable object, and not only has it protected to some extent the farmers under the Industries Assistance Board, but has enabled several other persons to be protected, and has had a good moral influence besides. I think that we in Western Australia are to be congratulated on the fact that in this State it has not become necessary to proclaim the Act generally. A fair and reasonable view has been taken of it. Consequently the Act has done no harm to anyone. We know, too, that in many cases it has done a certain amount of good. As the Premier has pointed out, it was necessary in the interests of the Industries Assistance Board, not because it was thought at the time that the other creditors would take an undue advantage of the farmers, but because the board had an enormous amount of money out, and as a reasonable safeguard, to have this Act proclaimed over these farmers. As the Premier pointed out, the position was tested, and it was found that there was a weakness in the measure which will now be put right. It would have been put right if the Scaddan Government had remained in power. We can meet the Premier in assisting him to get this measure through because it is desirable that the Act should be continued, and it can only be continued by the suspension of the Standing Orders in order that another place may deal with it on the 31st October. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Standing Orders Suspension.

The PREMIER (Hon. Frank Wilson—Sussex) [S.43]: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended to enable the Postponement

of Debts Continuation Bill to be passed through its remaining stages at the present sitting.

Division called for, and all the members present being on the side of the Ayes, the Speaker declared the question passed.

Third Reading.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN DAY FUNDS (No. 2).

In Committee.

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

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Application of funds:

Mr. FOLEY: For the purpose of assuring that any funds paid by the British Red Cross Society to the War Council of Western Australia shall be expended only for the temporary relief of sick and wounded soldiers and their dependents, and so that there may be no aftermath of misunderstanding, I move an amendment—

That in line 16 the words "for any of the purposes hereinbefore mentioned" be struck out.

Later I intend to move the insertion of words ensuring that such moneys shall be expended solely for the relief of returned invalid soldiers and their dependents.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: I raised this point on the second reading, and the Premier was good enough to postpone the Committee stage of the Bill in order that the matter might be considered. I have gone to some trouble to ascertain how the fund stands, and how it is to be distributed; and I am satisfied that the Bill provides sufficient safeguards. The arrangement between the War Council and the Red Cross Society is, practically, that the Red Cross Society, having no organisation or machinery for the distribution of moneys, shall use for that purpose the organisation or machinery of the War Council. The object which the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley) has in view is already attained by the use of the words "for any of the purposes hereinbefore

mentioned." Those words distinctly mean that the moneys shall be expended on the relief of returned sick and wounded soldiers and their dependents. I am perfectly satisfied that the best results will flow from the funds being controlled by the Red Cross Society and being distributed by the War Council.

Mr. FOLEY: Having heard the explanation of the leader of the Opposition, I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Amendment by leave withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Preamble, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—PERMANENT RESERVE (No. 1).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd October.

Mr. HUDSON (Yilgarn) [8.54]: The Permanent Reserves Act of 1899 provides that where a reserve has been classed as A, an Act of Parliament must be passed in order to permit of the alienation of any portion of such a reserve. Under that provision, I take it, this Bill has been introduced. The object of the provision is to safeguard the parks reserved for the use of the people, and great care should be exercised by Parliament to see that no improper deviation from the objects for which lands have been permanently reserved is allowed. However jealously we may guard our public parks, it becomes at times necessary to make inroads upon them. In this case it seems to me that necessity exists, because of the possibility of the development of one of our national resources, the mining of base metals. The Attorney General, in introducing the Bill, pointed out that the intention in granting the lease of the area described in the schedule is to enable certain leaseholders to develop portion of the reserve for the mining of molybdenite. We are all well satisfied of the richness of Western Australia in base metals; and, this reserve being almost in the vicinity of the metropolitan area, it appears desirable that the proposed lease should be granted and some encouragement given to the project. I was disappointed, however, that the Attorney General did not give the House more

information as to the locality of the reserve from which he proposes to cut out 48 acres. A plan should, I think, have been prepared so that hon. members might know exactly where the reserve is situated.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): The reserve is known as the National Park.

Mr. HUDSON: However, with the information I have I am prepared to accept the Bill. I would urge upon the Minister to see that the lease, if granted, is worked properly, that provision is made for the preservation of the timber there, and that the park itself shall not be damaged any more than can possibly be helped. In view of the fact of our having base metals in Western Australia, I may suggest to the Minister for Mines that, since prices now ruling for base metals such as molybdenite and sheelite are highly profitable, his department should issue an elementary manual giving information which would be of value to prospector:—such as the localities where base mineral have been found, and also where, from a geological standpoint, they are likely to be found. The manual should give, without too much elaboration, such particulars as would tend to the development of these resources. As regards this particular Bill, I take exception to the fact that it proposes to grant one lease to, apparently, one syndicate or one person. Possibly other developments may take place in the neighbourhood and then it would be necessary for the Minister to approach Parliament again before he could grant another lease. I have no objection to the Mines Department taking full authority to grant leases.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): For the whole of the reserve?

Mr. Willmott: Yes.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Certainly not.

Mr. HUDSON: The only objection I have to this Bill is that it gives to one person or one syndicate a monopoly of 48 acres, and leaves the Minister powerless to deal with any portion of the reserve that may be outside the boundaries stated in the schedule.

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): If minerals are located in any other part of the park, the matter can be dealt with in a similar manner to this.

Mr. HUDSON: The Government will have to come to Parliament for authority, and that will entail loss of time. The Minister for Mines might as well have full power and authority to deal with all applications.

Mr. Willmott: What is the entire area of the National Park?

Hon. J. D. Connolly (Honorary Minister): Three or four thousand acres.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: More like ten thousand.

Mr. HUDSON: For the reasons I have given I am prepared to support the second reading of the Bill.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning—in reply [9.0]: When I moved the second reading of the Bill I gave all the information in my power in connection with the matter. We have always had in our minds that Class A reserves are sacred, that they must not be interfered with except by the authority of the House expressed by a Bill. Therefore when the application for this land came forward I submitted to the House the matter of granting the lease from the area in question. I am entirely in the hands of hon. members, and if they think it is wise to give the Minister for Mines the power to grant leases wherever they may be required through that reserve, well and good, but I would point out to hon. members that that is their privilege entirely. In answer to a question asked by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) as to whether there was really any molybdenite there, I have myself inspected the reports of the departmental officers who have seen molybdenite both on the surface and in the holes put down, and who state that there are prospects of some success there. I think what the hon. member for Yilgarn (Mr. Hudson) has in his mind, in the event of this metal being found in quantities, is that other people might want to take up leases, and it might be an advantage to get the machinery in motion to help the industry. As I have already stated, it has been the practice to bring applications of this nature before the House, but of course if Parliament likes to give the Minister power to deal with them, well and good. I am entirely in the hands of hon. members.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Holman in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to grant mineral lease of portion of reserve:

Mr. HUDSON: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 the word "that" be struck out and "any" inserted in lieu, and in line 4 the words "described in the schedule to this Act" be struck out.

The object is to provide that leases may be granted instead of a single lease.

Amendment passed.

Schedule—negatived.

On motion by Mr. Hudson, the Title was consequentially amended.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH PROPERTY ACTS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd October.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford) [9.8]: I secured the adjournment of the debate so that hon. members might have the opportunity of looking through the Bill. So far as I can see, there is nothing in it to which objection can be taken. We quite realise owing to altered conditions, that a Bill of this description as applied to the Roman Catholic Church is necessary. I want an assurance from the Attorney General, however, and it is that under the Bill no greater powers will be given to Roman Catholic community than have been given to any other denomination to dispose of land granted by the Crown. We know it has been the practice, and a proper practice, too, to grant fairly freely to all denominations, Crown lands on which to erect places of worship, and so far as the Catholic and the Church of England communities are concerned, they have also been granted land on which to erect buildings for educational purposes. I think, however, it was undesirable to give any denomination the power to sell or dispose of land given by the Crown for a specific purpose. I have looked up the Act of 1895 and I am of the opinion that sufficient protection is given under the Bill now

before us. We want to see that no one denomination secures greater rights and privileges than any other. At the same time, every one will agree that it is desirable to see that Crown lands granted for any purpose shall be used for that purpose unless strong reasons are given for an alteration, and those reasons should only be endorsed by the Governor-in-Council. I would like the Attorney General to give an assurance on that point.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. T. Robinson—Canning—in reply) [9.12]: I cannot say off-hand what is the degree of variation of the powers conferred on the Roman Catholic Church as compared with the powers given to various other denominations. As a matter of fact, there is some difference. Some act under a particular deed and only exercise the powers given by that deed. Other powers—I am speaking from memory—are very similar to the powers conferred by the Bill before the House. If it is necessary for the information of the House to contrast the powers of the Roman Catholic Church with those of other denominations I am afraid I cannot do it this evening. I have no hesitation in saying, however, that if there is any power in this Bill that is in advance of the power granted to any other denomination I will be agreeable to introduce a measure to place the other denomination on a similar footing.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: I do not think that would be desirable. I do not think the House would allow any denomination to sell land which had been granted by the Crown for church or educational purposes. I am willing to let the matter pass if the Attorney General will promise to look into it before the Bill reaches another place.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The matter might be dealt with in Committee, but I am quite in accord with the view the hon. member takes. The Bill, as it stands, however, I think is a proper one to pass.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Holman in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2, 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Power to sell, lease, and mortgage lands:

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: This is the clause that contains the powers to which the leader of the Opposition referred. The hon. member's point deals with the power to sell. Under Section 5 of the Roman Catholic Church Lands Act, 1895, it is provided that—

With the consent of the Governor in Council, the said Bishop and his successors in office may sell any lands granted by the Crown as aforesaid to him or his predecessors in such office, or that may be hereafter be so granted.

In this Bill the wording is, "Notwithstanding anything contained in the Acts mentioned in the schedule hereto, it shall be lawful for the Archbishop. . . . with the consent of the advisors in writing." Section 7 of the Act of 1895 reads—

No assurance on sale or mortgage or any lease for a term exceeding twenty-one years, of lands granted by the Crown to or for the use or benefit of the Roman Catholic Church, without pecuniary consideration therefor, shall be valid unless countersigned as approved by the Governor for the time being of the said Colony with the advice of the Executive Council.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Is that not only dealing with the term of 21 years? I do not understand the word "assurance."

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Assurance is a term used in conveyance; it means transfer. I take it the meaning of that is that no conveyance or transfer of property will be valid unless signed by the Governor-in-Council, which is practically the same meaning as Section 5 of the original Act.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 5, 6, 7—agreed to.

Schedule, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—SPECIAL LEASE (LAKE CLIFTON).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 3rd October.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford

[9.23]: This Bill is the outcome of a discussion which took place in this House last session on a motion moved by the member for Murray-Wellington (Hon. W. J. George). That motion was as follows:—
"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that a tramway be constructed from Waroona to Lake Clifton without delay in order to make available the vast lime deposits." The member for Murray-Wellington, in moving this motion, convinced the House generally, I think, that something should be done to make these vast lime deposits available to the agriculturists of the South-West. As a result of the discussion on the motion, which received the support of myself as Minister for Lands at the time, an undertaking was given that an offer which had been submitted to the then Government would be investigated with a view to having prepared an agreement to be submitted to Parliament for consideration on its next assembling. Negotiations were entered into between the proposed concessionaire and the Government and an agreement drafted, as is now included in this Bill. The Minister for Lands (Hon. H. B. Lefroy) has been good enough to say that in his opinion care has been exercised to see that the interests of the State are adequately protected, and that at the same time no undue burden has been placed by the agreement on the concessionaire, so as to make the proposition a financial impossibility. I think the agreement will commend itself to the Chamber. There may be room for a difference of opinion as to whether a private concession of this description should be granted. Personally I think that where sufficient safeguards are provided, no harm can come to the State. I am prepared to support the second reading because I think it is desirable that the lime deposits should be made available to the agriculturists of the South-West. As a matter of fact, the proper development of that portion of the State cannot take place until a cheap and adequate lime supply is made available; and seeing that we have a large and valuable supply almost at the backdoor of the South-West I think the agricultural industry should be assisted towards obtaining that supply at the earliest possible moment. It will be remembered that the Scaddan Government,

some considerable time ago, placed on the Estimates a sum of money for the purpose of constructing a railway, but the finances did not permit of that being proceeded with. I think it would be wrong, seeing that there is no immediate prospect of money becoming plentiful, or the money market becoming easier, to penalise the South-West further than it has been penalised already by having waited for an opportunity to the Government. Viewing all these matters from the broadest possible point, I think it is desirable that these lime deposits should be made available, in order that that portion of the country may be developed as it should be. For this reason I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading of the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. J. George—Murray-Wellington) [9.27]: As the member for the district concerned with this particular item, I am pleased indeed that the present stage has been reached. The urgent need for lime in that portion of the State is well known, and an opportunity for supplying it quickly is, I think, supplied under the concession which has been arranged for. From my knowledge of the position, and the information given to the House by the then Minister for Lands, I think there was justification for the undertaking given following on my motion. There may, perhaps, be a feeling that a quicker solution of the difficulty might have been found. Since the matter was last before the House I have received several letters from different persons in the district. One thing they ask is that when this concession is granted, a townsite shall be surveyed and properly reserved, so that there may be free access for all classes of traders. I mentioned the matter to my colleague the Minister for Lands and he tells me that there is no necessity for inserting such a condition in the Bill, that the procedure governing such matters already prevailing will conserve the rights and interests of the people.

Mr. Smith interjected.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not gone into that portion of the transaction particularly, because I felt it was not a matter which need be introduced into the Bill. The officials concerned were satisfied, and

as the Minister for Lands had gone into the question, I was prepared to leave it to their judgment.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: Does not the railway govern the situation really?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is another aspect of the matter. The concessionaire will have to provide a fairly large sum of money to build the railway. When men are prepared to introduce a new industry which is required for two special reasons—firstly to provide lime required by the farmers in the district, and secondly to give employment to men in the district—we cannot err on the side of giving them something that will make it worth their while. If we adopt a niggardly attitude we are likely to defeat the end we have in view. If these gentlemen carry out their work according to the agreement they will have conferred a public benefit on that portion of the State, so surely we are not going to haggle about terms.

Mr. Smith: But you have given them the lot.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: It would be necessary to build two railways if it were divided.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I cannot say how much of the area they ought to have, but I do not think there is a great deal in that point. They have to build the railway to Government standard, under Government supervision, and the Government will take an accurate account of the cost of the railway, and will be empowered to take it over at any time by paying that cost, less depreciation. Also, the goods have to be carried on the line at rates not less than the Government rates, and under conditions to be laid down by the Commissioner of Railways. The carrying out of this project will confer upon that district a tremendous benefit, and will open up large areas of land capable of growing enormous quantities of produce, which at present would be quite useless in view of the cost of cartage. It parts of that district four good horses would be required to bring 10 cwt. of potatoes into Waroona. If the Government cannot build the line and open the land, we must give to those who are willing to take the risk something that will afford them a fair chance of obtaining their reward.

Mr. Smith: But the company cannot possibly utilise the whole of the concession.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It does not matter to me whether you give them the whole of it or a quarter of it. If the hon. member has information which suggests to him that too much is being given, it is a question for the consideration of the Minister for Lands. What I wish to see is that there shall be no obstacle thrown in the way of attaining the object in view. To encourage enterprises of this sort was the recognised policy of the State as far back as 1872, when the first Jarrahdale concession was granted to Messrs. Wanliss Bros. at a nominal rent. The best jarrah forest in the State was handed over to them for about £50 per annum rental, it being recognised that they were undertaking a very large job. For many years after the start of that enterprise Jarrahdale was regarded as practically the only place in the State where employment could be secured. At that time it was the policy of the Government to assist concessionaires in the first place, with a view to encouraging them to establish these concerns. After a number of years during which concessions of this sort have been put on one side—legislators and others thinking that it was better for the country to refrain from giving concessions—we have come back to the old system. We require lime for our people in the South-West, but we cannot get it, because we have not the money to build the necessary railway. These people are ready to build the line and work the deposit, and their proposition has appealed, not only to the late Minister for Lands, but also to the present Minister.

Mr. Harrison: What is the area?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is about 12 miles long by approximately three-quarters of a mile wide.

Mr. Harrison: You are giving the firm a monopoly of the lake for about 40 years.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, that cannot be denied.

Mr. Harrison: If the district down there develops rapidly, what will be the value of the concession?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Upon that the hon. member must form his own opinion.

Mr. Harrison: The value of the concession will increase with the development of the South-West.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: As I stated last year, the only interest I have in the project arises out of the desire that my constituents and the other people of the South-West shall get lime at a cheap rate. I was careful to say on that occasion that it rested upon the Government to see that the full interests of the State were preserved.

Mr. O'Loghlen: Was it not proposed to fix a maximum price for the lime?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I believe it was spoken of. However, these are not the points upon which I am touching just now. The responsibility was cast on the Government to see that the interests of the State were preserved. The deputy leader of the Opposition, who was then Minister for Lands, has given the House an assurance that the interests of the State are being preserved, and in this the present Minister for Lands agrees.

Mr. O'Loghlen: There can be no question about it.

Mr. Thomas: Power is taken to repurchase the line?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes, at any time at cost price, less depreciation. Since I have been in the State I have seen various lines purchased by the Government, upon conditions which did not commend themselves to my view, and therefore I was determined that if I should have anything to do with supporting the building of a railway which the State might ultimately take over, there should be no mistake as to what the State would have to do. Consequently I laid it down, and it is embodied in the agreement, that the line shall be built to Government standard, under Government supervision, that an accurate account is to be taken of the cost, and that at any time the Government may take over the line at cost price less depreciation.

Mr. Smith: Could the Government take over the lease?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I do not know; that is for the Minister for Lands to say. Regarding it from a business point of view, who among hon. members

would be prepared to put down the capital required for the enterprise without some security of tenure? The lease is for 21 years, increasing to 42 years. It is a long time, certainly, but what does it matter to the State provided the State's interests are conserved and the people of the South-West get the lime, which they cannot get by any other means? Surely this firm, or any other persons, if they are prepared to do the work and find the money, ought not to be harassed by our standing in the way and saying we will not agree because we have to go fiddling about with a view to determining whether the concession is too much or too little. Too many projects which, if they had been agreed to, would have been of great benefit to the country, have been wrecked by little quibbles raised by hon. members. Here is an agreement which, we are assured by responsible members on both sides of the House, has been thoroughly well considered and is fair and equitable.

Mr. Thomas: It is all right so long as they are not to get an unreasonable profit out of the people.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The price of lime is fixed at 10s. per ton delivered at Waroona. It will have to be conveyed over 15 or 16 miles of railway. The hon. member will see, therefore, that the price is very low, for the mere loading of the lime into trucks is worth from 1s. 9d. to 2s., in addition to which there is the freight. Clearly, unless a tremendous quantity comes along, the price of 10s. per ton is not a very fat thing.

Mr. Smith: Lime loaded into trucks at Dongarra can be purchased at 5s. per ton. It costs a penny per ton per mile to carry it over our railways, so, allowing 2s. for loading and 1s. 3d. for freight, the concessionaires will be making a profit of nearly 7s. per ton.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, it is open for hon. members to criticise the price, but we ought not to spoil the scheme for getting the lime.

Mr. Thomas: We can pay too much for it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It is for the hon. member to show how we can get the lime at a lower price.

Mr. Thomas: Find the money and build the railway.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There would be no difficulty about it if we had that million and a half which we are supposed to have in our pockets. I have no more to say. The question is before the House. The people want the lime and have asked the Government to provide it. The Government have not the money to build the railway line. Indeed, if the Government brought in a Bill for the construction of the line to-morrow, the House would not pass it. Hon. members opposite would make a party question of it and quibble over it till Christmas.

Mr. O'Loughlen: No.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, the project is before the House, and hon. members can voice their objections. I have pointed out what appeals to me as a practical man regarding this agreement, and if the House does not like to accept it the responsibility rests with hon. members.

Mr. WILLMOTT (Nelson) [9.43]: For 30 years past this has been a pet project of mine. Ever since I have been in the South-West, it has been my earnest desire to see our lime deposits opened up with a view to providing cheap lime for the farmers. Let me compliment the late Minister for Lands, who, I understand, is directly responsible for the Bill. I say confidently that the interests of the State are completely safeguarded in the Bill. We have absolutely chained these people down in every respect. We have heard by interjection that there is a fortune in it for these people. I hope there is. If there is a fortune in it in supplying lime to the farmers at 10s. per ton on rails at Waroona, then, at the present time, we are paying 25s. a ton for an inferior article. What a profit, therefore, must the people who are dealing in lime be making at the present day.

Mr. Smith: You are getting a superior article containing 80 per cent. of carbon. This is only 60 per cent.

Mr. WILLMOTT: There is no lime so suitable for the farmer as this particular Lake Clifton lime. As was read out by the Minister for Lands, this is lime containing what is known as aragonite, as against the ordinary calcite lime which we have in other

parts of the State. Very interesting reports by Mr. Saint Smith, Mr. Simpson and others were also read out. I have for many months followed up this question of the Lake Clifton lime, and the more we follow it up the more interesting it is, not only from the point of view of the farmer, but from the point of view of the man who takes an intelligent interest in matters of this kind. There is no other lime proposition in the State that I know of that can produce anything like the quantity of lime at the price, namely, 10s. per ton or 12s. per ton screened. I am perfectly sure that the lime as it exists to-day is fine enough to go through any fertiliser spreader that is on the market to-day.

Mr. Smith: Wet or dry?

Mr. WILLMOTT: I take it that the lime will be pumped out of the lake, dried, put into trucks and sent away in bulk. We are not going to lay down the law to these people as to how they are to conduct their business, but we have tied them down so that the Government are safeguarded.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: It must be dry to be screened.

The Minister for Lands: The public will not buy it if it is wet.

Mr. WILLMOTT: We need not worry ourselves about that. All we want is to get the lime. We know that it is of the best, and I hope that hon. members will not quibble, as they seem inclined to do, as to the size of the area that is to be granted.

The Minister for Works: If the lime is no good the farmers will not take it.

Mr. WILLMOTT: If it is no good, then Mr. Simpson and Mr. Saint Smith are out of their reckoning. I am, however, prepared to take their word.

Mr. Smith: It would not be the first time that experts were out of their reckoning.

Mr. WILLMOTT: As regards the size of the area it is proposed to grant, we have to bear in mind that these people will have to spend a large amount of money, and that the area and the length of term are not excessive. A term of 21 years with the right of renewal is not too long in the circumstances. Not only is it intended to provide lime for the farmers, but to make cement. The price of cement will be governed by competition.

Mr. Smith: You have excluded competition here.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Competition will come from outside the State. These people will have to sell at either the same price or less than the price paid by people who are importing it. Every argument that has been put up is in favour of the scheme. If hon. members knew how anxiously the farmers had been waiting for this, they would do all they could to get it through the House without delay.

Mr. O'Loghlen: They have not tried to stop it.

Mr. WILLMOTT: No, but from their interjections one would think that the Government of the day were trying to force through the House something that would be a detriment to the State. If hon. members would take the trouble to go through the Bill they would find that the interests of the State are absolutely safeguarded, as well as those of the farmers.

Mr. O'Loghlen: So long as the cocky is all right, nothing else matters.

Mr. WILLMOTT: If the cocky is all right, this State is all right. I hope the Bill will be passed.

Mr. THOMAS (Bunbury) [9.52]: I should be loth to do anything to obstruct a measure that is of such advantage to the South-West. I realise, as well as the leader of the Country party, the crying need which exists in that portion of the State for an adequate supply of lime at a reasonable price. Practically the whole of the land there is in need of it, but if any great development is to take place in the South-West in the near future, it cannot effectively be carried out unless a proper supply of lime is provided. I do not, however, share the opinion of that hon. member when he says that by interjecting and asking questions we are endeavouring in some way or other to prevent the passage of the Bill. While realising with others the great need for it. I am desirous from my place in the House of protecting the public interests. Too often in the past concessions have been rushed through Parliaments giving to people certain rights extending over a great number of years. In the need of the moment we are inclined to be too generous, to give away the public estate, and to make condi-

tions which, in the light of after events, and increased experience we might live long enough to bitterly repent. It seems to me, according to the Minister for Works, that the cost of handling lime at Lake Clifton is to be 2s. per ton, that is if it is shovelled, and that the carriage of it over 15 miles of railway at a cost of 1d. per ton per mile works out, on the system prevailing at present on our railways, at 1s. 3d. a ton, and that this will bring the cost of handling and transport up to no more than 3s. 3d. per ton. If I know anything of the company that is taking this over and investing its money, the most up-to-date machinery will be supplied and the costs of handling reduced to even below that.

The Minister for Works: There is something to be allowed for the preliminary expenses.

Mr. THOMAS: I do not want to be unfair, but merely to sound a note of warning. I want to help the Bill through all I can, but to be satisfied at the same time that the interests of the public are safeguarded.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: One shilling and threepence is not a fair estimate for rail-age.

Mr. THOMAS: It works out at that at 1d. a ton per mile over 15 miles.

Mr. W. D. Johnson: You are speaking of the ordinary railways of the State running ordinary traffic. This will have a limited traffic and be an isolated railway.

Mr. THOMAS: Allowing that it costs 6s. 3d., which it will not do, to land it at Waroona, there is still room for an enormous profit to go into the pockets of the people who are running the concern, which might very well, if the Government would take up the scheme, remain in the pockets of the producers of the South-West. It may seem that our need is great, and that to get lime at 10s. per ton is very desirable, but if this lime could be supplied at 7s. 6d. a ton, considering the countless thousands of tons that will be available, it would amount to an immense concession. I am not going to say that my point of view is altogether the right one, but I do not think I have ever known of any railway concession which has been granted in any part of Australia that has in future years been entirely satisfactory to the Government which granted it. We have

seen instances in which in after years, the Government have had to buy back properties which had been conceded in that way at an enhanced value.

The Minister for Works: You have never seen one on a commission like this before.

Mr. THOMAS: True, we have the right to take back the railway. That is very desirable, but I think some clause could have been inserted by which we would have the right to repurchase the lease. To have to wait 40 years is a long time in the development of Western Australia. The time may come when we will find, with the electrification of our railways and the improved conditions that science is bringing forward every day, that these people may be able to transport their lime over the railway at a fraction of the cost that is estimated to-day. In such case it is reasonable to assume that they would make 50 per cent. profit on every ton they handle. While being as anxious as any member of this House that these deposits should be developed, I would like them to pause a little while and consider whether it would not be better for the House to strain a nerve and find the money to take the matter under the control of the Government so that in time to come the people of the State themselves might benefit from these deposits.

The Minister for Works: Would your objection diminish if the term was made shorter than 42 years?

Mr. THOMAS: It will diminish with every year.

The Minister for Works: Then it is open to the hon. member to move an amendment.

Mr. THOMAS: I am only ventilating my opinion. I quite agree that this is one of the great essentials for that part of the country which the Minister for Works and I have the honour of representing. Somehow I fear that if this is allowed to be a privately-controlled railway, we shall lose some of those inestimable benefits which have come, and are coming, from the Government control of railways. Without the Government control of this line the whole of the profits will go to the company. It would, of course, be a peculiar situation if the Government took over the railway and refused to transport the lime over it on behalf of the company.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The company would not hold out long if they had to pay interest on the plant and outlay.

Mr. THOMAS: It would, of course, create a very complicated position. Some better conditions might be made and some power given by which the lease could be repurchased, and with the improved facilities for transport, which I have suggested may come in the future, it might mean that the State could handle the product for 5s. a ton. When development takes place in the South-West as it should and ultimately must take place, the demand will be simply enormous. If we can save 50 per cent. on the cost as it appears on a rough, casual estimate, then it is worth while, in the interests of the State, to see whether something better cannot be obtained in improved conditions in connection with the agreement. If we knew the definite amount we had to pay in order to buy back the concession, if it were, say, £20,000, then, if the position did arise, we could find the £20,000. But it may prove that the concession will be worth hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The Minister for Works: To the farmers of the State.

Mr. THOMAS: Yes. I am fully alive to that. If we can save 50 per cent. of the cost of the product to the farmer, it would mean that he could use two tons where under these conditions he can use one. To double the quantity of lime at the same cost may infinitely increase the productivity of the soil, and will certainly give the farmer a fairer deal and a better opportunity of producing. I am rather surprised that the leader of the Country party is so anxious to hustle this Bill through, without giving consideration to every detail.

Mr. Willmott: I have given consideration to every detail.

Mr. THOMAS: While I share that hon. member's anxiety for the people whom this Bill is to benefit, I do not wish to be carried off my mental feet with the immediate prospects and conclude an agreement which may prove faulty. I do not wish to forget to examine definitely the prospects of the future. Not for a moment would I like it to be said that I had done anything to block the legitimate prospects of the Bill, but if the second reading debate is adjourned I

would ask the Minister in charge to think just a little longer, to give the matter some more thought and see whether still better conditions cannot be made in the direction I have suggested. I have every confidence that the Minister for Lands will not knowingly give away any concession that should be reserved to benefit the people of Western Australia, and particularly the South-West. Let him consider whether a better agreement cannot be concluded, before we give consent to the granting of this concession, with the risk of our people having ultimately reason to regret hasty action on our part.

Mr. HARRISON (Avon) [10.5]: There is no doubt whatever that this measure is going to produce quite a different aspect of the South-West. Our agricultural experts have repeatedly said that the South-West is so deficient in lime as to have prevented the efforts of those who have been settled there for a number of years from proving as successful as they should prove. The high cost of production in the South-West, owing largely to the lack of lime, has retarded the development of the district more than any other factor. The development of the lime deposit by the lessee represents one of the best proposals ever submitted to Parliament. I agree with the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas), however, that a 40-years concession at the prices fixed for lime is dangerous, though of course the right to purchase the railway protects the Government to a considerable extent. I observe a reference to a 20-inch mesh. The Minister for Lands will understand that a 20-inch mesh would be utterly useless. What I suppose is meant is 20 meshes to the inch.

The Minister for Lands: Yes; that is so.

Mr. HARRISON: But the Bill does not say so.

The Minister for Works: The measure is badly drafted.

Mr. HARRISON: Yes. I believe, with the member for Bunbury, that a provision should be inserted empowering the Government to purchase the lease at a future date, should they desire to do so. A clause to that effect would not prevent the lessee from proceeding with this work. Then, as regards the minimum production of 50 tons per day, that of course would not pay the lessee: but

the fear occurred to me that the lessee might make sufficient profit out of a restricted production, and that this might result in retarding the development of the South-West. However, I observe from the Notice Paper that another concession of this kind is to be granted.

The Minister for Works: That is at Capel.

Mr. HARRISON: If the lime is going to do all that is expected, the demand will increase year by year, and the settlement of the South-West will so extend in 40 years that the lessee will be doing an enormous business.

The Minister for Works: If the lessee helps to develop the South-West, surely he is entitled to some reward.

Mr. HARRISON: Yes. In my opinion, it is much more better to develop the lime deposit by private enterprise, which gets off the mark far more quickly than the Government. We on this side of the House are now utterly opposed to such undertakings being handled by the Government. But we may have improved in this respect after the lapse of 40 years.

Mr. Bolton: Improved in intellect, do you mean, or in socialism?

Mr. HARRISON: In anything the hon. member pleases; perhaps in mechanics. We may also, of course, have improved mentally. I am with the Government, however, in the view that this lime deposit will be developed more quickly by private enterprise than by the State, especially having regard to the condition of the finances.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. H. B. Lefroy—Moore—in reply) [10.10]: Some little criticism has arisen in the minds of hon. members as to this Bill, and I wish to point out that careful consideration has been given to the measure. It does not represent the work of a moment. It has been considered for some time past by the departmental advisers and by the Crown Law officers. There seems to be a fear on the part of the member for Bunbury (Mr. Thomas), and perhaps some others, that the lessee will make an enormous profit out of the enterprise while the State will derive no benefit.

Mr. Harrison: It is a big concession for a long term.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is also thought by hon. members that the State should reserve the right to take over the lease at any time. The State, however, has the right to purchase the railway at any moment. If the State steps in and purchases the railway, the lessee of the lime deposit would have to obtain the right to build another railway before he could further utilise the lime deposit. In that way the State could take control if the deposit were not worked by the lessee in a proper way.

Mr. Harrison: The railway would be useless to the State without the lime deposit.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the lessee would have to work the lease to the extent of at least 50 tons per day.

Mr. Smith: How could he do it if the Government took over the railway?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He could not do it.

Mr. Smith: Then he would have an action for damages against the Government.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, not at all. Under this measure the Government have a right to take over the railway. I really do not think there is any need to cavil over this proposition, which seems to me an excellent one. If it is really carried out and the lessee does make money out of it, all the better for Western Australia, I say. The prices fixed for the lime are low. The member for Bunbury estimated the cost of production on the basis of shovelling the lime into something and then carrying it to Waroona by train. But the lime has to be pumped out of the lake, and then to be dried and screened. That is not going to be done for nothing. The drying and screening of the lime will be the most expensive part of the whole business. The whole thing having been threshed out, it has been considered that 10s. per ton is a fair price for the unscreened and 12s. per ton for the screened lime. Some hon. members may know more about the technical part of the business than I do, and I shall be glad to have their advice. However, the common sense view is that if this agreement is carried out great benefit will result to the State, and especially to the South-West. If

we can enrich our lands, the State is getting a great deal. The lime deposit has been absolutely useless to Western Australia up to the present. If the Government are not prepared to work it, why should not someone else be permitted to work it under conditions satisfactory to the State and satisfactory to the lessee? I think every endeavour has been made to render this agreement satisfactory to the lessee, while safeguarding the State in every possible way. The lessee has to build a railway, and carry passengers and freight at rates to be approved by the Minister for Railways, but not less than the rates charged on our Government lines. The lessee will not make money out of carrying passengers and freight, because on this line there will not be the amount of traffic to make it payable—certainly not as regards passengers. I shall be only too pleased if hon. members will, in Committee, point out any improvements which can be effected in the Bill, or any loophole whereby the interests of the State are liable to suffer. Finally, I would like hon. members to bear in mind that the production of the lime will prove of inestimable benefit to Western Australia as a whole, and especially to the farmers of the South-West. Considering all the work that is necessary, I hope that the price to be charged for lime will not be too great. In dealing with a concession such as this it is not wise to be too one-sided. We ought to consider the interests of the lessee and we should not cut him down more than is necessary so long as we safeguard the interests of the State. Under all the circumstances we shall not be doing any injury to the State by granting the powers provided under the Bill. We grant gold-mining leases for a term of years with the right of renewal until the gold is worked out, and people have been known to make fortunes out of them. When the company is taking more than a certain amount of gold out of a mine we do not provide that the State shall step in and take it over. It would be a pity to do anything which might prevent the intending lessee from proceeding with the matter. If Parliament is satisfied about the bona fides of the lessee, it should agree to the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Holman in the Chair; the Minister for Lands in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to grant lease:

Mr. SMITH: I move an amendment—

That in line 4, after the word "lease," the words "of 2,500 acres" be added.

Mr. FOLEY: I hope the clause will be allowed to pass as it is printed. If we are going to give a concession it is just as well to grant it in the way proposed in the Bill. If we adopt the amendment suggested by the member for North Perth we shall open up an avenue by which someone else can come in and exploit the work which is already being carried on by the intending lessees.

Mr. Smith: The 2,500 acres will be more than they will be able to work.

Mr. FOLEY: If I thought there was going to be a monopoly, I certainly would not vote for the Bill. It is not, however, a question of monopoly, because the House knows that other concessions have been granted in regard to lime. The amendment, if carried, would act unfairly to those who have applied for the concession. I doubt whether the member for North Perth knows whether 2,500 acres would be too large or too small a concession. The previous Minister for Lands, as well as the present Minister, must have had expert advice on this question and I think the Committee would be justified in accepting what has been put before them.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I have no doubt that the member for North Perth is perfectly sincere in his attitude. The amendment, perhaps, might be workable if a proviso were added that, in the event of an additional area being required, the company would have first call on it. The proposal in the Bill, however, is a fairly equitable one; but, as I have said, if the member for North Perth has any genuine fear that the company will get too much from the State he can add the proviso that I have suggested. Then, again, it is doubtful whether the company could go ahead, were the amendment carried even with the proviso. They must have security and a sufficient area to operate upon. It must not be forgotten also that

an enormous initial expenditure will be involved. I am not going to deny that the company may do well, but we have been informed that the State was not able to operate these deposits, and consequently we must make the best provision possible. The company must have a fair guarantee, and I am satisfied with the safeguards provided. If the hon. member persists with his amendment and it is carried, then I think in justice to the firm, provision should be made that the State, if the future warrants it, will make the concessionaires an extension of areas. I do not know whether the House would agree to such a provision, but I do think that if the amendment be carried some such undertaking would be necessary. The fear seems to be that this company is going to do well, but I would point out that if the company does well, other people and the State also will do well.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am afraid that the member for North Perth has not taken all things necessary into consideration before moving his amendment. He asks the House to support his amendment that the area of this lease shall be reduced to 2,500 acres. I may say that in making that limit the hon. member has been most generous, because the whole area of Lake Clifton, so far as can be gathered from this small map, is something under 4,000 acres.

Mr. Smith: It is 4,200 acres.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Well, 4,200 acres. I was not very far wrong in the calculation I had made without a scale. I want this line simply and solely because the people of the South-West want it, but I do want the question viewed from a common-sense point. The people of the South-West want this line, and, as I have just told the Premier, if he will provide the money for the Government to build the line, I shall be satisfied. We can have this line without encroaching on the Government reserve. Some members appear to view the latter in a dog-in-the-manger spirit. They cannot get a line themselves, and they endeavour to prevent others from getting a line which is required; and some of them seem to expect the concessionaires to build the line and make nothing out of it. I do not care twopence whether the concessionaire makes money or not: I want the line.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You are anticipating a lot of trouble.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am not anticipating trouble, but I have been listening to this debate and it has been most hostile until a few moments ago. If the area is reduced to 2,500 acres that may leave sufficient for the concessionaires to develop, but if I were in their position I would not take it up. I would say to the Government, "All right; if that is the spirit in which you approach the matter, if you want this industry developed, develop it yourself." Members who have been adopting this attitude should visit the district. I can promise them a courteous reception, and a safe journey home, but I cannot promise them that their consciences will be easy.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: The Committee should remember that this Bill is the result of a resolution of the Chamber. Unquestionably the motion moved last session by the member for Murray-Wellington would have been carried by a large majority had it gone to the vote; but in order that the hands of the Government should not be tied I requested that the matter be held over and a proper investigation made. There is nothing easier than to criticise an agreement of this kind. The less one knows about the subject the easier it is to criticise—therefore some members have a pretty wide scope to-night. This debate has reminded me of the discussions I have had on various occasions with the gentlemen interested in this proposition. I raised then all the points which have been raised to-night. I realised that it was my duty to get the best terms possible for the State; but if I had insisted upon a reduction of area, a reduction of returns, and a reduction in the price of the lime, I realise that there would have been no agreement at all. I would not have been able to come to an understanding at all, and although I do not wish members to understand that the last word has been said in regard to this agreement, I wish to give the Committee the assurance that I went closely into it myself and had associated with me in its preparation the best experts of the Agricultural, Lands, and Crown Law Departments. In connection with agreements of this sort, it must be realised that the lessee has to put a good deal of capital into the proposition

before he can hope to get one penny of return, and in order to justify the investment of that capital he must have some assets; and if he is limited in area, limited as to the price of the lime, and in the amount he must hand over to the Government before he makes any profit at all, the proposition then becomes a financial impossibility. Dealing with the monopoly aspect, there is no monopoly so far as lime is concerned. There is any quantity of lime at Lake Clifton.

Member: But they have the whole of it.

Mr. W. D. JOHNSON: They have not. The lime country stretches along the coast right up to Rockingham, and undoubtedly if this lime were built it would be the means of opening up other lime deposits. Already a motion is before this Chamber to approve the granting of another concession for an exactly similar purpose, namely, to exploit the lime deposits at the Capel. It will thus be seen that no monopoly is created. The leader of the Country party has told us that the farmers have been crying out for lime for the last 30 years; and if the two concessions now proposed are granted the farmers will be in the happy position of having the choice of two propositions. In this agreement we have kept the price as low as possible. Before we started our negotiations the departmental officers said that if we could get this lime to Waroona at 10s. we would do a wonderful thing for the South-West. The price of 10s. was fixed by the departmental officers. I am not putting up a special plea on behalf of the agreement, but it is reasonable, and it protects the interests of the State. Also it is fair to the lessee, who should make a reasonable profit if he can manufacture cement. In regard to the lime, the agriculturists of the South-West have the big end of the stick, and the agreement is undoubtedly to the advantage of the State. If the amendment is carried I think there will be no development of Lake Clifton for some considerable time.

Mr. THOMAS: No members are desirous of voting against the Bill, but we wish to see the interests of the State properly safeguarded. In return for the benefit the State will undoubtedly receive from the enterprise, I am perfectly willing that the company should do well out of their opera-

tions, but I would like to see some limitation set to the extent to which they can exploit the country. On behalf of at least some of the people of the South-West, I desire to thank the Government for their prompt action in the matter.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 3 to 6—agreed to.

Schedules, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

House adjourned at 10.49 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 31st October, 1916.

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

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By the Colonial Secretary: 1, Bankruptcy Rules, 1892, amendments. 2, Fremantle Harbour Trust, amendment of regulations. 3, The Health Act, 1911-15, adoption of model by-laws (Kojonup Road Board). 4, The Health Act, 1911-15, By-laws Claremont Road Board. 5, The Health Act, 1911-15, adoption of model by-laws (Goomalling Local Board of Health). 6, The Health Act, 1911-15, adoption of model by-laws (Meckering Board of Health). 7, The Health