

Entrepreneurs who want to run their own business would be entirely opposed to a proposition that all citizens should work for wages, whether a living wage or any other sort of wage. So I resent this subtle way of getting me to make an open confession that I am in favour of some form of communism under which all undertakings are publicly controlled and everybody works for wages as they do in Russia. Further along in the motion, it is quite clear that the hon. member has overlooked the necessity for some increase in the pensions for widows. It is quite clear too that she is not in favour of old-age pensioners and infirm people getting a pension that is equivalent to the basic wage. I think that is a very desirable ideal—that people who have done their bit for this country should, if possible, be retired when they reach the age of 65 on a pension equivalent to the basic wage. But the hon. member is opposed to that because, she says, in the latter part of her motion, that she wants those who are able to work to get the basic wage, including the pension. So the motion postulates that the pension shall be less than the basic wage.

This question of old-age pensions and social security generally is a very big question that will have to be discussed in a great deal of detail, and quite possibly in the near future, in order that it shall be properly based and the money given to people as a right for their services to the country when they reach a certain age without any means test whatever. I was quite intrigued with the New Zealand system of old age and invalid pensions which is incorporated in the Social Security Act of that Dominion and which is contributed to, to a certain extent, through taxation because everyone pays a certain amount of taxation that makes provision for the benefits that come to him ultimately under the social security laws. There, in connection with old-age pensions, in the first year under that Act pensioners were to get £12. I think it was fixed at 30s. per week but they were to get £12 without any means test and the balance subject to a means test. In the next year it was to be £24 and the balance subject to a means test and so it went on increasing each year by £12 until, unless the war has interfered with arrangements, the amount will ultimately be £78 a year without a means test.

That is something in the right direction, but the whole question of pensions for old age and invalid pensioners is going to be affected quite possibly in the near future by the declining birth rate and the reduced numbers of that section of the community who are able to work and earn wages or income. That is one of the objections that was raised against the Beveridge Plan—the possibility of the old age people being so numerous as compared with that section of the people who are young enough and able to work and would have to contribute to the fund that would pay the pension. So this question of old-age and invalid pensions is not a small one. It raises great problems concerning financial considerations that cannot possibly be examined in a discussion by members of this Chamber who know nothing of the possible resources from which such pensions or increases of pensions could be drawn. As I say, I am not particular whether the motion is carried or not. I reiterate that it is badly phrased, and I say again, and if I have not said it already I say it now, that when a member of this Chamber presents a motion of this nature, or any other, to the House and expects to receive the support of members, it is effrontery on the part of that member to get up and throw the motion at us and say, "God help you if you do not understand it."

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.21 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 19th October, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (3). POULTRY FOOD.

As to Proprietary Lines Available.

Hon. V. HAMEESLEY (for Hon. G. B. Wood) asked the Chief Secretary:

(i) Is the Government aware that poultry farmers are very dissatisfied at the Chief Secretary's replies to my questions concerning proprietary foods for poultry?

(ii) As the producers are not compelled, according to the reply given, to buy made-up mashies, will the Department concerned make an announcement as to what other foods for poultry are on the market for sale, and in what quantity?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(i) The Government has not received evidence of general dissatisfaction at the replies referred to.

(i) Advice regarding fodder substitutes has been given from time to time and can be repeated if desired.

WAR SERVICE PERSONNEL.

As to Railway Accommodation.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(i) Is the Government aware that servicemen who have seen service in the Middle East and New Guinea, when travelling on the Trans. train, have to travel in cattle trucks and sleep on straw palliasses placed on the floor of the cattle trucks?

(ii) Will the Government make immediate representations to the Federal Minister for Transport with a view to remedying this very unsatisfactory state of affairs, and the immediate provision of wire bunks, built in tiers, similar to those provided by the Queensland railways for transport of servicemen?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(i) Yes. The vehicles are converted cattle trucks with lavatories, wash basins and water bags and electric light. They are used to a limited extent only and when no other rollingstock is available. Owing to crowded condition of sitting-up coaches men frequently ask to be allowed to travel in the trucks.

(ii) The matter is one between the Department of the Army and the Commonwealth Railways.

TRANS. RAILWAY.

As to Kalgoorlie-Fremantle Extension.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary:

(i) Has the Director-General of Land Transport (Sir Harold Clapp) who was appointed by the Commonwealth Government to prepare and submit a report on the standardisation of railway gauges, submitted a report to the State Government regarding the extension of the Trans. line to Fremantle?

(ii) If so, will the Minister lay a copy of his recommendations upon the Table of the House?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(i) No.

(ii) Answered by No. (i).

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Reports of Committee adopted.

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. L. CRAIG (South-West) [4.37]: I shall not oppose the Bill which has some merit, but I think it advisable to point out one or two anomalies that might almost be regarded as dangerous. Co-operative societies originally were registered under the Co-operative and Provident Societies Act of 1903. Some years ago I believe Hon. W. D. Johnson secured the insertion of a new section in the Companies Act preventing co-operative societies from registering under the Co-operative and Provident Societies Act and compelling them to register under the Companies Act. Now for some reason the same hon. member has introduced a Bill to enable co-operative societies to register under the 1903 Act.

The main purpose—almost the only purpose—of the Bill is to allow co-operative societies to purchase their own shares. As members are aware a limited liability company has no power to purchase its own shares. Naturally we can see the danger that would lie in such a course. Out of its own money a company could purchase all the shares and thus the assets would be placed in the hands of the few who held the shares. Under the existing legislation

a co-operative company can spend only up to 5 per cent. of its capital in the purchase of holdings of people who may have left the district. Now it is proposed to give the directors of a co-operative company power to purchase almost an unlimited number of shares from members who may desire to cease to be shareholders.

I know the position in regard to the society to which I belong, the South-West Dairy Farmers, Limited—this position arises in connection with other co-operative producer companies or societies—which is that certain farmer members have ceased to be dairy farmers. As a matter of fact, they are called “dry-shareholders.” Their number is increasing. A dairy farmer may die and his shares are then held by his widow or his family. Thus over the years there has developed a huge shareholding in the hands of people who have no interest whatever in dairying. Consequently dividends are payable each year to people who are not connected with the industry. That, as Mr. Gibson has said, was never intended. The idea of co-operative societies is that the users or purchasers or suppliers in relation to the company should receive the benefits and profits, which should be returned to the shareholders of the company rather than to outsiders. I still see some danger in the proposal, but that is not the real object of my speaking. Section 42 of the Co-operative and Provident Societies Act, 1903, reads—

A registered society may, by special resolution, determine to convert itself into a company under any Act for the time being in force relating to the incorporation of companies, or to amalgamate with, or transfer its engagements to, any such company.

One sees the danger. The directors of a co-operative society could purchase all the shares of members who wished to sell. Many co-operative societies have a backing of, say, 30s. for every £1 share. One can imagine these shares being acquired by the directors until very few shareholders are left. The shareholders could then pass a resolution converting the society into a limited liability company. Thereupon they would hold the whole of the assets and be able to distribute them as they chose. The real reason for my speaking to the Bill is that the measure deals with Section 108 of the present Act.

The principal Act, as Mr. Thomson knows, is almost dead, Parliament having

passed a new Companies Act superseding the statute which the Bill proposes to amend. Thus the Bill seeks to amend an Act that will be dead six months after the close of the war. Section 194 of the new Act, which has not been promulgated, is almost identical, word for word, with Section 108, which is to be deleted if we agree to the Bill. Section 108 reads—

No society shall, after the commencement of the Companies Act Amendment Act, 1929, be registered under the Co-operative and Provident Societies Act, 1903, as a co-operative society.

That section prohibits a co-operative society from being registered under the 1903 Act. The Bill deletes that provision, in effect saying, “You can go back and register under the 1903 Act.” The new Act says, by Section 194—

No society shall be registered under the Co-operative and Provident Societies Act, 1903, as a co-operative society after the commencement of this Act.

We cannot amend that. Consumer societies may be set up when the new Act comes into force, but there will be no more of them unless we amend the Act again. A similar Bill to the present one will have to be introduced immediately the new Act is proclaimed. We are amending a measure that is nearly dead.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: We can amend the new Act now, without waiting for the war to end.

Hon. L. CRAIG: The present Act permits purchase of shares only up to 5 per cent. of the capital. I see some slight danger in deleting that safeguard, and I wonder whether that is the reason why the provision was taken out of the Act of 1903. Members of this House have been written to on the subject. I shall raise no objection, however, because I do not know enough about the matter. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. T. MOORE (Central): Like Mr. Craig I have been asked by a number of societies and also by individuals to support the measure. After all, it will be a long time before the situation is created that Mr. Craig visualises regarding the possibility of shareholders in co-operative societies being so few in number that they can convert their concerns into limited liability companies. If that is the only danger, he is looking a long way ahead. On the other

hand, co-operative societies may be expected to increase. We want to see the establishment of more co-operative organisations. I think that what Mr. Craig visualises will really never happen. We do not want any outsiders to enter co-operative undertakings if the shares of the original shareholders can be kept in the family in which they started.

Hon. L. Craig: Kept as active shares.

Hon. T. MOORE: It is desirable that those who participate in the commencement should remain in the society, and that their shares should continue to be the property of their families, or else be transferred to producers who are carrying on the society. The people concerned have been interested in the matter quite a long time; it has not been rushed on them. They have thought the whole situation out. I hope the Bill will be passed as printed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

MOTION—ELECTORAL REFORM.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the previous day on the following motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter:—

That a Select Committee of five members be appointed to inquire into the question of electoral reform, and to advise on amendments to existing legislation with a view to improving the representation of the people in the Parliament of the State.

THE HONORARY MINISTER [4.52]: I intend to vote against this motion and will, as briefly as possible, outline my reasons for doing so. All the evidence available of the weaknesses of the present Act is contained in the honorary Royal Commission's report which was mentioned by several speakers when debating the Electoral Act Amendment Bill, which was defeated yesterday. The obvious thing to do was to pass that measure, and thus mete out bare justice to thousands of people now denied the franchise in an election for this Chamber.

In the course of the debate Mr. Seddon yesterday advocated a change in the qualifications of electors entitled to be enrolled

for both the Assembly and the Council. He is treading on very dangerous and reactionary ground. Mr. Seddon would exclude wasters and other undesirables and give a special place to citizens who, by scientific research and cultivated talents, make a great contribution to the advancement of society. In actual fact, many of the latter are today denied a vote for this Chamber. It should be recognised that the most dangerous citizens in a community are those who pursue an anti-social policy, thinking only of themselves and all the time keeping well within the law. Down the ages these "smart Alecs" have done untold harm to the community. Far from being denied the franchise, they too often move in the very best circles and are fawned upon by the very best people.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: You are speaking of the Communists?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: No, I am talking of a class of people who exist in every grade of society and conduct their questionable operations well within the law. They are able to conduct themselves within the law, escape their legal punishment and go Scot-free. They do a lot of harm to all sections of society and hinder the progress of the country.

Hon. L. Craig: You said that they are fawned upon by the best people. The best people do not fawn on anybody.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I think they do. Some of these people are very cunning. In the development of the present system they have exploited the geniuses and inventors to whom reference was made by Mr. Seddon yesterday. They have cruelly exploited them.

Hon. L. Craig: You do not fawn on them.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Not at all!

Hon. L. Craig: You said they were fawned upon by the best people.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Yes, because people do not realise who they are.

Hon. L. Craig: But you said "the best people."

THE PRESIDENT: Order! This is a debate; not a dialogue!

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Such individuals have caused untold misery and suffering to millions of people. There is no doubt about that. Those commonly designated as wasters and undesirables, whom

Mr. Seddon would de-franchise, are in the majority of cases victims of environment. Under similar conditions, many people who now condemn would themselves sink lower into the gutter than those unfortunate individuals. Everyone who has studied the matter realises that, and instead of condemning them, pities them. Definitely they are on the scrap-heap and in similar circumstances some of us, including myself, might find ourselves far lower down than they. Despite the strenuous attempts made to justify the present franchise for this House, it will not bear inspection, scrutiny and examination.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: That is why we want to inquire into it.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The facts are so obvious that it is unnecessary to have an inquiry. They are known to everyone who has studied the position and to everyone who has worked under the system. It must be admitted by everyone that tremendous social progress has been made since the inauguration of the Legislative Council—not by the advocacy of this Chamber but in spite of its opposition. I repeat that, under present conditions, great numbers of desirable people are denied the franchise. This calls for amendment. It is not difficult to enumerate useful sections of the public that cannot enrol for this Chamber. First, there are thousands of men of the Fighting Services. All young men who have enlisted in the Forces, thus offering their lives for their country, should be, without question, entitled to enrol for this Chamber.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We do not want any more of that sob-stuff.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is not sob-stuff.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You will not give them a fair deal when they come out.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member cannot say that I would not give them a fair deal.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Your organisation would not.

The HONORARY MINISTER: My organisation or one of the organisations I belong to will be the bulwark for their protection.

Hon. G. W. Miles: If they contribute to your union funds!

The PRESIDENT: Order!

The HONORARY MINISTER: What is the most any man is asked to contribute to the funds? It is not much.

Hon. G. W. Miles: He cannot get a job unless he does.

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is 3s. a year. The hon. member cannot mention any well-organised profession that is not similarly protected and which does not enforce its rules rigidly.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You will not give preference to those soldiers you are talking about all the time.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Ninety-nine per cent. of the soldiers will be only too glad to re-join the unions to which they previously belonged.

Hon. T. Moore: Hear, hear!

The HONORARY MINISTER: It is not a question of using sob-stuff in an argument of this nature.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It is sob-stuff.

Hon. G. Fraser: The hon. member would not give them a vote for this Chamber either.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Many of them cannot get a vote for this Chamber, and I will show why. Surely the galaxy of speakers against the abolition of plural voting is not afraid to hear the advocates for its abolition when they put up their case. We are entitled to state our views even if we are in a hopeless minority.

Hon. G. W. Miles: You should have put them up on the Electoral Act Amendment Bill.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am putting my views forward on this motion. I referred to the Fighting Forces.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The men who are put into cattle trucks to sleep!

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask the Honorary Minister to resume his seat. I wish members would hear the Honorary Minister in silence. Those who are interjecting will have an opportunity to reply to what the Honorary Minister has said. Then will be the time for them to answer any of his arguments.

Hon. G. W. Miles: I apologise for my interjections. I obey your ruling, Mr. President, and will remain silent for the future.

The HONORARY MINISTER: After the victory of yesterday some members doubtless feel jubilant and occasionally jubilation may overcome their discretion. I was

referring to the Fighting Services, men who have had five years of war. Throughout those five years there has been practically a cessation of building operations, and that has led to an acute housing shortage. Large numbers of returned men with their wives and families are forced to live at home with relatives or in rooms elsewhere. In either case they cannot enrol, because under the Act they are not legal householders.

There will be thousands of young married returned soldiers who will be disfranchised for this House because they cannot pay 6s. 10d. a week rent, but without question those men should have the right to be enrolled. The same thing applies to many hundreds of civilians who cannot rent houses. Such a state of affairs cannot be defended. One of the biggest arguments in favour of broadening the franchise for this House is the exclusion of the majority of women from enrolment. Most of the women of this State cannot legally enrol so they cannot have a vote for this Chamber.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: They should be enrolled.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I am glad to hear that interjection. Over the years the women of this country have progressed and played a big part in the nation's affairs compared with what society did when the Constitution for the Legislative Council was framed. During the war years the work of women in the Fighting Services and with the Fighting Services as well as on the home front has called forth the admiration of all decent citizens. Notwithstanding all this the majority of adult women cannot qualify for the franchise because they are not legal householders or landholders. Is this desirable or just? The answer must be a definite "No." In the majority of cases nurses and matrons cannot enrol because of the very nature of their profession. They, too, are denied the franchise. There may be a few of these women who own a block of land or are otherwise qualified, but the big majority of them are denied enrolment because they cannot legally qualify as householders. They have to live in hospital, in rooms, or in the homes of their parents.

No one has done better or more self-sacrificing work in the operational areas and the fighting front than have these women. On the home front, too, they have been grossly overworked through shortage of

staff, and yet they have carried on splendidly and uncomplainingly. Can anyone put forward a decent argument why these people should be denied the franchise for this House? The majority of doctors on the staffs of public hospitals cannot qualify for enrolment because of their present occupations. In the main these are young men who have worked hard and are highly qualified and cultured. Either through their own self-sacrifice or that of their parents they have fought their way into the profession, and only a very small percentage indeed can be qualified to vote for this Chamber. Can an argument be put up why such highly useful citizens should be debarred from enrolment? I say the answer again is "No."

Compare these people with the class of persons who are qualified to enrol! There are those who were mentioned by Mr. Williams. I will not refer to them in the same jurid language that he did, but would refer for instance, to the type known as the unhygienic storekeeper. If a storekeeper rents a shop and, for decency's sake, being unmarried, lives in a room, he is denied the franchise because he is not a legal householder. If he sleeps in the shop amid the food and stores he can enrol, as he is then a qualified householder. If he is married and he and his wife hold a joint rent-book, paying a rent of 14s. a week or over and sleep in the shop amid the foodstuffs, they can both enrol. They can claim the vote and cannot be refused. If, however, a man and his wife are clean and decent, and live in rooms away from the shop, they are not qualified to enrol. Then there is the rack-renter who is ready to pounce upon the unemployed worker when he is in difficulties, buy his house for a song, and can vote in every province if he can produce proof of ownership. Anyone who has a knowledge of the goldfields, of Fremantle and Perth, knows of the trouble that has been due to building by-laws not restricting dwellings as they might have done. The result has been that numbers of working men built their homes as best they could, and ultimately a rack renter bought them out for a song and the working men had to shift to some other locality. The buyer through his keen business acumen can then vote for the province in which those homes are situated.

The present franchise gives preference to the wealthy and disqualifies too many hun-

dreds of highly useful citizens. The present qualifications and methods employed to obtain legal enrolment are a negation of commonsense and justice. If ever the practice was justified, which was questionable, it certainly cannot be justified today. Both Mr. Cornell and Mr. Fraser some years ago served on a joint Select Committee to inquire into questions of this kind. Valuable information was obtained and that is available to every member. I think it would be a waste of time to appoint a Select Committee, and I regret that this House did not take the quicker course and pass the Electoral Act Amendment Bill yesterday. The evidence is clear that an inquiry by a Select Committee is unnecessary, and I shall vote against the motion.

HON. T. MOORE (Central): I oppose the motion. It is merely a method of drawing attention away from what was proposed by the Government, namely, an alteration of the franchise for this House.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I ask that that remark, which is both misleading and offensive, be withdrawn. I had no such intention in my mind when moving the motion.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure the hon. member will withdraw anything that any other hon. member regards as offensive.

Hon. T. MOORE: I am always prepared, Mr. President, to follow your dictates and, if the remark is regarded as offensive, I withdraw it. As soon as the Electoral Act Amendment Bill appeared in this House, one could see through the atmosphere what kind of hearing it would get, and how much consideration it would receive. I have been in this House so long that I always feel that any remarks I may make will fall very often on biassed minds. It seems to me that some members have been here so long that they assert their might very often more than their right. I have seen that sort of thing so frequently that I become disheartened and am afraid that any remarks I may make will fall on deaf ears. If the Select Committee is appointed and does the right thing, perhaps I can suggest one or two points with regard to the franchise for this House that it might take into consideration. First of all, I instance the province represented by Mr. Craig. I have mentioned this before.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Why not give that to the Select Committee?

Hon. T. MOORE: I am doing so now, because no doubt some of the members present will serve on that committee. I want to give them something to lead up to. If a Select Committee is to be appointed members are entitled to put forward something for its consideration. Does Mr. Parker find fault with that? With his biassed views, he will probably find fault with anything I say. In the province represented by Mr. Craig are hundreds of people who have lived there for many years and have brought up many children, but they are deprived of the right to vote for this House. Why should they be denied that right? The vote is withheld from them simply because they are not paying a rental of 6s. 10d. a week. There are people at Nanga Brook, Holyoake and at the railway mill and at many other places that I could enumerate who are denied a vote for this House. I worked there for years and so did Mr. Cornish. Down there are to be found some of the finest citizens this State has known. They are living in mill houses and have not a vote for this Council. I feel heated when I recall that they are denied this right. Does the Select Committee propose to go down there amongst those people? Does the hon. member ever visit the mills? Does any member representing the South-West Province ever visit the mills?

Hon. L. Craig: What has that to do with you?

Hon. T. MOORE: I am looking after those people.

Hon. L. Craig: They are looked after much better than are yours.

Hon. T. MOORE: I want the Select Committee to know that a large number of these people are living in the South-West; I want the Select Committee to view their houses and realise that a fair thing is not being done by their occupants. I think Mr. Mann would be inclined to support my remarks and I hope that Mr. Craig will support me. Those people have a right to a vote. What has happened down there? In my time those people were charged 5s. or 6s. a week, and I think the rent is the same now.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Four and sixpence.

Hon. T. MOORE: And it went up to 6s. 6d.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That was their own fault, too.

Hon. T. MOORE: Exactly, everything is their own fault. At the time I was down there—

Hon. W. J. Mann: How many years ago was that?

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. T. MOORE: Anyhow the conditions are the same today as they were then.

Hon. W. J. Mann: They are not.

Hon. L. Craig: Of course not.

Hon. T. MOORE: Members are merely trying to draw me off the track. I believe that the rents charged for those houses are the same as they were in my time. A similar house at Mt. Magnet, Kalgoorlie or Subiaco would bring 15s. or 20s. a week, so members will appreciate that they are good houses.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Does the company pay the rent

Hon. T. MOORE: I do not want the rent to be paid for these people; I want them to have the right to a vote for this House. I do not want any privileged class living in flash houses to have the sole right of governing this country.

Hon. J. Cornell: You are on good ground now.

Hon. T. MOORE: Mr. Cornell knows it; he married one of the girls from that district.

Hon. J. Cornell: A man on a goldmining lease gets a vote.

Hon. T. MOORE: Yes. The houses provided at the railway mill are good houses and the men are charged 6s. 6d. a week rent. They are charged that low rent because the timber was cut on the spot and the houses were erected by contractors.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: On day labour?

Hon. T. MOORE: I am not referring to an isolated section of workers. Hundreds of women have brought up large families in those houses, but neither they nor their husbands have been entitled to votes for this House. Is it not fair that they should have the right to the vote?

Hon. W. J. Mann: I think you are exaggerating the number greatly.

Hon. T. MOORE: Then let us go into the question of the number. If the hon. member goes to the timber districts, he ought to know the number.

Hon. W. J. Mann: I go there as often as you come to this House.

Hon. T. MOORE: That is a dirty sling off.

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask the hon. member to address the Chair.

Hon. T. MOORE: Apparently the hon. member does not like the information I am putting before the House.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You do not like mine, either.

Hon. T. MOORE: There are numbers of those people living in the timber districts, and anyone who has been there knows that these citizens of the South-West are entitled to a vote, but simply because they live in houses that carry a cheap rental, they are deprived of a vote for this House.

Hon. J. Cornell: If they were living rent free, they could get on the roll.

Hon. T. MOORE: That is right. Such houses would be worth much more than 6s. a week. If a Select Committee is appointed, I hope it will consider that phase of the question. I invite the Select Committee to prove me wrong if it can do so. Justice should have been done to these people years ago. Many young men born and reared in those houses have played a very important part in after life.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Nobody disputes that.

Hon. T. MOORE: Then why dispute their right to a vote. That is all I am asking for these people—the right of citizenship. I have always felt that in denying them the vote we have been casting an indignity upon them. I hope Mr. Mann will rise in his place and say that he considers these people should be given consideration at this juncture.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Unfortunately I have already spoken on that.

Hon. T. MOORE: If the hon. member will say that, I will be more satisfied. I know that the case I am putting up is correct and that nobody can deny the right of these people to a vote for this House.

Hon. L. Craig: What about the Legislative Assembly?

Hon. T. MOORE: Never mind the Legislative Assembly! The hon. member is merely trying to draw another red herring across the trail. I am putting up the case as it appeals to me, and I hope the hon. member will listen and not try to sidetrack me.

Hon. L. Craig: Confine your remarks to your own province.

Hon. T. MOORE: I am confining my remarks to a section of the people who have been absolutely forgotten and whose interests should have been looked after long ago. Let me instance what happened on the goldfields. At Mt. Magnet for years before the depression houses were bringing, say, 15s. to 20s. a week. During the depression, owing to the fact that there was not much doing on the goldfield, the rental of those houses dropped to 5s. a week. The owners were prepared to allow people to occupy them at nominal rents. Yet the same people living in the same houses before the depression had a vote for this House, whereas during the depression they were not entitled to a vote. Would members say that is right? I say it is ridiculous. Members talk about the householder qualification; that is about as a ridiculous a qualification as one can imagine. How long, I ask, is the existing state of affairs to be tolerated? The Government is not in power in this country.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: No, it is not.

Hon. T. MOORE: This House is really in power. This House takes unto itself a power that it really does not possess. Following on that remark, I should like to mention that there has recently been no serious trouble between the two Houses. There was a time when disputes arose on the relative rights of the two Houses in regard to certain measures. This House had no right to deal with an income tax Bill, but it did have a right to amend an income tax assessment Bill. By exercising this right, it was able to hang up the assessment Bill and force its will on the Government with respect to the tax Bill.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is tactics.

Hon. T. MOORE: That may be so, but they were low-down tactics and not right. When that occurred——

Member: When was that?

Hon. T. MOORE: It happened on many occasions. When the House of Review adopts such tactics, it is time that some alteration was made. On one occasion when trouble occurred between the two Houses, it was suggested by the Government and the Assembly that a case should be stated to the Privy Council to determine exactly what the powers of this House were. The Privy Council is the final court of appeal, and to obtain its opinion would have been a commonsense course to adopt. This House,

however, declined to go to the Privy Council. Why? Because it was afraid.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: How could it go there?

Hon. T. MOORE: It could have gone there, and the hon. member knows that that is so.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Why could not the Assembly have gone?

Hon. T. MOORE: The Assembly wanted each of the Houses to state a case for submission to the Privy Council in order to get a determination as to their respective powers.

Hon. J. Cornell: That was tactics on the part of the Assembly.

Hon. T. MOORE: Why did not this House go to the Privy Council and have it decided once and for all whether such tactics were justified?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Because it could not go.

Hon. T. MOORE: Because it would not go. You, Mr. President, know that this House could have approached the Privy Council. The suggestion was made by the Assembly, but members here would not agree to it. In effect, they said, "Might is right; we will go on doing the things we have been doing." Sir Hal Colebatch knows it would have been better for all concerned had the two Houses agreed to ascertain which was in the right.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: When there is a dispute between two parties, it is usual for one to make the appeal.

Hon. T. MOORE: But under our bicameral system the two Houses were involved, and they might well have got together and approached a higher tribunal so that deadlocks would be avoided.

Hon. J. Cornell: What happened on the secession appeal?

Hon. T. MOORE: This has nothing to do with secession.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That is a good red herring you are trailing now.

Hon. T. MOORE: I defy the hon. member to contradict any statement I have made. I challenge the Select Committee to go to the timber areas and investigate the truth of every allegation I have made. I do not think it will do so, though I sincerely hope it will.

Hon. J. Cornell: Now you are knocking down your own case.

Hon. T. MOORE: If members of the Select Committee do visit the timber areas, I will raise my hat to them on their return. Not only are these people in the South-West entitled to a vote for the Council; that is the right of every decent citizen over the age of 21 years. We have to change with the times and our people are now educated and want the right to a vote for this House. It is said, "Look at the number of electors on the roll and then observe how few of them vote." That has nothing to do with the question. Why? Because only a certain number in any community take an interest in the government of their country. Every member knows that. To say that because there are 3,000 electors on the roll and only 2,000 vote is no sound argument. In a democracy we should have government by the whole of the people.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: We should have! Yes.

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member admits that that is right; but under our laws we cannot be governed by the whole of the people, when so many have not the right to vote.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: It is not a case of not having a right to vote. They should be compelled to vote.

Hon. T. MOORE: My desire is that everybody should have the right to vote. Some ten years ago, or perhaps longer, it was proposed in this House to do away with the rental qualification and bring in a household qualification.

Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch: A very good proposal.

Hon. T. MOORE: It was, and had it been adopted, married people living in a house would have had the right to vote. But this House decided otherwise. I think this history should be made known to Dr. Hislop; I want a few of our new members to know what this Chamber has done in the past.

Member: It is a different place now!

Hon. T. MOORE: It is the same old House, but we have a few new members and ought to be more hopeful. Some members have said that, after all, certain educated people should have the right to vote for this Chamber; but in my roaming about I have found men of no book-learning who are very wise. Other members have found such men, too. If an educational test were to be set up, then some of our best people would be denied a vote, while the privilege would be

extended to bookworms who really only have other men's ideas in their minds.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: They are theoretical.

Hon. T. MOORE: Yes. The men to whom I have referred obtained their education in the university of hard experience. I have found the so-called educated people to be narrow in their outlook, because they know only what they have picked up by reading. If we really want to be democratic, as we should be, all the people should be entitled to vote. Then there would be a preponderance of people voting and we would get all we could expect.

Hon. J. Cornell: Very often you get what you deserve!

Hon. T. MOORE: I know that some people are not getting what they deserve. I shall vote against the motion, because I think it does not provide that the Select Committee should set out on the right lines. I am satisfied the motion will be carried by the House.

Hon. J. Cornell: Be with the House!

Hon. T. MOORE: I have stated my reasons, but if the Select Committee is appointed, I hope it will deal with some of the points that I have raised. I do not think it will be hard-hearted enough to turn down the people whom I have mentioned.

HON. C. R. CORNISH (North): Our Electoral Act is certainly due for some reform. It strikes me that the first thing a candidate for Parliament has to do is to go to much trouble and spend much money in putting people on the roll. I guarantee that I could put on the roll for the North Province as many more electors as are already on it. The people are apathetic and do not seem to trouble about voting. The Honorary Minister spoke of persons who could not be enrolled. Much has been said about our soldiers, but I do not think the soldiers returning from the war will be so much interested in a vote for this Chamber as they will be in getting out of uniform and securing a job. That is how I felt myself after returning from the 1914-18 war. The soldiers who returned from that war were given gratuity bonds. Mine was for over £100. The soldier could buy a block of land with his bond and then take advantage of the Commonwealth Housing Scheme under which he could have built for him a house costing £1,000, which he could pay

off at a very low rental. That was one of the finest things done for the soldiers.

Both this House and another place are deploring the fact that the soldiers returning from the present war cannot get a vote for this House. But what did the Government do for our soldiers after the last war? The Returned Soldiers' League approached the Government for preference to returned soldiers, but the request was turned down flat. The Government said, "Our policy is preference to unionists." That meant a man with 25s. in his pocket to enable him to join a union would get preference over the returned soldier. I mentioned that fact and was told, "If you look at it in that way, that is the position." It has also been said that a soldier who might be delayed for a couple of months in securing a house or in buying a block of land would be denied a vote for this Chamber. Well, according to the Repatriation Commission's report, 35,000 farms are to be set apart for soldiers; so the soldiers who get those farms will be entitled to a vote.

Personally, I do not think soldiers will worry about a vote for this Chamber, nor will the nurses who are returning. The latter are engaged in a profession that absorbs all their time and energy, and naturally they will not be worrying about politics until they get married. They might do so then. In any case, they are earning good money and could speculate in a block of land. When my brother and I enlisted for the last war, we were qualified to vote for this Chamber, being then in the early twenties. I had accumulated a few pounds and had speculated in blocks of land in progressive districts. I have three votes for this Chamber, and that is how I qualified for them. As I said, the trouble is apathy. During the last election a lady asked me whether it was compulsory for her to vote. I replied, "No, but it is your duty to vote. You are entitled to do so." She said, "I will not bother." She only had to walk 200 yards to a polling booth. Yet we hear all this "sob-stuff" about people being denied the right to vote! Do they exercise the right? A good Labour man said to me, "I am entitled to vote for the Legislative Council, but have not bothered to do so for years." I asked him the reason. He replied, "I cannot be bothered." We hear the same up in the North.

The last time I was in the North I noticed dozens of men living in good homes, yet not one of them was on the roll. Banana growers said to me, "We will give you a vote," but when they came in to vote they found they were not on the roll. I told them that they were enrolled for the Legislative Assembly and that it was too late to put them on the roll for the Council. There are hundreds of such men. We have heard talk about foreigners, but it is the foreigner who will settle on the land. Apparently, Australians do not worry about settling on the land. I know of a man who owns land near Carnarvon. He has leased 10 acres of it to another man who grows beans and tomatoes. Both of those men are entitled to vote for this Chamber, one as a leaseholder and the other as a property owner.

In the North it is not the pastoralist or the mineowner who controls the votes for candidates for this Chamber; that is in the hands of the small householders. The latter are apathetic and too busy with their own affairs; they could, if they really wanted to, put a man of their own choice into this Chamber, but they do not worry. It is said that the prospector is denied a vote. The prospectors and the contractors are among the wealthiest men in the State; in fact, many men I know knocking about the country are entitled to a vote for this House. Obviously, this position should be inquired into. Why should it be the duty of a candidate for Parliament to put electors on the roll? It should be the duty of the Government of the day to see that the rolls are up to date. Everybody entitled to be on the roll should be placed on the roll.

We have rolls for the Legislative Assembly, the Legislative Council and the Commonwealth. I myself, before I took an interest in politics, did not know whether I was on any of the rolls. If a card was sent to me, I signed it and returned it. I expected to see my name on the roll after that. I think the proposed committee could do a great deal of good by inquiring into the anomalies existing in our electoral laws to-day, and by making people realise that they are entitled to the franchise. Many people do not realise the value of this great privilege, to obtain which in times past men were persecuted and laid down their lives.

Hon. J. Cornell: I travelled 200 miles to vote.

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: One elector told me that if he could get a horse he would travel 75 miles to vote for me. He appreciated the value of his vote, yet other electors will not walk across the road to vote. People should not be compelled to vote. A volunteer fights better because he is a volunteer; and if a man were fined for not having his name on the roll and for not voting, I think it would be found that he was a man who could not cast an intelligent vote. He might cast a vote that would suit the people who make the laws. As I say, I think the Select Committee could do a lot of good. We might as well pass a Bill to abolish the Legislative Assembly as have that Chamber seek to abolish this House. Any reform brought about should be done through the people. If they want to make any reforms let us have a referendum and I will abide by the wish of the people.

Hon. T. Moore: Do you not think that the people living in the houses in the timber areas should have a vote?

Hon. C. R. CORNISH: The houses in those districts in my day were very poor, but the people were good. The hewer is the best class of man I have met in the whole of this State. The Select Committee could attend to those matters. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. J. G. Hislop, debate adjourned.

BILL—EVIDENCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [5.46]: When I first read this Bill I was in very grave doubts as to the wisdom of supporting it. It caused me considerable thought, but on review I believe that it is correct to support the measure. It is difficult to make up one's mind, when faced with two difficult problems, in the hope of rectifying both of them. It does not seem possible to achieve that end and, as a result, some compromise is necessary. We are faced with two questions here. One is: Shall we protect the wrongdoer? The other is: Shall we adhere to the time-worn custom of asking for corroborative evidence? I feel that the lesser of two evils, in this case, would be to protect the child.

On reading the Bill carefully I realise that it is a Supreme Court judge to whom we

shall be giving the discretion. We are also giving him the right to use that discretionary power when he thinks fit. We are not making it obligatory on him to accept uncorroborated evidence. One of the doubts that I had in mind was due to the fact that a child's evidence can be altered by suggestion, unwittingly. In my time, as Superintendent of the Children's Hospital, I saw only a small number of these cases, fortunately, but sufficient to give me some insight into what might happen in any particular case.

As a rule the story of the child, after it has been in the hospital for a day or two, tones down very considerably from what it was on admission. This is due to the fact that people, such as the sisters in charge of the wards, trained to care for children, are able, by reassuring the child, to learn the truth. It is only natural that when a child returns home and states that interference has occurred, the whole maternal instinct of the mother is roused in anger, and by the mother's questioning of the child it is possible, by suggestion, to increase the child's reaction to the event. I noticed that once a child was reassured by members of a trained nursing staff, the seriousness of the story would, on occasion, lessen. It was this that made me wonder whether it could ever be wise to accept the child's uncorroborated evidence.

But I consider, on review, that a judge of the Supreme Court with his experience in the taking of evidence, could so reassure the child as to obtain the same story as a trained nurse is able to secure it after caring for the child. I admit that the child is examined in court, but I still believe that the judge can use his discretion and accept evidence after he has questioned the child, using his knowledge gained as the result of years of experience. On further reflection, and on seeking other advice, I have in mind to move at the Committee stage, an additional clause to provide that the Act shall remain in force until the 31st day of December, 1946, and no longer. That would give us a chance to see how this legislation worked for two years, and then this House could review the Act and give it permanence.

That would allow us to see what types of cases had been dealt with, because I have been assured that there are many cases

which have not been brought before the court because no corroborative evidence could be given. If we can bring these cases to court and if, by passing this Bill, we can protect the child, then I am in favour of giving this measure a trial for two years and, if it proves to be a success during that time, of making it permanent legislation. If, on the other hand, during that period there can be brought to the notice of this House any possibility of injustice having been done, then we shall have the opportunity of reviewing the Act. I support the second reading.

On motion by Hon. J. M. Drew, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 5.55 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 19th October, 1944.

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

QUESTIONS (6).

RAILWAYS.

(a) *As to Damage to Tarpaulins.*

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) How many tarpaulins were repaired on account of damage caused by superphosphate during the 1943-44 season?

(2) How many tarpaulins had to be completely replaced on account of such damage?

(3) What was the total cost of the repairs and replacements?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 79.

(2) 121.

(3) £1,833.

(b) *As to Use of Spark Arresters.*

Mr. WILLMOTT asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Are all Western Australian Government Railway engines fitted with spark arresters?

(2) Are these spark arresters patented?

(3) If so, by whom?

(4) Is it possible for a spark arrester to be disconnected whilst the engine is on a journey?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) Answered by No. 2.

(4) Yes, but only if the driver stopped his train for the purpose.

FENCING WIRE.

As to Shortage of Length in Coils.

Mr. WATTS asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is he aware that merchants are advertising in the Press and elsewhere in regard to black unused barbed wire, 12½ gauge, in 28 lb. coils, stating that there is approximately 150 yards in a coil?

(2) Has he been advised that such coils contain varying lengths down to 98 yards, the average being approximately 110 yards?

(3) If so, has he sought any explanation from Army in regard to this length shortage as the advertisements state that the wire is being released from Army surplus?

(4) If such information has not been made available to him, will he investigate the allegation that the shortage exists with a view to rectification and a reduction of the charge made?

(5) Does he not consider it apparent that if the shortage exists the advertised rate makes the price of the wire compare unfavourably with wire purchased in cwt. lots through normal channels?

(6) Is he aware what commission retailers are obtaining for the sale of this wire, and has this commission been recently increased?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) to (6) I will enquire into the whole matter and take it up with the appropriate Commonwealth Department direct.