

Mr. Pickering: What about the farmer?

Mr. MARSHALL: I am battling for the farmer, too. Farmers will have to pay a license for every gun, and it is not right to burden them with such an impost. Outside the metropolitan area the measure will be unworkable. If we do not wish to make law-breakers of the people, we should pass only laws that are reasonable. I protest also against the high fees proposed.

On motion by Mr. Broun, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 4th September, 1923.

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

QUESTION—RAILWAYS, LOCO. BOILERS.

Mr. WILLCOCK asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is it a fact that there is a shortage of boilers at the Loco. Shops which will materially impede the preparation of engines for the current year? 2, What is the extent of the shortage? 3, Is it a fact that a recommendation has been made that boilers be imported? 4, Which officer of the Railway Department is responsible for such recommendation, if any? 5, Which officer of the Railway Department is responsible for the shortage of boilers? 6, When was the shortage first reported by the officer responsible? 7, Is it a fact that the number of new boilers required to keep up the equipment of the locos. in the Railway Department is approximately 14 per year? 8, What is the number that has been built for each of the past six years? 9, Is it not a fact that boilers of as good quality can be built as cheaply at the Loco. Shops as imported boilers cost?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: 1, No. 2, See No. 1. 3, Yes, and tenders have been invited in Australia and Great Britain for 20 boilers. 4, The Chief Mechanical Engineer. 5 and 6, See No. 1. 7, No specific number can be laid down; annual requirements vary in periods corresponding with those when large blocks of locomotives were placed on traffic. As, for instance, in 1901, 1902, and 1903 107 locomotives were put into use. These are now in course of requiring boiler replacements, giving estimated requirements of 47 boilers for 1923-24, 48 for 1924-25, whereas only 22 are estimated to be needed for 1925-26. The position in regard to boilers is referred to at paragraphs 17 and 38 of the Commissioner's Annual Report, 1923. 8, Year ended 30-6-18, 6; 30-6-19, 4; 30-6-20, 8; 30-6-21, 9; 30-6-22, 9; 30-6-23, 15. 9, Boilers made in loco. shops are as good in quality as any hitherto imported. The tenders now being invited will enable a comparison of costs to be made; the last boilers, 10 in number, were imported in 1911.

QUESTION—KENDENUP SETTLERS.

Mr. HUGHES asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that settlers are leaving Kendennup, and that unless fertilisers and seeds are provided for the remaining settlers, it will be impossible for this season's crops to be planted? 2, If so, is it the intention of the Government to do anything to keep the settlers on their holding? 3, If the answer to question (2) be in the affirmative, what action is it proposed to take?

The PREMIER replied: 1, No, but I am aware that crops cannot be grown without seed and fertiliser. 2, The State Government was not, and is not responsible for the subdivision and settlement of Kendennup Estate. It has offered, subject to the company's agreement to provide security over the land, to make advances for the purchase of seed and fertiliser and for sustenance, and this offer is still open. There has been made available £2,000 for works in the vicinity to provide employment for settlers, and £50 has been granted for relief through the Charities Department. The estate has now been offered to the Government, and the offer will be sent on to the Land Purchase Board. 3, Answered by No. 2.

QUESTION—DIABETES, INSULIN SUPPLIES.

Mr. LUTEY asked the Colonial Secretary: 1, Are supplies of insulin for the cure of diabetes procurable in the State of Western Australia? 2, If not, will he try and procure a supply?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY replied: 1, A small supply of insulin, sufficient for the treatment of one case of diabetes, has been made available to the Honorary Medical Staff

of the Perth Public Hospital. No other supply is available. 2. It is expected that more will be available shortly, when a supply will be procured?

PAPERS—INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT, ADVANCES.

Mr. SPEAKER: It will be fresh in the minds of members that the Leader of the Opposition last week moved the following motion:—

That all papers relating to the applications for Government assistance that were referred to or reported on by the Council of Industrial Development, be laid on the Table of the House.

During the debate the Minister for Mines suggested that if the motion were carried it would be unwise to lay the whole of the papers on the Table, but that he would have a precis made containing information as nearly as possible in compliance with the motion of the member for Boulder (Hon. P. Collier). I have that precis now, and it will be left in the Speaker's room under my care. It is marked "Confidential only." Members can see it for themselves in my room at any time. It is for confidential perusal.

BILL—ELECTRIC LIGHT AND POWER AGREEMENT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

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

BILL—PINJARRA-DWARDA RAILWAY EXTENSION ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 30th August.

Mr. DAVIES (Guildford) [4.40]: I welcome the introduction of this Bill. A measure similar to this was prepared in 1913, but was not introduced. The main opposition to the Bill from members on this side of the House appears to come from the fact that there have been no serious accidents in the building trade. This is a foolish argument to use.

Mr. A. Thomson: Another objection to it was that it meant the establishment of another Government department.

Mr. DAVIES: I remember the day when the quarries and clay holes in this State were not subject to inspection. Since the Government brought their quarries and others under the rules governing the inspection of mines, I know that no fatal accident has occurred in that connection. It is foolish to suggest that this Bill should not be intro-

duced until an outcry is made that all these things should be subject to inspection.

Mr. A. Thomson: I did not intend to convey that.

Mr. DAVIES: Building in Western Australia is only in its infancy. The Government, however, are wise in providing for the inspection of such dangerous gear as scaffolding, although the need for this may not have existed as much in days gone by as it does now. The Government have been twitted by members on this side for introducing the Labour policy. This Bill was introduced through the advocacy of National Labour members. Last year the Premier promised to bring it down. It was prepared for introduction last year, as the Minister for Works will admit, but it was not brought down then. Before Parliament assembled members were given an assurance that the Bill would be introduced this session. The member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) read a letter from a firm of architects, a paragraph of which contained the following:—

Unless there is a world-wide need for such a Bill, and I have heard nothing of the kind, I see no necessity for its introduction here.

This statement surprised me. This is the only State on the mainland of Australia that has not passed a scaffolding Act.

Mr. McCallum: There is not one in Victoria.

Mr. DAVIES: The hon. member is misinformed. New South Wales introduced the Scaffolding Act in 1902, and it has been amended several times, notably in 1908 and 1912. South Australia introduced a Scaffolding Inspection Act in 1907, and Queensland an Inspection of Machinery and Scaffolding Act in 1908. This latter Act was repealed, and the Inspection of Scaffolding Act brought down in 1915. New Zealand introduced a Scaffolding Act in 1908, since when certain amendments have been made to it. Victoria was the last State, with the exception of Western Australia, to introduce a Scaffolding Act, this having been brought down last year. It did not come into operation until March of this year. Western Australia, therefore, is only following in the footsteps of the other States. I admit this is merely a machinery measure, and we must deal with it in Committee. Notwithstanding the opposition that has come from members on this side, particularly those who have spoken from the cross-benches, I hope they will see their way to accord this measure their full support. The member for Sussex was misinformed as to there being no agitation for the Bill.

Mr. Pickering: We have only your assurance that there is an agitation for it.

Mr. DAVIES: Every State of the mainland of Australia and New Zealand, as I have remarked, has such a measure in operation. Even if there were no such Act in any other State, we should pass this Bill. There is on our statute-book many an Act to the credit

of the Parliament of Western Australia that has not been passed by any other legislature in the world.

Mr. Willcock: The Workers' Homes Act, for instance.

Mr. DAVIES: Yes. I urge members, particularly on this side of the House, to make any objections that they have to offer, in the Committee stage, and to carry the second reading unopposed, thus proving quite clearly to those who now claim that the Government are somewhat indifferent to industrial legislation—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do not put the Government away too clearly. That sort of pleading does the Government no good.

Mr. DAVIES: I trust that when the question goes to the vote not one member on this side will be against the Bill.

Hon. P. Collier: Why not even one? Would not you be satisfied with carrying the Bill? Or do you think it would have a better political effect if there was not a "No" against it?

Mr. DAVIES: In my opinion, the opposition to the measure on the part of members on this side comes from their being misinformed.

Hon. P. Collier: It comes from their political troglodytes. Anyhow, they must vote against the Bill if their votes are to be consistent with their speeches.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Guildford will address the Chair.

Mr. Johnston: Some of us are supporting the measure.

Mr. DAVIES: I hope that hon. members who have spoken in opposition to the Bill will now see their way clear to support it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the Minister going into Committee with the Bill to-day?

The Minister for Works: The member for South Fremantle (Mr. McCallum) has placed his proposed amendments on the Notice Paper, but the member for Katanning (Mr. A. Thomson), who also intimated that he had amendments to move, has not done so yet. I propose, therefore, to postpone the Committee stage to the next sitting of the House. Meantime I hope the member for Katanning will put his amendments on the Notice Paper.

BILL—REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous sitting.

Mr. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narrogin) [4.50]: The necessity for a redistribution of seats needs no emphasising at all. Probably every member of this Chamber who looks at the list of the numbers of electors in the various Assembly electorates will agree that there is urgent need for redistribution before the next general election. The only point at

issue may be the basis upon which the redistribution is to be made. I have before me the report of the Commissioners appointed to divide the State into 50 districts for the election of members of the Legislative Assembly, and from that report I find that on the 24th May last certain electorates had fallen to very small numbers. Yilgarn had 760 electors, Cue 605, Menzies 543, Mt. Margaret 445, and Mt. Leonora 649; making a total for those five seats, returning five members to this House, of only 3,002 electors.

Mr. Marshall: Are you sure that those figures give all the people in those districts?

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am not sure, but they are the certified official enrolments. In my opinion an electoral canvass of Western Australia should have been made before the Commission entered on their work. I know that in my own electorate that was not done, and that in the Williams-Narrogin district there are hundreds of unenrolled electors. Against the figures which I have quoted there is the fact that in my electorate there are 3,742 electors, or some 700 more than the total of the five electorates I previously quoted. However, when we come to the metropolitan area, where there has been a great increase of population during the last 10 years, we find that the disproportion of electors is much more serious still. We find 10,412 electors in the Canning electorate, 9,524 in Leederville, and 8,696 in Subiaco. No member who believes in fair representation of the people, and gives consideration to the many factors which have to be taken into account, but must agree that the figures I have quoted show the urgent and serious necessity for a redistribution of seats on just and equitable lines before we go to the people again. In a measure which was passed last session, the Electoral Districts Act, Parliament laid down a basis of representation on which the Royal Commissioners were to act. The Government appointed a Royal Commission, and in my opinion they appointed the best that could be obtained for the purpose, for if any men ought to be able to do this work well, it is the Chief Justice, the Chief Electoral Officer, and the Surveyor General.

Mr. Latham: But don't you think they should have called evidence?

Mr. JOHNSTON: That might well have been done, but I do not know that we could have had a more independent Commission than the one appointed by the Government.

Mr. Marshall: An independent Commission is not necessarily an efficient Commission.

Mr. JOHNSTON: In my opinion the result of the Commission's efforts is distinctly disappointing. When the Electoral Districts Bill was before this House last session, the Premier said he expected that two new seats would be given to the metropolitan area. I then forecasted that under that measure the metropolitan area would get three additional seats. I am sorry to see that my forecast was right, and that the metropolitan area, where already we unfortunately have nearly half the

population of Western Australia, is to get three new seats instead of the two forecasted by the Premier.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Premier also forecasted that there would be only one new seat for the Country Party, but you have got two.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Premier forecasted two.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No; one. Turn up his speech and look at his figures.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The agricultural districts are entitled to at least two more seats. The metropolitan quota fixed under the Electoral Districts Act is 5,583 electors, and a margin of 20 per cent. is allowed by the measure either way. That is to say, there is a margin of allowance of 1,117 either above or below the metropolitan quota of 5,583. Therefore the maximum enrolment for a metropolitan seat would be 6,700 electors. Yet we find that the proposed new Maylands seat has only 3,911 electors, or a few above the quota and 789 below the maximum. The proposed Mt. Hawthorn seat has 4,772 electors, and the proposed Karrakatta seat 4,831.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And Leederville has 4,726.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Thus Mt. Hawthorn has 811 electors under the quota, and 1,928 under the maximum, and Karrakatta has 752 electors under the quota, and 1,869 under the maximum permitted by the Electoral Districts Act. The Commissioners should have given more consideration to the factor, laid down for their guidance, of distance from the capital, and should have used the margin of 20 per cent. permissible above the quota to its full extent in the metropolitan area. If that had been done to any extent at all, the metropolitan area would have had only the two extra seats forecasted by the Premier. Now let me turn to the agricultural areas. One would naturally expect to see a new seat given to those parts of the agricultural districts which have shown most progress during the last few years. No part of Western Australia has made more progress during the last few years than the area north of Wickiepin and lying between Wickiepin and Merredin, which is served by the Wickiepin-Merredin line. If there is any part of Western Australia which deserves a new seat, it is that huge area served by the Wickiepin-Merredin line and the Yilliminning-Kondinin line, and containing the Bruce Rock, Corrigin, Kondinin and Kulin districts. No part of Western Australia has progressed more rapidly during the last 10 years, and it is an amazing thing to me to see those well-settled districts tacked on to other seats along the Great Southern railway, instead of being supplied with representation of their own. To me it is most surprising that Plantagenet, which, apart from the Kendenup venture—unfortunately burst—has not progressed, should be given a new seat, while that magnificent, closely settled, and progressive area which I have named, between Wickiepin and

Merredin, has not been given any fresh representation at all. Even if the present number of seats had been retained for the Great Southern District and east of it, there should, I contend, have been a new seat east of the Great Southern railway and taking in the Corrigin and Bruce Rock districts. This should have been done even if the seats along the Great Southern line had been correspondingly re-arranged, and the same number of representatives returned from that area.

Hon. P. Collier: But those people are only pioneers. They had no say.

Mr. JOHNSTON: These deserving pioneers should have had their own separate representation. I speak from knowledge when I say that the districts in question do not wish to remain tacked on to Pingelly, Beverley, and York. I am not going to touch on the position of the Murchison area, because that aspect was so fully dealt with by the member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy). That hon. member said that the Murchison area is entitled to better representation rather than that three new seats should be given to the city. As to that I agree with him in every respect.

Hon. P. Collier: That would be the second alternative.

Mr. JOHNSTON: There are serious anomalies in the South-Western electorates. Kirup, with its timber mill and purely industrial interests, has been taken from the Collie electorate and included in Sussex.

Hon. P. Collier: What a shocking thing to include that centre in such an aristocratic electorate! Common workers!

The Minister for Works: They represent a fine body of men.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I agree. The Leader of the Opposition knows I am not talking of them in that sense. The Commissioners have included the Kirup mill in a purely farming constituency.

Hon. P. Collier: But it must lower the tone!

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Commissioners were told they should have regard to community of interests affecting the people in the various electorates. That should have been the determining factor. I will not take second place to the Leader of the Opposition in my regard for the dignity of labour.

Hon. P. Collier: But it will hurt to have them together!

Mr. JOHNSTON: It would have been better to have left the Kirup mill in the Collie electorate, where it has been for years, rather than tack it on to the farming electorate of Sussex. Instead of that, the Commissioners could have added the Balingup and Mullalyup districts to the Sussex electorate, rather than in Collie.

Hon. P. Collier: It is really the outstanding blot of the Bill.

Mr. JOHNSTON: The Commissioners have not shown regard for the community of interests in these cases.

Mr. Underwood: What is "community of interests"?

Mr. JOHNSTON: There is a community of interests among farmers and, therefore, the suggestion I make would be preferable to the Commissioners' proposal.

Mr. Underwood: There is a community of interests affecting the whole British Empire.

Mr. JOHNSTON: We instructed the Commissioners to take cognisance of community of interests different from that outstanding community of interests referred to by the member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood).

Mr. J. H. Smith: The member for Pilbara has no community of interests at all; he is exempt.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I wish to refer to the Plantagenet seat, the inclusion of which has had the effect of squeezing other seats in the Great Southern districts out of what one would regard as normal positions. The effect has been to squeeze Katanning nearly down to Bridgetown, and the Wagin seat has been squeezed up to within three miles of Narrogin, so that a large number of people who trade with Narrogin, and others who live near Wickpin now find themselves in new electorates.

Mr. Underwood: Poor sausage! Squeezed up!

Mr. JOHNSTON: As to my attitude towards the Bill generally, I intend to vote for the second reading, because I believe a redistribution of seats is necessary. In the Federal Electoral Act, the Commonwealth Government have the power to appoint Commissioners just as we have in our Bill. There is an additional provision in the Federal measure, however, permitting the work of Commissioners to be referred back to them if it is considered unsatisfactory by Parliament. That power is repeatedly exercised. The anomalies to which attention has been drawn, together with further anomalies which, no doubt, will be mentioned during the debate, are such that the House would be justified in referring the report back to the Commissioners.

Hon. M. F. Troy: How can we do that?

Mr. JOHNSTON: This House can do what is right. The Premier has the right of reply and I hope he will tell us how it can be done. If we can secure the reference of the Commissioners' recommendations back to them and obtain their additional report in time to deal with the Bill this session, I would advocate that course being adopted. It is essential that the redistribution should be made before the election. I do not see why the Bill should not be referred back to the Commissioners, who should not take more than a fortnight in further considering and amending their proposals. If we can get a fairer redistribution than the one before us, it is our duty to obtain it from the Commissioners. If our choice lies between the Bill and an election conducted with the existing electoral boundaries, I would be put between the devil and the deep blue sea. In those circumstances, I

would prefer the Bill before the House, than to go to the country with the existing electorates and the anomalies we are suffering from at present. Even with the anomalies to which attention has been drawn, the Bill gives much fairer representation to the people generally than the present electoral boundaries. I hope the Premier will tell us definitely if the Bill can be referred back to the Commissioners, so as to secure a better redistribution than is now proposed.

Mr. CHESSON (Cue) [5.6]: Like yourself, Mr. Speaker, I am one of the slaughtered innocents under the proposals outlined in the Bill. For that reason, I wish to protest on behalf of my electorate. I realise the great difficulty confronting the Premier when he had to bring forward an Electoral Districts Bill to secure the appointment of Commissioners to report on the redistribution of seats in this Chamber. I realise the difficulty, because of the trinity sitting behind him. The three sections constituting the trinity have been fused into one body to support the Government. Naturally the members concerned in the respective sections expected that their seats would be made as safe as possible under any amending legislation brought forward. As they represented the parties who kept the Premier in office, naturally they expected some consideration to be shown them. In the first instance, we found in the original Electoral Districts Bill that the North-West seats were made safe for members of the trinity. The Premier told us that four seats would be taken from the outer goldfields.

The Premier: That was, on the number of electors on the roll then.

Mr. CHESSON: We now find how the Commissioners have done their work. Five seats have been taken from the outer goldfields. Some sinister influence has been brought to bear in connection with the redistribution of seats. It was known to us six weeks before the report of the Commissioners was presented to the House that five seats were to be taken from the outer goldfields. We were even told the various streets that would define the electorates in the central goldfields areas. It would appear that the object of the Bill is to satisfy the city and agricultural areas. The Bill gives three additional seats to the city and two additional seats to the agricultural areas. That means that five seats have been taken from the outer goldfields in order to provide the city and the country with the extra members I have indicated. The goldfields have thirteen representatives in the present Parliament. Anyone considering the Bill impartially will admit that Murchison has not received a fair deal when a comparison is made with other electorates. Of the five seats to be taken from the outer goldfields three are held by Labour members and two by Nationalists. If the last Federal election is taken as an indication, it is likely that those seats will revert to Labour. Thus it would seem the present Bill contemplates taking

five seats away from the Labour Party, this being done to satisfy the city and the country. The Commissioners were appointed to consider the redistribution of 46 seats, not 50. If they had dealt with the whole of the electorates, there would not have been such strong opposition to the Bill. As it was, the Commissioners were tied hand and foot when they were appointed. The quotas were fixed, these being for the metropolitan area, 6,000; for the agricultural areas, 2,800; for the central goldfields, 3,000; for the outer goldfields, 1,800. There was a margin of 20 per cent. above or below allowed to the Commissioners. The promises made by the Premier when he introduced the Electoral Districts Bill have been departed from by the Commissioners. We were promised that at least nine seats would be given to the goldfields and probably 10.

The Premier: It was not a promise. You had a statement of the position according to the rolls then.

Mr. CHESSON: I will deal with that phase directly. The goldfields will only have nine seats. Some influence has been brought to bear regarding the definite promises made by the Premier.

The Premier: I made the statement on the rolls as they were then.

Mr. CHESSON: We were told that a redistribution of seats was necessary. We candidly admit that. If the Murchison district had been given two seats, I would not have made any protest against the Bill, despite the fact that in a leading article appearing in the "West Australian" in reply to the statements made by the member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy), it was stated that objections came from members who were disgruntled because of seats that were being lost. I realised that if any redistribution of seats were to take place, the Murchison would lose one seat, but never in my wildest dreams did I think the boundaries would be extended as suggested in the Bill.

Mr. Willcock: Your dreams would have become a nightmare.

Mr. CHESSON: That is so. When the Electoral Districts Bill was brought down last session we were told that the reasons why the North-West was to have four seats were its isolation and its vast territory. But under this Bill the Murchison will be more isolated than any of the North-West electorates, with the exception of Kimberley. Then look at the territory and the quota! Murchison is to have 122,000 square miles, which is greater than the territory of any of the North-West seats except Kimberley, and two and a half times greater than the area of Gascoyne, which has only 50,000 square miles. Gascoyne, at present, has 1,057 electors, and its nearest corner is 510 miles from Perth, whereas the Murchison has 2,202 electors, and its nearest point is 830 miles from the capital. The Murchison's quota is within 162 of the quotas of the Gascoyne, which has 1,057 electors, of Roebourne with 587 electors, and of Pilbara with 720 electors, or a total for

the three of 2,364 electors. Yet we are told that this redistribution has been worked out on a fair basis. The Bill of 1913, introduced by the Labour Government, provided three seats for the North-West. The member for Pilbara (Mr. Underwood) moved an amendment that the three seats should be north of the Tropic of Capricorn. In the Bill before us the Gascoyne has been put on a level with the outer goldfields. Had Murchison been treated in the same way there might have been no cause for complaint. Gascoyne can be reached from Geraldton in 24 hours by boat, in eight hours by motor car, and in three hours by aeroplane. The mail service in the North-West is much better than that in the outer goldfields, where in some places it is only fortnightly. As for isolation, it cannot be for a moment claimed that the North-West is at as great a disadvantage as are some of the outer goldfields. Take Murchison, with 2,202 electors, and compare it with Beverley's 2,511 electors, with Irwin's 2,660, with Pingelly's 2,509, with Wagin's 2,699, with Mt. Marshall's 2,148, or with Plantagenet's 2,472; consider these, and see how easily all the places enumerated can be reached, as contrasted to the isolation of the Murchison. None can deny that the Murchison has been badly treated. No redistribution should have been considered until the electoral rolls were brought up to date by a thorough canvass. No provision has been made for the enrolment of all the many people working outback on stations and in other industries, shearers, fencers, well-sinkers, kangaroo-shooters, prospectors, and sandal-wood getters. All those people draw their supplies of meat from the stations, and if the Electoral Department had been alive to its work it could have arranged to leave electoral claims at the various stations with a view to enrolling all the people outback before the redistribution proposal was brought in. What is the use of compulsory enrolment if we do not make it possible for people to get on the roll? At present electors are asked to travel 50 or 100 miles to the nearest town to get claim cards. In my view, the Electoral Department should take claim cards to those people, or at all events to the stations where they get their meat supplies. The Bill placards the incompetency of the Commissioners to whom the work of redistribution was entrusted. When we consider how the several electorates have been treated, their quotas and their distances from the capital or from the nearest port, it must be admitted the Commissioners have failed to carry out their task, a task which would have been comparatively easy had the advice given last session been adopted, namely, that the work be entrusted to a select committee. The members of that select committee, by their very knowledge of the electorates, would have been able to do the work with satisfaction to all, and certainly would have avoided the anomalies manifest in the Bill. A select committee would not have placed the same value

on the one-man-one-vote principle as is attached to it by electors in big centres who, without difficulty, can get the least of their grievances duly voiced. Electors outback are not thus advantaged; their's is a voice crying in the wilderness. They cannot get the consideration that is readily vouchsafed to metropolitan electors. Again, a select committee would have more fully appreciated community of interest, distance from the seat of Government, and physical features of the country—all important factors which should be taken into consideration in any scheme of redistribution. Most members already have decided how they shall vote on the second reading. It is only natural that members badly treated should put the opinions of their electors before the House. Since you, Sir, are one of the proposed victims, it will surprise me very much if we do not see you hopping down from your perch and putting up a scrap on behalf of the electors who first gave you political birth. You have been placed in the same position as a number of other members, and we know what action you would have taken if this had happened a few years ago. All I can say is, that if I do not see you on the floor of the House putting up a scrap on behalf of your electors, I shall know that you have slipped.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. CHESSON: We have had in the "West Australian" a leading article dealing with the contentions put forward by the member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy), and declaring that those of us who are to be victimised under the Bill are voicing practically our own opinions. I can assure the House we are voicing, not our own opinions, but the opinions of our electors. None of our electors outback are satisfied with the proposed redistribution.

Mr. Willcock: They are very indignant about it.

Mr. CHESSON: Yes, they are. We realised that a redistribution would have to be made, and we thought that at most we should lose but one seat. When we find that, in the Murchison electorate, we are to have a territory larger than that of two North-West seats, and a quota equal to that of three North-West seats, it is no longer to be wondered at that the Murchison electors are dissatisfied. When one leaves the head of the line, one has to travel hundreds of miles to reach the settlement points in the vast Murchison electorate. I intend to vote against the second reading. I would support a proposal to refer the Bill back to the Commissioners in order that some of the anomalies might be rectified.

Mr. HUGHES (East Perth) [5.31]: No one with any electoral experience would envy the Commissioners their task of effecting a redistribution of seats, and much less so when the Commissioners were given practically no scope whatsoever. Under the Electoral Districts Act passed last session, the Commissioners were practically placed in straight-jackets and asked to frame a Bill. The State

was marked out into divisions for them, an arbitrary quota was set, a very narrow margin was allowed either way, and they were asked to frame a Bill.

Mr. Latham: They were given a 40 per cent. allowance.

Mr. HUGHES: They were given 20 per cent. either way.

Mr. Latham: Well, that is 40 per cent.

Mr. HUGHES: If the member for York were placed in the position of bringing down a satisfactory redistribution measure under similar conditions, he would fail and if he could not do it, how could any other three men do it?

Mr. Latham: Dear me, you are complimentary.

Mr. HUGHES: Quite apart from the effect of the Bill on various members, there is no doubt that the number of anomalies it contains reduces it to an absurdity. The Electoral Districts Act laid down well-defined principles for the guidance of the Commissioners. They were to consider existing boundaries; the population basis on the ascertained quota was to be observed; the area of an electorate was to be a vital consideration. The Premier, when introducing the Electoral Districts Bill, laid great stress on the point that large areas should have fewer electors than small areas, and he spoke of the vast areas in the back country. To provide that the larger the electorate, the smaller shall be the number of electors required is a reasonable method of redistribution. Other important factors to be considered by the Commissioners were community of interest and transport facilities. The Commissioners first had to ascertain the quota, the number of electors living in the district. A return laid before the House this session shows that, in the electoral district of Perth, 559 names were removed by objection. In East Perth 623 names were similarly removed during the last six months. In no part of the metropolitan area are there vacant houses and, if electors' names have been removed from the rolls, it is reasonable to assume that new electors have taken their places. Yet no effort whatsoever was made to have the enrolment brought up to date. I have some knowledge of objections; I myself on one occasion by objection had 8,000 names taken off the Federal roll for the division of Perth. The indications were that the electors had left their various subdivisions and, owing to these people not having left particulars of their change of address, they never received the notification of objection. Consequently, their names were removed from the roll, although they were still residing in the metropolitan area. I venture to say that 75 per cent. of the names removed by objection are those of electors who still reside in and around the metropolitan area, because there is a tremendous amount of shifting about within the metropolitan area. To ascertain the correct figures for the quota, there was only one thing to do, namely make an effort to have all the unenrolled electors

placed on the rolls. We have compulsory enrolment but no prosecutions were instituted. If a batch of 100 prosecutions had been instituted to warn the electors of the necessity to enrol, the metropolitan area would have had 16 seats instead of 15. Instead of taking this step, the department simply went ahead and removed all the names they could, making no effort to place these electors on their proper rolls. I wonder if a similar course was followed in the country districts. What efforts were made to clear the country rolls of the dead names thereon? If a return were laid before the House, would it show in the country districts similar activity to that displayed in the metropolitan area during the last six months? Having neglected to ascertain the correct enrolment for the metropolitan area, it naturally follows that the Commission started from a wrong basis. An important factor to be considered, apart from the actual population, is whether a district is settled or growing. In the city are certain electorates where there is very small scope for additional population, electorates practically fully settled. The area of vacant land is very small, and it is very unlikely there will be any marked increase in the population of such districts. On the other hand, there are growing electorates in the metropolitan area, districts that are growing daily.

The Premier: You are a pessimist, then.

Mr. HUGHES: No; every day new houses may be seen in course of construction. It is only natural to assume there would be a higher quota in the settled districts than in the growing districts. Yet the reverse obtains. Instead of the maximum quota being applied to settled areas, we find it applied to growing areas. This is a direct negation of Parliament's intentions and of any sound form of redistribution. Take the Canning electorate—

The Premier: Why take it from the present member?

Mr. HUGHES: The Premier knows that would be impossible. The quota allotted for the metropolitan area was 5,583; the margin of allowance was 1,117; and the maximum enrolment an electorate could have was 6,700, while the minimum was 4,466. Under the scheme of redistribution, the new Canning district will have 6,381 electors, or only 319 short of the maximum. In view of the fact that no effort has been made to secure enrolments, I venture to say that Canning to-day is over the maximum allowed for any electoral district in the metropolitan area. If a couple of men went around the Canning district with a supply of claim cards, they would find 319 unenrolled electors within a couple of days. If there is any district in the metropolitan area that is a growing district, it is Canning. The new Leederville district is a much more settled area; the extent of growth there cannot possibly compare with what may be expected in Canning. If the two districts were on a par and the Commissioners had calculated that Canning and Leederville would

grow at a similar rate, something might be said for their redistribution proposals, but the settled area of Leederville has 4,726 electors and the growing district of Canning has 6,381. Thus Canning, though more distant from the capital and without the good transport facilities that Leederville has, is loaded with 1,655 more electors. Mount Hawthorn has 4,772 electors. This is a growing suburb, but is it more so than Canning? Yet Mount Hawthorn is given 1,609 electors fewer than Canning. The whole thing is absurd. In order to contrast areas, I cut out from the map the area representing the Canning electorate, and compared it with the areas of the Leederville and Mount Hawthorn districts. Members can see for themselves that the area of Canning is about equal to that of Mount Hawthorn and Leederville combined. Yet Canning has 1,600 more electors than either of those two constituencies. If that is not an absurdity, I do not know what is. If that is not a direct negation and contravention of the Act, I do not know what is. Let us compare the growing district of Canning with the settled district of Subiaco. In area I suppose Canning is 20 times that of Subiaco. Subiaco is a little, compact, pocket borough now, right close to the heart of the city; Canning is a growing sub-metropolitan district. Yet the Commission have given Canning 6,381 electors and Subiaco 5,139. Thus, Subiaco has 1,200 fewer than Canning, although it is one-twentieth of the size, situated almost at the post office door, in possession of the best transport facilities in the State, completely settled and with very little scope for extension. Is that in accordance with the Act passed last session? Is that a sound system of redistribution? It is the very antithesis of sound redistribution. It is everything that the Act does not stand for. If Canning were an isolated case we could perhaps say that there had been a mistake made there. Let us take Guildford. Guildford is larger in area than Mt. Hawthorn, Leederville, Canning, Subiaco, and Karrakatta put together. It has an electoral population of 6,023. Mt. Hawthorn which has 1,250 fewer electors than Guildford, has better means of communication with the city and is closer to the city than Guildford, which is a growing suburb, though perhaps it is not growing at the same rate as Mt. Hawthorn. Still it cannot be denied that Guildford is a growing suburb. Guildford has 1,297 electors more than Leederville, and Leederville is almost at the back door of the post office, with two or three tramway services. The settled Subiaco area has 834 electors less than Guildford. Karrakatta which is probably as close to the city as is Guildford, and certainly has better means of communication with the city than Guildford, is given 1,200 electors less than Guildford. In addition to these, further comparisons can be made with Guildford. The extreme outlying metropolitan seat has been given over 6,000 electors; yet the settled area of North Perth has only 5,815. Surely when the Commissioners can give Guildford more

electors than either North Perth or Subiaco, running into nearly 1,000 in one case, they could not have had any regard for the instructions contained in the Act. Whether they were hamstrung or not, I do not know; certainly they took no notice of the guidance set for them. If anything is needed to show that that was actually the case we have only to take the new seat at Maylands. That new seat has been given 5,911 electors, actually more than Subiaco or North Perth. Anyone who knows that locality is aware that it is growing rapidly, particularly on account of the extension of the Inglewood tram, which is likely to be very largely availed of. Yet no attention has been paid to the possibilities in this direction. The district has been given 700 more electors than the settled suburb of Subiaco and 100 more than its neighbouring constituency of North Perth. So far as progress is concerned Maylands may well be compared with Hawthorn. Both suburbs are extending at the same rate; yet we find that Maylands has 1,137 electors more than has Hawthorn. The settled suburb of Leederville has 1,200 electors less than Maylands.

Capt. Carter: That is a growing suburb.

Mr. HUGHES: I do not desire to suggest that the Commissioners intended to make pocket boroughs, but it is strange that they should have brought about these absurd results. It is peculiar that members supporting the Government should have had nice little pocket boroughs made for them.

The Premier: What are you insinuating?

Mr. HUGHES: I am not insinuating anything; I am stating facts when I say that Government supporters have now cosy little pocket boroughs. It appears also that the fact that they were going to have these pocket boroughs was known six weeks before the redistribution report was issued.

The Minister for Works: That is not true.

Mr. HUGHES: It was told to me second-hand by a member opposite a considerable time before the report came out.

The Premier: Who told you?

Mr. HUGHES: Whoever was responsible for the statement, if he was not aware of what was happening, guessed pretty correctly.

Capt. Carter: Tell us what was told to you.

Mr. HUGHES: I was told, to a house almost, the direction in which my electorate was going.

The Premier: Who told you?

Mr. HUGHES: Never mind who told me.

The Premier: I want to know.

Mr. HUGHES: It was reliable information; it was supported when the report came out.

Mr. Corboy: I can assure the Premier that a member of another place gave me practically the whole plan.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Mullany: You must have consulted the officials.

Capt. Carter: It was "Argus" who told him.

Mr. SPEAKER: Hon. members must keep order.

Hon. P. Collier: Never mind about the officials; it was Cornell. He knew the boundaries of some of the electorates weeks before the report was issued. I do not make reckless statements.

Mr. Underwood: Where did Cornell get the information?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, order!

Mr. Underwood: The only person I got the information from was the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. HUGHES: It is strange that the information about the boundaries should have been available so long before the report was issued. If those who gave that information did not get it from any authentic source, all I can say is they were good guessers. In my own electorate, long before the report saw the light of day, I was told, to a house almost, the new boundaries.

Mr. Underwood: Perhaps you knew a few of the clerks.

Mr. HUGHES: I know most of the clerks, but I did not get any information from them. And I would prefer to know them than the hon. member.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HUGHES: I did not believe it would be possible for the Commission to take that portion of my electorate that they did actually take.

The Minister for Agriculture: If you had known, it would not have been much good.

Mr. HUGHES: From my point of view the electorate is no worse and no better off; the Commission balanced it nicely. They could not have injured me without injuring an hon. member opposite.

Capt. Carter: They wanted to keep you here.

Mr. HUGHES: I think they wanted to keep the hon. member also. But they want to make me represent 6,000 electors as against the hon. member's 4,800. They clearly realised that I was worth one and a half times as much as the hon. member.

Capt. Carter: Yours is a pocket borough; mine is a growing constituency.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes, with 1,200 electors less than outer suburban districts. If the hon. member can hold his seat, good luck to him.

Capt. Carter: Thank you.

Mr. HUGHES: But I very much doubt it.

Hon. M. F. Troy: He will want a war cry for the next election.

Mr. HUGHES: We very nearly had a war cry for the next elections. The "Daily News" published it, and if they can get the people used to it, then the hon. member will have it. I do not suppose any member will say that he is not interested in the Bill. The member for Sussex, for instance, is not only personally interested, but he is also interested to the extent that he is wondering how it will affect his party.

Mr. Pickering: Why pick me? I can look after myself.

Mr. HUGHES: I think I have demonstrated that the Bill before us is absolutely

contrary to the provisions of the Act we passed last year.

The Premier: You have not shown that at all.

Mr. HUGHES: I have already shown the Premier the maps. I shall hold them 'up again for his inspection. Unfortunately, when I displayed them before he was in one of his sleeping fits and did not see them. I am prepared to give these maps to the Premier to let him try to make what he can out of them.

Capt. Carter: They should be laid on the Table.

Mr. HUGHES: According to the Premier's own statement the size of an electorate had to be an important guiding factor. I think he shook his fist at the House in order to stress the point when he was speaking. The Commissioners have produced anomalies by making some electorates twice the size of the adjoining ones, possessing in some cases 1,200 more electors than those adjoining constituencies. If that is not a direct negation of what the Premier stated he wanted, I do not know what is. Had the Government made two electorates adjacent to Northam, together equal in area to Northam, and given Northam 1,200 more electors than either, the Premier would have agreed with me. Every member who looks at the Bill dispassionately and calmly must admit it is very disappointing. The Commissioners were not given the requisite scope to enable them to do anything. They made one fatal mistake. If they were to have regard for distance from the capital, and allot a lesser number of electors, the further out they went from the capital, the only way for them to work on such a system was to start from the centre and go outwards. They could have started at the capital, giving that its fair quota of electors, and could then have redistributed seats in circles, gradually reducing the number of electors as the constituencies became further from the capital. Whenever they came to another circle they should have provided for a larger area and fewer electors. That is the only sound basis of redistribution, where it is necessary to take into account the area, the number of electors, distance from the capital, and transport facilities. By starting in the south and redistributing north the Commissioners achieved absurd results. This Bill certainly contains the germs of another redistribution in the near future. There is no finality about it. Growing electorates in the metropolitan area have been brought up to near the maximum quota. Already the Canning electorate is over its quota. The moment an additional seat is required to represent the number of electors concerned, there must be another redistribution. A further enrolment of 700 electors in the Guildford district will mean another redistribution, and a similar number of new electors in East Perth will lead to the same thing. If the unenrolled electors in East Perth were placed on the roll, that district would even now exceed its quota, Maylands requires only 700 more elec-

tors to exceed its quota. If the names of those people who were removed from the roll as the result of objections were replaced, the quotas in many of the electorates would be exceeded, and another redistribution would be required. After the next election the seats will have to be redistributed, because the elections will mean a number of fresh enrolments. Next year many more people will have their names placed on the roll, with the result, from that source alone, that the quota of two seats will be exceeded. Let us, therefore, have a Redistribution of Seats Bill that will settle the question for all time. The Commissioners would be able to appreciate the possibilities of progress in the various districts, and where the population is likely to increase. In electorates where there is every probability of an increase in population, sufficient margin should be allowed to provide for that, and to permit of such a quota being fixed that there is no danger of reaching it for many years. They have, however, done the very opposite.

The Premier: Did you say two electorates, or five? It is five.

Mr. HUGHES: If the names of those electors, which have been removed because of objections during the last six months, are replaced, we shall have the five seats. There are also the names of people who have come to live in their own houses, and these too should be placed on the roll. There are no vacant houses in Perth now. The moment a family leaves a house some other people move in. There is such a shortage of houses that very often two families live in the one place. The concentration of people in their own houses within densely populated areas is particularly noticeable in the East Perth, West Perth, North Perth, and Perth electorates. I have had a lot of experience of this in Perth. For three years I was responsible for the enrolment of electors for the Federal division of Perth. It is no uncommon thing to find 1,000 new electors in Perth. To do this one only requires to go round the hotels, and big coffee palaces and boarding-houses.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No wonder our Commonwealth subsidy is down.

Mr. HUGHES: One of the great troubles in the Electoral Department occurred on the eve of an election, for we would get hundreds of enrolments from persons residing in hotels, boarding-houses and the like.

The Premier: People who resided there only at night.

Mr. HUGHES: They could not enrol if they resided there only at night.

The Premier: Many of them did so.

Mr. HUGHES: That idea has now been exploded. The suggestion was put forward by people who belonged to the same party as the Premier. They said that hundreds of electors were enrolled for Perth, though they were not eligible for enrolment.

The Premier: So they were.

Mr. HUGHES: The Commonwealth Government spent a lot of money upon an exhaustive examination of the rolls to see if this was

correct, and whether men who had only a one day qualification had enrolled themselves. We found but two irregular enrolments after months of work. We examined the bona fides of hundreds of claimants in the city, because of the wild statements made by disappointed members of the Party to which the Premier belongs.

The Premier: I did not say a word about the Federal rolls. You only know about the Federal rolls.

Mr. HUGHES: What applies to the Federal rolls applies to the State rolls. The Premier is casting an unwarrantable slur upon the Electoral Department when he says it allows hundreds of people to get on the roll who are not qualified to be there. The authorities do go to the trouble of verifying the enrolment, and repeatedly compare the State rolls with the Federal rolls.

Mr. Chesson: And they strike people's names off, too.

Mr. HUGHES: Yes. I have so far mentioned only the metropolitan areas, but what of the country districts? I do not think any effort was made to purify the rolls before any redistribution of seats was thought of. There are country electorates in which it is possible the number of electors will fall below their quota. Plantagenet will shortly be much below its quota. Especially will this be so if the Kendenup settlers leave the district. When this House lays down the basis of a redistribution of seats and prescribes a method for doing it, the Commissioners should conform to what Parliament lays down, but they have not done so. Possibly they have mistaken their instructions. They have misinterpreted them to such an extent that practically everything the Bill instructed them to do they have failed to do. The essential features they were told to have regard for have been disregarded. I do not know on what basis they have arranged this redistribution. It was not in accordance with the Electoral Districts Act, nor was it sound from the common sense point of view. A redistribution of seats is, of course, necessary. It is, however, a difficult task for any three men to carry out unless they are given some scope. The proper way to carry out such a scheme would be to allow the Commissioners to go into the whole question, call evidence if necessary, and recommend what they think will be the best system for the State, instead of the State being subdivided into certain areas for party purposes. The separation of the State into agricultural, metropolitan, and mining seats was done for party purposes; otherwise for what purpose was it done? If the Government look upon the Commissioners as responsible and independent men, able to redistribute the seats on an equitable basis, why were they not given power to do that? Why were they tied hand and foot? This redistribution is not their work, because they had no chance of exercising any discretion in the matter. It is the work of the Premier. He brought down the Bill which prevented them from having any scope.

The Premier: You said they exercised too much discretion. That is your whole argument.

Mr. HUGHES: Not at all.

The Premier: Yes, it is.

Mr. HUGHES: The Premier has misunderstood me.

The Premier: No.

Mr. HUGHES: The Commissioners have evidently misinterpreted the instructions contained in the Bill, and for this there is some excuse.

Mr. Munsie: In their report they complained about having their hands tied.

Mr. HUGHES: The Premier did not understand his own Bill. He told us the metropolitan would have two new seats, and that there would be nine and probably 10 seats for the mining areas. He said 14 seats was the quota for the metropolitan area. When an amendment was moved to give it 15 seats he opposed the amendment. Now, after many names have been removed from the roll, it transpires that the metropolitan area is to have 15 seats. Surely the Commissioners may be excused for misinterpreting the Bill when the Premier himself did not understand it. In all his calculations he has been wrong. What he told the House has now been disproved by the Commission. The House has been misled by the Premier, whether wilfully or unintentionally I know not.

The Premier: You would not be able to judge.

Mr. HUGHES: There is no need for anyone to judge. The Premier made a plain statement that there would be 14 seats for the metropolitan area, and nine, with a probability of 10, for the goldfields. He said that dozens of times.

The Premier: I know the numbers.

Mr. HUGHES: This Bill shows a very different position. The work of the Commissioners has been so disappointing that it would be absurd for Parliament to place the Bill on the statute-book. Nothing can be said to justify it, and the Premier made no attempt to do so when he introduced the Bill. I intend to vote against it.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. PICKERING (Sussex) [7.33]: Like all other members, I have taken a very particular interest in the report of the Royal Commission appointed for the purpose of dividing the State of Western Australia into 50 electoral districts. Let me say at the beginning that I have no fault to find with the Commission. In our Chief Justice I consider we have one of the best chief justices in Australia. In the Chief Electoral Officer we have a very able officer. So far as the Surveyor General is concerned, we have a capable officer in him also. But when one comes to consider these gentlemen in relation to the problems they had to solve, there may be some divergence of opinion. Personally, I do not think the Chief Justice would know very

much about community of interests and other matters of that nature. Nor do I think the other Commissioners would have a very intimate knowledge in that connection.

The Premier: No one would have a better knowledge.

Mr. PICKERING: These Commissioners were vested with the same powers, presumably, as were given to other Royal Commissioners appointed in Western Australia.

The Premier: The Commissioners were named in the Act.

Mr. PICKERING: They were given power, I presume, to call evidence as regards any of the duties with which they were entrusted. But I have yet to learn that even one witness was summoned. Other Royal Commissions were not given greater powers to deal with the subject referred to them than were given to this Commission. It is to be assumed that they had power to call witnesses. There is no evidence that the Commissioners availed themselves of their power in this direction. Without this valuable aid to a decision—the basis upon which a Commission's findings are usually built—it is not a matter for surprise that the findings of these three Commissioners are not very much to their credit. I think it would have helped considerably if the Commissioners had availed themselves of the evidence that was available. I do not think that all the care possible was exercised by the Chief Electoral Officer in giving information to the Commission which would have helped them most effectively in coming to a decision. First of all, I do not think a proper electoral roll was taken. I do not think any effort was made to see that the rolls were correct.

Mr. Heron: The only effort made was to strike names off the roll.

Mr. PICKERING: If names are struck off the roll in one electorate, they must, generally speaking, belong to some other electorate. In "Hansard" of 1922-3, Vol. II., page 2833, the Premier is reported as saying, in reply to an interjection from Mr. Willcock suggesting that the rolls be put in order—

They will have to be put in order. I do not know whether the public realise that we have compulsory enrolment, that if they fail to get on the rolls they can be prosecuted, as they are under the Federal Act. I hope they will see to it that they do get on the rolls. Of course, if they change their residence frequently, I suppose it is a little annoying to have to go along and get on the new roll. Some people are very careless about it.

Then Mr. Lambert interjected, "Why not prosecute them?" and the Premier replied:—

Probably I should have to start with the hon. member. At any rate, considerable interest has been manifested in the Bill. From those remarks we might infer that the Premier would have issued particular instructions to the Electoral Department to use every possible effort to see that the rolls were in proper order.

The Premier: They did make every reasonable effort.

Mr. PICKERING: As regards my district, I am satisfied that that was not done.

Mr. Chesson: The department merely struck off names.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The department could not do the work unless money was provided for it.

Mr. PICKERING: The necessary funds should have been found. The matter is of the utmost importance, and the Government should have realised the need for taking every care to see that the rolls were perfect. I do not think they were perfect. Now I wish to draw attention to the country districts, and more particularly the South-Western and South-Eastern Divisions. Clause 8 of the Royal Commission's report states—

The work of redistribution and formation of two new districts in this area presented more difficulties than in any of the other areas, mainly due to the fact that the two existing districts of Collie and Forrest are bounded on every side by districts with which they have little or no community of interest, while, in the case of Collie also, the enrolment largely exceeds the quota. It was also found that in the existing Nelson district, with an enrolment of nearly 1,000 above the quota, community of interest was more or less absent. . .

One would naturally have thought the first thing which would occur to the Commissioners would be to study the quotas of Collie and Forrest. Had they done so, they would have found that there was considerable room for adjustment in the quotas as between these two electorates. According to the enrolment on the 24th May, 1923, Collie had 3,766 electors, whilst Forrest had only 2,539. But there is nothing in the Commission's report to show that that fact was taken into consideration at all. After the adjustment, the quota of Forrest is only 2,568, or considerably below the quota fixed, being 2,906. What did the Commissioners do to adjust Collie's overplus? They went to the Sussex electorate and gave it 661 votes out of Collie. What they had to consider was community of interests. So important was this that they found great difficulty in arranging the quota, this being due to the fact that there was no community of interests between Collie and Forrest on the one hand and the surrounding districts on the other. Yet the Commissioners deliberately disturbed Sussex by putting into it 661 votes from the Collie electorate, whereas they could have practically adjusted the difference as between Collie and Forrest.

Hon. P. Collier: Are all those 661 votes Kirrup votes?

Mr. PICKERING: No; they extend right down the electorate. I want to point out a most peculiar anomaly in this regard, and that is that the Commissioners put the Kirrup mill into the Sussex electorate and to make up the quota lost to Collie by that means, took, from Nelson, purely and totally agricultural votes from Balingup and Mul-

lalyup. It is impossible to understand why an adjustment of that nature was thus effected. What is at the back of my mind is that the first thing which impressed the Commissioners was that they had to find so many new electorates for different interests—two for the agricultural interests, and three for the city interests. Then they asked themselves, "How are we going to arrange these new electorates?" From a careful analysis of all the figures it seems to me that the Commissioners deliberately set out to establish an electorate in Plantagenet. I am not going to attribute any ulterior motives to the Commissioners. I have no reason to believe that the gentleman who to-day represents Albany has any reason to want a more secure seat.

The Premier: That had nothing to do with it.

Hon. P. Collier: There are the Kendenup people to be considered now.

Mr. Willecock: The member for Albany is not going to Plantagenet.

Mr. PICKERING: I do not know where he is going, but it has been suggested that the Plantagenet electorate was framed for a certain gentleman. From the figures of the last election it appears that in Albany Mr. Seaddan scored 738 votes as against Mr. Wausbrough's 736, and if Mr. Seaddan could beat his opponent in Albany he had every right to assume for himself a much stronger hold on the outlying districts.

Hon. P. Collier: He has gone back in Albany a good bit since then.

Mr. PICKERING: I do not know that. It is, however, my firm conviction that the Commissioners made up their minds that Plantagenet was to be one place where a new electorate should be put. I now shall show why there should not be a new electorate in Plantagenet. Taking as a basis the figures on which the electorates are fixed, we find that Albany now has a quota of 2,835, which is a minus quota of 71 below the fixed minimum quota. Katanning has 3,090 voters, which represents a plus of 184. Wagin has 2,699, which is a minus of 207. Williams-Narrogin has 3,214, which is a plus of 308. Pingelly has 2,590, which is a minus of 397.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Williams-Narrogin and Katanning have been rather favoured.

Mr. PICKERING: If we total up the pluses and the minuses, we find that the former total 492 while the latter total 604. Subtracting the pluses from the minuses, we find that the minuses are 112 on the whole of those electorates in the South-Eastern Division. If we add Plantagenet, the proposed electorate, which has 2,472 electors according to the number at present accredited, we have a further minus of 334. Adding this minus to the total of the other minuses, we have a grand total of 546 minuses. That is the position of the South-Eastern Division. Now turning to the South-Western Division, we find that Murray-Wellington will have a quota of 3,287, which is 380 above. Forrest, to which I have already referred, will have 2,568, which is

338 below. Sussex will have 3,263, which is 357 above. Collie will have 3,397, which is 491 above. If we add up those figures, we find that the total of the pluses for the South-Western Division is 2,161, and if we take from that the minus quota, which is 338, we find that the South-Western Division has a plus quota of 1,823 as against a minus quota of 546 in the South-Eastern Division. I contend that, on these figures, if an additional seat were to be allowed in that portion of the State, it should have gone to the South-Western Province instead of to the South-Eastern Province.

Hon. P. Collier: More especially as there is likely to be an increase in population there.

Mr. PICKERING: Exactly, I was coming to that. We have to take the figures as they are presented to us. The Chief Electoral Officer at least should know that the group settlers will not be eligible for enrolment until after they have been in the State six months.

The Premier: Not all of them will be eligible.

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, they will. We were told that the group settlement scheme was for the repatriation of Imperial soldiers, and that being so, they must be here six months before they can be enrolled.

The Premier: That is not so.

Mr. PICKERING: There are many persons who will be eligible for enrolment in due course; yet we have this quota fixed by the Royal Commission!

The Premier: No.

Mr. PICKERING: I can prove my statement.

The Premier: I have the particulars.

Mr. PICKERING: They are not shown in the report. They cannot be here, because the group settlements have only recently been, and still are being established in the Sussex electorate.

Mr. Lutey: Will those people have a vote for the next election?

Mr. PICKERING: Yes, and so they should.

Hon. P. Collier: Moreover, the number will be ever increasing.

Mr. PICKERING: That is so, and before the Bill becomes law, the Sussex electorate will have more than the margin of 20 per cent. above the quota. To make sure that the Sussex electorate gets its due proportion, the Commissioners have taken from the Collie electorate a timber mill and put it into the Sussex electorate, and robbed the Nelson of some of its real agricultural interests.

Hon. P. Collier: The Commissioners could have fixed the quota nearer the minimum, because of the probable increase in the future.

Mr. PICKERING: That should have been in the Commissioners' minds. When I went through the figures and analysed them, I saw that we had almost a quota for a new electorate, and when I realised that, I was at a

loss to understand the creation of the new electorate of Plantagenet.

The Minister for Works: Is not the Sussex electorate duly representative of the people who are there?

Mr. PICKERING: Is there any electorate not duly representative of the people there? I did not know that was the point at issue. I understood the Commissioners were required to have regard for community of interests and close proximity to railways. When we find the area that has been tacked on to the far south-eastern corner of Sussex adjacent to the Pemberton railway, I claim that no consideration has been given to community of interests nor yet to close proximity to railways. It would have been possible to establish a new electorate which would have taken in the timber industry in Nelson and Sussex and the mining industry of Greenbushes. That would have given an electorate with community of interests, although I admit that the seat would have been a Labour one.

Hon. P. Collier: That is why it was not established.

Mr. PICKERING: That may have been the point; I cannot read it otherwise, unless there was a desire on the part of the Government to hand over the agricultural interests of Sussex to someone else.

The Premier: The Government! We had nothing to do with it.

Mr. PICKERING: Well, I will say the Commissioners—

Mr. Lutey: Under the whip.

The Premier: I did not use any whip.

Mr. Willcock: But you gave away taxation to the extent of £100,000.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PICKERING: It is interesting to read the figures dealing with the different electorates. Nelson had 953 above the quota, as disclosed by the 1923 enrolment. The Commissioners took from that electorate 303 votes and gave them to Katanning. What could have been behind the Commissioners' minds in taking voters from Nelson and placing them in the Katanning electorate, which extended its boundaries to within eight miles of Bridgetown, alienating portion of the Nelson electorate, which has always been included? Surely the sole idea must have been to build up the Plantagenet electorate in the Great Southern. In the Katanning district the Commissioners took 192 voters from the Wagin electorate but gave 1,123 to Plantagenet. There is a continual juggling of figures to bolster up and make the electorate of Plantagenet. That is the only conclusion I can draw from the report. In view of the figures disclosed, an electorate could have been established in the South-West Province that would have confirmed the community of interests in the Nelson electorate, making it purely agricultural, and giving another seat to Labour with mining and timber interests. For some reason or other the Commissioners dragged electorates over to Plantagenet.

Mr. A. Thomson: Where is Plantagenet?

Mr. PICKERING: The hon. member should know, seeing that his electorate is giving 1,123 voters towards its establishment.

Mr. Marshall: It is a suburb of Katanning now.

Mr. PICKERING: Perhaps the Commissioners were influenced in establishing the Plantagenet electorate because they thought Kendenup had a number of people there.

Hon. P. Collier: Two hundred of them have left during the last two or three months.

Mr. PICKERING: That is so.

Hon. P. Collier: They are going every day.

Mr. PICKERING: We also know, according to a statement in the "West Australian," that the Premier has received from the Kendenup representatives in Melbourne an offer that staggered him. He would not disclose what the offer was, but from what the "West Australian" stated, I concluded the Premier was flabbergasted. If that is so, there is little hope of a solution of the Kendenup problem. If it is not settled soon, there will be acute distress there. In that event also there will be no justification for establishing a new electorate in that part of the State. These facts should have been common knowledge to the Commissioners or to the Chief Electoral Officer at least.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is more likely to be within the knowledge of the Surveyor General.

Mr. PICKERING: I do not know. So far as the rolls and the possibility of maintaining the number on the rolls are concerned, the Chief Electoral Officer should have known more about it.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: He would not know as much as the Surveyor General about people leaving the district.

Mr. PICKERING: As the Kendenup estate had nothing to do with the Government, who were not responsible—the surveying was done at the expense of the Kendenup company and the subdividing and other works were done by the Kendenup people and not by the Government—I do not see how the Surveyor General should have any particular knowledge of Kendenup conditions. The Chief Electoral Officer should have been familiar with the position and known how the future would probably affect enrolments. I want it borne in mind that we are faced with an increase in population in the South-West. We have every reason to believe that such will be the case, because if the group settlements prove the success every hon. member desires them to be, the present population must be more than maintained. On the other hand, the population in Plantagenet must be a diminishing factor.

The Minister for Mines: Nonsense!

Mr. PICKERING: The Minister can put forward his statement of the position when his opportunity comes. It is interesting to view the position of some electorates. I am in accord with the remarks of the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. Johnston) when he said that it would have been better to re-

adjust the boundaries of some of the Great Southern electorates, such as Beverley, Pinglelly and so on, and create a new electorate east of the Great Southern railway. That would have been a fair adjustment because, if we take such electorates as Beverley and Pinglelly, we find they are considerably below their quota to-day. Surely it should not be the intention in the Redistribution of Seats Bill to maintain electorates already considerably below their quota. The Pinglelly electorate is 397 below the quota and Wagin 207 below, while Beverley is minus 395. It would have been possible to amalgamate some of these electorates and establish a new one east of the Great Southern railway. Coming to the metropolitan area, I wish to draw attention to the fact that the Premier told us it was not the intention to increase the number of metropolitan seats by more than two.

The Premier: On the numbers before me then, that was so.

Mr. PICKERING: What do we find?

Hon. P. Collier: On a lower quota they have been increased by three.

The Premier: That is wrong.

Hon. P. Collier: There are 900 fewer. I will quote the Premier's own figures.

Mr. PICKERING: When I can get in an interjection, I will proceed.

The Premier: I apologise.

Mr. PICKERING: In the metropolitan area we find that three additional seats are provided. The quotas set out in the report show that Fremantle will have 5,092 electors and North-East Fremantle 4,976.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Do you know that I found many hundreds off the roll in my electorate?

Mr. PICKERING: There is so much talk going on, Mr. Speaker, that it is very hard for me to proceed. I am trying to show my reasons for opposing some aspects of the Bill, and it is difficult to proceed with this interruption.

Mr. Corboy: They are ashamed of their measure.

Mr. PICKERING: This seems to hurt the member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin).

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Not at all.

Mr. PICKERING: There is nothing personal in the matter at all. I am merely comparing the proposed approximate enrolments.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I merely interjected that I had found 1,140 names off the roll in my constituency.

Mr. PICKERING: Leederville is to have 4,726 voters, and South Fremantle 5,107. These figures are considerably below the quota and yet the Commissioners provide for the establishment of three new electorates—Maylands, with 5,911 electors, Hawthorn with 1,772, and Karrakatta with 4,831. Again these are below the quota.

Hon. P. Collier: Karrakatta is ever increasing, week by week.

Mr. Marshall: We are all heading there.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. PICKERING: Unfortunately I had to go there to-day and I was told there were 32,000 in Karrakatta. I do not know how we can reconcile that with this quota.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I do not think that has anything to do with the Bill.

Mr. PICKERING: The constituency of Karrakatta is mentioned in the Bill. However, Karrakatta has only 4,831 live electors. Mt. Hawthorn is below the quota by 811, whereas Karrakatta has a shortage of 752. So there are in the metropolitan area no fewer than six seats below the quota. In the South-West corner there are six seats aggregating 1,500 above the quota. Surely if an extra seat had to be given, it should have been given to that part of the State, not to the metropolitan area. I have been waiting to hear arguments from metropolitan members.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I believe in giving votes to men and women, not to sheep.

Mr. PICKERING: On that principle you would require to have your quota increased.

Mr. Teesdale: They have no sheep down there; they are all goats.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: No, the goats are in the North-West.

Mr. PICKERING: I cannot speak authoritatively—

The Minister for Mines: Hear, hear!

Mr. PICKERING: If it comes to that, I can speak with just as much authority as can the Minister. However, I cannot speak with authority on the community of interests in the metropolitan area. We have had from the member for East Perth to-night astounding statements, particularly as to the distances to be traversed in tram and train. In point of fact, 20 miles would cover the whole lot. Metropolitan members say nothing about distances in the country. I am at a loss to understand where in the metropolitan area community of interests comes in. It seems to me the feature there is political differences, not community of interests. The interests of the metropolitan area are very much on all fours. We have not in the metropolis divergence of interests such as we find outback, in electorates like the Murchison, so ably dealt with by the member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy), where people are separated by enormous distances, yet have only one representative in the Assembly, whilst we are doing our utmost to crowd in additional representatives of the metropolitan area. I am at a loss to understand the reasoning behind it. I take strong exception to the giving of an additional seat to the metropolitan area. After carefully considering the report of the Commissioners and analysing the tables, I can only conclude there has been a juggling of figures to fix up one electorate.

The Minister for Works: That is a reflection on the Commissioners.

Mr. PICKERING: I cannot help that. I cannot see any other explanation. Perhaps the Premier, when he replies, will give us the information he failed to give either when placing the Commissioners' report on the Table or when moving the second reading of

the Bill. The one thing he told us was that this is a non-party measure. Therefore I am at liberty to deal with the Bill on non-party lines. I am satisfied that it does not give effect to the will of the House. It was never intended by the House that the representation should be as recommended in the Commissioners' report. The Commissioners have not given consideration to community of interests, have not called a tittle of evidence to support their findings. Who are they that they should know everything? I concede that the Chief Justice knows all about his business, and that the Surveyor General knows everything concerning his department. But this is not their business. It is on the evidence that a Royal Commission should form their decision. This Royal Commission should have secured every available piece of evidence before bringing in this report. What could the Royal Commission have thought of the intelligence of this House when they put up this report? They must have thought we were a lot of fools, who would accept the thing without question. An analysis of these figures fails to find in them any intelligent interpretation of the directions given to the Commission, any evidence to show that the Commissioners studied community of interests. The Commissioners found there was no community of interests between Collie and Forrest and adjoining electorates, and to prove that there was not any they shoved into my electorate 616 electors of Collie. It was an aggravation of the mistake that they put into my electorate a part that really belongs to Collie. There is true community of interests between Collie and Forrest, which the Commissioners could have adjusted. Instead of adjusting it, they left Forrest with a deficiency of 338 electors. Why did they not say, "Here is community of interests, here is an outstanding feature." Instead of that, they say—

The work of redistribution and formation of two new districts in this area presented more difficulties than in any of the other areas, mainly due to the fact that the two existing districts of Collie and Forrest are bounded on every side by districts with which they have little or no community of interests.

Instead of adjusting the difference there, they go and disturb the community of interests in my electorate. The position is scandalous. I do not understand how any member can accept the report.

The Premier: If the boundaries of Sussex are amended it will be all right.

Mr. PICKERING: I have refrained from referring to the Premier's electorate. I think hon. members will absolve me of any personal animus. Where is there another member whose interests have been treated so kindly as those of the hon. member for Northam?

The Minister for Works: Where is Northam?

Mr. PICKERING: It is very well represented.

The Minister for Works: Hear, hear!

Mr. PICKERING: Northam, we find, had 2,920 electors, the number above the quota being 14. The Commissioners added 10 from Toodyay and transferred five to Avon, thus leaving Northam with 2,925, a very nice position for the Premier.

Hon. P. Collier: No loss of old friends.

Mr. PICKERING: No, quite a happy position for the Premier, who, however, reproves me because I object to disturbance of community of interests in Sussex. It was clearly set forth in the instructions to the Commission that they should not disturb community of interests. After careful consideration and believing, as I do, it is necessary we should have a redistribution of seats, I am not going to commit myself to a Bill such as this. If the Commissioners have so underrated the intelligence of hon. members as to expect them to accept a hybrid, mongrel sort of thing like this, they have made a great mistake. What the Premier should do is to withdraw the Bill and refer it back to the Commissioners with a request that they make a better Bill of it. I do not think the Premier can expect to carry this Bill.

The Minister for Mines: It is a heavy load.

Mr. PICKERING: It is indeed. I trust I have established the fact that my electorate has been treated unjustly and that there has not been an observance of the instructions which the House imposed on the Commissioners. Having come to that conclusion, I cannot support the Bill.

Mr. WILLCOCK (Geraldton) [8.10]: The Premier has said nothing in justification of the Bill. Nothing can be said in its justification. It is curious that a Bill for a redistribution of seats, which generally provokes divergent opinions, should on this occasion have nothing said in favour of it. It is the duty of the Government to let the people know what there may be to commend in the Bill. I am not going to criticise the Commission, but it is up to the Government to justify the conclusions arrived at by the Commissioners. In the Bill are to be found endless points for criticism, but I do not find adhered to in it one thing definitely prescribed in the Act of last session.

The Premier: Oh yes, there is. You are quite wrong.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The principles definitely laid down to be followed were community of interests, means of communication and distance from the capital. In almost every instance those principles have been disregarded.

Hon. P. Collier: Absolutely.

The Premier: You are not justified in saying that.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Consider the outback mining areas. Take the furthest from the seat of government, with the poorest means of communication, yet with the greatest proportion of electors. That is the Murchison. Much the same may be said of agricultural electorates. Yet 303 voters have been taken out of the Murchison and placed in Green-

ough. With those 303 voters, and the prescribed 50 per cent. added, the outer districts would have had sufficient to entitle them to five seats. They are not all goldfields; taking into account their community of interests some of them are as much pastoral as mining. Away up on the Sandford River, 600 or 700 miles from Perth, a district has been put into an agricultural constituency so as to make the quota of the Murchison just low enough to give it one seat instead of two. Sandford River is 60 miles from Cue, the nearest railway station. Yet these places are taken from an outback constituency to bring the Murchison district low enough that it may have only one seat instead of two seats. If community of interest had been thoroughly considered, the 20 per cent. should have been added and those stations extending right down to Mullewa should have been included in the area so that the Murchison district would have had two seats. The proposed Murchison district is an absolute scandal; it is a blot on the Bill.

Mr. Munsie: It is a blot on this redistribution of seats.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Yes, and it seems as if it were done deliberately. There is nothing to justify it.

Mr. Marshall: The framers may have a lot of faith in the members who represent the Murchison.

Mr. WILLCOCK: While the Murchison country has had three representatives, a lot of the Government utilities have been taken away from it. I do not know what will happen if it has only one member.

The Premier: You had better fight hard for Geraldton, where you have only one member.

Mr. WILLCOCK: No one can accuse me of personal bias; my district is little affected.

The Minister for Mines: Then why charge the Premier with bias?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am not charging the Premier; I am speaking of the ignorance displayed by the Commissioners in drawing up these foolish boundaries. If they think we are going to swallow their proposals—well, it is an insult to the intelligence of members.

Hon. P. Collier: They must think us a lot of political duds.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We would deserve to be considered political duds if we allowed an outrage of this description and permitted them to dictate to us in this way.

The Minister for Works: You cannot call it dictating after they have been ordered by Act of Parliament to carry out this duty.

Mr. Munsie: If they had done that, it would be all right.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The trouble is that they have not been guided by the considerations specified in the Act. Murchison, the district farthest out and extending right away to the South Australian border, has 2,200 electors.

The Premier: It is not peopled out to the South Australian border.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is peopled nearly as well as any portion of the Gascoyne electorate.

Mr. Teesdale: Oh, look at the map! It has 1,465 electors in four towns with Japanese washing and all sorts of comforts.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Bill does not affect me personally, but what is more important than my personal feelings are the feelings of my constituents. After all, one is here to represent, not himself, but his constituents.

The Premier: It is a matter of representing the State.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Anyhow, I cannot be charged with speaking from motives of personal interest or bias.

Capt. Carter: And it is a non-party measure.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Premier was prepared to make the Licensing Bill a non-party measure, though it meant a loss of £40,000 or £50,000 revenue to the State. He was prepared to make the Hospitals Bill a non-party measure, and that meant a loss of another £50,000 to the State.

The Premier: Licensing Bills are always non-party measures.

Mr. WILLCOCK: And there are stronger reasons why a Redistribution of Seats Bill should be a non-party measure.

The Premier: This is a non-party measure.

Mr. WILLCOCK: When the Licensing and Hospitals Bills were before the House last session, the Premier was not particular how his supporters voted, although those measures involved the State in a loss amounting to £100,000, but every supporter of the Government was whipped-up to vote for the Electoral Districts Bill last year.

The Premier: A perfectly good measure it was, too.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Last year I voiced my opposition to the Electoral Districts Bill. Bad as that measure was, the report of the Commissioners has made the Act the laughing stock of the country. Anyone who seriously studies the instructions in the Electoral Districts Act and the report of the Commissioners based upon the Act can come to only one conclusion, namely, that they have flagrantly disregarded the instructions.

The Premier: No, they have not.

Mr. WILLCOCK: They have.

The Premier: Show me where they have disregarded the instructions.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have cited the Murchison district as an instance. The Commissioners were instructed to consider distance from the capital in settling the quota. Murchison is the farthest removed from the capital; yet it has 400 more electors than Leonora, 500 more than Kanowna, and 600 more than Coolgardie. Now take the agricultural constituencies. In framing a report of this description, we expect the Commissioners to exercise common sense. They are men holding high positions; they are men of intelligence. I do not deny that they possess intelligence, but they certainly have not used it.

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

Mr WILLCOCK: I am not speaking derogatorily of them, but I contend that they have not used their intelligence. The second set of factors specified in the Act was community of interest, means of communication and distance from the capital. The Commissioners when fixing the new boundaries should have considered the possibility or probability of rise and fall in population. As the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) pointed out with regard to the metropolitan constituencies, places likely to increase in population should be given a lower quota than the closely settled districts.

Capt. Carter: If that were logically followed out, the metropolitan area would have at least five more seats.

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

Mr. WILLCOCK: And they are making their money out of other people who are doing the work.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: They are doing work, just as much as are people in the country.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Perth and Fremantle are the greatest cities of parasites—

Hon. W. C. Angwin: You say that and yet you represent Geraldton!

Mr. WILLCOCK: The industries that occupy the people of the metropolitan area are less industrial than those of any capital city in the Commonwealth.

The Premier: There are fewer industries.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I admit that. I do not carry too many compliments or bouquets in my bag to throw at the people of the metropolitan area. They are the greatest set of parasites in the Commonwealth as regards the nature of their occupations. I say nothing against them individually, but it is a fact that they are not engaged in productive or industrial occupations.

Mr. Teesdale: You yourself represent some of them. Geraldton, with its fast express trains is almost a suburb of Perth.

Mr. WILLCOCK: If the hon. member chooses to be foolish, he may be.

Mr. Teesdale: I have to go 600 miles from the coast to see some of my constituents and I have not a train to travel in, either.

Mr. WILLCOCK: But the hon. member can hardly call a place situated 300 miles from Perth a suburb of the city. However, I was discussing the occupations of the people in the metropolitan area as compared with the occupations of residents of other Australian capitals. Here there are fewer people employed in legitimate industry than elsewhere.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: What more have you in Geraldton? You have a flour mill—

Mr. Teesdale: And a brewery.

Mr. WILLCOCK: A good brewery, too.

The Minister for Mines: I think you had better shift the capital to Albany.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We cannot lay claim, as can the metropolitan area, to having 50 per cent. of the population of the State doing practically nothing but distributing and other parasitical occupations for the producers of the country. That is a disgrace to the State.

Mr. Latham: There is a seat for you on this side of the House.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have voiced similar opinions every time I have had an opportunity.

Capt. Carter: I tremble for you.

The Minister for Mines: An engineman in Perth might prefer to be in Geraldton, but he cannot help his being in Perth.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: And if you include the enginemen, you must include the lot.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I should like to continue this discussion, but I realise it is a digression from the Bill. Regarding the agricultural constituencies, the Commissioners should have shown common sense and considered the places likely to increase or decrease in population, and set the quota accordingly. Yet places near to Perth and old established places which, instead of increasing, are decreasing in population, are to have fewer electors than other places further out. Pingelly 100 miles or so from Perth, is to have 2,500; Beverley, another old established district where the land is held up and where no one can get any new land—though the Premier says it is being used productively, that is a matter for argument—Beverley is to have 2,500.

Mr. Broun interjected.

Mr. WILLCOCK: There is not likely to be any increase of population in Beverley. At any rate, there has been no increase in the last 10 years. Forrest, practically within a stone's throw of Perth, is to have 2,500; Moore, which is next to the metropolitan area, is to have 2,900; Northam, which is within 40 or 50 miles of Perth, is to have 2,900. These are agricultural seats surrounding Perth. On the outer fringe of these seats, where there should be a smaller number of electors, according to the principles laid down in the Electoral Districts Act, we find Katanning, situated at almost the southern end of the State, requiring 3,090 electors. Bunbury, which is further away than Forrest, and the other five or six seats I mentioned, is to have 3,400; Collie similarly situated, is to have 3,300; Nelson, right at the bottom end of the State, 3,300; Williams-Narrogin, also outside the adjacent districts I enumerated, 3,200, and York, which includes Bruce Rock and Narambeen—the latter I suppose is the agricultural district farthest distant from Perth by rail—

Mr. Latham: It is 281 miles, and pays the highest freight of any place on wheat.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The railway is the only communication it has and the quota there required is 3,168. The places far removed from the capital and with poor means of communication, have a considerably greater number of electors than the districts in the immediate

vicinity of Perth. If the Premier can convince us that the Commissioners have carried out their instructions—well, I shall not say what I intended to. The report is an insult to our intelligence. Not one of the principles laid down in the Act has been carried out to the letter. Were it otherwise, I should not have so much to say against the Commission; all the efforts in opposition to the proposed redistribution would then be directed against the Bill. The Act which laid down the procedure to guide the Commissioners in carrying out their duties has been flagrantly violated. There is no doubt whatever of that. The absence of support from members opposite to this side of the House shows they must be satisfied with the Bill.

Mr. Teesdale: We are all chloroformed.

Mr. WILLCOCK: They have gone to sleep over the whole business.

Mr. Munzie: The primary producers are satisfied with it. They have instructed their members.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Murchison is the chief blot on the Bill. Everything that could be done to rob this constituency of two representatives has been done. People have been transferred out of it to other constituencies.

The Minister for Agriculture: I do not want a lot that I have got.

Mr. WILLCOCK: It is very unfortunate from the Minister's standpoint that he should have people transferred from Magnet, for they will not do him any good. I do not suggest the Commissioners have done this on purpose, but they have not shown common sense or due regard for the instructions contained in the Electoral Districts Act. The Murchison is one of the oldest gold-mining districts in the State, but it has not been properly prospected by any means. No sooner have prospectors gone to one part of it than they have gone off to some other part. Anything can happen in a district like the Murchison to cause the population to go up enormously. If the Government had been alive to their responsibilities in encouraging production, the Murchison would not be where it is to-day, so far as its representation in Parliament is concerned. That district contains some of the best pastoral land in the State, and yet no more than 300 or 400 people are engaged in the pastoral industry where there should be 3,000 or 4,000. One cannot say as much as one would like to on this Bill. I have always endeavoured to steer clear of imputations against anyone, but if one wanted to impute motives in this case, one could find ample opportunity for doing so. The Bill violates the principles of the Electoral Districts Act in almost every particular. Hardly a principle of that Act has been adhered to, and in the majority of instances the Commissioners have strayed as far away from them as possible. The Bill is an outrage.

The Premier: You ought to show where it has been departed from.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Good Lord, as if I had not been doing so for the last half hour! The Premier is evidently not open to conviction. I suppose the whip has been cracked and the

Bill will be passed, but it will constitute another outrage upon an unsuspecting public. The people have had confidence in the Commissioners, but a Bill of this kind can be described only as an outrage on public decency. I will vote against it.

The Premier: You are sure of that?

Mr. WILLCOCK: I am certain. It is an outrage.

Hon. P. COLLIER (Boulder) [8.35]: One is compelled, after an impartial examination of the Bill and the electoral boundaries laid down, to draw the conclusion that one must either impugn the good faith of the members of the Commission, or express utter contempt for their competence. I prefer to take the latter course. Every blue line on the map, with the exception perhaps of the goldfields central district, proves that members of the Commission did not understand their work.

Mr. Willcock: Or the Electoral Districts Act.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I wish to deal with the culpability of the Government in appointing the Commission to carry out this work without first of all preparing a satisfactory and equitable basis on which to operate. The very genesis of the Act of last year, providing for the redistribution of the boundaries of electorates, was an up-to-date roll. How could the Government ask men to rearrange the boundaries along certain lines, giving certain quotas to various districts, without taking steps to see that a reasonably up-to-date roll was provided for them? It is inevitable that, after the work is done and when the roll is prepared for the election following, there will be no end of anomalies, which are not now apparent, and which could not be avoided by the Commission. I am surprised the Government did not take steps to get the roll brought reasonably up-to-date. The matter was brought before the Premier after the close of last session, and he was urged, I think, to take steps in that direction. The Government were not asked to undertake any considerable expenditure of public funds in doing this. The work of enrolment could have been carried out all over the State, with the exception of the North-West and the metropolitan area, by members of the police force without the work costing an additional pound. There are numbers of policemen in Kalgoorlie and Boulder who have to be kept there because of the possibility of something happening. Members of the constabulary admit that they have absolutely nothing to do and are unable to occupy their time from week-end to week-end. In that centre a house-to-house canvass could have been carried out by members of the police force in one week at no cost to the public funds. This work could also have been done in most of the outback mining districts, and in the agricultural areas as well. In the metropolitan area it would have been necessary to engage men for the purpose, and to have thus incurred a little ex-

penditure. The Government, however, made no move in this direction.

The Premier: You are quite wrong.

Hon. P. COLLIER: They did nothing to prepare a sound basis except what might have been done by the Electoral Office.

The Premier: There is compulsory enrolment.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Act has never been enforced, because the Government have never issued any orders for prosecutions.

The Premier: Have we not?

Hon. P. COLLIER: What is the use of it when we know there are thousands of people off the roll in every district, and that those in charge of the administration of the Act have taken no action?

The Premier: Yes, we have.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Compulsory enrolment is a dead letter. When was the last prosecution?

The Premier: I could tell you.

Hon. P. COLLIER: When has any member read of any prosecution by the State?

Mr. Wilcock: A man was fined in York about 12 months ago.

Hon. P. COLLIER: A decent roll cannot be obtained without a house-to-house canvass. This has been the position during the last 20 years. Whatever Government has been in power, no steps have been taken to secure a revised roll except prior to a general election. If it is necessary to do this prior to the election, it is doubly necessary that it should be done in order that the Commissioners might have the latest roll on which to act. When the roll is made up in a few months time it will be found that many of the electorates provided in this Bill will have their quotas exceeded by many thousands.

The Premier: That cannot be.

Hon. P. COLLIER: We are told that the population has been declining during the past two years. In the return presented to the House by the Premier last December, the enrolment at that date was given. We also have the enrolment as on the 24th May on which the Commissioners operated. According to the official figures given to the House in December, the enrolment for the metropolitan area was 84,694. According to the roll on which the Commissioners worked, four months older, the enrolment was 83,748, a reduction of 946. We are, therefore, asked to believe that the population of the metropolitan area fell in four months to the extent of 946 persons. The enrolment for the agricultural districts was stated in December to be 66,820, and on the 24th May 66,838, an increase in the four months of only 18. These areas now comprise 23 seats. When we come to the goldfields central district, it is clear that someone has shown a considerable amount of activity. The figures in December were 13,294, and in May, 11,184, or a decrease of 2,111. Will anyone who knows the goldfields say that the adult population of the goldfields central area, comprising four seats, has decreased by 2,111 in four months? I am

sure we have not lost more than a few hundred people at the most. By a process of striking names off the roll we now have the arrangement of quotas set forth in this Bill. In the mining districts the figures given in December were 8,825, and in May 7,515, or a decrease in all those outback districts of 1,335. There again it looks as if activity had been displayed in striking goldfields people off the rolls. Although we know that mining generally has been very dull in the outback districts, we know also that the tendency to fall off took place a year or two ago, and that during the present year, rather than a decrease, there has been a revival in more than one of the old districts, with consequent increases in the population. The total figure given us for the State in December was 173,661, but in May the total was 172,922, exclusive of the four North-West seats. On the Government's own official figures, the total enrolment at the 24th May for this State was 4,374 less than in December. When speaking a few weeks ago on the Address-in-reply, I dealt with the question of arrivals and departures in this State; and the Premier then refused absolutely to believe that the arrivals and departures were as stated in the official publication. But here, on the official roll, he shows a decrease of 4,374 in the space of a few months, notwithstanding that people have been coming in all the time. I know, of course, that the new arrivals would not be qualified; but all those who came in last year would have been qualified month by month, according to the time they had been in the State. Yet we are asked to believe that the State, which has been spending millions of pounds in order to encourage immigration, a State which has embarked upon a greater policy of immigration than any other State of the Commonwealth, has a decreasing adult population month by month and year by year. That is the state of things according to the electoral rolls. I will make a further comparison. We have official figures supplied to us by the Chief Electoral Officer when the Electoral Districts Act was before Parliament last year. They prove that not only has the population, according to the rolls, decreased since last December, but that the population has been decreasing year by year. I venture to say that the roll of December was entirely out of date. There would probably be tens of thousands of people in the State who were entitled to enrolment, but who were not on the roll according to the December figures. Even taking the metropolitan area, according to the census figures of April, 1921, that area had an adult population of 90,000. Two years later, in May, 1923, the electoral rolls, upon which these boundaries are drawn, show an adult population of 83,000. We are asked to believe that the population of the metropolitan area, in two years, from 1921 to 1923, has fallen by no less than 7,000 people. Our common sense tells us that it is not so. Night after night here have we heard of the scar-

city of housing accommodation in the metropolitan area, and of building activities all over that area for the past year or two to such an extent that there are hundreds of houses waiting to be built, but unable to be built owing to the want of artisans. And yet we are asked to believe that the total population in two years, according to the census figures, has fallen by 7,000. In the agricultural districts the census figures of April, 1921, gave a total of 67,889. The electoral roll of May, 1923, gave a population of 66,820, or a loss of 1,069.

Mr. Underwood: That works out evenly all over the State.

Hon. P. COLLIER: The part of this State in which the greatest activity has been shown, upon which the energies of Parliament and of public policy have been directed, is the agricultural area. Our migrants are sent there. In those agricultural districts development work has been going full speed ahead for the past two or three years. And yet, comparing the census figures of 1921 with the electoral figures of 1923, we have an actual loss of over 1,000 in the adult population of those districts. Can any member believe that to be true? I may be told that it comes to a question which is more likely to be correct—the electoral roll or the census figures. We know perfectly well that the census figures are more likely to be correct. In fact, the census figures are likely to be below the actual population, because whilst it is conceivable that a number of persons would be missed by the census papers, it is not conceivable that fictitious census papers, representing imaginary persons, would be put in. So the logical deduction is that even the census figures are below the actual population. And the figures for the goldfields show an even greater discrepancy than those for the agricultural districts. Those are two glaring instances, proving that the rolls are hopelessly out of date. Dealing a few weeks ago with the question of excess of arrivals over departures, I quoted the census figures; but the Premier stoutly contended that the census figures were not correct, and that those who were charged with the collection of census figures in Western Australia would naturally miss a proportion of our scattered population. To-day the Premier contends that the actual population of this State is considerably in excess of the figures shown by the census returns. Yet our electoral rolls show that the numbers in our metropolitan area and our agricultural districts have decreased by some 6,000 people. I say that is not correct. It is apparent that the rolls have been hopelessly out of date; and I say the Government have been culpable in that no attempt has been made to prepare up-to-date rolls.

The Premier: You cannot get a perfect roll.

Hon. P. COLLIER: One might give that comfortable assurance after making every reasonable effort to prepare a perfect roll. But my complaint against the Government is that they did nothing at all.

The Premier: We did.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Only striking off. All the electoral officers were most active in striking off names. One thousand names have been struck off the roll in my district alone since March, 1921. Inevitably, even if these boundaries were drawn with absolute perfection, the Bill would still represent inequality because the rolls were entirely out of date; and that is a defect which, as I have shown, could have been remedied without any expense to the State. Turning now to the Bill itself, I say that the statements of the member for East Perth (Mr. Hughes) and of the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) and others as to the absurd nature of the boundaries have been proved right up to the hilt.

The Premier: I think the member for East Perth proved the case both ways. He was most illogical.

Mr. Corboy: Get up and prove he was illogical.

The Premier: I am not allowed to.

Mr. Corboy: You can do it when replying.

The Premier: I will, too.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I repeat that as regards the metropolitan area the rolls for May show a decrease of 4,374 as against the rolls used by the Premier in December. Except as regards the goldfields central district, the Commissioners have not worked in conformity with the rules laid down for them. Take the metropolitan districts. The Commissioners were asked to observe the following points: community of interest, means of communication and distance from the capital, physical features, existing boundaries of districts. Not one of those points cropped up at all in the arrangement of the boundaries of the metropolitan area. Take the first point, community of interest. There are no diverse interests in the metropolitan area. There are the diverse views of individuals on many questions, but that diversity of opinion is probably distributed about equally over the whole of the metropolitan area. Therefore it was entirely unnecessary to have regard for the question of community of interest. As to means of communication and distance from the capital, they are considerations which do not enter into the question when boundaries for the metropolitan area are being drawn. All these districts are at the seat of government, and a difference of a mile or two here or there does not count. The means of communication are about equal. Most of the metropolitan electoral districts are in the capital, and the suburban districts can be reached by tram or train. The question of means of communication and distance from the capital therefore does not arise at all in regard to the metropolitan area. Neither does the third point arise, as to physical features. The physical features are all similar throughout the metropolitan area. Again, the existing boundaries are not to apply. Having regard to those facts, what would be the course taken by any Commissioners who

knew their work? They would say, "Here is the metropolitan area, and here is the electoral roll. Let us ascertain the quota." They find that to be 5,800. Then they set to work to delimit the 15 seats to which they consider the metropolitan area entitled under the figures. They proceed to draw the boundaries in such a way as to give, as nearly as possible, an equal number of electors in each seat, not to within a hundred or two, but to within a reasonable number. None of these points arise in connection with the metropolitan constituencies, so that no difficulty should have been experienced. The Commissioners should have started from South Fremantle and fixed the 15 seats between there and Guildford, and each one should have approximated within a hundred or two respecting the electors on the rolls. What do we find? There is a variation among the electorates that cannot be justified on account of physical features, community of interests or any other point. Despite that, there is a variation of 1,600 voters in some of the districts. What is the justification for it? What is the impelling principle influencing the Commissioners in allotting Canning 6,300 voters and Mt. Hawthorn and Leederville 4,700 voters—a difference of 1,600 voters? What is the object? What purposes have been served? The Commissioners entirely disregarded the Electoral Districts Act in making those variations. It was the obvious duty of the Commissioners to make the number of electors in each of those districts as nearly equal as possible, more particularly when it is laid down in the Act we passed last year that whenever five seats or more fall 20 per cent. below, or increase 20 per cent. above the quota, there shall be another redistribution of seats. In view of the way the Commissioners have acted, it means practically that a Bill will have to be introduced every year.

The Premier: God forbid!

Hon. P. COLLIER: The Commissioners have brought the Canning, Guildford, and Claremont seats to within measurable distance of the margin which will necessitate an amending Bill. That shows that respecting the metropolitan electorates, the Commissioners disregarded the instructions issued to them by Parliament. I do not refer to the size of metropolitan constituencies, for none is large.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: I wish you had to walk over some of them.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At any rate, they are relatively small, and all are accessible by tram or train.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Not all.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Well nearly so.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: There are neither trams nor trains in some parts.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At any rate, what is the justification for giving 1,600 electors more to one metropolitan constituency than to another? When the Electoral Districts Act was before the House, I said it did not require

Commissioners to carry out the fixing of the boundaries, but that an office boy could do it. To-day I repeat, notwithstanding the personnel of the Commission, that any decent office boy with ordinary common sense could have done a better job than these people. If members turn to the agricultural districts, they will find the same thing. The figures quoted by the member for Sussex (Mr. Pickering) disclosed the position. He showed that the Commissioners had allotted 2,472 voters to the Plantagenet electorate or 800 fewer than to the Sussex electorate. As the hon. member pointed out, if a new seat had to be provided, it should have been in the South-West.

The Minister for Mines: You cannot compare Plantagenet with Sussex!

Hon. P. COLLIER: Certainly. I would not compare the two members representing those two constituencies.

The Minister for Mines: There is no comparison between the two.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I do not know why the Minister for Mines should have referred to Plantagenet. I know that he does take a keen interest in that part of the State. He has evidently adopted that electorate and marked it out for himself as a pocket borough. The electors of Albany will be interested to learn of the Minister's willingness to desert them.

The Minister for Mines: I have not marked out Plantagenet for myself.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I mean after the Commissioners' report was issued. It would seem as though the Minister had done so, particularly as he is right with Kendenup. If the Bill does not go through, this is a point the Albany people will remember.

The Minister for Mines: I would not build on that too much. You have not got Albany yet.

Hon. P. COLLIER: It is evident where the Minister wishes to go.

The Minister for Mines: Don't count your chickens before they are hatched.

Hon. P. COLLIER: At any rate I may be justified in drawing that conclusion. It has been the policy for the past two years to develop the South-West. All the energies of government are being directed to pouring population into the South-West. We have undertaken to introduce from overseas 25,000 people during the next five years. The majority of those people will be settled in the south-western portion of the State. The margin set out in the Electoral Districts Act is 20 per cent. above or below the quotas fixed. Obviously that provision was inserted in order that the Commissioners might exercise their discretion respecting the various electorates. If there is any district at all where we might expect, in the exercise of that discretion, the Commissioners would keep the enrolments below the quota, it is the South-West. It is evident that the whole future policy of the State will mean increasing the population in the South-West. Yet we find the Commissioners giving a higher quota in the South-West to the extent of from

600 to 800 voters, than in the older settled parts of the State, parts that are not likely to expand at all. What is the object of that? Was it sheer, rank stupidity? These men could not have had the slightest idea of the work they were called upon to perform! Although we are pouring people into the South-West, and must recognise that the population is bound to increase, the Commissioners have fixed such a quota! On the other hand, in the older settled parts along the Great Southern, which are really stagnating, we find the position is reversed. The census figures for 1911 and 1921 show an actual decrease within that period. Yet those older settled areas, such as Pingelly, have 400 or 500 below the quota, this notwithstanding that the population has decreased during the past 10 years. In those parts of the State where the population is increasing week by week and month by month at the rate of scores or hundreds, the number of electors is upwards of 500 above the quota. What can be the object of that? Is there any common sense displayed in fixing boundaries such as those I have referred to? If the Commissioners had had regard to the principles and conditions laid down in the Act under which they were to work, they could not have done so. As to the goldfields, I admit that the central goldfields district is the only one where the Commissioners allotment can be supported, bearing in mind the manner in which their hands were tied by the Act. The Commissioners have arranged the four seats with practically an equal number of electors in each, the variations representing about 200 only. If that could be done in a compact community such as that of the central goldfields, where the interests, distance from the capital, and means of communication are identical, why could not that be done in the metropolitan area where the conditions, too, are equal? With the Murchison electorate as fixed by the Commissioners, I cannot conceive how any hon. member representing a North-Western constituency can vote for the Bill. One need only look at the map to realise at once that the Commissioners have entirely misunderstood their work. They failed to realise that they were dealing with a mining district. They failed to have regard to the requirements of the Act. Here is an electorate where they could have exercised the discretion it was intended they should exercise. Compare the Murchison electorate with the Coolgardie district. The Commissioners have allotted Coolgardie 1,600 voters as against 2,200 for Murchison. Coolgardie has the benefit of a daily express train from the metropolis and postal, telephonic, telegraphic and all other similar conveniences. Leaving Perth at 5 p.m., one can reach the furthest point of the Coolgardie electorate by noon on the following day. Despite such facts we find these omniscient gentlemen have allotted Coolgardie 400 or 500 fewer electors than they have given to Murchison. This, too, despite the fact that one cannot reach the Murchison electorate and particularly its outer portions inside four or five days trav-

elling! The greater part of the electorate is remote from railway communication. It is far removed from the seat of government. The means of communication are difficult. It stands out as plainly as Mt. Eliza to any man with eyes to see and sense to understand, that the Murchison should have had a smaller quota. That should be evident to anyone who gives it ten minutes consideration. On the other hand, we find that the Commissioners have allotted the higher quota to the Murchison. There was another instance where the Commissioners should have exercised their discretion. Instead of providing a number of electors below the quota, to the extent of 20 per cent. or some portion of it, the Commissioners acted in a diametrically opposite way.

Mr. Heron: The quota is within 50 of the maximum.

Mr. Willcock: And they had to transfer people to the agricultural areas to do it.

Hon. P. COLLIER: No matter how one examines this work, whether in the boundaries of the metropolitan area where, without apparent reason, the Commissioners make a variation of 1,600 in the different electorates, or whether in the agricultural areas, where we find unprogressive districts with diminishing populations getting the smallest quotas, while progressive districts with increasing populations have the highest quotas, one is forced to ask why it was done. With all due regard for their high attainments in their respective positions, I can only say the Commissioners were entirely unfitted for the work. A judge of the Supreme Court is not the best person to do justice to work of this kind. It requires men who have travelled through the State, who know the country districts, who have some idea of the disabilities the people have to undergo; not men who spend their time in city offices and have no general knowledge of the State outside the metropolitan area, who do their work with plans before them, drawing lines here and there, and counting off 2,000 in one place, and 3,000 in another. From beginning to end the work stands condemned. If merely because a Commission has presented it, the House is prepared to accept a Bill when there are a hundred and one anomalies and inequalities in it, when every member after examining it must know that it is inequitable, where shall we get to? If we accept the Bill there must be another rearrangement after a year or two. As soon as the rolls prepared on these proposed boundaries are issued there will be found almost as great discrepancies as exist to-day, when many of the electorates contain over 1,000 electors more than are allotted to them on the boundaries. So I say the Bill ought to be rejected, and that the House will be stultifying itself in accepting it. I admit the impossibility of the present boundaries, with 8,000 electors in one district and 400 in another, but that is no reason why we should accept something else that is unequal, although per-

haps less unequal than the existing plan. There should be a way out, and I hope the House will take that view of it, and indicate to the Commissioners dissatisfaction with their work. As showing that the Commissioners have not complied with the conditions imposed upon them, I remind the House that the Premier, when moving the second reading of the Electoral Districts Bill last session, told us the enrolment of the metropolitan area was 84,000, and that on that basis it would have 14 members. The House accepted that. What has happened? As made up to the 24th May of this year, the roll on which the Commissioners operated showed 83,000 odd electors, or 900 fewer than the number given by the Premier. Yet the Commissioners were able to make 15 seats in the metropolitan area.

The Colonial Secretary: The electors numbered 83,700.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Yes. I am taking the round figures. The Premier also said that there were in the agricultural areas 66,000 electors.

The Premier: I said 65,083.

Hon. P. COLLIER: Here is an official report signed by Mr. Cooke, the Chief Electoral Officer. It shows a difference of only a few hundred. The Premier said that on those figures there would be 22 members representing agricultural electorates. Yet on practically the same figures the Commissioners have been able to make 23 seats. Either the Premier did not understand his Bill of last session—and nobody would accuse him of that—or else the Commissioners have not worked to that Bill as expounded by the Premier; because on a fewer number of voters they accommodate a greater number of members. On those two points alone the Bill ought to be rejected. It is not often that Parliament undertakes the disagreeable task of rearranging the electoral boundaries. We have not had it since 1910. It is not desirable that the boundaries should be rearranged with any frequency. The electors themselves are the only ones to be considered. They get accustomed to certain conditions, and it is not desirable to disturb those conditions, except if be essential in the interests of justice. But if we are going to accept work such as this, we shall have a Redistribution of Seats Bill every second year. I hope the House will reject the Bill.

Mr. TEESDALE (Roebourne) [9.23] I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	23
Noes	12

Majority for .. 11

AYES.

Mr. Angelo	Mr. Money
Mr. Brown	Mr. Pickering
Mr. Carter	Mr. Piesse
Mr. Davies	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Durack	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. George	Mr. Stubbs
Mr. Gibson	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Hickmott	Mr. A. Thomson
Mr. Latham	Mr. J. Thomson
Mr. H. K. Maley	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Mann	Mr. Mullany
Sir James Mitchell	(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Angwin	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Chesson	Mr. McCallum
Mr. Collier	Mr. Troy
Mr. Corboy	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Munroe
Mr. Heron	(Teller.)
Mr. Luty	

Motion thus passed.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 30th August.

Mr. LATHAM (York) [9.27]: I regret that the Premier has not seen fit to bring in some kind of amendment to the Agricultural Bank Act instead of introducing the annual Bill to continue the Industries Assistance Act. If we are to benefit the State, it is time the Industries Assistance Board were wound up. The Premier says he cannot do that, because he requires to have some protection for the accounts of the clients on the board. I believe sufficient protection could be given under an amendment of the Agricultural Bank Act. I am concerned about this because the clients on the board to-day, or most of them, are men in doubtful financial position; and the longer we keep them on the board the more of the State's money will be used without our having any really valuable asset for it, and the greater the difficulty those people will find themselves in when it becomes necessary, as it must, to put them off the Government sustenance. At the same time, while I know a considerable amount of money is being lost through advances furnished under the Industries Assistance Act, it is not so great as some people would have us believe. In another place reference has been made to a loss of a quarter of a million, which we were told might eventually prove to be one million. On this aspect of the board's operations I shall refer to the report of the select committee which inquired into the working of the board. It states—

The total advances made since assistance has been given amounts to £6,101,075. For the year ended 31st March, 1922, the amount was £1,018,085, and from March to the 31st August an additional £396,354 was advanced. The total amount owing to the

board on the 31st August, 1922, was £1,460,941. The amount written off as bad debts totals £48,946.

[*The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.*]

If we went into the whole of the figures and tried to realise on the security the board are holding to-day, I think we would not lose more than another £100,000. While the State might lose that sum, I venture to say the gain to the State has been considerably more. It has enabled the State to collect land rents and Agricultural Bank interest which it would have been impossible to get but for the Industries Assistance Act. I was hopeful that the decentralisation scheme would have proved beneficial, but the powers of the district officers are so limited that, if anything, the scheme has been working to the detriment of the clients. Repeatedly assistance has been sought and the requests have been referred to the district office, sent to Perth and then referred back again, thus delaying considerably the granting of the assistance. There is another thing that would assist the settler: Instead of referring everything to Perth, matters such as the ordering of super should be left in the hands of the local officers. Where the cases are doubtful, it would be advisable to refer them to Perth, but such cases would be few and far between. I would like the Premier to look into the question of contracts let by the I.A.B. for the supply of waggons. One exclusive contract is given to a firm at Fremantle and, during the last summer, the firm were unable to supply the number of waggons ordered by the board. This sort of thing should not be permitted to continue. Last season farmers were leaving their wheat in the paddocks for months waiting for means to cart it into the sidings. I hope the Premier will insist upon only such orders being placed with the firm as they are able to complete at the time, so that farmers shall not be hung up for two or three months waiting for waggons. The type of waggon supplied has not given general satisfaction. The State Implement Works are turning out a very good class of waggon. I do not wish to be a free commission agent for the State works, but the instructions issued by the manager of the I.A.B. are that no orders shall be given to the Implement Works. He does not take into consideration that the applicants may have a credit balance with the board at the time of applying for waggons.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Why has he issued that order?

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The manager of the board will not allow a client to place his order at the Implement Works?

Mr. LATHAM: The instructions are definite that all waggons must be obtained from the one firm at Fremantle, irrespective of whether the client has a credit or not. The applicant is the best judge of the class of waggon he requires, and if he is in credit, he should certainly be able to place his order where he likes.

Mr. Brown: If he is in credit, he should not be on the I.A.B.

Mr. LATHAM: But it is stipulated that he must have £1 for every acre he intends to crop.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Who is the manager of the I.A.B.?

Mr. LATHAM: Mr. Heuston. It is time the Premier investigated the practice of giving these contracts exclusively to one firm, particularly after the experience of last year when they were unable to supply the waggons on order to time. They are turning out the waggons at a cost of £70, whereas a better class of waggon by other firms costs considerably more. The Premier, too, should interview the outside creditors, because I believe a considerable advantage could be gained for the clients by coming to an arrangement with the creditors, who have been waiting for some time for their money. If clients were put off the board to-morrow, the outside creditors would be compelled to step in and realise what they could get, but I believe the Premier could make a very good compromise with these people that would not only relieve the settlers but would place the outside creditors in a much better position than they occupy to-day. They do not know whether they are going to get 1s. or 5s. in the pound, and I believe they would be willing to meet the Premier and adjust these debts on a basis that would be satisfactory to them as well as to the clients. Another question is that of the debts purchased from Harris, Scarfe & Co.

The Premier: That was before my time.

Mr. LATHAM: I am aware of that, but it does not matter how many wrongs were done by the previous Government; it is the duty of the present Government to do what is right. The previous Government thought fit to purchase some of the debts from Harris Scarfe & Co. and the International Harvester Co., and I believe they were purchased at 6s. 8d. in the pound. In the ordinary course that would have been a very good deal, but the method adopted by the Government of the day is a blot on the history of the State. Though these accounts were bought for 6s. 8d. in the pound, the Government are charging the clients 20s. in the pound, plus 7 per cent. of 8 per cent interest on the 20s. When a client comes to get his clearance, he finds himself up against a considerable debt in excess of what he expected. It is a scandalous state of affairs.

The Premier: You have no right to say that.

Mr. LATHAM: Does the Premier want the good payers to pay for the bad payers? It is iniquitous. I do not think he desires that, but that is the result.

Mr. Willcock: They pay only what they owe.

Mr. LATHAM: The Government paid 6s. 8d. in the pound.

Mr. Corboy: Those people originally contracted a 20s. debt, and that is all they are being asked to pay.

Mr. LATHAM: No other trustees would be permitted to do such a thing.

Mr. Willcock: The Government lent the settlers the money.

Mr. LATHAM: They lent them 6s. 8d. in the pound in order to purchase their debts, and now they are charging the clients 20s. plus 8 per cent. interest on the 20s.

Mr. Willcock: They lent them the money to enable them to carry on their business.

Mr. LATHAM: I venture to say no one else acting as trustee for a concern in liquidation would be permitted to do such a thing.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: It is doubtful whether the Government can legally do it.

Mr. LATHAM: But the Government are doing it, and I say it is a scandal.

Mr. Willcock: I think it is a fair proposition.

Mr. LATHAM: I take quite a different view. Those clients who to-day are struggling to do what is right should not be penalised for the men who are not. That is what the Government of the day seem to be doing.

Mr. Money: Those clients are not paying more than they owe.

Mr. LATHAM: They are paying more than was advanced by the Government.

The Premier: No, they are not.

Mr. Money: The contract is with Harris Scarfe & Co. and the International Harvester Co.

Mr. LATHAM: If the hon. member were acting as trustee for my estate, would the Government permit him to do the same thing? The Government would not, and as a trustee he would be placing himself within the law if he purchased my debts at that price and charged me 20s. in the pound plus interest.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: The Act provides that the client can be charged only what was advanced.

Mr. Money: The clients had to pay 20s. in the pound, but were not in a position to do it.

Mr. LATHAM: The advance made on behalf of the clients was 6s. 8d. and not 20s. in the pound; yet they are being charged interest on the 20s. The Government have no right to charge them 20s. in the pound and interest on the 20s.

Mr. Willcock: You want the Government to lose the bad debt and the clients to get the benefit?

Mr. LATHAM: The hon. member wants the man, who is struggling to pay 20s. in the pound, to make up for the man who is not meeting his obligations.

Mr. Willcock: He should pay.

Mr. LATHAM: But the other man should not have to pay for him. I know men who could go to their creditors and compromise. Their creditors are willing to accept 10s. in the pound. Some clients have done this and have obtained their clearance.

Mr. Broun: The advances were made to the clients.

Mr. LATHAM: But the clients should not be charged in excess of what was paid on their behalf.

The Premier: Another place carried a motion stating that any profits made should go to the State.

Mr. LATHAM: Another place does not control the purse of the State. If I quoted some of the things another place has done, the Premier would not agree with me.

The Premier: You may quote all that another place has ever said.

Mr. LATHAM: But the Premier would not agree with me; he remembers what happened last session.

Mr. Willcock: These debts would not have been obtained for 6s. 8d. if the Government had not advanced the money.

Mr. LATHAM: Clients getting their discharge from the board are going to Massey Harris and other firms whose debts were not purchased, and are making compromises of 10s. in the pound. They are getting their clearance, and are not being charged 8 per cent. interest on 20s. in the pound.

Mr. Money: They are making a composition.

Mr. LATHAM: The Government made a composition on behalf of clients with the other firms and have no right to charge those clients on the 20s. I do not know whether they had any legal power to do so, but those firms should have remained as outside creditors.

Mr. Willcock: There was a moratorium, at any rate.

Mr. LATHAM: That had nothing to do with the Industries Assistance Act. If these debts had not been collected, the two firms would have had to wait until the Industries Assistance Act was discontinued or the settler obtained his clearance, whichever happened first. If the Government had not bought these debts, the clients would have been able to get out by paying 10s. in the pound. The Government would lose nothing at all if they charged the clients only what they paid for the debts, namely, 6s. 8d. Even if they charged the clients the full 20s., it would not be so bad as at present when they are charging them interest on the 20s.

Mr. Willcock: I agree that that is rough.

Mr. LATHAM: I hope the Premier will look into this matter and see that the people struggling to get out of the debt of the Government have an opportunity to do so. The Government will not be giving them anything. So long as they pay 20s. in the pound on the money paid for their debts, that is all that should be expected of them. They should not be required to pay on money that was never advanced. I hope the Premier will also investigate the question of winding up the Industries Assistance Board. I am aware that no fresh advances are being made, except to soldiers, but all the advances necessary could be made under the Agricultural Bank Act. It is a very unwise policy to make advances to people for sustenance. It saps their initiative; there is no incentive for them to work. They know that at the end of the year the whole of the profits they make must go to the Government, and al-

though they may be in credit they have almost to beg permission of the board to place their orders where they desire. I regret that the Premier has not been able to bring in an amendment to the Agricultural Bank Act. I hope he will take some notice of the small committees appointed in the agricultural areas to assist the I.A.B.

Mr. WILCOCK: Oh, oh!

Mr. LATHAM: For the hon. member's information, in nine cases out of ten dealt with, the decision of such committees will be in favour of the I.A.B. and the Agricultural Bank authorities. These committees have visited clients; they have been able to judge of the people who cannot make good. It is unwise for the State to carry on such people any longer. That being so, what is the use of going on year after year?

Hon. M. F. Troy: Who visited these farmers?

Mr. LATHAM: Two settlers from the district accompanied by the district inspector.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Did they go on their own?

Mr. LATHAM: The district inspector went with them.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Were they competent judges?

Mr. LATHAM: They were competent to know the value of the improvements and machinery.

Hon. M. F. Troy: Some of them are not.

Mr. LATHAM: Some may not be, but the best men have been appointed to these committees, and they have been approved by the Government.

Hon. M. F. Troy: You do not know who have been appointed.

Mr. LATHAM: They are worth considering. They have given a lot of their time to helping the settlers and the Government. I hope some notice will be taken of their reports. If they do, benefit will result to the farmers and the State generally.

Mr. WILCOCK (Geraldton) [9.45]: For the past six or seven years I have protested against the manner in which this Act has been administered. Every year brings forth fresh ground for complaint. It is iniquitous that two men, who are members of a political organisation, and are interested in the district, should be expected to write down securities and make a fair report on what they see. It is absurd. Fancy two members of a political organisation being asked to do this!

The Premier: They do not.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They do.

The Premier: You do not know the people.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I do.

The Premier: Tell me the names of two of them.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I know them well in my district.

Mr. WILCOCK: These men could be appointed in Mullewa and other places. This is the general procedure in connection with the administration of the Act. The committees can be appointed in various centres to report

on the securities, and the assets and liabilities of the settlers.

Hon. P. Collier: Appointed on the recommendation of the Farmers and Settlers' Association.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And to advise the Government as to reducing liabilities.

Mr. WILCOCK: We have been assured on many occasions that this does not take place, and yet we find it is done.

The Premier: What is that?

Mr. WILCOCK: Committees have been formed on the recommendation of a political organisation to report on the securities of the settlers.

Mr. A. Thomson: They are not appointed by the organisation.

Mr. WILCOCK: They are appointed by a branch of the organisation and their recommendations have been carried out. Is that near enough for the hon. member?

Mr. Latham: It is all to the benefit of the Government. You should see some of their reports.

Mr. WILCOCK: These men are placed in an invidious position. They have to recommend whether a man's sustenance shall be cut down, or his assets written off, and so on.

Mr. Latham: They advise as to whether a man is good enough or not.

Mr. WILCOCK: It is an iniquitous proceeding on the part of the Government to allow such a thing.

Mr. Latham: Do you know anyone better suited to advise the Government?

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Government officials.

Mr. WILCOCK: The Government officials who have to stand up to the Government for their acts. We should not have men, who are chosen because of their popularity with a political organisation. That is not the way to appoint valuers.

Mr. Latham: We appoint our committees differently.

Mr. WILCOCK: Why go outside the Government officials? Banks do not call in private people to make valuations for them.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Westralian Farmers do not allow anyone to do that.

Mr. WILCOCK: I do not know that they need be held up as a pattern.

Mr. Brown: The banks do call in private individuals to make valuations.

Mr. WILCOCK: All sorts of people connected with this political organisation could be appointed. The most serious thing of all is that certain big firms were able to get a much better deal than the ordinary storekeeper was able to get. That is my chief quarrel with the Government over this matter. If there was any reason why the liabilities of the clients of the board should be taken over at all, they should have been taken over altogether.

The Premier: They should not have been taken over.

Mr. WILCOCK: Everyone should have been treated alike, whereas preference was given to some of the big firms because of the

pull they had. That was a scandalous procedure. I do not see why, if certain clients were able to pay 6s. 8d. in the pound to some firms, all their creditors could not have been placed on the same footing. The settlers owed the money and they should pay it back in full, and I do not think they should pay interest.

Mr. Brown: They should pay interest on the 6s. 8d.

Mr. WILLCOCK: Because of the assistance given to them by the Industries Assistance Board, they were able to get into a better financial position, and they should, therefore, pay in full.

Mr. Hickmott: The creditors are not getting it all.

Mr. WILLCOCK: In return for what the State did for them, they should pay up.

Mr. A. Thomson: That is Shylock outdone.

Mr. WILLCOCK: There are some farmers now worth up to £5,000, who would not be worth a shilling to-day but for the board.

Mr. A. Thomson: But such a man has paid all his debts.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The hon. member wants him to pay only 6s. 8d. in the pound. He should pay the lot. It is dishonest not to do so.

Mr. Hickmott: The creditors were willing to take 6s. 8d.

Mr. WILLCOCK: They were willing to take 6s. 8d. for bad debts on which they might have had nothing. They struck an average. There are some men who, if taken individually, would not have been let off with 6s. 8d., though they might have been let off at 15s. in the pound. The Country Party want the Government to collect 6s. 8d. from the good clients and let the country stand the loss upon the others. This means that the farmer who is financial is being let off 13s. 4d. in the pound.

Mr. Money: Which was not intended.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Government should have seen that all the creditors of the clients of the board had the same consideration extended to them. This would have restored business to a greater extent than has been the case during the past five or six years. Many of those who were constantly assisting settlers have now gone to the wall. In my district they have suffered perhaps more than in any other. I know of one man who was worth £8,000 or £9,000 a few years ago, but who, because of the assistance he rendered to clients of the board, and other settlers, has now had to apply for an old age pension. The big firms, however, have got their 6s. 8d., whilst the other creditors have been overlooked. Private capital is in a great measure responsible for the expansion of the agricultural industry. I protest against this Bill being brought down year after year as a temporary measure. It was first introduced in 1914, and we are still re-enacting it. No one expected it would go on all these years. It was brought in as a temporary expedient to

meet circumstances brought about by the drought. We have had no drought like that since, and there is no longer any necessity for the board. We have at least five institutions financing people on the land.

Mr. Brown: The difficulty is to get out without a loss.

Mr. WILLCOCK: We know there will be a loss, and we should cut it. It would be far better to institute a system of rural credit. There are settlers who owe land rents, who have to pay to the Repatriation Department, who are in debt to the Soldier Settlement Scheme, to the Agricultural Bank, and other Government institutions. They have accounts with different departments, and do not know where they are. It takes a certified accountant two or three months to get to the bottom of the financial position of some of the settlers. I have tried in vain to get to the bottom of the accounts of some of the clients of the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank, because their affairs are so interwoven with those of other departments.

Mr. Angelo: We were told of cases of clients of the board who had received clearances, although they owed money to the Agricultural Bank and other Government institutions.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I know that is so. Under a proper system of rural credit, there would be none of this overlapping. A man has to trot round from department to department all for the sake of one account. That is not businesslike.

The Premier: I do not think it can be done in any other way.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I do not often throw bouquets at the Premier, but I am sure that if the Premier sat down and considered this matter for a week, he would evolve a scheme of rural credit satisfactory to the people. It is not beyond his capacity, and he ought to do it for the benefit of the State. Such a reform would save the Government thousands of pounds in duplication of services, and place the system of rural credit on a proper footing. There are people on the Industries Assistance Board who do not know within two or three hundred pounds how they stand.

The Premier: They can find out at any time.

Mr. WILLCOCK: I have tried many times on behalf of people having accounts with the Industries Assistance Board and the board could not get the information for me. The Premier ought to adopt my suggestion. He is in intimate touch with the system of rural credit. He knows more about that subject than any other individual.

The Premier: But you are on the wrong track.

Mr. WILLCOCK: The Premier is the one man, or at all events the one man in the Government, who does know something about the matter. He could save thousands of pounds to the State, and make things far more satisfactory to the people doing business with the Industries Assistance Board, the Agricultural Bank, the Soldier Settlement Scheme, and all

he taxing and rating bodies. This is not something that is sprung on the Premier. Every year we have asked him to do something in this connection. I hope that before the Bill passes the Premier will give an assurance that the committees we have heard so much about will be abolished. They are unwarranted and unnecessary. Further, we should have an assurance that this temporary measure, which has now existed for eight or nine years, will be abolished in favour of a proper system of rural credit under the control of the Agricultural Bank, which would take over the whole business of land settlement.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. A. THOMSON (Kataunung) [10.6]: Like the member for York (Mr. Latham), I regret very much that the Government have not seen fit to bring in amending legislation to deal with the Industries Assistance Board and the Agricultural Bank. The member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) has stated that in his opinion the committees are iniquitous, and that they savour of having been appointed by a political organisation. I reply that the hon. member does not know what he is talking about.

Mr. Willcock: That is easily said.

Hon. P. Collier: It is very convincing.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I can easily prove it.

Mr. Willcock: Proceed to do so.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I do not think the member for Geraldton has any of his constituents, or at least but very few, in the unfortunate position of being on the Industries Assistance Board.

Mr. Willcock: I have a good number.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Not many.

Mr. Willcock: I have a lot of storekeepers with bad accounts.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I am more concerned with men who have given years of their lives to land which will never give them a return. I want to see them get justice, as well as the storekeepers. While quite willing that the storekeepers should receive consideration, I am more concerned about the man on the land, who has been misled, unfortunately for himself. He has been misled by the Government, though quite unintentionally. I am not speaking of the present Government. Such men were placed on land stated to be first-class, but which has never given a crop. In my district some men have worked for 10 years without a return, and there are similar cases in your district, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Some men have had returns and have not paid their rents.

Mr. A. THOMSON: That may be so. There are good and bad in all classes. The member for Geraldton has stated that settlers on the Industries Assistance Board cannot get information as to how much money they owe. I can substantiate that statement. Some of them say they are charged with considerably larger sums as owing to the Government than

they have received. I can give instances of men who, in my district, went out years ago as much as 30 miles from a railway, in anticipation of the construction of a line. They were removed from that land, and took up abandoned farms closer to the settled districts. Thereupon they found that the whole indebtedness on the farms which they had abandoned 30 miles away was transferred to the farms which they were compelled to take up. In addition, they had to assume responsibility for the whole of the indebtedness on the abandoned farms taken up by them. And yet we have members in this House stating that we ought to consider the storekeeper.

The Minister for Agriculture interjected.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The Minister does not know what is taking place in the Government departments. I have here a pass book belonging to a settler in my district, which I am prepared to show to the Minister. I am talking about what I know. My statements are borne out by the bodies who inquired into the subject.

Mr. Corboy: You are quite right. What you state has been done.

Mr. A. THOMSON: What reasonable chance has a man in such a position of making a success of farming? In my district there is a man who has spent 12 years on the land, and Heaven knows he has worked hard enough, but now he has to go off his land to work for a living.

Hon. P. Collier: I know a man who has been at work 50 years, and is still working for his living.

Mr. A. THOMSON: It is much to be regretted.

Hon. P. Collier: He has not been on the land, but he has worked just as hard.

Mr. A. THOMSON: The man I refer to has been compelled to farm under conditions which, if he had been left to his own discretion, would have caused him to refrain from putting in a crop. I do not blame the board, who, under their Act, can only advance money to put in crops. However, if they had given this man sustenance for other purposes, they would have got a satisfactory return. The Government are lacking in their duty to these settlers. They have the reports of dozens of committees. The member for Geraldton took exception to the appointment of the committees, but I say they have done excellent work, work of great value to the State. I had the privilege of seeing a report which had been prepared by a committee in my district, and the recommendations in that report bore out the suggestion of the member for Geraldton, that the Industries Assistance Board should cease to exist, and that the provisions of the Agricultural Bank Act should be so amended as to bring in settlers now on the Industries Assistance Board. I have these men coming to my office and asking, "What are the Government going to do with us?" That is the most important point of all. The men have this huge load of debt hanging upon

their shoulders, and they want to know whether they are to have a fighting chance of sticking to the land on which they have worked so hard for so many years. To-day, if a man abandons a farm under the Agricultural Bank, that farm is thrown open to selection. The property has to be written down, because no man will take it up under its load of indebtedness. I am one of those who maintain that a man who has given nine or ten years of his life to the development of a farm which has not proved all that he, or all that the Government, hoped it would prove, should have the opportunity of carrying on with an abandoned property. For one thing, he must have gained some experience during the years he has expended his energies on the land. By giving such men a chance, the Government will be doing mere justice. I commend the Minister for Agriculture for his action in appointing committees to investigate these matters. The session should not conclude without amending legislation being passed to afford the settlers an opportunity to make good. If we must face a loss in connection with the Industries Assistance Board, we should cut that loss. We are facing a huge loss in connection with the Wyndham Meat Works.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Is that the only freeing works that is losing at the present time?

Mr. A. THOMSON: No.

Hon. W. C. Angwin: Well, why deal with the Wyndham works and not with others?

Mr. A. THOMSON: I wish to illustrate my point. The member for North-East Fremantle (Hon. W. C. Angwin) should not be so tender about the State trading concerns. We are making huge losses and they will have to be written down. The value of the State Implement Works has been written down. We have the example of the Commonwealth Government who wrote down the value of the Commonwealth steamers, in order to give them a reasonable chance of paying. That is what we must face in connection with the I.A.B.

Mr. SPEAKER: That cannot be done under this Bill, which is merely a continuation measure.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I know that, but the Government have practically promised to consider concluding the operations of the Industries Assistance Board. That was one of the recommendations of the select committee last year who were appointed to inquire into the administration of the Industries Assistance Board. A large number of these committees—I know of one at any rate—favour the recommendation of the select committee. One reason for the non-success of settlers has been, to use their own phrase, that “farms cannot be managed from an office chair in Perth.” That is the unfortunate part of the whole business. I regret the Government have not seen fit to bring forward an amending Bill to carry out the recommendations of the select committee. In dealing with the clients of

the board, the select committee stated in their report:

Great difficulty is experienced by clients in making arrangements for cropping when the board ceases to grant further aid. If assistance for this purpose is obtained elsewhere, the board has a lien over the crop. The committee is of opinion that when such clients are allowed to remain on their holdings, the conditions applying to the crop should be similar to those which apply in the case of wool obtained from sheep supplied by private firms, or at least to the proceeds for the amount advanced in connection with the cropping. The evidence given to the committee was to the effect that when aid was refused by the board, time would be required to permit of the further payments to the board being made off the amount previously granted by the board.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is discussing the principles of the parent Act.

Mr. A. THOMSON: That is so. I am endeavouring to show that the Government would have been wise in the interests of the State and, more particularly, of the settlers who are on the Industries Assistance Board, had they brought forward an amending Bill instead of merely one to continue the principal Act. I am not out to protect the interests of any particular section of the community, and I am not out to beat the storekeepers. Evidence was given before the select committee that many of the storekeepers were willing to accept 5s. in the pound. The Government were foolish not to have accepted the offer. I hope the Government will not wait for the whole of the reports to come in from the various committees before giving attention to this question. From the bulk of those already received, from the experience of the Agricultural Bank, and from the experience of the officials of the Industries Assistance Board, the Government know what is necessary. The Premier, the Minister for Agriculture, and all members of Parliament recognise it is only a fair thing to give these men a reasonable chance to make good.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is discussing the principles of the Bill. This is merely a continuation measure. I have already allowed the hon. member considerable latitude.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The question is: Shall the Act be continued or shall it not.

Mr. A. THOMSON: Following on the lines pursued by the member for Geraldton (Mr. Willcock) and the member for York (Mr. Latham), I am showing why the Act should not be continued, and why it should be amended.

Mr. Willcock: You are giving reasons against the Bill.

Mr. A. THOMSON: I do not say I will vote against the Bill, because I have no opinion in the matter. I do not know that the Government led us to believe they would introduce legislation to amend the Agricultural

Bank Act but some of us hoped that it would be done.

Mr. SPEAKER: Unfortunately, the Bill does not indicate that and I cannot allow the hon. member to get right away from the Bill before the Chair.

Mr. A. THOMPSON: I will not disagree with your ruling, but the fact remains I am giving reasons why the parent Act should be amended.

Mr. SPEAKER: The point is whether the Industries Assistance Act shall be continued. It is only a matter of striking out certain words and inserting others. The hon. member can give reasons why the Act should not be continued, but he is not in order in discussing the whole of the ramifications of the Industries Assistance Board.

Mr. A. THOMPSON: I am not doing so. If I were to do that I would keep the House sitting for hours. I have made my protest and I do hope the Government will introduce a Bill to amend the Agricultural Bank Act before the close of the session. As the member for Geraldton has pointed out, we have two departments practically doing the same work.

Mr. Willecock: There are more. There is the soldier settlement scheme in addition.

Mr. A. THOMPSON: In the interests of the State, in the interests of economy, and in the interests of the settlers, amending legislation should be introduced.

On motion by the Minister for Agriculture, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.25 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 5th September, 1923.

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

PETITION—REDISTRIBUTION OF SEATS.

Mr. J. H. SMITH brought up a petition from the electors of Balingup and Mullalyup, in the Nelson electorate, protesting against those areas being transferred from Nelson to the Collier electorate.

Petition received and read.

QUESTION—EAST PERTH CEMETERY.

Mr. HUGHES asked the Minister for Lands: 1, What is the area covered by the land reserved for a cemetery in East Perth? 2, Has the cemetery been closed against further burials? 3, In whom is the control of this land vested? 4, Approximately what percentage of the reserve is occupied by graves?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (for the Minister for Lands) replied: 1, 14 acres 3 roods 12 perches. 2, Yes. 3, 12 acres and 20 perches granted in fee to the various denominations, one-quarter of an acre reserved for the Chinese, 2 acres 1 rood 32 perches is vested in the Crown. 4, Forty per cent.

QUESTION—VETERINARY SURGEONS' BOARD.

Mr. LATHAM asked the Minister for Agriculture: 1, Who are the members of the board appointed under the Veterinary Surgeons Act, 1911? 2, For what term do they hold office? 3, How many meetings were held for the years 1921-22-23? 4, Who deals with the correspondence for the board? 5, What number of new registrations were made in the years 1921, 1922, 1923? 6, What number have been struck off since January, 1921? 7, What are the total number of practitioners registered to date?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE replied: 1, R. E. Weir, M.R.C.V.S. (chairman); John Robson, M.R.C.V.S.; E. A. LeSouef, B.V.Sc.; Edwin Rose; M. Body. 2, Twelve months. 3, 1921, nil; 1922, one; 1923, one. 4, The chairman. 5, 1921, one; 1922, nil; 1923, nil. 6, Nil. 7, Twenty-two practitioners; and there are also nine qualified surgeons in the State.

QUESTIONS (2)—RAILWAYS.

Jarnadup-Denmark Line.

Mr. MANN asked the Minister for Works: Is it the intention of the Government to call tenders for the construction of the two sections of the Jarnadup-Denmark railway?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: Preparations are in progress with that object in view.