I hope the Government will make a thorough survey of the Gascoyne River in order to ascertain the amount of water that is available, so giving the growers or planters greater security of tenure. As members are probably aware, there are two towns in the North, Onslow and Port Hedland, that have exceedingly poor water supplies; in fact, at Port Hedland the water is as salty as the sea. We know there is water at Onslow—or we think we do—but it is a matter of the cost of piping the water to the town. Drinking water is brought to Port Hedland by train and costs residents 3s. 6d. per 100 gallons. The military aerodrome, only eight miles from the township, has an abundance of fresh water and surely the residents, who have to spend their lives in such towns, are entitled to some consideration.

The pearling industry has suffered more than most other industries in the North. It was completely lost during the war years and Broome was the town which suffered most. The industry could be put on a sound financial basis again, and it deserves every encouragement from the Government. The pearlers who lost their luggers through no fault of their own should have every consideration shown them and should, I think, be reimbursed in order that they may buy new luggers.

In the North there are three towns, Onslow, Roebourne and Port Hedland, without a doctor. The Flying Doctor Service is doing, and has done, a wonderful job, but is it not asking far too much of one medical man that he should look after these three towns as well as the whole of the inland between Port Hedland and Exmouth Gulf? It is imperative that a doctor be stationed at every town in the North, and that the Flying Doctor Service be extended to cover the whole of the inland between Wyndham and Carnarvon.

Another big problem in the North is that of education, especially for those people who live away from the towns. The correspondence system has been a great help to the outback people and has been appreciated by them, but the time comes when a child has to be sent away to school, and then the cost to the parents becomes very high. How can a man who is on a salary—living away from the towns—afford £100 or £150 per year to have a child educated? He may have two or three children and it is practically impossible for him to pay for their education. I think it is only right that the Government should pay a subsidy to parents who have to send their children away to school.

At a later date I hope to discuss many other subjects such as aviation, shipping and harbour facilities, postal services, telephonic communication, and also the problem of natives and half-castes. The last-mentioned, no doubt, is fast becoming a serious problem in the North-West, mainly owing to interference by an ignorant, mischievous, and unscrupulous section of the community—

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. R. M. FORREST: —whose main object seems to be to create trouble and discontent among people who are naturally a happy and contented race. In conclusion, I would say that the story of the North is one of pioneering endeavour, courage and endurance which could not be surpassed in any other country. I support the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by Hon. E. M. Heenan, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.7 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 13th August, 1946.

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

QUESTIONS.

SOLDIER LAND SETTLEMENT.

(a) As to Applications under Commonwealth Scheme.

Mr. DONEY asked the Minister for Lands:

1, What is the number of ex-Servicemen who have applied for farms under the Commonwealth Scheme and who are now in training at the centres in Western Australia set up for that purpose—the number applicable to each centre to be mentioned separately?

2, What is the total number of applicants —during and since the war—for farms in this State?

3, What number cancelled their applications?

4, What number of applications have been finally refused?

5, How many have finalised training?

6, How many, if any, have commenced operations on their own account on farms?

The MINISTER replied:

1, None.

2, 2,189.

3, 158 withdrawn; 170 cancelled.

4, 71.

5, None.

6, None.

(b) As to Purchase of Dairy Stock.

Mr. McLARTY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, What is the total number of dairy heifers purchased by the Government for intending soldier settlers?

2, Are suitable bulls also being purchased?

3, If so, what are the average ages of these bulls and what number?

The MINISTER replied:

1, 988.

2 and 3, Sixteen pedigree bulls have been purchased; 9 others are under offer. Ages 12 to 24 months.

BULLDOZERS AND TRACTORS.

As to Allotments to States.

Mr. DONEY asked the Premier:

1, What are the conditions under which bulldozers and tractors are made available to the Australian States?

2, What numbers have been allotted each year (if distributed over more than one year) to Western Australia since distribution commenced? If figures are available for the other States, what are those figures?

3, Is any allowance made for the fact that this State is not agriculturally developed to the extent the others are?

4, Of Western Australia's share to date, what number has been allotted to (a) private individuals; (b) to this State's Government departments?

The PREMIER replied:

1, To Government Departments—Through direct allocation by Allied Works Council of equipment released by the Services. To Private Concerns—Through distribution after allocation by the Allied Works Council of released equipment or importation of new equipment.

2, This information is not available.

3, The agricultural needs of this State have been stressed to the Allied Works Council direct and through the Director General of Agriculture.

4, (a) This information is not available. (b) Approximately 35.

HOUSING TIMBER.

As to Exports to Eastern States.

Mr. NEEDHAM asked the Premier:

1, Is he aware that certain classes of timber necessary for house building and repairs and renovations to existing buildings are being exported to the Eastern States?

2, If so, what is the reason for such export?

3, If the answer to Question No. 2 is in the affirmative, will he request Mr. Wallwork to include this important phase of the housing problem in the inquiry he is now conducting?

The PREMIER replied:

1 and 2, Certain items essential for the housing programme in Western Australia must be imported from the other States, just as supplies of our timber are required by them, and reciprocal arrangements are necessary in the interests of all. Although quantities of export timber to the Eastern States are fixed by the Commonwealth Controller of Timber, the State Government is

watching the position closely in order to safeguard the interests of our own people.

3, This has already been done.

WATER SUPPLIES.

As to Mendel-Wongoondy-Kocketea Estate.

Mr. BRAND asked the Minister for Works:

1, Are steps being taken to provide an adequate water supply to meet the needs of the farming community in the Mendel-Wongoondy-Kocketea Estate area?

2, If so, what stage has now been reached in the project?

3, If the answer to question No. 1 is "Yes," will he state what is the proposed capacity of the works being undertaken?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Yes.

2, The survey has been completed and the proposed site is now being tested by way of trial shafts.

3, This matter has yet to be decided.

NATIVE ADMINISTRATION.

As to Request for Commonwealth Grant.

Mr. McDONALD asked the Minister for the North-West:

1, Whether a request has been forwarded to the Commonwealth Government pursuant to the resolution of this House in November, 1945, that the Commonwealth Government be asked to make a grant of £50,000 per annum for three years to enable the Western Australian Government to do more for the needs of the native people of this State?

2, If so, what was the date when such a request was forwarded?

3, What reply has been received, and what negotiations on the matter between the Commonwealth Government and the Western Australian Government have taken place in consequence?

The MINISTER replied:

1, 2 and 2, A request was forwarded in compliance with the resolution passed by this House and in November last a reply was received from the Commonwealth Government to the effect that after careful consideration it was regretted that in view of the heavy obligations on the Commonwealth in regard to post-war requirements the financial assistance could not be provided. A conference on native affairs between the States and Commonwealth is to be held shortly.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Electoral (War Time) Act Amendment. Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

2, Road Districts Act Amendment. Introduced by Hon. N. Keenan.

BILL—FEEDING STUFFS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—North-East Fremantle, [4.37] in moving the second reading said: This is a very short Bill necessitated by an oversight that occurred in 1940 when an amendment was being made to the Feeding Stuffs Act. In that measure provision is made for the compilation of a list of manufactured stock foods and all by-products registered under the Act. The list has to include, amongst other things, the respective analyses which are required to be set out in the applications for registration made under the Act. In Section 5 details of the chemical analysis for registration purposes are set out. In the case of stock foods the minimum percentages of crude protein and crude fat and maximum percentages of crude fibre must be stated. When consideration was being given to the amendment to the Act in 1940 a schedule was prepared showing comparisons of the practices in Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria and the proposed amendment to the Western Australian Act. With the three Eastern States Acts the minimum percentages of crude protein and crude fat are required and for Western Australia it was proposed that, with the exception of meatmeals, the requirements for any stock food should be the minimum that had been provided for in the States I have mentioned. In the case of meatmeals it was suggested that the information on the application form should include the minimum percentage of crude protein, and the maximum percentage of crude protein, and the maximum percentage of crude fat and crude fibre. There is a difference there.

With regard to stock foods other than meatmeals, the requirement was a statement of the minimum percentage of crude protein and crude fat and the maximum percentage of crude fibre. With regard to meatmeals it was not desired to have the minimum percentage of crude fat at all, but the maximum percentage of crude fat. The desirability of stipulating the maximum percentage of crude fat in the case of meatmeals was stressed by the Animal Nutrition Officer during the early discussions on the proposed amendment. With meatmeals, which are rich in protein, a high percentage of fat is a distinct disadvantage, as it adversely affects the digestibility and the biological value of the food. Therefore nothing is to be gained by stipulating for such foods the minimum percentage of crude fat. It is far more desirable for the purchaser of a stock food to know the maximum amount of crude fat in a food rich in protein, and it is to effect this alteration in the Act that this small amendment is introduced. It has been brought prominently before our notice recently because a number of purchasers have questioned the value of some stock food on the market and have asked for the chemical analysis. Such analysis would have been of little value so far as rich protein foods were concerned, unless we could have a provision which would call upon the manufacturer to stipulate the maximum amount of crude fat instead of the minimum. So all that this Bill proposes to do is to substitute the maximum amount of crude fat for the minimum amount of crude fat in food concentrates rich in protein. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Thorn, debate adjourned.

BILL—BULK HANDLING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—North-East Fremantle) [4.44] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is also a very short one, its provisions being designed to meet a request which the Government received from Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., to enable that company to deal with certain shares in a way which it is not possible to do under existing legislation. One of the requirements of Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd., is that the growers who are in possession of shares shall be active growers; and "active grower" is defined as a grower who has continued to supply wheat in bulk to the company. Any grower who for the past two successive seasons has failed to supply wheat in bulk to the company is no longer regarded as an active grower; and the articles of association of the company in such circumstances provide that those growers are deemed to have served a notice on the company stating that they wish to dispose of their shares. The company can then proceed to transfer the shares to eligible persons. Such persons are those who have built up a toll credit of £1 or more. Of course the company does not take such action without endeavouring to ascertain from those who have ceased to be active growers the reason why they have ceased to send wheat forward. Notices are sent out. If no replies are received the company assumes that the growers are no longer interested and it proceeds to transfer the shares. Any answers received are given consideration and if the explanation is that there has been a shortage of superphosphate or bad seasons, or some such legitimate reason, then the company is satisfied that the grower, although he has not actually delivered wheat, is still in effect an active grower and consequently no attempt is made to transfer the shares.

Each year there are a number of men who cease to be active growers and also a number of men who become eligible, as growers, for shares in the company, and so the transfer is effected. But then there are always a number of shares in excess of the number required by new growers. The company is permitted under the Companies Act to purchase some of those shares provided it does not purchase a quantity which is in excess of five per cent. of the paid-up capital of the company. After having done so, there are still surplus shares in the hands of the company that have been forfeited under the conditions which I have outlined, and Co-operative Bulk Handling, Ltd. desires power to be able to purchase those shares, not by way of reduction of capital but to hold the shares so that they can be allotted again at some future date. Under existing legislation there is always a surplus of shares which cannot be dealt with by way of transfer and which cannot be purchased because

the limit of five per cent. has been reached. It is proposed to give the company power to purchase those surplus shares up to 20 per cent. of the paid-up capital of the company; so, instead of the proportion being one-twentieth, as it is now under the Companies Act, the proportion is to be one-fifth of the paid-up capital. These shares do not bear dividends nor do they confer any great benefits upon the holders.

The company desires this amendment more or less as a machinery measure to obviate the necessity of its having to wait 12 months before it can do anything with an accumulation of shares that cannot be dealt with under existing legislation. I am satisfied that it is a legitimate request on the part of the company, and that there is no danger in it to anyone. The desire of the company is that only active growers shall be associated with it, and so long as a man is an active grower, he retains his right to his shares. When he ceases to be an active grower, under existing legislation and the articles of the company, his shares are deemed to be forfeited to the company, and so they are there for some purpose. As I have already pointed out, some of them are transferred to people who are eligible to hold them.

I will give members an idea of the number of shares so dealt with. Following the handing over of the company to growers, shares were issued as provided in the deed of trust and, at the conclusion of the 1944-45 season, the position arose where 1,702 shareholders had failed to deliver wheat to Co-operative Bulk Handling Ltd., and consequently, on the resolution of the directors that Article 44(e) should apply to the shares held by these persons, they would be deemed to have served a notice upon the company to the effect that they desired to transfer their shares and appoint the directors agents for the sale. At the same time, from the 1944-45 season, 554 new growers delivered sufficient wheat to the company to be eligible for membership—that is, they delivered sufficient wheat for their toll credit to become £1 or more and, under the articles, a share must be transferred or issued to them. The directors therefore resolved that Article 44(e) should apply to the 1,702 shares held by the persons first mentioned, and that 554 of these should be transferred to the new growers who had become eligible for membership.

Following this, as the company under existing legislation may only acquire one-twentieth of the total paid-up shares—which at that date amounted to 8,158 shares—the directors resolved that 407 of the remaining shares of the original 1,702 should be acquired by the company. This left an outstanding balance of 741 shares. The 1,702 shareholders were notified of the resolution of the directors and a number of them indicated that they had not ceased to be active growers of wheat but had been prevented from delivering wheat to the company owing to drought, flood, fire, storm or other untoward happening to their crops. But there still remains the necessity to deal with the shares which could not be transferred or purchased. So that these shares may be acquired by the company, it is proposed to give power to the company to purchase shares in excess of 5 per cent., which is its present limit. The Bill proposes to enable the company to purchase shares up to 20 per cent. of the paid-up capital.

The important points to remember are that the shares are really only a form of membership and carry little or no privilege, and that it is not the policy of the company to pay dividends on them.

Hon. N. Keenan: What is the value of them?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I could not tell the hon. member that.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: They are worth £1. The grower has to establish a toll value of £1 before he can hold them.

Mr. Seward: Do they carry any voting power?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, and that is one of the reasons why it is desired that these shares shall be again allotted. The company desires that only active growers shall have a voice in its business.

Mr. Seward: Do they carry voting power to the company when it acquires them?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Yes, but the company will not just buy in shares with a view to reducing the amount of paid-up capital. Its first object is to issue as many shares as possible to active growers. Now, as soon as a grower establishes his toll value, the articles entitle him to a share, and the company will issue shares to all eligible growers. It will do that by

transferring these forfeited shares, but, having done that, there is still a surplus of shares. The company then buys in as many of these surplus shares as the restriction to 5 per cent. of the paid-up capital will permit. Having done that, there are still some shares left which the company cannot buy at present, but which it desires to have power to purchase. This Bill will give it the power to buy in those shares up to 20 per cent. of the paid-up capital. I have examined the measure very carefully and can see no possible danger in it. I therefore ask the House to pass the Bill which, I believe, is more or less a machinery provision to enable the company to do that which I think is desirable in all the circumstances. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

BILL—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [4.58] in moving the second reading said: The first genuine attempt to obtain the Saturday half-holiday in the metropolitan area was made about the end of 1910. I think you, Mr. Speaker, are acquainted with that episode. After considerable agitation and propaganda, and a referendum under the Act, the Saturday half-holiday was acceded to and became an accomplished fact here. Shortly afterwards, the late shopping night was abolished and, in 1921, the present Act—which has been considerably amended since—was brought into force. From time to time many alterations have been made to it. This Bill contains three principles, namely, the provision of universal closing on Saturdays at 1 p.m., the abolition of the late shopping night throughout the State and the closing at 5.30 p.m. of all shops other than those mentioned in the Fourth Schedule. Members will recall that this Bill was introduced towards the end of last session, when I moved the second reading and then left it for the purpose of giving country members, in particular, an opportunity of going into the question with their electors, with a view to continuing with it this session. But the fact that a general election of the Legislative Council would intervene was overlooked and, of course, the Bill had to lapse and be re-introduced. That is why I am introducing it now.

There are, in the State, 119 shop districts created under the Act of 1920-37, and the great majority already observe the Saturday afternoon holiday. As a matter of fact, out of the total of 119, only 39 observe the half-holiday on Wednesday, five observe the Thursday half-holiday, and one observes a half-holiday on Tuesday. Of the 39 observing the Wednesday half-holiday, only 12 have been contested by a referendum of the people as provided under the Act. In other words, the remaining areas voluntarily went over to the Saturday half-holiday by the action of a majority of the shopkeepers. I desire to remind members that the Act provides for a referendum to be taken, allowing the majority of the people to decide, or a majority of the shopkeepers to decide, to shift from one day to another. A number of towns have voluntarily changed over from Wednesday to Saturday, without any referendum, as is provided for in the Act.

Considerable correspondence has been received during the last few months on the desire to change from Wednesday or Thursday or Saturday. I had no alternative but to refer to this Bill which I thought, at the time, would be picked up again, but which is now again being introduced. An interesting survey at York showed that a proportion of nine shopkeepers to one were against reverting to the late shopping night and a proportion of six to three against opening on Saturday afternoon. In the State there are 7,496 registered shops, employing a total of 28,327 persons. Of that number only 883 shops, employing 1,380 males and 933 females are affected by the provisions of the Bill. The existing law, which remains unaffected by these proposals, allows shops carrying perishables—fruit, vegetables, bread, milk, refreshments, cooked meats—as well as newspaper offices, dining rooms, fish shops—and even undertakers—to remain open, if they so desire, till 11 p.m. on every day of the week, whilst newsagents, stationers, booksellers, florists and tobacconists may remain open until 8 p.m. on every day of the week except Sunday.

All this occurs at present and will continue, irrespective of what is contained in this Bill, because those shops come under the provisions of the Fourth Schedule and are what are known as small shops. "Small shops" include shops conducted by widows and elderly couples and provide for hard cases where the chief inspector, subject to the Minister's approval, may declare them small shops. They enjoy certain concessions over other shopkeepers, provided they do not employ any assistants. In March 1942, under the National Security Regulations, shops generally throughout the State were closed at 5.30 p.m. and the late trading night was abolished. Those particular provisions of the National Security Regulations have now expired, but the closing hour of 5.30 p.m. has been generally maintained by shops in the country, because the compulsory earlier closing had proved that trading could reasonably be conducted within the shortened hours.

The shopkeepers appreciate what it means to have shorter hours and have found that it is possible for people to trade within those hours. Both the proprietors of businesses and the executives of companies have told responsible officials that they are hopeful that these hours will be maintained. I have a vivid recollection of the arguments that were used in 1910 against the closing of shops in the metropolitan area on Saturday afternoon. I remember what was said as to the dire results that would follow. It was said that the unfortunate single man would not be able to buy shirts, ties or collars, and so on, but nevertheless the shops were closed. After that the late shopping night was abolished.

At that time I was general secretary of the Metropolitan Shop Assistants' Union, and it was interesting to walk about the shops and see the two sections of the community that used to patronise the shops at those hours. First of all there were the ladies, who went from shop to shop looking at dress materials, but admitting that they could not pick the materials they wanted under electric light. They went in again on Monday and bought what they wanted. The young blades and girls used to walk up and down the streets until about a quarter to ten, and then there would be a rush until 10 o'clock while the young men bought collars and ties. We closed the shops at 1 p.m. on Saturdays and abolished the late shopping night, and I am sure that no businessman in Perth would like to revert to the Saturday afternoon and Friday night trading. What applies in the metropolitan area would also apply, I think, in the country.

Country business people appreciate the extra time given them for social intercourse or for following their hobbies. I know that the member for Williams-Narrogin likes to play golf, and would feel very hurt if he had to give up his game in order to keep open his business on Saturday afternoon. The shorter hours permit friends to visit one another, particularly with modern transport, and generally speaking the change has been found to be of great value. During the recess, and for the reasons I have already stated, I left the Bill at the second reading stage in order to allow members to find out the opinions held in their various districts. I have also indulged in a little propaganda myself, through other people. We wrote to the Chambers of Commerce, the road boards and business people in various areas and received a considerable amount of correspondence in reply.

I would ask one member opposite to take note of this, because I wish to allow the Leader of the Opposition an opportunity of introducing an amendment, if he so desires. The Katanning Chamber of Commerce wrote a letter to the Leader of the Opposition, dated the 12th February, 1946, agreeing to the three principles, with one slight provision, and I ask the Leader of the Opposition to try in some way to deal with it. Portion of the letter to which I have referred reads—

> Whilst 5.30 p.m. closing is quite convenient on four days of the week, we would appreciate an extension of half an hour on this time on Friday nights, as is the practice at present. Almost every Friday is a sale day in Katanning, and as it is frequently 4 p.m. and later before the sale finishes, the extra half hour gives those interested a little extra time in which to collect their stores.

The letter continues—

> In return for this concession we would be quite willing to close at 12.30 p.m. on Saturdays, instead of at one o'clock as at present.

If the Leader of the Opposition drafts an amendment along those lines I think it will receive sympathetic consideration here. Fifteen shopkeepers at Donnybrook signed what appears to be a petition supporting any measure designed to abolish late night

trading, and to confirm a Saturday half holiday and provide for the 5.30 p.m. closing of shops generally, except those especially provided for in the Factories and Shops Act. Eight traders at Narrogin also wrote supporting any measure designed to abolish late night trading, to confirm a Saturday half holiday and to provide for the 5.30 p.m. closing of shops generally, except those specially provided for in the Factories and Shops Act. Five traders at Wagin forwarded a similar petition, as did also five traders at Collie. The Chamber of Commerce at Albany wrote saying that the conditions mentioned already applied at Albany and that traders there do not desire any alteration. The traders of Bunbury not only signed a petition but sent up a petition, containing 19 names, asking for an amendment to their present agreement with the Shop Assistants' Union in order to bring them into conformity with the suggested hours. The Northam Chamber of Commerce wrote as follows:—

> Your letter of the 22nd January last to hand and same was placed before the meeting of this Chamber last month, and it was resolved to advise you that the Chamber is very much in favour of the legislation to amend the Factories and Shops Act, and we are writing to the member for the district and to Mr. Thorn of Toodyay, requesting that they support the Bill.

Mr. Thorn: They threatened me when passing through Northam.

The Minister for Works: It is a very progressive Chamber.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The Meckering Farmers' Co-operative Company Ltd., also wrote to the Minister for Works asking him to inform me that they were anxious to endorse the State-wide Saturday closing. The Meckering Parents and Citizens' Association is also anxious to support it. The large number of letters that have been sent from the country gives some idea of the opinions held in country areas as to this proposed amendment. I think it will be obvious to members that the shorter working week is better for both employers and employees, as both have to work in the running of the shops, and therefore the shorter week is coming and coming fast.. As no one seems to want to go back to the old hours I see no reason why we should revert to that position. Whatever arguments might be used in support of the longer hours were used in days gone by when you and I, Mr. Speaker, worked for the closing of the shops in the metropolitan area on Saturday afternoons. The dire results predicted have not materialised and I see no reason why we should not pass the Bill. I have pleasure in moving—

> That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Brand, debate adjourned.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. A. H. Panton—Leederville) [5.15] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is somewhat similar to the preceding one; it is not very long but it is very important. Many efforts have been made to give the State Government Insurance Office the necessary statutory authority to undertake all classes of insurance business in competition with the associated companies and non-tariff offices. This, to a very large extent, has been prevented by the attitude of the Legislative Council, which was not prepared to allow the State Office that amount of liberty, if I may so term it. Members, irrespective of party, must agree, I think, that the time has arrived when the State Office should be given the same rights as any of the associated offices enjoys, and so I make no apology for introducing a Bill of this sort again.

There are two very important facts that I wish to mention. The first is that under Section 134 of the Commonwealth Life Assurance Act No. 28 of 1945, which came into operation on the 20th June last, the Commonwealth is empowered to undertake every class of insurance. Therefore I ask members whether there is any possible argument against giving the State Office the same right as the Commonwealth has now taken unto itself.

Hon. N. Keenan: Is that Act a war measure?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: No; I have a copy of the Commonwealth Act which the hon. member may see. The second reason is that the State Office is constantly being requested by people desirous of taking out insurance to accept general risks and they

have expressed keen disappointment that the State Office has not the statutory power to comply with their wishes.

Dealing first with the Commonwealth Insurance Act, I desire to draw attention to Section 51 (14) of the Commonwealth Constitution Act, which reads—

> The Parliament shall, subject to this constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to insurance other than State insurance; also State insurance extending beyond the limits of the State concerned.

Quick and Garran, in their well-known textbook at page 583 say—

> The words "other than State insurance" are words of exception, reserving to a State the control over insurance business organised and conducted by the Government of the State. The Federal control over insurance extends in the same manner as the Federal control over banking, to any form of insurance throughout the Commonwealth except insurance organised and carried on by the Government of a State and confined to the limits of the State.

Thus while the Commonwealth cannot prevent the State from engaging in any class of insurance so long as it does not extend beyond the boundaries of the State, the Commonwealth has the constitutional right to engage in insurance in every State of the Commonwealth. Now, under the Act I have mentioned, it has the statutory power to do so. Section 134 of the Commonwealth Act provides inter alia that the Commonwealth Government Insurance Office may carry on life assurance business and such other kinds of insurance business as are prescribed. I presume this means such other kinds of insurance business as are prescribed by the Governor-General-in-Council. Section 35, Subsection (3), provides that the Commonwealth Insurance Office shall be liable for such contributions as a company would be liable for payment to fire brigades, which rather implies that the Commonwealth proposes to undertake fire insurance.

The State Government Insurance Office began operating on the 1st July, 1926, chiefly to provide compensation for employees suffering from industrial diseases, particularly silicosis, a risk which the associated companies were not prepared to accept. At that time Cabinet approved of the office undertaking all classes of employers' liability insurance as it would have been unfair to load the office with only the risks covered by the Third Schedule to the Act.

Since the State Office has been in operation, the rates quoted for general accident business have throughout compared more than favourably with those of the associated companies. Policies are eagerly sought by people desirous of insuring. The volume of business of the State Office increased steadily until 1932 when its premium income was equal to the aggregate workers' compensation insurance premiums of the companies. The position was reversed slightly in the next year because of the number of men in the mining industry dropping from 15,000 to 4,000 odd and the number of employees engaged in munitions and secondary industries for whose insurance the Commonwealth Government was responsible. The maximum number of policies current with the State Office in any pre-war year was 1,758 which, during the war, was reduced to a minimum number of 1,691. I have explained the reason for the decrease. Since hostilities ceased, the leeway has been overtaken and in June, 1946, a new all-time record was established, there being 2,154 policies current at the end of that month.

After four unsuccessful attempts, the activities of the office were legalised by the passing of the State Government Insurance Office Act during the 1939 session. This not only authorised the conduct of workers' compensation business, but also ratified all transactions of the office up to that date. Notwithstanding the fact that the State Office has been directly responsible for a very substantial reduction in the premium rates charged to industry, the business has proved most profitable. At the 30th June last the accumulated reserve totalled £851,000, which represents a general reserve of £466,000, and specific reserves of £385,000. Of the total general reserve, £785,000 represents liquid assets, of which £716,000 is invested in various Commonwealth loans and £69,000 in Australian Consolidated stocks. In addition to the reserves created, very substantial profits have been transferred to the Treasury, being credited to Consolidated Revenue Account.

Mr. Seward: What are the liabilities of the State Office?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: To the end of June there were no liabilities. However, the balance sheet has been laid on the Table and the hon. member may dissect it.

Mr. Doney: Have you the totals paid to the Treasury?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: No, but they will be shown in the balance sheet. If those amounts had not been paid into Consolidated Revenue, the office would have been able to pay rates and taxes.

Mr. Doney: You said they were substantial and I thought you might have been glad to give them.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am not so glad, because I do not think that Consolidated Revenue should get the money. I consider that it should be put into buildings for the office, but the Premier does not agree with me. It should be perfectly obvious to all who have the interests of the State at heart—as I know every member here has—that it would be most unwise to allow an open field to remain which might attract the establishment of a Commonwealth Office. We have heard a good deal from members opposite of the need for protecting ourselves against the Commonwealth and of not allowing the Commonwealth to take things from the State.

Mr. Watts: That is not your attitude.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am introducing a Bill to prevent that sort of thing.

Mr. Leslie: You subscribe to that policy.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I always have, as the hon. member well knows. Any profit made from this lucrative business should be retained in the State for the benefit of the State and not allowed to pass to the Commonwealth. In view of the Commonwealth Act I ask members, "Are we going to sit back?" If we allow the Commonwealth to enter the business, it will not be a question of the State Insurance Office versus the associated offices; it will be a matter of competition between the Commonwealth Office and the associated offices.

Mr. Doney: You are making a good point. That is quite right.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I think it will bring the hon. member to support the Bill. In fact, I find it hard to understand why any member, with this fact in mind, should seek to prevent the State Office from having the same right as the Commonwealth has now taken to itself. I shall be pleased to hear any reasonable argument that can be advanced against my statement.

Mr. Doney: Nobody would put up opposition on those grounds.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: That is the principal reason for the introduction of the Bill.

Hon. N. Keenan: What part of this Bill deals with that position?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The fact that the Commonwealth has the right to engage in insurance is sufficient.

Hon. N. Keenan: But what part of the Bill deals with the position?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The fact that, without this measure, we shall be unable to operate in open competition with the Commonwealth. If the Bill be rejected, the Commonwealth will be in competition with the associated offices and the State Office will simply slip back. Members will appreciate that, if the Commonwealth Office undertakes all classes of insurance, as it will be able to do under its Act, people will not go to the Commonwealth Office for one section of insurance and to the State Office for another.

Mr. Doney: You are assuming that the associated offices could not successfully compete?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am not assuming anything of the sort. All I am asking is that, if the Commonwealth has an open go, why should the State Office be tied up so that it cannot compete? I am not making any suggestion about the insurance companies; they are well able to look after themselves without my worrying about them. But I am worrying about what will happen to the State Office if the Commonwealth has the lot, without our having a say at all. I do not think there is any doubt that the general public desire to insure with the State Office, and that they will wish to do so to a greater extent when it is a matter of State insurance versus Commonwealth. They will come to the State Office if they are given an opportunity to do so. It may be of interest to members to know that under the Motor Vehicle (Third Party) Insurance Act, the State Office was authorised to handle all classes of motor vehicle insurance, the two principal classes

being third party compulsory insurance and comprehensive insurance to cover the owner's vehicle and third party property damage. The amending Act became operative on the 1st July, 1944, and for that year 11,000 vehicle owners entrusted their compulsory third party insurance to the State Office.

Mr. Leslie: You had very busy agents.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: What does the hon. member think we are in the field for? It is sometimes said with regard to Government enterprises that they go to sleep. I am pleased to hear that this is one that is doing a good job.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Minister should address the Chair and never mind interjections.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: They are very pertinent, Mr. Speaker! For the year ended the 30th June, 1946, the number increased from 11,000 to 18,000 and judging from the number of new applications it looks as though there will be a considerable increase beyond that figure. During the past two years approximately 600 comprehensive policies have been issued which would probably equal the volume of that class of business written by individual insurance companies; that is excepting the Club Motor Agency, which operates in conjunction with the R.A.C. and which acts as agent for the majority of the associated companies.

Mr. Thorn: Is not that an independent company?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Yes, but they are agents for all the companies and so would write more than any other single company. Therefore I exclude them. This Bill has been introduced for the reasons I have stated. I might point out that the State Offices in Queensland and New South Wales have the right to handle every class of business, including life assurance; and Tasmania has the right to handle all classes except life assurance; and from the information I have received, I glean that those offices work in perfect harmony with the associated companies. In fact, our own office does also.

The Bill looks big but is really a very small one and is largely self explanatory, calling for very little comment on my part. Provision is made for the title of "Manager" to be altered to that of "Genera Manager." If the Bill becomes law th appointment of branch managers will b necessary in the country, and it may als be required to appoint internal managers o such departments as the fire insurance an life assurance departments. It will b necessary, therefore, to bestow on the ad ministrative head the title of general man ager to distinguish him from the other offi cers under his control. In Queensland, Vic toria, and New Zealand the administrativ officers are designated commissioners and i New South Wales and Tasmania the tern used is general manager.

The Bill seeks to preserve to the officer of the State Insurance Office their presen appointments under the Public Service Ac 1904-1935, and further provides that othe officers with special knowledge may be ap pointed from time to time to meet the re quirements of the office. Another clause ha been inserted about which some member may be curious. Under the present Act, i is necessary for the State to comply witl certain provisions of the State Trading Con cerns Act of 1916. We feel there is alway a disadvantage in any office being require to conform to the provisions of some Ac which does not directly control that particu lar office. In this case it would be possibl for the State Trading Concerns Act to b amended, and the fact that the State Offic is required to conform to certain section of that Act may be overlooked. So we hav made adequate provision for the prope control of the funds of the office and al of the safeguards contained in the Stat Trading Concerns Act are incorporated i this Bill. So any policy issued by the Stat Office will be guaranteed by the Government

The schedule to the Act merely provide the machinery for the proper administra tion of the office. The accounts will b audited by the Auditor General and th general manager will be required to furnis to the Minister a report of the transaction of the office not later than the month o September in each year. Such report mus be accompanied by financial statements dul audited by the Auditor General and mus be laid before each House as soon as prac ticable.

I was rather interested to read an opinio expressed by Mr. Dunstan, ex-Premier o Victoria. I do not think that anybody wh

knows him would say that he was a great advocate of the Labour Party. Knowing him as I do, I would say he is fairly conservative. In a statement attributed to him and appearing at page 1721 of the May 1946 issue of the Victorian Parliamentary Debates he said—and I am sure no Labour man could be more emphatic—

I believe that healthy competition between the State Insurance Office and private insurance companies—vested interests as some people call them—is for the good of the community, because any insurance office that cannot stand competition has no right to survive.

That is his opinion and I think members will agree it is a very fair statement that if associated offices with their long experience and standing are unable to stand up to competition, they should not be in the ring. I submit the Bill with a great deal of confidence. I feel that members appreciate that we are now up against not only the Associated Insurance Companies, but also the Commonwealth Act which was assented to on the 16th August, 1945, and came into operation in this State in June of this year; and in consequence that we should be up and doing and at least give our own office an equal right to that of the Commonwealth office. Under those circumstances I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Watts, debate adjourned.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REFERENDUM.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. E. Nulsen—Kanowna) [5.40] in moving the second reading said: In this Bill we are bringing down an old hardy annual. On 20 or 30 occasions in this Chamber attempts have been made to readjust the relationship between the two Houses of Parliament, but those attempts have met with little success. That emphasises the need for some reform in regard to the Legislature in this State. We hope that members of this Parliament will give full consideration to the matter of submitting two questions to our masters.

Mr. Doney: You have poor grounds for that hope!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I think we have very good grounds. We had a recommendation from the hon. member's leader himself in 1944. This is a simple and clear-cut Bill and I would like members to understand the fairness of the two questions it contains. The first is:

Are you in favour of the abolition of the Legislative Council as a constituent part of the Parliament of the State?

On that issue the people can vote yes or no. The other question is:

Are you in favour of the franchise for the election of members of the Legislative Council being the same as the franchise for the election of members of the Legislative Assembly?

There again the answer will be yes or no. We on this side of the House would not mind if Bills that we sent to the other place were not treated so contemptuously. Our attempts to secure reforms have been many; but on the last occasion, and on many other occasions, the other House did not even allow the Bill to pass the second reading.

Mr. Thorn: Which of the two questions would you recommend?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It is a matter of opinion. As far as I am concerned—and I think the Government feels the same—I would not mind if we could get some measure of reform. If this matter is submitted to our masters, it behoves us to vote one way or the other, whether we be Labour members or otherwise. I can assure the hon. member that there are members on this side who would not vote for the abolition of the other House, provided we had the adult franchise for the election of that Chamber as is the case with regard to second Chambers in other parts of the world.

Mr. Doney: Whereabouts?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: To deal with deadlocks, I have introduced Bills similar to the legislation of the Mother country.

Mr. Abbott: Would that satisfy you?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The other House threw out that proposal without letting it go to the second reading. The members there did not want the Legislative Council to be put on the same basis as the Imperial Parliament.

Mr. Abbott: Would that satisfy you?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I can speak only for myself. At that time it would have satisfied me. I feel that something

must be done with respect to the Legislative Council. It seems to me that that House is archaic. It is living in the past.

The Minister for Works: That is praising them up!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The members of that House are treating people the same as they were treated 200 years ago —as an uneducated and illiterate mass. That is wrong. Education has improved and the people of today are going to demand more say. It is ridiculous that the people of Western Australia should submit to the will of less than one-fifth of those who voted for the Legislative Assembly. The voting for the Legislative Council at the 1943 elections showed less than 20 per cent. of the number of votes recorded for the Assembly elections.

Mr. McLarty: What will be the attitude of the Government if the electors vote "yes" to both questions.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not know what it will be, but I should say that the majority, whichever way the majority goes, will survive. We live in a democratic age, where the majority rules.

The Minister for Works: We are living in it, but the member for Murray-Wellington is not.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It seems to me that the hon. member is doubtful about the matter. Our Constitution is an elastic one. It is only a matter of the will of the people being expressed. Even in the old days, the people were given an opportunity to advance as progress was made. Because of the Legislative Council, there has been no progress. Section 2 of the Act gives the Legislature full authority to do what is thought to be best in accordance with the views of the people. Because we live in an age of democracy, the majority should have a say. Our masters should be consulted.

Mr. Abbott: Are the coalminers the masters, or do they constitute the majority?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That has nothing to do with the Bill. The people of Western Australia are not going to sit down for ever under this sort of thing, because they comprise a free and enlightened community. They are going to look for redress in some way. If something were not done, I would not blame them if they took drastic action. People are becoming more educated every day. The will of the people must in the long run prevail. Their will does not prevail now. This House is subject to a minority.

Mr Abbott: That is a ridiculous statement.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There is nothing ridiculous about it, for it is a fact. Members cannot get away from facts.

Mr. SPEAKER: I must ask the member for North Perth to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Property owners circumscribe the rights of the people generally. The only qualification they need is that they shall own a house or a bit of property.

Mr. Abbott: Or pay rent.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Provided they pay sufficient rent, but we have a number of people who do not pay sufficient rent to give them a vote.

Mr. Cross: The hon. member would not know what the qualifications are if he was asked to set them out.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I feel that the Legislative Council dominates the position and has not a sense of its responsibilities in accordance with the equities that should be allowed to each and every person who is entitled to a vote. That is in accordance with our Electoral Act. There was a time when there was no qualification other than the property qualification. I do not think we have changed much from those days. Today the property qualification dominates and rules. It does not matter much what we pass in this House. Although another place represents only a few people it can, if it so desires, throw out legislation that has gone through this Chamber. It has the power of veto. I have here notes that could keep me on my feet for probably an hour and a half.

Mr. Watts: You will certainly lose the Bill that way.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I think I shall keep these notes for the Committee stage, if it is necessary to use them then, but I feel that that will not be necessary in this House.

Mr. Watts: It will be like the Hopetoun Railway Bill; it will be passed without discussion.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It seems that property interests in this Parliament are of greater importance than any other interests. Proper consideration has not yet been given to the mothers in this State. We find that even if the father has a vote, the mother has not. At the last election for the Legislative Council, less than half the votes recorded were those of females, whereas in connection with the Assembly election, one could say it was over 100 per cent.

Mr. Seward: Voting for the Assembly was compulsory.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This has nothing to do with compulsion.

Mr. Seward: That is a ridiculous statement.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Tradesmen have a vote for this Chamber because they have the qualification, but many of them have no vote for another place. That is a statement of fact.

Mr. Watts: Did you say just now, over 100 per cent?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I hope the member for Subiaco is listening. She always sticks up for her sex; something that I admire her for.

The Premier: She cannot stand flattery.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We often hear trite sayings, phrases and sentences about democracy. We hear about, "Government of the people, by the people, for the people." There is no "government of the people by the people" in Western Australia.

Mr. Doney: Who is it by?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: By a minority of property owners.

Mr. Seward: We have always held that they are in a minority.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Bricks and mortar represent the minority. If a person has the qualification, it should be taken notice of but, so far as Western Australia is concerned, that does not exist.

Mr. Watts: You might have had enough members in the Legislative Council to enable you to get this Bill through if you had contested the ten seats.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We cannot fool all the people all the time, although, in this instance, most people have been fooled for a long time. We have been accused of not bringing down progressive legislation. We have brought it down and it has been thrown out in another place, which represents only a few of the people, namely those who are property owners.

Mr. Thorn: Your movement fooled the people at the last Council elections by not putting up candidates; you were not interested enough.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: As the franchise is today, it is not of much use to do so. It is a preserve of their own and they are looking after their own. No doubt property owners will return to Parliament only those who will look after their interests. It is the desire of this side of the House to look after the interests of all, of the property owners as well as of the workers. We want full representation, not merely the representation of one section of the community, and we do not want one section to dominate the remainder. Political issues are often depreciated by extraneous influences. It is rather queer in regard to another place that it seems to have the backing of the Press.

Mr. Watts: I like that!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We do not get from the Press much consideration in regard to our advocacy of a better deal from another place. The only consideration we get is through our own Press, the Press that we ourselves own.

Mr. McLarty: They print every word you say.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not say that the Press is unfair.

Mr. Watts: We thought you were saying so; that is better.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I am speaking for myself. Naturally, the Press advocates what pleases it to advocate.

Mr. McLarty: They print every word you say.

Hon. N. Keenan: And in good English!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Has the Press on any occasion advocated adult franchise for another place? I do not think so. I do not think our opposition Press has ever given that consideration to us. It moulds public opinion in regard to the Legislative Council.

Mr. Watts: Will you name the opposition Press?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I will not name any section of the Press. Even "The West Australian," for which I have a high regard, is naturally looking after those it represents; that is its function. The same thing applies to the rest of the Press, other than the Press we own ourselves.

Mr. Watts: I read an article in a weekly paper saying that the whole of Parliament should be abolished.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There may be something in that, but this Bill has not been brought down to abolish the State Parliament. It is to be left to the people to decide whether we should have adult franchise for the Legislative Council and, if not adult franchise, whether it should be abolished. The position today is unfair. No chaos has developed in England because of the passing of the Parliament Act of 1911, notwithstanding the great change that was effected. When we seek to bring about an almost identical system here with regard to the Legislative Council, the Bill is thrown out before it reaches the second reading stage. Queensland possesses only one Chamber, but the State Parliament there still exists. Since the introduction of the uni-cameral system in Queensland, the population has increased rapidly, and today it is considerably over a million.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And there has been a change of Government since that was agreed to.

Mr. McLarty: No.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is so. If the people were dissatisfied, why was not the bi-cameral system re-introduced? I do not think it ever will be re-introduced. It is realised in Queensland that one Chamber is sufficient, and it is felt in England, where the population is over 40,000,000, that one Chamber should also be sufficient. Justice for all must be enforced, but justice is equal for all. The Legislative Council cannot be defended on justice. I say that advisedly. It is too unjust to too many people. We have thrifty people who save their money and establish their homes, and their wives and they are doing their best to educate their children. Educational advancement is an investment. These people are doing a lot for their country, but they cannot have a vote for another place. There are thousands of mothers in Western Australia who have no vote for the Legislative Council.

Mr. Thorn: And they are breaking their hearts about it!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Whether that is so or not they should be given a vote, because they are entitled to have one. The timber workers have not a vote for another place, and they, too, should have one. I hope this Bill will be given favourable consideration. I would like to repeat the figures I gave when moving the second reading of the deadlock Bill. At the last election in 1943, there were 274,851 persons on the roll for the Legislative Assembly, but in the case of the Legislative Council there were only 79,889 persons on the roll, less than one-third of those for the Legislative Assembly. In the case of this House, 86.53 per cent. of the electors voted —members will say they did so because voting is compulsory—but in the case of the Legislative Council, only 49.48 per cent. voted.

Mr. Watts: Because it was not compulsory in their case.

Mr. Seward: What was the percentage before it was compulsory to vote?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not know, but on the Goldfields in the early days, before voting was compulsory, a very high percentage was recorded at the polls.

Mr. Watts: People took more interest in politics then.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The member for Guildford-Midland can back me up in that.

Mr. Seward: He would agree with what you said.

Mr. Thorn: Yes, he would agree to anything; we do not take any notice of that.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: As a matter of fact, the State was warned about the situation in 1888 when the then member for Greenough pointed out to the Imperial Parliament that there should be one Chamber only and he asserted that, if the bicameral system were adopted, the second Chamber would retard progress. He said that it would be mischievous and would not work for the

progress of the country, that it would be undemocratic and would be a hindrance to Western Australia. I have at my disposal quite a lot of material that I could place before the House referring to the various steps taken to deal with the relationship between the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council. On the 2nd October, 1902, the then Premier, Hon. Walter James, introduced a Bill dealing with the matter—the Bill was not as drastic as the one I am submitting to the House—but the conservatism of another place ensured its defeat. In the following year the then Premier introduced another Bill along similar lines, but it was again defeated.

Mr. Seward: Was that to abolish the Council?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: No, the object was to alter the relationship between the two Chambers. I draw attention to this fact to emphasise the discontent that has existed in this Parliament ever since 1902. If I had had sufficient time at my disposal, I could have gone further back than that and possibly I would have found still earlier attempts to effect an alteration. As I have already indicated, the subject was raised as far back as 1888 when a note of caution was sounded as to what might happen—and we know that it has happened in this State. In 1906 the then Attorney General, Hon. N. Keenan, introduced a Bill dealing with the reform of another place, the object being to amend Section 15 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1899. That Bill lapsed. On the 11th August, 1908, Mr. T. H. Bath asked the Premier in this House whether the Executive Council would avail itself of an opportunity to test the opinion of the electors respecting the abolition of the Legislative Council by authorising a referendum, but it was found that that course was unconstitutional and the only way to deal with it was to secure the approval of the Chamber that it was desired to abolish.

Mr. Doney: What was the object of the Bill introduced by the present member for Nedlands?

Hon. N. Keenan: The object was to broaden the franchise.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The object of the member for Nedlands' Bill was to effect a reduction in the household and leasehold qualifications of electors for the Council by lowering the annual value from £25 to £15. But members would not agree to that.

Mr. Doney: At any rate, that is not an argument that will help you today.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: On the 15th September, 1909, Hon. T. H. Bath moved the following motion in this Chamber—

> That in the opinion of this House a referendum of the electors for the Legislative Assembly in this State should be taken to ascertain their opinions in regard to an amendment of the Constitution Act to provide for the introduction of the unicameral system of legislature.

The motion was defeated after a long debate. On the 23rd November, 1909, the then Premier, Hon. W. J. Moore, introduced a Bill in the Assembly for the purpose of amending Section 15 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1899.

Mr. Thorn: Can you tell us what was the opinion of the Minister for Lands on this question when he was a member of the Upper House?

The Minister for Lands: The same as Mr. Gladstone's opinion.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The Bill introduced by the then Premier failed to pass the second reading in the Council by an absolute majority. On the 6th December, 1910, a similar Bill was introduced by the Attorney General, Hon. J. L. Nanson. That Bill was amended in the Council to provide for an annual value of £17 instead of £15 as proposed in the Bill, in connection with the leasehold, household and ratepayers' qualifications. That amendment was accepted by the Assembly and those are the qualifications that exist in the Act at the present time. On the 14th November, 1916, Hon. James Cornell moved a motion in the Council favouring the amendment of the Constitution Act but the motion was not agreed to. On the 6th February, 1917, Hon. J. W. Kirwan moved a motion in the Council affecting the franchise for the Upper House. The debate on the motion was adjourned, and apparently it was not again considered by the House. On the 26th September, 1918, Hon. P. Collier introduced a Bill in this Chamber to amend Section 15 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1899, but that measure was defeated. Again on the 10th September, 1919, Hon. P. Collier introduced a similar Bill but it was dis-

charged from the notice paper. On the same date—the 10th September, 1919—the then Attorney General, Hon. T. P. Draper, again dealt with the matter by introducing a Bill to amend the Constitution Act.

Mr. Thorn: All this indicates nothing. We do not know what the Bills contained.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If I had the necessary time, I could supply members with a mass of particulars indicating the number of occasions upon which Bills of this description have been rejected by another place and would show that only on two occasions has the Upper House agreed to any amendment and even so the amendments in question represented very little. Those who know the history of the electoral law know that the Act has not been altered to any considerable extent since it was passed originally. On the 13th October, 1920, Hon. P. Collier again introduced a Bill in this House substantially similar to those he had submitted in the two previous sessions, but the Bill was discharged from the notice paper. On the 7th September, 1921, the then Premier introduced a Bill to give effect to the recommendations of a Joint Select Committee appointed to inquire into procedure on money Bills. The existing provisions of Section 46 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act, 1899, are the result of this enactment. On the 10th November, 1921, Hon. P. Collier again introduced a Bill dealing with Section 15 of the Constitution Act. The Bill was passed in the Assembly without amendment but was defeated in the Legislative Council. Again on the 1st December, 1925, Hon. P. Collier submitted a similar Bill in the Assembly but this again was defeated in the Council.

Mr. Thorn: At any rate, he was a trier!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: On the 19th August, 1926, Hon. P. Collier again introduced similar legislation but once more the Bill was defeated in the Council.

Mr. Watts: The rats have been nibbling at this cheese for a long time.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But the conservative tigers of another place would have nothing of it. It is a pity that the mouse did not succeed in chewing through the ropes and releasing the lion of progress, in accordance with the old fable. On the 21st November, 1935, Hon. J. Cornell introduced a Bill in the Council with the object of amending the Constitution Act but that Bill was withdrawn because its provisions did not suit the members of another place. On the 6th December, 1938, the then Minister for Justice, Hon. F. C. L. Smith, introduced a Bill that was defeated in the Council and on the 29th August, 1939, I myself, as Minister for Justice, introduced a similar Bill in this House but the measure was not proceeded with. On the 29th August, 1944, I again submitted similar legislation, but once more it was defeated in the Council. On the 6th December, 1944, Hon. C. F. Baxter introduced the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, Amendment Bill, but it was thrown out. These are some of the efforts made to provide the people of this State with a fair deal.

Mr. Watts: Mr. Baxter's Bill was not thrown out!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yet members on the Opposition side of the House advocate the retention of the Legislative Council in its present form. If I had the necessary time—

Mr. Seward: What is the hurry? You can get leave to continue your remarks.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The effort has not been made by members on one side of the House only. I could remind members that in 1944 the present Leader of the Opposition suggested that a referendum of the people should be taken on the question. He said that they are our masters and that we should abide by the people's decision.

Mr. Watts: That was not on the question of the abolition of the Council.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: This Bill is not for the abolition of the Council.

Mr. Watts: Your Bill is for its abolition.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I submit the Bill to the House and I trust we shall receive full support for it so that we can allow our masters to reach a decision. If they agree to the abolition of the Council, we must abide by that decision. If the people should say that both Houses should be elected on the same franchise, we would be satisfied. In that event we will be on a fair basis, exactly the same as in the national Parliament in connection with

which the Senate is elected on the same franchise as the House of Representatives. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Leslie, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 14th August, 1946.

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

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Eighth Day.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East) [4.33]: May I at the outset join with other members in extending congratulations to you, Sir, and to Mr. Kitson and Mr. Seddon on their respective appointments and to the three new members on their election to this House. Your elevation to the Presidency, Sir, is the reward of hard work over a long life, and I hope you will be blessed with good health to carry out the high duties of your office. Mr. Kitson's appointment as Agent-General has, so far as I am aware, not found one critic, and this may fairly be regarded as some indication of the high esteem in which he is held by all sections of the people. I am sure he will create an excellent impression in England and prove a fitting successor to Mr. Troy. I do not believe that any higher tribute than that could be paid to him.

The appointment of Mr. Seddon as Chairman of Committees is also well merited and I know that I am expressing the hope of his colleagues for the North-East Province when I say that we wish him a speedy and complete recovery from his present serious illness. I feel confident that the House has suffered no loss by the election of Messrs Bennetts, Forrest and Simpson. We have all been greatly impressed by the maiden speeches of those gentlemen and I congratulate them upon the able way in which they have stated the case for the people outback. Whilst Mr. Forrest and Mr. Simpson were not known to me previously, Mr. Bennetts has been well-known to me for many years, and I assure members that his election to Parliament is the culmination of long years of splendid service to the community on the Goldfields. He is conscientious and hard-working, and those qualities will make him a valuable member of this Chamber.

The Lieut.-Governor's Speech strikes a very optimistic note, and both in regard to what has been accomplished and the plans that are in hand, the Government deserves congratulation. If ever our State has fallen on its feet, that time is now, and any impartial critic must agree that the Government realises this and is doing everything in its power to cope with the situation.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: We only want the workers to agree.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: There are many difficulties ahead, but difficulties are the inevitable consequence of the sacrifices forced upon us by the war effort. Housing is a typical example, but to my mind the Speech shows that everything possible is being done to meet the difficulty. There is no easy, quick solution of the problem; it is world-wide, but I am pleased to note that the Government is concentrating on the provision of building materials, while the appointment of Mr. Wallwork to make an examination of the whole set-up is to be commended. If his work in this direction has the good results that it had in the coal industry, it will be a matter of general satisfaction.

Hon. C. B. Williams: I do not think he has done anything much about the Collie miners. They have always been good workers.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The goldmining industry seems to be on the verge of a great revival and, in all my years on the Eastern Goldfields, I have never known the people