

there is no doubt about the type of report that he made. I should say that any person reading it would immediately, and without further hesitation, say that it was so extraordinary that steps should at once be taken to inquire into the position. If it is sufficiently strong to necessitate a Bill being brought down, it is sufficiently strong to have a full and complete inquiry before presenting that Bill to Parliament. There should have been, immediately, a Royal Commission to inquire into all these serious allegations. Mr. Clark asked if he could come and see me, and I was pleased to see him. He again repeated these allegations, almost word for word with what is contained in the report. It does not matter what effect it had on me, but there is the report, and the Government did nothing. Before the Government takes such serious action as to bring down a Bill, it should, at the least, get the evidence on oath and make some inquiries.

Hon. G. Fraser: Would you support a Royal Commission to inquire into trotting affairs?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Most decidedly I would. That is what should have been done before any Bill was presented to this House. For that reason, I shall vote against the Bill.

On motion by Hon. G. Fraser, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.52 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 20th November, 1945.

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

QUESTIONS.

MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

As to Requests by Local Authorities.

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Works:

Have any municipalities or associations of municipalities, and if so, which, asked for the proposed amendments to the Municipal Corporations Act dealing with—

- plural voting;
- meetings to commence before 7 p.m.;
- abolition of interest on overdue rates;
- uniform building by-laws to be prescribed by the Governor;
- cancellation of the discretion of municipalities on respect of the use of wood in the construction of buildings intended to be used as dwelling houses?

The MINISTER replied:

(a) No, and it is not to be expected that members of municipal councils would ask for the abolition of the voting system which has brought about their election to those councils. The Bill proposes to abolish the plural voting system because the Government believes that system is undemocratic giving as it does as many as 16 votes to a number of individual ratepayers in the Perth City Council and as many as eight votes to certain ratepayers in certain other municipal council districts.

(b) No.

(c) The right of municipal councils to charge and recover interest on rates in arrear was expressly taken away by Section 42 of the Municipal Corporations Act Amendment Act, 1938. The consequential amendments in the Bill are in line with that legislation.

(d) Yes—by the Local Government Association, the membership of which embraces the metropolitan municipal councils in addition to the metropolitan road boards.

(e) No. The discretion conferred on councils by Section 311 is limited to the issue of licenses, the operation of which may be restricted to specified periods of time. There is no provision in the Bill purporting to cancel this discretion.

TROTTING CONTROL.

As to Parliamentary Discussion.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON (without notice) asked the Premier:

In view of the Government's association with the report prepared by the Crown Solicitor in connection with the activities of the West Australian Trotting Association, and the subsequent tabling of such report in the Legislative Council, and now the reply published in this morning's "The West Australian" by the secretary of the association, will he give Parliament an early opportunity to discuss this matter?

The PREMIER replied: Parliament will have an opportunity to discuss this matter in considering the Bill already before the Legislative Council.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: If it gets here.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Land Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

2, Marketing of Eggs.

Introduced by the Minister for Works
(for the Minister for Agriculture).

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [4.38] in moving the second reading said: The question of soldier settlement on the land is hardly a new one in this State, nor indeed, is any land settlement as a scheme new in this State. Over the years I have heard many complaints from men who have been put on the land, and during the last 20 years, I should say, the stories of the disabilities of the men on the land emanating from members representing farming areas, have not led one to believe that the land settlement of the past has been very successful. Particularly during the last 20 odd years have I heard at the annual conferences of the Returned Soldiers' League of the many disabilities suffered by soldiers settled on the land after the 1914-1918 war. If we look back over those

years, having some knowledge of the experiences of the men settled at that time, it will be obvious to most if not all of us that our job with the present scheme is to do our utmost to avoid, if possible, the mistakes that were previously made.

We read of the results of those experiments—that is really what they were—and they are very interesting. The number of returned soldiers settled under the scheme following the 1914-18 war was 37,561, of which Western Australia was responsible for settling 5,030. It would be very interesting, if the figures were obtainable—and very accurate figures are not procurable—to find out how many of those returned soldiers are still on the land today. It is estimated by those who should have some knowledge of the matter that the figure is less than one-third. The total loss to Australia of that scheme was £45,000,000 which is a colossal sum—Western Australia's share was £6,000,000—being about £1,200 per head of the population or £1,200 per serviceman settled. That is the actual loss it would be interesting to know the total cost. We have to remember that not only was there loss from a Governmental point of view, but heavy losses of private capital were sustained by settlers, merchants and unsecured creditors; so the loss on that scheme, directly and indirectly, must have been tremendous.

It is not my intention to apportion any blame in any shape or form. That disaster if it can be so called, was brought about by various causes. If we cared to examine them we would find that they could be classified under four headings; namely, over-capitalisation, depression and droughts, increased cost of production, and unsuitability of some of the men. Over-capitalisation I think can be avoided on this occasion. Men who have gone into the question, including the Premier—who has spent a lot of time on the matter as Chairman of the Rural Reconstruction Commission—have endeavoured to ensure, by virtue of the Commonwealth Government's assistance, and the agreement in the Bill now before the House, that such over-capitalisation shall not occur again. If we look back over the years, we shall find that the system at that time was for a block of land to be chosen and cleared mostly by a handsaw or a double handsaw, an axe and a mattock. Some of us, who know something about the bush country in Western

Australia, are aware of how much it costs to clear a few hundred acres of land in the South-West.

So, in addition to the cost of the land, there was the tremendous cost of clearing; and by the time the house and a few other buildings had been erected on the property, the settler found himself faced with a huge capital expenditure. He was told, "That is your block and that is what it cost." He started off with that capitalisation around his neck; and if he stayed long enough, it continued to remain with him, and he had to pay interest annually. It was a heart-break from the inception. The over-capitalisation of the scheme following the 1914-18 war broke more hearts of men who settled on the land than did anything else. On this occasion it is proposed to avoid that. We do not intend to sell the land to the men at all. The whole scheme will be based on a perpetual leasehold. The proposal is that the land will be prepared, whether it be a Crown block of virgin country or a property that has to be reconstructed or a re-purchased estate. It does not matter what type of land it is; it will be prepared for the settler to whom it is to be allocated.

Instead of the valuation of the property plus the cost of preparing the block being a debt around the neck of the holder for the rest of his life, it is proposed not to wait till the man's heart is broken and then write off a sum, but to write it off from the beginning. The Commonwealth will meet three-fifths and the State two-fifths of the difference between the valuation and the cost. The settler will not be interested, except that he will pay a very small fraction as one of the taxpayers of Australia called upon to contribute his share of taxation. He will take up the property with no capitalisation at that juncture at all. The scheme is based on a 999 years' lease, and I think that that will see out most of the settlers! He will go on to a block which contains a house and certain other buildings necessary to the proper conduct of the type of farm he is to carry on, and he will merely pay a rent computed on the productive capacity of the property. That is very different from the scheme that was put into operation after the first world war.

The committees administering the scheme will be composed of experts who will be able to tell us what should be the average

productive capacity of a particular block—whether it be devoted to sheep farming, or sheep and wheat, or dairying, or pigs. The good, bad and indifferent years will be taken into consideration and an average struck, and that will be the man's rent. That rent will not be re-appraised every five or ten years but will last during the 999 years' lease. The settler for the time being will know exactly what he has in front of him in that connection. There is every indication, therefore, that we shall avoid that over-capitalisation which broke nearly every returned soldier's heart after the first world war. Over depressions and droughts we have not very much control. Certainly I think the depression of 1930-33 was man-made, but I do not imagine that some of the men responsible will endeavour to create another depression. Droughts are not man-made, and I do not think we can do very much about them.

Increased cost of production is something that is very difficult to assess, but I can visualise, together with the staff conducting these operations, that cost of production can to a large extent be kept down by getting away from the old pick and shovel or saw and hammer methods and engaging in mechanisation. Mechanisation should keep down the cost of production. During Saturday and Sunday last, I spent two very interesting days. I went, with the manager and two Commissioners of the Rural Bank, to Mt. Rupert, where I saw huge tracts of country under wheat, oats and barley. It was astounding to see the way in which machinery was being used there, with one tractor pulling two harvesters, one behind the other, on those properties. I was told that if I went up there again at the end of the month I would see five tractors pulling 10 harvesters on a 2,000-acre block of wheat. If anything will limit the cost of production, I think that mechanisation and machinery, used by thoroughly trained men, will do so.

The fourth reason put up by the men who have gone into this matter thoroughly is the unsuitability of some of the men who were settled on the land. I think we have all of us friends or people whom we know who went on the land with little or no knowledge of it. Though I have been Minister for Lands only for a short period, I have seen sufficient to convince me that the man going on the land,

with no knowledge of it, is courting disaster. On this occasion we are going to overcome that factor and a Classification Board is already interviewing those who have made applications, in order to find out whether they are suitable. I will deal with the figures in that regard shortly. I am satisfied that when that board has finished its investigations it will have obtained a sufficient number of men with the requisite knowledge—or with the knowledge yet to be acquired—to insure against putting unsuitable men on unsuitable blocks, as was the case in the past in so many instances.

The Premier, who was chairman of the Commonwealth Rural Reconstruction Commission, travelled with that commission over an immense part of Australia. That commission brought out four reports, No. 2 of which deals with soldier settlement. I am not going to deal at length with that report, but it is a very interesting document. It is perhaps unfortunate that that report was not followed in its entirety in this scheme. However, at the Premiers' Conferences of 1944 and 1945 the present agreement, which is part of this Bill, was based mainly on that report of the commission. Since then we have had our own men, men such as Mr. Fyfe, meeting the representatives of South Australia and Tasmania, which States are parties to this agreement, in Adelaide in February of this year. This scheme is to be based on perpetual leasehold, on a 999-years' lease. In a country where freehold has always been looked on as the right of every man who owns a house or farm, this provision for perpetual leasehold may be debatable, but at the same time it is a decision of the Commonwealth Government, and is part and parcel of this Bill. Personally, I agree with it.

I have not asked the Government for its views on the question, because this is the ratification of something that was done in the Commonwealth Parliament. I have always looked on the freehold in land as something of a snare and a delusion. It would be interesting to see the figures showing how many men, returned soldiers and others, who went on the land either under the group settlement scheme or otherwise, own the blocks they are living on. I think it would be a very small percentage and that Elder Smith's, Dalgety's, the Associated

Banks or the Rural Bank own most of the farms and that the farmers have to pay a fair amount of interest to those owners. I do not think there can be a great deal of argument on the merits of the 999-years' lease as compared with freehold, particularly where there is to be no periodical re-appraisal, which means a great deal to the settler. Whilst this clause may cause some debate, I would point out that it makes provision for a decision that has been reached, and that no alteration is likely to take place in it. That is not a threat, but we are ratifying a Bill that has been passed by the Commonwealth Parliament.

The more I have heard, when listening to the Director talking, the more convinced I have become that he has converted more to the idea of leasehold than would ever have been converted by having to work it out for themselves. The tenure, as I have said, is to be a perpetual lease. One of the first questions that will be asked is as to what is to happen to the house and other structural improvements put on the farm. The situation will be different in the various States concerned, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia. I understand that in Tasmania the Government is not going to sell any of the structural improvements, but is going to lease the lot to the farmer. In South Australia it is likely to be optional, and in this State it is proposed to make it optional also. If the settler desires to purchase the house and structural improvements over a long period, we shall be quite agreeable to that.

I believe it would be in the best interests of the Commonwealth and the State, who will own the land and the structural improvements until they are paid for, to allow the settler to acquire an equity because of human nature being what it is, if a man has no equity in the buildings, he is likely just to let them go. In that case he would perhaps not think of putting a coat of paint on the buildings or of driving in a few nails when necessary, but if he has an equity in those structures he will take a great deal more interest in them. It is proposed, in this State, that that will be according to the usual procedure—or something of that sort—but here we have no usual procedure in that regard. We will therefore have to start a practice of our own, which will be to make

t optional to the settler to buy or lease the structural improvements.

Mr. Seward: If the settler's health breaks down and he has to leave the farm, what will become of his equity?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It will be just the same as mine was when I had a worker's home after the 1914-18 war. If my health had broken down, what I had paid on the home—not on the land—would have been my equity.

Mr. Seward: Is any power to be provided to force the purchaser to pay the amount of that equity? The purchaser may not give that amount.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Surely we will know what the house cost to build, and what other structural improvements cost. They will be valued.

Mr. Seward: You say they will be valued?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, there will be a committee to deal with that sort of thing. We will not leave it to anybody else. We have made provision, even where a dispute takes place, for it to be settled. I am only dealing now with structural improvements. The man concerned will have to buy his own stock and plant, but he will be financed and will be able to buy them over a long period. It is obvious that there is a difference between stock and plant and buildings, because the structural improvements can be kept up to date and in good order. In Western Australia we propose to inaugurate a practice that has not prevailed hitherto, and so it will be optional for a soldier settler to buy or lease the structural improvements on his block. Tasmania is going to sell them but here, as we have a free hand under the agreement and have no "usual practice" already established, we are making it optional.

As members will appreciate, the first year a settler is on his block will be a crucial one for him. When he goes on his block, he will naturally know what rent he will have to pay, and will know the conditions. For the first year he will pay no rent, so from that standpoint he will have no worry. He will naturally require to have money advanced to him in order to enable him to buy stock and other requirements, particularly if he is to go in for structural improvements, but during the first

year he will have no interest to pay on the money so advanced. For that period he will naturally have to obtain sustenance. Thus a returned soldier settler will be in the happy position when he goes on the land of knowing just what his position will be during the first year. If he is a married man—we hope most of them will be—naturally he will require the wherewithal to maintain his wife and family during the early stages, and therefore provision has been made for the payment of sustenance. Members will be pleased to know that the Commonwealth Government will be responsible in that regard.

Mr. Berry: Has it been decided what rate of sustenance will be paid?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. A flat rate could not be fixed. Some men may be single, but others may be married and have five or six children. In the circumstances no flat rate could possibly be fixed. That phase will be in the hands of a very fine committee.

Mr. Doney: Will any sustenance so provided be a grant, or will it be a charge against the land?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Sustenance will be part and parcel of the scheme of rehabilitation and the establishment of the soldier settler on his block. The Commonwealth Government will accept the financial responsibility for these concessions. Plant and stock will have to be bought and, as I have already pointed out, that is already provided for. In these matters the State's financial responsibility will be relatively small. The responsibility will be that of the Commonwealth. I have argued all along that that phase is a Commonwealth responsibility and it is for the Commonwealth to look after the returned soldiers, their placement on the land and the provision of plant and so on for the job. I have held that opinion for many years and have no ground for altering it. As I say, the Commonwealth Government has to a large extent accepted the financial responsibility in that regard but, of course, the State owns the land. That will still be the position unless we hand it over lock, stock and barrel, but the member for Nedlands I am sure would not agree to that. Members will see that that particular phase is dealt with to a large extent in the agreement.

Some criticism has been indulged in with regard to the progress in connection with soldier settlement to date in this State. Notwithstanding anything that may have been stated outside the House—I am very pleased to be able to admit that inside there has been no destructive or condemnatory criticism of soldier settlement matters to date—I wish very definitely to pay a tribute to the Premier, who was my predecessor in the ministerial control of the Lands Department, and the staff he gathered about him in that department to take this matter in hand, and particularly do I commend them for the way they anticipated the terms of the agreement, which I am now placing before the House. I greatly appreciate the manner in which preparations were put in hand despite the difficulties regarding essential personnel. I am referring to the men and women who were drafted into the several branches of the Fighting Services during the war period. Some of those essential officers were valuers and surveyors. Their services were particularly essential seeing that we were embarking upon the opening up of new estates and re-valuing holdings that had been allowed to revert to a state of Nature. Those men were in the Forces and were mainly employed in surveying and mapping for our Allies and our own Armed Forces.

The position regarding valuers and surveyors reminded me of the lady who wired from Peak Hill, 800 miles away from Perth, for a perfectly sober kitchenman. It was during the war years when manpower difficulties were extreme, and the reply that she received was, "Perfectly sober kitchenman unknown quantity."

Mr. Leahy: He would be—in Peak Hill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes. At that time surveyors and valuers, with their respective staffs, were very difficult to obtain. We did our best in an endeavour to get such men out of the Armed Forces. We did some racing around and got as many men as we could and sent them out to get on with the clearing, following upon which there was the necessity to deal with the surveys. I am not advancing that as an excuse for any so-called delay, but am merely stating the facts. That was the position particularly during the last three years of the war period. It will be seen then that any delay that has taken place was due to causes over which we had little

or no control. On the other hand, the application displayed and the work done in respect by Mr. Fyfe and his staff are to be commended. Once one got to know something about it one appreciated that it was rather astounding. Here we are a little more than three months after the cessation of hostilities, and the position is rapidly improving! If we have regard to the organisation, the staffing and the preparatory work carried out in other directions we can well be amazed.

An increasing number of men are being employed in Perth and on the farms. They are not being obtained half as fast as we would like, but those that we have been able to secure are being employed in Perth on the administrative staff and in the country as well. Anyone familiar with the Treasury Buildings will know that the staff of the Wyndham Meat Works have vacated the portion they occupied and the office accommodation rendered available is being constructed and reconditioned and will be occupied to a large extent by the staff of the Soldier Settlement Branch of the Lands Department. As more men become available they will be employed. During the year £120,000 is being spent by the State on the purchase of private land and the reconditioning of reverted Rural Bank holdings. That relates to some of the work that has been particularly hampered through the insufficiency of valuers and surveyors.

As I mentioned earlier, plant must play an important part in the opening up of these areas if we are to accomplish the task at a reasonable cost. With that end in view the Commonwealth and the State, by way of advertisements, telegrams and other directions, have endeavoured to secure bulldozers, tractors and power saws, the essentials for carrying out this particular work. Another difficulty has been to obtain a supply of suitable motor vehicles. As a matter of fact, they are not obtainable, though I notice that some are to be sold in Darwin. I do not know how, if we purchased them there, we could get them down.

Mr. Seward: You might find that they were not worth buying if you went up there to make purchases.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That is so. At any rate, that seems the nearest approach to the possibility of securing suitable motor vehicles. I understand that

ome are now coming forward in small numbers. Preliminary arrangements have been made with the Agricultural Department for the establishment of machinery pools wherever practicable. We believe that by the application of the knowledge gained by officials of that department, the establishment of machinery pools would enable us to secure a greater share and priority in connection with what vehicles are procurable than would be possible otherwise. Then again the Controller of the Government Stores Department is collecting plant and equipment in anticipation of the employment of large numbers of men in the reparation of farms.

Seeing that we have been so pushed for men, members will realise the extent to which that has gone when I tell them that we have been offered, and have accepted, the services of 200 prisoners of war. They will be ready to start work within the next few weeks. The huts are nearly ready for them and those men will then be engaged in clearing reverted holdings and in undertaking other necessary work. It is unfortunate that we had to resort to the employment of prisoners of war because other men were not available.

Mr. Triat: They will not make work more scarce.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, and as other men become available the prisoners of war will be dispensed with. We have eight civilian gangs out and we will increase the number of men employed in that direction as they are released from the Services. As a matter of fact, we are attempting to secure 500 ex-servicemen for the preparation of farms within the next six months. Just whether we will be able to induce those men to go into the country is another question. Although I have not discussed this phase with the soldier settlement staff, my personal feeling is that it would be to the benefit of ex-servicemen if they were to participate in this work which, although hard, would accustom them to the land and clearing methods. We are anxious to get 500 men for that work within the next few months. As long as the men are able to do the work, that is the main thing.

The Land Purchase Board, which was established under the State legislation, includes four returned soldiers—although that does not count with the Minister!

That board is actively engaged in giving consideration to the properties offered for purchase, several hundred of which have already been recorded. Of those, 116 have been considered to date and all the available valuers and inspectors are out valuing and inspecting suitable properties. The board is concentrating on the purchase of one-man farms first, and then will deal with subdivisional propositions. There seems to be a greater demand for one-man farms and this comes particularly from lads who want blocks near their parents' holdings or from others who may desire to have particular blocks. For that reason we are concentrating on one-man farms. It is expected that 25 private areas will be inspected over the period I have mentioned and will be submitted to Canberra at an early date. Before we can purchase an estate through the Commonwealth, the area has to be surveyed and valued and recommended to the Commonwealth for purchase. The Commonwealth has to review the matter and finally agree to the purchase. At present 25 private holdings which have been recommended for purchase are before the authorities at Canberra.

The programme of work provides that if men, materials and plant can be obtained and the Commonwealth Government approves—it is the Commonwealth Government that has finally to approve—at least 500 farms will be prepared within a year. That will give members an indication of what the officials have in mind and what they are endeavouring to do. The objective is to provide 3,000 farms if the demand is sufficient. If we can get 3,000 blocks for suitable men who can meet with the requirements of the Classification Board, that will be the objective. The position regarding soil classification is rather interesting. At present about 30,000,000 acres of private land has been classified by the Valuation Branch of the Taxation Department, the Department of Lands and Surveys and the Rural Bank. In addition, we can say that practically all the Crown land in the agricultural areas is also classified from that standpoint.

I intend to ask members opposite to give the Government all the assistance they possibly can in this matter. I know they are ready with their assistance at any time, but here is something in which they can do a great deal to help the Government. It has been suggested that the road boards be re-

requested each to appoint a committee of five members, including an R.S.L. representative. We will ask these committees to act in an advisory capacity for the purpose of selecting properties where men can receive training, as the classification board is now finding that some of the men have had sufficient farming experience, that others have had a certain amount of farming experience, but require still more, and that others again require more experience even than those in the second category I have mentioned. We have to find places where these men can be trained. Every hon. member, particularly members opposite, will materially assist the scheme if they can induce some good farmer, with an up-to-date farm, to undertake to train these men.

Mr. Watts: You hurry up the announcement as to what assistance towards their maintenance will be given to the farmers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think the Leader of the Opposition need worry one bit about that. The farmers will lose nothing by undertaking the training of these partially experienced men, as the Commonwealth Government will, under the Rehabilitation and Re-employment Scheme, see to that matter. We need not worry our heads about it. I appeal to hon. members opposite that when they return to their constituencies they look around and pick out properties and talk to the farmers about this scheme. I talked to one on Saturday, Mr. Smart. He said he would undertake to train three or four men; and that he would do so with a great deal of pleasure. The classes of work these men will be taking up cover sheep and wheat, wheat alone, dairying and so on. I am sure that members generally can help a great deal, if they know of decent farms and good farmers, to induce the farmers to train these men to become efficient at their work. I would like to see a couple of members, like the member for Murray-Wellington—

Mr. Leslie: Why are you approaching the secretaries of the road boards instead of the secretaries of the sub-branches of the R.S.L.?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We are approaching the road board secretaries because we think they are the right people, who can do the work quickly. The sub-branches of the R.S.L. only meet once a month, whereas the road board secretaries are on the job all the time. It is not a ques-

tion of ignoring the sub-branches of the R.S.L. Everybody in the district knows the secretary of a road board; people are more likely to come in contact with him than with the secretary of the sub-branch of the R.S.L., which meets once a month and the secretary of which is probably ten miles away from the town. I have known the sub-branches of the R.S.L. for the last 24 years.

Mr. Leslie: You would get some enthusiasm from them, not from a public servant.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not want to be told about enthusiasm. I have just come away from a conference dealing with an invalid home for old soldiers; and the only enthusiasm shown there was not by the sub-branches of the R.S.L., but by the State Department and the Minister for Lands. We have our £2,500 towards the project, but the sub-branches have nothing like that. The hon. member should not try to break me up. Mr. Speaker, you should protect me. We have done what we believe to be the right thing. I believe that in numerous cases the secretary of the road board will be a returned soldier and he certainly will be able to get into touch with the class of people with whom the hon. member desires to get into touch.

Mr. McLarty: Very often the chairman, and also the members of the board, are returned soldiers, too.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Let me say that there was no intention whatever of ignoring in any way the R.S.L., because we specifically ask that there should be included a representative of the R.S.L. I can visualise that an advisory board of five members will probably include four returned soldiers.

Mr. Leslie: I can visualise some that would not. I know of some.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Is that so?

Mr. Leslie: Yes.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Nevertheless, I think they would still be fair.

Mr. Leslie: I do not.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member has a very poor opinion of other than returned soldiers.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will address the Chair.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I apologise! The hon. member had me mesmerised and coaxed me away from my subject. As I was saying, great progress is being made in listing farms for employment of ex-servicemen, to be known as approved farms. We can still do with all the advice and assistance on this matter that we can obtain from Opposition members. As I pointed out to the Leader of the Opposition a moment ago, the Commonwealth will be assisting with part payment of wages. With regard to rural training, arrangements for intensive courses of training and advice by extension officers of the Department of Agriculture to assist in the education of trainees are being made by Mr. Davenport, the Deputy Co-ordinator of Rural Training. On instructions from the Government, the Under Secretary for Agriculture has for a considerable period been buying heifers and now has about 800 of them, which are being held for the settlement scheme for ex-servicemen. We have a proposal for 50 dairy farms and 15 sheep and wheat farms, with full particulars of valuations and estimates. These have been discussed with Mr. McLaren, the Commonwealth Director of Land Settlement, and final details will be sent to Canberra for approval at an early date.

Mr. Leslie: Are those places already developed?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If not, they are in course of development. They will be ready when the settler is ready. These are part of No. 1 project, which is to include 300 dairy and 100 sheep and wheat farms, all of which were reverted Rural Bank holdings; all these properties will be submitted as soon as the vast amount of detail work can be completed. There has been some talk, as well as notices in the Press—I have seen it in the "Listening Post"—and I presume that is part of the mighty Press—about arrangements made for sales of large properties not fully developed and suitable for subdivision for war service land settlement, to be held up pending decision as to purchase or resumption by the Crown.

We have first to satisfy ourselves whether these properties will be suitable for soldier settlement; if they are considered suitable, they will be taken up by the Crown and will not be sold to other people. That is a matter upon which we have been most insistent.

We are getting great help from all the departments, which are putting their shoulders to the wheel. They are particularly interested in this soldier settlement scheme and are anxious that it shall be successful. The Director of Works has been helping with guidance on engineering aspects of settlement, water supplies, heavy plant, etc., whilst the Chief Mechanical Engineer is endeavouring to get heavy plant, motor vehicles, etc., for the scheme. The Principal Architect has his officers employed full-time on the planning and costing of houses on farms. His officers are not only planning and costing, but are touring the country to find out just what can be done.

Unlike the soldier settler after the 1914-18 war, the returned soldier from this war will have a home when he takes up his holding. The Commissioner of Main Roads is co-operating in the planning of main and subsidiary road systems in settlement areas. Engineer Grace and Field Superintendent Casselton were recently at Northcliffe on this work. There will be no further delay on that score. The Rural and Industries Bank is concentrating on the repricing of blocks for offer for war service land settlement, and is assisting with classifications, valuations and office data. Experts of the Department of Agriculture are assisting with field inspections and reports on soils, productivity, carrying capacities, salinity, etc. The Repatriation Department has granted a number of re-establishment loans up to £250 for ex-service men.

The Ministry of Post-War Reconstruction here, under the Chief Administration Officer, Mr. R. A. Wood, has preliminary arrangements for re-establishment well in hand. I regret that the member for Toodyay is absent for the moment, because the other night we had a discussion upon forestry versus lands. I now wish him to know that the Forests Department is examining areas in order to ascertain whether any land can be released from forest reserves for settlement. The Department is making arrangements for the removal of timber from certain Crown Lands in accordance with an agreed priority. The Deputy Conservator of Forests is busy looking into these matters. The C.S.I.R., in co-operation with surveyors of the Surveyor-General's staff, has carried out extensive soil surveys in the Lower Black-

wood and Margaret areas. It is to continue this work on other areas between those localities and the Great Southern Railway. The Surveyor-General and divisional surveyors, together with the Chief Draftsman, are assisting with classifications, valuations, surveys, maps and plans. I have spoken of a classification committee. This committee comprises five members, three of whom are returned soldiers—

Mr. Leslie: But only one representative.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It does not matter how they are appointed. They are three returned soldiers.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Does the hon. member think the R.S.L. is entitled to five representatives?

Mr. Leslie: I did not say that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister will address the Chair.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I say again, through you, Mr. Speaker, that the committee consists of five members, three of whom are returned soldiers. From the argument put forward by the hon. member, we might be led to believe that the only people who would be likely to do anything for the returned soldiers are the direct representatives of the returned soldiers. I point out to the hon. member that I am not a representative of the R.S.L., but the Minister, and I venture to say that what small ability I have, as well as all the energy I have, is being used for the advancement of the returned soldier, not because I am a member of the R.S.L., but because I believe in the principle.

Mr. Leslie: I have made that point clear.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No. It is as clear as mud! To get back to the classification committee, the members are working on a full-time basis interviewing ex-servicemen and their wives. They have arrived at the conclusion that it is necessary to interview the wives, because some women may not wish to remain on the land. The committee is making good progress with the classification of the men into three main classes, namely—

Suitable and sufficiently experienced.

Suitable but requiring rural training.

Unsuitable for farming.

The committee is now visiting main country centres. Up to the 12th November, 304 ex-servicemen were interviewed. Of these 60 proved to be suitable and sufficiently experienced; 119 were suitable, but required a short period of intensive training; 106 were suitable, but required practical training on approved farms; while 19 were unsuitable for farming. I think it remarkable that only 19 out of 304 men should prove to be unsuitable. There is nothing soft about the men. The committee is determined to find the most suitable men and then to find the most suitable land for them. The Commonwealth Director of War Service Land Settlement and Director of Research visited this State a few weeks ago, when the war service land settlement plans outlined were discussed and provisional approval given to them. That approval was given by the departments in anticipation of the agreement.

In all the circumstances, I feel that the officers have done a particularly good job considering that they had no resolutions to work upon, but simply went ahead under Government instructions, anticipating what the agreement would provide. To a very large extent, they are right. May I briefly deal with the agreement? I do not propose to deal with it clause by clause; it contains many clauses, and I think that is a job for the Committee stage. Briefly, Tasmania, South Australia and Western Australia are agent States for the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth finances the scheme. The agreement is based on the fact that we are really agents for the Commonwealth. What, in my opinion, is most important is that it is part of the re-establishment and rehabilitation of returned service personnel of the 1939-45 war, and that is just what it should be. I have always held, and I repeat, that the re-establishment of returned soldiers is a Commonwealth job.

With Commonwealth approval, men, materials and plant will be obtained, and if we can do that we shall have 500 farms ready in the first year, with the ultimate objective of 3,000 farms, if the demand is sufficient. If there is not a sufficient demand we shall sell them to men who are not returned soldiers. It is not necessary for me to go over the perpetual basis again because I have already explained that. I look upon this agreement as being the found-

dation of what I hope and feel will be a successful land settlement scheme. I do not know whether all members have read the report of the commission of which the Premier was chairman, but one paragraph of it, dealing with soldier settlement, rather appealed to me. I have altered this to suit this scheme, but I have taken the principle from the report of the Premier.

Mr. Seward: The Premier accepted it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: He has to put up with it now that I am here. I have taken the essential part of this paragraph and applied it to the scheme, and it was applied to the scheme on which this one is based. This paragraph is as follows:—

The scheme set out is a liberal one. It will naturally not be successful unless the settlers appreciate this fact and play their part loyally. The Government is confident that they will do so, but as is natural amongst all bodies of people, there will be some who are less conscientious than others and who will not abide by the conditions. In order to deal with these the Government has inserted safeguards wherever possible so that public moneys shall not be wasted on those who, by their actions, prove themselves unworthy of assistance.

Boiled down, those lines describe just what this scheme is going to be, successful or otherwise. If the men placed on the land do their share loyally, then I am satisfied that the Governments, both Commonwealth and State, will see them through. No doubt the agreement, which is the Bill, will be open to criticism. All I ask is that whatever contributions are offered by members will be constructive criticism rather than destructive because, after all, we all have the one object, and that is to do the best we can for the returned soldiers.

Mr. McDonald: Can we alter the agreement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The first clause states that it does not come into operation until approved by the State Parliament. If there is much alteration it will have to go back to the Commonwealth Government, which has already passed it, and I presume, being legislation, it will have to be re-enacted or amended in some way in the Commonwealth Parliament, and in the meantime we will again be held up.

Mr. Abbott: The same old tale; again we are given no opportunity.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no "same old tale" about it. We have accepted the responsibility for this State to act as agent for the Commonwealth. I have stated that time after time during the last hour or so.

Mr. Abbott: How can we offer constructive suggestions?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will talk to the hon. member in Committee. I was going to say to the member for West Perth who, being a learned counsel, will appreciate the point, that if there is much alteration to it we will be held up and we will not be able to blame the Commonwealth Government.

Mr. Doney: Will there be an opportunity to amend the agreement?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Bill will go through the Chamber in Committee just the same as would any other Bill. An amendment is part and parcel of a Bill.

The Premier: Read Clause 2.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Clause 2 is very definite, and states that the Bill does not become law until passed by this House. I am hopeful that there will not be any great hold-up because of amendments here.

Mr. Seward: What about paragraph (b) dealing with eligible persons?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I cannot deal with clauses or paragraphs at this stage. There is just one other matter with which I wish to deal, and that is the question of whether this scheme is to be come a political football or not. I am pleased to say, as I stated earlier, that it has not become so yet.

Mr. Doney: We give an assurance—

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It has been stated that a couple of members outside the House have already kicked off the ball. If it is going to be a political football, I say, without threatening, that I propose to don a guernsey, and I shall play in the ruck. We will have some fun.

Mr. Doney: You need not have mentioned that.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Two members have already so used it.

Mr. Doney: I do not know who they are.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I will tell the hon. member secretly, because I do not use this place, under the cloak of privilege, to mention names. I said that they were

not members of this House. So far as this particular part of the scheme is concerned, the Government is not going to be stampeded into doing anything foolish. Neither will the Government allow, ask, or expect the members of the staff doing the job to be stampeded. We want the best scheme possible, and in order to get it we may have to hasten slowly. It is an easy matter to endeavour to bring pressure to bear on Governments so that they rush into things. We saw a Government rush into the 1914-18 scheme and into the group settlement scheme which has cost Western Australia millions of money. I have no desire to be associated with any such scheme. I am hoping that I will live long enough to know that I was associated with a successful scheme of land settlement. In our Director General, Mr. Fyfe, we have a man who is a ball of energy and has wonderful capacity. If he and his staff are given the opportunity the soldiers of today will prove by results that the foundation of the scheme, which I am endeavouring to lay tonight, will be well and truly laid. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Seward, debate adjourned.

BILL—WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT (LAND ACT APPLICATION).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [5.39] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill, and I hope to get rid of it very quickly. If members read the heading they will see that it is—

to provide for the application and modification of the provisions of the Land Act, 1933-1939, for the implementation of the agreement between the Commonwealth and the State in relation to War Service Land Settlement.

The Bill is to be read in conjunction with the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Bill, which I have just introduced, and the Land Act, 1933-1939. The reason for this Bill is that there is no provision in the Land Act to lease land on a perpetual basis. Rather than amend the Land Act for the purpose of perpetual leaseholding, we thought it was better to amend the Act in such a way that it is supplementary to the Bill I have introduced, and, naturally, tied

up with that Bill. Perpetual leasehold will be used under the Land Act only for the purposes of soldier settlement. This Bill provides—

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in the Land Act, it shall be lawful for the Governor to grant leases of land for the term of nine hundred and ninety-nine years.

The whole thing is, therefore, completely tied up, and we can use this provision of the Act—if it becomes an Act—only for the purposes of leasing land for 999 years. That is all the Bill contains. It gives the Governor the right to use the land in that way and sets out that we can, for the purposes of soldier settlement, lease land for the term I have mentioned. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Seward, debate adjourned.

BILL—LEGAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned without amendment.

BILL—SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to amendment No. 1 made by the Assembly, but had disagreed to No. 2.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 15th November.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [5.43]: I have been disagreeably surprised at the attitude of several members towards the activities of councils and local governing bodies. During debates on matters appertaining to local government, they have expressed these sentiments very freely. I would like, on behalf of those people who work in the interests of the whole community, to say that they are doing valuable work. They do not make laws, but administer legislation brought down in this and other places. They have in their charge, under the supreme body, the health of the people, and sometimes, because of their by-laws regarding building activities, they have the happiness of people in their hands. I am leading up to this that

in this Bill neither the Perth City Council nor any member of it was invited to give an opinion to the Minister before he introduced this measure. A sporting body lately had the advantage of the help of a committee. It was consulted and thereby the Bill in question will be considered in the light of the experience of those people who have been intimately connected with that sport. The same privilege should have been extended to the municipal councils and local governing bodies.

That part of the Bill which proposes to extend the period of office for the Lord Mayor to two years is a good one, but the method of selecting Lord Mayors or Mayors, even if the period is two years, is not ideal. I think holders of that office should be elected by the municipal council members just as road boards elect their chairman. The members of a road board are elected by the ratepayers of the district and at their first meeting the members of the board elect their chairman. That system is followed in most municipal councils in Australia and in a great majority of councils in England. After an election members of the London County Council elect their Lord Mayor. They are thus enabled to judge the qualities, capabilities and experience of the man who will be the head of civic affairs. When it is a matter of electing a Mayor or Lord Mayor for one year, we may choose a man who has no experience whatever in local government affairs. Perhaps the man is elected to the position of mayor who can spend most money in advertising. When he takes office he is certainly found not to be the best man to guide the destinies of that particular council. We had that experience many years ago. The people of this State elected a mayor, and shortly after we had some Royal visitors to Perth. Before we could receive those visitors we had to ask the mayor to resign and this he did. That is an instance of what happens when a mayor is elected.

The Minister for Works: What was the matter with him?

Mr. READ: I will tell the Minister later on.

The Minister for Works: Did he drop his sitches?

Mr. READ: The question of plural voting is a vexed one. The system of plural voting is operating in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Hobart, based on the valuation of properties. In Sydney there is a system whereby not only the tenant but the landlord also has a vote for the property. If a man owns more than one property he must nominate the ward in which he intends to vote. The one place where I think there is single voting, where the principle of one person one vote is followed, is Brisbane. I think people had rather an unhappy experience in that city. A town hall costing £1,000,000 was erected there, and for many years the revenue of Brisbane had to be earmarked to pay off the amount. The property of the individual or landowner is the security for the municipal loans. If a municipality raises a loan for purposes of improvement, it is certainly also for the improvement of the properties that are owned in the area. Property therefore is the security for the repayment of the loan, and the owners have to pay an advanced rate in order to provide interest and sinking fund on the money borrowed.

Another matter dealing with plural voting is that it is not altogether a question of the number of votes that one individual has but of the number of votes that the individual casts. Statistics show that at elections the figures are very poor. It is very difficult to get ratepayers to exercise the franchise no matter how many votes they possess. In my long experience of civic elections I have found that it is very rare to get one landowner to vote in two wards, even though he may have 16 votes.

Mr. Styants: He would have the right to use them.

Mr. READ: Yes. The remedy for that state of affairs is the same as in the case of other forms of voting. If we do not make voting compulsory, on-one will take any interest in what is going on in a municipality. Even when the private individual is given the franchise his first consideration is his own interest and convenience. If it is not convenient for him to go to the poll he refrains from going, unless he goes because of the fear of being fined £2 for not recording his vote. If voting were made compulsory in municipal elections we would probably find the same thing would occur. I have a

few figures showing the number of votes cast in the last two or three elections for the Perth City Council. For the South Ward an extraordinary election for councillor was held on the 23rd June, 1945. The number of ratepayers on the roll was 1,566 and only 359 voted.

In the case of the Victoria Park ward an election for councillor on the 3rd January, 1945, resulted in 1,478 votes being cast out of a total number available of 5,847, and yet there were five candidates in that election. The interest taken was certainly not great. On the occasion of the annual election on the 25th November, 1944, for the Lord Mayor, 6,760 votes were cast out of a total number of persons on the roll of 26,450. In the case of the North Ward, an election for councillor brought forth 721 votes out of a total of 2,313. Another election in the Victoria Park ward showed that 952 persons voted out of a total of 5,847. These figures indicate that no matter how far back we go in elections of this kind, we find that very little interest is taken in them. If plural voting were instituted here I do not think the position would be greatly affected. The question of night meetings is also a vexed one. The matter has been before this Chamber on other occasions, I understand, and it is proposed by this Bill to make that principle apply in the case of all municipal councils. It would not be workable with the larger municipalities, particularly in the capital cities where a great volume of work has to be undertaken. That work could not be done at night.

In the case of the Perth municipality, I point out that we are administering the civic affairs of about one-third of the population of the State. Most of the work is done by committees, of which there are six. On four of those committees there are six members and on the other two there are five. Sometimes there are so many committees meeting that we have two in an afternoon. Each committee usually sits for two hours at least, and we therefore could not possibly do the work at night. We require officers to attend these meetings and they also have to do their work in the daytime. If they were obliged to work at night as well that would be detrimental to the officers. It would also lead to greater expense. According to the award

under which the municipal officers work the City Treasurer estimates that the extra cost consequent upon night meetings would be £652 per annum. Under the present arrangements that cost is saved to the ratepayers. It is contended, I think, by the Minister that night meetings of municipal councils would enable workers who have to go on shift during the day to attend night meetings. That would be so in the case of small municipal councils or road boards but not so in the case of Perth.

No man who has to work all day could attend night meetings of any length and carry out municipal duties. In no municipal election that I am aware of have day sittings caused nominations to be withheld on the part of working men in any of the wards with which I have been connected. On four occasions I have had to contest elections against men who were working in the daytime and would therefore not be able to attend committee meetings even if they were elected. In the past we have had some very brilliant men serving the ratepayers of Perth in an honorary capacity. Their knowledge and ability would have been lost to the city if we had had night meetings. The late Councillor Raphael took a prominent part in the development of his ward. Councillor Burgess, who is now in an official position, also did excellent work. Councillor Jim Fraser, who was for six years a member of the Perth City Council and was just an ordinary working man, is now the Federal Minister for Social Services. We have also Councillor McLearn and Councillor Beadle and others. Possibly Councillor Beadle will be the next Lord Mayor. If night meetings had been held the services of those gentlemen on behalf of the ratepayers of Perth would not have been available.

To emphasise the amount of work that has to be performed by a large governing body the Perth City Council has to administer the affairs of people with a revenue of £264,000, in addition to which it has many current loans, one of £525,000, and one for £300,000 for converting macadamised roads into bitumen-surfaced roads. All these matters entail attention that I do not think could be given at night meetings. Apart from the ordinary meetings of the council there are many committee meetings that must be held, and I believe they occupy as much as or more time than the ordinary

meetings of the council. During the past few years, meetings have been held every three weeks instead of every fortnight. This was done because the 250 workmen employed by the building committee, the largest committee, were taken by the Allied Works Council and the council's stock of bitumen was taken for war purposes. These men are returning, and on account of pressure of business, we shall have to revert to fortnightly meetings. During the last three years, 242, 245 and 207 meetings were held of the council, standing committees and special committees in each year, in addition to which numerous inspections were made and deputations attended.

Provision is made in the Bill for any jetty, if the Governor so directs, to be placed under the management and control of the council. It would be beyond the financial ability of any local governing body to undertake that responsibility. We can visualise what this would mean by taking Albany as an example. If a storm seriously damaged the jetty there and the local authority were responsible for its maintenance, there would be no revenue available for effecting repairs. South Perth and Como have three jetties and the local governing body certainly could not afford out of its rates to maintain them. Such resorts are not used exclusively by the residents of the district. People from the country spend their holidays at river and sea-side resorts, which places are for the use of the people of the rest of the State, just as much as for the ratepayers of the district.

The Minister for Works: You suggest we should tax people in the country for their upkeep?

Mr. Hill: The Government has the petrol tax now.

Mr. READ: Provision is made for the municipalities to establish and maintain kindergartens, community centres, maternal health centres and infant health centres. I point out that kindergartens are a matter for the Education Department. Indeed, if we carry the matter further, we must agree that education should be a responsibility of the Commonwealth Government. The Commonwealth is the authority that should pay for education and then we could have a uniform system throughout Australia. The cost of infant health centres should be a charge against the Public Health Department. The idea of suggesting that these

activities should be financed by the ratepayers has probably been gained from the practice in older countries. In some of the large cities of England, the local authorities undertake their own transport, education and other activities, such as Governments in young countries have made themselves responsible for. That practice is satisfactory for large cities with large revenues, because the developmental work there has already been completed. Here, the developmental work has not been done, and the revenue of practically all our local governing bodies is required to provide necessary facilities for the people.

The revenue of the Perth City Council has to be spent on developmental work, providing the people with roads and footpaths and maintaining parks and gardens. The Perth City Council has 200 miles of footpaths yet to make. It costs £75 per chain for a 15ft. bitumen-surfaced road, and the City Council has yet 430½ miles of roads to make in order to provide facilities that the ratepayers badly need. Many ratepayers have built homes abutting streets where the roads have not yet been made. The building by-laws of the City Council are such that I think those now in operation should be permitted to continue. The province of city and town in the matter of building by-laws is quite different from that of the country. Then there would be the town planning zoning by-laws. It is about 17 years since town planning was considered, but I do not think the zoning scheme has yet been put into operation. Perhaps the building by-laws of the city would, in a great measure, clash with that scheme.

Another proposal in the Bill is that municipal councils should provide a subsidy of pound-for-pound to establish playgrounds for children attending Government schools. This is a charge that should not be imposed upon ratepayers of the city. I know of five or six schools that are in need of repairs, and I hope the work will be put in hand as soon as men and material are available. The proposed building of homes on endowment lands is a matter that should be clarified, and I hope the Minister will give more information when he replies. If the intention is to alienate Class A reserves for this purpose, I say that the proposal should be deleted from the Bill. I have given a brief resume of the disabilities that would be inflicted upon municipal councils by the

passing of this Bill. If amended, the measure might be made workable, but if amendments are not agreed to, the Bill should be voted out.

nigger which, like a maggot, seems to harry the brain of the member for Guildford-Midland.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

HON. N. KEENAN (Nedlands) [6.11]: This is a Bill which contains a very large number of amendments, many of which, it would be complimentary to say, are important but some of which—and no doubt one—are matters of considerable importance. The views I am about to express on this Bill are purely personal. I do not claim to have any right to speak on behalf of any municipal council. However, I hope that some of my remarks will commend themselves to the House and to the Committee when the Bill reaches that stage. I propose to deal with these matters in the same order as the Minister adopted. That is not quite the order in which they appear in the clauses of the Bill, but the Minister went from pillar to post and back again, presumably with some idea of emphasising their importance.

The first matter he dealt with was the proposal to make it compulsory for municipal councils to hold all meetings at night-time. *Prima facie*, I should say that this is a matter that could best be determined by the council itself.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Under plural voting?

Hon. N. KEENAN: Surely the question of whether meetings should be held in day-time or at night-time should be determined by the council, as it is entitled to do under the existing Act. Although I am not certain of the point, I think the Minister said that, with the exception of the Perth City Council, the meetings are held at night-time.

The Minister for Works: That is so.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Perth, no doubt, has substantial reasons for holding its meetings in day-time instead of at night.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Under plural voting, the Perth City Council is sure to do so.

The Minister for Works: That is the "woodpile in the nigger."

Hon. N. KEENAN: The Perth City Council is doubtless acquainted with all the reasons that make it more advantageous or more convenient to hold its meetings in the day-time instead of at night. That has nothing to do with any woodpile or any

Hon. N. KEENAN: When the House rose, I was dealing with the first amendment which had been spoken to by the Minister in his second reading speech—namely, an amendment providing that meetings of municipal councils should take place at night-time. Whatever way the decision goes, I do not think it will disturb the foundations of the nation. It is a matter of almost trivial importance, but I would rather it was determined on common sense lines; and at the appropriate time I shall ask the Minister to leave the law as it stands.

The second point the Minister dealt with was that Saturday should by law be provided as the day on which polling should take place for any extraordinary election. It is clear that this is a case of what is called *casus omissus* in the original Act, and it should be supplied now. The third point dealt with was that mayors—or, if it happened to be in Perth, lord mayors—should hold office for two years. I do not propose to support that idea. If a mayor is elected, and if he proves worthy of his office, there is no difficulty whatever in his being re-elected. On the contrary, he is certain to be made the subject of many requests to stand for re-election. If, on the other hand, he is not fit for his office, then a year is too long.

So, as the law stands, I venture to suggest there is no case in which a mayor who has made a success of his office has not been renewed in that office. On the other hand, as in the case mentioned by the member for Victoria Park, and queried to some extent by the Minister, there may be mayors whom one would be very glad to get rid of; and a year in office would be quite enough for them and even too much. The next suggestion made was that the election of mayor should remain as it is at present, a matter for the ratepayers of the municipality as a whole. But the Minister suggested that he would welcome some idea, following the practice of the road boards, providing for the mayor to be elected from the councillors.

The Minister for Works: I did not suggest that.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Then I misinterpreted the Minister, and I am sorry. The member for Victoria Park suggested that it might be a good course to pursue, and that by that means the municipality would have as mayor a man who had experience of municipal council work and would therefore be a better type than ratepayers as a whole sometimes elect. But I would prefer—and I am speaking entirely personally in this matter—that the position should remain as it is and that the mayor should be elected by the ratepayers of a municipality as a whole.

The next matter dealt with by the Minister was to give power to municipal councils to regulate caravan parking. That power, I understand, is possessed by road boards; and I have no doubt that if caravan parking had been the ordinary habit when the principal Act was passed, that power would have been given. But in those days caravan parking, or the use of caravans for spending a holiday in, was utterly unknown. So that is another matter in which it is clearly right to supplement the Act. It could be entirely governed and provided for by regulation. It is only necessary to amend the section of the existing Act by adding power to make regulations for the purpose of providing conditions for the parking of caravans.

The next matter concerns power to build houses for occupation by employees of municipal councils. This is a power possessed by road boards, and it is eminently desirable. I find myself in accord with the suggestion. I do not, however, approve of giving power to municipalities to become speculators in house building for the purpose of letting or selling houses to persons other than employees. That is not a world in which we wish to see them operating at all. They are elected for a special purpose and should be asked to confine their energies and capacities to that purpose. I hope that portion of the Bill will be dropped.

The Minister next dealt with the erection of wooden houses, notwithstanding any restrictions to the contrary which the by-laws of a municipality may provide. There again we have an illustration of the curious trend towards totalitarianism in modern legislation. We set ourselves resolutely against fascism, yet every now and then we find our-

selves worshipping at the feet of fascism. This is one illustration. A local authority, elected by ratepayers, is to be over-ridden by the Minister. He is to tell it that its by-laws are not to prevail but that his order—the order of a bureaucrat—is to prevail. Then the local authority is to bow its head and say, "That is the right order of things."

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You worship property; we, humanity.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Abbott: You think you do, but you do not.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not think that the observations of the member for Guildford-Midland or the observations made in reply are either interesting or important.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You may not think so, but it is a fact all the same.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I point out that it is not desirable in principle that the Minister should be given power to over-ride the decision of representatives of the ratepayers, elected by the ratepayers.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: On the plural vote.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Abbott: Who contributes the money?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: Can you, Sir, possibly restrain these members?

Mr. SPEAKER: I must ask the member for Guildford-Midland to keep order.

Hon. N. KEENAN: There is another reason why this provision giving power to the Minister to over-ride the local authorities should not be granted, and that is because a brick area is only proclaimed for the purpose of ensuring some precaution, to some relatively large degree, against fire. I know the implications of this matter, because I was obliged to live for a considerable portion of my time in a municipality the greater part of which consisted of wooden houses; and we had to pay a high fire premium because of that.

Mr. Fox: There were not too many fires.

Hon. N. KEENAN: That is perfectly true but it was more good luck than anything else. Moreover, it may be that our fire organisation, of which the member for South Fremantle may know, was a very efficient one, though small. But the fact

remains that we had to pay a largely increased premium because we lived in wooden houses. And now it is proposed to give power to plump down wooden houses in the middle of a brick area, and those who have spent money in building in brick to obtain some degree of security will have to pay a larger premium. That is not desirable.

The next matter dealt with by the Minister was a provision giving him power to override on appeal the decision of a council not to allow a proposed alteration in or additions to existing buildings for the purpose of making those buildings contain more people; in other words, of making them into flats. There again, I think the council should be left in control in order to prevent the creation of these flats. We know where it is going to end; it will end in slums of a very objectionable character. At present municipal councils are endeavouring to prevent that by allowing only a certain number of flats to be erected and setting themselves resolutely against altering existing houses into what might be described as second-rate flats. In that matter I hope the Minister will allow the view I am submitting to prevail. The next power is of a similar character. It is to make and enforce uniform building laws. The member for Victoria Park pointed out how wholly impracticable that would be in the case of the city of Perth as compared with small municipalities throughout the country, and it is apparent on the face of it. Uniform building laws as between some very small municipalities and a municipality the size of Perth would not be comparable in any sense; and that proposal should be dropped.

Then there is the extraordinary proposal to give councils power to erect abattoirs outside their boundaries. The reason given for that is that the area inside the boundary is limited and is all required for residential or business purposes, and that therefore the council should be given power to go outside its boundaries and select a site on which it may conduct abattoirs. It is true that there is an appeal, by the adjoining authority whose land is taken, to the Minister, and there again we find the trend of which I complained, the trend of substituting for municipal control, bureaucratic control, which alone is responsible for the chaos in the world today.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And capital has not played any part in it?

Hon. N. KEENAN: I do not know that this power has been asked for by the municipalities, except one, and there it appeared to be asked for under a conception that that municipality is to provide abattoirs for the whole district; not just for its own citizens, but for a large district of the South-West. If there is some agreement made between a municipality and an adjoining road board for the creation of an abattoir, it would be most desirable that the power should be given to those bodies to enter into such an agreement, but that is not the suggestion made in this Bill. The suggestion here is that the municipality should be given the power to go beyond its boundary, and the authority that owns the land that is taken by the municipality may be entitled to an appeal to the Minister, whose decision is to be final. There is contained in the Bill a similar power regarding landing grounds for aeroplanes, and ground for other purposes. We have had in this House, in recent days, a long discussion on sanitary sites, but it seems that that matter has been left out of this Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Nedlands is not in order in discussing sanitary sites, a matter that has been discussed.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Am I not in order in saying that power should be given under this Bill to municipalities to erect sanitary sites on other adjoining parts of Western Australian territory, whether it be the territory of a road board or a municipality? It would solve the problem of the member for Canning—

The Minister for Works: No, that is his trouble, that they have that power at the moment. Your argument is fallacious.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for Nedlands is not in order in discussing what the member for Canning said on another subject.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I bow to your ruling, Mr. Speaker. The next power is the power to subsidise infant health centres and kindergarten schools. The granting of this power does not compel municipal councils to subsidise kindergartens or infant health centres, but merely gives them the right to do so if they choose to do it, in their wisdom. Though the member for Victoria Park does not like this power, I differ from him and

approve of it. Now I come to what will excite the member for Guildford-Midland, plural voting. Plural voting consists of two sorts. In the first place it arises, as the Minister pointed out, from the fact that if a municipality is divided into wards any ratepayer who has property in each ward is entitled to two votes for electing representatives of such wards; up to two votes. The Minister held out the picture, for the contemplation of this House, of some ratepayer enjoying 16 votes in the municipality of Perth. It is possible, but highly improbable. In fact I rang the Town Clerk and asked had he heard of any ratepayer who enjoyed anything like 16 votes, and of course he said he never had. I suppose he could look it up from his records. In fact, from what the member for Victoria Park told the House of certain elections that had taken place, it is difficult to get ratepayers to cast one vote, much less two or sixteen, assuming that they were entitled to cast 16.

In support of the argument put forward that anyone 21 years of age should be entitled to vote and to have an equal vote, in the election of the mayor or any councillor, of course that is not provided for in this Bill. I submit that the Minister's view arises entirely from a misconception. Municipal councils are purely executive bodies. They may well be described as boards of work, which are given the duty of spending the money raised by rates within a municipality. That is the beginning and end of their functions. They have no powers to create new conditions or new obligations and impose them on the ratepayers, or indeed to exercise any power outside the limited powers given to them by statute. A short review of the history of the coming into existence of municipal councils would illustrate that. In the first place the Crown declares a certain area of the State an area open to be occupied by persons desirous of residence or of carrying on business there. Some accept that and by degrees a number put themselves together and contribute, one and the other, according to the amount of interest and land they hold, to a common pool.

When that common pool provides an income exceeding £750 per year the Governor-in-Council can declare that area a municipality. That is what has happened in the case of every municipality existing today in Western Australia, under the Act, and of course the amount contributed to that pool

is contributed in proportion to the rental value of the land the ratepayers hold. Who is to contend that some person who happens to reside in that area—after all that I have told the House has come to happen—is to have the same vote and the same right to determine how that common pool is to be spent, as have those who have contributed?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Those people that come in create the value.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Am I under a misapprehension that the member for Guildford-Midland is only allowed to speak by way of interruption, or is he allowed to speak in the ordinary manner?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. N. KEENAN: If the second is the case I suggest that he resort to it. To resume, I say that no-one would suggest that some person who has just taken up residence and who has not an atom of responsibility, and who can pack his bag and go away and not suffer 1d. loss—

Hon. W. D. Johnson: He can be kicked out.

Hon. N. KEENAN: —shall have the same vote as those who have nursed the municipality from its infancy, and have put all that they could raise by way of rates into the common pool and who have supplied the sinews that have developed and made the municipality—as it is in some cases—a great municipality. I do not desire to say anything further in general observation on this Bill. Although I am perhaps in strange company, I find myself in accord with the idea that where a municipality is divided into wards there should be a limited right to exercise the vote in respect of each ward. We might rather adopt the principle to be found in the Road Board Act, and say that they are to be limited to a certain number, with the right of selection of the particular ward. That is a personal view. I do not view with approval the dividing of municipalities into wards.

When I was a party to municipal life I set myself resolutely against the division of municipalities into wards, because my view was that if there is a municipality with no wards all the ratepayers are interested in every part of the municipality and there is not that wretched sectional fight that takes place when wards exist. Here we have a parent Act that allows wards. Undoubtedly municipalities have of their own wish

gone into wards, and so we must accept the position as it stands, but I am in favour of limitation of the right of those who have property in a number of wards to vote except in a limited number of such wards. Those are my general observations on this Bill. I think it is a very good measure in some ways, but they are such small ways that it is hard to understand the importance of bringing it down. I have heard that—I do not know on what grounds—there is a strong desire for a complete review of the Act of 1906, which of course is now almost 40 years old and which could therefore not be expected to provide for things as they are today. This is not a Bill reviewing the whole of the Statute of 1906 and therefore I cannot find any enthusiasm for it. It has some good points and, though I disagree with it strongly in the matters I have mentioned, I propose to vote for the second reading.

HON. W. D. JOHNSON (Guildford-Midland) [7.55]: This Bill is a reform Bill and anything in the way of reform always has the opposition of the member for Nedlands. The position of this House constitutes the difference of opinion that exists regarding reform. This side of the House places first in importance and high in priority the claims of the people for protection in all matters of life. The other side of the House, led mainly by the member for Nedlands, places property on a pedestal, with certain privileges and rights that have overridden the claims of the people for a voice in the government of the country, and because that has gone on for a period he says it should continue.

Mr. Doney: You are in the same boat.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Plural voting did not come in in the interests of the people, because they do not profit from it. It is property and the value of property that constitute the special claim for plurality in voting. Property shall have certain rights, and those rights can be detrimental to the interests of the people associated in the district where the property exists. The member for Nedlands said, in his history of how municipalities came into existence, that property with a given value constitutes the charter for a municipality. It is nothing of the kind. The property was there long before the people came, but it had no value. Almighty God put it there

for a community, but the community did not exist and therefore, no community, no value.

At a given time certain people came from other settled areas. They came over the boundary into this remote part of value, placed there for the benefit of the people by the Almighty, and as soon as the people got over the boundary into this uninhabited land of no value, the value started to grow, but in anticipation of that the vested interests, property and capitalists have stepped in. We can look around Perth today, where land has been monopolised by companies, vested interests and capitalists, so that they could exploit the people. Therefore the people spread into those areas, and found that capitalists had bought up properties at low prices and the population started to create the value. Instead of giving the people that created the value a voice in the general development of the areas, we say that those who profited from the value created by the people shall have a certain measure of right or claim to control those people by taxing them to enjoy plural voting. The member for Nedlands may stand for the perpetuation of that sort of thing, but the world is slipping from under his feet.

Mr. Thorn: It has slipped from under your feet.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: There is a trend towards reform throughout the world today, and the domination by capitalism and of property rights is going steadily out of date.

Mr. Abbott: In favour of domination of trade unions.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: And unions will become stronger as men are—

Mr. McLarty: Weaker!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON:—ignored and denied the right to a voice in the manner suggested by the member for Nedlands and the member for North Perth. Most decided the unions will become stronger.

Mr. Abbott: Like they are at Collie today.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Their added strength will be due to the fact that humanity is to be given an equal voice in the general welfare of the country and government. The member for Nedlands must appreciate that the health and welfare of the community in a municipality is

main factor, and neglect of that will not mean an increase in the population. The ratepayer represents only a small section of the population which, in a municipality, is the whole of the people living there. The member for Nedlands would say that the minority that represent only a part of the population should dominate the much greater remainder. That has been the rule throughout the centuries. That is what the revolt throughout the world is against to-day—the domination of a section over the many. I commend the Government for its action in this regard; I am proud of the Government, because it is trying to expose the unnecessary second Chamber that we have in this State.

Mr. Doney: That is not dealt with in this Bill!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Just in the same way it seeks to eliminate the power and domination of property; the dictation of vested interests and all that tends to enable the few to dominate the many. We are trying to amend laws that have become obsolete. The member for Nedlands admits that the municipal laws are 40 years old. In those early days there were no unions, and the ordinary people had little control over their affairs; property had full scope and used its domination to the maximum extent. It subjected people to all kinds of conditions that were good enough for them so long as property increased in value. People were invited in their numbers to come to the State and increase the value of property so that those who owned that property, which increased so much in value, might have a still bigger say in the control exercised over those that created the value. Forty years ago that existed in various forms and the sad thing is that it has taken over 40 years to make any progress at all. Certainly some small municipal reforms have been introduced, but they have been very few compared with what is required today. Therefore his State Government has stepped in with an endeavour to get rid of some of those old conditions. The world sees the need for that, and the Government is in step with the world. We must have some regard to the claims of the people and the less regard that is paid to those claims the greater will be the increase in the power of vested interests.

Mr. Thorn: It will hurt you, if it does.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The hon. member knows that is not so.

Mr. Doney: You are one of the biggest property owners in this House.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Toodyay is jealous because he has made such a mess of his business, whereas I have made such a success of mine.

Mr. Thorn: You and your vested interests!

Mr. Doney: I think the member for Guildford-Midland said something he really did not want to say.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Toodyay is hard up against it, whereas "W. D. J." is not, although he may not have very much.

Mr. Doney: You have more than most people have.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Toodyay is always complaining. He has complained in the past and he will moan in the future.

Mr. Thorn: If I had as much as you have, I would go for a trip round the world.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If I were in order—

Mr. Thorn: You are always out of order.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Perhaps it is as well to console the member for Toodyay and others associated with him by saying that sooner or later they will awaken to a realisation that an end is being brought to age-old practices because people cannot get a decent living under the present capitalistic system.

Mr. Thorn: I woke up to you long ago.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The member for Toodyay is always moaning.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think we will get back to the Bill. There is nothing in it about the member for Toodyay and moaning.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: This Bill is a measure of reform, seeking to promote the health and general welfare of the people who live in municipalities. That matter must be one of major concern for us. We must look to the people, and unless we do so and safeguard their interests, this Parliament will have failed in its responsibilities and will find ultimately that the people will no longer tolerate such consideration for vested interests and property privileges. They will look to us to protect them against slums, against unhealthy conditions, against bad

roads, and against inferior conditions generally. One cannot go into much detail, but we can look around and see those things that are objectionable to us, things that make us feel that we are unworthy representatives of the people.

Mr. Thorn: Have you just awakened to that?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It makes us feel that we are unworthy representatives of the people in that we still find property interests in control in so many directions. The member for Nedlands talked about flats and people living in objectionable conditions in various buildings, but he supported the construction of flats! Did not Parliament appoint a Royal Commission for the purpose of protecting people in the metropolitan area against the regulations of, and the administration by, the Perth City Council? We know what conditions were exposed at that time. We know that people were horrified at the exposures made by that Royal Commission regarding conditions that actually existed in their midst. That was done because of property and vested interests that encouraged people to live in slums and hovels, in areas where so long as many could crowd, the property owner enjoyed a bigger income. People were pushed into those areas to provide rentals for those who now under the plural voting system would dominate the whole of the community.

Mr. Watts: What about co-operative building societies?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: If I were in order, I would say that I am not favourably disposed towards co-operative building societies.

Mr. Thorn: You never were in order.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: The best housing system in Australia is the workers' homes scheme of Western Australia. I say that after a proper survey of the most economic housing systems in the Commonwealth.

Mr. Doney: We do not deny it.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: It is far better than any co-operative building society scheme.

Mr. Watts: Even in New South Wales?

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: Co-operative societies operate where there is need for them to interfere; but with regard to housing, that is a responsibility of municipalities or the State. In Western Australia we

are doing a wonderfully good job in that regard. I do not desire to go into the merits or demerits of the Bill. I like its clauses because each one is an indication of advanced thinking, a realisation of the fact that there is a new world to be built, and that this Parliament must keep in step with that world trend. This Parliament cannot stand idly by and see neglected reforms that need to be introduced, reforms that are generally recognised as being in the interests of the people as against the interests of property owners. The Bill represents a claim made by a Labour Government that was not elected on the basis of plural voting. Were we to be elected under that system, Labour would never be in power. We could not win a seat under a system of plural voting. The member for Nedlands wants to know why the Minister seeks to dictate to the municipalities. I have endeavoured to correct that hon. member, but he does not desire to be put right. He knows perfectly well that members sitting on the Government side of the House and the Minister himself are elected on the adult franchise. Everyone over 21 years of age is able to vote for the candidate of his choice.

Mr. Doney: But that matter is not dealt with in the Bill.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON: On the other hand, plural voting operates in connection with a municipality. Hence it is that if we left it to municipal councils to introduce reforms, we would never have any reforms at all. We would like to reform the municipal system completely, but we say, in order to get some measure of reform in certain directions that affect the interest of the people more directly than others, that this particular matter shall be reviewed by the Minister who will have the right to direct a municipality in connection with what should be done in the interests of the people and of occupiers of property. We stand for the people and for those who occupy properties. We want them to be protected, and that is the object of the Bill now before the House. We want that, and we appeal to the member for Nedlands and to the members sitting on the Opposition side of the House generally to realise that the day of plural voting, of vested interests, of the domination of the one section over the rest of the community is obsolete and out of date. We want to

trust the people and to educate the people up to a sense of responsibility so that all shall pull together and not be divided into various classes. Rather do we desire to have them included in one big class that will make for the general elevation of humanity and the better government of the world.

The more people that vote the more there will be to take an interest in the welfare of the community as a whole. If they are consulted, the more people there will be to work and to share in the progress of this country. The less consideration we extend to the people along these lines, so much the more will be the stagnation in this and in other countries. We want the people to be protected. We wish to demonstrate our interest in the people in that we do not want to continue having a property Chamber like the Legislative Council or a municipal council elected on the basis of plural voting, but rather on the one-vote basis, so that all men and all women should be equal when they go to the poll; every man's vote and every woman's vote will be quite as good as the other man's and the other woman's. We stand for absolute equality of humanity, with no privileges and no rights to private property owners.

MR. WITHERS (Bunbury) [8.15]: I welcome the Bill, although I do not agree with the whole of its contents. I listened carefully to the remarks of the Minister when introducing the measure, and the part that appealed to me to be his weakest effort was the question of the extension of the period of office of a mayor from one to two years. The Minister said, in effect, that of course people could elect a mayor for a year and, if he proved to be successful and did the right thing by the community, then the people could re-elect him. The Minister did not give us a sound reason, however, why the term should be extended to two years. Be that as it may, I realise that a mayor guides his council—wisely, I hope; but it must not be forgotten that the council should at least take some responsibility, and that theirs should be the policy, as well as the mayor's, for the 12 months that the mayor is in office. It is not merely a question of the mayor giving effect to his policy, because if it is the right one and the people endorse it, he will be re-elected year after

year. Numbers of mayors have been re-elected in that way. Of course, there are times when a mayor is re-elected without opposition. Sometimes that is accepted as a vote of confidence in him; whereas it is very often due to the fact that there are no other aspirants for the position of mayor as people do not wish to take upon themselves the onerous duties of civic administration. Therefore, the mayor possibly goes on year after year, but he cannot always claim that it is on account of his policy; it may be due to the fact that he has been returned unopposed.

The question of joint owners is raised by the Bill. It is desired to repeal Section 50 of the Act. I have read both the section and the amendment, but find it difficult to distinguish between the verbiage. Both appear to be almost similar. When we get to the Committee stage, I shall want to know what actually is meant by "joint occupier." It may be well to provide for joint owners if we have plural voting, with which I shall deal later. Joint owners, if they are not partners in a business, should not, in my opinion, enjoy plural voting. I know of two hotels in Bunbury occupied by tenants. They do not own the property. If there are joint lessees in partnership, however, why should they be allowed to have a vote? Why should a man, because he has a wife, and is the lessee of a property, be entitled to four votes on account of the valuation? His wife possibly has no partnership interest in the business, so why should she also have a further four votes?

Those anomalies exist under the present system of plural voting. I realise that this system is similar to the system of voting for the Legislative Council. In the first place there is no definite basis. For instance, a person can go through the municipal roll and find a considerable number of people owning property with an annual valuation of £26. This entitles them to two votes. Right alongside their property is a house quite as good, but the valuation is only £25, or £1 less. That entitles the owner to only one vote. And this remark applies also when the annual value of the property is £51, which carries three votes; when it is over £75, it carries four votes. As I say, there is no really sound basis. It has been said by members opposite that a person with an equity in a property should have some extra right to plural voting because

of the fact that he may have erected a palatial building on the land. What happens if he does? The property is let to a tenant who is a will-o'-the-wisp. He enters into possession of the property as lessee to-day and relinquishes his tenancy in three months' time. During the time he was in possession his name was put on the municipal roll which was then being compiled. Because of the fact that his name appears on the roll, even though he be 500 miles or 1,000 miles away—as long as he is in Western Australia and can be located—he has the vote for the property, whereas the owner has lost it.

I cannot be convinced that that is a fair basis. If the desire is to protect a person by plural voting, we are not achieving that result. A man may build a terrace of houses, and each tenant would have a right to enrolment prior to the owner of the property. The very fact of a person building houses and letting them deprives him of the right to vote. The person who owns the property is not the person who is actually protected by plural voting. The fact that a man owns property of a little more value than another man's should not entitle him to any more votes than the other person. We had an illustration recently in the British municipal elections, when for the first time they were conducted on the adult franchise. Surely we are not going to let it be said that Western Australia, a new country, is lagging behind dear old England! We may call it conservative old England, but England is showing us the way today: its conservatism has gone. Another provision in the Bill deals with contracting. I am opposed to a council acting as a contractor to an individual. The Act provides that the council may contract with another local authority or with some governmental body, but cannot under the Act contract out, that is, work for an individual.

This Bill provides that the council may contract out to fill low-lying land for the purpose of draining and such like things, provided that the consent of the Minister is obtained and that the expenditure in connection with the project shall not exceed £150. In Committee, I shall seek to ascertain what really is meant by an expenditure of not more than £150. If a municipality is permitted to buy two or three, or even more, fairly expensive tip-

trucks for the purpose of competing with people in opposition to ratepayers who already own trucks used for that particular work, the council is not going to do under £150, so I do not know what the £150 expenditure actually means. I know that this work has been done to the detriment of ratepayers who are engaged in the industry of transport, sand-filling and the like. For the council to enter into competition with them is not a fair proposition and I do not feel prepared to support that provision.

As for the erection of houses for municipal employees, I am in agreement with that proposal. I also agree that the council should be given the right to erect houses for letting purposes, if the council can provide the houses. When introducing the Bill, the Minister said that that would be a help in relieving the housing shortage. I do not know that it will, we are faced with a shortage of building materials and manpower, which seem to be the main stumbling block.

Mr. Doney: Which do you prefer, financing the houses from loan or from revenue?

Mr. WITHERS: That is a question I am not concerned about. I think it should be from loan. If a loan is raised, it can be repaid from the rents received from the properties. Revenue is used for the purpose of maintenance and reconstruction. Of course, loans can be raised for that purpose also, but houses should not be erected out of revenue.

Mr. Watts: That is so.

Mr. WITHERS: Nevertheless, if the council saw that an insufficient number of houses was being erected and it could see its way to erect additional houses—which I cannot visualise—it might do so. But there would be the trouble of the council securing artisans and building materials. If these latter were available, I am convinced that it would be the outside contractor who would be erecting houses. If the council decided to do that work, it would have to get employees to do it, because it could not keep a staff of artisans permanently employed for the purpose. I do not mind the council entering into the field, provided it does not do so in competition with the private contractor. That is the question of the rating on the unimproved value as against the annual rent.

alue. That system has its anomalies also. We have the instance of a hotel on one block of ground which would be rated, under present conditions, at £800 or £900 as a hotel, and on a block of ground next door a shop, which would be rated at £150 or £200, that being a just and fair rating.

Under the unimproved land values system, the land on which the hotel was erected would be rated upon the same value as the land upon which a much less valuable building was erected next door.

I hope that advantage will not be taken of that system as a means of rating the people. That system should only be used where land is left idle to the detriment of the progress of the municipality. Once the land has been improved by erecting a building on it—a shop or a residence—when that system of rating should cease. Rating on the unimproved value would be a real hardship on some people and would be a relief to others who are paying on the annual rental value. It would relieve them, but increase the burden on others who today are not called upon to pay so much.

Mr. Watts: It increases the burden on the unimproved block.

Mr. WITHERS: I do not disagree with that. If a person is holding a block in the centre of the city with a view to reaping the unearned increment by increased values, then he should pay. Whilst the property is unimproved, he should pay a higher rating on it. Immediately he sells it or uses it for some other purpose, then he should be rated on the other valuation. But to say that this should be done right throughout the township would be unfair and unjust. There is the question of abattoirs and aerodromes. Abattoirs are essential in a growing district. It is impossible to get any area of land today within a municipality for the purpose of erecting abattoirs. They are not pleasant industries to have in a municipality.

The provision whereby money can be expended with the consent of the Minister and the co-operation of adjoining local authorities is locked up in the Bill. There is no reason why a council should not do these things. I do not think there would be any objection to that part of the measure. Abattoirs are essential and it is just a question as to their extent. If they are going to be glorified

killing-yards, we would not need to spend huge sums of money on them, but if they are going to include cool storage, freezing, etc., they would become too big for a municipality and should be Government concerns. I have looked year by year through the returns of the Kalgoorlie Abattoirs, and they are not very encouraging. I do not think that concern has shown a profit for some time. We do not want to have municipalities establishing losing propositions.

Hon J. C. Willecock: Let the Government do that.

Mr. WITHERS: The Government has a better chance of picking up on the merry-go-round what it loses on the swing boat. If we build a railway or establish irrigation works, the project might not be a paying proposition, but there are other avenues from which the Government can offset the loss. A municipality cannot do that. The proposition in such a case would need to be a paying one from the start. I have no objection to the clause dealing with aerodromes, but how any municipality could finance an aerodrome without some means of collecting revenue from the people using it, I do not know.

Mr. Rodoreda: Get the Transport Board to do that.

Mr. WITHERS: I will leave that to the North-West people. If we got financial assistance from the Commonwealth for the purpose of putting in aeroplane landing grounds—I have Bunbury in mind—I would be concerned as to how we would get interest from the venture.

Mr. Abbott: You could not get interest.

Mr. WITHERS: That is the point. The municipality would lay out a few thousand pounds in excavations, runways, and the like, and, unless something came back from the Commonwealth—

The Minister for Justice: You would get it indirectly.

Mr. WITHERS: The municipalities would not have much chance of getting it indirectly other than from the people who would fly rather than travel by train. I do not think many people would take advantage of air transport as against motor transport over such a short distance. Every one of us who represents country districts, particularly those in the more remote places, naturally wants to have these amenities and

facilities for aircraft. I have been thinking that it is beyond the possibilities of any municipality to cope with. The other question relates to kindergartens and health clinics, and I am definitely in favour of councils assisting in their establishment. That is a responsibility due from the citizens to themselves. We in Bunbury have assisted in the past, and I have been connected with the infant health centre since its inception. The Municipality of Bunbury has found a room and everything else for the infant health centre. One could discuss the clauses of this Bill more in the Committee stage than on the second reading.

[*Mr. J. Hegney took the Chair.*]

MR. ABBOTT (North Perth) [8.35]: I congratulate the member for Guildford-Midland on a most eloquent address tonight.

Mr. Watts: Is that what you call it?

Mr. ABBOTT: I listened with great interest to what he had to say and now, when I try to think back, I find I cannot remember one word of what he said. I do not think his remarks contained very much logic.

The Minister for Works: You ought to go in for a system of memory training.

Mr. ABBOTT: It would have impressed me had there been any logic in it.

Mr. W. Hegney: I hope you make up for it.

Mr. ABBOTT: There might be some logic in the idea of universal suffrage for councils when the money for rates comes out of Consolidated Revenue. That would be a different position, and possibly the organisation of our society may come to the stage when the whole of the money will come from Consolidated Revenue and one tax—income tax. When that happens, I may change the view that I am going to put forward now. Under the existing system, where the whole of the revenue is contributed by a very few people for a specific purpose, I cannot see why those who contribute the most should not have a little more say than those who contribute much less. Therefore I cannot see why this present system is so undemocratic. Surely, under democracy, the people who provide something should have a reasonable say in its distribution. I am not, it will be noted, in favour of deleting plural voting.

Mr. Cross: You would give the flat-dweller a vote?

Mr. ABBOTT: I might give many people a vote.

The Minister for Lands: It might depend on whom they vote for.

Mr. Watts: The flat-dweller has a vote now.

The Minister for Lands: He deserves it for living in a flat.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! The member for North Perth will address the Chair.

Mr. ABBOTT: The parent Act provides that there shall be no wooden houses erected in any area. It then goes on to provide that in certain circumstances the council may permit the erection of wooden buildings subject to such conditions as it may grant or provide in the particular license on that occasion. I think the Perth City Council can say that at the end of the year it requires such a house to be removed. That may not be quite a sensible proposition, but when the administration of an area is to be taken out of the hands of the municipality, that is to have the general executive authority in connection with it, then I cannot see that that is a good suggestion. After all, the responsibility is placed upon the council to see that the city and its affairs are administered in a proper and efficient manner. In these circumstances, it is not a good idea that the Government can suddenly say, "We want a certain area to be a wooden area." The responsibility is better placed where it is at present. So far as the building of houses is concerned, I think probably that is a good suggestion. The only comment I wish to make on it is that I would object to park lands being used for that purpose. According to the way the Bill is framed now I think that in all probability they could use land that had been given in trust for parks for the purpose of erecting houses, because this provides for any land vested in it.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: That has to go through Parliament.

Mr. ABBOTT: That is another Act of Parliament.

Mr. Cross: You would have to alter other Acts before you could touch a Class A reserve.

Mr. ABBOTT: That may be so. I would not like to see any area that has been acquired for park lands used for the purpose of erecting houses. If a council acquires land, or has land given to it for the purpose of erecting houses, that is another matter, and it is probably a good idea. School grounds and kindergartens are very worthy objects and have my support on every occasion when the responsibility for them is placed on the proper authority. That again, means a charge against Consolidated Revenue. I cannot see what local authorities have to do with school grounds or kindergartens. The money they collect is collected for specific purposes, namely, for roads and other municipal affairs which do not cross the general responsibility of the Government. It is the Government's responsibility, and not that of a local authority, to provide reasonable and proper grounds for schools and kindergartens.

The measure contains provision for superannuation schemes to be established by by-law. I am in favour of superannuation schemes but I would not like to see them established by by-law, because they can always be altered by that means, and that is not fair to the people who are contributing, or to the councils. A scheme that had been carried on for many years could be vitally affected by a by-law. These schemes should be established on a much more permanent basis, as is the City Council's scheme, by Act of Parliament. I do not like a scheme where trusts are created that apparently could be altered by a local by-law. Therefore I am not in favour of that provision. As regards aerodromes, these are essential, but half measures are not advisable. The creation of aerodromes must be at least a State affair but better still a Commonwealth responsibility because such a lot of money is involved and many provisions may be necessary. A council might buy an aerodrome and lay it out only to find that a wheat silo or something of the kind is erected alongside which would ruin it. The creation of aerodromes is not a wise power to put in the hands of a municipal council.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Would not the Town Planning Act prevent that?

Mr. ABBOTT: Possibly, but whether the board would give it consideration, I can-

not say. Aerodromes are very expensive. The runway for modern machines costs £10,000 to £20,000 and a first-class aerodrome would probably need three runways. The modern machine is becoming faster, and the faster it is, the higher is the wing loading and the higher the landing speed. If an aircraft is not fast, it is hardly worth while running. I should like to see good aerodromes established everywhere, but I doubt whether it would be advisable to give this power to municipalities.

A good deal has been said about the provision requiring council meetings to be held in the evenings. Perhaps a majority of people would be more interested if this provision applied to another matter. If the business of the Perth City Council is to be conducted at night, a staff will be required, and I have been informed that it would cost the Perth City Council over £600 a year for the requisite staff.

Mr. Cross: For how long a period?

Mr. ABBOTT: Annually; but the cost would probably be considerably more..

Mr. Cross: The revenue of the Perth City Council is tremendous.

Mr. ABBOTT: The wise thing surely is to allow the council members to decide when their meetings shall be held, just as we decide what hours the House shall sit. With these reservations, I support the second reading.

Mr. WATTS (Katanning) [8.50]: It is my intention to support the second reading. We have recently been treated to something which the member for North Perth referred to as an eloquent address from the member for Guildford-Midland. I could find other terms in which to express my feelings regarding his speech, but I shall content myself by saying that, pursuant to his usual custom, the hon. gentleman, having arranged his gallery and provided us with a Sydney Domain exposition of his views, has left the Chamber, so there is no possibility of views contrary to his own being heard by him. I think I am justified in making that observation because this is by no means the first time an occurrence of that sort has taken place in respect to the hon. member.

So I am obliged to deal, to the best of my ability, with one or two minor aspects of his remarks that struck me as being the only ones of any importance. I noticed

that the hon. member took great praise unto himself and was most enthusiastic that the occupier, the person who paid the rent, should be the person to receive consideration. This Bill, he said, was going to abolish plural voting and give the occupier a chance. Let me point out to the House that the occupier is the person who is entitled to the plural voting under the Act to the exclusion of the owner. If anyone is being deprived of plural voting, it is the occupier whom the hon. member, according to himself, desires to defend and protect. There can be no question about it. Section 49 of the Act states—

Provided that the owner and occupier shall not be separately registered as electors in respect of the same rateable land:

Provided also that the occupier of any rateable land shall be entitled to be registered as an elector in respect of such land in preference to the owner.

So the existing conditions under which municipal members are elected do not provide for the owners of land to be given pride of place; on the contrary, they provide for the occupier, the person whom the hon. member alleges he is out to protect.

While I am prepared to leave that aspect of the hon. member's observations to the good judgment of the House, I venture to suggest that most of the remarks he made on this measure are reminiscent of the saying about two grains of wheat that were hidden in a bushel of chaff—

You shall seek all day ere you find them and, when you have found them they are not worth the search.

Although I have no very decided views on this question of plural voting, speaking for myself, I will say, however, that were the owner of the land the person who, under the Act, received prior rights to exercise the franchise on the plural voting system, I would be far more inclined to abolish plural voting than I am now, but when I realise, as I have indicated, that the occupier is the person who has the foremost right to the exclusion of the owner, then I doubt very much whether there is any need to tinker with a system that has, so far as I know, worked quite admirably in recent years, because municipal local government, taken by and large is and has been a credit to Western Australia and to local government in Western Australia. As I say, were the ow-

ner the person who received the consideration under the Act, and not the occupier, my views on the subject would undergo decided change.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: The owner has the right to vote at a referendum with regard to loans.

Mr. WATTS: That is perfectly true. If a certain number of resident owners can be brought together to petition the council objecting to a loan being raised, then a vote of resident owners is taken as to whether the loan shall be raised or not. This measure does not purport in any way to alter that proposition; there is no proposal to change the position of resident owners with regard to referenda on loans.

I view a great deal more favourably than do some members who have spoken some of the proposals in the Bill. I am wholeheartedly in accord with the idea of bringing municipal councils into line with road boards by giving them power to erect dwellings for municipal offices just as road boards have power to do in regard to their secretaries. I cannot say that I can find any opposition in my mind to the proposition that municipal councils should be allowed to erect houses either for sale or for letting. There are times when a municipal council would be advised to undertake that type of work, but so far as I know, the Bill contains no compulsion. Councils would be at liberty to do it if they wished; they could leave it alone if they liked.

It seems to me that the state we have reached in regard to housing is this: We are miles behind in the number of suitable dwellings that are available to the public. We have a great number of sub-standard dwellings that ought not to exist in our community. There is a continual and growing demand for new houses to be erected, quite apart from those which are required to catch up the lag of the war years. In consequence, it seems to me that neither private enterprise, nor private enterprise and the Workers' Homes Board combined, will be able satisfactorily to cope with this difficulty in the near future, even assuming—which is an assumption one must make in the circumstances—that the supply of material and manpower is ample for the purpose. If a municipal council feels disposed to undertake a housing scheme with

its district, then, provided loan moneys are used and not ordinary revenue, for the reasons given by the member for Bunbury I can see no objection to it. The ordinary revenue of the council is raised for specific purposes—the construction and maintenance of roads, the provision of health facilities and the other normal duties of municipal councils—but a loan proposition which has run the gauntlet of an objection from the resident owners and a referendum on the subject if objection is made seems to be the right way to go about these housing schemes.

In other countries of the world municipal councils and kindred bodies are not only allowed to undertake these housing schemes, but are also virtually compelled to take some interest in them. I find in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*—this is the only work I discovered containing any reference to the subject—the following information:—

The various Acts passed since 1890 giving powers for dealing with housing problems were consolidated in the Housing Act of 1925.

Part III (Sections 57-80)—This is concerned with the provision of additional new dwelling houses and authorises the various local authorities to provide housing accommodation for the working classes by the erection or acquisition of dwelling houses, or by the conversion of buildings into dwellings; and for this purpose dwellings include lodging-houses, tenement houses or cottages; and the latter may have gardens not exceeding in size one acre. The Act also includes power to provide and maintain with the consent of the Minister of Health buildings adapted for use as shops, any recreation grounds or other buildings or land, which in the opinion of the Minister will serve a beneficial purpose in connection with the requirements of the persons for whom the housing accommodation is provided (Section 107).

Urban local authorities may go outside the boundaries of their areas for the purpose of building dwellings or exercising the like powers. The duty is put upon the local authority to consider the needs of their area, and as often as the occasion arises, or within three months of notice given by the Minister of Health, to prepare a scheme showing the number and the nature of houses to be provided. When approved with or without modification the scheme becomes binding on the local authority. It is interesting to note that under Section 60 (3), the local authority in preparing a scheme and the Minister in approving it, are directed to take into account and so far as possible, to preserve, existing erections of architectural, historic or artistic interest, and to have regard to the natural amenities of the locality; and under certain circumstances the Minister is empowered to direct that an archi-

tect nominated by the Royal Institute of British Architects shall be appointed to secure these ends.

Power is given under which the local authority may acquire land by agreement, and may be authorized by the Minister of Health to purchase compulsorily, for the purpose of carrying out the object of the Housing Act. Act.

Provision is made for empowering the local authority to make by-laws for the management, use and regulating of their houses.

In addition to building themselves, local authorities are authorised to promote or to assist public utility societies to provide housing accommodation.

It is quite obvious that since 1915 at the earliest, the municipal authorities in Great Britain have had far more extensive powers than this Bill contemplates; and I am not suggesting that one should not hasten slowly in a State like this, I am not suggesting that the proposals in this Bill should be as wide as those in force in Great Britain. But in all the circumstances of the case, bearing in mind the careful management for which I think local authorities have distinguished themselves by and large in this State, we should not be out to restrict the powers of local authorities but rather to widen them. That brings me to one of my chief objections to this measure; and that is the inclination I see in it to make local authorities no longer local governments but merely agents for the central government, which I think is a most undesirable trend. I see that trend in the provision which enables the Governor by proclamation virtually to deprive local authorities of all rights in regard to determining what sort of houses should be built in their district.

On the one hand the Bill proposes to widen their scope by giving them some of the powers which are vested in municipal and borough councils in Great Britain; and on the other hand, it proceeds practically to deprive them of their existing powers, by saying that they shall do what the Governor shall tell them. We find provision in regard to uniform by-laws, another aspect of making, as I put it, local government the agent of the central government. While we know that there is provision in the Road Districts Act for road board by-laws to be made uniform by Government proclamation, we also know that, as a general rule, there is a distinct resemblance between the conditions prevailing in one road board district and another. We know, too, that local

authorities have been exempted on the one hand from the provisions of the uniform by-laws, and on the other hand have added to them by-laws of their own to suit their peculiar difficulties.

But there are vast differences as between a municipality such as that of Perth and a municipality such as that of Kalgoorlie and two municipalities like Carnarvon and Busselton—such vast differences that I cannot see in any circumstances, quite apart from the objection of making local government into a mere agency, how uniform by-laws could be made applicable in the very different circumstances that must exist in those cases. Therefore it seems to me that the trend of this measure—and there are other instances of it, too—is to deprive local authorities of some of their powers, instead of providing for an increase in the authority they wield in their own districts, which I believe they are entitled to.

There is a provision in the Bill dealing with the building of abattoirs in an adjoining local authority's district. The only power which the adjoining local authority has is to make objection to the Minister. It does not seem to me that that is sufficient. I am not suggesting that a Minister would not consider the objection. I anticipate that he would give it every consideration. But is not the right way to go about it this: To see that the people of the district, the electors of the district which is concerned in this invasion—and invasion it is, if one looks at it in the right way—are the ones to be consulted? Are not they the people who are justified in saying whether some neighbouring local authority shall come into their territory and do something there which they may or may not consider desirable? I do not think the mere right of the local authority whose district is to be invaded to make a complaint to the Minister justifies us in passing the Bill in its present form. I would certainly say that we should provide some means whereby the people whose interests are to be interfered with should be consulted before the Minister comes to a decision on the matter.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: There may be an agreement between two local authorities.

Mr. WATTS: In that case there would be nothing to consult the Minister about. If both parties were agreed, there would

be no objection. I assume that that aspect of the matter did not arise, because if there were an agreement there would be no objection.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: There might be a disagreement in regard to terms.

Mr. WATTS: I submit there is no need for any further argument.

Mr. Styants: They might agree about aerodromes but not abattoirs.

Mr. WATTS: That is conceivable, too. But the basic principle should be adhered to, that the people of the district should be consulted and the decision of one local authority to invade the territory of another should not be the only thing taken into consideration without the people most concerned being consulted. I will not weary the House with other aspects of the Bill in which I am interested, but will content myself by saying that I support the second reading but will endeavour to improve the measure in Committee.

HON. J. C. WILLCOCK (Geraldton [9.7]: I want to say a word or two about plural voting. While somebody may have had some good reason in the early days of municipalities to provide for plural voting the various portions of the State have become so integrated in the course of progress that it is not right that some people just because they have a little more property than others, should have more votes in that particular area. So far as the municipality of Perth is concerned, the people of the whole of the metropolitan area contribute to its upkeep but all of them have not the right to say who shall represent them on the City Council. Through the electric light enterprise, the Council gets a profit of from £20,000 to £30,000 out of people who are not resident in the municipality.

Mr. Abbott: Do you say that was a foolish agreement for the State to make?

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: It was made a long time ago. Between 1850 and 1910 money values had been almost static and it did not seem foolish to enter into such an agreement. However, we have seen what inflation does; and possibly we shall see it again in the near future. While long-dated agreements are not very wise, one can hardly blame the people of that time for entering into an agreement on the terms they did.

Mr. Abbott: It could be amended by Act of Parliament.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: We could amend it; but there would be such a howl in regard to repudiation from the City Council and other people concerned, that I doubt whether this House could stand up to it.

The Minister for Works: The member for North Perth would not support it.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: No, he would be one of the most active opponents. He would call it repudiation in the most horrible form.

The Minister for Works: What a speech he would make!

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I do not want to hear him make such a speech; and I do not think he will have an opportunity, unless the position gets much worse. From my knowledge of the policy of the Government, I do not think the Government has any idea of interfering with that agreement. I do not want to be led into a side-track, but it may be that there should at this stage be some saving clause in regard to the price of coal affecting the price paid for electric light. There are other things so integrated with the surrounding districts of Perth that it is only fair that people living within the boundaries of the municipality should have equal votes. Certainly some should not have four or ten times more than others. When I was Minister for Railways 15 or 16 years ago, the member for Mt. Hawthorn represented the district now known as Wembley. It was then bush country, and Floreat Park was not even named. But the Government expended on those places money gathered from the taxpayers all over the State, to such an extent that the value of the land was increased and the municipality gets £10,000 a year out of the property. That was due to the expenditure of public loan funds by the Government. Yet because people have property a little bit more valuable than that possessed by others, they claim the right to have from four to ten times the voting power of other people.

Similarly in regard to water supply and sewerage! If the Government had not spent money in extending those facilities to remote areas, people would not have gone to live there. So the Government, through the expenditure of funds contributed by the general taxpayer has assisted greatly in the

progress of the municipality. In the early days, the Municipality of Perth was responsible for the whole progress of its area, and capital was expended by it on the progress of the district. At present I doubt whether the municipality spends very much on its roads. The member for Mt. Hawthorn does not live in the municipality of Perth. Nor do I, and many others; but the bulk of the money we pay by way of motor licence fees, to the extent of £10 a year each, goes into the Perth municipality for its expenditure on roads. I do not want to decry what the Municipality of Perth has done. It has performed a good service in regard to recreation grounds and many other activities designed to beautify and make of more value the City of Perth. The Government and the taxpayers have been responsible for building up the foreshore at the back of the Christian Brothers' College and Government House, and that has been a valuable contribution to the City of Perth and enhanced the rateable value of its property.

All these things have been done by the Government; yet a few people, who own a little more property than others, demand or claim or defend their right to have four times or ten times the voting value of others. That is a narrow idea. It could perhaps have been defended 40 or 50 years ago, when the municipality provided its own roads, and rubbish tips, and sanitary contracts; but it cannot be defended now, when the Government has taken over many activities and enhanced the value of the property in the City of Perth area. People living in the area should have equal voting power, because they are contributing to the rateable value of the property of the city and its surroundings. I do not think it will be long, if we continue to sell electric light to the municipality at the present rates, before the general community will have to make up some of the money lost that way. For many years residents of Wyndham have had to pay some of the cost of the trams which helped to build up the value of the City of Perth.

Yet we have those who say that because the rest of the people in the State have done that, and because they own property worth £100 annual value, they can have four times the right of others in working out the destiny of the capital city of Western Australia. I say they have not that

right or, if they have, it is definitely time it was taken from them. This Bill takes it from them. I would like the Minister to make the position clear under the clause that says municipalities would have the right to build houses on any land that may be vested in them. I do not think that can possibly mean that land dedicated by the Government to a municipality for recreational purposes, known as a Class A reserve, which under the law of the State is sacrosanct—

Mr. North: Endowment land.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: If it is endowment land it is not a Class A reserve. The Government does not take endowment land back without compensation. I would like the Minister to make it clear that in the case of a Class A reserve, which the Government cannot take for any purpose, it will not allow a municipality to take the land for any purpose. I think the part to which I refer is new Section 219A. I believe King's Park is in the Municipality of Perth, but the Government would not allow the council to build houses on King's Park, as some members have said it could under the provisions of this section. For years the City Council has wanted to build a town hall on the Esplanade, which is a Class A reserve, but has not been allowed to do so. That reserve has been dedicated to the use of the people in perpetuity, or until Parliament overrides that, and it has never done so. Notwithstanding the importunities of the Perth City Council the Government has stood its ground regarding that land, and I think the people of the State would wish it to be reserved in perpetuity, yet, under the interpretation placed on this clause by some members, the Perth City Council would be able to build houses or a town hall on the Esplanade. I would like it to be clearly expressed that the council cannot do anything with land such as that, just because it happens to be within the boundaries of the municipality.

With reference to the meeting time, it has been said that the council should have the right to arrange its own sittings. Perhaps so, but a man who wants it to meet in the night-time cannot be elected to secure its meeting at night-time, because he has to work during the day. He is a wage-earner and because of his working hours cannot become a member of the City Council.

Mr. Doney: There is no one hour that would suit all councillors or persons.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: No, but there is an hour in the evening when the majority of people have time available. Most people work between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. and they cannot be elected to the council because they could not do their jobs without taking a lot of time off, which no employer would allow them for the purpose of attending meetings of the council. Such people are therefore debarred from being on the municipal council and taking part in the progress of their city. It is time we got away from that. If their sitting at night would be said to be overtime, why do we sit here at night and why do we have officers of this House kept here at night after being on duty in the day? Why do Ministers come here at night after strenuous days in their offices?

Mr. Doney: Do you not think it right that they should come here?

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: It is right that anybody should be a member here, and members can make their own arrangements about times of sitting. At the beginning of each session the House fixes its own meeting times, but nobody who works in the daytime can be elected to the Perth City Council because he would not be allowed time off. It is not a paid job, and therefore the average man is unable to be a member of the council and cannot have any influence on whether the council meets in the day or night. The reference to £500 or £600 means stopping 80 per cent of the ratepayers of Perth from seeking the right to represent their fellow citizen on the municipal council, because they cannot do it without financial loss.

Mr. Doney: I suppose they could manage it if the meetings were on Saturdays.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: In these democratic times I think Saturday is given over to recreation, which is a good thing for anybody who participates in it. I do not want to see Saturday afternoon recreation done away with simply because someone does not want to allow ordinary citizens to become members of the council under conditions that apply in every municipality in the State except that of Perth.

Mr. Doney: Many of the men desirous of being members of the council regard this sort of thing as their recreation.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Many people would not want to sit on Saturday afternoon.

Mr. Doney: I do not know that I want to sit here at night, either.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: We should see that no citizen is debarred from representing his fellow ratepayers on the council, and that is what happens at the present time. Such a man as I have mentioned would be counted out after being a member of the council for five or six weeks, through lack of attendance, just as would a member of Parliament who did not attend.

Mr. Doney: If the meeting was at 7 p.m. that would penalise some people.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: I think the majority of meetings take place at 8 p.m. in the municipalities with which I have been connected. With a mayor who endeavoured to expedite proceedings the work could be got through in two or three hours.

Mr. Doney: Could committee meetings be held at 7 p.m.?

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the member for Williams-Narrogin to keep order.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: Committee meetings can be held to meet the convenience of those on the committee, but when there are 24 councillors, as I think is the case with the City Council, it is hard to make a time to suit them all. Three people on a committee may be able to sit at some time to suit them all, either in the afternoon or evening or, if they are as enthusiastic as is the member for Williams-Narrogin, they could sit on Saturday afternoon.

Mr. Styants: The attendance might not be too good.

Hon. J. C. WILLCOCK: If two did not turn up there would be no quorum. I think a case has been made out for the abolition of plural voting. Concerning sitting hours, I think it is a disgrace to this country that 90 per cent. of the ratepayers of Perth are debarred, through the sitting time, from serving their fellow citizens on the City Council.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [9.25]: As I see the measure before us, it is our duty to look after the people whom we represent, the people generally, without regard for certain interests or classes of people who are enabled to exercise a vote and authority at the present time. We repre-

sent the people of Western Australia and I believe we are failing in our duty and responsibility if we show any particular consideration for a section of the community, especially when the work undertaken by local governing bodies is such as to affect all the people in a community. A number of suggestions has been made from the other side of the House, to the effect that the Government should have considered and consulted the local governing bodies, in this case the municipal councils, before bringing down this legislation. That reminds me of a suggestion which could be made with equal merit, though it is of course absurd. It is that if it were suggested that there should be amendments made to the Criminal Code, burglars and other lawbreakers should first of all be consulted. As I have said, we have a responsibility to the people whom we represent, but none to organisations that represent only a section, in view of what I have already stated in that regard. The member for Williams-Narrogin twitted members on this side of the House on the fact that this measure appeared to contradict an earlier measure, because this Bill does not provide for adult franchise.

This Bill provides for the abolition of plural voting. I suggest, as all the members of the Opposition are aware, that irrespective of what the Government might think regarding that proposition, there has to be some regard for facts, and the fact unfortunately is that a democratically elected Government has to trim and shape its legislation in order to give it a reasonable prospect of passing a House of privilege. Accordingly, many principles for which the Labour Party stands are not embodied in legislation, because it is known perfectly well that, while there is a restricted franchise and while the Legislative Council represents a particular section of the community and is not responsible to the people as a whole, there is no prospect of legislation along those lines passing the second Chamber. Because of that, the Government has decided, as it were, to take one step at a time.

I have listened to the remarks by members of the Opposition, endeavouring to justify the fact that in one instance one person has one vote while in another instance another person has more than one, but I am unimpressed by the reasons they ad-

vanced. As the member for Bunbury pointed out, there is nothing scientific or logical with regard to the present basis of voting for municipal bodies. As a matter of fact, while a man is a householder and accordingly entitled to vote, all that is required is the simple expedient of a mother undertaking the responsibility of paying the rates for her automatically to become endowed with all the responsibilities that members of the Opposition would have us believe pertain to one who can cast a vote for a municipal council.

Mr. Abbott: Do you object to a mother having some responsibility?

Mr. GRAHAM: Of course, I do not.

Mr. Abbott: I thought that is what you suggested.

Mr. GRAHAM: I have no objection to any adult member of a community having the right to shoulder the responsibilities to which I have referred. That is what I advocate. But because of a device by certain people by which persons may be qualified on that score, I am drawing attention to the point. A person may live in a certain locality and may decide to change his residence and to take up his abode in a locality where another local governing authority operates. He will become qualified to exercise the vote and assume all the responsibilities to which the member for Victoria Park referred. I do say, however, that it was not altogether necessary to listen to his speech this evening because at any rate the substance of it was contained in an article in this morning's Press. The general idea was that the ratepayers in a municipality carry the burden and responsibility of the loan indebtedness, because of the fact that they are ratepayers and accordingly should be entitled to a say as to who should represent them.

As I suggested a few minutes ago, a position could quite easily be created where 50 per cent of the ratepayers of Perth, because of certain special circumstances, could transfer to another part of the State and an entirely new set of individuals could come in and reside within the confines of the area controlled by the Perth City Council. Then, without assuming any responsibilities at all, those people would become endowed with all the niceties entitling them to assume the responsibility of the indebtedness of the municipality concerned. There is nothing

substantial with regard to that point. Valient objection has been taken to the fact that under the provisions of the Bill it will not in the future, should the Bill become law, be possible for a local authority—in this instance the Perth City Council—to hold meetings prior to 7 p.m. Frankly, for any person making a pretence of being democratic to oppose such a reasonable proposition is hard to understand. As far as I can make out, the only local governing authority affected by the Bill in this respect is the Perth City Council. For some time the Perth Road Board held its meetings in daylight, but for a number of years it has resorted to the practice of holding its meetings at night. That has been done without any harmful effect on the work the members of the board are called upon to perform.

There is no gainsaying the point that there are many thousands of ratepayers covered by the Perth Road Board, which body handles considerable sums of money. As the member for Geraldton pointed out, the fact that meetings are held in the daytime automatically debars the great majority of the people residing in the Perth City Council area from actively participating in the affairs of that municipal body. They are denied the right that members of the council enjoy of dealing with matters affecting the lives of people here. The result is that members of the Perth City Council largely comprise persons who are self-employed or have retired from business or are independent of business or other ties. Thus we find that, contrary to the original intention of Parliament, we have the Perth City Council consisting of select representatives of a select section that are entitled to vote or stand for municipal honours. Yet in this year 1945 we talk of democracy and allow that state of affairs to persist! After all, the workers to whom I am referring are those that render useful service to the community but yet are debarred from participating in the work of local government.

As I stated earlier, municipalities function under rights granted by successive Governments and therefore it is the responsibility of the Government and, in a broader sense, the responsibility of Parliament to see that local governing authorities function on something approaching a democratic basis. That claim cannot be advanced

the present moment on behalf of local authorities because, on account of the voting qualification, a very definite limitation is imposed on the type of person that can take a seat on the City Council. It is only natural that the decisions of the council in such circumstances should be contrary in many respects to what is sought by the ordinary people. Just as the Legislative Council, as constituted at present, can snap its fingers at the people of Western Australia because it is not answerable to the people but merely to certain interests, so the municipalities are able to snap their fingers at the great mass of the ordinary people of the community because they know perfectly well that so long as they serve certain interests their members will be sure to secure return because the interests they serve are the only ones that exercise the vote. So there is a penchant existing in Western Australia and elsewhere in the Commonwealth wherein it is agreed that a particular virtue attaches to brick buildings.

It is surprising that in a State like Western Australia where we have the finest hardwoods procurable in any part of the world—I refer particularly to jarrah and karri—so little respect is paid to the qualities of those timbers. In other parts of the world, as members are aware, there is no particular delimitation so far as the construction of buildings is concerned so long as they conform to certain standards and appearance worthy of their immediate surroundings, while at the same time complying with the minimum requirements. In such circumstances, irrespective of whether the dwellings are built of brick, cement, timber or any other material, they are allowed to pass.

Mr. Seward: If you make inquiries when you go to the Eastern States next week, you will find that you are wrong.

Mr. GRAHAM: I was referring particularly to other parts of the world. Unfortunately local governing authorities in other parts of Australia have much the same set-up as regards methods of election and responsibilities to vested interests as obtains here. When all is said and done, if a building conforms to certain standards it is of no great consequence whether it is constructed of one material or another. I suggest that the provision

in the Bill under which the Minister will have authority in this respect is wise, because the Minister is responsible to Parliament and above all is responsible to the people, which is something that cannot be said with regard to local governing authorities. I suggest, therefore, that in areas where it is desired there should be retained at least a certain level, there should be an immediate standard fixed with regard to costs. At the same time, a strict watch could be kept on the type and general lay-out regarding buildings. To suggest that they should be constructed of one material only is the height of absurdity, particularly when we bear in mind the wonderful asset we possess in our hardwoods.

Most of the other matters dealt with in the Bill refer to extra powers granted to local authorities and which it is optional for those bodies to exercise. There is nothing mandatory about them at all. It might be suggested that that is wise because it makes for decentralisation regarding the powers, responsibilities and administration of local governing matters. With that angle I am in entire agreement. One of the matters dealt with concerns kindergartens and institutions of that description. It is suggested that those functions are properly the responsibility of the Government. I am confident that members appreciate that the Government has, and will have for many years to come, its hands more than full in making up leeway with regard to its construction of school buildings, the training of additional teachers and in making further provision against the day when the school leaving age will be increased to 15 years. Everyone hopes that this last-mentioned reform will be achieved as early as possible.

It has to be borne in mind, too, that the income of the State at the present moment is such that, as I mentioned earlier in the session, it is quite possible that the present stringent financial conditions are likely to continue. Therefore, having in mind all that the State has to undertake in the way of the education of a child from six to 14 years—and we hope soon to the age of 15—I should say there is very little prospect indeed of the State's undertaking any work worth while so far as pre-school education is concerned. I know that many local authorities have

assisted, and are anxious to assist on a greater scale than hitherto, pre-school education generally. At present it is necessary to resort to all sorts of devices, such as making contributions from the 3 per cent. fund, to pay for this service; but, if it is desired to go further under this provision of the Bill, it will be left entirely to the discretion of the local governing authority to make a contribution should it so desire. No-one can suggest that this work is not worthy of the fullest support.

I would suggest that the greater part of the development work in most municipalities has already been undertaken; and that therefore the major work which remains to be done may be regarded as of a maintenance character, in large part. This means that the expenditure of local governing authorities is not, and will not be, as great in the future as it has been in the past. Accordingly, new avenues will be opened to them in the way of kindergartens, free libraries, clinics and facilities of that kind. I have given particular emphasis to the merits of the proposal that there should be an abolition of the pernicious system of plural voting, and that meetings of local governing authorities should not be held at such an hour as to debar representatives of the greater portion of the community from being able to take their seats on municipalities because they are unable to attend daytime meetings. I find merit in the Bill, because of the tendency to decentralisation; but I qualify my remarks with the statement that I sincerely hope no additional powers whatsoever will be granted to local governing authorities, either municipalities or road boards, so long as they function, and are allowed to function, on their present autocratic basis, responsible to so few in the community and responsible particularly to broad acres rather than to human beings.

As has been stated not once or twice but many times during this debate, it is my fervent hope that the day is not far distant when Western Australia, a part of the Commonwealth which has so long prided itself on its advanced views, will catch up with conservative Mother England and grant a vote to all persons over the age of 21 years. When that is done, and only then, am I prepared to support the granting of additional powers and responsibilities because of the virtues that I see in decentralisation,

especially as regards administration. But because of the attitude of the Opposition because of the fact that we have a Legislative Council, I see but little prospect indeed of these democratic principles being put into effect. One often judges a situation according to one's experience and problems according to the way one encounters them. As I said previously, municipal councillors are not responsible to the people and therefore are in no way interested. In the short period that I have been a member of Parliament, I have found that an antagonism exists between councillors representing certain interests; whereas I, as a member of Parliament, represent all the people in my electorate, having been elected by a majority of all of the people. Because that antagonism exists, I have found it necessary, when certain matters have been represented to me, to adopt a particular attitude.

Properly, the person who should have been consulted was the councillor of the ward, but I knew the answer would be in the negative. I therefore resorted to the device of approaching the departmental head of the City Council, which I should not have to do, or alternatively I have suggested to my electors that they should approach the City councillors direct, not mentioning that they had discussed the matter with me. Such a course has been found necessary because the representatives of the Perth City Council are not answerable to the people, whereas I am. As I said earlier the councillors can snap their fingers at the people generally; they can snap their fingers at the representatives of the people generally. That has been my experience during the two years I have been a member of Parliament. Until such time as local authorities are democratised in the full sense of the word, members of this Chamber, who are responsible to the people generally, should be very chary of conferring additional powers and responsibilities, as such powers and responsibilities, once granted with the consent of the Legislative Council—and this is important—cannot be retracted without the consent of the Legislative Council. So we should probably find ourselves in the position, if the powers are wrongly exercised or abused, of being powerless to alter what has been done, because by and large the Legislative Council and the local governing authorities are re-

sponsible to the same section, which is certainly anything but the people generally.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [9.54]: I support the second reading of the Bill, although I do not know that I am particularly enthusiastic about some of its contents. However, I have no great objection to anything appearing in it. As to a number of these provisions, I believe some question exists as to their desirability. I am pleased the Bill proposes to alter the mayoral term to two years. The present system of electing a mayor for one year only has very little to recommend it; except, perhaps, as one member said, a mayor who is not giving satisfactory service can be quickly got rid of. However, few cases would fall into that category. The fact of allowing a mayor a term of two years gives him opportunity to put into effect any municipal programme which he probably had in his mind at the time he sought the position. There is much to be said in favour of the system which operates in some of the other States. In some instances the mayor is elected by all of the ratepayers in the municipality; in others, the councillors elect the mayor in much the same way as members of Parliament, having a majority, elect their leader. I know that on more than one occasion a mayor has been at loggerheads with his councillors and has almost thrown down the gauntlet to them, telling them that they had no control over him because they were elected by a section of the ratepayers whereas he had been elected by all the ratepayers.

It may be said that it is more democratic to have the mayor elected by all the ratepayers; and if in fact he were, that contention would have a great deal of substance. But we find, from figures quoted by the member for Victoria Park, that in the first place not more than 50 per cent. of those entitled to be put on the municipal roll take advantage of their right, and even so, only 25 per cent. of those enrolled exercise the franchise. Therefore, while in theory the fact of having the mayor elected by all the ratepayers is democratic, in practice we find that only a small percentage of those eligible to be enrolled and vote exercises its franchise. I also give my support to the abolition of plural voting. I believe that much of the apathy on the part of electors is due to the

fact that the council itself is constituted under an undemocratic franchise and because of the fact that 95 per cent of those who would be entitled to stand as a councillor are prevented from doing so, to a great extent, on account of the time the council holds its meetings.

One member seemed to be under the impression that the owner of the property was the person who paid the rates. I say that in the final analysis all the people in a municipality pay the rates. Take a large business established in the city! I do not think it would be contended by any member that the owner, of his own efforts, is producing the money that is paying the rates. Actually, the people who are paying are those who patronise that particular business establishment. Take the outer suburbs! A hotel is erected, also a picture palace and a place of business. Suppose there are a thousand residents within a certain radius of those buildings. Their value is assessed on the number of residents who live in the locality, whether they be ratepayers or not, within the meaning of our legislation. But let the population double or treble, which it has done in a great number of our progressive districts in the metropolitan area, and we immediately find that the value of the property in that area doubles or trebles. So I point out that by no stretch of the imagination can it be said that it is the owner of the property who pays the rates; in the final analysis, it is the people who reside in that locality.

It may be contended that the person who owns a large amount of property, or property to the greatest value in a municipality has a greater interest in the welfare and progress of the city than one who owns a small amount. I do not believe that to be the case. Let us take the position of two men—and this is an actual instance on the part of the wealthy man—one of whom is wealthy and has property in the municipality of Perth, worth possibly £3,000, but it does not represent more than 25 per cent. of his wealth, because his interests are in the goldmines of this State. The working man or a man of moderate means may own a modest cottage worth, perhaps, £700 or £800, and it represents the whole of his life's savings. I believe that that man has an equal or greater interest in the welfare

and progress of the city than the man who owns a house worth £3,000 which represents only 25 per cent. of his possessions, the remaining 75 per cent. being invested 375 miles away from the municipality of Perth. The man of moderate means who possesses any property should have the same voting power to say what shall be the destinies of the municipality in which he lives as the man who owns a considerable amount of property. I am in favour of evening meetings.

Mr. Read: You would not have attended if you had been a member of a council.

Mr. STYANTS: That is so because I was a shift worker, but I was able to arrange my shifts due to the good fellowship of my mates and to a certain extent to the indulgence of my employer with the result that I was able to attend in the afternoons. On many occasions the night would have suited me just as well. Shift workers are at a disadvantage. Most people, and particularly those interested in municipal matters—and this refers particularly to the Perth City Council—feel if we mention evening meetings that we want to get a lot of working men in as most men who work for wages are occupied during the hours that the council usually meets. But that is not the case. There are many business men and others who hold influential positions in the Public Service who would take an active interest in municipal affairs if they were permitted to do so by having the meetings held in the evenings.

At present unless a person is at the head of a firm, not an executive but actually the owner or is retired or runs a hotel or something of the kind, he is debarred from taking an interest in municipal affairs. I would say that at least 80 per cent.—that is a conservative estimate—of the population of the municipality of Perth is debarred from being elected to the Perth City Council because meetings are not held in the evenings. I agree with the member for Victoria Park that a certain amount of disability would be created by having the meetings in the evenings. He said, "What about the committee meetings?" The position now is that the committees meet on an afternoon in an off week—the council meets fortnightly—and if it is now possible for the committees to meet on one week and the council the

next, what is wrong with having the committee meetings one evening in one week and the council meeting in the succeeding week?

It is true that under that system one would have to bring in a certain amount of staff on those nights when the council meets at any rate. It would not be necessary to bring in all the departmental heads on those nights when the committees met but only the head of the department concerning the committee that was meeting. After all there are high executive officers in many businesses who have to go back after work and attend to meetings, committees, etc. I admit that there would be this disability, but the departmental heads are paid very high salaries. From memory I think the Town Clerk is on a range of about £1,250 to £1,400 and the city engineer is in receipt of well over £1,000 a year. It would not be asking too much of these men to come back. After that they would be relieved of the additional work that the committee meetings and the council meetings place upon them at present in the afternoon.

Provision is made for councils to inaugurate superannuation schemes on a voluntary basis. I have no objection to that but I emphasise that my support is conditional on the obligation of the employee joining being voluntary. At present there is no appeal for a man on the basic wage, within a margin of £1 a week, in regard to joining a superannuation scheme. On account of the increase in the social benefits by way of old age pension for himself and his wife it simply works out now that he disqualifies himself by paying in weekly over a long period of years to a superannuation scheme. He disqualifies himself and his wife from the major benefits he could get without making any direct contribution.

The Minister for Justice: If the means test was abolished that would be all right.

Mr. STYANTS: Yes, but one would be a super optimist if he expected that the means test would be entirely abolished. Senator Fraser, who is Minister for Social Services in the Commonwealth Government, pointed out a couple of months ago that at that time £35,000,000 a year was being paid out in old age and invalid pensions and that, of those who were disqualified by age or invalidity to participate

only two of every five were recipients of the pension. If, because there was no means test, all those who became entitled through age or invalidity to participate in the pensions availed themselves of the privilege, a sum of between £80,000,000 and £90,000,000 a year would be required. That amount, I believe, is quite excessive. The most we can wish for is a liberalising of the means test. To desire its total elimination would simply mean disappointment for us.

Mr. McDonald: The British Government's proposals have no means test.

Mr. STYANTS: I would like to see them do it here. I would support it, but I think it is over-optimistic. The giving of power to municipalities to erect houses is a matter that receives my qualified support. I am not at all enamoured of it but, on account of the acute shortage of houses and the fact that in some instances municipalities have sufficient material to build only one or two houses, I would be prepared to support the provision, but I am definitely against any proposal permitting a council to purchase houses for the purpose of re-sale. My support is on the understanding that it will be for the purpose of erecting houses. Merely because a council turns itself into a glorified estate agency and buys and sells houses will not relieve the housing position. I support the giving of power to councils to erect houses simply with the idea of relieving the acute housing shortage. I believe, with the member for Bunbury, that any such scheme should be carried out from loan funds and not from Consolidated Revenue. It should be somewhat along the lines of the Workers' Home Board, although a Government instrumentality has borrowing powers and the whole of the money has to be paid back into that particular fund.

I do not think that all ratepayers in a municipality should be compelled to pay higher rates into a fund to provide homes for a few. A loan account should be kept separate and apart from any building scheme. Whilst under the Municipal Corporations Act a municipal council has not power to erect houses at present, it is not generally known that under the Town Planning Act it has ample power to embark upon a home building scheme if it likes. If any council wishes to embark

under that Act, there is nothing debarring it from floating a loan, of course with the necessary permission of the Loan Council. Actually, the drill is that the proposal has to come from the municipality to the State Treasurer and from the State Treasurer to the Loan Council, and if the Loan Council approves of floating the loan there is nothing to prevent the municipality from embarking on the scheme.

I want to deal with the matter of wood and brick areas. While I realise that there is quite a lot to be said in favour of keeping certain localities entirely restricted to bricks, particularly on the grounds outlined by the member for Nedlands, namely, the matter of insurance rates and the prevention of fire, what I do object to is that it works out in effect that the working man and the man of moderate means, are continually being pushed to the outskirts or into undesirable areas. Let us cast our minds around the metropolitan district. We find that all the more pleasant and desirable localities are brick areas. It is in the outskirts where there is sand and virgin bush that we find the weatherboard areas. That means that the worker has to go where the usual amenities are not provided. He probably has to go a considerable distance to transport facilities, and has many other objectionable features to contend with.

It is admitted that the insurance rates for areas composed of all wooden buildings are higher than for brick areas, and that again is a disadvantage to the man of moderate means. He is paying exceptionally high rates. So far as my knowledge goes, in an area where there are mixed wood and brick dwellings, the insurance rate on a brick house is no higher than it is in an area where all the houses are of brick, but in an area where all the houses are of wood, the insurance rates are higher. If the Bill is not agreed to, we shall be perpetuating the injustice against the men we should assist. While I am not enthusiastic about some of the provisions of the Bill, there is nothing that I object to and I shall support the second reading.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [10.17]: Like the member for Kalgoorlie, I am not very enthusiastic about the Bill, but will support it because I hope that certain clauses will be amended in Committee, while I am not

very perturbed whether other clauses are passed or not. I should like to point out that in 1939 we had a reprint of statutes. The statutes up to that year were consolidated and amongst them was the Municipal Corporations Act. Since 1939, we have had six Bills amending this Act, and I wonder why the Government goes to the expense of consolidating statutes, especially when in each of two years the amending Bill contained only one clause.

Mr. Cross: The Act was out of print.

Mr. SEWARD: How could it be out of print when it was consolidated in 1939? In another year the amending Bill contained four clauses. If we had put all the amending Bills together, the whole lot would have made only one decent-sized measure. The Government should give consideration, when having statutes consolidated, to those Acts that are not likely to be amended in the few subsequent years. Strangely enough, too, there is no mention in this Bill of an amendment that I would enthusiastically support; that is an amendment for the abolition of all municipalities in country districts. I think it is high time that we took some steps to prevent what I call the stupid duplication of local governing authorities. Of course, I am not referring to the City of Perth or the City of Kalgoorlie.

The speeches delivered by members during the debate clearly indicated the impossibility of providing for all municipalities in one Act, because the conditions in Perth are so entirely dissimilar, as was pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, from those in places like Carnarvon, Busselton, etc., where there is a local road board as well as a municipal council functioning for a handful of people. This is simply a waste of money, particularly at a time when all the money available is required. In many of the country towns where two such authorities are functioning, an enlarged town ward of the road board could carry out all the work the municipal council is doing and so save the duplication of staffs and other expenses entailed.

Mr. Doney: Would you have a road board for Perth?

Mr. SEWARD: I have stated that I excluded Perth and Kalgoorlie. What the distinguishing mark should be to enable a locality to have a municipality, I am not prepared to say. The present provision is

that the Governor may proclaim any area a municipality where the revenue is £750 a year. That is a ridiculously low figure. I should apply to a population greater than one that has a revenue of only £750.

The Minister for Justice: Or to an area with 10,000 people or more.

Mr. SEWARD: Yes. Of course we may tread on the corns of those places where such duplication exists, and if we cannot abolish them, then I hope that no more municipalities will be created in the country districts, because they are not necessary. Such duplication cannot be justified.

This brings me to a point I wish to make regarding the power this Bill seeks to give to municipalities to erect houses. If the power were to be confined to giving a municipality power to erect houses for its own employees, I might be induced to support it, provided it could be proved that the difficulty in the municipality was caused through genuine inability of the employees to obtain houses. I am opposed, however, to giving a council the right to erect houses generally for letting, and I venture to say that, where a shortage of houses does exist—and I know it exists in many country centres where there is a municipality as well as a road board—it has not been caused by the war. The shortage has existed much longer, and has been brought about by the unnecessarily heavy expense which a houseowner is called upon to bear. In other words, the duplication of rates and the other added expenses have become so heavy that people will not build houses.

I have in mind a locality where there is a great shortage of houses, due mainly to the fact that people will not build in that district because the rates are too high and the conditions being imposed are excessive. I had an instance brought under my notice the other day where new regulations have considerably increased the cost of a house in course of erection, with the result that the owner will have to accept a considerably lower rental by reason of supplying the additional facilities required. I am referring to the provision of sumps and so forth. The expenditure will run into something like 5s. or 7s. 6d. a week extra on four flats. Such conditions are preventing people from building houses in those localities.

If we are going to give municipal councils power to build houses out of revenue, it will simply mean that we are going to collect revenue from those who have—contrary to the remarks of the member for East Perth and one or two others—in the early days made money in that locality, invested it, and created business premises there, and used part of that money to build houses to compete against those owned by the ratepayers. The member for Guildford-Midland, in one of the flights of fancy in which he so often indulges, would have us believe that these municipalities spring up overnight. He said that they were bush yesterday and are flourishing localities today, and he attributed the wonderful progress to the chap who blows in today, and is gone next year. As a matter of fact, the progress is due to the people who settled in those districts, where the residents do not receive the wonderful help in the way of roads, water supplies and electric light that are provided by the Government in more favoured places. Such facilities as are provided in the country have been financed by the ratepayers, even the water supply for which we have waited for years and which we have not been able to get the Government to provide for us. These are factors that are retarding building operations in country areas.

If we are going to give municipalities power to erect houses, they will have to charge a higher rate than private enterprise would charge for them. If they are not profitable to private enterprise, they cannot possibly be profitable to a municipal council. This means that the municipalities will have to relieve tenants of the payment of some of the rates, and if they do this, it will be giving those tenants an unfair advantage over the people who build their own houses. This, of course, is just another bit of socialism and is the natural outcome of the pet cry of one-man one-vote, regardless of whether a man is settled in a locality for five minutes, five years or 25 years.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: But he is still a human being.

Mr. SEWARD: Admittedly so, and entitled to all the facilities and amenities of life that we can give him, but when he rents a house for a year or two years, he is not entitled to the say in civic affairs that is given to the man who has lived

there all his life and who has all his assets in the town. Such a man should have a greater say as to the liabilities that are to be imposed upon him. A man renting a house might be moved away by reason of his occupation and when he leaves the town, he leaves all responsibility behind him, whereas a man whose property is there cannot or does not desire to move away because he is interested in the progress of the locality.

There is another provision in the Bill to which the Minister did not refer. This sort of omission was not characteristic of the Minister who usually deals with every point. I refer to the provision whereby it is proposed to take from municipalities the right to charge interest on overdue rates. In answer to a question by the member for Williams-Narrogin today, the Minister stated that the intention was to bring this provision into conformity with an alteration made to the Act some time ago. Whether that is so or not, I cannot bring myself to support it. It will simply mean that the man who does not pay his rates as they fall due will not be penalised. Without provision for the charging of interest, some people will not pay their rates, while those who do meet their obligations will be paying for those who do not. If no similar penalty were imposed by the Commissioner of Taxation for the non-payment of income tax, I wonder how many people would pay their taxation to time. Certainly many people would be behind time in paying. It is only right that a penalty should be inflicted on the man who does not pay his rates to time. A municipal council frames its estimates for the work contemplated over the year on the amount of rates to be collected. If people do not pay their rates, the council has to borrow money from the bank and pay interest on it, so why should not the ratepayer who is late in paying his rates forfeit an interest charge? That is a clause I cannot support.

There is another power referred to in this measure. It has been said that the art of speech has been given to us to enable us to conceal our thoughts. If that is so, the Minister certainly used it to the very limit the other night because his interpretation of one of the powers in the Bill was totally at variance with what that power actually is. I refer to the clause which grants power to

the Governor, by order to prescribe uniform regulations with respect to all or any of the matters in relation to which councils may make by-laws under Section 138. The Minister did not tell us that. He said—

Another proposal dealing with the question of housing aims to give municipal councils the power, should the Governor by proclamation so declare, to use wood or other structural material other than bricks in the construction of the external and internal walls of a dwelling house notwithstanding any restrictions to the contrary in the by-laws of a municipality.

So, according to the Minister, if a council wanted to alter any of its own by-laws, all it would have to do would be to ask the Governor to issue a proclamation. But that is not according to the contents of this Bill, which gives the Minister power to over-ride the by-laws of a council—an entirely different matter. Consequently, I cannot give any support to that.

Mr. Doney: But the council loses every shred of discretion.

Mr. SEWARD: Yes. What is the use of a council's being elected to conduct its own affairs if we are going to give the Minister or the Governor—which is the same thing—the power to over-ride it at will; or probably not at will, but merely because some disgruntled ratepayer wants to do a certain thing which a by-law says he cannot? That is a power I do not intend to give the Minister. Another matter referred to which is not provided for in the Bill, but which I think should be provided for, is the election of a mayor from a council. We frequently see a mayor being elected who has not previously sat on the council. He comes in to preside over members who may have been sitting at the council table for five, ten or 15 years. I do not think that is fair. A man who has served a term at the council table should have preference of election as mayor. The mayor of a municipality should come from the council chamber, where he has had experience of municipal government and is therefore far better able to take the office. There are other clauses regarding times of meeting, and so on, that I think concern the councils themselves. With those observations, I intend to support the second reading, but hope that some of the amendments proposed will be carried.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [10.33]: The member for Pingelly does seem to see many benefits in the Bill, but my major complaint is that it does not go far enough.

Mr. Watts: That was his, too.

Mr. CROSS: I think a separate Bill should be provided for the City of Perth because of the vastly different conditions operating there and in other municipalities. But the member for Pingelly does not see any virtue in local authorities being given power to build houses. It is a strange but true statement that in Great Britain in the few years prior to 1939, when there was a live housing programme, nearly 3,000,000 new houses were built; and the majority of them were erected by various local authorities subsidised by the Government. That system operated in Scandinavian countries too. It was to local authorities that the Government deputed its powers to build houses. I do not see anything wrong with progressive local authorities, which have separate borrowing powers, doing this work. Usually the work they carry out is done particularly well. The City of Perth has been extremely lucky because, some few years ago, it received a gift from the Government in the way of a wonderful contract it entered into to buy electric current from the Government, which costs more to produce than the council pays for it. For some time the City of Perth charged consumers 6d. per unit, until the public outcry became very great. From that time the price was gradually reduced. But all that time the council has been making an average of £30,000 per year profit.

Mr. Read: What has that to do with this Bill?

Mr. CROSS: It may be that the City of Perth could spend some of the money taken from the taxpayers—for the taxpayers have to pay losses on the current bought by the City of Perth. The Perth City Council advocated the building of a model suburb at Floreat Park; and it did a lot of work in that connection to the detriment of the southern suburbs. It may easily be that the council could embark on a housebuilding programme to provide homes for some of the workers, seeing that there is a great shortage of houses. During the war years the council has not been able to spend money, and it could possibly use some of the accumulated funds

for the building of homes at a price that people could afford to pay. I agree with giving local authorities the right, if they so desire, to assist in looking after local school-grounds and kindergartens and so forth. Many road boards do that. In that regard the South Perth Road Board has been very helpful.

Mr. Watts: From what fund is the work done? From the 3 per cents.?

Mr. CROSS: Yes; the road board cannot take money from any other source, I understand. The work the board has done has been very greatly appreciated, particularly by the Parents and Citizens' Association. I notice that a clause is inserted in the Bill that—

Any sea or river jetty the approach to which is within a district shall, if the Governor so directs, be deemed to be within the district, and if such jetty is a public jetty it shall, if the Governor so directs, be under the management and control of the Council of the district.

For a long time I have been trying to find out whose job it is to mend the various jetties, and nobody seems to know.

Mr. Watts: You will find out if you pass that clause!

Mr. CROSS: I would like the Minister to tell us who is going to pay for the repair of these jetties. I have some in a bad state of repair in my electorate. Those at Applecross, Canning Bridge and Como are actually dangerous and should be repaired before the summer months. I hope the Minister will tell us who is going to put them in order. I do not think they should be handed over to the local authority on a plate and left in a state of disrepair. In the past those jetties were used very much by visitors from other parts of the metropolitan area.

Mr. Leslie: Did you not charge them for the use?

Mr. CROSS: No.

Mr. Leslie: You had the money the visitors spent in the summer time.

Mr. CROSS: Sometimes.

Mr. Leslie: They spent quite a lot; that is why you encouraged them.

Mr. CROSS: I said I did not think the Bill went far enough; neither do I. By way of interjection, the Leader of the Opposition said that flat-dwellers had votes. They have for the Legislative Assembly, and can have for the Legislative Council.

Mr. Watts: And they have for municipal councils, too.

Mr. CROSS: For municipal councils they have not votes.

Mr. Watts: I can take you to one house not far from here and show you six flat-dwellers who have votes and will record them on Saturday.

Mr. CROSS: I would draw the hon. member's attention to Section 50 of the Act, and I would point out that there are families living in flats within 200 yards of this Chamber and paying £6 to £8 per week for those flats, who have not votes.

Mr. Leslie: Are you in favour of flats?

Mr. CROSS: No.

Mr. Leslie: Then why not do something to abolish them?

Mr. CROSS: Section 50 of the Act reads as follows:—

(1) When more persons than one are jointly owners or occupiers of rateable land, each of such persons not exceeding two shall, for the purpose of the last preceding section, be deemed to be an owner or occupier of land of the rateable value of one-half the rateable value of the whole land.

(2) Such persons, if more than two, may, by writing under their hands delivered on or before the first day of September in any year to the town clerk, appoint two of their number to be registered in respect of such land; and if no persons are so appointed, those whose names come first in alphabetical order shall be registered.

I would like to say, Mr. Acting Speaker—

The DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would draw the hon. member's attention to Standing Order 23 which indicates that my title is that of Deputy Speaker, and not Acting Speaker.

Mr. CROSS: Very well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, then! I would not like to rob you of your title! The position is that where a number of flats are contained on one block of land or in one building, there are really fewer than six, and often as many as 20, and the combined rentals of one set of 14 flats situated in East Perth is £75 a week. The occupants of those flats are paying that amount between them; but not one of them is on the roll, and none of them is entitled to vote. I have taken the trouble to find out. One made an attempt to be enrolled but was told that the section I have quoted would have to be complied with and that two of the number of residents would have to be selected to make application.

There are numbers of these people who are not ratepayers and are not on the roll because, as they point out, the rates are paid by the landlord. It has been indicated to me that two joint owners of land in Cambridge-street and Adelaide-terrace are enrolled and that debars the 14 tenants of the premises on that land, even though they indirectly pay rates, from having a vote. If anybody can say that is democratic, I have a lot to learn. Those 14 flat-dwellers are being prevented from having a vote for the Legislative Council, for this reason: If they could qualify as ratepayers and appear on the municipal roll, they would automatically be qualified to have a vote for the Legislative Council.

Mr. Watts: I am afraid your friends are unenterprising.

Mr. CROSS: The flats are self-contained and are not like rooms or a boardinghouse. Each flat has a separate entrance but, because people cannot get houses and must live in flats, they are debarred from voting for a municipal council. I will not refer to sanitary sites because members will remember what was said on that subject, but I think provision should be made in this amending Bill, particularly at this stage in the history of Perth, to compel the City Council to take the required action to ensure that all new houses or buildings are connected with the sewerage system or have septic tanks installed. That would safeguard the health of the people. Some local authorities have been doing that for years, and for 12 years South Perth has pursued that policy. The Perth Road Board has also pursued that policy for 12 years, so that in future there will be less and less of the old pan system.

In Victoria Park and at Carlisle, as I have been advised in the last few days, houses are still being built and the pan system installed. If the City Council will not take steps to stop that practice, Parliament should do so. There was a change of front on the part of some members to-night, particularly the member for North Perth. He did not agree with giving power to put a sanitary site somewhere else, but he did not adopt that attitude last week. I believe this Bill gives the Minister opportunity to put in the required amendment. I do not know that I could do it as a private member, or whether it is within the scope of the Bill, but I hope the

Minister will take that step and, if he does, I think he will have the support of the whole community. I approve of the abolition of plural voting, which I think is entirely wrong.

[The Speaker resumed the Chair.]

Mr. Leslie: You think the abolition of plural voting is wrong?

Mr. CROSS: It is largely geography that creates values in the city; the geographic position of the main buildings and facilities. The values are also increased by the people who use the facilities. Though a large number of the people may not contribute directly to the rates, they do contribute to the institutions that pay heavy rates, and the abolition of plural voting is a step in the right direction. I think the Government should have taken a firm step and said that everybody over 21 years of age should have the right to vote for their representative on the local authority.

Mr. LESLIE: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. LESLIE (Mt. Marshall) [10.50]: I had hoped that this matter would be left until tomorrow night.

The Minister for Works: Why not next week?

Mr. LESLIE: I listened with considerable interest to the debate, and particularly that portion of it dealing with what is called plural voting. I would remind the House that we are living in a world in which considerable and unexpected changes are taking place. We must expect to move and change with the alterations in circumstances, but if we are to remain stable or escape from a state of chaos, and hang on to the things that have kept the Empire the leader of the world, we must, at all costs, cling to vital and basic principles. This Bill interests me, not because it deals with municipal councils in particular, but because it deals with a basic principle in plural voting. While I am as radical—perhaps more so—as some members on the other side of the House—

The Minister for Lands: You are telling me!

Mr. LESLIE: I am not prepared to depart from vital principles unless they can be proved to be unworkable and in the way of the administration of the social services of the community and of Government and society in general. So far in this debate, neither the Minister in introducing the Bill, nor any of those who spoke about plural voting, put up a single instance of where the fact that an individual had more than one vote had operated against the efficient working of a municipal council. I require that evidence if I am to support a departure from a principle that has operated for so many years. If that evidence is forthcoming I am prepared to accept it as showing the need for a change, but I do not see it.

The Minister for Works: Did you ever hear of the Perth Rating Appeal Board?

Mr. LESLIE: I have heard of rating appeal boards in practically all councils and road boards.

The Minister for Works: Why was this one established?

Mr. LESLIE: Has the Minister ever heard of taxation appeals, and of organisations set up for the purpose of appealing against taxation? There is a Price Fixing Commissioner and there are many organisations to object to impositions placed upon people. It is suggested that in this Bill it is intended to depart from or alter the plural voting system, yet one clause actually perpetuates the plural voting system. The only plural voting that I find today in regard to municipal councils or local governing authorities, is that which permits joint owners of property to exercise votes respectively. There is nothing in the Act or in the law that establishes these councils, which are created and operate only under delegated authority, that says the ratepayer is the person who shall have a vote. The member for Nedlands pointed out some of the functions of and the method of establishment of the councils, and how they came about in the first place. The Minister did not mention the one point that I hoped he would touch on. Actually the vote is vested in the land itself and it is the occupier or owner who really exercises the vote.

The vote is not vested in broad acres, as the member for East Perth says. It is vested in the land itself and it transfers to

the owner or occupier, whoever he may be, at the time when the vote is taken. He may not necessarily pay a rate. That is the principle on which the local governing bodies have been established, that the vote goes with the land. While I own or occupy a block of land I can exercise that vote, but the moment I leave it the vote is transferred to the new owner or occupier, and that establishes a degree of permanency of policy and responsibility. The payment of rates is only a burden that must be carried with the responsibility of ownership. The payment of rates, however, does not entitle a person to a vote and I can quote an instance where the owner of four blocks of flats has not a vote, while the four occupiers of the flats have votes. I do not know how it is done, but that is the case.

Mr. Cross: Then the four blocks of flats are not on the one piece of land.

Mr. LESLIE: They are. The payment of rates is not a qualification for the exercise of a vote for a municipal council. The land itself is the qualification and that establishes the reason for the creation of the local governing body that is, the improvement of the facilities that are to be provided for the owners and occupiers of that land, whoever they may be. The land itself and the revenue from it are the security for what the council undertakes, and are a sure guaranter of permanence. That guarantees that the responsibilities will be undertaken, and it covers the question of who shall exercise control of that area and decide what improvements are to be made and how the money is to be spent. That authority is actually vested in the land itself. While I have approached this matter with an open mind, I believe that when I vote against the clause in this Bill that is designed to abolish plural voting, I will be exercising a correct judgment, because no evidence has been advanced to justify the alteration of a vital principle. I am prepared to go this far, that I believe it is wrong to allow votes in quantity, according to the value of the property. There should be a limitation there and I am prepared to support any limitation the Government may care to introduce in that regard.

I am prepared also to support the abolition of what is called plural voting, in certain cases where an owner or occupier of

land owns land in more than one ward in a municipality, and where the affairs of that municipality are carried out, and the finance is administered in such a way that the money is spent over the whole of the municipal area, regardless of the revenue received from any particular ward. I am prepared to say that one owner shall have one vote only in that municipality. So long as municipalities operate under the system—as some do—whereby the area is divided into wards and the revenue from each ward is spent in that ward and improvements are limited to the amount of revenue raised in the ward, I consider that each ward should be regarded as a separate entity and, on this account, is entitled to separate representation, and each owner or occupier is therefore entitled to a vote in each ward. This, I believe, is a system that would not be challenged by any opponent of plural voting that permits a ratepayer in Perth to have a vote in the city and, if he has property also at Northam, to have a vote for the Northam municipal elections.

So long as we retain the system of separate ward financing, we must have a separate system of voting. This cannot be described as plural voting, and therefore I shall oppose the proposal to alter the system in a way that would deprive the owner or occupier of the land of the right to select his representative to determine the spending of the finance applicable to his ward. I do not like the provision in the Bill which proposes to empower the Governor-in-Council arbitrarily to overrule the decision of a municipality with regard to the brick area. Because I am a democrat and a believer in democracy and justice, I consider that where an injustice exists, it is the duty of Parliament and the Government to remove it. Some injustice might occur under the limitation regarding the material to be used in the erection of buildings. Every individual should have the right of appeal to a higher authority. An individual who desires to erect a building in a certain area and comes in conflict with the decision of the local authority should have the right of appeal. I would be prepared to support an amendment providing that the Governor shall have the right to grant a permit for the construction of a building in any

material other than brick or stone so long as an appeal was granted upon good cause being shown by the intending builder

An interesting point was raised by the member for Geraldton relative to voting. He suggested that the consumer of electric current or a person who contributes towards the revenue of any public utility should, by virtue of the fact that he is so contributing, be in the same category as a ratepayer and should be entitled to some say in the selection of the governing body. If we followed that suggestion to its logical conclusion, it would be just as reasonable to contend that everyone who contributes towards the profit of any commercial undertaking is entitled to a voice in the management because he is contributing towards its profit. I cannot see members on the Government side, not even the member for Geraldton, stretching the desire to extend the privileges of voting to such a degree.

I hope that when amendments are submitted in Committee, members on the Government side will consider the points of view that have been advanced from this side of the House. It is all very well to be wedded to an ideal.

The Minister for Lands: I have been wedded to one for 40 years.

Mr. LESLIE: I believe that this Bill has been introduced simply with the idea of giving effect to something that has been desired by a small section of the community for a long time. I remind the member for East Perth that the Government is responsible to the people as a whole and not merely to one party or to one political organisation that might lay down the planks and policy of the party. I do not consider that the Government has received a mandate to propose such a vital and drastic alteration as is incorporated in this Bill. Therefore I shall support the second reading, and in Committee will support many of the indicated amendments with all the vigour of which I am capable.

On motion by Mrs. Cardell-Oliver, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 11.8 p.m.