Legislative Assembly,

Tuesday, 29th October, 1907.

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By *the Premier*: 1, Plan of route of proposed railway from Mount Magnet to Black Range. 2, By-laws passed by the Cemetery Boards at Paddington, Boyup Brook, Karrakatta, Kelmscott, Kanowna, Kookynie, Midland Junction, and Mount Magnet. 3, Timber Regulations under the Land Act. 4, Timber Tramways—Copy of permits to construct.

QUESTION—RAILWAY CARRIAGE OF LAMBS, DELAY.

Mr. FOULKES asked the Minister for Railways (without notice): Has he read a letter written by Mr. Hack and published in the *West Australian* newspaper of October 28th, regarding the carriage of some lambs from Beverley to Fremantle, wherein Mr. Hack complained that the Railway Department took from 5 a.m. to 6 p.m. to take a truck of lambs from Midland Junction to Fremantle.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: I cannot trace any live-stock consigned from Beverley on 15th by B. J. Hack, but one small truck of lambs, c/o Elder Shenton, received the following transmit:—Beverley, dep. 7 p.m. Tuesday; Midland Junction, arr. 6 a.m. Wednesday; Midland Junction, dep. a.m. Wednesday; Fremantle, arr. a.m. Wednesday; Fremantle, dep. 10 p.m. Wednesday; Robb's Jetty arr. 2.25 p.m. Wednesday. This is the usual goods transit.

Mr. FOULKES: I would ask whether the Minister will take steps to remedy that state of affairs, and see if live-stock can be carried at a more rapid rate in future.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Large consignments of stock are run specially.

QUESTION—HOPETOUN JETTY TRAFFIC.

Mr. ANGWIN asked the Premier: 1, What quantity of goods has been landed from vessels at the port of Hopetoun during each month of July, August, and September, 1907—goods for Government works excepted? 2, Is it true that owing to the falling off in trade, several teams have been taken off the road carrying goods between Hopetoun and Ravensthorpe? 3, If so, will the Government reconsider whether it is advisable or not to make any further expenditure in railway and pier construction at Hopetoun?

The PREMIER replied: 1, The quantity of goods landed at Hopetoun during the month of July was 1,105 tons; during August 1,643 tons; and during September 1,213 tons—exclusive of goods for Government works. 2, The Government are not aware of any falling-off in trade. Certain teams have, however, been taken off the road, due no doubt to the early completion of the railway. 3, No expenditure other than that already in hand is contemplated.

BILL—SALE OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Council.

BILL—ELECTORAL.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 23rd October:

Mr. E. E. HEITMANN (Cue): In discussing the Bill, I desire first to tender my thanks and the thanks of this part of the House to the Minister in charge

of the measure for giving so many opportunities for discussing it. I was unfortunately not present when the Attorney General moved the second reading; but in witnessing on two occasions an adjournment of this question, I have come to the conclusion that it is his desire that every member in the Chamber should fully debate this Bill. I take it that his desire is to get the best possible Bill placed on the statute-book. Looking through the measure, I notice that although the qualifications of electors for the Legislative Assembly are set out, the framer has omitted to set out the qualification of electors for the Legislative Council. Perhaps that is the reason the Bill has been delayed so often; perhaps it is the desire of the Minister to bring forward a Bill that would give effect to the utterances we have heard so often from the Government that they intend to liberalise the franchise in connection with the Legislative Council. In fact I would not be surprised from the expressions we have heard of that Chamber if they are not contemplating at the present time a Bill to abolish it altogether. The fact remains, the Minister for some reason or another has given members of this Chamber various opportunities of discussing this most important measure, and it is the duty of every member to fully discuss the Bill, for no doubt it will mean a lot to members of this Chamber at the next election. No doubt it will affect many and will mean the fate of many members of this Chamber. On looking over the Bill it would indeed be kind for anyone to give credit to the Minister for bringing in a Bill for the objects as expressed by the Attorney General when moving the second reading of the measure last session. He stated then, in no uncertain terms, that the object of the Bill in the first place was to facilitate, as far as possible, people getting their names on the roll; but on looking through the Bill I have my doubts about the sincerity of the expressions that came from the Attorney General, and in fact it seems to me if a title were needed for the Bill one might be stated to this effect: "How to get the people to vote informally, and how to keep people's names off the roll." In discussing a Electoral Bill, a measure which is to pr vide the machinery for elections to t Legislative Assembly and Legislati Council, it is only natural membe should bear in mind their experiences elections in the past, and more especial their experiences of elections held und the present Act. I think it is the on possible way members have of judgi what is necessary in a measure of th description. No doubt in the old A there is a good deal which is desirabl and no doubt a few amendments are r quired. From my experience, the A did not work too well, more especial that part concerning postal voting. was unsatisfactory as far as my electi was concerned. I found that men w had left the district, several of them f years, had cast votes. No doubt the are some improvements needed in t rolls administration of the Act or eve in the Act itself to prevent, as far a possible, the stuffing of rolls and the po sibility of a person having his or h name on two or more rolls, also to pr vent the abuses that were demonstrate during the last election in regard to post votes. The Minister for Works ha shown that even under the old Act it possible to have almost perfect roll According to the hon. gentleman, the were 18,000 names on the combined Fr mantle rolls and these were cut down t about 8,000 or 9,000. I feel sure tha with one or two amendments, especiall those we have provided for in this Bi in regard to the card system of keepin rolls, we could have a measure that woul enable us to have as nearly perfect rol as it is possible to get. The greatest de fect in the elections carried out under th old measure was not in the Act itsel but rather in the administration of th Act; and the Minister for Works ha proved that by his remarks in regard t the stuffing of rolls; while on the othe hand, I know that many names sent i have not been placed on the rolls; fo what reason it is difficult to find out. I we made an example of a few offender in the matter of having names on mor than one roll, in a short time under th old Act we would prevent those abuse

that have been carried on in the past; and if we made it an offence punishable by a severe fine for any elector to send in a claim form when his name is on another roll instead of sending in a transfer form, in a short time we would have almost pure rolls. A good deal has been said as to why this Bill should be passed, but I have not heard many faults in the old Act pointed out and given as reasons why we should repeal the Act. Though there were between 40 and 50 elections at the last general election, there were not many complaints, and it was proved that where complaints existed or disputes arose, with ordinary care on the part of the departmental officers they could have been avoided; and, therefore, seeing that is not the Act, but rather the administration that is at fault, I think we should deal with the officers instead of trying to repeal the Act. Of course there are no Acts absolutely perfect, but it is wrong to say that it is not possible to make an Act very nearly perfect. In discussing a measure of this description, it is necessary to consider what are the essentials of an Electoral Bill. As has been stated time and again by the Attorney General, the Minister in charge of this Bill, and I think it is the opinion of every member of this Chamber, the first essential is to give every facility to electors to get their names on the rolls; the Minister says that it is almost his sole desire; and it is necessary to set out the qualifications of electors; to give every facility to voters not only to get their names on the roll, but to record their votes at an election; to set out the method by which members shall be elected, whether by a single majority over all other candidates or by an absolute majority of the votes recorded; and to provide machinery as simple and effective as it is possible to get for carrying out elections. Also while attending to these matters, we must, as has been pointed out by the Minister, leave as little room as possible for abuse or dishonesty. But I am afraid the desire of the Government to prevent people being dishonest and abusing the privileges given to them in this Bill, has made it almost impossible for people to get their names on the rolls or, if they do get their names on the rolls, to record their votes. The qualifications of electors are set out in Clause 17. I do not object strongly to that clause, but at the same time I think there are cases in which it is not necessary for a man to be forced to reside six months in the State before being qualified to have his name placed on the roll. I think that when persons come to this State and they have been here three months and have made their homes here they should be qualified to vote. Why should we make it six months? I am certain that in the old days, when people who came from the other States were given their votes which had been refused to them for years, elections were just as pure with those people voting as they were in the old conservative days when it was almost impossible for a man to get his vote. It is provided that a man must reside a certain time in the district in which he claims to vote. That is all very well, but I think that all that is required of a man should be that once he is in Western Australia a certain time and qualifies to vote, immediately he shifts to any other electorate, he should be allowed to get his transfer after he has resided in it a week and made his home there. As I have said, there is nothing much to object to in this portion of the Bill, but when one comes to read Clause 18 (disqualifications) one has to object very strongly indeed. I desire to record my objection to Subclause (*b*) which provides that every person is disqualified "who is wholly dependent on relief from the State, or from any charitable institution subsidised by the State, except as a patient under treatment for accident or disease in a hospital." Surely the time has not come, after we have gone on so long allowing these old people to have votes, when we are going to deprive them of the rights of citizenship simply because they have become old and happen to be poor. Surely there are many of these old people who have carried through life those rights of citizenship with honour and credit to themselves. I feel convinced there are old people in the charitable institutions of this State whose labour on behalf of their country and whose

pioneer work for the State should commend them to this House, and whose names are more worthy of remembrance than even those of many members of this Chamber. We have in those institutions men who have worked continuously for many years for the good of the State, perhaps for more than the years the Attorney General has been in the world, but simply because they happen to be unfortunate or at all events unlucky and unable to provide for their old age the Attorney General wishes to say, "Because you are poor, you are to be dishonoured." There is no other construction to be put on it. It is the natural desire of every man to secure the rights of citizenship; they are born with him; but *now* simply because these people happen to be old, and have not the money necessary to prevent them from being in these old men's homes, the Attorney General and his Government say, "We are going to deprive you of the right of voting." It seems to me that it is the desire of the Government to make if not a property qualification, at least a money qualification in connection with the Legislative Assembly as well as the Legislative Council. He gives no reason. I have read his speech, and a long speech it was, when *introducing this measure last session*; and he gives no reason why these people should not have the rights of citizenship, should not be allowed to vote. At least the only reason he gave was that they might possibly be influenced by the party who for the time being had the handling of the State money. Seeing that some of these institutions are only partly supported by Government, the remainder of the funds being supplied by the public, I wonder on which side these persons are likely to be influenced—towards those subscribing the funds or towards the Government. Then the hon. member mentioned in support of this provision that in olden days soldiers, civil servants I believe he mentioned, were not allowed votes in different parts of the world. I would not be surprised if the Minister in charge desired that at the present time. It seems to me that the fewer persons the Government can give votes to, the better they like it. Is it to be a qualification of property or of value, or is it to be manhood suffrage in connection with this Chamber? Is it right that we should deprive these old people of their votes because, after battling through life and after doing good work for the State they are unable to support themselves and are given relief in these depôts? I think it is a shame. In fact, is a shame and a disgrace that many of these old men are in those depôts at all. Many of them have done good service for this State, and are deserving of better treatment at its hands in their old age. I believe the inmates get fair treatment in the depôts; but something more, something in the shape of pensions should be provided for these old people. I admit there are many among these inmates who perhaps have not led exemplary lives; but there are also men entirely capable, mentally and in every way, of recording their votes. I think that to deprive them of votes is an even greater disgrace than that they should be in the homes at all. The time has come when any Government that happens to be in power should consider the advisability of granting these old people pensions. I can assure the Chamber that this provision will strike heavily against many of my constituents; for I am satisfied—and I have often made this statement in the House—that with the conditions existing in the mines of Western Australia, before very long we shall have a great percentage of our miners, not old men but comparatively young, who will be absolutely incapable of earning a living. What will be the result? That the future of a majority or of a huge percentage of the miners of this State is the old men's depôt, or a State pension of some description. The prospector works on year after year, seeking nothing from the State, opening up new country; and we have had many instances brought under notice where men, after battling for practically the whole of their lives doing good work for the country, are forced to accept a pension or take refuge in the old men's home. I am satisfied there is really no danger, and the Attorney General has not attempted to point out any real danger, to be feared from giving these old people

a vote. If the Minister could convince the House that it would be dangerous and likely to affect an election in an unfair way, I would support the provision; but until it is proved to be necessary to deprive these people of the right they already have to vote, I shall not vote for a measure preventing old people from having a vote. I have tried to show how difficult it was for people to get their names on the roll: and in that case I have proved it was the desire of the Government to altogether prevent some from voting. But it is not merely a question of getting names on the roll. It has been generally admitted that if we are to have an ideal Electoral Bill, it should be one making it possible for every adult in the State possessing the necessary qualification to vote. And even though the system of elector's rights has been a good deal abused, much can be said in favour of that method of voting. I think the time will come, and at no distant date, when people will be able to take out elector's rights or whatever they may then be called, and without any farther trouble than presenting them to the returning officer or other person in charge of a polling booth, be permitted to vote. There would be no more work in that than at present, for under this Bill many persons, particularly on the goldfields, will require to sign declarations that they are the persons set forth on the roll, which is no more than would be required had we a system of electors rights. Before a name is placed on the roll a claim has to run all sorts of gauntlets. First a claimant has to find someone from whom to obtain information as to whether his name appears on the roll for a particular district, sub-district, or polling-place as the case may be. After finding out that he has to search for a gentleman having claim forms; and at this stage I would ask the Minister whether in any provisions made for sub-districts it is intended to provide a central place in such sub-districts where a person may ascertain whether or not his name is on the roll?

Mr. Underwood: The Minister does not intend to allow men to get on the roll, if it can be prevented.

Mr. HEITMANN: If sub-districts are to be established, some such provision is necessary; but in the Bill as printed none is made. As I read the Bill, a man has to find a public servant, a justice of the peace, or some other duly authorised person, to witness the signature to his claim. In regard to sub-districts, I contend it is at least grossly unfair to introduce such a system, especially on the goldfields. I can see some small reason for the proposal in thickly populated centres such as Perth or even Kalgoorlie; but how you are to work this sub-districts system outback, and at the same time give facilities to people for getting on the roll, as the Government declare they desire to do, I for one cannot understand. In the Bill certain persons are authorised to witness claim forms. I do not know whether it is the Minister's intention to make any alteration here, but I can see no reason why a claim should be witnessed. As I said, a man has to chase about to find some officer who has been appointed to witness claims, and the officer must first be satisfied that the claimant possesses the necessary qualifications—in short that his various statements are correct. So far as justices of the peace are concerned, I know of many justices who are not fit to judge of the correctness of a man's statements. In connection with the sub-districts, I can assure the Minister that the provision will result in hundreds of people on the fields being deprived of votes. Take for instance the electorate of Cue, which if cut up into districts, sub-districts, or whatever else the Minister chooses to call the divisions, would require to be divided into seven districts. People are continually travelling from one of those districts to another. In going through the district I have often met people in Cue, and when I have reached Black Range, or Birrigrin 40 miles farther, I have met those people again, and *vice versa*. How is it possible for such men to ascertain whether they are on the roll for this district or that? The Minister must know that people will not go to the trouble of finding out for themselves whether they are on the roll. We know that in the past electors have been lax in these matters.

We had an instance of this a few weeks ago, in an election at which a very small percentage of voters on the roll exercised their votes; and even in that case the percentage was regarded as high. Under this proposed system I can assure the Minister that people will be disfranchised, even though they be lucky enough to get their names on the roll. In my opinion, goldfields electorates will be cut up in such a way that there will be only about half the qualified persons on the roll. Even after a man has gone to all this trouble, after he has been perhaps lucky enough to get his name on the roll, immediately afterwards or even while his claim is still lying in the office, as it has to remain there 14 days before the name can be placed on the roll, someone may object. He may have sent in his claim from Barrambi, 80 miles from Cue. The officer in charge will send him notice that an objection has been lodged against his name; but the claimant may have left Barrambi before the notice reached that place, he may have gone into Cue looking for work, or gone in any direction; but even though he is still there and receives the notice, is it likely he will travel 80 miles to protest against the objection or to show that he is qualified? It seems to me this is another objection to the sub-districts provision. I am perfectly satisfied that not only will one have trouble in getting on the roll, but when enrolled one will not know where to vote. Apparently the Minister desires to prevent a person from voting twice, or from voting in somebody else's name; for when speaking last session he stated that the returning officer or the scrutineers became acquainted with the voters. I resided in Day Dawn for several years, and I am quite satisfied, though it was a small place, that I did not know half the inhabitants. What will happen in larger places? I feel sure there is no necessity for all this precaution; that instead of treating every elector as if he desired to obtain some unfair advantage, or even in some cases treating him as a criminal, we should be guided by our own experience. Surely no member in this House can point to a large number of cases of dishonest practices at elections. Ninety-nine per cent. of the people only desire to vote properly; and as for the remainder, I do not think it matters. Instead of catching the few dishonest voters by hemming them in with sections and regulations, we are only nullifying the benefits of the Bill, and placing obstacles in the way of claimants for enrolment instead of giving them proper facilities. I notice that any elector whose name is on the roll may object to a claim or to any other name on the roll. It seems peculiar that whereas the Government are not prepared to give every man the right to witness a claim-form signature, yet an elector who is not fit to witness a signature is fit to object to a name appearing on the roll. This seems anything but consistent. If the elector happens to get enrolled, after all this humbug and circumlocution, and if he finds out which district he is in, and that he is likely to remain in the district till election day or for a long period, nevertheless the Minister may shortly afterwards decide to take a census. And Subclause 3 of Clause 38 states, very clearly to me at all events, that, "In such portion or portions of the State for which an electoral census may be ordered, the result of such census shall alone be used for the purpose of preparing new rolls." If I were satisfied that the census would be perfect, and that every name in the district would be obtained, I should have no objection. But in goldfields districts particularly, and everywhere in the outback country, it is simply impossible to take a perfect census. Even the Commonwealth authorities, who were so careful in taking the census of 1901 or 1902, omitted the names of hundreds who never sent in the particulars, or never had an opportunity of so doing. It will be the same with an electoral census in the outback districts. I think it will be even worse. People have lived so long under the existing electoral law that they will say, "Our names are on the roll; we shall not trouble to make claims; we shall make them when we go to the township." But the subclause states, so far as I can see, that no other names shall be enrolled except those taken at the census.

True there are provisions for adding names subsequently. But suppose the census were taken and there were an extraordinary election shortly after the roll was printed, it would be impossible to supply deficiencies. We should find hundreds of names off the roll. The question of sub-districts is another impediment in the way of the voter. It is proposed that the Minister may set out any sub-district or cancel any district or sub-district. Matters of this kind, I think, should not be allowed to go through the usual cumbersome track of the *Government Gazette*. I found by experience that the returning officer should if possible be given power to appoint polling places. I do not believe in the districts at all: we do not want them. But even the declaration of polling places is left in the hands of the Minister. At the last Federal election we found that numbers of out-back places were left without polling booths, consequently hundreds of people could not vote; and I know that many electors had to walk ten, twelve, and sometimes even fifteen miles to the poll. As to the postal vote provisions, we know that at the last general election and the two or three other elections held under the Act of 1904, these provisions were open to abuse; and I think there is a possibility of abuse in the new provisions of the Bill. At the same time, I should trust to the honesty of the electors rather than surround postal voting with provisions which make it almost impossible. In Clause 93 I notice that in case of a postal vote the returning officer shall compare the signature on the claim form with that of the person who is voting. I know there are other provisions; but if it is possible for a returning officer to throw out a postal vote because he finds the signature of the applicant is somewhat different from that on the claim for enrolment, many will be disfranchised, for their signatures will be unlike in some respect, and often almost entirely unlike. People who take up the pen perhaps only once every two or three weeks, perhaps not oftener than every pay-day, do not make their signatures alike twice running. I notice a provision which is in the old Act, and I believe in all the Electoral Acts of Australia to-day, that the presiding officer shall initial ballot papers before giving them out. This I will admit is desirable; but many votes have been made informal by the neglect of a presiding officer; and I think it would be possible to provide that, even though a ballot paper was not initialed, there would be little difficulty in ascertaining whether the vote should be counted. The ballot papers could be numbered; or it could be ascertained whether the numbers polled corresponded with the butts; and such correspondence would be sufficient evidence that the votes were right and that the ballot papers must have been obtained from the returning officer. It is apparently the desire of the Government to make some great alteration in the method of determining who are and who are not the successful candidates. After reading the Bill with some care I am compelled to admit that though I understand certain of its clauses and provisions, yet, when I come to this portion, which seeks to explain preferential voting, I am absolutely lost. I cannot understand the system to be adopted; or if I have a slight idea of the system, I cannot understand the reason for its adoption. Though we have in the past found certain candidates returned by not nearly a majority of the votes polled, still I think the time has arrived when the line of cleavage is so distinct between the Labour Party and the Government party that rarely shall we find more than two candidates for the seat. The Minister for Works (Hon. J. Price) says this is one good feature of the Bill, for it will tend to do away with the selection ballots. I feel sure it will do nothing of the kind. Preferential voting seems very fair in theory; but I have known it in single-member electorates to work out so as to give any amount of room for cliques, and for conspiracies to defeat certain candidates. Very rarely shall we have more than two candidates for one seat. I do not object so much to the provision in single electorates, but I have a profound objection to it in plural electorates. I object strongly to the provision by which the Minister may amalgamate

several of the single electorates, the one electorate thus formed returning four or five members. At this stage the Bill gets altogether beyond me. Say, for instance, Kalgoorlie is made into one electorate returning five members. We can rest assured that the Labour Party will put up five candidates for that constituency. Why should any elector be forced to differentiate between the candidates for whom he votes? Why should he be compelled to vote for them preferentially, from one to five? Here is the position. A voter in an electorate returning five members thinks just as much of one candidate as he does of the others, but the Attorney General will have it that the voter must vote for one candidate, and then give second, third, fourth, and fifth preference for the others. Anyone can see that if that happens, where the Government now hold one seat out of five they can possibly get two, and that appears to me to be the Government's object in introducing this system. It is all very well for the Government to say through their Minister that they want better representation and the full value given to every vote; but they must know that the system has been tried in two or three places, and even in Australia and has not been altogether a success. Those who advocated it for so long did not anticipate that the party lines would be so clear between the candidates. When candidates formerly put up and no two of them belonged to one party the system now advocated might have been good; but where a section of the people put forward and support the full number of candidates and think well of all of them, having no preference for one over the others, it is altogether unfair to force that section to make any discrimination between their candidates. The Minister has assured us that he has no intention of bringing the system into operation at the present time, but I cannot see any reason why it is in the Bill, and I am not prepared to accept the word of the Minister or the Government. I have no doubt, from our experience of the past, that if the Government find that they can get an unfair advantage over the Labour Party they are going to take it by legislation or by administration. I do not wish to repeat what has been said in the House time after time; but I believe there is a good deal of truth in the statements made, that had the last general elections not been so rushed, the Menzies electorate would be represented by someone other than the Minister for Mines. Be that as it may, I say that the party in power are going to win the election. If not by fair means at any rate they will try to stretch a point as far as they can. We have seen it time after time, so that I am not prepared to accept the word of the Minister that this provision for preferential voting and plural electorates is only put in the Bill for the fun of the thing. In a short time, perhaps, we shall see a measure brought down to this House, and no doubt the Government will carry it, providing machinery for carrying out the desire of the party in power. I can see the object. It is because the Government fear the next election, because they know the feeling of the people is going to be against them at the next election. The Government appear to me to be like a man struggling against the tide; they grip at any straw, and this is one they are putting forward. No doubt someone has gone to a great deal of trouble to bring down this long Bill, but I cannot give any credit for the result achieved. I believe that without bringing in this Bill we could have had a fairly good measure with a few amendments to the old Act. I even hold that without any amendment at all the old Act is preferable to this Bill, Though the Government say they want a different system of ascertaining the feeling of the people, and that they want every vote to have the same value, whether it is for the first, or second, or third preference, I am perfectly satisfied it is only a means to an end; they desire to place certain parties at a disadvantage. I have heard people say that this preferential system of voting is oh, so simple; but I guarantee that even if it is so simple, there are few returning officers in this State who will understand it unless the Act is sent to them and they are allowed a certain time to study it. I believe that it will be time for a fresh election to be held before

the votes at the first election are counted under this system. I am opposed to it. No great reason has been advanced why it should be instituted, at all events no reason sufficient to justify the Opposition supporting the system. Standing out in bold type we find in Clause 170 a provision dealing with the limitation of electoral expenses. It is farcical in the extreme to place anything of the description in the Bill. From my experience this limiting of candidates' expenses and compelling candidates to send in accounts of their expenses makes more liars and perjurers than any other law in the State. I am perfectly satisfied there is not one member on the Government side of the House whose expenses were inside the limit. In some cases it was not the views of the candidate that counted, but rather the result of the ballot rested upon how much money he could spend. There is a limit of £500 for the Legislative Council elections, but we know in certain elections in this State a thousand pounds would be nearer the mark than £500. For a considerable time it has been the case that when it comes to a good fight it is a matter of capital *versus* the Labour Party. I have no hesitation in saying that if it were possible for the Labour Party to put up the same amount of capital as is put up by our opponents we would be far more successful. During the last Federal elections had the money been at the command of at least one of the metropolitan candidates he would have won the seat. It was purely on account of his not having sufficient capital to run his election and to provide vehicles and so forth, that he lost his seat. As far as my experience goes, there is no need for a provision of this kind. It is impossible to find out a candidate's expenses. We know or feel sure that a great deal over the limit is spent, yet how can we find out? Any man can fake up his return and send it in. We find candidates declaring, falsely declaring, that they have not spent more than £100. There is no need for this provision as far as the Labour Party are concerned. My experience was that the election of 1903 cost me £50 though the polling booths were fifty to sixty miles apart, and the district was 400 or 500 square miles in extent, and that the last election was still better for me, costing something like £22, though I guarantee nearly ten times that amount was spent in opposing my return. It is folly, and it appears to me rot, to place in a Bill of this description a provision which we know is impracticable and not worth putting in. Then there are penal clauses in regard to bribery. The Government have made it clear in Clause 181 that they shall be allowed to make promises; at least, to put it in the words of the clause "A declaration of policy shall not mean bribery." That may be so; it may be legitimate for a member to promise anything; but I know of various elections in this State where the promises of Ministers amounted to nothing but bribery. No man could interpret them in any other way: there was not the remotest idea of these promises being carried out. They were not matters of public concern: they were matters concerning a few people, but we have it they were a declaration of policy. I understood the Bill fairly well until I came to the schedule of explanations in connection with preferential voting. Really I think the Minister should give us an idea of what he intends to do or how he is going to decide an election. I am sure no one can understand this dot-and-carry-one business. It has me paralysed. Here is a man who gets 500 votes, when under this Bill he only needs 400 to get returned. They take the odd 100 and give them to someone else. If anyone can show me why that is so, and if anyone can satisfy me that it is correct and fair, I am prepared to vote for it; but until that comes about I am not prepared to vote for this Bill; because, instead of being a Bill to give facilities to people to get on the roll, the title of this Bill should be "*How not to* get on the roll." Experience will show the Minister that hundreds and thousands of electors will be disfranchised especially by the provision for subdistricts. I notice in *Hansard* that the Minister said he had an open mind on that question. I think he should advance some reason for putting it in the Bill. There may be great need for an Electoral Bill, but there may be clauses in this Bill which may be so

bad as to counterbalance the good points about the measure. I think it only right that members should force the Minister to give them some clear understanding. It may be stated in reply that we can amend in Committee; but supposing we cannot do that, or that we can only succeed in amending certain portions of it which require amendment, the result will be that one-half of what may be termed the "rotten" features of the measure will be left in. If members take my advice, and if they desire to get a fair deal at the next elections with a chance of being returned, they should vote against the Bill.

Mr. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Pilbarra): I am rather pleased that this Bill has been adjourned once or twice, as I wished to make a few remarks and was not prepared to do so previously. I desire to enter my protest against the Bill as it stands, and also against its being pushed ahead at the present time. This session was called, or should have been called, for one purpose, that being to settle the finances of the State. The one thing the country wants settled is the financial position, and I contend that until that has been done we should leave out all contentious measures of this description. I can only describe this measure as a sort of dust thrown in the eyes of the people for the purpose of blinding them to the fact that we have a deficit, and that the deficit is getting larger. Taking the Bill as it stands, I contend that when we repeal an Act we should be shown that some faults exist in it; but on the two occasions when the Attorney General moved the second reading of this Bill he made no attempt whatever to my mind to show the faults in the old measure that required remedying. As the member for Cue has said, it may be that there are a few small matters that could be improved upon in the Act; but I think the amendments in that direction could have been made by an amending Bill, instead of the time of the House being taken up in going through a new measure such as the one now before members. Farther than that, when we frame an Electoral Bill, it should be for three purposes—1, in order to facilitate persons becoming enrolled as electors; 2, to facilitate the recording of votes; and 3, to make a measure so clear and explicit that anyone, no matter how poor his education might be, can understand it, and will be able to record his vote in a proper manner. This Bill is just the opposite. In my opinion the title of the Bill is altogether incorrect, inasmuch as it is not in conformity with the contents. It should have been described as a Bill for an Act to prevent enrolment, to prevent those already enrolled from voting, and to confuse those who do attempt to vote. If we look at the clause carefully we will find that as a rule the object the draftsman of this Bill had in view was to carry out the purpose I have just indicated. The first clause I will deal with is Clause 18, which provides, "every person shall be disqualified from being enrolled an elector, or if enrolled, from voting at an election who is of unsound mind." There is some reason in preventing people of an unsound mind from voting. At the same time, in my opinion, there may be no harm in giving them a vote for the Legislative Council. I feel sure that the franchise for that House requires broadening in some way or other, and any alteration we make cannot possibly be for the worse. My suggestion might be adopted. The next subclause of the clause is a much more serious one, however, and that is wherein it is provided that persons shall be disqualified from voting who are wholly dependent on relief from the State, or from any charitable institution subsidised by the State. A slight amendment was made in committee last session, and this provided an improvement to the subclause, but at the same time it has not been altered in regard to many people in this State who are thoroughly entitled to vote. The question was discussed fully last session, and the longer we discussed it the more convinced I became that there are a large number of people who are disqualified under this subclause who are entitled to have a vote for the Parliament of this State. The fact that a man is drawing relief, or is wholly dependent on relief, from the State institutions should not disqualify him from voting, and

should not be looked upon as decreasing his mental faculties. He has as much right to vote if he is drawing relief from the Old Men's Home as if he were drawing relief in the shape of a pension. These persons should be placed in the same position, and I cannot see why one man drawing a big pension from the State should be allowed to vote, while a man drawing a small pension should be disqualified. The granting of the vote might make up for the smallness of the pension. I know a number of cases where men are thoroughly competent and capable to cast an intelligent vote, but who will be disfranchised under this clause. Take the Old Men's Home. We find in that institution many men who are not really old or decrepit, but men who have met with some accident; some have been paralysed in the limbs, or something of that description ; others may have become blind, but many of them are likely to and probably will be out in the world again soon, and be earning their living as well as they did before. Yet, while they were inmates of the institution they were not allowed to vote, but they would be qualified when leaving it. We provide that men of unsound mind and criminals cannot vote, and it appears that the Attorney General and those supporting the Bill wish to provide that any persons who by any accident whatever have become inmates of these homes, are to be placed on the same level as a lunatic or a criminal. I protest strongly against such a course being adopted. I trust that when in Committee, if the Bill ever reaches that stage—and I will do the best I can to prevent it from doing so—it will be farther liberalised, and will follow the system laid down by the Federal Act. The Attorney General has a good precedent to follow, for in respect to qualifications what is good enough for the Australian Parliament should surely be good enough for any State in the Commonwealth. As to the manner in which this Bill is being drawn, we find that all sorts of small obstacles are placed in the way of people eligible to vote. Under Clause 22 it is provided, "Rolls shall describe surname, christian name, sex, residence and occupation of each elector, and shall contain such other particulars as may be prescribed." What on earth else can you describe? Do the Government want to know the colour of a person's eyes, or how many children his grandmother has. You have to give the surname, christian name, sex, residence and occupation, and it will want an ingenious man to find out what else he desires to know. In regard to Clause 38 which deals with the electoral census, that is, I contend, one of the best clauses in the Bill for the purpose of getting electors off the roll. We find it said there, "In such portion or portions of the State for which an electoral census may be ordered, the result of such census shall alone be used for the purpose of preparing new rolls." It is well know that a census, no matter of what description, always misses a certain proportion of the people, and in an electoral census it is more highly probable than in any other that people will be missed. This Bill provides that no matter what faults there have been in connection with the taking of the census, that census and that alone shall be used for making up the new rolls. Without going outback, we will adopt as an instance the census recently taken in town. I have heard several complaints from people that their names were not taken by the census collector who went to the house, and in numbers of cases people who were living there were missed out altogether. On the other hand, I have heard it from a census collector that, in certain cases, the occupiers of houses deliberately tried to prevent their servants from getting on the roll. There was one specific instance of which I was told, where the lady of the house objected strongly to her servant having a vote, and refused to give any particulars about her or even to call her down so that her name might be placed on the roll. With such examples before us we now find that the census alone is to be taken in making up the new rolls. Then dealing with the outback districts. Supposing you go into the Pilbarra electorate, it is practically impossible to find all the men at any given time in that electorate. In fact you would have to keep a census collector continually going to keep a check on

the men in that district. Men in that and similar other districts are frequently outback for periods of six months at a time. It is not at all an unusual thing for a party of half a dozen or more men to go out expressly with the intention of staying away for six months, and if a census is taken in the meantime these men are struck off the roll. They are still in the district, however, and there is plenty of room for them, but because they are not working close to a public house their names are struck off the roll. I contend that this clause is one of the best possible for striking people off the roll. Anyhow, the following sections do not read quite so well in this respect. We find that in preparing new rolls Section 38 says that only the census shall be taken, and Section 39 states that in preparing new rolls the names of all persons, who appear to be qualified, shall be inserted. Who is to judge of their appearance? Again, there is provision in Clause 39 that notwithstanding the census the names of persons who appear to be dead may be struck off the roll; and again it says that new names may be added to the roll, etcetera. But I contend that if you have a census and you act according to the reading of Clause 38, there is no other possible way of getting on the roll, a claim or anything else is out of the question. I feel certain that is one clause of the Bill that will work very detrimentally to the interests of electors in the outback parts of the State. Perhaps the framers of the Bill thought it undesirable that anybody outback should have a vote, for it appears to me they have framed the Bill somewhat on those lines. In Clause 43 we find that "the essential part of a claim shall be," etc.; but it is stated farther on in the Bill that "the usual signature of the claimant, in his own handwriting, must be on every claim." So a claimant who cannot write cannot get a vote; yet we find in other parts of the Bill that provision is made for persons who cannot read or write. There are clauses which lay down —in the postal voting clauses, for example—that if an elector cannot read or write the returning officer may vote for him, or fix up his voting paper for him. What I desire to know is, if a man cannot get on the roll by claim without being able to write, how is he going to vote, or why make provision for a man voting when you block his getting on the roll. I commend this to the attention of the Attorney General, and I think it well worth consideration. For my own part, I contend that the system obtaining in the past has worked no harm to anybody. That a man cannot read or write is, in my opinion, no crime and should not bar him from having a vote in the affairs of his country. Farther on in the Bill we have a provision that persons unable to write requiring to do anything, such as signing anything under this Bill, may do so by making their mark. This is a clause to which I wish to call the Attorney General's attention. Is not the signing of a claim doing something under the Bill? And in this connection does not Clause 207 clash with Clause 43? Clause 207 says:—

> "Any person required by this Act to sign his name may, on satisfying an officer that he is unable to write, make his distinguishing mark, which shall be witnessed by the officer."

I contend that, seeing that no such provision has been made throughout the Bill for people who cannot write their names, we should certainly make provision for them to get on the roll. We have made every provision except for their getting on the roll, for in the provisions for getting on the roll it is distinctly laid down they cannot be enrolled. I cannot altogether agree with the remarks of the member for Cue (Mr. Heitmann) with regard to postal voting. That is one part of the Bill on which I wish to compliment the Attorney General. My experience of postal voting is that it should be looked upon as a necessary evil, and reduced to the lowest possible minimum. I found that the system was, in Pilbarra at any rate, that certain persons were appointed to take postal votes. These persons then drove all round the country to people who they knew would vote for their fancy candidate and took their votes, those likely to vote against their choice being not troubled about. I certainly compliment the Attorney General

on making an effort to remedy this evil, although I contend that this could have been done very easily without a new Bill. The fact that a postal vote is informal unless it is initialled or signed by the returning officer certainly has its objections; and here again I do not take the same ground as the member for Cue. I believe it is necessary that postal votes, and every ballot paper, should be signed or initialled by the returning officer. At the same time, I contend there should be some punishment for the returning officer who fails to discharge his duty in this respect. In the recent election for Pilbarra I know that my opponent lost four votes through the returning officer failing to sign voting papers and postal votes. We require returning officers who know their duty; we should pay them a fair salary, and if they make a mistake they should suffer for it. Although these mistakes have been made, nothing whatever has been done to the officers responsible. They are still in their positions, and likely to be, making mistakes with the greatest impunity. It is only a matter of a number of such mistakes as those I have indicated and an election, especially when the contest is a close one, is practically in the hands of the returning officer. Some provision should be made for punishing, either by dismissal, by fine or by some other means, the returning officer who fails to initial claims or to sign postal ballot papers. Another part of this Bill which certainly does not commend itself to me is that relating to the facility given to people to object both to claims and to people already on the roll. If similar facilities were given to people to get on the roll as there are for getting them off, then this would be a really good Bill. We find that efficient provision is made for removing names from the roll. We find that not only may the registrar object to names on the roll, but any elector may do so; and such elector has merely to deposit a shilling with the objection. Thus it would be quite possible for any man, by spending a £10-note, to upset an election, as he could object to electors at the rate of £5 per hundred, which is certainly a pretty cheap way of getting names already on the roll struck off. And this could be done very easily, especially when an election is pending, and particularly in some districts. This provision may work in a town or city where the postman comes around three times a day, for it is possible in such places for the man objected to to get his notice; but in the back country, where mails run fortnightly, or perhaps monthly, and where perhaps men are working 20, 30, or even 50 miles away from a mail route, in such circumstances all that would be necessary would be for some gentleman in the town, who knew where the men were, to object to their names, and as no reply came to hand—and a reply could not because the notice would not be received in time—those electors would be struck off the roll. This is a most pernicious clause, in my opinion. And there is no provision for punishing anybody who might work on it. If it is necessary to have provision made for objections, then I should say there should be provision that the objections must be genuine, there should be no wilful objections made. I cannot see where the necessity comes in. Very concise provision is made as to the means of getting on the roll, by claim and by various other means; and for the life of me I cannot see that these objections are necessary. But still, as any man is to be allowed to object to another's name for one shilling, I think we should have a provision made to see that he has reasonable grounds for that objection, failing which he should be made to pay a fairly considerable sum. Farther on in the Bill we find that the magistrate seriously tries the case and decides whether the objector's deposit of one shilling shall be returned to him or forfeited. In my opinion a man wilfully and knowingly entering a frivolous objection against another man's name on the roll should get a term of imprisonment, anything from six months up to, but not exceeding two years. I contend that any man who would get another struck off the roll is equally as bad as a man who would vote twice; and since a man is liable to imprisonment for six or twelve months, and even for two years, for voting twice, the man entering an ob-

jection which is not justifiable is equally deserving of two years. When the Bill gets into Committee—if it does reach that stage—I shall move an amendment providing for the punishment of anyone wilfully making objections to names on the roll or against claims for enrolment. Again, it is provided in the Bill that notices shall be posted outside certain buildings, wherever the Chief Electoral Officer or the registrar may direct. But how many people ever go near the electoral offices to see if their names are posted in the lists? Supposing men are working many miles away from the office, is it just or to be expected they should be compelled to go into the town to see those lists?

At 6.15, *the Speaker* left the Chair.
At 7.30, Chair resumed.

Mr. UNDERWOOD (continuing): It appears to me that comparing the signatures is not a reliable method of proving the identity of an elector. We all know that a man's handwriting is subject to great changes in varying circumstances of life. A man employed as a clerk, a storekeeper, or in any like occupation, and continually using the pen, would write an almost entirely different hand if for a few months he were to use the double-ended hammer, or the pick and shovel, or other heavy implement; and it is quite possible that his two signatures would not be at all alike, and on this ground he may be refused a vote. Moreover, the returning officers, their deputies and assistants, are not writing experts; and if a man's right to vote is to depend on his signature, I say the signature should be identified by an expert. We should not allow a layman to look at it and say that it differs from the signature on the claim. As to appointing polling places, I take strong exception to this power being given the Minister. We know it is at times of the greatest importance that fresh polling places should be declared, especially in a State like this where new centres start up or are likely to start up every week. To-day we find a wilderness uninhabited except by a few blacks; and in a few months there may be hundreds of white men in the locality. Hence fresh polling places should be pretty liberally provided. I contend that they should be selected by the registrar or some other permanent officer, and not by the Minister, who is certainly liable to be guided in this matter by party bias. I think a much plainer definition should be given of what is a sub-district and what is a polling-place area. Both are provided for; and according to the definition a sub-district is any part of a district the boundaries of which have been defined under a certain clause, and a polling-place area is defined to be the same thing. If both are identical one is unnecessary. Speaking on the amendment to the Address-in-Reply the Premier said the language of the amendment was Walkerian. I should say these definitions are Keenanistic. At drafting a definition which means positively nothing the Attorney General is a past master. The object of this Bill is supposed to be to secure purity of elections; and with that end no doubt the Attorney General has provided that the Attorney General for the time being cannot be a candidate. I do not know whether he did this by accident or design. I should not like to suggest that his being forbidden to stand would conduce to greater purity. But we find that "officer" includes all persons exercising any power or discharging any duty under the Act. We find numerous clauses in which the Attorney General, the "Minister." is empowered to do certain things and "shall" do certain things; and therefore I contend that, according to the clause which reads, "Any officer becoming a candidate shall vacate his office," the Attorney General would either have to resign his portfolio or to refrain from becoming a candidate. This little provision was inserted either by accident or in straining too vigorously after purity. I do not think the Attorney General meant the provision to apply as I believe it will according to the reading of the Bill. Another provision that appears to need amendment is that a candidate shall deposit £25, and that his nomination paper shall be witnessed by a justice of the peace. The J.P. seems in fact to be spread all over the Bill. He seems to

be a great friend of the Attorney General. I contend that if the candidate puts up £25, that is equal to 25 justices' signatures as witnesses. If the nomination paper is not genuine, the candidate would not put up £25; and why a justice should be required to witness the candidate's signature when £25 has to accompany the nomination I am at a loss to know. I do not suppose this will involve any great trouble; but it may involve trouble, especially if a man is in a hurry at the last moment, in looking up a J.P.; and as the justice's signature is absolutely useless, why waste printer's ink in putting the provision in the Bill? Again, we find it provided that if an unsuccessful candidate has not secured a certain proportion of the votes recorded for the candidate elected, the former shall lose his deposit; and it is farther provided that in reckoning such votes only first-preference votes shall be counted. I contend that if second-preference votes are good enough to put a man into Parliament, they should be good enough to save the £25 of a man who did not get into Parliament. Why the first-preference only should be counted when it is a matter of losing a deposit, and why the second-preference should be counted when it is a matter of electing a candidate, I am at a loss to understand. I shall deal with only one or two other matters—the preferential voting and the proportional voting. By preferential voting I do not know that any great harm can be done, nor do I think it will do any good. First, such voting is not made compulsory; and secondly, if it were made compulsory the electors would take particular care that they did not use their second-preference votes to elect a man of whom they were afraid. They would rather throw away their second votes, as is always done at such elections; in fact, it is quite possible we should find candidates put up purposely to take the second-preference votes, instead of having those votes given to the opponent, who would thus have a possible chance of being returned. Therefore I contend the system will be useless even if it is not harmful. If it is a fact that some members are representing only minorities, and if this is to be prevented, the best way to prevent it is by a second ballot, which will leave no possible doubt as to who is the candidate desired by the district or by a majority of the electors. The second ballot is much better than the preference-voting system. Moreover, are there any glaring instances of members representing only minorities of their constituents? How many members in this House now represent minorities? And apart from that, I think it is agreed that if a second ballot had been taken, or if preferential voting had been permitted, the same men would have been elected. Something of that sort was tried in Tasmania, and it was found on several occasions that those elected under the old system were again elected under the preferential or fancy system—the Hare-Spence system, the hare-brain system, or whatever it was. The new system made no practical difference. However, I have not any great objection to preferential voting. I think it is undesirable that a minority in an electorate should be able to elect the member; and if preferential voting will do away with that, perhaps it is worth a trial; but I feel sure it will have no practical effect whatever, and might as well be left out. The proposal to establish dual electorates is a horse of another colour—I was about to mention another animal. What object has the Attorney General or anybody else in creating dual electorates? The object of the Bill should be to get the opinions of the people; and by cutting up the State into single electorates we give minorities in the State a possible chance of being represented in some places. By having dual electorates—and the larger they are the greater will be the effect—minorities have no possible chance of securing representation. That has been demonstrated time after time. It is all very well for those logicians, or whatever they may call themselves, to write about the value of a vote, about dual electorates and the rights of a minority; but the test is the practical result of the system. For instance, Adelaide and suburbs were at one time constituencies of which some returned two members each, while some returned one only. The whole metropolitan area was

subsequently divided into two electorates; and we find that though prior to that division both political parties had representatives returned for metropolitan electorates, afterwards the whole representation was given to one party. Again, in our own State at the last Federal Senate elections, we saw that when the whole State was made one electorate, one party secured the whole of the representation. I cannot say I agree with the system which gives one party all the representation. Though I do not agree that the minority should have any possible chance of ruling—because it must be admitted after all that the majority rules—yet it is as well that the minority should have representation. As I have said before, the one point an Electoral Bill should have strongly is clearness, so that anybody can understand its provisions. I do not think that has been achieved in this case. The Attorney General gave us a lucid explanation of the working of the various clauses, but after he sat down I confess I knew as much about them as before he stood up. The Bill has one advantage. When a man stands up before an audience and attempts to explain it and makes his audience believe that he thoroughly understands it, he has a great advantage over the audience, because I am positive that not one in the audience will understand it. I am afraid that when we attempt to frame a Bill that even members of the House cannot understand, it is time we tried another system. I have tried on several occasions to understand the Bill. I have got on very nicely until I came to the proportional voting. On the first section I am all right, on the second section I am shaky, but on the third I get knocked out altogether and take my ten seconds. I believe I have a moderate amount of intelligence; and if I cannot understand the measure, I am sure there are many electors who will not understand it. The more one studies it the more confusing the Bill becomes. My opinion is that we might just as well put the electors' names in a hat and declare the first four out elected. I believe in a bit of a gamble, but I contend that we should do our gambling in certain places provided for it, or on certain sports, but not on an Act like this. If we want to gamble, the W.A. Turf Club will hold their meetings at Christmas, and from my experience anyone who wants more than that is glutton. There are Tattersall's sweeps and other things on which we can gamble, but we should not attempt to gamble on such a serious thing as an Electoral Bill. When we come to consider these clauses on preferential voting, we see that A gets 850 votes and B 430, and you take 50 from A and put them on to D, and D has 10 too many so you put them on to E, and E has seven preference votes and they go on to F, and G, having no visible means of support, is knocked out on general principles. The longer I go at this the more confused I become, and I cannot make out who gets in at all. In a manner of speaking I cannot make out "whether she married the hero in the last act or whether the villain still pursued her." In much of the literature we have had lately a great deal is left to the imagination of the reader. No doubt there is a great deal left to the imagination in the lucid explanation of the Attorney General. Of course we can imagine that the good and noble Labour candidate is elected in the end, after much trouble, and the anti-socialistic villain is defeated after contact with too much water, probably because of being accustomed to nothing but whisky. I contend there is nothing clearly set out to show a man what will happen after he has voted. For a few clauses thoroughly confusing the minds of people these are about the best I have seen. [*Mr. Heitmann*: The Attorney General does not intend to use them.] Then I contend they should not be here. Our great statesman, Sir John Forrest, has said we should take a fence when we come to it; and I maintain we should introduce the machinery for these elections when we have decided to have dual electorates. There is just one other matter; it is not in the Bill but it should be. No Electoral Bill is complete without a proposal to alter the franchise for another place. The Attorney General last session certainly did bark in this matter; but now another place has had him to heel there is not even a bark out of him. The session before last he had a

Bill on the table, but he took particular care not to have it discussed. This session not only has he neglected to bring in that Bill but he brings in this Bill and omits any reference whatever to that reform of the other Chamber which in times gone by he has claimed as absolutely necessary. I trust this Bill will be defeated on the second reading. If it is not, then it will be the Opposition's duty and pleasure, I hope, to considerably amend a large number of the clauses.

Mr. C. A. HUDSON (Dundas): It must be pleasing to the framer of this measure to have this Bill discussed. When it was introduced last session it was spoken to by the Attorney General in an interesting speech, and he was followed by the Leader of the Opposition. After these speakers it was naturally expected that someone would have been heard from the Government side of the House answering in some degree the opposition that had been raised to the measure by the Leader of the Opposition; but instead, the debate closed and the second reading was carried. All the efforts put forward last session in Committee became futile on account of the action of the Government in proroguing Parliament. The Bill, however, did have some consideration at the hands of members, but I venture to say it is a pity that the many members who are present this evening and who have been present on the several occasions this Bill has been before the House this session seem to have nothing to say, and that the Bill should have been prolonged from day to day without any discussion, and that adjournments should have been moved by members such as the member for Canning (Mr. Gordon) who takes a great interest in electoral matters and who could give us some idea of the conduct of elections in the city and of what takes place in a suburban constituency. Some members from the outer districts have already spoken and given their views in regard to the effect of this Bill upupon their constituencies and upon those who live in townships and those who go out into far distant places in search of gold and other products of the State and who endeavour to open up the State's resources to the best of their ability; but surely there are members representing farming districts and city constituencies who could afford us a great deal of information on the management and conduct of elections and as to the effect of this Bill. They might tell us the defects of the measure we are seeking to repeal, as to the necessity for altering the Constitution and introducing certain provisions in this measure that were not contemplated and dealt with in the Act we are seeking to repeal. I think it is hardly fair that those members should remain silent during the course of a debate on a measure that has such far-reaching effects. Surely we are entitled to hear from members representing city constituencies the effect of the old Act on previous elections. We have the member for Katanning who has been continuously a member of the House since Responsible Government. He must be able to give us a good deal of information. He affords it to us in regard to the price of flour and as to the value of country for sheep-raising or cereal-growing, or for making ensilage, as the member for Mt. Magnet suggests; but the hon. member has not attempted while this Bill has been under consideration to afford any information whatsoever in regard to it. However, I cannot let the opportunity pass without offering some practical reasons against those portions of the measure to which I take exception. Certainly there are some provisions in the Bill which must meet with the approval of everybody. They must have been drawn from the measure under which we have been conducting our elections since 1904. Let me at this stage remind the Attorney General that in fairness to those who have to discuss the measure he should at least have put in marginal references, so that members might easily understand what clauses are introduced from the original measure under which we are now working, and so that we might have some idea of the source from which he takes the new matter. The hon. gentleman informed us during his speech last session and this session that many of these provisions have been drawn from the legislation of other countries and that many have been taken from

the Queensland Act, and that he and his officers have been through the different Acts in operation in the various States of the Commonwealth. I think he even went so far as to say that he had considered subjects introduced in this Bill and the effect of them in other parts of the world and in the Commonwealth and New Zealand. Failing any such marginal references, one has to be very careful to ascertain the effect of the provisions in the Bill. It seemed at first that the idea was to have some provision for the purification of the rolls and for enabling those entitled to vote to exercise the franchise. But before I go through the general principles of the measure it would be as well to consider why this Bill takes precedence over the Bills that are already on the Notice Paper. The reason for this session of Parliament was primarily for the clearing up of the finances of the State so as to do something to provide for the removal of the deficit that was continually growing and that appears to be growing to a size that is somewhat alarming. The excuse the gentleman controlling the affairs of this country put into the mouth of His Excellency the Governor for calling this session together so quickly after the other, was that it was necessary to bring in taxation measures, and they made no particular mention of this Bill. It seems to me that the consideration of the Land and Income Tax Assessment Bill should have taken precedence over the consideration of this measure. Instead of that, on nearly every occasion when the business sheet is prepared, it is placed immediately after the informal business of the day's sitting. It seems to me that we are dealing with matters which should be left over, and which could most conveniently be left over, to a later period, when the wishes of the member for Perth (Mr. H. Brown) are gratified and a land tax has become an established fact. Failing that, as those in power who have control of affairs think it better to bring this down, and seem to have a particular reason why it should be forced on, it is our duty to deal with the measure in the best way we can. I take it that the first principle of this measure is as stated by the Attorney General when introducing the Bill last session. In moving the second reading he said:—

> "The first necessity is to afford the maximum of facility to all who are entitled to the franchise to become possessed of the franchise, and the second is to include in the measure safeguards of any necessary character against those who are not entitled to the franchise being on the roll or, if they are on the roll, to make provision for their removal."

That was said in the first few sentences of the Attorney General's speech. And if it is his intention to afford the maximum of facility to all those entitled to the franchise to vote, then in my humble opinion he has signally failed in that direction. He seems rather as though he had set up a franchise in the centre of a large area, and had surrounded it by a number of barbed wire fences—fences of such a nature that the farther one went in an endeavour to reach the franchise, at the end the more difficult became the entanglements. In addition, when once those obstacles had been overcome and the would-be voter had obtained the franchise, then the Attorney General has made provision on the other side for him to be robbed immediately of what he had gone to such pains to procure. There is a provision in the Bill that every applicant desirous of having his name placed on the roll should sign an application in the presence of a witness. There are other difficulties in the way of applying for enrolment, and they also seem to be of the barbed wire description. The application is to contain certain information which, if not given correctly, may deprive the applicant of his rights. Having signed his application in the presence of a witness of a particular kind, and having sent that application in, there are still farther difficulties confronting him before he is able to get on the roll. The reasons have been given for this by the Attorney General, and he seems to have drawn those provisions from legislation that obtains in other parts of Australasia—principally Queensland, New South Wales, and New Zealand. Before any of those provisions are introduced into a Bill in

Western Australia they should be carefully considered as to their aplication to this State. To me there seems to be a tendency on the part of the Government —they may not be singular in that respect—that all measures which are law in other parts of Australia should necessarily be good for Western Australia. It does not follow that they would be. Measures which have become law elsewhere should receive greater consideration than the mere dumping down of them and acceptance here. The conditions here are very different from those in the other States. While many of the provisions of the Bill may be excellent in the particular places where they are in force, still they have no application here. During the last and preceding sessions, the speakers from the other side of the House did not seem to like the idea of importations of principles and measures existing elsewhere, but when it comes to something that will please them such as the provisions in a Bill of this kind, they are only too glad to adapt themselves to circumstances and adopt measures as they obtain in other States. There is another provision made in the Bill for the enrolment of voters. A provision is set out for the taking of a census, but I think this clause has been somewhat loosely drawn, and I would recommend the Attorney General to consider the amendment suggested last session by this side of the House. It is within the discretion of the administrator of the Act as to when and where a census should be taken. The clause referring to this states that the census should be taken "at such a time or times as the Governor may direct." That means that the census shall be taken on the recommendation of the Government. It may suit the Government at any particular time to take a census and to apply the result as the only roll from which votes could be taken. That should not be so. There should be a regular census, similar to the one taken every ten years, and which, I understand, will in future be taken by the Commonwealth. This census should be taken very seriously, and it should not be left to mere caprice of the administrator of the Act to fix the manner in which and the time when or the place where it should be taken. In some districts it might be that the census would be a very excellent idea and the best possible means of securing the object which is sought to be attained by the Bill, but this remark does not apply to all localities and certainly not to those in the country districts where men are wandering about from place to place. Take the electorate I represent as an example. The electoral registrar lives at Norseman; he may have control of the census but might know nothing of what goes on in other parts such as Ravensthorpe and Hopetoun, distant nearly 200 miles, and very difficult of access from Norseman. If a census is to be taken at the caprice of a Government, it would be most unfair, as those in power might be thought to be prejudiced, and if it were taken by an irresponsible officer it would also be liable to abuse. That is not all. Once an elector, after overcoming some of the difficulties, gets his name on the roll of voters for his particular district, power is given to the administration to subdivide the electorate into sub-districts. Electors go from place to place in a locality, and a man may be in one portion of a district to-day and in another portion to-morrow. If these sub-districts are formed suddenly and a man gets off the roll for one sub-district it would be difficult for him to ascertain whether his name was on the roll for another sub-district. Not only that, but he, knowing that his name was once on the roll, would rest in confidence that it was still there. That is the whole difficulty in this Bill. It seems that power is given to the registrar to strike off the names of electors almost at his own sweet will. Certainly he has to give notice, but that notice is usually wasted because in many cases it does not reach the elector, and if it does he has not the time nor the inclination to answer a summons in court to show he is still entitled to vote. What seems to me to be altogether absurd is that the registrar may at any time when it appears to him that a person has lost his qualification call upon that person to answer a summons to show cause. If it is desired to get names of electors on the roll that power should not be given to the

registrar. There is too much power given to an irresponsible officer under that clause, and I think it is a bad principle altogether. It may be exercised by someone in sympathy with the Bill or by a man with a prejudice against it. It is just a question as to how it may move the mind of the individual administering it. By way of illustration I will quote the position of electors in my own district. As I have said, the registrar lives in Norseman. The miners and prospectors wander about the country and go sometimes to Ravensthorpe. It might appear to the registrar at Norseman that the men who have gone to Ravensthorpe had ceased to reside in the Dundas electorate. Certainly the men had ceased to live in his particular portion of the district but still remained in the electorate although some 200 miles away. It is absurd for the registrar to have the power to give notice to those men to appear before a magistrate at Norseman within a few days in order to show cause why their names should not be struck off the roll. All the registrar had to do was to serve those men with a notice by post at their last known address. They were still in the electorate and were entitled to vote, and there was no reason why the vote should be taken from them. The Attorney General proposes perhaps to cut that electorate up into sub-districts. I use the word perhaps advisedly, because the Attorney General himself last session could not tell us what was meant by sub-districts; he could not tell us in what manner it was proposed to administer that portion of the Bill, although it had been prepared and brought into the House. He was questioned on the subject, and an amendment was moved, I think by the Leader of the Opposition, to strike out of the interpretation clause of the Bill the provision relating to sub-districts. Eventually the Attorney General told the House that the Bill was not drawn wholly by himself, but by his officers and himself. The Bill I think was largely drawn by his officers, and I think too much blame has been cast on the Attorney General, because I do not think he understands the measure, and I shall try to show this at a later stage when dealing with other parts of the Bill. But the Attorney General admitted on that occasion that he did not know what was intended when the clause dealing with sub-districts was introduced into the measure. He told the House it was his intention to consult with his officers, and that he would, after consultation with those officers and after finding what was intended to be done with sub-districts, that he would then be able to inform the House, at a later stage on Clause 97 of that Bill, I think, what was really meant. If the Attorney General does not know what the Bill means, how can he expect members of the House to know what is meant? He had the advice and assistance of the officers of his department; he has been to Queensland, I believe it is true physically as well as by reading the effect of the laws of Queensland; he has actually been to Queensland, and possibly has made inquiries as to the law in force there; and with the assistance of his officers he has gone through volumes relating to the electoral laws of all parts of the world. He referred to that in his address when he spoke frequently of New South Wales and New Zealand. With all that information, and that careful study of the provision and the travel he undertook, and the information he no doubt gleaned in the course of his travels, he should have been able to tell us what was meant by sub-districts in the Bill. A little consideration will enable us to ascertain really who were the authors of the Bill; was it the Attorney General and his officers who prepared this measure? It has been brought under my notice, and I believe it is absolutely true, that the main principles and main alterations in the law as embodied in this Bill are identical with the suggestions for amendment made by the National Political League in their last annual report. I do not suggest that the Attorney General would avail himself of such material at all, because this is essentially a purity measure, and the Attorney General would not go to such a source as the National Political League, which has party reasons for particular amendments. He would not go to them for amendments because this Bill is purely for the purification of

the rolls. It is an elevating measure, and should be set up as a standard; therefore it is one about which the Attorney General would not go to that source for such study. Yet it is strange that the provisions are identical with the suggestions made by that body. I was dealing with sub-districts, and I want to show too that we are in the dark with regard to the intentions and proposed effects of the subdivisions of the electoral districts of the State. A great deal of attention was paid in the Parliament before last to the question of the re-distribution of seats, that is as it affected the candidate and the particular areas of Western Australia that would be represented by single candidates. If it is essential that lines should be marked out, and that the locality represented by a member of the Assembly should be clearly defined, there should be some system in the Bill, and it should be settled by Parliament as to what the districts are. I say emphatically if there are to be sub-districts—I do not know what is intended, for no one seems to know, the Attorney General cannot tell us—but if there are to be sub-districts let us have the information in the House; let us know how they are to be subdivided, and in what manner; and let the House settle what the subdivisions shall be, and not allow it to be left to the caprice of any particular Administration. I emphasise that fact, because if it is left in this Bill a good deal of hardship will ensue, and the object of the Bill, as stated by the Attorney General in moving the second reading, will be frustrated. It will not be encouraging; it will not help to the purification of the rolls, or secure the enrolment of those entitled to vote. There is another principle on which I would like to touch and which is of importance, that is the question of the qualification of electors. This is a very serious matter, it is introduced into an Electoral Bill I believe for the first time; why, I am at a loss to understand. We are at a loss to understand a good deal of the intentions of the measure, but if we had attended some of the meetings of the National Political League we might receive some information on that point. It has not been given in this House, and we are not getting the information from the Government side of the Chamber. In dealing with the qualification it seems to me, and I think the member for Pilbarra mentioned it casually, that the House had not been taken into the confidence of the Attorney General with regard to the proposals in dealing with another place. If it was the intention of the Government as they announced in their original policy—I say original policy because it has suffered a good many variations since—but in their original policy it was suggested that it was their intention, I say "suggested" advisedly because I do not believe they are sincere, that it was intended to reform the Upper House, to extend or reduce, whichever word applies more aptly, the extension perhaps of the franchise of the Upper Chamber; such measure was to be introduced early in the session. During the first session of this Parliament we did see a Bill early in the session; the Government kept their word in that direction, but they did not fulfil their promise in its entirety. The Bill was introduced without discussion, but it did not go beyond the introduction of the measure. Here is an opportunity for the Government, if they are sincere in their desire to have the qualification of the electors properly put into an Electoral Bill, and they evidently seem to think that a proper qualification should be introduced, because they have introduced here a qualification for electors for the Assembly; surely they could have introduced here the qualification for the electors for the Legislative Council. The franchise for the electors of the Assembly already existed except for a slight amendment in our present Constitution Bill, and there seemed to be no real necessity for bringing in the qualification here, and no explanation has been given why it has now been introduced for the first time in an Electoral Bill. There is a very slight amendment as to the qualification of the electors for the Assembly, or rather the amendment, if any, is made in regard to the disqualification which has been slightly altered and possibly may have a beneficial effect. But that certainly did not, to my mind, warrant the

introduction of a special provision in an Electoral Bill, which should deal purely with electoral matters. The question of the Constitution and the qualification of electors seems to be out of place in a measure of this description. If, on the other hand, the Government had brought down a comprehensive measure, dealing with the question of qualification, one might have seen reason for its inclusion. If the Government, as well as including the qualification for the electors of the Assembly, had brought in a measure dealing with the proposed alteration in the qualification, they should have brought down the qualification for the Upper House, amending the Act that embraced this provision. They have not done that, they do not seem to me to intend to do it, it is not on the Notice Paper this session, and the Government have a great number of Bills of less importance, but no reference is made to the qualification of the electors of the Upper House. Therefore the consideration of the qualification of electors might be well left over until the Government are prepared to bring down what is absolutely necessary, and what they have promised. Everyone recognised the Government, in the present stage of their history after suffering a rebuff from another Chamber in the last and the previous session—in fact on three particular occasions they suffered these rebuffs, and they announced their intention of reforming that Chamber—they should have the courage at this date, in the fourth session of this Parliament, and the fourth session since they actually came into power, but they have not yet had the courage to carry out what they professed to be their convictions. There is an element of novelty in this Bill, and it affords anyone who does attempt to understand the provisions of preferential and proportional voting some amusement. The member for Pilbarra afforded some amusement in relating his endeavours to understand the provisions contained in the Bill for preferential and proportional voting. It seems extraordinary, while the Attorney General and the Government admit there is a necessity for the reform of the Upper House in dealing with their franchise, they omit it from this Bill. They have gone to a deal of trouble in studying the laws of the different States of Australia and New Zealand with regard to preferential and proportional voting, and they have introduced an amendment in this particular session of Parliament in regard to the Assembly, but they have not done anything in regard to the Upper House. We have before us for discussion the principle of preferential voting, and the principle of single electorates, of dual electorates, and of plural electorates represented by several members. We have also the question of proportional voting. All these questions have exercised the minds of scientists, statists, and others, who have studied the effect of voting and the statistics of voting in different parts of the world; and these authorities have not yet agreed upon a proper basis for the introduction of such provisions. Preferential voting is of course desired in order that the majority may rule. If in single-member electorates there are only two candidates, the matter is very simple. If there are three, the principle of preferential voting may be applied, or as suggested by the member for Pilbarra (Mr. Underwood) there may be a second ballot. But as I am unaware of any occasion when it has been thought necessary to have a second ballot, it seems to me there is no need for introducing preferential voting to this State. I do not say I disapprove of preferential voting; on the contrary, I think it is excellent in principle, and that it would serve a good purpose; that it may be introduced with advantage when it is properly understood in the State, when some propaganda work or educational work has been done so as to instruct the people in this method of voting before they are called upon to vote preferentially without understanding it. But to dump the system down before the electors without giving them a chance of understanding it is altogether improper, and should not be permitted by the House. If in a few years these principles become better understood, then I think it will be wise to introduce the system here. I am reminded that the returning officers who will be called upon to give effect to the system of

counting votes may not be conversant with the method of counting preferentially. If we adopt the system of proportional voting, we get into farther and greater trouble. Is there a single returning officer in this State who could explain to the House how he would calculate preferential votes? I say there is not one who thoroughly understands the provisions for proportional voting as they are generally understood, and I am certain there is not one who could properly explain them as they are embodied in this Bill. I do not wish to go fully into the matter to-night, as I shall have another opportunity: but I wish to show that the right principle has not been grasped by the framers of the Bill. When more members than one are to be returned, the kernel of the whole business is what is known as the quota. This is referred to on page 11 of the Bill, where it is prescribed that the returning officer shall ascertain the total number of votes, and divide it by the number of members to be returned, thus obtaining the quota. To show that those who framed that provision knew nothing of the subject, may I tell the House that this is a very obsolete notion of what constitutes the quota? Many years ago, when this method was first introduced, the question of the quota was considered and the definition in the Bill adopted. But this is a Bill prepared in 1907. Three, or four, or five years ago it was ascertained that the method of dividing by the number of members to be returned was absolutely wrong; that it did not work out practically; it did not attain the object desired. In fact, I cannot understand how the framers of the measure allowed this definition of the quota to creep in. It is flat, stale, and unprofitable. An illustration has been given of the injury which might be worked under this definition; and I will give another. There were three members to be returned, and 1,200 voters. There were two parties—the Government with 650 votes and two candidates polling respectively 400 and 250; and the Opposition, with 550 votes and two candidates polling respectively 280 and 270. In that case one party secured for one of its candidates 400 votes, and for the other 250, making a total of 650. That of course gives the Government candidates a majority of the 1,200 votes; and the Opposition with 550 votes, had two candidates, one of whom secured 280 and the other 270, or more than were secured by the second Government candidate. So that, although 650 votes were polled in favour of the Government—thus giving the Government a majority of the votes polled—yet the second Government candidate, with 250 votes, was rejected, and the other three candidates were declared elected. That was done upon the basis proposed in the Bill, upon the same definition of the quota; because the number 1,200 was divided by three, the number of members to be returned, giving the quota as 400. That method was found to work erroneously, and not to attain the object sought. The proper method of reckoning the quota is to divide the total number of votes by one more than the number of members to be returned, and to add one to the quotient. I give these illustrations only to show that this part of the measure has not received due consideration. Its framers have certainly not properly considered the figures, or they would not have made this provision for the quota. And having started with a wrong foundation, the whole superstructure is faulty. The whole of this part of the Bill must go; and even the Attorney General says there is no necessity for these provisions in the measure. I do not know why he keeps the House studying the question and working out the figures, as we shall certainly have to work them out when we come to consider the clauses in Committee, seeing that he started on a wrong basis. He admits that there is absolutely no necessity for these provisions.

Mr. Collier: And he farther states that if preferential voting were compulsory, 50 per cent. of the votes at the first election would be informal.

Mr. HUDSON: When he was asked whether he intended to introduce plural electorates, to be represented by more than one member, he replied "Not in this Parliament." Now what on earth is the use of our wasting time in discussing preferential voting and proportional vot-

ing. matters not yet settled in any part of Australia? The system was tried in a fashion in Queensland, but under far greater restrictions than the Attorney General proposes in this Bill. Queensland did not permit of preferential voting in constituencies when there were more than two members. People there were afraid of it in such circumstances.

Mr. Collier: The Attorney General is legislating for all time.

Mr. HUDSON: Of course, we must remember he holds his office in perpetuity, and may reasonably suppose that as he is to be there for all time he should make laws for all time to guide the Electoral Department. I do not see how exception can be taken to that, and I consider the member for Boulder (Mr. Collier) should be rebuked. I was dealing more particularly with preferential and proportional voting, and was endeavouring to show that the Attorney General was not acting fairly to the House in bringing down proposals that are unnecessary, that are ill-considered, and are of very doubtful application in such a State as this.

Mr. Collier: Have you read the explanation at the end of the Bill?

Mr. HUDSON: I prefer to go for information to men who have given some careful study to the subject. I glanced at the end of the Bill, and I quite agree with the member for Pilbarra when he says that he found confusion worse confounded—as clear as a moonless midnight. Until proper consideration is given to this subject, until the effect of this method of voting in other parts of Australia is ascertained, it is useless to introduce it here. Reference was made to Tasmania, where proportional voting was introduced, with plural electorates, but only in the centres of Hobart and Launceston. There it was found that the system did not work satisfactorily. It was said if it did no harm it served no good purpose. The Legislature thought fit to do away with it after one election. It is now again under discussion, and it may be re-introduced; and it has been discussed in the Commonwealth Parliament, and in nearly every Parliament of the world, but has not yet been adopted. Yet the Attorney General asks us to accept it in this particular form, in a form that has been rejected by every Parliament in which it has been proposed. Some Parliaments are considering new forms as they are devised by the ingenuity of people some of whom are devoting their lives to the subject. When they propound some new scheme it is farther considered by Parliaments; but the proposals of this Bill have always been rejected. No one could accept this definition of the quota, and I am sure this House would not do so after considering the question for one moment. On the whole I consider that this Bill might well be left over until we have dealt with matters that are more pressing for the welfare of this country. It is admitted by the Government that the finances are in disorder and need rectification, and it is admitted that the sooner the measure for the remedying of the finances and raising revenue—a land tax or an income tax, or a land and income tax, or whatever hybrid measure is introduced, is considered, and if passed by this Chamber is sent to another place, the better. The welfare of the State should be considered before we consider what is going to happen to the Attorney General when he seeks re-election in Kalgoorlie.

Mr. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret): The Attorney General introduced this measure last sesion on the 1st August, and he explained the provisions of the Bill in a clear and concise manner. The hon. gentleman appealed to members to deal with the Bill on non-party lines and emphasised the necessity for dealing with what he called a machinery Bill on lines that would be in the best interests of the people of this State. He emphasised the need for purity of elections, and he instanced recent occurrences and occurrences for seven or eight years back. The Opposition realised that it was necessary that we should make our electoral law as up-to-date as possible, that though the Act in force was passed as recently as the early part of 1904 it had not proved satisfactory after the experience of two general elections; and the Opposition also realised the force of the

arguments put forward by the Attorney General in favour of dealing with the Bill on non-party lines; and after the Leader of the Opposition had replied to the second reading speech of the Attorney General and had criticised the Bill and compared it with the existing Act and legislation in other States and the legislation of the Comonwealth and that of New Zealand, and after he had pointed out that the measure was anything but one the Attorney General should be proud of, the Opposition recognising the necessity for dealing with the Bill on non-party lines and the fact that the Attorney General had assured the House that he would give favourable consideration to suggestions from this side of the House, allowed the Bill to pass the second reading with but two speeches. Then we had the opportunity and pleasure of dealing at some length with the Bill in Committee. I believe we got through a considerable number of clauses after long debate, but we did not find that the attitude of the Government in Committee was in accord with the expressions of the Attorney General on the second reading. On the contrary we found at every stage in Committee the party lines of demarkation; forces were rallied, bells were rung, the whips set whipping, and members were brought in to vote with the Goverment.

The Attorney General: Did not I meet you at all?

Mr. TAYLOR: Partially. You met us on some half-way track, but questions that were considered vital by this side of the House and, with all due deference to the Attorney General, vital to the country, were not considered in the non-party spirit in which the Attorney General had introduced the measure. Had the Attorney General in Committee adopted the attitude he adopted on the second reading, greater progress would have been made, the Bill would have reached another place, and perhaps might have been law to-day. But no, we had long sittings, long debates, and those on the Government side were whipped. Had that not been the case, I would not have spoken to-night on this second reading. Last session I pointed out as clearly as words could convey certain anomalies in the Bill, but the Attorney General practically said, "The Bill as it is drafted, is what I am going to put forward." I gave my experience of the outlying goldfields, and I instanced the difficulties under which elections in the farming districts would be conducted by the provision for subdistricts. No one can tell me it is a wise proposition, though the Attorney General has the opinion of the Federal electoral officers and the Chief Electoral Officer in support of the clause. I maintain these gentlemen have not had any experience in outlying districts in any part of the Commonwealth, or they would not put forth the reasons they have. Take any of the large constituencies containing several towns where the industry carried on is common throughout the electorate. There is Gascoyne, for instance, which is practically a pastoral electorate outside the seaport. A man might be working in one corner of the electorate for six months or 12 months, and then he may have to seek employment in another part 60 or 100 or 200 miles away from where he has been working. He may be still in the same electorate, but he may be close to another centre of population. I can illustrate how it will affect a man in Yilgarn, Mount Magnet, Murchison, Leonora, and even Menzies. A man gets his name on the roll by virtue of a residential qualification. After residing at one centre sufficiently long to have his name on the roll he goes from that centre to another place 60 or 70 miles away, though he is still in the same electorate. According to this Bill the Chief Electoral Officer will have power to subdivide the electorate, and the elector must record his vote in the subdistrict where his name is enrolled. When he shifts he may move out of the subdistrict where his name is on the roll. Supposing it is in the Gascoyne electorate, and an election comes on, he applies for his vote and tells the returning officer that he is on the roll and that he resided at Carnarvon. But as he happens to be hundreds of miles away in another subdistrict, though in the same electorate, the returning officer promptly says, "You will have to go back to Carnarvon to vote.

This is another subdivision and you are not on the roll for this subdivision."

The Attorney General: Were you in the House when I explained that any man can vote by making a declaration?

Mr. TAYLOR: But there is no need for this legislation. It does not ensure any greater purity of rolls than the existing law. It is unwarranted in a country like Western Australia, a country of such distances. There is no country in the southern hemisphere —[*Mr. Underwood*: In the world]—with the expansion of territory we have; there is no Parliament in any country in the world that has to deal with an Electoral Bill covering such a large area so sparsely populated. We should profit by the experience of those who have travelled through this large country. I have travelled through New South Wales and Queensland, and I know well the obstacles that the outback men have in recording their votes. I can give the Attorney General an instance which he will accept, and which will convey to him some idea of the inconveniences men in the back country have to put up with to record their votes. For something like 25 years I have been eligible to vote, but I have only once been able to record my vote owing to the conditions in which my name was placed on the roll. I believe I have taken as much interest in politics as any average elector in the country, and in every State I have been in, but I was not able to vote simply because of the unfair condition of the electoral laws. It was only in this State that I could record my vote, the only occasion in my life. I have always been in the back country so that I know its disadvantages; and that is why I desire, on the second reading of this Bill, to endeavour to convince members on the Government side of the House—though my voice will have to travel farther than the walls of this Chamber to do so—of the necessity for knocking out this subdivision business, also certain other anomalies in the measure in Committee. In common with my colleagues on the Opposition side of the House, we tried to do so last session, but we failed. Certainly we got veiled promise, but I hope it will be more than that when we reach the Committee stage this session. If the Bill does reach the Committee stage I hope we will be able to put it into some shape which will be a credit to the Committee. Now I can take the instance of the Yilgarn electorate. A man working at Southern Cross, a mining centre, who has been there a year or so, and whose name is on the roll at Southern Cross, leaves the district, and the next camp he strikes where he can get employment is Bonnievale, something like 100 miles from Southern Cross, but still in the Yilgarn district. If there is any justification or necessity for a subdivision, this is a case where such might be established; for Coolgardie, as an instance, is located right inside the boundary of the Yilgarn electorate, and a man may pass through the Coolgardie electorate and go to Burbanks or Bonnievale and still remain in the Yilgarn electorate. I am safe in saying that a subdivision will take place covering Bonnievale and Burbanks. A man will therefore have his place of residence registered at Southern Cross, and will believe he will be able to vote at say Bonnievale: but when he goes to the poll, he will be told he is in another subdivision and can only vote at the Southern Cross polling-booth. [*Mr. Gull*: He can sign a declaration.] Yes; he can sign a declaration, and this system of signing declarations is another new-born concern. We want to give the people of the country every facility to vote and every opportunity of saying who shall represent them in Parliament. We have not given the people freedom of action in their selection of men to represent them in another place, for before one can vote for that House he must possess certain property and wealth; but in this Chamber, the people's Chamber, we say that every person over the age of 21 and in his sound senses shall by virtue of living in the country have the right to vote for the Legislative Assembly. We are giving him this privilege, but the Attorney General is desirous of snatching it back again. I do not say the Attorney General is alone in this desire, for I suppose the Bill has the concurrence of the Government, that the Government has considered the necessity of curbing the people in this

direction. I am confident the Minister for Mines has gone into the matter, for his experience of the last two or three electioneering campaigns has taught him the necessity for removing democratic elements from the rolls. It is with the concurrence of the Government that we are not to allow people to vote, that we shall tell them in one breath they can vote, but in the next we shall hedge them round so that they cannot possibly exercise their franchise. The position is an impossible one, and the Attorney General will be unable to uphold it in any part of the State. Why should a man in the hurry and scurry of election day be forced to make a declaration simply because he has moved from one portion of his electorate to another? It is no safeguard against the impurity of voting. A man desirous of voting twice on one polling day would make a declaration to do it. There are penal clauses in this measure dealing with people of that kind, but in all my experience of elections I cannot remember one instance where a man has deliberately impersonated someone else. I believe there have been recorded instances of wrongful voting: but in nearly every case this has been where a man living in one place and knowing that his name was on the roll has recorded his vote under that name although in reality the qualification belonged to someone else of the same name. No one could say that that man had deliberately committed a crime, for he knew he had been on the roll for the electorate and was unaware of the fact that he had been disqualified or been disfranchised. He would be voting in good faith, and this Bill will not prevent the recurrence of such a thing any more than does existing legislation. I hope that whatever else we do, we will remove some of these anomalies in Committee; for I am confident there is no necessity, and nothing has cropped up in the elections in the past, for this subdivision of districts. I have not had a share in elections for metropolitan electorates, and I do not know what occurs there; but in the outback districts you will by passing this clause disfranchise at least two-thirds of the electors.

The Attorney General: Was the hon. member in the House when I pointed out that I intended to leave this matter to the House?

Mr. TAYLOR: I believe I heard the hon. member say something in moving the second reading of the Bill this session. With all due respect to him, I may say that I did not listen with great keenness to it because I had listened with care to the second-reading speech on the Bill he delivered last session, and therein he conveyed the idea, and by doing so imposed on my credulity, that he would not make this Bill a party question. He said in effect that members should approach this Bill with an open mind, as it was a measure affecting the representation of the people in Parliament and that we should not fight it on party lines; but I found in Committee that his promise was not adhered to, and this was responsible for my not listening closely to the hon. member when moving the second reading of the Bill this session. In discussing the clause in Committee, the Attorney General fought it with all that bitterness which he can use in fighting a measure, and especially when backed up by his majority.

The Attorney General: We never reached the clause.

Mr. TAYLOR: Not as to sub-districts?

The Attorney General: No; we never reached it.

Mr. TAYLOR: I think a discussion was raised on Clause 19. It may not have been in order to do so, but that is where I referred to this question of sub-districts.

The Attorney General: Clause 97 is the one dealing with sub-districts.

Mr. TAYLOR: If the Attorney General thinks I would let Clause 19 go by without discussing this question, he has not summed me up properly.

Mr. Bath: We brought up the matter under the interpretation clause.

The Attorney General: Clause 97 gives power to create sub-districts.

Mr. TAYLOR: In dealing with this Bill in Committee last session, I brought up the question under Section 19, and under the Standing Orders there was nothing to prevent me from doing so. With that legal cunning with which the Attorney General is so gifted, he tried to

impose on my credulity to-night and thought I would accept his statement, as I have done in the past, in good faith; but I am now beginning to realise that I cannot always take what the members of the Government bench say, without probing it thoroughly. Just now the Attorney General tried to insinuate that I was wrong in suggesting that a discussion took place on this question of sub-districts; but it will be shown by reference to page 1173 of *Hansard* of last session that a discussion did take place on this question. In connection with the Bill as introduced last session, it was one in which the Government did not attempt to touch another place, and it was brought down at a time when the Government recognised to the full their fear of another branch of the Legislature. Last session the Attorney General said it was only a machinery Bill and did not affect another place. To all intents and purposes he said "We as a Government believe that the other place will allow us to pass legislation affecting their own Chamber, without making too much noise; but we dare not bring in legislation here affecting another place or it will be rejected." The Attorney General appealed to this Chamber to pass the Bill as a non-party measure and only as a machinery measure. There is not a provision in the Bill altering the franchise of another place. The Government should have brought down a comprehensive measure dealing with both branches of the Legislature. This is a waste of time. The Government should have brought down a Bill dealing with another place placing its franchise within reach of the great bulk of the people. It is not too late to do so now. Referring to the clause under discussion to which I have taken so much exception, I made these remarks on a former occasion:—

> "If a large district with seven or ten polling places were divided into sub-districts, a voter shifting his residence to a distant place in the same electorate would be disfranchised if he forgot to transfer his name to the new sub-district. [The Attorney General: The provisions would not apply to the country districts.] That did not appear. In view of what happened at the last general election, we must not trust the Goverment with too much power. At Menzies 270 workers were disfranchised in one batch. [Mr. Seaddan: A total of 567.] The goldfields people and agricultural labourers were not a fixed population, and this provision if administered like the law at the last election would disfranchise many, and could not prevent dual voting. Dual votes polled in the last ten years could be counted on the fingers of one hand. [The Minister for Works: It would tend to make the man vote in a district where he was known.] The Mount Margaret district would probably be divided into sub-districts. A man on the roll at Mount Magnet would move to Black Range, 90 miles away, but still in the same electorate. So in outlying districts the system would be a hardship, and would disfranchise many workers and prospectors."

That was said on the interpretation clause last session, but the Attorney General tried to convey to me that we had not reached it.

The Attorney General: Read the postponed discussion in regard to Clause 97.

Mr. TAYLOR: After the member in charge of the Bill had realised the necessity for taking some step in the direction indicated by this side of the House, he agreed to postpone the clause until we reached Clause 97, so that he could consult the framers of the measure. I do not desire to say what attitude I shall take on the measure in Committee; but I should not be doing my duty if I allowed the measure to go through without entering my emphatic protest, knowing as I do the obstacles already placed in the way of people in outback districts to record their votes. The Attorney General says that all an elector has to do is to make a declaration that he is the person on the roll in some other subdivision, making a declaration before a justice of the peace. I know there are lawyers on all sides of the House and I may be offending them when I say I believe this declaration is the outcome of their legal training, clinging to declarations all their live. And these declara-

tions are to be made before a justice of the peace. There are some justices of the peace who should never have been made justices. I only wish I were dealing with legislation that would enable the Government to create J.'sP. I wish we were dealing with that subject now instead of the Electoral Bill, and I could bring down to the House a sufficient number of justices who have been created by the Government which would disgrace them in the eyes of the country. But I am not dealing with that subject but with that portion of the Bill referring to declarations. This is merely a subterfuge on the part of the Attorney General and he is echoed by that intellectual giant the member for Swan. I believe lawyers must be making declarations all their lives to justify their existence on the face of the earth. Just imagine a respectable elector like the member for North Perth living at Mount Lawley, in that respectable area, that aristocratic suburb, and perhaps having previously lived in the more humble locality of Newcastle Street or Beaufort Street, but now living at Mount Lawley. He naturally would proceed to the Mount Lawley polling booth, but be told to trot off to the Beaufort Street polling-booth. The hon. member would naturally say, "I will make a declaration before a justice of the peace." I would not suggest who the justice would be before whom he would make that declaration; but imagine the member for North Perth trotting about with a pen behind his ear, ready to make a declaration that he is the James Brebber who previously lived in Beaufort Street; that he had not altered a bit. Perhaps some friend of the Attorney General from England might be the returning officer, a new chum who would not know the member; then the member for North Perth would have to go round to find a justice of the peace. I suppose he would get the member for Balkatta to identify him. He would naturally go to his friend in the adjoining electorate, or he might get the member for Perth, by pressure, to identify him as being the exact James Brebber he had known previously as residing in Beaufort Street. The hon. member has unfortunately advanced in years and has recognised the necessity of getting higher up in the hills for health purposes, and he has gone to live at Mount Lawley, a healthy part of the city, gone there to get the full benefit of that suburb; so he is put to this inconvenience, that on sworn testimony he is to say he is the same James Brebber who previously lived somewhere else. That reason alone ought to convert the Attorney General. It is quite a simple matter in the metropolitan district as against an outside district. A man may be working two or three years in the Gwalia mine in the Mount Leonora electorate; he may not be known outside that district, and after two or three years he may be compelled to leave his work for many reasons —perhaps on account of the peculiar nature of the mine; perhaps he has been working in sulphides, and it may be necessary that he should go to work on oxidised ore. He may go to the Kathleen Valley, fully 130 miles away, where the mines are not worked to such a depth, and where the mine-owners are working oxidised ores. This elector may go to a polling-booth where he would be a perfect stranger; and an election taking place within a fortnight, he would not have time to get his name transferred. A subdivision might have been created in that district, and on going to the polling-booth he would be asked "What is your name?" He would reply, "Douglas Rothsay Mackenzie," because men have pretty decent names in the Mount Leonora electorate, or they did when I represented it. He is then confronted with the question, "Where did you have your name put on?" And he replies, "At Gwalia." The returning officer would say, "You are in the other subdivision, 130 miles away." It is perhaps two o'clock on polling-day, and the booth closes at seven o'clock. He may be told, "You will have to get down there quickly, old boy, for there is no possible chance of polling here." Perhaps this intellectual officer there had not realised that there was this "declaration" which the Attorney General has in his brain. There may not be a justice of the peace there, for I have known that district without a justice of the peace, and I have seen a man in that

place tied to a tree because he had taken more drinks than he could reasonably carry on a race-day. I have seen a man tied to a tree and then taken to Leonora 130 miles away. Under these conditions it is hopeless for the Attorney General to attempt to pass this clause of the measure and expect it to work satisfactorily. It cannot work satisfactorily in outlying districts, no matter what success it may meet with in the metropolitan area. There is no hope of the provisions working with success in outlying agricultural districts or goldfields areas. I have waited to hear the agricultural members on the Government side give some reasons why they support the measure, but I have listened in vain. [*Mr. Scaddan*: You will hear them at the luncheon to-morrow.] I recognise that they will see the necessity for inflating their chests and looking wise to-morrow at the Royal Show, especially about 12.30 o'clock when the card announces there will be a scramble. I dare say they are pluming themselves to-night, and getting ready for to-morrow. I suppose that is of greater importance to their electors than the members' presence in this Chamber. But I did hope to hear something from those members, though I did not hear it when the Bill was before us last session. Having had the advantage of last session's discussion in Committee, those members must recognise how dangerous are the provisions of the Bill to their own districts, and I hope they will assist the House to remove this clause, the clause the Attorney General says we may not apply, there being no necessity to put it in action, though he wants it on the statute book. It is idle to have on the statute book any machinery which is not to work. It is not my desire to create idle machinery, and I will not help the Government to do so. I could speak for another hour on that clause, but it is not my intention to detain the House long. I have already pointed out that the Attorney General calls this a machinery Bill, and says this House should deal with it as such. I am sorry it is only a machinery Bill. I am sorry the Government had not the courage to bring in a comprehensive electoral measure dealing with both Houses. In view of the election for another place early next year, when ten members out of thirty will be facing their electors, I am sorry the Government did not include in the Bill a provision placing the franchise of that House within reach of the bulk of the people. I do not approve of the existence of the other House; I believe there is room for only one Chamber in this State. I think the Government can be carried on most successfully by one House; and I believe Ministers think with me, after the manner in which their Land Tax Assessment Bill was handled last session. Under the existing law we find the revision courts are anything but satisfactory, and I do not think they will be much improved by the Bill. By way of illustration I will take the electorate of Yilgarn, and my own electorate of Mount Margaret. Southern Cross is the seat of revision court for Yilgarn, and Mount Morgans for Mount Margaret. People have to come from Boorievale or from Burbanks, 120 or 130 miles to the revision court at Southern Cross, having been duly notified by the department that they must show cause why their names should not be removed from the roll. What is the result? The elector does not say a word. He will not travel 130 miles at great expense and inconvenience, perhaps losing his job; and he lets his name be removed. In the Mount Margaret electorate, a large area, people have to come from Duketon, some 130 or 140 miles, to Mount Morgans; and some of them travel 80, 90, or 100 miles of that distance on foot, per bike, on horseback, or otherwise as best they can, to show cause why their names should not be struck off. Is it reasonable to suppose that men will jeopardise their employment and walk or ride that distance for such a purpose? It is absurd on the face of it. I am reminded by the member for Murchison (Mr. Holman) that a voter would have to travel from Wiluna to Nannine, about 160 miles, by no means a pleasant journey, for the same purpose; and that three days will be spent in the coach, the single fare being a little less than £7. These are said to be only minor obstacles to the men who open up the country, the men who have made Perth

and the agricultural areas what they are to-day; the men who are living under most trying conditions, known to all hon. members who have visited the remote goldfields. And the very thing those pioneers have most delight and pride in is being able to record their votes. It is amongst men of that class, at camp fires, that you can hear what Governments are doing and what members of Parliament have said. Such men know every principle uttered or abandoned by members of Parliament and ex-members of Parliament likewise, for years back, not only in this State, but in all the States of the Commonwealth.

Mr. Scaddan: You hear that also in the Palace Hotel.

Mr. TAYLOR: But you hear it when men's mental faculties are somewhat clouded in the Palace Hotel; you do not hear the effusions of bright clear intellects, as in the back country. At the Palace Hotel you will hear the sentiments of men whose intellects are more or less clouded by long beers. It is a different type of man and a different type of intellect—an altogether different mental fibre. You would not go to the Palace Hotel to hear an intellectual discussion about an Electoral Bill; no, nor about any Act of Parliament. But you might go there to hear some job being put up about the construction of a railway, or about doing something for a big syndicate or to hear the names of men in high positions being lent or used in some prospectus to float a wild cat. I do not go there. It is on the men who are opening up this State, who have suffered the privations and hardships of the back country, that this Bill will press more heavily than on any other section of the community; and that is why I am trying to-night, in my humble and weak manner, to convince the Attorney General and the House of the necessity for making this an up-to-date measure, making it an Act that will confer the franchise on every citizen who is eligible to vote, so that if he can fulfil the residential qualifications he may record his vote unhampered in any way. I do not wish to see my fellow electors trotting up asking people how to make this declaration and where they are to vote. We can imagine the reply: "Have you a copy of the declaration? No. Well, you will find it at such a place." That is not the proper method of conducting elections. Returning to revision courts, I say they should be held at centres that are closer together. Why have only one revision court in an electorate? I recognise that if we remove the revision court there may be a possibility of confusion; of dealing a second time with the same claim. But in outlying districts I think it is unfair that people should have to travel 100 miles in answer to a summons to show cause why their names should not be struck off. Now we come to a question discussed at great length in Committee on the Bill of last session, when Opposition members moved that the franchise should be extended to the inmates of the Old Men's Depot, a proposal stoutly resented by the Attorney General, the Minister for Works, and the Government generally. We instanced cases of the most recent electoral legislation; we cited the Federal Electoral Act, which gives the vote throughout the Commonwealth to such people as the inmates of the home at Claremont. The Attorney General would not listen. I have since investigated the matter, and am more fully convinced, by conversations with a number of men in that unfortunate position, that they are quite as capable intellectually of recording their votes as is any member in this House. Though weak physically, the inmates of the depot are as strong intellectually as they ever were, and they know as well as any other man in this country which is the best brand of politics for Western Australia. I made it my business to interview some of these men, to see whether the argument of the Government had any value; and I am all the more convinced of the necessity for that extension of the franchise. The argument of the Government that the old men are receiving charity is no argument at all; and I will not accept the statement that there is a difference between a man receiving charity in the Old Men's Home and a pensioner. If because he is receiving support from the Government one is not entitled to vote, neither is the other. But unfortunately,

we find the poor man in the Old Men's Depot, and we are likely to find the pensioner in the Weld Club. To my mind the man who is receiving what is his just right, what he is entitled to from the State, who in his declining years is supported by the country to which he devoted his lifetime, has a right to that support. It is not charity, it is justice. It is what every country should do for its people. That being so, I am satisfied that the franchise should be extended to him as a citizen. I want to hear some arguments that are stronger, stouter and better than the flimsy trash put forward by the Government against the amendment moved from this side of the House. We have had two elections carried on under the Federal law, and there has been no complaint. The Federal law is the most up-to-date and freest form of franchise known, and it has worked in every State of the Commonwealth, but there is not one complaint, nor is there one breath of suggestion that the provision should be altered so as to restrict the franchise in this direction; but here we are to-day bringing in an up-to-date electoral law and we will not avail ourselves of the most recent and democratic law of a similar character. It is not as if Federal legislation was a tentative law put on the Statute-book and never tried; it is that we are afraid to accept it, and not that it is not good. In fact the Government seem to have, as all Governments that represent the same political principles as my friends represent in this House have, an inherent desire in their breasts to make the man who is down feel that he is down, to make him feel more degraded instead of elevating him and making the last days of his life on earth happier and brighter. Indeed, it would be one of the bright specks in their lives if these old men could take part in a general election and talk with one another of the elections in which they had taken part in years gone by in various parts of the Commonwealth where they had seen their political idols rise, burst, go bung. I suppose that is why the Government do not desire to extend the franchise to these people, because they have too long memories. However, I suggest to the Attorney General that this question will be fought over again in Committee; and I hope the Government will abandon the position they took up during the discussion on the Bill in Committee last session. I hope members on this side of the House have done as I have done; that is, I hope they have gone farther into this question and armed themselves with greater arguments for the necessity for having it the law of this land that these old men should have the franchise. In this Bill we find another departure. There is a clause which points out that there shall be a clerk of writs. Why this departure? I suppose this gentleman will have to be appointed at a decent salary and with all the flourish necessary. I suppose the position will not carry a big enough salary and he will have some other office added to make his salary big enough. But I fail to see why we should depart from the principles we have worked under for all this time in this State. Will the Attorney General point out the need for this clerk of writs, and why writs could not be issued in the same form as they have been issued hitherto? If there be any ground of complaint at the manner of issuing writs in the past, it should come from this side of the House, when we carry our memories back to the election when Mr. Rason was Premier, two years ago, to the way in which the elections were hurried, writs being issued to-day and the elections being held to-morrow; or when we come nearer to the present time and realise what took place in the East Province election when Mr. Throssell was returned. In that election in that large area of pastoral and agricultural country containing five electorates of this House, the writs were issued in such undue haste that in dozens of places the farmers had not time to be informed that there was an election in progress. They knew that their member unfortunately had died, but they had not time from the issue of the writ until polling day to learn that the candidate they had returned, who had a few weeks before toured the province against land taxation and raised the ire of the country against the Government, had now taken his stand in favour of a

land tax, or that the man who a few weeks before had condemned the young member for Northam, the budding politician, the Honorary Minister——

Mr. SPEAKER : The hon. member is wandering.

Mr. TAYLOR : I was pointing out the undue haste that takes place in the issue of writs. I want to know if this clerk of writs be appointed, if it will facilitate that undue haste. We know that in the East Province many electors came in two or three days after polling day and desired to record their votes, because they had heard there was an election in progress. I maintain there is no necessity for the Government making this departure. I hope the Attorney General will make clear why the need for making this appointment has come about. I have only touched on one or two subjects in connection with this Bill. There are at least 21 reasons why I should oppose the measure. I have dealt with two, but the others are just as vital in my opinion. However, I have no desire to take up the time of the House in dealing with them. I merely wish to emphasise as briefly as possible the iniquities of the Bill. But in regard to preferential voting, what has the Attorney General to offer? He did not touch that aspect of the question on the second reading this session, though he went into it in a sort of fashion last session. In case the Attorney General may think I am misrepresenting him I may be permitted to read the remarks he offered on preferential voting last session. The hon. member pointed out that the man who is returned will have a majority vote, and that the electors will have a preference ; but he does not make preferential voting compulsory, so that the system will lose its object, namely, to have a majority vote. I am not going to argue that I am in favour of compulsory voting or the preferential system, because I find that in most places where they tried it it has failed. They tried it in Queensland, and it led to "bullocking" the rolls. Anyone who knows anything about elections in Queensland will know what I mean. The system, however, wherever tried, has not been too successful. When we are in Committee the Attorney General may be able to explain how the preferential voting will work, how every member returned to Parliament, under that system will be returned by a majority of the electors ; but it is absolutely unworkable unless is is made compulsory for every elector to mark his preference on the ballot paper. If there are five candidates and a man only marks two preferences, where does the man come in with the majority at the end? I believe the Attorney General is dealing with a matter to which he has not given that consideration which is necessary before it is made law. However, here is what the Attorney General said during the second reading of this measure on the 1st August of this year :—[Extract read from *Hansard*, vol. XXXI., page 621.] The Attorney General himself recognised there is danger in bringing this thing in. In reply to an interjection of mine it appears that his desire is to deal with the matter in the most simple form. If we make it compulsory there is a certainty in the mind of the Attorney General that it will be confusing and hence there will be a lot of informal votes recorded. From the very start the Attorney General recognised that the system which he desired to adopt would, in all probability, confuse the people. It is desired to accomplish something that cannot be brought about by the provisions of the Bill, and the reason for this is that it is not compulsory for the electors to give a preference vote. The Attorney General states that the reason why it is not made compulsory in the Bill to give this preference vote is because there would be a likelihood of confusing the electors. When the Minister goes so far as to admit that it would confuse the people, and so much so that he is obliged to go one step farther lest he might render all the votes in the State informal, there is a necessity for him to be advised by members on this side of the House. I cannot support this system of preferential voting for I do not see how the Attorney General is going to reach the object aimed at unless he makes it compulsory. As to elections generally, I do not know

whether it would be wise for me to go into that aspect of the question now. I would, however, emphasise the attitude I took up after the last general elections when referring to the election for East Fremantle. I made a statement in connection with that election, pointing out the necessity for analysing the whole of the procedure of the Government officials, and I was hooted by the Government, and told by the Press that the statements I made were so wild that they must be untrue. I am pleased to know, however, that the Chief Justice of this country decided that case on evidence on the same grounds and on the same facts which I put before this House. What I said in this House was absolutely true, and was proved to be correct. It was proved up to the hilt before the Chief Justice, and his decision was given in the way I indicated 12 months beforehand. I could go on speaking until morning on this question of the way in which elections are conducted and I am not sure that I would not be doing right if I were to adopt that course. When a question of this nature is being discussed in Parliament, and, moreover, when we have had an opportunity previously of discussing it, it is the duty of members to make their opinions known to the House, and urge upon the Attorney General the necessity for making the electoral legislation the freest and best known in the Southern hemisphere. I believe it is necessary for me to give to the House what knowledge I possess with regard to the conduct of elections in this State, and I have had experience of it now for some 12 or 13 years. If the conduct of the elections in some half dozen or more districts at the last general elections had been tested before the Supreme Court they would have met with the same fate as in connection with the East Fremantle and Geraldton elections. In both these cases the result of the polling was declared void. [*Mr. Angwin*: This Bill does away with the powers of the Chief Justice.] If that is so the Bill should substitute some power which can deal with disputed returns in a fair and proper manner. I did not lay myself out to make a lengthy speech on this measure. [*Mr. Gordon*: We all realise that.] The hon. member realises a great deal, for he realises at least £200 a year on interjections. He has such wonderful realising powers that I do not find it hard to believe he can realise I did not make preparations for a long speech. [*Mr. Gordon*: You did not realise £1,000 a year for very long.] In pointing out to the Attorney General and his colleagues the necessity for taking advantage of recent legislation in electoral matters in the Commonwealth, in the States and in New Zealand, I would ask him to remove some of the anomalies that exist generally, and not to press for the retention of clauses with regard to dual constituencies. There is no reason why we should go back to conditions which have been tried in all the Eastern States, or at all events in most of them, and which have failed. Single electorates are now the order of the day. In all the most modern electoral laws there is a provision for single electorates, and we have enjoyed that privilege in this State. I hope we shall not depart from it. The Attorney General says he does not wish to depart from it, but he wishes to provide a contingency for the future. We are not now legislating to give the Attorney General or some of his followers an opportunity of instituting a new system, and I hope the hon. member will recognise the futility of the provision and when in Committee a motion is made to strike this provision out he will accept the suggestion. I have no desire to address myself longer on the second reading. I hope when the Bill becomes law every person in the State who has reached the age of 21 years, male or female, will have the opportunity of getting their names on the roll and have every opportunity to record their votes, no bars, no impediments, no declarations, no sworn testimonies as to their identity. There are enough penal clauses in the Bill, and if not in the Bill there are penalties in the Criminal Code for those who violate the clauses of this measure without the Attorney General endeavouring to make provisions here which will practically disfranchise at least one-third—[*Mr. T. L. Brown*: Two-thirds]—if not more elec-

tors. In the outlying centres there will be two-thirds of electors disfranchised through the new provisions suggested in the measure. That being so, I would like to hear members representing agricultural centres who wish to see people record their votes on election days give reasons why these provisions should remain in the Bill. I fail to see any necessity for them and I hope in Committee this Bill which has been brought down by the Attorney General, badly drafted, will be licked into shape and that it will give the electors and the country the opportunity of saying who shall represent them in Parliament, without any bars, impediments, or declarations.

Mr. BOLTON: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

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

Ayes	.. .. ..	16
Noes	.. .. ..	28
Majority against	..	12

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Barnett
Mr. Bath	Mr. Brebber
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Butcher
Mr. T. L. Brown	Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Collier	Mr. Daglish
Mr. Heitmann	Mr. Davies
Mr. Holman	Mr. Draper
Mr. Horan	Mr. Eddy
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Scaddan	Mr. Gordon
Mr. Stuart	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Taylor	Mr. Gull
Mr. Underwood	Mr. Hardwick
Mr. Walker	Mr. Hayward
Mr. Ware	Mr. Keenan
Mr. Troy (*Teller*).	Mr. McLarty
	Mr. Male
	Mr. Mitchell
	Mr. Monger
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. S. F. Moore
	Mr. Piesse
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Stone
	Mr. Veryard
	Mr. F. Wilson
	Mr. Layman (*Teller*).

Motion thus negatived.

Mr. H. E. BOLTON (North Fremantle): If any proof were required that this measure was one-sided or a party measure, that proof has now been supplied; and it has been supplied since the measure was introduced even from the fact that all the remarks and criticisms have come from this (Opposition) side of the Chamber. It seems that the Attorney General has made up his mind to bludgeon this measure through the Chamber. Moreover, it appears he has gone so far as to advise his following to keep their mouths shut, so that they will not have to go back on anything they say.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not impute motives.

Mr. BOLTON: Is it imputing a motive to say that members are keeping their mouths shut?

Mr. SPEAKER: If you charge the Attorney General with advising members to keep their mouths shut in order that they may not have to go back on anything they may otherwise say, I do not know what other construction can be placed on your statement.

Mr. BOLTON: I withdraw my statement as to the Attorney General advising them, and will say that his followers have perhaps agreed among themselves that it is better to say nothing. Nothing has been said by them either in support of or in opposition to this measure. And this is the reason. I am of opinion that the country is not favourable to the Bill; and the followers of the Attorney General, when they are before the country and have to state why the measure was placed on the statute book, can say they did not support it, they never said a word in favour of it, they were opposed to it, but did not think it would work so badly. I think it is admitted all hon. members and the electors agree that the electoral law needs some amendment. But I think the electors, as well as the members of the Opposition, know that it is easy enough to amend the existing law without introducing the entirely new methods proposed in the Bill. The Minister for Works (Hon. J. Price), in a somewhat peculiar speech in support of the second reading, a speech that did not last long enough to suit the Attorney General, instanced the Fremantle district elections in 1904, and claimed that the rolls were highly inflated at those elections, and that because they were inflated this Bill was necessary. It seems a weak argument that because the rolls were then inflated this Bill should

provide for a census, and for other rolls being compiled from the result of the census; and that in addition we should pass all the other provisions of this Bill, though a simple amendment of the existing Act would secure the taking of a census and the compiling of rolls from that census. Is it not peculiar that all the clauses of this Bill are necessary because the rolls were inflated at the Fremantle district elections of 1904? The Minister himself knows that the rolls were inflated, and that an attempt was made to strike off a considerably larger number of names than ought to have been struck off. He knows that there was in each of the electorates, Fremantle, East Fremantle, and North Fremantle, an average of 1,200 names proposed to be struck off at the revision court. And it appeared from the start that these names would be struck off, for the people were given to understand that if they wished to object they would have to appear in person to lodge appeals. According to the Minister for Works the new provision in the Bill is much better, and pleases him because the existing revision-court system proved unworkable. Why was it unworkable, and why does it need alteration? If the Government feel that it should be altered, why not have a decent and thorough reform? The proposal of the Bill will be no better than the present revision court, which was not satisfactory to the Minister for Works and Government supporters generally, because they were unable to strike off the whole of the names objected to. I had something to do with that revision court, having been appointed to appear for several against whom objections had been lodged. And after spending some two or three days, and certainly some Treasury funds, the Government supporters suddenly discovered that certain technicalities made the thing illegal; and they decided not to strike off one solitary name from the roll. Many people had appeared at that court to answer the objections. Having lost time, they applied for their expenses, but without success. But the political association that had lodged the objections and fought for the removal of those names was well satisfied at the expense to which those objected to were put, but was dissatisfied that the names were not struck off. A better method was adopted. Instead of letting the magistrate either strike off or retain the names, the registrar took a hand. If he takes a hand, as he is expected to do under the existing Act, and as I should like to see him do under the Bill, we shall have no trouble. After the registrar took certain action, some names were struck off the roll; and except with regard to four or five names wrongfully objected to, there was no complaint from the 600 or 700 struck off in each of the three electorates I have named. Yet the Minister for Works is well satisfied with this new proposal, which allows an objection to be lodged by any person or any body corporate, and allows the magistrate to hear the appeal when and where he likes. Will it not be possible for an objection to be lodged today against me, and for the magistrate to hear the case on the following day? Is it not manifestly silly to object to an elector because he has moved to a house a few doors off on the same side of the street, and to remove his name from the roll unless he appears in court to protest? Why should not the Chief Electoral Officer or certain subordinate officers make the necessary inquiries, instead of filling in a few words on a printed form and posting it to the address on the roll, very often an incorrect address in a country with a floating population? If the elector has moved to a different house in the same street, the printed notice will not be delivered, and he will have no chance of attending the court. Then he has to see whether his name is on the printed roll hung outside the registrar's office. If not, the elector must at once make a claim. That is the present method, and the method proposed is exactly similar. But according to the Attorney General it will be necessary for the elector to notify the registrar of a change of address. Is that done now? Of course not. It never has been done, and it is hardly right to expect the elector to give the notification. Only an enthusiast would notify the registrar that he has moved next door but one. Consequently the

notification will not be delivered to him, and he will not know that an objection has been lodged. The Attorney General will tell us it is the fault of the elector, but surely when we recognise there is a weakness, members placed in this Assembly to make laws to govern the people should regard it as a weakness and try to overcome it. We should not say that it is the fault of the elector, and blame him because the change of address has not been given. At North Fremantle one person was deputed by a political party to object to 1,200 names. That man well knew that many objected to were still resident in the district. As stated in court when giving evidence, the ground of objection was that so-and-so lived in No. 86 and he had lived in No. 68. That has been going on. An elector can lodge objections; that may be well; but if, instead of holding a revision court, the power were given to the registrar there would be less objection raised. The Minister for Works said that why the Bill was necessary and why he liked it so much was that it would allow the free and unfettered electors their choice of a member. I always thought the free and unfettered electors did have the choice. It is all very well for the Minister to say that he frankly admits—he does not like to admit, but to strengthen his case he frankly admits that he was the nominee of a party. That fact did not put him in this Chamber. What right has the Minister to say that the free and unfettered electors did not choose him? They may have made a mistake by choosing him, but they did choose him. What does this Bill do any more than is done to-day? The Minister for Works says that preferential voting and proportional voting will allow the electors alone to have a say. Not at all. What is intended is this: if it be made compulsory, and I believe it will be, if not now, then shortly, it may be that the electors generally cannot see as far as some members who have gone into the Bill thoroughly with the real intention of seeing what is in it, and giving it a fair criticism, and have found it is anything but a satisfactory measure and have been bound to raise their voices against it—compulsory voting will necessarily mean the abolition of plumping. But it will do more than that; it will force a man to give a vote to his opponent even if it be the third or fourth preference.

[The *Deputy Speaker* took the Chair.]

Mr. BOLTON (continuing): It seems absurd to force a man to give a vote to his opponent. The present system is at least satisfactory, and before we embark on preferential voting I think we should understand a little more about it. I am satisfied that no matter how one looks into the question, he can gain little if any information from the Attorney General; and none is to be gained from Ministers or from any members on the Government side of the House, because they have sat dumb since opposition was raised to the measure. It is their Waterloo, not ours. They will have to answer for the fact that they sat here and never offered a word of condemnation or commendation on the measure, so that they could sit on a fence and say: "We felt one way and said nothing; we did not think it would be as bad as it is." It is hardly fair for member after member on this side of the House to get up and ask for information and not be able to get it, because the Attorney General can only reply to criticisms at the close of the debate. It is hardly fair that we should have no replies from that side of the House. If members on the Government side have not the intelligence to reply to anything put forward from this side of the House they should go and sit next to the Attorney General, or the Attorney General should go and sit next to them and prompt them so that they can reply. Surely they think the measure worth supporting or opposing. I believe a good many of the members on the Government side would like to oppose the measure. If this Bill becomes law there are many who will heartily wish they had opposed it rather than let it go in silence as they are doing. The Minister for Works, speaking in regard to the inflated rolls in the 1904 election, said it was mainly owing to the fact that electors moving from other electorates into the Fremantle electorate instead of transferring had put in new

claims, and that electors removing from the Fremantle electorate to other districts had put in new claims for the new districts instead of transferring, so that their names had not been removed from the rolls. That was the case, but what harm did it do at the 1904 election in Fremantle? Absolutely none, though it gave a big column of figures to the newspapers who said that such a small percentage had voted, and that it was the apathy of the electors. It was nothing of the sort. So far as Fremantle was concerned nearly 90 per cent of those eligible to vote voted. It was absurd to take the numbers recorded on the rolls. Everyone must admit that the rolls were inflated. But is it necessary to have such a conflicting measure as this to have pure rolls? By no means. Any effort to get pure rolls will have all the support it is possible to get from this side of the House. Electoral reform was one of the principal planks of the Government. Is this electoral reform? There is absolutely no mention of what was uppermost in the minds of the people when they agreed to electoral reform in regard to the alteration of the franchise for another place. Is that not what the people look for in electoral reform? I know what the Attorney General will say when he replies. He will say that when he introduced the measure he said he had left out any reference to the Upper House because of the impending elections next May; but the Attorney General has been long enough in office to have introduced it long before, and why does he not introduce it because of the elections next May? It is the very time it should be introduced. The Attorney General has the opportunity of introducing and having the matter discussed in this House so as to allow those gentlemen who are seeking re-election next May to fight the matter out in the country if they will. But no: after May some reform will be attempted by the Government, if they are in power, but what will they be told by the Chamber that dictates the policy of the Government? They will be told that the country has not spoken, and the Legislative Council will refuse to pass the measure, and the Government will again accept the rebuff. Has the Attorney General left it out of this measure because, had any mention been made of the reduction of the franchise for another place that other place would have nothing to do with the Bill? I think so.

Mr. Taylor: The Attorney General said so on the second reading of the Bill.

Mr. BOLTON: The mere fact of leaving it out is evidence sufficient to me that the other House will look at the Bill with some favour. If it were included in this Bill the measure would not become law. It seems to me there must be something in this Bill frightening people, and of which the Attorney General is rather doubtful. The appearance of the division, which took place a few minutes ago, makes me more sure that he is afraid. I expect the second reading will be carried, and perhaps the Committee stages got through this year or next, as soon as we can, but the measure does not appeal to this side of the House, because there is something underlying it. Evidently it is dangerous to allow a supporter of this measure to speak on it for fear that he should put his foot in it. Is that the reason why no members of the Ministerial side of the House have spoken to the second reading of the measure? It is evident that this is going to be treated by the Government as a party measure. In the *West Australian* some little time ago appeared the annual report of the National Political League of Fremantle. After dealing with the usual political information which all political bodies give in their annual report, we come to a most interesting part headed, "Proposed electoral amendment." I want to show in a few words from this extract that the National Political League practically drafted the measure now before us. The proposals were published in the *West Australian* before the Bill ever saw the light of day, and that body there claimed to have proposed certain reforms that are now embodied in this Bill. We can thank the National Political League for the reforms in the measure. The report says:—

> "Alive to the many shortcomings in the present Electoral Act, the Council appointed a committee to draft sugges-

tions; and some of the matters to which the attention of the electoral authorities were directed, with a view of having same incorporated in the proposed Electoral Amendment Act, may be alluded to:—(1) Introduction of a system of proportional voting on similar lines to that advocated in the *West Australian* newspaper articles by 'Novateur.' (2) The advisability of initiating a system of compulsory registration and voting."

If the provisions of the present Bill are gone into thoroughly, it will be found that in place of adding names to make up the rolls prior to an election, the National Political League proposed a new roll with no supplementaries—so does this very Bill. They provided for all sorts of machinery, and also for the voters to make declarations in certain circumstances. The report continues:—

(4) "Any electoral registrar on receiving information in writing from a duly qualified elector of the district that an elector has, through removal or other causes, lost his qualification to vote, shall, after having satisfied himself as to the correctness of the information, be empowered to remove such name from the roll."

In a certain clause of this Bill it will be found that the Christian names of applicants and the numbers of the houses they live in, and many other details, must be returned on the claim, or it will be deemed informal. That very discussion took place last session, and according to this suggestion, if you had not the right number on your claim you lost your qualification. This is the way the National Political League put it and there is a good deal of logic in what they say:—

(5) "The name of any elector being on the roll shall constitute the right for the vote recorded in such name to be accepted (without appeal). (6) Postal voting clause amended, making it incumbent on the elector to appear before the officer in charge of the nearest polling booth to which he may be resident on the day of the election, and satisfy him as to his right before being allowed to record his vote."

That very provision is in this Bill.

(7) "Provision to be made to protect electors from being disfranchised consequent on the altered basis of rating in roads boards from annual values to unimproved values, the lists of electors formerly supplied by secretaries and forwarded to the registrars for inclusion in the province rolls being, under the altered basis, not accepted."

That I regret to say is not in the Bill, for the whole measure seems to me to be whether intentional or not, in the direction of disfranchising people rather than putting them on the roll. I do not want to go so far as to say that the Attorney General intended to disfranchise people but the position is that he cannot see the force of our contention that by the Bill people are going to be disfranchised. Such being so, he can surely give us credit for being equally as straightforward as himself. He thinks that the effect of the Bill will be to get people on the roll while we are certain that the result will be that many will be disfranchised, and surely he can credit us with disinterested motives in the contention we are raising. At the conclusion of the report, these significant words appear:—

"While politics remained as they were at present, with practically nothing in principle dividing Government and Opposition, the council thought its chief aim should be to offer an uncompromising resistance to Labour representation."

That appears to give a reason why the suggestions were made in the Bill. The only speaker to the second reading in favour of the Bill, other than the Attorney General, has been the Minister for Works, and if no better arguments are put forward than have been submitted by these gentlemen it is clear that the passage of the measure should be resisted. It is unfortunate that on the second reading debate the member responsible for the introduction of a measure is not allowed one or two speeches so that he could explain matters. It is unnecessary for us to ask for information on this question, for it appears that the Attorney General is the only Ministerial member who knows anything about it, but yet he is unable

to give us the benefit of his knowledge for he has already spoken on the question. Surely the Attorney General does not expect us to follow him blindly and suggest that because he believes in the Bill we should do so without any reasons being given us in favour of it. If he believes thoroughly in the measure let him credit us with having equally conscientious ideas in opposition to it. If he believes the Bill will give better facilities to people to get on the roll and exercise the franchise, let him credit us with the honest belief that it will disfranchise over one-third of the electors of the State. Some portions of the Bill, if they were not mixed up with some unnecessary and foolish provisions, would be acceptable. There is the provision dealing with bribes and promises just prior to elections. That, in my opinion, is necessary but the exemptions which follow are quite unnecessary. If it is necessary to exempt what can be nothing else than a Minister's bribe just prior to elections, and which is called the policy of the Government, then it should be necessary also to exempt all other members of Parliament and all candidates, for they really put their policy before the electors prior to elections, just as much as do the Ministry in submitting their policy speech; therefore why should the latter be exempt and not the former? If the Ministerial policy were not exempt I venture to say there would be fewer Ministers returned and fewer disappointed electors after the return of the Ministers. I know it is absolutely necessary that the Government should put their policy proposals before the electors, and no exception would be taken to a policy speech given by the Leader of the Government. But exception can be taken to Ministers touring the country promising reduction in this direction and various things in other directions. That has always been done. A Minister visits a weak place and promises something if the electors return their candidate; and very often they are able to return the candidate on that promise. Another reason I rather object to the Bill is that we cannot view with any satisfaction the large number of informal votes which must be recorded. No State can be proud of a large number of votes being recorderd as informal, and it must be admitted that when this alteration is made it will mean that a large number of informal votes will be given. And it goes out to the world that it is through the ignorance of the electors of the State. We are as enlightened as any other part of the world, and if an election under this complex and complicated system is held next year or at any future time, with the education of the system which the electors have had up to the present, it will be a bad advertisement for us because I believe 50 per cent. of the votes will be informal, even the votes of educated persons. It is not education that is required in connection with the system but a thorough understanding of it, which is not an easy matter unless a person makes a complete study of the system. I wish the Attorney General had gone farther in what he terms a concession to this House. I cannot understand what his objection can be to giving the unfortunate people in receipt of Government relief the franchise. If the Attorney General had come into closer touch with these persons he would alter his opinion. If I am not going too far may I say that there are intellectual giants in some of the old men's homes who would do credit even to this Parliament. They would be able to sit here and listen to both sides and form their conclusions, which is not done in this Chamber at the present time. Not all of us are gifted with fluent language which it is interesting to listen to, but we are able to point out defects which it is our duty to do. If some of the inmates from the homes who are to be disfranchised were allowed to come in here as members of this Chamber they would do credit to it and would be better than some of us who are members of it. I wish the Attorney General had gone the whole way and given those in receipt of Government relief a vote. I know he has gone part of the way and given a vote to those who are partly receiving relief. Perhaps the Attorney General will give the other concession to this side of the House before the measure passes through the Committee stage; not necessarily giving any

concession to members on this side, because I believe there are members on the other side who are willing to assist in this direction, but they would rather have the suggestions come from this side of the House. Let us hope that some of the suggestions that have been thrown out will be embodied in the Bill. I should like to see the preferential or proportional voting provisions knocked out until some Government decide to go in for dual electorates. It is no use introducing machinery clauses years before they are wanted. If the argument is of any weight about the machinery clauses being got into working order some years before they are required, that argument does not tell in regard to the taxation Bill. The provisions for preferential and proportional voting will not be required for some years to come, and they should be knocked out. There are some reforms proposed in the Bill which would not be objectionable if they were not mixed up with other provisions. Until we are satisfied that the Attorney General does not wish to disfranchise people but that he wishes to get the voters on the roll, we shall oppose the measure every time opportunity offers. It may be useless opposition, it may be talking against time, talking to the winds, but we are doing what appears to be our duty. If this Bill is allowed to become law without entering our emphatic protest, it will be a standing disgrace to this side of the House when we view it as every speaker has viewed it from this side of the House, and may I make the statement—as it is viewed by a great proportion of members on the other side. Because we take exception to some portions of the Bill, it must not be claimed that we are trying to knock the measure out; but I believe that in its present form members on this side would like to see the measure in the waste paper basket. I would assist in that; and if I have assisted to do that by the few remarks I have offered tonight, I shall be glad. I do not bob up when I get up to speak it is because I have something to say and I feel what I say. This measure will be no good to the State, and if I can help to either make it better or knock it out, I shall do so. I would like to hear what some members on the other side think of this Bill. I know the measure as it is drafted suits some members on the other side, and it is very easy to see that it does suit some people. Take the electorate of Fremantle for instance. The member who represents that constituency would not be quite as comfortable as he is if the 128 people now in receipt of Government relief in his electorate were given votes. The hon. member would be by no means as comfortable as at present. Perhaps that is why such a general support is given to the Bill on the other side. I believe the Government wish to get the Bill through this session because of the general election which will take place next year, but whatever they do under this Bill I do not think they will save a defeat when they go to the electors next year.

Mr. W. C. ANGWIN (East Fremantle): I do not see any justification for this Bill, though I admit the existing Act might well be slightly amended with a view to making it clearer. In my opinion too much has been said in condemnation of the existing Act. No doubt it has given rise to several abuses, but they were due rather to the administration than to the Act itself. We know that numbers of persons have voted who were not entitled to vote; but we know also that there was a possibility that many of the electors did not understand the Act. When one section provided that every person on the roll was entitled to vote, and another a hundred sections farther on debarred an elector from voting if he had resided outside the district for a longer period than three months, it naturally followed that electors might innocently vote contrary to law. But residents of the State are now beginning to understand the operation of the present Act, owing to several illustrations of its working; and I was hoping that the Attorney General would, for the benefit of the electors as a whole, introduce an amending Bill to prevent abuses which on two or three occasions have been revealed. Instead of that, a new measure is introduced, a Bill entirely foreign to any Electoral Act in Australia. An early

clause in the Bill shows that the Government wish to exempt from the operation of the Public Service Act a number of persons to be employed in carrying out the provisions of the Bill. I do not know why this is desired, unless it be that Ministers may have a free choice in employing such officers. If they were engaged by the Public Service Commissioner, we should have a system free from political influence. But as their appointment is left to the Minister or his subordinates, I maintain that we are perpetuating the old system by which the temporary employees under the Act were all of a certain political persuasion. I note in the Bill that while a person is not entitled to have his name on more than one Assembly roll, there is nothing to prevent his being enrolled more than once for a province of the Legislative Council. I should like to know whether, if a province roll was split into divisions as at present, an elector having his name in more than one division in the same province would be able to vote in more than one division. The word "district" is defined; and while the Bill provides that a person shall not vote in more than one district, nothing is said against his voting in more than one division of a province. Again, persons are not prohibited from voting more than once at an election. I admit the Bill provides that a person must not vote more than once at one election: but if his name is on more than one roll, he may do so, and there is no provision that he shall not vote at more than one election held on the same day. The Queensland Act contains such a provision, but it has not been incorporated in this measure. In Queensland no person is entitled to vote more than once at the same election, or to vote in respect of more than one electorate, notwithstanding that his name may be on more than one roll. The question has been raised, what constitutes an election? I know it is generally understood that a general election—an election for every constituency in the State—constitutes an election. But there might be one election, say for Subiaco, and another election for Perth. These would constitute two elections. Consequently, while the Act provides that a person shall vote at only one election, yet, if his name were on the Perth roll and on the Subiaco roll, he might on the same day vote at Perth and at Subiaco, because he would vote only once in each electorate. When the Minister for Works spoke of the stuffing of rolls, I asked by interjection why the rolls were so inflated. The Minister replied, that some people instead of signing transfers from one roll to another, sent in new claims prompted by various political parties, thereby increasing the number of names on the roll. But the Minister was wrong. In 1903, when the present Electoral Act was passed, some time elapsed before the measure received the royal assent. Consequently, when the proclamation was issued for the preparation of new rolls, sufficient time was not allowed to permit of a revision court being properly advertised and held with a view to striking off a large number of names. Instructions were then issued that new rolls should be compiled from the existing rolls; that the names of all new claimants should be added; and consequently, there not being sufficient time for the Electoral Department to send to those whom it was thought should be struck off notices to attend the revision court, the rolls were considerably inflated. That is one of the points I wish the Minister had stated definitely, that is, the manner in which the rolls should be prepared.

Mr. T. L. BROWN: I beg to call attention to the state of the House.

[Bells rung and quorum formed.]

Mr. ANGWIN (continuing): The Minister should not be allowed through proclamation only to prescribe the manner in which rolls should be prepared. I hope the Minister will take into consideration the question of going back to the system of holding revision courts. I believe in them because, before names can be objected to, due notification has to be given. The system adopted in the past, and which has caused a good deal of ill-feeling, is the manner in which names have been removed without reference to a revision court. It has been the means of removing a large number of names

from the roll. People were ill-advised and were under the impression that is was not necessary to attend the court. The time has arrived when we should make an alteration in the manner of serving notices. In the past all that has been necessary was to post the notices. In my opinion letters should be registered or delivered personally, so that if a person is not found there is a possibility of a name being removed from the roll, or there is the possibility of a person being found whom a letter would not reach through the post. I have known instances where it has been said that summonses have been sent notifying that objections had been lodged and that a revision court would be held, but the letters did not reach the persons, and consequently new claims had to be put in. When the select committee was taking evidence on this question Mr. Fairbairn, the resident magistrate at Fremantle, was strong on this point, and said distinctly that he thought all notices should be served in person, otherwise they should not be dealt with.

[*The Speaker* resumed the Chair.]

Mr. ANGWIN (continuing): In regard to elections being declared void by order of the Supreme Court, I notice that the Minister has not made any provision whereby a new election can be held in the case of a seat being declared void during recess. The clause is almost similar to what it was previously. Consequently, before a new election can take place a vote must be taken in Parliament. I trust the Minister will make some provision whereby a writ may be issued for an election of a member where a seat has been declared void by order of the Court of Disputed Returns. I notice that the powers of the Judge are curtailed considerably in regard to the Court of Disputed Returns. Previously full powers were given to the gentleman who presided at the court, but now there is an alteration. In the Federal Act, and also in the existing Western Australian Act, the court has to take into consideration the substantial merits and good conscience of each case without regard to legal forms or technicalities. This has been struck out; for what reason I do not know; because we must realise that the president of the court should be able to investigate more carefully than he can under the limitations of the rules of the Supreme Court, and that he should not be tied down as he would by the rules of the Supreme Court. It appears that the Minister has no confidence in the Judge. I thought he would be willing to give the Judge every power to enable him to make a close scrutiny into every matter that pertains to an election in which there have been illegal practices. I hope the Minister will include a provision whereby a candidate can demand a scrutiny of the rolls. My attention was drawn to this because when I requested some time ago that I should be able to see the original rolls so that I might be able to form an estimate in regard to my own rolls, the officers of the Government refused my request, and I had to go to the expense of moving the Supreme Court to obtain permission to see the roll. I am pleased to say the Chief Justice saw the justice of my request, so that I was able to get access to the roll and gain the information I rquired. I hope the Minister will make provision whereby every candidate can request the returning officer at any date set down, similar to the New Zealand provision, for a scrutiny to be made whereby he can, for his own information, scrutinise the number of persons who have voted at the election in order to compare the result with the reports of the scrutineers he has appointed and see whether their scrutinies are correct, or whether his scrutineers have been negligent. It may avoid appeals to the court in regard to disputed returns. It is not my intention to detain the House. There are other matters I wish to deal with but I shall reserve them for the Committee stage. I only trust the Attorney General will realise that members on this side of the House wish, as far as possible, to make the Bill a workable one, and one that can be understood by the people, so that they will be able to cast their votes in a proper manner. The intention of members on this side is to try to obtain an Electoral Act as simple as it can possibly be made. Simplicity is one of

the principal necessities in regard to electoral matters, and everything that can be done to enable the Act to be easily understood should have the sanction of the Government, no matter what party is in power. Success at elections is impossible unless the people thoroughly understand the Act. I regret that the Attorney Geeneral should not have brought down one or two necessary amendments with a view to overcome the abuses that have existed in the past.

The Attorney General rose to reply.

Mr. T. L. BROWN: I desire to address the House on the second reading, and I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

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

Ayes	.. .. ..	11
Noes	.. .. ..	23
Majority against	..	12

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Angwin	Mr. Barnett
Mr. Bath	Mr. Brebber
Mr. Bolton	Mr. Butcher
Mr. T. L. Brown	Mr. Cowcher
Mr. Heitmann	Mr. Davies
Mr. Holman	Mr. Draper
Mr. Horan	Mr. Ewing
Mr. Hudson	Mr. Gregory
Mr. Stone	Mr. Gull
Mr. Stuart	Mr. Hayward
Mr. Troy (*Teller*).	Mr. Keenan
	Mr. Layman
	Mr. Male
	Mr. Mitchell
	Mr. N. J. Moore
	Mr. S. F. Moore
	Mr. Piesse
	Mr. Price
	Mr. Smith
	Mr. Verrard
	Mr. A. J. Wilson
	Mr. F. Wilson
	Mr. Gordon (*Teller*).

Motion thus negatived.

Mr. T. L. BROWN (Geraldton): I regret that the Attorney General seems to be in a hurry to conclude this debate. [*The Attorney General*: There was an arrangement made.] I also regret that at this late hour the Minister has not seen fit to allow the debate to be adjourned. Personally, I am somewhat tired and do not desire to speak on the question; nevertheless it is a matter which appeals to me very strongly, and there are but few members in the House who can, at the present time, deal with the question from the same standpoint of experience which I possess. The Electoral Act of 1904 to a certain extent revolutionises the whole of our electoral system, and it has taken all our abilities and endeavours since that time to educate the people so that they shall really understand the position they occupy in connection with electoral matters. Now that they do understand what is necessary in connection with the existing law we find that a new measure is to be brought down which will render the whole of that work useless, and we shall have again to commence from where we started when the 1904 Act became law. This I regret very much. To-night we have not heard an expression of opinion from members on the Government side of the House whether the Bill is good, bad, or otherwise. They have thrown the whole debate on this (Oposition) side of the House, and I fail to see where they consider justice comes in. Nevertheless, I feel a duty devolves on me to enter my protest against the second reading of the measure being carried. During the discussion some members have referred to certain elections, in one of which I was an interested party, and I feel more than ever that it is my duty to rise in my place and protest against the second reading of the Bill, as it changes the electoral methods altogether, which to my mind is undesirable. A few years ago we had an Electoral Act and there were certain methods to be adopted, certain means to be applied, by which persons could record their votes on election day. It was thought afterwards by this House and by another place that these methods should be changed, that the Constitution should be altered. That was brought about, and many of the old settlres even to-day are mystified by that Act. We find in the interests of purity, to use the words of the Attorney General, for he claims that this is purification, that every clause carries purification with it, this measure is brought forward; to purify the whole of our electoral system, and to prevent the duplication of names on the roll. We find that in the 1904 Act provision is made for transfers. But the Bill that is before us now has not a

clause which refers to transfers, but there are clauses referring to the fact that a person must register his claim which has to be signed in the presence of certain individuals appointed by the Minister. After a person has once registered a claim, and it has been allowed by the registrar or the chief electoral officer, the name is enrolled as a voter for an electorate. After that there is not a provision in the Bill which refers to transfers. I have gone through the Bill—I must be dense—as submitted to this Chamber, and I cannot find in it a clause referring to transfers. Once a name is registered for an electorate, there it has to remain. It cannot be transferred, according to the Bill. This is altogether contrary to the spirit of our electoral system. We are told the object is to prevent persons submitting new claims or to prevent the duplication of the rolls, to prevent chaos. But how are we to avoid that? If the Bill does not permit or provide for transfers, how is an elector living in one district to-day and removing to another district to-morrow, and living there for a month or three months, to transfer his vote or his right to the franchise to the electorate in which he resides when there is no machinery for the purpose? We are told this is a machinery Bill. But where is the machinery providing for the transfer of a vote? I have gone through the measure carefully and cannot find it, but probably the Minister in replying will be able to point out where it is possible for a voter changing his residence from one electorate to another to transfer his vote or his right to vote. Probably the Minister has in his mind the object of making the whole State one electorate. To my mind there is something underlying this Bill. I do not wish to impute motives, but there must be something underlying the whole Bill that the House is not cognisant of. I think the Attorney General should take the House into his confidence. If he wishes our confidence he should give us his. If it is the desire of the Attorney General to duplicate or concentrate electorates, why does he not say so? To-day we may have a dozen single electorates and the Attorney General may wish to make six electorates out of them, or three or four, as the case may be. If that is his desire he should take the House into his confidence, and if he does so I can assure him he will get members' confidence in return. If he comes down to-day and introduces a machinery measure but does not take members into his confidence, he must take the responsibility of the opposition which the Bill receives. We are told this is a machinery Bill pure and simple. If the machinery is to be put in the hands of the Minister to do as he likes with or to work in certain directions, he should tell members that such is the fact. And if he wishes to do that—he may not desire it—if he tells members that that is his desire, then members can only thank themselves if they are led in that direction by the Minister. Until the Minister sees fit to take members into his confidence, he must thank himself for the opposition which the measure is receiving. To my mind the present Electoral Act, as far as we have gone, has proved effective and necessary, and has "filled the bill," if I may use the term, except in one particular, that is in regard to postal voting. The postal voting system is where the abuse has crept in. The present Act is sufficient for all our requirements. It is pure enough for every pure-minded man, as far as our voting qualifications and franchise are concerned. If the Attorney General had moved in order to safeguard the postal vote system, he would have met our electoral requirements to-day. The Minister has authorised or appointed persons to receive postal votes. I can relate my own experience. I was one of the persons so appointed. Naturally, when I accepted the appointment, I thought, as any other honourable man would think, that there was a system of checking the actions and the papers of a postal vote officer. After the first election following my appointment I naturally waited until the Chief Electoral Officer—not the present officer but his predecessor—should call upon me to produce my papers so that they might be checked. Some weeks passed, and I wrote inform-

ing him that I had certain papers in my possession, that I had received certain postal votes, and I asked him what I should do. The reply was that I should retain those papers until I was called on to produce them; and I held the papers till I became a candidate at a later period. There was no check whatever. An unscrupulous man appointed to receive postal votes, if he had happened to be a partisan of a candidate, could easily have opened the envelope containing a voting paper, so as to see how the person voted; and in some cases no envelope was used. There was no system by which the officer was prevented from destroying the voting paper and substituting another containing the name of the candidate he wished to be returned. The possibility was there; and while the possibility existed I should have honoured the Minister had he brought in a measure providing the necessary safeguards. A person going to record a postal vote should receive the same protection as is accorded to voters who enter an ordinary polling booth. That protection is not accorded; and if the existing Act were amended to give it, the whole requirements of our electoral system would be met. But instead of simplifying the Act, instead of allowing every man and woman to exercise the franchise, we find a measure introduced which will operate in the contrary direction. Instead of getting duly qualified electors on the roll, the Bill will keep people off the roll who have the right to be there, and will prevent them from exercising the franchise when they are enrolled. Last session, when a similar Bill was before the House, the Attorney General contradicted certain statements of mine, and when I called for the Federal Electoral Act and read from it a confirmation of my remarks, the Attorney General quietly put the matter on one side, and there it ended. But I reassert to-night that what I then said was perfectly correct. I referred to the subdistricts. A man and his wife lived in the same house, the man being on one roll and his wife on the other. They went to the polling place for the district in which they thought they were entitled to vote. The husband was allowed to vote and the wife was not, she being told she was not on the roll. She said she was prepared to sign a declaration that she was on the roll for a certain district, and claimed the right to vote at that polling place by proxy. The Attorney General said she could not do so; but I maintained it was possible, because I myself saw it done. I took that lady back to the polling place, and she signed the necessary declaration in the same polling booth where she was told she could not vote, and she recorded her vote. The simpler we can make voting the better, but the Minister has introduced a measure which is harking back to the dark ages. Instead of assisting the people to get their names on the roll the Attorney General is trying to drive them off the roll. At the revision court which sat at Geraldton yesterday there were 500 names objected to. I made it my business on Friday last to go through the list of names objected to. Many should have been struck off years ago. The Judge who presided at the Court of Disputed Returns when I petitioned against the previous election decided that these names should not be on the list, yet they were still on the rolls. I had objected to them at the previous revision court, but the gentleman who presided over the court said that they could not be struck off because the names had not been formally objected to. On the other hand there were 60 names objected to by the electoral registrar, the names of people who had not left the district and who were living in the houses in which they lived five years ago, and the ground of objection was that these people were not residing in the district. The mere fact that people are summoned to attend the revision court is sufficient to drive some away from recording their votes, and this only operates on a certain class that has to suffer every time. I maintain that instead of simplifying the law and allowing our electors to use their right of citizenship, the Minister is working in the opposite direction and placing difficulties in the road which the electors cannot overcome. The Bill does not contain one clause whereby a man can transfer a vote from one district to another. I re-

gret, more than anything else, that no member on the Government side has seen fit to give expression whether the Bill is desirable or not, and I protest against this silence. When members will allow themselves to be gulled or led in the direction in which they have been led to-night, I maintain that they allow their manhood to go by the board.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is offensive.

Mr. T. L. BROWN: I withdraw.

Mr. SPEAKER: I may point out that the hon. member has repeated that argument two or three times; I hope he will not continue repeating it.

Mr. T. L. BROWN: I withdraw. I feel strongly on the matter, seeing that we are talking to empty benches practically all night. I take it as a compliment and as an act of courtesy to me that members have seen fit to come into the House to listen to what I have to say. When I drew attention to the state of the House some little time ago there were but two Ministers and two members on the Government side of the House. If I may be allowed to repeat myself, I maintain that the Minister should have informed us how he intended to apply this simple measure. We are told that any clause inserted in this Bill with the object of purifying the system of voting is opposed by members of the Opposition, but no member more than myself desires to purify the electoral system, and I maintain that no one will go farther in support of the Minister in that direction than myself, because I have suffered more than any other member. It is useless to repeat how I have suffered, but I have suffered because of the looseness of the Act in regard to certain clauses. If those clauses were safeguarded or amended the whole of the Act would be as complete as is necessary. The Act is lax in regard to postal voting and administration. If we could administer the Act properly with a few amendments in regard to postal voting, we would have one of the most up-to-date Acts in the world.

[*12 o'clock, midnight.*]

Mr. T. L. BROWN (continuing): But what do we find? Compare one with the other. In the Act of 1904 there are several clauses dealing with transfers, but in the present Bill there are none. [*Mr. Scaddan*: That is an improvement.] We are told that when once a man has been registered everything else must be done by transfers, and yet there is no machinery for transfers. I feel called upon to-night to assert my manhood and right of citizenship, and the right of citizenship of the men and women living to-day under conditions which a great many members of the Ministerial side of the House have little conception of. With regard to the disqualifications passed upon those who are receiving state aid, I consider that the provision should be eliminated from the measure. There is no suggestion to disqualify persons receiving pensions, but only those who are in receipt of what is termed charity. For my part, I can see no difference. At the revision court, which sat in Geraldton yesterday, there were names objected to by the electoral registrar of men and women who have lived in the State for 40 or 50 years, and they were struck off the roll merely because the people were receiving goods to the value of 5s. per week from the State. These people are the pioneers of the State and they lived and worked under conditions which do not obtain to-day; and now, after all the good they have done in helping to bring this State to the position it occupies, they are refused the privilege of voting, because they are receiving in relief the paltry sum of 5s. a week with which to keep body and soul together. On the other hand, there are the cases of men who have drawn large salaries for years, who then obtained a doctor's certificate to say they were no longer fitted to do their work, who resigned from the service and now draw a huge salary in the shape of a pension. These persons are allowed to vote, and in all fairness the rights of citizenship should be given to those others who fought harder for the State than they did but who were being disqualified because they were in receipt of State aid. Under the present Bill all those receiving one shilling per week as

assistance or charity from the Government are to be disqualified. I claim the right to think and act as my conscience dictates, and I claim the right to assert my citizenship; therefore I deny those rights to no one else. Let members opposite look at the question from the same point of view. If the case set up by the Government is a good one there is surely some reason for it; but why are we not given this reason, why are not arguments adduced to show me that the opinion I hold is wrong? If it could be proved to me that there was good reason for the step that is being taken I would be prepared to adopt that view, but we have not heard one reason or one argument and we naturally ask ourselves whether this action is not being taken merely because these people are poor, because they are old, because they have been placed by circumstances over which they have no control in a position to need help from the State. We may be in a similar position ourselves some day and then shall we think it right to be deprived of our vote? We only have to compare the old Act with this Bill, and I am sure the Bill will not for a moment bear comparison. We know the old axiom that "comparisons are odious," but we must compare the success of the old Act with the possibilities of this Bill, and if we compare the evils of the 1904 Act with the possibilities of the 1907 Bill, the 1904 Act will come out on top every time. If we compare the weaknesses which we find in the 1904 Act with this Bill, then they are far more preferable, far more just and equitable, than the provisions of this measure. Members by their silence are acquieseing, as it were, in the passing of the measure, and are doing the State and themselves an injustice; for we do not want this measure to be forced. I fail to see why an adjournment of the debate was refused. Already we have had two adjournments. The other evening only one Minister spoke on the measure for about half an hour. He talked himself practically to a standstill, if I may use that term. Then a motion was moved to adjourn the debate, before the tea hour, and now at midnight, we are refused an adjournment of the debate because the time has arrived to force the House to pass this measure. And if by rising in my place to-night I can prevent such a thing coming about, I shall have done some good. I am only doing my duty to the electors of the State. If members on the Government side will only look at the matter in the same light they will see that they will be doing their duty to themselves and to the country if they take the stand which I am taking to-night, and instead of having the matter forced they give it fair consideration. Members on the Opposition side consider it their duty to prevent what is evidently a pre-arranged plan. In regard to the reform of the Upper House, we were told several years ago by persons who held positions in the Ministry that the main objective of electoral reform was the reform of the Upper House. But the only reform that the Government have got is that the Upper House has beaten them every time. The measure before the House at the present time does not contain a clause dealing with the Upper House; yet this was one matter which was to be attended to. But it is not going to be done because the Upper House deals with the Government how they like and when they like. Is this what should be allowed in the face of the elections for the Council which are to take place next May? Why has not the promise of the reform of the Upper House been fulfilled? If the 1904 Act had been amended in that direction I would have assisted the Government to have done whatever I could to reform another place. But we are not asked to do so in this measure. We are asked to do something that we do not know anything about. Let us have reform where it is needed. The reforms in regard to the Legislative Assembly are small, but as far as another place is concerned reform is required. Why are we not to get it? The Upper Chamber is dictating to us as to what we should do. Is this as it should be? If we are to alter our electoral laws, let us alter them in the way to liberalise them, making the system more simple than it is instead of making it more difficult and more harsh. It is necessary that every member should realise his right to citizenship and his manhood, and to-night should take a firm

stand and assert his position and the right of those whom he represents, taking a broader view and asserting the right of those living within the boundaries of our State. To-day we are in a more fortunate position as a State than any other State of Australia. But we find that we are attempting to place laws on the statute-book which are going beyond the dark ages of the history of Australia. I would like to refer to the position of persons who are residing to-day under conditions which a great many members have not the faintest conception of; yet to-night we are asked to place farther difficulties in the way of these people, to prevent them from exercising their rights as citizens by recording their votes. The conditions of enrolment are such as cannot be complied with.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have listened patiently to the hon. member, and have given him every latitude. I wish to draw his attention to this quotation from *May*:—

> "A member who resorts to persistent irrelevance may, under Standing Order 24, be directed by the Speaker or the Chairman to discontinue his speech, and akin to irrelevancy is the frequent repetition of the same arguments of the member speaking or the arguments of other members; an offence which may be met by the power given to the Chair under Standing Order No. 24."

I do not wish to take any action of this kind, but I have listened patiently long enough. If the hon. member continues in the course he has adopted, I shall order him to sit down.

Mr. T. L. BROWN: I am very sorry my remarks should have called forth that correction from you, Mr. Speaker. Feeling strongly on the matter, I have perhaps allowed myself to exceed my rights; but I am quite prepared to accept your correction and to conclude my remarks. I believe conscientiously that I have done my duty. I may have offended members. It was not my intention to do so. I have done what I thought to be my duty, and I consider that no man can do more.

Mr. J. A. S. STUART (Mount Leonora): The fact that I do not often rise to speak here will perhaps be taken as a reason why I seize the very auspicious opening that now presents itself of saying a few words. A line of Tennyson is running in my mind:—

> "You must wake and call me early,
> call me early mother dear"—

not that I have any desire to be "Queen of the May," but I should like to go to the Agricultural Show, and I am afraid this somewhat novel entertainment we have had last night and this morning will militate somewhat against the success of the function we are all hoping to attend on Wednesday afternoon. But if there is one wish that has been uppermost in my mind last night, it could be expressed in the scriptural phrase, "Oh that mine adversary had written a book." I have been wishing that Government supporters would make some speeches; but they have been as dumb as oysters, and I do not think it is altogether fair for them to assume that attitude. I can but conclude that the silence of those hon. members is induced by a fear of the wrath to come. I do not mean the divine wrath; but had they made speeches to-night in support of this measure, the written word would have been on record against them when the time came to give an account of their stewardship. That is about the only scriptural reference I shall make, as the subject is not at all scriptural; but I will ask whether it benefits the country or the people in it to have members here all this time, calling one another names and making accusations against one another during this debate, or perhaps repeating platitudes that might well be dispensed with. The only reply can be that there is no benefit to the country or the people. For that reason I have often kept quiet, and have had very little to say. But I have devoted considerable time to the study of this measure. I think I know a country, and I think the Minister in charge of this Bill knows that country too, where if he introduced such a measure, or some of its provisions, certain patriots, about this time of the morning, instead of talking would be looking for him with

shot guns. There are so many penalties, so much of what I may term the chain-gang element in this Bill, that I cannot find it in my heart, much as I should like to be at home, to allow the second reading to pass without protest. I do not know what the country has done that we should have this thing foisted on us; that we should be threatened with such antiquated provisions, and that we should either have to waste time in protesting against them, or simply allow ourselves to be bludgeoned into accepting a reactionary measure detrimental to so many of our citizens. I can imagine certain circumstances in which a Government threatened with loss of power would be capable of descending to almost any degradation in order to retain office. I can imagine some Ministers descending almost to infamy rather than relinquish the reins of Government. But I shrink from believing that the present occupants of the Treasury bench are trying to act in that manner, though the evidence on the other side is strong. I am afraid that whoever is responsible for introducing this Bill, whether the National Political League or any other body, is actuated by a sinister motive, by an intention to make it difficult to secure enrolment; and that, though Ministers will not go so far as some Ministers would, they are willing to go to considerable lengths to deprive voters of the chance of getting on the roll, and to place difficulties in the way of recording votes. When someone was pointing out the other night the disabilities that men who have every right to have facilities for voting labour under in having to go 24 miles to get on the rolls and record their votes, the Government Whip, the member for Canning, interjected that if men were prepared to go 20 miles to get on the roll they should be prepared to walk that distance to record their vote. Well, I should like the hon. member to meet some of those men on the return journey, if it was a hot and dusty day and there was not very much water on the track, and if they knew that the hon. member was responsible for the lack of facilities for voting which compelled them to foot these 20 miles, I think they would give him a particularly bad time. I should not like to refer to this measure as a three-card trick, but I think I would be safe in regarding it as a two-card event. The first I heard of this Bill was when the Minister was addressing his constituents at Kalgoorlie. He then outlined this proposition, but I do not understand it much now. If he is going to insist that a man shall sign his name on one card and on another, and that one shall be kept and the other sent on to the head office, I believe he is going to create a good deal of confusion; because I know there are hundreds of citizens in every way qualified to exercise their vote, yet I believe it would be absolutely impossible for them, considering the few times they sign their names, and considering the arduous occupations they followed in order to get a living, to sign their names identically in the same style. While the hon. member was about it he might just as well have introduced the French finger-print system that is applied to criminals. It seems to me it would be about fitting when a man came up to vote to take an imprint of his fingers and forward it to head office, and have a committee of criminal experts at the head office to deal with the matter, and go to all this trouble to see that a man does not get on the roll twice, though perhaps unintentionally.

The Attorney General: Do you know of any system where the claimant does not sign his name?

Mr. STUART: No; I am not referring to that. It is absurd to think we are going to put people to all this trouble to verify a simple claim for enrolment as an elector. All this correspondence has to be sent from the registrar to the head office and back again, and if a man does not happen to have crossed a T, or made a Y or S the same length as before, we are going to have a writing expert called in, if the thing is to be carried out to its logical absurdity. The hon. gentleman thinks there is a greater number of criminals in the country than I do. I do not think there are so many people who are going to perjure themselves to get on the rolls. I was going to suggest that when a man comes up to vote the brand of Cain or some other suitable symbol should be put on his brow so that he may

not vote twice. That would be about as absurd as some of the provisions contained in this Bill. With so much that is sealed and barred, one naturally expects to find clauses providing that anyone infringing the provisions of the Bill shall be hanged, drawn and quartered, and his head placed on the town gate as a warning to malefactors. There are many precious gems in this Bill—some have been referred to already, but my principal objection to the measure as a whole is that although avowedly meant to purify the rolls, I do not see that it is likely in any way to attain the end supposed to be aimed at. In a previous speech the Attorney General was kind enough to cast some insinuations on the manner in which Labour ballots are taken. I have taken part in several ballots, and whether I won or lost I was always prepared to abide by the decision. If I was aware that any corruption took place, whether I lost or won, I would have been up in arms against it; and I think any insinuations from one side to the other as to the corruptibility of voters, or the corrupt state of the rolls, are based on consciousness leading perhaps to the necessity for making the statements. I know of none, and I have never accused one side or the other of indulging in these practices. I am satisfied there is no one sitting on the Government side who could impugn the methods in which the Labour ballots are conducted in order to arrive as to who shall be the Labour representative. We have something far better than the hybrid preferential system included in this Bill. We indulge in the exhaustive system of selection; and in justice to those who take part in those ballots, I say that our methods will bear criticism and compare favourably with the methods adopted by any other party in this State. I notice there is provision for taking a census. I have watched recently with a certain amount of interest the collecting of claim forms by the police, the method which will be adopted in the taking of the census which is to form the basis of the electoral rolls in the future, and I have this complaint to make, that the police lately have been discouraging voluntary workers, who have done so much in the past, from taking any part in this work, the result being that the work has been left in the hands of the police to do, and many names supposed to have been collected by the police officials, and which were in all probability collected, did not reach the revision court in time. This is a matter that only occurred quite recently, and I have not had time to fully probe it to the bottom, but I intend to do so. However I point it out now as a potential danger if this method of collecting names is to be made the basis of framing the rolls in the future. The attitude taken up by the Minister leads me to remind the hon. gentleman that he has not the qualities to make him successful as an autocrat. In this instance his attitude has brought upon him and on the measure what might be termed a resentment that would not otherwise have been shown. The Bill by itself has nothing in it to commend itself to members on this side, but the resentment and bad feeling might have been lost had the Minister been more candid and perhaps a little more communicative in regard to it. And if he were to ask me what he thought he would gain by this, I should say he would not gain many laurels throughout the country; I should say that he would receive the execrations of a good many citizens if this Bill became law. No body of electors can view the passage of a measure such as this without a certain amount of misgiving, seing that it may jeopardize some of their rights and militate against their participation in the franchise in the future. I do not know that in this instance the Minister is capable of a great amount of good, no matter how much he may have tried to make this Bill acceptable to us; but he can do a great deal of harm and can put a great many worthy citizens to a lot of trouble unnecessarily; and I do not think that is a conclusion he should aim at. I was present when the Attorney General delivered a speech to his constituents at Kalgoorlie; and I well remember that after he had announced that he had this measure in the process of incubation, he refused to answer any questions on the subject. I do not think that will ever occur

again. I think the electors are sorry for having returned the hon. member. I do not think they expected he would introduce a measure such as this. The hon. gentleman is not popular in his electorate. I regret he would not answer the questions asked him, otherwise we would have had more information in regard to this measure. I am anxious to make an endeavour to include in the laws of this country anything good we can find in the laws of other nations; but I am afraid that anything that has been drafted into this measure from any other country cannot be classed in that category. Some of the provisions are the most barbarous that could be adopted. I need only refer to one, that is, in regard to people receiving State charity. It is not necessary to say anything more than has already been said in regard to this matter. One would imagine that it had been lifted from the law of China, Patagonia, or some other uncivilised place. Nothing but what is of a penal or obstructive nature has been included in this Bill. As an Australian I would like to see Australia advance in legislation along sound lines towards some ideal which when reached will be of some use to us. I think there are greater and more important subjects and undertakings to which we might devote our time and what abilities we have rather than be wasting time over such a measure as this. I thought the experience of last session would have been a caution and warning against undertaking such a measure as this, and I do not see how any one of us is to come out of this with any credit unless we obliterate the thing, wipe it out of existence and begin afresh. Government supporters who are silent on this occasion I am justified in believing are silent because they would be quite prepared to take any part of the laurels and kudos that may be forthcoming, but they are afraid there may be something in the shape of political infamy associated with these consequences, that it will be referred to as a reactionary measure and one that will have to be speedily repealed. I would like to see the House engaged in the discussion of some more vital question. The only credit I think we can gain on the Opposition side of the House is to fight these sinister and sanguinary proposals and prevent them from becoming law. I know of no nobler or higher task than preventing so many of our citizens from being placed in the category of criminals. There are too many offences in the Bill altogether; and I say we are lagging very much in the rear of other States and countries who are introducing legislation, not to penalise their citizens, but to make them freer and to render their lives perhaps capable of being lifted to a higher standard than they are at present. I am afraid we are endeavouring to degrade many of our citizens into committing breaches of this law, and I think it will be the fault of the law if they do so. I think our philosophy is very much at fault when we have so many penalties included in this Bill. I am afraid this country would be capable of doing very much better for its citizens than what we are doing for them here to-day. There are certain clauses to which I shall take serious objection and which at a later stage will be objected to by others on this side of the House. There is Clause 45 with regard to objections. It seems to me that the provision made in order that the intending voter who is objected to shall be notified of that objection is altogether inadequate. The fact that he shall be notified is duly inserted, but in many instances it will not be possible by any process of mail carrying we have now, to be sure that the person objected to shall be notified in time to file a defence against the objection; and it seems to me that another part to which we should take serious objection is that dealing with the so-called system of preferential voting. It seems to me that it is a wild whirling phantasmagoria of figures. I do not think any member understands it; and when the officials in charge of a booth are called upon to hold an election under the system, I am convinced they will not be in a position to do justice to it, or to any similar system. That is not the only serious objection. We have it on the authority of the Attorney General

that he fully expects there will be an increased number of informal votes when this method is brought into existence. When the sponsor for the Bill has perforce to make the admission that it will take several years for those entrusted with the carrying out of elections to carry out this system, what is going to be the position should the system be brought into existence within the next few months. The hon. gentleman admits that he does not thoroughly understand it. Does he so belittle his own ability as to think that the returning officers, picked up haphazard throughout the State, can learn in a few months what it has taken him so long to get a smattering of? I do not think so; I do not take that view. Preferential voting is absurd in this degree, that as outlined by this Bill and judging by some of the remarks that fell from the Attorney General, it will be possible by means of this suggested system for a candidate who does not receive one primary vote to be elected. [*The Attorney General*: That is impossible.] If that is not reducing the thing to an absurdity, I do not know how far in any other direction the hon. gentleman could go and arrive at so disastrous a result. The hon. gentleman openly confesses that he does not understand the Act. Open confession is good for the soul, and that is another guarantee that the hon. gentleman in this case, before starting to lecture us or the country, should follow good advice and lecture himself. In deference to the state of the House I shall not go into other matters in detail. There is a provision in Clause 129 which I think should not be there. In the event of an election being interrupted by violence or in a similar fashion the returning officer is empowered to fix a date for its continuance. I think that is an imputation on the sanity and good citizenship of the people who would be taking part in the elections.

[*The Deputy Speaker* took the Chair.]

Mr. STUART (continuing): As I said previously, a lot of useless clauses have been introduced in this measure. Perhaps this is included because it was in some measure centuries ago. I think it has no right in an Australian Act, and I think it should be omitted.

The Attorney General: Did you ever read the Bill passed by this House in 1904?

Mr. STUART: I shall probably be told there was something in a Bill passed in 1704, or away back in the dark ages. However, it is an imputation on the sanity and citizenship of people who in future will be taking part in these elections. There are other provisions that should be omitted. We have practically a page devoted to offences and punishments. I believe there are about 15 included in the page, and I say in all sincerity they might be eliminated to a considerable extent without anyone being any worse. The member for Geraldton remarked that the Attorney General when introducing the Bill did not know what it contained, did not know that it was loaded. That reminds me of the farmer who had a rope round the neck of a bull. When the bull ran away, someone asked the farmer where he was going, and he said, "Do not ask me, ask the bull." That is the position in which those responsible for this Bill will find themselves before the matter is ended. I do not think those supporting the Bill really know what the result will be. They cannot foresee what is going to happen. With regard to the opposition from this side of the House I would ask if we in our places here have not time after time pointed out legislation which the Government were passing and foretold disaster; have not we taken upon ourselves to act the role of prophets and predict that something wrong would come of it; and have we not often, in fact more times perhaps than members would care to be told about, said that we had only to wait for time to prove that we were right? I could give a list fairly long of legislation opposed by this side of the House that has been disastrous to the country and that has not added to the prestige of those that passed it. Chickens at times have a habit of coming home to roost, and it will not be long after this Bill is on the statute-book before some of the chickens will be looking for a rest

for their feet. In regard to the institution of dual elections, I will point out that in New South Wales they departed from the system of dual and quadruple seats and reduced the number of members and, without exception, adopted single member constituencies. I do not think they are likely to depart from that innovation. It has been long enough in vogue to be practically a custom. Again, in Queensland they have about half a dozen places in which they have dual elections; and I think it is their intention, if they alter their Electoral Act at all, to alter it in the direction of single seats. In this State to the present so far as the law relating to elections is concerned, it required amending in many essential particulars; but I do not think an amendment towards establishing quadruple or multiple electorates is likely to be of any advantage. I am not going to make any apology for saying that I oppose this Bill lock, stock and barrel. It has been said that it is hard to draw a line between the good and the bad. If there is any good in this Bill I cannot draw a line between it and what is bad in it, so that, rather than be a party to placing such an aggregation of obsolete and reactionary provisions on the statute-book, I am opposing the measure, though perhaps in doing so I am opposing one or two provisions that may be of some value. I deem it better to do that than to be a party to placing the measure on the statute-book. We have had aspersions cast on the Opposition for our actions in regard to elections. I would say in the words of one of our most readable poets that we are willing to abide by whatever may be the circumstances attending to it. I would say:—

> "It matters not how strait the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate,
> I am the captain of my soul."

[*One o'clock, a.m.*]

Mr. STUART (continuing): In this debate reference has frequently been made to the question of the purification of the rolls, but I am afraid there has been altogether too much prating of this purity. If there is a genuine desire on the part of any party to have done with all this lingering and to get to business and to draw up a simple code of electoral provisions, then we should not be found speaking and voting against them. I regret that the dumbness and somewhat tyrannical attitude of the Ministerial side has necessitated our sitting to this late hour, and I trust that the debate will now be concluded.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL (in reply): I only rise to acknowledge the lengthy remarks, the voluminous remarks, addressed to the House by various speakers, and to express regret that on previous occasions when this Bill was down for consideration by the House, they did not avail themselves of the opportunity that then existed to deliver at any rate a portion of the remarks we have heard here to-night. [*Mr. T. L. Brown*: Why, we tried to prevent the adjournment.] The hon. member was silent on those occasions, although we heard to-night most discursive remarks from him. It is only necessary for me to say that almost by universal opinion it was considered that under the existing Act it was impossible to carry out an effective electoral system. It has been condemned on all hands, and it is somewhat astonishing to hear to-night so many praising its virtues, while some speakers, when speaking on clauses in the Bill before the House, have indulged in severe criticism of them altogether ignoring the fact that they are included in the Act of 1904. As a matter of fact, the necessity for making provision for a substantial majority to carry the second reading of this Bill arose in connection with the clause dealing with disqualifications, and in which I had made an alteration in the endeavour to meet the wishes of members opposite. It was this alteration which constituted an alteration to the Constitution.

Mr. Scaddan: Do you assert that is the only alteration which calls for a statutory majority?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Certainly.

Mr. Bath: What about Clause 110?

[*The Speaker* resumed the Chair.]

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: An amendment of the Constitution Act is not necessarily an amendment of the Constitution, for it may be an amendment of a mere machinery section of the Act. It is only an amendment of the Constitution that requires a majority of the House. Because I altered Clause 28 of the present Act, which disqualifies a person who receives any relief from a Government or charitable institution, the majority was rendered necessary. That disqualification in my opinion was too wide, and I endeavoured to meet the views of members opposite by providing that it should only apply to those wholly dependent on relief from the Government or from a charitable institution maintained by the Government, and should not in any event apply to those at public hospitals for the treatment of persons suffering as the result of accident or disease.

Mr. Bath: Clause 110 provides an amendment of the Constitution.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is only an amendment of the Constitution Act.

Mr. Bath: But it affects the Constitution.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am not going to discuss that question now.

Mr. Hudson: A repeal of the Act itself amends the Constitution.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The repeal of Section 28 does.

Mr. Scaddan: You said that was the only reason for a statutory majority being necessary.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There is one other observation I want to make and that is on the question of preferential voting, and proportional representation. It is astonishing how members opposite seem to be prejudiced against what is recognised I believe by all those who have turned attention to electoral reform as being the most advanced form of the electoral system one could design.

Mr. Hudson: You have not brought it up to date.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No doubt I could learn a good deal, and all members could, from the member for Dundas. It is not from that point of view, however, that the system has been criticised, but from the point of view of plural representation. Opposition members made that mistake.

Mr. T. L. Brown: What is your definition of the clause?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: All I can say is that Western Australians are not supposed to be possessed of less intellect and would not be less likely to understand matters of this kind affecting the electoral system than Tasmanians, who have adopted this system of preferential voting.

Mr. Hudson: And they have given it up.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member should not interrupt so much. The people of Tasmania are able to understand the printed matter attached to their Act which is similar to that attached to this Bill, and I think that even the member for Geraldton, when he turns his attention to it, will find it is not so difficult to understand. There is this distinction; it is not plural voting, but proportional representation. As to the preferential provisions, the member for Leonora is absolutely incorrect when he says it would be possible for a candidate who receives no first preference votes to be ultimately elected. He is wrong for this reason, that the first preference votes are counted, and the person who receives the least number of them is struck out. The man who gets no first preference votes, must of necessity be struck off. I thank members for the attention they have devoted to the Bill, and hope that that attention will result in their understanding it in a manner they do not appear to now.

Question (second reading) put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	30
Noes	12
Majority for	18

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Barnett	Mr. Angwin
Mr. Brebber	Mr. Bath
Mr. Butcher	Mr. T. L. Brown
Mr. Cowcher	Mr. Collier
Mr. Daglish	Mr Holman
Mr. Davies	Mr. Horan
Mr. Draper	Mr. Hudson
Mr. Eddy	Mr. Scaddan
Mr. Ewing	Mr. Stuart
Mr. Foulkes	Mr. Troy
Mr. Gregory	Mr. Ware
Mr. Gull	Mr. Heitmann (*Teller*).
Mr. Hardwick	
Mr. Hayward	
Mr. Keenan	
Mr. Layman	
Mr. McLarty	
Mr. Male	
Mr. Mitchell	
Mr. Monger	
Mr. N. J. Moore	
Mr. S. F. Moore	
Mr. Piesse	
Mr. Price	
Mr. Smith	
Mr. Stone	
Mr. Veryard	
Mr. A. J. Wilson	
Mr. F. Wilson	
Mr. Gordon (*Teller*).	

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

ADJOURNMENT.

The House adjourned at a quarter past one o'clock, until the next Thursday (Royal Show on Wednesday).

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 31st October, 1907.

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 4.30 o'clock p.m.

Prayers.

PAPERS PRESENTED.

By *the Colonial Secretary*: 1, Cemeteries Acts 1897 and 1899—By-laws passed by the Cemetery Boards at Paddington, Boyup Brook, Karrakatta, Kelmscott, Kanowna, Kookynie, Midland Junction, and Mt. Magnet. 2, Timber Regulations under the Land Act. 3, Timber Tramways—Copy of permits to construct.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by *the Hon. M. L. Moss*, farther leave of absence for one month granted to the Hon. F. Connor (North), on the ground of urgent private business.

BILL—MARINE INSURANCE.

Read a third time, and transmitted to the Legislative Assembly.

BILL—NAVIGATION AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY in moving the second reading said: This Bill before the House is exceedingly short, and only seeks to alter one word in the Navigation Act of 1904. At present some doubt exists as to whether the word "machinery" in the Act includes boilers, and it is doubtful whether boilers on a vessel should be inspected under the Machinery Act or the Navigation Act. It was understood, of course, that marine boilers should be inspected like the rest of marine machinery under the Navigation Act; and in order to remove the doubt that exists, it is sought to alter the Act by making the word "machinery" include "boiler."

Question passed, Bill read a second time.

BILL—SALE OF GOVERNMENT PROPERTY.

Second Reading moved.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY in moving the second reading said: This small Bill is purely a machinery measure, to regulate the keeping of Treasury accounts in connection with Government property which has been sold. The Bill refers more particularly to the addition