Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 11th September, 1946.

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

BILL—MEDICAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed.*

BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL REFERENDUM.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. E. H. Gray—West) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill of the same character as that which was ruled out of order in this Chamber towards the close of last session. The House, in doing so, dissented from a decision given by the then President—only the second time, I might add, in Sir John Kirwan's lengthy and record term of office that a ruling of his had been set aside. I think that those who wished to do so might have drawn certain inferences from the House's action on that occasion. No objection on the ground that resulted in the failure of that Bill can be sustained this year, as the measure now under discussion has passed through another place by absolute majorities.

The controversy regarding the Legislative Council, and in particular the restricted franchise under which it is elected, has flourished for very many years. It has been the subject of debate in Parliament at frequent intervals without any agreement being reached. In effect, the position is one of stalemate. Both sides are adamant, one considering that the cause of the people would be advantaged by the adoption of either of the suggestions contained in the Bill, while against that view are deployed the forces of vested interests, big business, wealth and property, and those who probably feel some twinge of regret at the passing of an era in which a favoured few possessed all the privileges while the mass of the people lived in ignorance and servitude.

But those who have the interests of the people at heart are not disposed to accept defeat. We believe that in our proposals we represent the wishes of the electors, and we are sincere in that belief. We feel that the Legislative Council in rejecting our proposals has not the support of a majority of the people of this State. Therefore, as the parliamentary representatives cannot agree, we consider that the people should be given the opportunity to express their opinion, and we are not afraid to ask them to do so. Are our opponents equally unafraid? Do they fear to give the people a chance to indicate their desire? Here is the opportunity for them to prove they are not! If they take that view, this Bill will be passed with little debate.

A recent Press statement, attributed to the Leader of the Opposition in another place, suggested that the purpose of this Bill was to camouflage what the member in question was pleased to describe as the "misdeeds of the Government," and to obscure other election issues. What a strange and unsupported statement! What a gross misinterpretation of the facts, when all knowledgeable persons are aware that year after year, whether elections were in the offing or not, the Government has sponsored similar measures! The minds of members may be refreshed if I allude briefly to occasions in recent years when such steps have been taken.

In 1927 a Bill was introduced to abolish plural voting and to replace the £17 householder qualification by the householder franchise. That was rejected. Again in 1938, the Qualification of Electors (Legislative Council) Bill, which sought the replacement of the £17 householder qualification by an inhabitant occupier qualification, was also rejected by this House. A Bill providing for compulsory adult suffrage to apply to Legislative Council elections met defeat in the Council in 1944, and, as all are aware, a measure similar to that now before the House had to be set aside in 1945 owing to opposition to the President's ruling.

The current Bill is another step in the Government's efforts to bring about a

state of affairs which it is considered will be of benefit to the people and which is desired by a majority of the people. It proposes that the people shall indicate their instructions by means of a referendum, the two questions that they shall be asked being, firstly—

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

and secondly—

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?

It is provided that voting shall be compulsory, and that the referendum shall be held not later than the 30th March, 1947, but not on the date on which a State general election is held. Persons eligible to vote shall be those who, at the date of the referendum, are entitled to vote at a Legislative Assembly election. This will include members of the Forces who are covered by the provisions of the Electoral (War Time) Act.

I do not feel that any member can object to the people being consulted. If the result of the referendum indicates that a change is desired, a further Bill will have to be submitted to give effect to the electors' instructions. If it is agreed that the electors are to have the opportunity to voice their opinions, then the Government believes they should be permitted to intimate whether they consider that the retention of the Upper House is unnecessary, or whether they are in favour of unrestricted adult suffrage. There is no doubt that in some quarters this House is regarded as obsolete and an obstruction to reform and progress, particularly so far as industrial conditions are concerned.

Hon. G. B. Wood: You do not think that, do you?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am expressing my opinions and those of the Government, and also I believe those of a large majority of the people.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Oh no!

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Bill provides the opportunity to ascertain how wide-spread is this opinion and whether a majority of the electors feel that the business of the State can be more efficiently and effectively dealt with by a single Chamber. Hostility to this House as at present constituted is, as members are well aware, not confined to adherents of the Labour movement. Other sections of the community have very forcibly at times recommended the abolition of the Legislative Council. This is far from surprising when it is realised that this House, representative of a minority of the people, has the power, which it uses, to veto decisions made by a democratically-elected Lower House and to nullify or emasculate progressive legislation which has been passed to it for consideration.

Quite obviously the Legislative Council has only itself to blame for its unpopularity. This feeling might have been reversed had members preferred to progress and not stagnate. It is of no use to bury one's head in the sand and dream fondly of the brave old days whilst progress and opportunity press on. Had members of this House moved with the times instead of clinging to the dusty, tattered curtains of the past, then this urge to do away with the Upper House might never have been born or expressed by a large majority of the people. No doubt members will prophesy that all manner of fearful consequences would result from the adoption of a single Chamber legislature, but what dreadful results eventuated when Queensland abolished its Upper House?

Hon. G. W. Miles: You ought first to have a redistribution of seats for another place.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Queensland is benefiting from what is considered to be one of the most progressive legislatures in the Commonwealth.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Who said so?

Hon. F. E. Gibson: The Queensland Government ignored the decision of the people on the referendum taken there.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The second question that the proposed referendum would place before electors is the liberalisation of the franchise for this Chamber. This is a proposal at which the regressionists of this House stand aghast. Apparently they cannot bring themselves to believe that every man or woman is entitled to be equally represented in Parliament. But what legitimate grounds are there for a system under which one person may be repre-

sented at the expense of another? Why should property be the yardstick of a man's worth? What of those persons who, by virtue of their employment, cannot under existing conditions qualify to obtain the right to vote?

Hon. W. J. Mann: That is a beauty!

The HONORARY MINISTER: What of those nomadic workers, the cutters of sandalwood, the prospectors for gold, the lifeblood of the State, those men who have pioneered the mining industry? What of the timber cutters, men of fibre, of character; working men, men whose labours are ensuring the wealth of our State, men to whom an unprogressive Chamber denies the right to vote, while persons who may be of less value but who own a little property or rent a home have such a privilege? What of the men and women of high educational attainments who also qualify for this jealously-guarded privilege—the professors, lawyers, scientists and others of like calibre who are furthering the cause of progress, to whom we entrust the education of our cherished children, from whom we seek advice and assistance, in whom we repose our trust? They cannot have a vote. There are thousands of people who cannot under any circumstances vote for this Chamber because of the acute and critical housing problem. There are thousands of ex-Servicemen and their wives who are forced to live in rooms in the metropolitan area and many parts of the country.

Hon. A. L. Loton: Whose fault is that?

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is due to the war, that is all.

Hon. A. L. Loton: The poor old war!

The HONORARY MINISTER: The war is the cause of the shortage of houses, is it not?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: And the cause of this proposed referendum, is it not?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Members must face the facts. The position as regards good citizens being prevented from exercising the franchise, through existing conditions, has never been so bad. Any member would find it very difficult to combat that statement.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Many people were on the roll for the last elections, and 50 per cent. did not vote although they were on the roll. That shows there is no great rush to get the vote.

Hon. G. Fraser: The wrong people are on the roll—people who do not taken any interest in the matter.

The HONORARY MINISTER: This matter should be taken seriously.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: But you do not usually bring down permanent legislation to meet temporary conditions.

The HONORARY MINISTER: No, but what happens in normal times is being accentuated by the abnormal conditions now existing. Why should such people as I have indicated be shut out?

Hon. G. B. Wood: Because they do not want to get on the roll.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Thousands of them are not legally entitled to be enrolled. I would term anybody who would not favour this measure an opponent of progress.

Members: Oh, oh!

The HONORARY MINISTER: Cannot members see where they are drifting?

Hon H. S. W. Parker: Yes, we can.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Should not those who take the opposite view and believe in a restricted franchise for this House realise that we are depriving of a vote many people with high qualifications who prefer to live in hotels or hostels.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Get a redistribution of seats in another place first of all.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am concerned with this Chamber. To bring about a redistribution of seats, a Bill would have to be introduced in another place, so the hon. member's interjection is out of order.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Have you had any requests from people living in hotels for the right to vote?

The HONORARY MINISTER: What of the wives and mothers; what of the women who have laboured long and well, who have sweltered in outback humpies, who have shivered in tents, to whose faith and unselfish efforts we owe so much? Are they, too, to be denied a vote? Are these few instances I have quoted compatible with justice and honour? Are we to continue to perpetuate a system which provides a few with privileges at the expense of many? Do the opponents of progress in this House really think they are deluding the people?

I do not think so. The franchise for the Legislative Council is a relic of days long sunk in oblivion, when a person to vote or to nominate as a candidate had to own property. Section 18 of the Constitution Act of 1889 stated that no person could qualify for membership of either House unless he possessed property of a net value of £500 or an annual value of £50.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Where did you get that?

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is in the old legislation. Section 19 of the same Act provided that every member of Parliament had to make a declaration before sitting or voting in either House that he possessed property of the necessary value and that he had not obtained the property for the sole purpose of becoming eligible to enter the House. Any member who sat or voted in either House prior to making such a declaration was liable to a penalty of £200 for each day on which he offended. Sections 20 and 21 provided that any member selling any of his qualifying property so that the residual value was below the qualifying value was also liable to a similar penalty of £200 per day.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Agreed to by this Chamber, don't forget!

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, that is admitted—after long battles! There have been many changes since that Act was passed. Every person, aged 21 years or over, has now the right to exercise a vote for the Legislative Assembly, and lack of property is no bar to nomination for membership of either House; but so far as the Legislative Council is concerned, the nominee must be at least 30 years of age and, in addition, the property qualification for Upper House voters is retained.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Of £50.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes. Only once since 1889 has there been an amendment in connection with the qualification of electors for the Upper House, with the result that those qualifications differ but little from the franchise which operated when the Council ceased to be a nominee Chamber. We have nothing to be proud about. Very little change has taken place. After all those years, notwithstanding the tremendous progress made, there has been little change. Surely that is an argument in favour of our loosening up a little with regard to the franchise for this Chamber!

The Act originally provided that the following persons were qualified to vote at Council elections:—

Every person of the age of 21 years, being a natural born or naturalised British subject, if he—

(1) has a legal or equitable freehold estate in possession situate in the Electoral Province of the clear value of one hundred pounds sterling; or

(2) is a householder within the Province occupying any dwelling house of the clear annual value of twenty-five pounds sterling; or

(3) has a leasehold estate in possession situate within the Province of the clear annual value of twenty-five pounds sterling; or

(4) holds a lease or license from the Crown to depasture, occupy, cultivate, or mine upon Crown lands within the Province at a rental of not less than ten pounds per annum.

Or if the name of such person is on—

(5) the Electoral List of any Municipality in respect of property within the Province of the annual ratable value of not less than twenty-five pounds; or

(6) the Electoral List of any Road Board district in respect of property within the Province of the annual ratable value of not less than twenty-five pounds.

These provisions make it possible for an elector to possess a vote for each of the ten electoral provinces. It is very difficult for any member of this House to justify anybody with property having ten votes for this Chamber.

Hon. A. L. Loton: How many have ten votes?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I could not say.

Hon. G. Fraser: The point is, they can have them.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Bring in a Bill for that purpose only, and you might get away with it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The sole amendment occurred in 1911 when the freehold property qualification was reduced from £100 to £50 and the leasehold qualification from £25 to £17. I have mentioned that on a number of occasions since 1911 efforts

have been made to liberalise the franchise, but to no avail. What ill effects would be the result of both Houses being elected on an adult franchise? We have the example of the Commonwealth Parliament—

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Yes, we have!

The HONORARY MINISTER: —each Chamber of which is elected on the basis of adult suffrage. There is no restriction there, based on the ownership of property. Is it not anomalous that citizens of Australia can vote for the Commonwealth Parliament and express their wishes regarding matters of national importance, regardless of their possession of wealth or property, and yet are not thought fit to be trusted with votes for both Houses of the State Legislature which deals only with matters circumscribed by the boundaries of the State? That takes some justifying.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: One is compulsory, and the other is voluntary.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The women have not had a right to be on the roll. There are thousands that have not the qualifications, under the present franchise, to be on the roll. Since women have taken such a prominent part in every social and public activity, and increasingly so every year, I think we are only doing the fair thing to the women's movement by giving them an opportunity to become enrolled as electors of this Chamber. At the last Legislative Assembly elections there were 274,856 persons enrolled, of whom 137,100 were males, and 137,756 females. In comparison, the limitation of the Legislative Council is most marked, for at the same date there were only 78,889 electors on the Council roll, and it is illuminating to note that only 23,868, or 30 per cent. of the total enrolments, were women, compared with a female proportion of 50 per cent. on the Assembly roll.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Give us something about Question A. You have been on Question B up to the present.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am referring to the necessity of giving people a chance to express an opinion with regard to this House and the franchise for it. We have tried long enough to effect a change, and failed. We cannot get anything done; Parliament will not do it. Let the people have a say. I think that is a reasonable proposition. Are we afraid to face the people and give them a chance?

Hon. G. B. Wood: They would not know what they were voting about.

Hon. G. Fraser: You have not much opinion of the people's intelligence.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is apparent from the figures I have quoted that thousands of worthy citizens are denied the opportunity to vote at Legislative Council elections. This we maintain is neither equitable nor justifiable and should be rectified, and we believe that we are supported in this opinion by a majority of the people of the State. This Bill is therefore submitted to give the people the chance to express their opinion.

Hon. G. B. Wood: They did not ask for it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I feel that any member who opposes the Bill will be denying the people the right to freedom of utterance, and that his action will be the very antithesis of democracy which is defined as government in which all classes have a voice, either directly or through their chosen representatives. And this, so far as the Legislative Council of Western Australia is concerned, is what the people do not possess.

I commend the Bill to the House and trust that members will vote according to their consciences and that they will be swayed by modern conditions. Great numbers of women have taken a prominent part in public and social activities, and did a magnificent job during the war, and they are amongst thousands of people who cannot—more so now than at any other time—enrol so as to be be able to vote for the Legislative Council. By sticking to our present old-fashioned method of a restricted franchise, we cut out thousands of people, with many of whom members are acquainted and whom they respect. I do not think they would deprive these people of the vote after considering the facts. I have said nothing that is not in accordance with fact. There are many thousands more people who cannot enrol for this House than was the case eight years ago. Conditions have changed and much progress has been made. Many people of a high standard do not go in for property in these days and prefer not have their own homes. There are men holding important

positions, scientists and others who are of the same opinion.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do you agree with that?

The HONORARY MINISTER: It all depends on the circumstances. I prefer to have a house to live in. Many people, however, cannot get homes today. There are men who went away and fought. They cannot get a vote because they cannot get a house to live in. I should like the statements I have made to be combated if they can be.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: They will be.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Many of my statements cannot, I think, be successfully combated. I feel that the Bill will receive the serious consideration of this House, and that the change that many thousands of people are looking forward to anxiously will come about. I think the necessity for a change to be made will convince members that they should pass this measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [5.1]: Notwithstanding the remarks of the Honorary Minister I have never, during my long experience in this House, opposed the second reading of a Bill with as much confidence as I do on this occasion, not confidence that the Bill will be rejected—I am speaking only for myself, because I do not know the feelings of other members—but confidence that it ought to be rejected because of the fact that it has no merit. The Bill comes to us masquerading as one to amend the Constitution whereas it is nothing of the kind. This Bill cannot amend the Constitution. It can be amended only in the manner prescribed in the Constitution itself. I do not understand the reason for the provision that the referendum shall be held on a day other than the general election unless it be to make the Bill more objectionable. It would greatly increase the cost and greatly inconvenience the public, if we were to have first an election and then the referendum. Probably that was put in the Bill to make it more objectionable.

Suppose these questions were answered in the affirmative, where would we be? Just where we are now! Supporters of the Government and the Government itself may think that it would strengthen their reasons for attacking the Legislative Council; that is the only effect it could have. On the other hand, if these questions were rejected, what would be the result? It would not be that the Labour Party would cease its attacks on the Legislative Council. There is only one case on record in Australia where a referendum has been taken on the question, namely, in Queensland. The people there by a substantial majority said they wished the Legislative Council to continue, but did the Government and the party behind it accept that decision? Of course not! It was a nominee House, and the Government packed it with members pledged to their own abolition. The wish of the people was ignored. I do not suggest that the members of the Government of this State, particularly those who sit in this House, would wilfully ignore the will of the people in that way, but I am sure that the forces behind the Government would compel it to find some other means of attacking the Legislative Council.

There is only one method by which the Constitution can be amended. I am free to confess that the time is ripe for such an amendment. I have long held that opinion. Recently I tabled a Bill for such an amendment, and was prepared to go on with it on the day following its tabling. The Bill was delayed, not through any fault of mine or of the Leader of the House but because the congestion of business at the Government Printing Office rendered it impossible to print it. The Bill has now been printed and is ready to be gone on with. That is the only way in which the Constitution can be amended. Our Constitution provides that any Bill for its amendment must be passed by an absolute majority on the second reading and the third reading in both Houses. That formality has been gone through in the Legislative Assembly although this is not a Bill to amend the Constitution.

Hon. G. Fraser: This House said it was.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: That provision shows that an amendment to the Constitution is something not to be lightly regarded. It gives members the opportunity to vote for the second reading if they think there is a principle in the Bill that they should support. It also gives them the opportunity to vote against the measure on the third reading if its emergence from the Committee stage is in such form that it does not suit them. As I have said, there is only one correct way to amend the Constitution,

the proper and orderly way, by an Act of Parliament passed through both Houses under those provisions. The only other way to amend it is the way adopted first by Lenin, then by Mussolini, followed by Hitler —the way of force.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: This Bill only purports to get an expression of opinion from the people.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Many Constitutions provide for a referendum as a means of amending them, and in every case the conditions are laid down. Limitations are provided. If we want our Constitution amended by a referendum we must first amend the Constitution to provide that a referendum may be taken to amend it, and also set out the conditions and the limitations connected therewith.

Let me take the Commonwealth Constitution, Section 128 of which provides for its amendment. It imposes limitations. It does not permit of a mass vote—the majority of the people say this and the minority that and the majority rules. It says that for any amendment of the Constitution there must be not only a majority of the total votes cast in favour but a majority of the States. It goes even further—this is a matter applying to the principle of this Bill—and with regard to any alteration diminishing the proportional representation of any State in either House of the Parliament or the number of representatives of the State, etc., provides that any amendment of that kind must be carried by the whole of the six States. A protest from one State nullifies the effect of a referendum. There we have the case; an amendment of the Constitution by referendum, with the conditions and limitations set down.

Personally, I would have no objection to a Bill providing for an amendment to the Constitution, so that further amendments might be carried by referendum, having included in it such conditions and limitations as might be deemed advisable. In the Commonwealth Constitution we see references made to the rights of the States to maintain their representation in the Senate. One question put up is, "Are you in favour of the franchise of the two Houses being the same?" Does not the Senate afford us a ghastly example of a legislature in which the franchise for the two Houses is the same? The Senate is generally admitted to be the outstanding failure of the Constitution.

The framers of the Commonwealth Constitution designed the Senate to have two particular prerogatives. First, it should be a House of review and, secondly, a House for the protection of the rights of the States. It has lost both of those characteristics. It has become purely a party House. At present—I do not know whether as a result of having become purely a party House, but I think so—Senate elections are conducted under the worst system ever devised in any country of the world. I make this statement with greater freedom because the system was devised by an anti-Labour Government and passed through the Commonwealth Parliament when Labour was in a minority in both Houses. It is a system which makes it compulsory that the Senate shall be a party House only, which makes it compulsory that each State shall at each Senate election return three members of one party, leaving the rest of the State unrepresented. If that system is persisted in, from time to time we shall find the Senate composed of one party only. What sort of House of review will that be?

I speak from the experience of having been for four years a member of the Senate. During portion of that time Labour was in power. There was a considerable anti-Labour majority in the Senate. It was then active in disallowing regulations, in amending Bills, rejecting Bills and so on. The Labour Government was then thrown out and a National Government came into power. The Senate then became a rubber stamp, and I do not think I was ever more thankful than when I had the opportunity to get out. Since then the Senate has not improved. It is now purely a party House due to there being the same franchise for the Senate as for the House of Representatives.

There are other countries in the world in which the referendum is a means of altering the Constitution, but in every one of those there are limitations and conditions laid down. For instance, in nearly every case where the referendum is recognised as a method of altering the Constitution, they have the four political freedoms—election, initiative, referendum and

recall. Let us ask ourselves—if we had those provisions here—what is the first thing the people with the powers of initiative would demand. The first demand would be for a reform of the Legislative Assembly to make it representative of the people. That is one of the first things that would be done. As a general rule the referendum is used to enable the will of the people to prevail against the will of Parliament, against the popularly-elected Parliament if you like. Two cases occur to me. One is in the matter of local government in New York, and as a result of the initiative a different method of electing councillors was established. That was the means of destroying the corrupt influence of Tammany Hall. Another case occurred in Switzerland. The people wanted a certain reform effected but Parliament did not. Under the initiative there must be a large number of signatures before it can become effective. Under the initiative in Switzerland the Government was compelled to take a referendum, and the referendum by a large majority decided in favour of the people against the popular House of Parliament.

I have said that if we had that provision here there is little doubt that the first thing the people would demand would be that the so-called popular House should be made of a representative character. At present more than one-half of the electors for the Legislative Assembly are represented by 15 members; less than one-half have 35 members; 15 members represent 140,000 electors; and another 15 represent only 36,000 electors. There are two cases in which individual members represent over 13,000 electors. There are other cases where 13,000 electors have eight representatives. That is to say, 13,000 electors have four times the representation enjoyed by 36,000 electors. I am far from suggesting that every electorate should have an equal number of voters. Some 25 years ago I was largely responsible for the drafting of a scheme which at that time would have given adequate representation to the Goldfields, the country districts and the North. Unfortunately that scheme was not adopted and we have drifted into this thoroughly ridiculous position where the Assembly can no longer be classed as a representative House.

Let us consider for a moment what would be the result if this Chamber were abolished and the Legislative Assembly as at present constituted had complete control—constituted not on representative lines, but in such a way that it is liable at any time to become an entirely class House. It would have absolutely unlimited power, power to completely destroy the Constitution, power to extend its own term of life indefinitely, power to do what it liked in the way of increasing the emoluments of its members—absolutely unrestricted power. Before it can be suggested that any steps should be taken likely to give a single Chamber power of that kind, something must be done to entitle that Chamber to be described as representative of the people. Today it is in no way representative of the people, and it would be entirely contrary to the interests of the community to clothe it with complete and absolute power. I have no hesitation whatever in opposing the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. H. Tuckey, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Marketing of Barley (No. 2).

2, Factories and Shops Act Amendment.

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—STATE GOVERNMENT INSURANCE OFFICE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. W. R. HALL (North-East) [5.20]: I support the Bill. In my opinion it is desirable that the State Insurance Office should be given the right to expand its business to deal with all classes of insurance. In dealing with workers' compensation and employers' liability matters, it has done a wonderful job and rendered great service to the people of Western Australia. When I was listening to the speeches delivered by some members on the Bill, particularly yesterday, I failed to understand how they could claim that State trading concerns should not show profits. Surely those undertakings are entitled to be operated at a profit. I certainly would

not like to see them registering losses all the time. Some people are ready to criticise the State trading concerns when they show profits and are just as ready to comment adversely on them should they disclose losses. So long as a State undertaking operates on a competitive basis against outside organisations, there is no reason why it should not operate at a profit.

Hon. V. Hamersley: But are they on a competitive basis?

Hon. W. R. HALL: I think so. Yesterday Mr. Parker made a statement that he would not advise any young man to take out a life assurance policy with a Government-controlled office. I cannot understand why he should make such a statement. The State office gives everyone a fair deal and surely Mr. Parker must have had something in his mind to enable him to make such a statement. Certainly he has not indicated that he thinks much of Government activities. The State Insurance Office has dealt with many policies and has saved the taxpayers a lot of money.

Today I heard of the case of a widow whose husband had died over five months ago. Her affairs were being fixed up by a member of the legal fraternity but the widow had not received a penny during those five months. The matter was placed in the hands of the State Insurance Office only this morning and this afternoon she walked out with a cheque for the full amount owing. That is service—something the people are entitled to! Then consider the position of local governing bodies. Recently Parliament passed legislation enabling the State office to undertake insurance work on behalf of local authorities. Many of those bodies availed themselves of the legislation and they were pleased to have the opportunity.

If the Bill be passed I can see no reason why the State Insurance Office should not compete on even terms with the, approximately, 75 insurance companies that are operating in Western Australia. Should the State office be empowered to undertake all classes of insurance business it will be of benefit to those who are anxious to place their business with that office. To hear the arguments advanced by some members one would assume that if the Bill be passed, there will be a rush on the part of the people to place policies with the State Insurance Office. Possibly many members of this Chamber have taken out policies with private insurance companies and they would not be likely to rush to the State Insurance Office to place their business there. I did not do so when the State office opened. I was satisfied with the office with which I had placed my insurances, and I did nothing about it at all. On the other hand, if any person desires to place his business with the State office I can see no reason why he should not have the opportunity to do so, and with that object in view the State office should be given the right to transact all classes of insurance business.

People will always take advantage of the cheapest rates that are available to them. Consider the position regarding the insurance of motor cars! If one takes out a policy with the Royal Automobile Club and has had no accident during the year a 25 per cent. reduction is allowed for the following year. Should he not have an accident during that period the reduction is increased to 30 per cent. That is attractive to people and, as I have remarked, it is natural to expect that the public will go where they can get the cheapest rates of insurance. Then again it would not be necessary for the State office to employ an army of men and women going about from door to door on a wage and commission basis in an endeavour to encourage people to take out policies. That would not be one of the objectives at all.

During the course of the debate mention was made by one member of the Public Trustee. For my part, if I had any business to transact in connection with a will—irrespective of to whom it might belong—I would place it in the hands of the Public Trustee if I could not attend to the matter myself. As a matter of fact, the Public Trustee has done, and is still doing, a wonderful job and little expense, if any, attaches to the work carried out on behalf of the people. I maintain that it is our responsibility to make it possible for Government departments to render service to the people whom we represent. I do not favour monopolies and so long as the business in hand is on a competitive basis, we should extend the right to the State Insurance Office to undertake the work desired.

On motion by Hon. A. L. Loton, debate adjourned.

BILL—INCREASE OF RENT (WAR RESTRICTIONS) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.30] in moving the second reading said: This is a continuance Bill proposing to amend Section 15 of the parent Act in order that its provisions may be continued for at least a further 12 months, that is, until the 30th September, 1947. Section 15 provides that the Act shall remain in force during the continuance of the war and for a period of six months thereafter, or until the 30th day of September, 1946, whichever shall be the longer period.

The Act, which provides for the stabilisation of rents and for the protection of tenants and landlords, applies to all types of premises and covers all leases, written or oral; but, with the exception of the provisions applicable to the fixation of rent, it is at present superseded by the Commonwealth Landlord and Tenant Regulations, which, however, will expire on the 31st December next. The part of those regulations dealing with fair rents applies to all the States and territories of the Commonwealth, with the exception of Western Australia and South Australia, whose legislation in this connection was considered fully capable of dealing with the question. It has been authoritatively stated that Western Australia's achievements in regard to the equitable stabilisation of rents are unequalled in the Commonwealth.

Until such time as the housing situation returns to normal, it is essential that the fixation of rents and matters incidental to the rental of premises shall be kept under strict control. These matters received considerable attention at a recent Premiers' Conference, where, I believe, complete agreement was reached on the necessity for the continuance of control, but it was decided to defer the matter under the next Premiers' Conference to be held, I think, in January. However, until such time as the Commonwealth and the States finalise the basis which is to be adopted in the future, and the necessary legislation has been passed, it is incumbent on this Parliament to take steps to ensure that there shall be no relaxation of control for any period, however short that period might be. I move —

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. H. S. W. Parker, debate adjourned.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [5.34] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to amend the Constitution in the manner prescribed by the Constitution itself. A number of Bills to amend the Constitution, so far as it applies to the Legislative Council, have been sent up to this House from time to time; but in all cases they have been of a character entirely unacceptable to the majority of the members of this Chamber. I do not think there is anything surprising in that when we have it in mind that those Bills have been sent up by a party whose aim is the abolition of this House.

I think the time for amendment in regard to the Legislative Council is ripe—probably overdue—and it seems to me that it is open to members of this Chamber to take up either one of two attitudes. They can say, "Well, we consider that the Constitution, as framed a good many years ago, has served a useful purpose and we desire to maintain it as it is." That is an attitude that can be adopted. The other attitude—the one which I take up—is that the time is ripe for a number of amendments and that those amendments should come from this House itself. The Bill is not a lengthy one and does not cover a great many subjects. Personally, I consider there is very great need to stimulate public interest in the Legislative Council. One might say the same in regard to the Legislative Assembly. In that case interest is stimulated by making enrolment compulsory and voting compulsory; but I should prefer to see some other method of stimulating interest in the Legislative Council.

Can we regard with indifference the fact that many thousands of people, fully qualified as electors of the Legislative Council, never take the trouble to be enrolled? Can we regard with indifference the fact that, of those who are enrolled, it is unusual for as many as 50 per cent. to come to the poll? I do not know that the percentage of voters on the rolls of the Legislative Assembly, or the percentage of those who record their votes at elections, would be much higher if it

were not that enrolment is compulsory and voting is compulsory. There is a good deal to be said, in my opinion, against compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting for any House of Parliament, and perhaps more against compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting for the Legislative Council.

But it is not without interest that—in 1938—the Parliament of Victoria, after a long-continued conflict between the two Houses, passed an amending Act which did provide for compulsory voting for the Legislative Council. The result was interesting. In the five previous elections the number voting had varied from 29 per cent. to 38 per cent. That is a smaller percentage than we usually get in Western Australia; but under compulsory voting there was immediately an increase to 78 per cent. I do not know exactly what happened to the 22 per cent. who offended against the compulsory law of voting. However, I would much prefer to see other steps taken to excite popular interest in the Legislative Council elections and not to have voting made compulsory; and it is largely in the hope that the amendments proposed in this Bill will have that effect that I ask the House to pass the second reading and give the proposals consideration in Committee. If the Bill emerges from Committee in a way not acceptable, it will still require an absolute majority to carry the third reading.

The amendments embodied in the Bill cover five matters, apart from consequential amendments and things of no importance. Those five are the definition of a flat; the extension of the franchise to wives of resident householders or flatdwellers; the doing away with plural voting; and the provision that no elector possessing qualifications in more than one province shall be entitled to be registered in more than one province; the clear expression of what I believe is at present the law regarding money Bills and the establishment of a procedure in the case of Bills repeatedly passed by the Legislative Assembly and rejected by the Council.

In my opinion, the passage of this Bill would entirely remove complaints that even at the present time I think have very little justification. The first of those complaints is that this is a House of privilege; the second is that this House stands in the way of legislation that the people desire. The present qualification for an elector is a generous one. It aims at giving the vote to every person who assumes the responsibility of citizenship, and incidentally this Bill will have the effect of making a 20 per cent. decrease in the qualification. I ask members to turn to Section 15 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, at page 124 of our Standing Orders. I quote Subsections (1) and (2)—

> (1) Has a legal or equitable freehold estate in possession situate in the electoral Province of the clear value of £50 sterling; or
>
> (2) Is a householder within the Province occupying any dwelling house of the clear annual value of seventeen pounds sterling.

So that the present qualification of a householder is about £21 Australian—£17 sterling. I propose to leave it at £17 and to strike out the word "sterling," because, altogether irrespective of what ought to be the right amount, there is no question that it should be expressed in our own currency. I presume most people think it is £17 now; as a matter of fact, it is not. It is £21.

The Chief Secretary: I do not think that point has ever been raised.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Settle it before it arises.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Yes. I have been looking at the 1938 Victorian Act very kindly handed to me by Mr. Dimmitt and it contains an amendment which I personally should have no objection to including in this Bill. At the present time, no person can be a candidate for the Legislative Council until he has reached the age of 30 years; but the 1938 Victorian Act reduced that to 21 years—anyone over 21 years can be a candidate. I should have no objection to including that provision in this Bill, as I said, because it is a matter for the electors to choose, and there have been many instances—particularly in the Old Country—where men of a less age than 30 years have attained to positions of very high responsibility. So long as they have to submit themselves to the electors I should have no objection to the reduction of the age to 21 years.

I shall briefly explain the proposed amendments in the order in which they appear in the Bill. First, the definition of "flat." At present there is no definition of "flat" in our Constitution Act, and the Electoral Department works under a ruling

which, I understand, was given by the Crown Law Department, probably a long time ago. At any rate, it is not applicable to present conditions. I think it essential that the proposed definition should be in the Act. The trouble about the present definition is that at the tail of it are the words, "has a separate entrance from the street." There might have been a time when that was perfectly applicable; but at present, in all the best flats in and about Perth, no individual flat has a separate entrance from the street. As a general rule, there are one or two large entrances and then lifts take the people up to their flats; but it cannot be said that any one flat has a separate entrance from the street. The result is that residents in flats for which the rent is even five or six times the required amount are not entitled to a vote. The definition of "flat" that I propose is as follows:—

"Self-contained flat" for the purpose of this Act means part of any structure of a permanent character which is a fixture of the soil and ordinarily capable of being used for human habitation, provided such part is separately occupied for such purpose and has no direct means of access to, and is structurally severed from any other part of the structure, which is occupied for a similar purpose by any other person, and has separate sleeping, cooking and bathroom accommodation.

That is practically saying that in order to qualify to vote an occupant of a flat must occupy something equivalent to a house. I do not think objection can be raised to that. The next amendment is an important one. It extends the franchise to the wives of resident householders. At present, if the husband or the wife owns a house, one can be registered as the owner and the other as the occupier. But where premises are rented it usually happens that the husband has a vote and not the wife. I think that is wrong. Acting on the basis that I have always adopted in regard to the Legislative Council, namely, that everyone who assumes the responsibility of citizenship should be entitled to a vote, I think the wife is just as much entitled to a vote as the householder.

Another reason for this amendment is that I believe it will go a long way towards stimulating interest in the Legislative Council. It is a fact—although I do not know whether it is to be regarded as a good move or a bad one—that women are taking more interest than men in public affairs. I hope it will turn out all to the good, and I think it will. At any rate, extending the franchise to the wives of resident householders, or qualified flat-dwellers, will not only enormously increase the constituencies but will introduce an element that will make for far greater interest in the affairs of the Legislative Council.

The activity of women in public affairs is world-wide. I do not think any argument can be used against it. In fact, in the present deplorable and disturbed condition of the world, it is a good thing to see anyone, and particularly those who are intimately interested in and have to bear today's burdens, taking the interest that women are showing in political affairs throughout the world. It will also be a step towards the establishment of representative government. I do not intend to repeat what I said in connection with another measure, but I am in agreement, and have long been in agreement, with all political philosophers who contend that the endurance of democracy and of democratic systems depends on governments being truly representative of the people. This amendment will certainly be a step in that direction.

The next is one on which I expect there will be a good deal of difference of opinion. It states—

No elector possessing qualifications in more than one province shall be entitled to be registered in more than one province. Such elector shall have the right to select and notify in writing to the Chief Electoral Officer which province he desires to be enrolled in.

The latter provision is essential, particularly in the case of people who have spent long lives in accumulating a little property in the North and have then come here to retire in the enjoyment of a climate more suitable to their age. I can quite imagine that a man having the qualification for the Kimberleys and residing in the Metropolitan-Suburban Province, might not attach much importance to having a vote with thousands of others in the latter province, but would attach importance to having a vote where his property and interests lie in the North. But the provision is to do away with plural voting. I have already referred to the Act passed by the Victorian Parliament in 1938, which does away with plural voting in that State. I did not see that measure until after this Bill was drawn, but the provision there is similar to this. It

allows any person having qualifications in more than one province to select, from time to time, the one in which he shall be enrolled. My amendment is simpler. It provides that the elector can select the province in which he wishes to be enrolled, and can change from it at any time that his interests or feelings alter.

As to the principle of abolishing the plural vote, I stick to my contention that the franchise should be open to everyone who has assumed the full responsibility of citizenship. But I do not agree, and never have agreed, that the man who has the most property should have the most votes. I do not believe in that. I believe in equality of opportunity when there is equality of responsibility. A man whose qualification is that he has a wife and, happily, a family has a responsibility as great as that of a person with a lot of money, and he is just as much concerned in the good government of the country as is the wealthy person. Therefore I have no hesitation in providing, following the Victorian Act of 1938, that the plural vote shall be abolished.

I am sorry the Chief Secretary was unable to give an answer to Mr. Thomson's question as to the number of plural voters. I do not blame the Chief Secretary; I realise that far more work would be involved than the answer is worth, but I do feel that the complaints about plural voting have been grossly exaggerated. I am sure that the number of people who have votes in several provinces is small indeed. However, I do away with that argument by abolishing the plural vote altogether.

The remaining amendments deal with differences that might arise from time to time between the two Houses. The first deals with money Bills. Again I would ask members to read with care the whole of Section 46 of the *Constitution Acts Amendment Act*, 1899. It appears on page 134 of our Standing Orders, and Subsection (4) is as follows—

> The Legislative Council may at any stage return to the Legislative Assembly any Bill which the Legislative Council may not amend, requesting by message the omission or amendment of any item or provision therein; provided that any such request does not increase any proposed charge or burden on the people. The Legislative Assembly may, if it thinks fit, make such omissions or amendments, with or without modifications.

The last sentence is important. Those words must surely have some meaning. I intend to express what I am sure is their meaning by adding these words—

> and in any event may present the same to the Governor for his assent.

Unless the words in the section have that meaning, then the whole of the limitations of the powers of the Legislative Council in regard to money Bills are meaningless because, in effect, we would have exactly the same power over money Bills as over other Bills.

Hon. G. Fraser: We have, too.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: There have been only one or two occasions when money Bills have been rejected as a result of the action of the Council. One instance occurred many years ago when the Council rejected a Bill imposing a land tax. The Government of the day shortly afterwards went to the country and the people approved the land tax with the result that the Government, partly on the strength of the approval of the people and partly because of the expressed wishes of this Chamber, brought down a Land and Income Tax Bill. On another occasion, I think in 1936 while I was away, a money Bill collapsed because of the opposition of the Council. I do not think it was ever the intention of the framers of the Constitution that the Council should have power to reject a money Bill. The Constitution gives us power to request amendments and then it states—

> The Legislative Assembly may, if it thinks fit, make such omissions or amendments with or without modification.

If the Assembly does not think fit, surely there can be no other meaning than that the Bill must pass. At any rate, that is the interpretation I put on those words, and I express it clearly in the Bill. The next amendment deals with the question of disagreement on Bills other than money Bills. The Assembly has twice sent up Bills dealing with this matter. The first was entirely objectionable because it provided that any Bill might be sent up and passed three times in the Assembly and become law, irrespective of the wishes of this House. The second Bill was much more reasonable in character. It excluded Bills for the amendment of the Constitution, and several others. On that occasion I voted for the second reading and placed on the notice paper certain amendments that I thought desirable. However, the second reading was not carried. I now

propose an amendment very much the same as the Assembly last sent to us, with two or three additions. My Bill states this—

This provision shall not operate and take effect unless two years have elapsed between the date of the third reading of the Bill in the Legislative Assembly in the first of those sessions and the date on which it passes the Legislative Assembly in the third of those sessions, and unless a general election of the members of the Legislative Assembly at which such Bill was placed before the electors has been held between the second and third sessions in which such Bill was passed by the Legislative Assembly.

That is an essential amendment. It is ridiculous to contend that a party which wins a general election has thereby had every plank of its political platform endorsed. That contention would be equally absurd if put up by a Labour Government or a Liberal Government. This Council would be giving away quite a lot if it sacrificed its right indefinitely to veto Bills. It is not asking much to say that there shall be a general election between the second and the third passing of the Bill by the Legislative Assembly. There is a further provision—

Provided also that on the third passage of such Bill after such general election the second and third readings of such Bill shall be passed by an absolute majority of the members of the Legislative Assembly, and that such members voting for the second and third readings shall represent districts containing at least one half of the electors enrolled for the whole of the Legislative Assembly districts at such election.

I do not see how, by any other means, we can ensure that the Bill will be something that the majority of the people will desire. I do not think the Council would be justified in amending the Constitution so that a Bill may pass in defiance of the opposition of the Council without making sure that the Bill is desired by the people. The other amendments are of a consequential character, and I need not deal with them.

The Chief Secretary: What do you mean by the words "or placed before the electors?"

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: The idea is that if a Bill has been passed in two sessions by the Assembly and rejected by the Council, there is to be a general election, the assumption being that the election will, to a large extent, be fought on that issue.

The Chief Secretary: You do not refer to a referendum?

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: No. The Act passed in 1938 by the Victorian Parliament is on very much the same lines, but its method of settling differences is, to my mind, more complicated than the one I have suggested. The position there is that if the Legislative Assembly twice passes a Bill, and the Council rejects it, then six months before the ordinary date of the termination of the Legislative Assembly the Governor dissolves the Assembly. He cuts its life short by six months and intimates that he has done so because of this particular Bill. Then if the Assembly, after the election, again passes the Bill and the Council rejects it, the Governor dissolves the Council, and after they come back again the two Houses meet and consider the Bill. That is a complicated method, and this is much simpler.

The Chief Secretary: It would not suit our two Houses.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: I am conscious of the fact that this Bill will not only fail to please everybody, but may not please anybody. Some will think that it goes too far, and some that it does not go far enough. Possibly that may be its strongest recommendation. I believe in avoiding the falsehood of extremes and I think those members who feel that this Bill goes too far would do well to remember that we live in a troubled world, a world of great changes, and that no Parliament can be considered safe unless it rests on the will of the people.

The Chief Secretary: Hear, hear!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: It is for that reason that I propose these very considerable extensions. They are the extension of the franchise to legitimate flat dwellers, the far more important extension of the franchise to housewives, the abolition of the plural vote and the establishment of means for settling differences between the two Houses. I think that even those who do not entirely approve of the Bill may think it is worth passing to the second reading, so that it can be discussed in Committee. It is in that hope that I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [6.4]: I do not wish to delay the House for long, but I would commend Sir Hal Colebatch for having introduced this Bill. I think it a pity

that such a Bill was not introduced in another place in the same atmosphere as that in which this Bill has been placed before this House. Amendments have been moved from time to time in another place and have been passed in that House in a spirit of bitterness and crude speech—if I may use that term—attacking individuals in this House, and the integrity of the House itself. No legislation can go on for ever without requiring amendment. I agree with Sir Hal that the Constitution of the Legislative Council does require amending in some minor degree. I do not agree with this Bill in its entirety. There are several clauses with which I do not agree, but the Bill is an earnest effort to bring our Constitution into line with those of Upper Houses in other parts of Australia.

I am sure that some new members here do not know that the powers of this House are the greatest of any House of Parliament in the British Empire. We have powers possessed by no other House in the Empire. It is perhaps desirable that in some respects we should be brought into line with other parts of the Empire. This Bill proposes to define a "flat." In our modern times a flat is just as much a dwelling as is a separate house. I agree that all people who live in flats that are self-contained and complete homes should have the same rights of voting as has the householder, but we must not forget that the fundamentals of this House are based on property.

Whether members agree that property has no rights is a matter for themselves, but the franchise of this House was originally based on the rights of property. Personally I think those rights should be maintained. If we disagree with those rights there is no reason at all for any of the rights contained in this Bill; we should be elected on the same franchise as the Legislative Assembly. I think property has rights and that people who have a stake in this country, who have been thrifty and have invested their savings in property, should have rights over and above those of people who have not done so. To me that is fundamental, and based on that fundamental are nearly all the other amendments. It does not matter whether the sum is £17 or £21 today, one could not rent a room for that amount. It is just a nominal qualification.

Hon. G. Fraser: It is sufficient to knock out a lot of people.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think it knocks anybody out, provided he is a householder.

Hon. G. Fraser: It knocks a large number out in the mill areas.

Hon. L. CRAIG: If the hon. member can tell me of any house that can be rented for £17 per year I would like to hear of it. Many of them are good houses, which are eligible, but some are just houses. The modern mill is putting up substantial houses, costing £500 or £600.

The Chief Secretary: What rental is being charged for them?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Sufficient to qualify the electors. The point is that previously they lived in one-roomed houses, and paid 2s. rental.

Hon. G. Fraser: And in larger houses than that.

Hon. L. CRAIG:: The hon. member is introducing extreme cases.

Hon. G. Fraser: I am pointing out where a large body of men were disfranchised for this House—

Hon. L. CRAIG: The hon. member says that because he thinks they support him, but they do not.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Do you want the second reading to be carried?

Hon. L. CRAIG: This Bill seeks to give the wife or husband of a householder a vote, but it says nothing about the wife or husband of a property owner. I do not say that I agree to this, but I will give it attention. If the husband or wife of a householder is entitled to a vote so also is the husband or wife of a property owner.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: The husband or wife of the owner of a block of land worth £50?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Do you say that seriously?

Hon. L. CRAIG: Yes, I do.

The Chief Secretary: You spoil it there.

Hon. L. CRAIG: I do not think so. What is the qualification of the wife of a man who pays the minimum rental for a small

house or a tiny self-contained flat, which today may consist of one room, a kitchenette and a bathroom? Under this Bill the wife of such a man would have the right to vote. Has not a freeholder, who has invested £50 in the purchase of a block of land on which he intends to erect a house, sufficient qualification?

Hon. G. B. Wood: His wife could claim the vote for the house in which she lived.

Hon. L. CRAIG: She might be living in an hotel. If it is right for the wife or husband in one case to have a vote we must agree that the wife or husband of anyone qualified to vote shall also have that right. This Bill deserves to go into Committee. It is an earnest endeavour by this House—introduced in this House—to amend its Constitution and the franchise of this Chamber. If we give it earnest consideration I think we can do something that will be satisfactory to another place, though I do not care what is said about it there, and we can make amendments that will be satisfactory to the people, if they take any interest in it, though I do not think they are concerned two hoots about the franchise of this House. I think we should bring our Constitution into line with similar Constitutions in other parts of Australia. I commend the Bill to the House and hope it will go through the second reading stage.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 11th September, 1946.

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

QUESTIONS.

TRACTOR CLEARING, ETC.

As to Operating Costs.

Mr. HOAR asked the Minister for Agriculture:

1, What are the expenditure items that together make up the £13 10s. per working day of eight hours now being charged in respect to the two Government 80.4 h.p. tractors at present operating in the Mount Barker area?

2, Is he aware that in the Manjimup district a privately owned 75 h.p. tractor with bulldozer equipment is operating at a total cost of £10 for a working day of eight hours?

3, Would he say that the increased h.p. of the Government tractors warrants an increase in charges of £3 10s. per day?

4. If not, will he consider reducing the charges for clearing, etc., by Government tractors?

The MINISTER replied:

1, Travelling (transporter charges from metropolitan area and movement from property to property), £1.46; field maintenance, £0.20; fuel, oils and lubricants, £2.20; hire charges, £5.19; wages (includes provision for Workers' Compensation