

an honorary officer but a most admirable man for the position. Still, the correspondence that reaches him from important institutions all over the world calls for a great deal of effort to keep pace with it; and, constituted as the society is now, recipients would feel that the information they received from it does not carry the authority it should. I hope, therefore, that the Chief Secretary will be able to give me encouragement to believe that the Government, even in this late hour of Western Australia's responsible government, will do something more. There being a surplus of revenue this year, I thought no time was better than the present to mention the subject with a view to obtaining some monetary assistance. I do not wish to delay the House further. I have the greatest pleasure in supporting the motion for the adoption of the Address-in-reply.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 6.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 7th September, 1943.

	PAGE
Question: Petrol, as to trafficking in ration tickets	321
Bills: Workers' Homes Act Amendment, 2R.	321
Public Authorities (Retirement of Members) Act Amendment, 2R.	327
Electoral (War Time), 2R.	333
Financial Emergency Act Amendment, 2R., Com., report.	346
Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment, 2R., Com., report.	346
Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment, 2R., Com., report.	346
Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation), 2R., Com., report.	350
Industries Assistance Act Continuance, 2R., Com., report.	354
Resolution: Daylight Saving, as to application to Western Australia.	328

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

QUESTION—PETROL.

As to Trafficking in Ration Tickets.

Hon. W. D. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Justice: 1, Whether he read the report of police court proceedings in "The West Australian" on the 12th August, and previous issue in connection with the ninth prosecution associated with the alleged traf-

ficking in Government-endorsed ration petrol tickets, in which statements were made by counsel—"We have never been favoured with the information in all these petrol cases as to the source of the tickets. I have been curious to know where the huge mass of tickets came from"; and again, "That it was the subsidiaries who had been brought to book. The ends of justice had not been served because the real offenders had not been apprehended, and were not likely to be; only the minor offenders had suffered?" 2, Whether, in view of public concern on these extraordinary cases, he will give to the House an explanation as to how Government tickets got outside Government control? 3, Has the officer responsible for loose handling of Government property been adequately punished?

The MINISTER replied: 1, Yes. 2, This has not been determined notwithstanding lengthy and exhaustive investigations by National Security officials. Government-endorsed petrol tickets are issued to a large number of Government officials and also to numerous private individuals whose vehicles are under hire by various Government departments, many of which vehicles are located in remote parts of the State. 3, The department has now been definitely advised by the Commonwealth authorities that no evidence could be obtained which would warrant criminal proceedings against any Government official or person receiving petrol tickets from the Government. The question as to whether any other action should be taken by the department is under consideration.

BILL—WORKERS' HOMES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER [4.37] in moving the second reading said: The purpose of the Bill is to amend the Workers' Homes Act to give additional powers to the Workers' Homes Board. The measure is a small one and can be easily explained. Its provisions are as follows:—

(1) To give the board power to use its funds for the erection of houses to be let on weekly tenancies to persons who are "workers" within the meaning of the Act.

(2) To enable a tenant if he so desires to purchase the house which he is renting from the board.

(3) To require the board to keep the financial operations of the letting section of its activities in a separate account from its other financial operations.

(4) To empower the board to use its funds to make advances to house owners to enable them to make alterations to their houses to bring them up to the standard of the health requirements of the local authority controlling the district in which the home is situated, where in the opinion of the board the owner's financial position is not sufficiently strong to enable him to have the alterations effected without the board's assistance.

The power of the Workers' Homes Board in regard to the provision of homes is divided into two main sections, referred to in the Act as Part III. and Part IV. Part III. deals with the provision of workers' dwellings and is generally known as the leasehold section. Under this section the board erects houses on land owned by the board. The purchaser pays an instalment which covers interest on the capital value of the house, a repayment of its capital cost, insurance on the house, rates and taxes, plus ground rent for the use of the land on which the home is erected. Having purchased the home he may, if he so desires, continue his payments and freehold the land. Under the leasehold section the applicant is required to pay a deposit of £5. It can readily be realised, therefore, that under that section it is not necessary for a worker to possess a large amount of capital to enable him to become a home owner. The applicant is required under the leasehold section to find a deposit of only £5, whereas under the freehold section it is necessary to put up a deposit equal to 10 per cent. of the estimated cost, including the value of the land. The limit of the advance is £900, though by paying a larger deposit than £5, a purchaser can secure a house of greater value.

Hon. N. Keenan: If the land is the property of the applicant he would not pay more than 10 per cent. of the estimated cost.

The PREMIER: It all depends. The land may be worth £140 and he may desire to have a house and land valued at £800. Generally speaking the blocks are worth 10 per cent. of the value of the whole property, and the applicants do not have to provide much more. In recent years the leasehold section has become very popular and more applications have been received under Part III. than under Part IV. The purchaser makes his payments in almost the same way as he would pay rent, knowing that his instalments to the board cover all his liabilities with the exception say, of excess water charge and expenditure on main-

tenance. Under Part IV. workers who own land may apply for an advance up to an amount not exceeding £900 by way of mortgage. A deposit of 10 per cent. is required, and provided the land reaches a value that is equal to 10 per cent. of that of the total security—that is, the land plus the building—and his application is otherwise in order, the land is acceptable as the deposit. Although the board's advance is limited to £900, the applicant may, if he so desires, provide the additional cash necessary to secure a home at a greater cost than £900, and this has been done in a number of cases.

I desire at this stage to give a brief resume of the history of the Workers' Homes Board so that members may have the whole position in retrospect. The board has been in operation since 1912 when it was inaugurated, and during the following 31 years has performed a very useful social service for the people of Western Australia. I am sure all members will agree with that statement.

Members: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: The board has enabled many thousands of workers to acquire their own homes whereas, but for the aid given by it, such acquisition would have been impossible. Since the inception of its operations the board has approved of 5,549 applications, involving an expenditure of approximately £2,100,000. Of these applications, 3,800 have been under Part IV—that is, the freehold section—involving a sum of £1,400,000, and 1,550 under Part III—the leasehold section—covering a further amount of £617,000, plus 160 applications under what is known as Section 44B, covering an expenditure of £100,000. I might explain that Section 44B relates to advances from money provided by the Commonwealth Bank. Members may recollect that in 1929 the Commonwealth Government decided to launch a housing scheme with advances up to £1,800 for eligible applicants whose income did not exceed £12 per week. Unfortunately, funds were not provided for the continuance of the scheme which lapsed. The board in that respect merely acts as agent for the Commonwealth Government.

It will be seen from these figures that the freehold section has been the more popular, but this popularity existed largely in the earlier years of the board's operations. In later years, more applications have been received under the leasehold section than under

the freehold provisions of the Act. This is understandable because the deposit under Part III is small, namely, £5, as against the deposit of 10 per cent. of the total value of the security required under Part IV. In addition, under the former part, the total fees payable for supervision, preparation of plans, etc., are capitalised and added to the value of the property, and the purchaser pays an all-in fortnightly instalment which covers the whole of his commitments. Under Part IV, the mortgagor has to pay the fees in cash and is treated in every other respect like an ordinary mortgagor. At the 30th June last the capital of the board stood at £965,000, representing £717,000 advanced from the General Loan Fund, £181,000 borrowed by the board from the State Superannuation Fund under the borrowing powers recently granted to it, and £68,000 due to the Commonwealth Bank under the Commonwealth Housing Scheme. In addition to this capital, the board has reserve funds amounting to £90,000, most of which is invested in housing property. At the end of the last financial year, the amount owing to the board on Part IV properties was £460,000, on Part III properties £470,000, and on properties reverted to the board £21,000, while the board held land purchased and dedicated to it of a value of £47,000.

Generally speaking, the board is in a very sound financial position. It has made full payment of charges respecting sinking fund and interest on the capital amount advanced, has made regular free payments to the Commonwealth Bank on account of the money advanced by that institution, and is also redeeming debentures issued to the State Superannuation Fund for money borrowed from that source. Furthermore, it has been able to make small contributions in some years to the Consolidated Revenue Fund. I do not know whether members have seen the blocks of workers' homes at Floreat Park. The homes erected there represent a model type that is very popular, and in most instances the houses in those groups have been erected by means of payments in excess of the £5 deposit in order that such better type of house could be secured. In most instances the amounts have been smaller than £100. The houses there have been inspected by many visitors from the Eastern States and oversea who are interested in housing problems, and they have expressed keen appreciation of the type of dwelling

erected under this scheme. They are all of modern design and there is no suggestion of any group type of building predominating.

Mr. Perkins: Were they erected under the freehold or leasehold system?

The PREMIER: They have been erected according to the desires of the owners. I think the Perth City Council gave the Workers' Homes Board some land in that area in order that buildings could be erected under the departmental scheme. The object of that was to popularise the suburb for residential purposes and, in consequence of the Workers' Homes Board erecting so many fine houses there, the Perth City Council was later able to follow suit with the encouragement of housebuilding on its endowment lands. The Minister for Works probably has more precise knowledge on the point than I have, but I would say that there are at least 400 houses at Floreat Park now, a very large proportion having been erected under the workers' homes scheme.

Mr. Watts: Have you considered the working of the Housing Trust in South Australia?

The PREMIER: Yes, and I intend dealing with that phase. The Minister for Works who is particularly interested in these matters, spent two days in Adelaide recently when he was in the Eastern States dealing with official matters. He looked through some of the houses erected by the Trust. Following upon that he had an interview with the board and dealt generally with the whole matter.

Mr. Styants: Tasmania has a scheme even better than that.

Mr. Watts: I do not know of it.

The PREMIER: While the board has done much good work in the erection of homes under both the leasehold and freehold sections, I feel that there is another method by which it could extend its operations by providing houses for other people, and that is by letting dwellings. Wherever possible, in order to provide a cheaper type of home, building costs should be reduced. Just prior to the commencement of the war—of course, I cannot give present-day prices because in these days permission cannot be obtained for the erection of homes—the erection of a five-roomed house, such as most workers would desire, cost between £800 and £900, for which the board expected repayments at the rate of 26s. or 27s. a week.

While that weekly payment was probably less than would be required to secure a home in any other way, it was a heavy burden for the average worker on the basic wage. Members will agree that a weekly payment of 27s. out of a wage of less than £5 represents a large amount, even though it is representing capital cost. The board attempted to meet the needs of lower-grade wage earners by providing wooden houses. Many of these have been built in the metropolitan area. The weekly instalments payable in respect of wooden houses have ranged from 14s. to 19s., according to the size of the house.

Not every worker, however, desires to live in a wooden house. Again, many workers do not desire to be home owners at all, owing to the migratory nature of their employment. If I may instance my own case, I was in the Railway Department for 20 years, and during that period lived in three or four different places. Obviously it would have been impossible to provide a home in each place. The Government feels that in such circumstances there is necessity for the board's powers to be extended to the erection of houses for letting purposes. In 1937 we endeavoured to amend the Workers' Homes Act in that direction. Here the proposal was received enthusiastically, but it was defeated in the Legislative Council. In that Chamber some absurd statements were made, one being that the Government intended to start another State Trading Concern. As the board was already building houses, the aspect of an additional State Trading Concern did not come in at all. Very few people, however, are prepared to invest capital in building homes for tenants, a form of investment which has become decidedly unpopular. Terraces for letting no longer impress, and are no longer popular.

There is a huge shortage of houses throughout Australia. In those circumstances this Government stands for the provision of reasonable housing conditions. People do not desire or cannot afford to have houses for themselves by building for themselves, and somebody has to step into the breach. Private capital is no longer interested in building houses for renting. Flats are expensive, and I do not know that they are an entirely desirable form of home. The fact remains that there is a definite shortage of houses. The Housing Committee reported that there was a deficiency of

5,000 or 6,000 houses. It was expected that at least six years would be needed to supply this shortage. Moreover, there are many ancient houses which should be condemned. Local authorities are extremely loath to exercise their powers in that respect, because frequently it would mean putting people out into the street, there being nowhere else for them to go. Somebody, whether the Government, or local authorities, or private individuals, must supply houses in which the people will be adequately accommodated.

With the anticipated expansions of industry after the war, we must provide housing. In South Australia the Government has started out on a policy of secondary industrial expansion, and concurrently with that has found itself compelled to provide houses. South Australia was concerned to get a lower basic wage, so as to be at an advantage over competitors; and the provision of cheap houses in that State has in fact resulted in a lower basic wage.

The South Australian scheme was adapted and carried through by an anti-Labour Government and is being extended by an anti-Labour Government. Mr. Playford's Government is carrying the scheme on, the Premier being very enthusiastic in regard to it. He really broke the National Security Regulations by going on with the houses, but that matter has been settled. Some people say that one cannot get tenants who will look after the premises. In South Australia the interested visitor is granted the privilege of entering many of these houses for inspection purposes. From the outside they all look splendid. They are built on large allotments, and have extensive gardens in front as well as fruit trees planted in the back. There is no difficulty in selecting a good tenant in Adelaide, and there is no hesitation there in turning down applicants who are not likely to prove good tenants.

The success of the scheme demands responsible tenants. For every house a hundred applicants are waiting. As with our Workers' Homes Board, the number of children a South Australian applicant has, gives a certain preference. The South Australian houses, I repeat, are well kept and in good order. The board there institutes little competitions in flower growing and general gardening; and, broadly speaking, the houses are maintained in excellent condition.

It does not take long to collect the rents. A man goes along on Monday morning in a car and blows his horn, whereupon the tenants come out and pay their rent. It is strange that people should rush to pay their rent, because usually the landlord has difficulty in obtaining the rent from the tenant. In this case the tenants are anxious to pay. This man collects the rent from about 200 houses in less than a day.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Improve the environment and you elevate the tenant!

The PREMIER: There is no doubt about that. I have had two interviews with the board, and the Minister for Works has also devoted some attention to the matter. The Minister for Lands was with me on one occasion when we inspected some of these houses, and we were impressed by what we saw. The one defect about which we complained is that the rooms are comparatively small; nevertheless, they satisfy the tenants. What is more, the size of the house determines the rental to be paid, and the tenants are prepared to have a house with smaller rooms because thus they will have less rent to pay.

I have hopes that if we embark on this scheme we may be able to provide a commodious four or five-roomed cottage at a rent not higher than 19s. a week. The scheme will be in the nature of an experiment; if building costs cannot be brought down to a reasonable level or if there is no demand for rented houses, then the scheme will not be enlarged beyond the first attempt. In South Australia the rent, when the scheme was inaugurated, was about 14s. a week, but it has now been raised to about 17s. per week. In the earlier days of the scheme, building costs were less.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You are not limiting the scheme to brick premises?

The PREMIER: No. On the other hand, we intend to build numbers of wooden houses.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Quite right!

The PREMIER: With regard to what are known in South Australia as duplex houses—we call them semi-detached—it is better that these should be constructed of brick. This class of house may be desirable because if constructed on land which is contiguous to transport, electric light and sewerage, the building cost will be less, although the land may be dearer, and it must be remembered that £50 makes a difference

of £2 a year to the tenant. This may not appear to be a very large sum, but it means a difference of 9d. per week in the rental. All these matters will be taken into consideration when the scheme is inaugurated.

The other section of the Bill is to enable the board to assist householders to bring their houses up to the health requirements of the local authorities where, in the opinion of the board, the financial position of the householder does not permit him to carry out the necessary alterations without the board's assistance. I feel this is a very necessary provision and that it will prove to be extremely popular. Recently, the Government appointed a Housing Committee which investigated the housing problem, and one outstanding feature discovered by the committee was the large number of houses which did not comply with the health requirements of the local authorities. So far as could be ascertained by the issue of a questionnaire, the reason why the alterations had not been made were mostly financial. From memory, I think 25 per cent. of the houses had no wash-house and about 40 per cent. did not have a kitchen sink.

Mr. Watts: Where was the inspection made?

The PREMIER: In Western Australia. Some 80,000 houses were inspected. Many of them had been erected for upwards of 50 years, at a time when these amenities were not always provided.

Mr. Mann: Will the privileges to be provided by this Bill be extended to the agricultural areas?

The PREMIER: The measure will not be restricted to workers. If a person wishes to instal a septic tank or to build a wash-house, then, provided the board considers he cannot finance the work in any other way, he will obtain assistance.

Mr. Watts: Will he not have to give the board a first mortgage?

The PREMIER: Yes, or perhaps a second mortgage.

Mr. Watts: But the Crown always comes first.

The PREMIER: If the person were a client of the Agricultural Bank, possibly the board would make the money available through the Bank. There is no reason why people engaged in agriculture should not participate in these benefits.

Mr. Doney: The security will be further improved. The advance will be made only if the security is a good one.

The PREMIER: We have heard much of the new order, and I think everyone is agreed that the home is the centre of our civic life. People with good homes are contented; if they have to live in a rat-bag of a house they become dissatisfied with their conditions. Two of the Four Freedoms are freedom from fear and freedom from want. People have been wanting houses for years and years and cannot get satisfactory accommodation. One of the first items in post-war reconstruction should be the inauguration of a huge house-building scheme throughout Australia. It will absorb a tremendous number of workers. The Commonwealth Government estimates that 40,000 houses will be required annually for many years before the shortage is overtaken.

The section of the Bill with which I am now dealing also provides that alterations may include sewerage connections. Members are aware that the Metropolitan Water Supply Department does to a limited extent provide finance to enable householders to connect their premises to the sewerage system. Each year provision has been made on the Loan Estimates to enable such loans to be made. It is proposed to give the Workers' Homes Board this power also, because it will probably be found that the alterations required to a house include a number of things, one of which may be connection to the sewerage system. It would be undesirable, therefore, for a householder to be obliged to deal with two Government departments and therefore the board will be empowered to make loans for this purpose. The idea of making advances for small alterations to houses is not new. During the depression the Government provided loan moneys to enable the Workers' Homes Board to make advances to persons desiring to renovate their houses, the purpose of the scheme being to encourage employment. It proved to be very successful and no losses were sustained by the board. The power to make advances for such alterations will not be limited to workers within the meaning of the Act, but will be available to any householder provided his financial position is such as to justify the board's making the advance. I feel sure the Bill will meet a very grave need, and it should prove of great value as well to the workers as to the employers of this State.

There is no provision in the Bill for indigent people or deserving but unfortunate people who, because of injury, ill-health, age or other disability are unable to provide themselves with housing accommodation. Fortunately, already we have in this State a scheme for dealing with these people. I refer to the McNess Housing Trust, established mainly through the benevolence of the late Sir Charles McNess. This trust is well known to members, but perhaps not so well to the general public. Some time prior to his death, Sir Charles interviewed me, as Treasurer, regarding the working and usefulness of what is known as the McNess Housing Scheme, which was established mainly through his generosity.

I expressed the opinion that the scheme was achieving a most worthy purpose for unfortunate but deserving people who could not be helped in any other way nearly so effectively for their comfort and peace of mind. Sir Charles subsequently left by his will a further sum for the McNess Housing Scheme. The scheme now has funds amounting to £70,000 for the provision of houses. It is anticipated that this amount will cater for some years for the needs of our people who are in circumstances entitling them to assistance from the McNess Fund, so there is no necessity to consider such people in this Bill. I should, however, say that perhaps some returned soldiers may possibly be able to benefit from this fund. The fund is unique, in that it assists a number of people who otherwise would suffer a great deal of worry and privation. They might be compelled to pay 10s. or 15s. a week for a room, whereas under the McNess scheme they can rent a small house for about 5s. a week and live in comfort. I have received letters from such people expressing their appreciation of the generosity of the founder of the scheme.

The additional activities of the board contemplated in the Bill will be conducted on a purely commercial basis; but, because possibly of low interest rates on money borrowed by the board and of the adoption of mass-production methods in building, it is expected to provide good housing accommodation at reasonable rentals. I do not think there will be any opposition to the principle of the Bill, and I submit it to the House in the hope that on this occasion it will receive the approval of Parliament. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Willmett, debate adjourned.

BILL—PUBLIC AUTHORITIES (RETIREMENT OF MEMBERS) ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS [5.15] in moving the second reading said: This measure answers a question raised when another measure was being discussed. The purpose of the Bill is to preserve the principle of continuity of retirement in rotation which is prescribed in Section 27 of the Road Districts Act, and relates only to members of road boards. The position regarding municipal councils is adequately covered by the provisions of the principal Act. Members will remember that all road board elections which would ordinarily have been held in April, 1942, were first postponed, under an order issued by the Premier under National Security Regulations, for 12 months, from April, 1942, to April, 1943. This order was gazetted on the 17th April, 1942. In November, 1942, this Parliament passed the Public Authorities (Postponement of Elections) Act, which provided that public authorities and their ratepayers should be given an opportunity of stating whether any further postponements of elections should be ordered. In accordance with the provisions of that Act notice of intention to postpone elections was published, and 115 road boards agreed to a further postponement—that was after the first—whilst 12 road boards decided to proceed with their elections in the usual way.

By a proclamation gazetted in January, 1943, and issued under the Public Authorities (Postponement of Elections) Act, the 1942 elections of the 115 road boards were further postponed until April, 1944. The other 12 boards held their 1942 elections in April, 1943. The principal Act, as it now stands, makes adequate provision for the 12 boards which held their 1942 elections in April, 1943, in that those elected in 1943 hold office until 1946, and those due to retire in 1943 and 1944 have been extended to 1944 and 1945, with the result that elections will be held annually for the prescribed number of retiring members. In connection with the 115 boards whose 1942 elections have been postponed for a period of two years, the position is that the 1942 elections have been postponed until 1944 by order and proclamation, and by Section 3 (b) of the Public Authorities (Retirement of Members) Act now sought to be amended the

1943 elections have also been extended to 1944, with the result that unless the amendment now presented is enacted two lots of members, that is, the 1942 and 1943, will have to go up for election in April, 1944.

That is by way of introduction and is actually what this Bill will do. It must not be forgotten that this deals with the retirement of members and not the postponement of elections. It provides for the very thing about which the Leader of the Opposition was inquiring in regard to the 115 boards who took advantage of it. The other 12 are in order. Under the proposed amendment the position in relation to these 115 road boards will be that the 1942 members will be up for election next year, and those elected will be returned for a period of three years, from 1944 to 1947. The 1943 members will go up for election in 1945, and their period will also be a three-year period from 1945 to 1948. The 1944 members, who will be elected next year, will be elected for the period 1946 to 1949, again a matter of three years, so that they will all be placed back again on the rails. Those are the effects of this Bill and the reasons for its introduction. It is assumed, that no further postponement will be necessary. The measure completes the postponements and provides for two things, namely, the continuity of local authorities, and the rotation of retirement, which occurs in the case of the Legislative Council elections. Those two things must be provided for. Now they will not clash. Elections will be held in 1944, 1945 and 1946 when they will all be in their proper order. That is all I have to say in that connection, but a question was raised by the Leader of the Opposition when he quoted the couplet—

Oh! what a tangled web we weave,
When first we practise to deceive.

He must realise that it was not an apt couplet.

Mr. Watts: The last word was not appropriate.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: Very often members have criticised the Parliamentary Draftsman, and on this occasion the suggestion was not that there was deception, but ambiguity. The member for West Perth has suggested that members might help and give the Government the advantage of any special knowledge they may possess. I therefore make the suggestion that the member for Nedlands, the

member for West Perth and the Leader of the Opposition should form themselves into a committee. They have knowledge of legal draftsmanship and diction, as well as the experience they have gained in this House. In addition we have the member for Claremont who has exploratory ideas on most things. He could be added to the committee. My proposal is that the draftsmanship displayed in many Bills could be simplified. It is done in other places. I believe that South Australia has a draftsman who can draft Bills in very concise paragraphs which are clear and understandable. I remember on one occasion introducing a Bill to enable the Public Service to take advantage of our industrial arbitration law. This was done in Queensland by a simple declaratory paragraph.

In this State we have a very laboured and redundant Bill about which the member for Nedlands complained. We had to amend it three or four times before it achieved what we wanted, and I was accused by the Civil Service of deliberately deceiving it and entering into a conspiracy. The Solicitor General was very hurt and annoyed at the charge levelled. There is, therefore, room for improvement and I throw out the suggestion that those who have the legal knowledge, and actually have to handle the Bills in this House, should form themselves into a committee to go into the question of simplifying the draftsmanship of some of our measures. If I were to read out even this simple measure for postponement, members would be amazed. The wording might be all right for men with legal training, but these measures have to be understood by road board members who are good commonsense men. They will certainly have to take our word for what the Bill enacts.

The last three sentences of the explanation I gave put the road board elections back where they were but, from the draftsmanship, it is difficult to arrive at that conclusion. If we had to say so we would, in plain language, state that they are to get back to the rails. There should be a simpler way to do these things. We are now talking a lot about the new order, and we might introduce a new order in the draftsmanship of Parliamentary measures which have to be understood, not only by laymen in this House, but by laymen outside.

Mr. Doney: We should adopt the methods and phraseology of some of the old ordinances taken over some years ago.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes. This Bill answers some of the questions raised the other evening by the Leader of the Opposition, and now there is no doubt that the elections will be held in their proper order with continuity and rotation in respect of retirement. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Doney, debate adjourned.

RESOLUTION—DAYLIGHT SAVING.

As to Application to Western Australia.

Message from the Council now considered requesting the Assembly's concurrence in the following resolution—

That in the opinion of this House, daylight saving should not, in future, be applied to Western Australia.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [4.48]: I move—

That the resolution be agreed to.

I realise that at the present time a great shortage of coal exists in this State, and when one is asked to move a motion against the saving of coal, it is rather dangerous. Before I was prepared to go on with the moving of this motion I decided to seek, from those in authority, information as to what amount of coal would be saved with daylight saving. That, in my opinion, was the crux of the whole position. I made inquiries of the responsible people and not one was able to tell me whether any coal at all can be saved under this scheme. It seemed strange to me because if the lights are cut out for one hour some coal would probably be saved. But the authorities say that they do not know whether coal can be saved or not. Under those circumstances it is not right to ask the people to put up with unreasonable conditions.

Mr. Patrick: They cut it out by having to rise an hour earlier in the mornings.

Mr. TRIAT: Yes. The authorities told me they had no method to check it and that up to the present they could not give any reliable information. Many disabilities are suffered by the people with the operation of daylight saving. I can name one. Some people at Kalgoorlie work right around the clock. It is obvious that any industry working around the clock will not help the coal position under daylight saving. These men who have to go on shift in the middle of the night do so as usual. Consequently there is no saving there. The goldmines

work the round of the clock and so do the munition factories. Railways work the round of the clock and so do the coalmines mostly. Therefore the greater number of our important industries work throughout the 24 hours. Some work only two shifts and a saving might be effected there. Now take some of the one-shift jobs like butchers! No saving would be effected by them.

I realise that a great quantity of coal would not be saved, but there would be a tremendous amount of disability if daylight saving were re-instated. Take a man employed at the Midland Junction Workshops who lives in Fremantle or Perth! Admittedly that is rather a long way for a man to travel to work every day, but quite a number of them do so. At present the wives of these men have to get up at 5.30 in order to get breakfast and cut lunch, but under daylight saving they would have to get up at what in reality would be 4.30 a.m. While the womenfolk are busy getting breakfast and cutting lunches, the young children of the family, in 99 cases out of 100, also waken, and those children are awake from that hour till 9 o'clock in the evening, a stretch of 17 hours, and the mothers have the trouble of looking after them all those hours. Some people ask why the children are not put to bed at the ordinary time. It is not possible to get children to go to bed in daylight and they will not do so. If the clock says 9 o'clock and the real hour is 8 o'clock, the children take no notice of the clock time.

The Minister for Mines: Even the fowls refuse to do so.

Mr. TRIAT: That is so. Like the children, they wait until it gets dark before they go to bed. So, while there is not a great deal of saving, there is much disability, especially for couples with young families. Unless we are going to effect a substantial saving by re-introducing daylight saving, why penalise people in this way? I do not think it is right to do so.

We have had experience of black-out conditions in this State from which we gained sufficient knowledge to warrant my not labouring this question. I do not think we should agree to daylight saving because we cannot prove that it will result in any saving of coal, but we can definitely prove that it will jeopardise the happiness, comfort and even pleasure of the people. I should have mentioned that men working

in the goldmines of Kalgoorlie finish the day shift at 3.12 p.m. With daylight saving they would knock off at 2.12 p.m. Thus, in the summer, those men would be coming out of the mines during the hottest part of the day, and would have to wait for 6½ hours before the sun set and conditions became cooler. I hope members will agree to the motion.

THE PREMIER: It might be advantageous to give a short history of daylight saving. It was imposed in Australia from the 1st January, 1942, to the end of March, 1942, and was re-imposed from the 27th September, 1942, to the 28th March, 1943. We have, therefore, had the experience of half of one summer and of spring, summer and autumn under daylight saving conditions. At the end of July last, the Prime Minister informed the State Government that the question of the re-introduction of daylight saving for the coming summer would shortly be considered by Cabinet, and he asked for any information we might have in relation to its effect on the life of the community. Although we had had two periods of daylight saving, we had had very little by way of an expression of opinion for or against the arrangement. The Government really had no information on which to base an opinion for the Prime Minister.

We made inquiries, and the outstanding argument in favour of daylight saving was that it would lead to economy in the consumption of fuel and therefore in the consumption of current for lighting. Most people took the view that if this, in a small degree, would benefit the war effort, although it would cause them inconvenience, they would not oppose it, especially as daylight saving was being imposed upon an Australia-wide basis. Therefore little complaint was made during the period which I might describe as the darkest days of the war. If it could be authoritatively shown that a considerable quantity of coal would be saved and therefore a considerable quantity of electrical current, there might be something to be said for its re-introduction. Daylight saving has been adopted in England for many years and it is re-introduced there year after year. It seems to be beneficial from some standpoints.

As no exception was taken to it here, the Government informed the Prime Minister to that effect. That was the position until I

made a statement regarding the tenor of our communication to the Commonwealth. Since then we have discovered that there are many people who take serious objection to the re-introduction of daylight saving. Doubtless if the war outlook was still as serious as it was they would put up with the inconvenience but, the war position having improved, people have voiced their objection.

A week or so ago the Government asked its experts for an opinion as to the extent to which daylight saving would effect economy in coal. Members are aware that the coal position in this State, in common with other States of Australia, is very serious. I asked the Minister for Works, who is in charge of the Electricity Advisory Committee, to secure a report from that body. The following request was sent to the chairman of the committee—

The Government desires that your committee be good enough to report urgently on the estimated saving in electricity, and consequently in coal consumption, which would be effected under the daylight saving proposal.

The chairman of the committee replied as follows:—

Some few weeks ago the Electricity Advisory Committee, in reply to an inquiry from the (Federal) Controller of Electricity, gave consideration to the saving, if any, which followed the adoption of daylight saving.

It was agreed that there were so many contradictory factors involved that it was quite impossible to calculate the ultimate result. It was the considered opinion of Messrs. Edmondson (City of Perth Electricity Supply) and Taylor (Manager of the Government Electricity Supply), however, that from their own experience and records, the savings, if any, in electricity and therefore coal, due to daylight saving, are negligible.

Mr. Marshall: I think they are right, too.

The PREMIER: The letter continued—

Viewing the matter from the consumption of electricity point of view, the committee expresses no objection to the introduction of daylight saving, and, equally, it has no reason to advocate its adoption.

If the saving is negligible, much of the case for daylight saving falls to the ground.

Mr. Needham: What was the saving of coal in the period?

The PREMIER: They do not know; they say it was negligible.

Mr. Needham: Then what is the good of it?

The PREMIER: We told the Prime Minister that if daylight saving was desired in

the interests of uniformity, we would have no objection. Members must realise that this is entirely a Commonwealth matter; it is not a matter that comes under State jurisdiction. The Commonwealth, under its war regulations, can insist upon the observance of daylight saving conditions. The Minister for Commerce, Mr. Scully, in a Press statement, indicated that he was referring the matter to the Cabinet within the next few days and we thought that, if we could obtain an expression of opinion as a guide to the Commonwealth Government, we might well get it to Canberra before Cabinet considered the matter. Therefore the motion has been brought before the House today.

Mr. Watts: Have the other States expressed any opinion?

The PREMIER: South Australia has objected to the re-introduction of daylight saving.

Mr. Cross: The other States are in a different latitude.

The PREMIER: A different longitude. Because of the longitude of Sydney, daylight saving there is beneficial. In wintertime it is almost dark in Sydney at a quarter-to-five in the afternoon, and the standard time there is about 12 minutes ahead of sun time. Here, standard time is about 20 minutes behind sun time. I believe that the meridian 120 degrees is east of Southern Cross, and as the difference in longitude is about $4\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, Perth time is therefore about 18 minutes behind sun time. Thus in any event we have about 18 minutes of daylight saving, and to put another hour on to that in the summer months gives us sunlight until nearly 9 o'clock in the evening. That entails certain disadvantages. If any real saving could be effected I think the people would agree to the proposal, even if they suffered some discomfort and inconvenience, but when nobody can substantiate the statement that any real saving can be effected in the consumption of coal, the reason for the continuance of the system largely disappears.

I did not want the Commonwealth Cabinet to make a decision without having an expression of opinion from this State, so yesterday I despatched a telegram to the Prime Minister in the following terms:—

Daylight Saving: Since my letter 24th August and announcement of contents in Press, widespread hostility has been expressed in this State to re-introduction of daylight saving. Government experts advise that saving of electricity and coal will be negligible. Perth

standard time is approximately 18 minutes behind sun time, resulting in effective daylight saving already to that extent. Legislative Council has passed motion opposing re-introduction, and similar motion in Legislative Assembly likely to be passed this week.

Following the expressions of opinion that I have received from many members, I anticipated that the motion would be passed by this House. My reason for bringing the motion on at this stage is that we might convey our decision to the Commonwealth Cabinet before it considers the matter. The Commonwealth asked for an expression of opinion from the people of the State, through the Government, of course, and we are giving it. In the circumstances I have no objection to the motion.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): Like the Premier I have no objection to the motion. The question of daylight saving has occasioned a lot of concern in many country areas. Objections have also been raised by people in the metropolis. In the country a day on the harvester seems to get extraordinarily long when the daylight hours have been extended. It is generally accepted that farmers work from daylight to dark, and the later the darkness the longer the hours of work. Many farmers, however, under daylight saving do not alter their clocks in connection with their farming operations but carry on under the old time. If they have to do business in the town or their children have to catch the school bus they take an hour off the time and act accordingly. There have been numbers of protests from many country organisations, and some of these have reached me. Now that we hear that the experts of the State say that there would only be a negligible saving so far as essential materials, such as coal, are concerned it seems to me that the objections to daylight saving carry a great deal more weight than they did.

So long as we were under the impression that the system was going to effect a saving in coal and in other directions, with consequent help to the war effort, there seemed to be some justification for arguing with people who objected to daylight saving. Now that that impression is removed there is no reason why we should not express the opinion that is contained in the resolution. I think the Premier said there were not many complaints in the earlier days of daylight saving. We had daylight saving some

nine months ago. I think he gave the right reason why complaints were not voiced, namely, that people were prepared to do things which they did not like doing because they thought they were making some contribution to the war effort, or because they thought the things they did not like meant a saving with regard to something which was closely connected with the war effort.

Since the impression got abroad that neither of these things applied objections are coming in fairly thick and fast. There is no apparent reason why we in Western Australia should stick to daylight saving, and no longer does there seem to be any reason to subscribe to a system which has done no good and is only making the position inconvenient for many people. Residents in the metropolitan area allege that they cannot induce their youngsters to go to bed at the normal time, and they claim that because of that fact young people are not getting sufficient sleep. Some people say children should do as they are told.

The Minister for Mines: That was in their grandmothers' time.

Mr. WATTS: I am afraid the time has arrived when it is difficult to put commands of that description into operation. The younger generation of these days is inclined not so much to do as it is told as to do what it would like to be told. I suppose parents are faced with a difficulty and I am sympathetic towards them, particularly as a continuation of this practice has given us nothing. As to people in country districts and on farms, the member for Beverley can enlighten the House as to what it is like to be driving a harvester until 8.45 p.m. His experience would be similar to that of hundreds of others in the country. There is nothing to be gained and apparently something to be lost by daylight saving in a good many instances, so I am prepared to support the resolution.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): The motion has my support. I do not regret that the occasion has arisen for this House to express an opinion upon this question. The Government has rather assumed the infallibility of the Commonwealth Government's proposals, and I think must accept the reproach of having acted somewhat precipitately in committing this State without making the necessary inquiries.

The Premier: We only said we had no objection.

Mr. McDONALD: That has for the most part committed the State prior to those inquiries having been made beforehand which were made afterwards. The Premier has, as gracefully as possible, acknowledged that he has seen the error of his ways, and has afforded the House an opportunity to express its views. Why I think this discussion is salutary is because it may help to remind the people of this State and this Parliament and also the Commonwealth Government of the necessity for inquiries being made in outlying States before bringing in Australia-wide conditions. Just as that is applicable in the case of daylight saving so is it applicable in regard to many other questions. We find that National Security Regulations can be made at Canberra with very little regard to the conditions in this State, and even made to apply to this State with the force of law before the people here have, perhaps for days or weeks, had an opportunity to see them. It may be that certain of these regulations had imposed penalties upon the people of this State who may have been committing an offence without any knowledge that they were so doing, or that any such obligation was imposed upon them.

Mr. Marshall: I know of regulations of which the administration has not even copies but they have been in force for three or four weeks.

Mr. McDONALD: That, too, has happened. It is of benefit to this State to remind the Commonwealth Government that the outlying parts of Australia, far removed from Canberra, have conditions which should be taken into especial account. This State enjoys a different climate from Victoria and New South Wales, and we have no secondary industries compared with either of those two States. Conditions which may be justifiable elsewhere in Australia are simply annoying and useless when applied to Western Australia. I am glad an opportunity has arisen for a discussion on this matter. There has been no proof whatever that any justification exists for interfering with the daylight hours in this State. The resolution has afforded this House an opportunity to remind the Commonwealth Government and Commonwealth Parliament that when they pass measures which affect everyone in this State they might well inquire as to the special conditions appertaining to it, and how

far they can justify an Australia-wide application when the reasons for the application do not exist in many parts of the continent.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington): It appears to me that the House will unanimously reject the idea of the re-imposition this summer of the daylight saving provisions. I am sure there is no necessity for them. The Premier has practically told us why there is no necessity for this State to have daylight saving applied to it. He indicated that the saving of coal would be practically negligible, and that is sufficient reason in itself for us to vote for the resolution. I was in Collie a few days ago and asked a few men what they thought of daylight saving. They were not in favour of it. They expressed the view that daylight saving did nothing to increase the coal output, and that on the contrary the reverse was the case. I am not capable of expressing an opinion myself, but probably the member for Collie could indicate to us that daylight saving has not increased the output of coal from Collie.

The Minister for Mines: It was not brought in to increase the output but to decrease the consumption of coal.

Mr. McLARTY: The view expressed by my informants at Collie was that daylight saving would have an adverse effect on the output of coal. I would also speak for the dairying industry. If members had the opportunity to meet any of the dairy farmers they would soon realise that there was strong opposition to daylight saving from that section of the community. In fact, daylight saving has had the effect of decreasing production in a commodity concerning which strong efforts were made to increase it. When these provisions applied dairymen had to milk their cows in the middle of the afternoon when the heat was at its greatest, and as a result they were not able in many instances to increase production that was said to be so necessary. I think the member for West Perth was right when he said we should also take into account whether it is in the best interests of the health of the people to have daylight saving in a country such as ours. I do not think it is good for the people as it will force them to rise an hour earlier, and parents will have to get their children away to school an hour earlier, this being especially difficult when the child-

ren have to catch buses as they do in the country. I am certain that daylight saving is not in the best interests either of the parents or the children. I know that selfish interests creep into this matter and that people who engage in golf, tennis, and other outdoor sports would favour the proposal. Generally speaking, I am convinced that the majority of the people of this State are opposed to daylight saving, and I think their opposition is fully justified. What I heard from the Premier convinces me that no advantage can accrue to Western Australia by the re-imposition of the proposal.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I move—
That the question be now put.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan): I am pleased that another place has taken the lead in this matter, and I am sure that the viewpoint expressed in the resolution is in the best interests of the majority of the people. Without any inconvenience we might, as a House, practise daylight saving. Unfortunately we meet when the day is nearly over, and we are making it a practice to work into the night. Perhaps consideration along these lines might be given. We are turning day into night and I am not sure that that is a good thing. There are many reasons why daylight saving should not be brought into effect. One of these concerns the children in the outer suburban areas who are going to school. They go out in the dark and come home in the dark. We have heard from the member for Mt. Magnet that the goldfields people do not want daylight saving. The primary producers do not want it and I do not believe workers in secondary industries want it. They are all opposed to the proposition, and the goldfields members wisely and properly supported the resolution that came from another place. With other speakers, I am inclined to think that daylight saving is done for, so far as Western Australia is concerned, and there will be a sigh of relief when this House votes in favour of the Council's resolution.

Mr. J. HEGNEY: I move—
That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

Question put and passed, and a message accordingly returned to the Council.

BILL—ELECTORAL (WAR TIME).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 2nd September.

MR. CROSS (Canning) [6.2]: It is essential that we carry this Bill, which is designed to give votes to soldiers and men in the Civil Construction Corps, who are not present in their home electorates. From the correspondence I have had from men—even in the operational areas—I am certain that they want the right to vote. Some of them point out that in the early stages, before joining the A.I.F. they were conscripted. Some had to leave businesses and some were apprentices, and in the service of the nation had to discontinue their apprenticeship. They say they are vitally interested in the formation and construction of the Government which is to put into operation post-war reconstruction. In tonight's "Daily News" there are reports of complaints from men of the Ninth Division who were not able to vote at the recent election.

Mr. Thorn: Will you read some of the letters you have received?

Mr. CROSS: I could do so, but I would not like to waste the time of the House.

Mr. Thorn: It would not be a waste of time.

Mr. CROSS: There are not many changes in the Bill, as compared with the contents of the Federal measure and the variations—I think there are about three—are an improvement. The measure is the result of experience gained during the Federal election. The Bill provides a vote for members of the Forces of 18 years and over. Some people do not agree with that, but these men were conscripted from civil life and are interested in the conditions that will operate after the war. They have the right to say who shall represent them in that period of post-war reconstruction. One point in which the two measures differ is the form in which the vote is actually cast. Under the Federal Act, such a thing as a secret vote was almost impossible. This Bill provides that when a ballot paper has been marked by the individual concerned he will put it into an envelope and, when the envelopes are opened, the authorities will not be able to tell how a man voted. The other difference is that the operation of the measure is confined to the South-West Pacific area. I have had a look through the amendments, of which there are quite a number on the

notice paper. We heard some comments from the Leader of the Opposition as to the need for a simpler method. My opinion is that quite a lot of the amendments contain a terrific lot of verbiage, especially the schedules. After all, the schedules should be simple. When men apply to the returning officer to make declarations, the returning officer or his deputy will say, "Sign on the dotted line," and the men will never read all the rubbish it is proposed to set out for them in the schedules. Decidedly the schedules need to be simplified. I propose to support the Bill, reserving the right to oppose some or all of the amendments proposed, as I think desirable.

MR. NORTH (Claremont): If it can be shown that there is no alternative that is satisfactory, I am prepared to support the measure without qualification. This Bill affords us an opportunity to make certain other reforms in our electoral arrangements because of war conditions. In the first place, we should ask ourselves whether it is wise to allow to take place a terrific amount of expenditure on an election, such as took place recently. Under the provisions of the electoral law, no candidate may spend more than £100 on his election campaign. A provision should be inserted in this Bill to prevent the throwing away of money upon elections in wartime. I trust that you, Mr. Speaker, do not see any objection to my proceeding along these lines. I do not wish to transgress the rules of debate. We have now reached the situation, in the matter of elections, when the existing law in regard to the spending of £100, has become a farce. In the first place a tremendous amount of money is thrown away in advertisements, over the radio, and in all sorts of other ways that I need not enumerate. If we are to put up a large war effort nothing is more simple than to prevent this loss of money which could be well spent in other directions—even along the same avenues. Just think of those expensive boardings that we have all seen in the past! With the same money much could be done in the way of painting houses in the cities, towns and hamlets of Western Australia. Anyone who goes around the city of Perth and sees the condition of the houses, from the point of view of the painting of the roofs, woodwork and fences, knows that a tremendous amount of money is being wasted.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I have just had a look at the Bill and it contains nothing relating to the expenses of elections and that sort of thing.

Mr. NORTH: Am I in order in saying something about the question of booths?

Mr. SPEAKER: For the soldiers?

Mr. NORTH: Yes. I think it is a terrible waste of money and time to have Australian citizens standing from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. handing cards to soldiers. That position could be well overcome if the soldiers were allowed to go into a booth and there see the way they are to vote, the photo and name of each candidate, with his Party written alongside, or the word "Independent" if he is standing as such. The war effort would then be saved a great amount of foot-energy.

The Minister for Labour: Cut out the photo idea!

Mr. NORTH: In a large State like Western Australia the handing out of these duplicate cards is ridiculous when the voter goes inside the booth and is permitted to see the names of the candidates and is told in small print to vote in order 1, 2 and 3 when, for the sake of very little more effort the names of the candidates, together with that of their parties, and instructions how to vote, could readily be placed in front of the soldier. I ask the Government to consider that plan while the measure is before the House.

Another matter to be considered—because some big camps are right in the heart of the city and soldiers will be voting in the metropolitan area—is the question of enabling all Government facilities to be made available to voters, including soldiers. The Commonwealth Government could provide free postage when dealing with electoral matters. The Government here could now make the railways, the tramways and the trolley buses free on election day for the purpose of preventing candidates from using their private cars to influence votes. Let us make all the public conveyances available.

Mr. Thorn: We could have the polling booths on the railway stations.

Mr. NORTH: Yes, and it would save an enormous amount of money, and would do away with the terrible idea of members of Parliament influencing votes by the wilful use of their motorcars.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member means soldiers, I presume.

Mr. NORTH: Yes, the soldiers too. We could save a lot of money in that direction.

Mr. J. Hegney: It is not a saving campaign.

Mr. NORTH: It may be for the war. The Bill can be divided into three sections, namely, the vote outside Australia; the vote within Australia, and discharged members. I am fully in agreement with the portion dealing with discharged members, but it is questionable whether there might not be a happy alternative to the question of over-sea voting, namely, to enable the soldiers concerned to have their vote at their convenience when they are repatriated to Australia after the war. In other words, have a postponed election so far as these over-sea soldiers who cannot now conveniently participate, are concerned. Everyone knows that in the recent Federal elections the soldiers' vote did not really count. They voted according to the trend, as did the rest of Australia. The advantage of my scheme is that if, when the soldiers return, a seat was in jeopardy then any 100 returned soldiers would have the right, if they considered their vote would influence the sitting member being turned out, to approach the returning officer by means of an affidavit or other form asking for an election to be held in the particular electorate.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. NORTH: I was dealing with the question of votes over-sea. I am glad that the Bill provides for voluntary voting by the soldiers. This might result in whole units deciding not to vote at all. I consider that the Bill has been drafted carefully, but we might add to it a provision setting out that where there is no voting by a large unit of troops—that is where they exercise the right not to vote—they might be given a postponed vote. By this I mean that when they return after the war, they might find that they belong to an electorate in which, at the last general election, the member was returned by only a small margin, and if the margin was as small as say 100 votes in a particular electorate, the soldiers could ask to cast their votes. The Chief Electoral Officer would then arrange an election in which those men would take part, and the result of the voting might be to upset the sit-

ting member. In this way we would preserve the votes of those soldiers without their being penalised, as they will be if they are engaged in fighting and not able to vote.

Another advantage of this provision would be that it could apply to the soldiers whom we are not attempting to reach by this Bill. All the soldiers outside the New Guinea sphere of operations will be disfranchised. Under the provision I suggest, all soldiers in Europe could, on their return, have a vote by the simple arrangement of making an affidavit. As I said, this would apply in electorates where the contests had been close, the majority being perhaps not more than 100 votes. We would probably find that only two or three seats would be involved, and an arrangement of this sort would not only save an enormous amount of money, but would also enable the soldiers to exercise their right.

I do not want to delay the House. My Leader has been urging me not to waste time, but I will not have it that I have been doing so. In conclusion I wish to refer to the question of trying to bring before the soldiers an outline of the policies of the various candidates. Nobody wants anything unfair to be done in the forthcoming election campaign. We do not want to see Labour, National, Country Party or Communist candidates going round trying to influence the soldiers, but I think that every party, including Independents, might have its policy brought before the soldiers in camp in a fair way. The general policy could be stated, and perhaps a synopsis as published in "The West Australian" could be brought under the notice of the soldiers, together with the name of the candidate and the party he represents. This would be fair to everybody and could not do any harm. I support the second reading.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie): I support the second reading of the Bill, the objective of which will have the approval of every member. This objective is to evolve some fair and equitable means by which the soldiers will be able to record their votes. To my way of thinking some very frivolous objections have been raised against the Bill. One member stated that a commanding officer might, on the eve of a big push by his unit, be called upon to take a vote of those members of his battalion who were entitled to record votes. In those circum-

stances I am satisfied that every commanding officer would disregard the measure and do the sensible thing—go on with the more serious business in hand. If that happened, I am sure that the offensive or the proposed action would not be disorganised, but that the commanding officer would use his judgment and say, "There is more important business on hand and the matter of voting will have to stand over." In addition, the men under his command would realise the greater importance of the business before them and would not hold any grudge against us because they were deprived of their votes.

I saw a complaint alleged to have been made by two soldiers of the Ninth Division that they had not been able to record a vote at the recent Federal election. That is quite likely. Our soldiers are spread from one end of Australia to the other and from one end of the world to the other, and some of those in the more remote places—probably more than two—were not able to record a vote. Probably 2,000 were not able to record a vote. We should endeavour to the best of our ability and the best of the resources at our disposal to ensure that everything within reason is done to enable these men to record their votes.

The member for Nedlands made a novel suggestion, namely, that if a man had been absent without leave on a number of occasions and had been able to obtain his discharge we should consider the question of whether he was entitled to a vote, seeing that he had been discharged for unworthy reasons.

Mr. McDonald: That would apply only to men under 21 years of age.

Mr. STYANTS: If it were applied in civil life, probably quite a lot of people would be disfranchised. Of course it does not apply in civil life and should not apply to the soldiers. I do not know whether there is any burning desire on the part of the soldiers to record a vote. This time last year I was many hundreds of miles away in the northern part of the State. We were isolated and were far distant from all the amenities of life. I believe that if the average person was not actually desirous of exercising the franchise before joining up, he would not be likely to exhibit much anxiety to exercise it afterwards. Quite a lot of them would be utterly indifferent as to whether they voted or not. However,

those whom we wish to vote should be given the opportunity to record their votes. I agree with the previous speaker that a synopsis of the policy of each party should be made available to soldiers, and that the party to which each candidate belongs should be shown clearly.

Now as regards an expression used by the member for Nedlands, a slighting reference to a man who holds the rank of captain! So that members may not be under a wrong impression as to the duties of this man, I shall give some information concerning them, for although no name was mentioned I think it was clear to a majority of the House that the man referred to was the officer in charge of the Amenities and Amusements Section in Western Australia. Without having any especial interest in that officer, I will say that he is doing a particularly good job. He was not raised to the rank of captain because he was a smoke-social entertainer. In any case, that is not probable; the ranks usually given for the purpose of going round in connection with entertainments are corporal and sergeant. This particular man's organisation provides entertainments for the troops from one end of Western Australia to the other. If he had in private life such a party of entertainers as he now has under his charge, he would be receiving a salary considerably higher than he receives as a captain in the Army.

Mr. McDonald: I consider he has a very responsible office.

Mr. STYANTS: Certainly. He renders excellent service in the outback portions of the State. There are men in those portions who suffer all the disabilities of a front line soldier except that they do not do fighting. They are isolated, many miles from their people; they sleep on the ground in the bush; they eat indifferent food. It is this man's job to organise musical and dramatic parties to go round and relieve the boredom of soldiers so situated. I know that his work is appreciated by the Commanding Officer in the State. One of the gravest things to deal with in the case of these soldiers is the boredom and monotony of the camp, due to the fact of the men being inactive. There is nothing to do except train, mostly in theory. If there was nothing in the nature of the organisation presided over by this officer to relieve monotony, the men would probably go frantic. This man is giving

excellent service, and is doing a particularly good job for the soldiers. Just in case any member here gained a wrong impression from remarks passed by the member for Nedlands, I offer this explanation. In conclusion, I shall support the Bill with a view to amendment in Committee. During that stage there should be an opportunity to decide upon a method by which every soldier shall be given an opportunity to record his vote, without any favour being shown to any particular candidate or party.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington): We all agree with the Minister for Justice, who introduced this Bill, that it is of great importance. I wish the Premier had adopted the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition to submit the Bill to a Select Committee. Even now it is not too late to appoint two members from the Government side and two members from the Opposition side to meet and discuss the measure. Such a committee, I feel sure, would be able to agree upon amendments that would improve the Bill and would hasten its passage through Parliament. Rumour has it that the elections are to be held before Christmas. If that is correct, this legislation must be passed as quickly as possible. Again, however, I would say that the importance of the measure certainly does, in my opinion, warrant a conference between all parties in this House, when it could be put into much more satisfactory shape.

Mr. North: That procedure might save time.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes. Even at this stage I suggest that that might be done. I am not keen on the provision to give votes to boys and girls. There has not been any demand for such votes. I have never heard any of these young people suggest that they should be given votes. I go so far as to say that they are not interested in the matter. I guarantee that if we could bring twenty of them together and ask them what they thought of the proposal to give them a vote, they would reply that they were not interested and had never heard of any such proposal. The vote is to be given to boys and girls of 18 years of age and over, some of whom are working in Perth while others are scattered throughout the State. They have not the slightest prospect of leaving the State. Hundreds of them are still living in their homes. Some are driving motorcars,

some are typists, and some are just doing work similar to that which they carried on in their civil lives.

To me it appears totally inconsistent to give a vote to a boy or girl working in the Air Force or in the Army although he or she may be only just 18 years of age, while hundreds of boys and girls working in the munition factories, and probably coming from the same homes as the others, are denied the vote. To be consistent, the vote must be extended to them. In urging this I am merely pointing out the inconsistency of the Bill. In some house a boy or girl just 18 years old would be going to the poll, while a brother or sister of 20 years would remain disfranchised. The elder brother or sister would not be too pleased about that, and the Minister would have difficulty in justifying his proposal in that respect. However, I have been looking up information with regard to the franchise in various countries of the world. I only came across two countries which make provision for voting at 18 years of age. One is Russia and the other Turkey, although in Turkey a person must be 30 years of age before he can enter Parliament.

Mr. Cross: Those are both very progressive countries.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes. In Norway a voter has to be 23; in Finland, 24; and in Sweden, Denmark and Holland, 25. I do not think the member for Canning, with all his knowledge, will deny that those countries are extremely well governed. In fact, Denmark is held up to us as a model.

Member: There are quislings in some of those countries.

Mr. McLARTY: There are plenty of quislings in every country. The proposal to give young people 18 years of age a vote is something new. I can see no justification for it, especially—as I have pointed out—since there will be thousands of other young people who are doing just as valuable work, work just as important and just as necessary in every way, and who are taking even greater risks than are the young people to whom it is proposed to give the vote.

Mr. J. Hegney: You are opposing the giving of a vote to any person under 21 years of age.

Mr. Watts: The member for Middle Swan does not want to listen, but to interject.

Mr. Thorn: He wants to make a speech for the member for Murray-Wellington.

Mr. McLARTY: A young person engaged in munitions work is following a much more dangerous occupation than are hundreds of the young people to whom it is proposed to give the vote. There may be some justification for giving boys of 18 who have served overseas a vote on this occasion. I do not think there will be any objection to that.

Mr. Needham: Is that boy any more interested in politics than the others?

Mr. McLARTY: I do not think so. I agree with the member for Kalgoorlie that, generally speaking, a soldier in a battle area is not interested in politics. Speaking from my experience of the 1914-18 war, during which period we voted on two or three occasions, I know there was a complete lack of interest. I spent a very short time in camp during this present war and again it was quite plain to me that the man in camp had very little thought for anything else but his camp life. When he got away from that, he did not want to be bothered with politics or the very serious side of life; he wanted a complete spell. I agree with the idea that the name of the party, as well as the names of the candidates, should be stated, because the men are away and will not know many of the candidates by name. However, they will still have their party allegiance and will adhere closely to party principles. The provision is a good one. In fairness to the soldiers, I do not think voting should be made compulsory. The proposal that primary votes should be counted by the returning officers where the votes are taken is, in my opinion, necessary, as it would guard against fraud.

Member: That is not in the Bill.

Mr. McLARTY: No, but it should be. I have seen ballot boxes coming from a distance not very far and they have been knocked about. Some of these boxes will have to come from great distances and will receive rough handling. If provision is made for a count of primary votes, I think it would help to ensure that the ballot would be clean. As I have said, there must be no opportunity for fraud, although I am not imputing fraud to any party. We know, however, what has happened at elections and we should guard against it. That is all I have to say on this measure. I hope the suggestions I have made will be agreed to.

MR. THORN (Toodyay): I desire to say a word or two on this measure that has been brought down by the Government to give our soldiers a vote, to which they are entitled. But I agree with the remarks of the member for Murray-Wellington regarding juvenile voting. I approve of the young soldier who has served in a theatre of war having a vote; but, according to the Army Minister's own statement, these young soldiers will not be allowed to go into the theatres of war in future. He says they are too young and should be kept away. Therefore, I maintain that they are too young to cast a vote. I would like to refer to such places as the Army ordnance, where young males are being replaced in large numbers by girls of 18 to 20 years of age. Those girls are not interested at all in politics and have no desire to vote.

Unless it is the Government's policy in future to lower the age for franchise, why give a vote to these young people now? Again, this provision is made for members of the Army and the Air Force; yet a sailor is accepted into the Navy at 17 years of age. He goes to sea and enters a theatre of war, but no provision is made to give him a vote. I sincerely hope that the Government will reconsider this provision and make it plainer, so that only the soldier of 18 years of age who has served in a theatre of war will be given the vote. The taking of the poll bristles with difficulties. After all, the latest Commonwealth election was Australia-wide and every soldier, sailor and airman was voting in respect of his own State. In this State we shall have to trace the Western Australians in all parts of Australia and elsewhere.

Mr. North: Like looking for a needle in a haystack!

Mr. THORN: Yes. Great confusion would ensue in taking the vote. In many instances the commanding officer and others in authority will not be at all interested in taking the vote, because there will be so few Western Australians attached to their unit that they will not consider it worth while. Undoubtedly this is a Committee Bill and it is in Committee that we shall have to deal with the difficulties that arise. Consequently that is all I have to say at the present time. I will support the second reading, hoping that amendments will be made in Committee.

MR. PERKINS (York): I am another member who intends to support the second reading of the Bill. I quite agree it is necessary that provision should be made for those electors who are away at present serving with the Forces to record their votes. I am one of the members of this House who has recently contested an election, and in connection with that election I realise that men of that particular electoral district who were away with the Forces were unable to record their votes. From letters I have received from some of them—probably those who were particularly interested in politics—it is evident that they regretted their inability to exercise the franchise. The decision to be made during the forthcoming election will be a momentous one because the Parliament to be elected on that occasion will have to deal with some of the most urgent problems Western Australia has ever faced. We hear a great deal of idle talk about reconstruction but most of it up to the present has been very much in the air.

The Parliament elected at the forthcoming general election, however, will have the duty of bringing that reconstruction down to something concrete and therefore in its election each of our electors entitled to vote should have a voice, if possible. We all know there are physical difficulties which will prevent some of the men from voting. Unfortunately it is impossible to avoid that, but it is the duty of this House and this Parliament to provide, if possible, for the men who do desire to vote an opportunity to record their votes. There is plenty of room for doubt on the part of members of this House as to whether the Bill as it stands will achieve that end. Most of us can accept the general principles outlined, but when we get down to the machinery clauses to give these men the vote there is room for a division of opinion.

The notice paper contains quite a number of amendments and I have hopes that the Government will see fit to accept the majority of them in order that the Bill may be put into a better condition to carry out the wishes of the majority of members of this House. Rather than lose the Bill altogether the Government should accept those amendments in order to achieve the general purpose members are striving to achieve.

Mr. Needham: Is that a threat?

Mr. PERKINS: No. I am putting up a reasonable proposition. It is unthinkable

for any Government to go to the country without making provision for absent electors to have some voice or a proper voice in the election of the incoming Parliament. Many speakers have referred to different clauses which may be regarded as dangerous. I share the view of those members who have referred to the reduction of the age to embrace persons in His Majesty's Forces at the age of 18 years. I do not see any reason why the Government should be unwilling to compromise on such a clause as that because I take it that, whichever side members are on, the aim of us all is to secure the good government of our State. There is, of course, room for a division of opinion as to how that end may be achieved. I believe the reasonable view to take is that those men who have not been in the fighting line should be prepared to wait until they are 21 years of age—as is the case at present—before exercising the franchise.

There is room for criticism of some of the aspects of compulsory voting. We find many people going to the polling booth with very uncertain ideas of the questions upon which they are called to adjudicate. We know that many electors vote most reluctantly. Some of them have made their reluctance plain by defacing the ballot papers. That is an indication of what happens when people are forced to go to the poll even when they are over 21 years of age. If the age is reduced to 18 it appears to me there is a grave danger of increasing irresponsibility on the part of electors to the very important questions they have to decide on polling day.

The Minister for Justice: Voting under this Bill is not compulsory.

Mr. PERKINS: I know. But when the majority of a unit is domiciled in a certain place and most of the men have the right to vote, they will want to go along together and exercise that vote even though they know very little indeed about the questions at issue. Consequently I disagree with that provision in the Bill and intend to attempt to amend it when the measure is in Committee.

Mr. Cross: In other words you are afraid of the vote of the young people.

Mr. PERKINS: That does not follow at all. At this stage I intend to indicate my support of the second reading but hope to achieve some amendments in Committee.

MR. DONEY (Williams-Narrogin): I am far from being satisfied with the pro-

visions of the Bill but, like all members who have spoken thus far, I shall support the second reading. I imagine that other members think with me that this is a measure we have been waiting for. It is a measure which, had it been in view at the time the House was discussing the last Postponement of Elections Bill, would so far as I am concerned have prompted me to vote against that measure instead of for it. All members who have thus far spoken have dealt with the machinery of the Bill. I desire to deal with certain factors which, in my opinion, prompted the Minister to bring down the Bill. May I say at this juncture that nothing is more necessary than this Bill, suitably amended of course; or more desirable than that it should permit the franchise and benefits that it deals with to apply fully and fairly. No franchise could ever be equitable and complete unless that big and vital section of our people—our fighting men in the field wherever they may be—are in a position to vote. You, Mr. Speaker, will agree with me that to assist in the election of a national Parliament is a right under our legislation of all right-minded and law-abiding people. Consequently to deny to any considerable and accessible number of soldiers the right of access to the polls is surely a reprehensible proceeding. Yet such a denial is to be found in this Bill, much to my regret.

Those Western Australian members of the Fighting Forces in the Middle East, in England, in Canada and elsewhere are not to vote. That is a great pity. It will be remembered that the soldiers in France and on all European fronts in the last war were permitted to exercise the right to vote. They did not always do so, but nevertheless the right was there. The recent Commonwealth Act, under whose provisions the members of the Army, Navy and Air Force voted in the recent elections, found distance no bar. The last soldiers' electoral Bill submitted by this House—a Bill which incidentally and quite properly we turned down—embraced all parts of the world. Again distance was absolutely no bar. But this measure does not go beyond New Guinea and the islands in the immediate neighbourhood of New Guinea. That is a most regrettable defect. The Minister, in bringing down the Bill, said quite innocently that if we allowed this measure to apply as did the Commonwealth Act we could not have our elections until after

Christmas. Apparently he does not object to the elections being held just before Christmas, but to hold them just after Christmas simply just cannot be done! As I have said, there is no reason at all why the election should not take place after Christmas. I do not know whether the Minister can explain his attitude.

The Minister for Labour: Which Christmas?

Mr. DONEY: There it is. I do not complain that the Minister was not specific in that regard. We can take it for granted that he referred to the 25th December next. Actually he did say why, but his reason was entirely irrational and I honestly found difficulty in taking it seriously. I do not mind admitting here that as a general rule I am not justified in questioning the judgment of the Minister in regard to his Bills, but I certainly am forced to do so in respect of the one now before us. At the commencement of his second reading speech the Minister made it plain that the prime desideratum of the Bill was that all our fighting men should vote. He said that all members of the Navy, Army and Air Force were entitled to vote and led us to believe that the Bill contained provisions for all men of the Forces, no matter where they were, to vote. But he then explained with expressions of regret which I am sure were sincere, that this obvious duty in respect of a large section of the Forces must inevitably be set aside because—and surely this is most amazing reasoning, and I use the Minister's own words—"the motion of the member for Irwin-Moore on the notice paper makes it very necessary that we should get on with the election as soon as possible." Makes it very necessary! Why, I do not know.

It appears that because of a mere suggestion from a private member the Government, without waiting for an opinion of the House and with the most suspicious haste, sets aside its own arrangements for holding an election in March and, according to the Minister, must have the election before Christmas. While this is flattery indeed to the member for Irwin-Moore I submit that there is nothing very flattering in it to the Government, and certainly not to the Minister, although I readily acquit him of any undue share of responsibility for the Bill, because we know full well that it is a Government measure. I remind members, too, that the Premier treated the author of

the motion to some pretty scathing and wholly uncomplimentary remarks.

The Minister for Mines: But not to the same extent as did your leader.

Mr. DONEY: I did not draw attention to that, so the balance is now equal.

The Minister for Mines: Not quite. You have the better of it.

Mr. DONEY: Very good. If it suits the Minister I am glad to say that with the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition took strong exception indeed to the change of front of the member for Irwin-Moore, as evidenced by his bringing forward the motion he did at that particular juncture.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! We had better get back to the Bill.

Mr. DONEY: Yes, I am with you, Mr. Speaker, in that regard. The blame is on an ex-Speaker of the House.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member must not reflect on a member.

The Minister for Mines: Especially an ex-Speaker!

Mr. DONEY: I must say that despite the unfriendly attitude of the Premier, the Minister for Justice insisted that the motion was an instruction that must on no account be disregarded—

The Minister for Justice: There was another very pointed indication when you allowed the Address-in-reply to drop so soon.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. DONEY: I agree with you, Mr. Speaker, that that does not appear in the Bill. I ask this question of the House: Whenever before in this House did a mere motion—and this is not even a resolution—receive such slavish attention from a Labour Government? Probably never before. I cannot recall an instance, at any rate. I say now—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in alluding to the motion. Standing Order No. 126 states—

No member shall allude to any debate of the same session, upon a question or Bill not being then under discussion, except by the indulgence of the House for personal explanations.

I must ask the member for Williams-Narrogin to confine his remarks to the Bill.

Mr. DONEY: I am afraid the Minister for Justice led me astray by making copious references to the same matter. I certainly wanted to refer at length to the subject that you, Mr. Speaker, say is out of order. Without doing so, I cannot make

the charge against the Minister that I was anxious to make. I would not have embarked upon it had it not been for the fact that the Minister was allowed ample scope to refer to this matter. The Minister had at his disposal quite a number of expedients for setting aside that particular motion, but he did not avail himself of any of them. It is not for me to say what expedients he should have adopted; that is a matter for his own decision. I do no more at this juncture than point out that he was faced with the very simple problem of deciding which was the more desirable intention for a Minister of the Crown to implement—the spirit of our electoral laws, that is the spirit and word of the Government Bill of 1941 and other similar measures, and thus keep faith with the Fighting Services, or to shoulder the responsibility of denying the franchise to many members whose rights are not to be recognised merely because a private member, exercising his undoubted rights in this House, expressed certain hopes that are not supported by the slightest vestige of legal compulsion.

I call the attention of the House to the view expressed by the Leader of the Opposition that the forms of declaration should be embodied in the measure and thus be available for criticism and amendment. The Minister has intimated that in due course the schedules embodying those declarations will be laid on the Table of the House. That is not a fair procedure at all. The Minister should not wait for that. He and his legal advisers must surely already have the structure and aim of these forms well in mind.

The Minister for Justice: There will be no objection to them.

Mr. DONEY: It is all very well for the Minister to give that assurance. Mere assurances are insufficient. Frequently when regulations have been tabled in the past, we have found that they were something quite suited to the Commonwealth outlook but not suited to ours, and the opportunity for attempting to get them disallowed has passed us by. In this case I agree that there would be the usual opportunity of moving to disallow, and conceivably we might succeed; but the point is that the substitute regulations might not reach us in time for the House to deal with them again. Had the subjects embodied in the Bill been first referred to a Select Committee drawn

equally from both sides of the House, the matter of the declaration forms and other debatable points could have been settled on a basis more or less acceptable to both sides of the House, and a great deal of time would have been saved in consequence.

The Minister for Mines: We have had a lot of Select Committees, and a great deal of debate has occurred on the reports of those committees.

Mr. DONEY: I propose to support the second reading of the Bill because it is a vast improvement, as all members will agree, on the very queer and questionable measure which the House in 1941 found reason to reject, and because I think the Bill is capable of being moulded in the Committee stage into a reasonable piece of legislation.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (in reply): I have listened to the comments of the various speakers with very great interest, and am pleased to know that everyone has supported the second reading. Everyone has seen some virtue in the Bill. Members have, to a great extent, agreed that all soldiers should be given an opportunity to cast a vote. I shall deal later with the specific points raised by various members, but on general principles I should like to make the position as clear as possible. In framing the Bill, we copied Commonwealth legislation as closely as we could.

Mr. Doney: You cannot say that.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I appreciate that it is always necessary to have a precedent because, if one brings forward anything new, there is no hope of getting it through this House.

Mr. Thorn: That is not the way of progress.

Mr. Doney: That does not set out the position accurately.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The Commonwealth legislation was carefully prepared and, after being passed, was put into operation. We have to realise that we need the assistance of the Commonwealth and that it will be necessary to use Commonwealth machinery. Therefore we have not departed from the Commonwealth Act to any great extent. We intend to give all members of the Forces a vote, though we are restricting the area to the South-West Pacific zone, for which I gave full reasons when moving the second reading. The counting will be carried out by the Chief Electoral Officer and not by the various re-

turning officers in the forward areas. For this provision there is a good reason. In a few minutes I shall read letters that have passed between the Premier and the Prime Minister, which give clearly the reasons why we altered the original Bill, which did provide that the scrutiny should be done where the votes were taken in the various areas. We propose to give all members of the Forces a vote because we consider that the principle is a good one. We say that if they are old enough to fight for their country, they are old enough to vote.

Mr. Doney: A lot in the State are not called upon to fight. That is the point.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: They are all members of the Forces, and they are obliged to go anywhere they are sent.

Mr. Doney: They are not.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Of these young men, some have been called up and some have volunteered for service, and are cheerfully prepared to defend Western Australia and also defend liberty and justice.

Mr. Doney: Why talk about defending Western Australia when—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: These young men are also running the risk of meeting death or severe injury. They are on a par with those older than themselves if they are in the Fighting Forces or if they are liable to be sent anywhere at any time.

Mr. Thorn: But the Prime Minister said he would not send them there.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We have numbers of young soldiers stationed on the coast of Western Australia. They have run great risks.

Mr. Doney: There is no risk about that at all.

Mr. Cross: How do you know?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We say that these young men have no option but to go where they are sent, and that therefore they ought to have a voice in the government of this State. When we have peace again—which we hope will not be long delayed—there is going to be a huge reconstruction scheme of tremendous importance to the young people, and in fact to all who today are concerned in fighting for this country. This is matter of the greatest interest not

only for themselves, but to their families. In the original Commonwealth Bill provision was made to enfranchise persons under 21 years of age. That provision, however, was amended by the Act; and in consequence, by the desire of the people, all soldiers were not given a vote. In New Zealand provision has been made to give all soldiers a vote, irrespective of age.

Mr. Thorn: Provided they are on the roll.

The Premier: Surely members opposite do not think all the soldiers are criminals and desirous of breaking the law!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Further, we have departed from—

The Premier: I listened with interest—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I must ask the Premier to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: We have departed from the Commonwealth Act only where that could not be avoided. There is only one particular in which we departed from the Act deliberately; from the Act, be it noted, but not from the original Bill. That is with regard to the age limit. The restricted area was introduced owing to necessity, because we realised that it was impossible to hold the election within so short a period and give all the soldiers fighting for the Allied cause a vote. The member for Irwin-Moore has on the notice paper—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That has nothing to do with the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The member for Irwin-Moore has indicated to this House that he wants a Parliamentary election. A similar wish was indicated by Opposition members when they cut short their Address-in-reply debate. The Opposition seemed anxious to have an election as soon as possible.

Mr. Doney: And so we are!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That was one of the reasons, I understand, why the Address-in-reply debate had been so short. Or was the reason, possibly, that members of the Opposition were over-pleased with the manner in which this Government carried out its duties during the past four years?

The Premier: Hear, hear!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: As regards counting of votes, our original Bill provided to have them counted at various distances in the areas in which soldiers

voted; but we were told that, while every assistance would be given, the better course would be to do the scrutinising in Perth; that the whole of the lockers after the votes were taken should be sent to the Chief Electoral Officer here to be dealt with. We should look at that matter fairly and squarely. I am now about to read some correspondence between our Premier and the Prime Minister. The first letter is as follows:—

Commonwealth of Australia.

Prime Minister,
Canberra, A.C.T.,
16th July, 1943.

Dear Sir,

With reference to your letter of 6th July, 1943, concerning members of the Forces voting at State elections, I desire to inform you that the Chief Electoral Officer for the Commonwealth will advise the Chief Electoral Officer for Western Australia as to the areas in which votes for Western Australian Divisions are recorded by members of the Forces at the forthcoming Federal elections and the number of such votes.

Subject to the provision of a satisfactory arrangement in relation to their services, Commonwealth Divisional Returning Officers will be authorised to render such assistance as is necessary and practicable insofar as their respective Divisions are concerned.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) John J. Dedman,
for PRIME MINISTER.

The Honourable
the Premier of Western Australia,
Perth.

Next comes the Prime Minister's reply of the 16th July, 1943:—

The Western Australian Government has been considering the best means of ensuring that members of the Forces overseas and in Australia are given the facilities to vote at State elections. It is our intention to introduce legislation in the coming Parliamentary Session for this purpose. The proposed Bill is almost identical with the measure which has just been passed in the Commonwealth Parliament, and I expect it to be dealt with very early in the session.

I desire, therefore, to seek your assistance in the provision of the necessary machinery, and to request that the Commonwealth Government make the following arrangements on our behalf. Appointments will be required of Commanding Officers and Commissioned Officers overseas whose units contain Western Australian electors, and in Australia of Commonwealth Divisional Returning Officers who will be required to appoint officials and control the election in camps, aerodromes, Civil Construction corps works, etc., in their respective divisions.

Instructions are required for the Chief Electoral Officer for the Commonwealth to disclose to the Chief Electoral Officer for Western Australia where votes were recorded by members of the Forces from Western Australia and the approximate number of such votes in order that some idea can be obtained of the facilities to be provided and provision made to record same.

By the time the State elections are held your electoral officers will have had practical experience of the workings of such a voting system and accordingly the granting of this request should not involve a great amount of administrative work or difficulty.

Your co-operation in issuing the necessary instructions to enable us to give effect to this proposal would be very greatly appreciated. The deliberations of the State Parliament will be expedited if I am able to assure both Houses in advance that the Commonwealth Government has signified its intention to assist in the provision of the franchise to members of the Forces on duty throughout and outside of the Commonwealth, and I desire to request therefore that an early decision should be given. The following letter, dated the 10th August, 1943, is from the Premier to the Prime Minister:—

I wish to thank you for your letter of the 16th July (S. 342/1/2), concerning members of the Forces voting at State elections.

In the second paragraph of my letter of the 6th July, I made particular reference to the necessity for the appointment of Commanding Officers and other officers overseas whose units contain Western Australian electors. We propose to extend the franchise to Western Australians on active service outside Australia on the lines adopted by the Commonwealth in its Electoral (War Time) measure. This aspect of our legislation is especially significant at the moment because I imagine the tendency will be for more and more Australians to move outside Australia as the Pacific offensive extends northward.

Your helpful letter is appreciated as far as it goes, but it does not seem to cover the very important matter referred to above. I know that you appreciate the desire of the State Government to make certain that Western Australians are not deprived of their constitutional right to vote at the forthcoming State election. You are also cognisant of the fact that it will be impossible for our purpose to be achieved unless the necessary appointments are made from army personnel.

I trust that you will give this request favourable consideration and let me have a reply as soon as possible, as I wish to be able to inform the State Parliament of your co-operation in this regard.

This is the final letter, dated the 18th August, 1943, from the Prime Minister to the Premier:—

With reference to your letter of 10th August, 1943, and previous correspondence in regard to proposed legislation providing for voting by members of the Forces absent from the

State at State elections, I desire to inform you that Service Commanding Officers will be authorised to render, where practicable, services in connection with State Parliamentary elections similar to those required by the Commonwealth Electoral (War Time) Act.

The Department of the Army has suggested that, in order to relieve the burden on army administration and signals service, consideration be given during the preparation of the proposed legislation to the practicability of all ballot papers completed by members of the Forces being transmitted to Perth for scrutiny, instead of requiring such ballot papers to be scrutinised and the votes counted in the respective areas—especially in those areas immediately to the north of Australia where service officers are required to act as returning officers.

Members who have listened to these letters will now understand why alterations were made in the Bill as originally drawn and why we have departed to some extent from the Commonwealth Act.

The Leader of the Opposition commented upon the Civil Construction Corps. He intimated that he considered the members of that Corps should vote for the district from which they enlisted, that is for the district where they resided prior to enlistment. The Bill makes provision for that.

Mr. Watts: They will be entitled to a vote in respect of that district?

The Minister for Justice: Yes.

Mr. Watts: That is different from being obliged to vote for that district.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That was not made compulsory in the Commonwealth Act. If they are enrolled for any district they may vote for it. If they do not desire to vote in accordance with the facilities provided in the Bill, they can record a postal vote. That is reasonable; they should not be disfranchised. The Bill makes no provision for any soldier to vote south of the 26th parallel of latitude. It applies only to soldiers and others north of the 26th parallel of south latitude.

Mr. McDonald: Why is that?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: There are postal vote officials nearly everywhere south of that parallel of latitude. That was the line adopted by the Commonwealth.

Mr. McDonald: Have we any C.C.C. workers outside the State below the 26th parallel of south latitude?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I cannot answer that question.

The Premier: There are some at Meekatharra.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. McDonald: I mean outside the State.

The Premier: There are some at Darwin.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: A suggestion was made that this Bill should have been referred to a Select Committee. I am quite sure the Government would have agreed so to refer the Bill, but we did not have the time. I think the Bill has been in the House long enough for every member to have given fair consideration to its provisions. Consideration will be given to amendments, other than vital amendments, that have been put on the notice paper. The provision with respect to the forms is exactly the same as the provision in the Commonwealth Act. The schedules to that Act were brought down by regulation. However, I see no reason why the schedules should not be incorporated in the measure, as it makes no difference. Members will then be satisfied that the schedules are in accordance with what they had agreed to.

The greatest objection of the Leader of the National Party seems to be to the giving of the vote to persons under 21 years of age. I can but repeat what I said a moment ago: if these young people are old enough to fight and are willing to undertake the risk, surely they should be entitled to record a vote. I feel that members have made up their minds how they will vote. Nevertheless, I hope the Bill will become an Act, with some minor amendments that will ensure making it watertight. So far as the Commonwealth Act is concerned—and this measure is as near it as possible—the people of Australia have spoken and have seemed to be satisfied with what the Commonwealth Government intended to do. Its intention was to give to all members of the Fighting Forces a vote, irrespective of age, which is exactly what New Zealand has already done. "Defence Forces on active service" is a very wide term. I had the Crown Solicitor furnish an opinion on that clause. Unfortunately I have mislaid it at the moment, but it can be used when we are discussing the clause in Committee. The member for Nedlands supported the second reading, but inferred that I did some stealing when I said that if men were old enough to fight they were old enough to vote.

I am pleased the member for Nedlands has supported me in that direction. He said

that he had no enthusiasm for all members in uniform, men, women and children. I say this to the hon member: Even though a person of 18 is called a child, if he is old enough to fight he should be entitled to a vote. I hope the Bill will commend itself to the House and that members will be reasonable and look at it fairly and squarely. I can assure them that the Government has given a good deal of consideration to the Bill and has had no desire to be anything but fair. The Government wanted to be just and impartial and to see that every member of the Fighting Forces had the right to vote. That is the purpose for which the Bill was designed. We wanted to facilitate the counting where the votes were taken and were also anxious to give every soldier a vote wherever he might be. Owing to the limited time, however, that was not practicable because we were told by the Chief Electoral Officer that after the Bill became law it would take four months to distribute the whole of the matter necessary to record votes.

Mr. Doney: Is the time necessarily limited?

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: If the Opposition did not want to have the election, its members should have opposed it. However, there has been no objection to an election at the earliest possible moment. Had we endeavoured to make provision for all soldiers throughout the fighting areas to record a vote, we would have been more or less hypocritical in our assertion that we wanted an election as early as possible.

Mr. Watts: It is a matter of physical difficulties.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, there is no question of that. That was one of the reasons—there are several others—that we brought down this measure and we hope to get it through the House as early as possible.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 31st August.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [8.56]: I will be very brief in my remarks on this measure, which is a hardy annual. I remember quite well its introduction in 1931. It was amended in 1934 and has continued since, particularly dealing with the rate of interest on mortgages, which is fixed at a maximum of five per cent. I only wish we could go further and fix interest rates permanently at a much lower figure than five per cent. Interest has been a great burden on land settlement right throughout the times, and I am looking forward to the day when we shall make a real effort to reduce interest rates in order to give the man on the land and others engaged in production a reasonable chance of success. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth): It is sufficient for me to say that I support the second reading. Since the war started, the matter of interest rates has been regulated by National Security Regulations. Those regulations have imposed differential rates of interest according to the security involved, although the classification is a very slight one in the sense that it covers only two or three classes of security. At the same time it is something. National Security Regulations, however, constitute a wartime measure and the regulations will disappear at the end of the war. It may be open to doubt whether the permanent regulation of interest would be within the constitutional power of the Commonwealth Parliament.

Mr. Marshall: The permanent abolition of usury would be better.

MR. McDONALD: That is one of the functions that could be exercised by our State Parliament, and if we do not pass such a measure ourselves we have nobody but ourselves to blame. The Federal measure being of a temporary character, it is to my mind desirable that we should continue this legislation which has some protecting effect in the case of very many securities existing today, especially those over country properties. It is not altogether easy to do so today or under existing conditions, but I am so far in agreement with the mem-

ber for Murchison that I think when the time comes, and it is possible to look forward to something like normal conditions, not unduly fluctuating, the matter of a ceiling for interest rates according to the class of security and the risk involved might very well receive the consideration of this House. In the meantime this legislation, which has served a useful purpose, can still do so for the time being. I support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—PUBLIC SERVICE APPEAL BOARD ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 31st August of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUST- MENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 31st August.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [9.4]: I propose to support the second reading of this Bill which is to continue the operations of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, with which is incorporated the Rural Relief Fund Act, 1934-35. It is true that a considerable amount of relief has been afforded to members of the farming community under the measures which are to be continued by this Bill. It is usual to agree, and I do so in this case, that half a loaf is better than no bread. But I will adhere to my belief that this legislation consists only of the half loaf. It has been by no means entirely satisfactory, nor has it grappled with the main problems of the debt structure of our farming industry. As a matter of fact, it is simply a substitute of one debt for another, so far as the moneys for the contri-

butions under the Rural Relief Fund Act are concerned. I grant, of course, that the debt that has been substituted is, in the majority of cases, smaller than the one which was there before. Nevertheless, the result has been that one obligation—an obligation to the State as against one to sundry creditors—has been substituted for another. It has always seemed to me, and still does, that the intention of the Commonwealth—the Minister for Commerce at the time was Dr. Earle Page—was that this money having been granted to the States for the purpose of relieving farmers of excess debt obligations should, in turn, have been granted to the farmers themselves.

This legislation, so far as the Rural Relief Fund Act is concerned, was a product of the Labour Government which preceded the one now in office, and for some reason the then Minister for Lands, the Hon. M. F. Troy, persisted in making the advances to the farmers a debt charged upon all their assets, including after-acquired assets. But he alleged subsequently, in the course of some controversy, that it was unlikely that this statutory charge created by the Rural Relief Fund Act would have any great force and effect, because there was actually no registered document, but merely a statutory notice to the Registrar of Titles that, in dealing with the land of farmers affected, there might be an obligation, and that he was to ascertain whether there was. The result has been that no transfers of farming lands have been able to go through the Registrar of Titles Office since that time without the transferor obtaining a certificate from the Rural Relief Trustees that he is under no obligation or, if he is under an obligation to the trustees, to obtain their consent. In many cases, to my knowledge, that has only been granted upon conditions. So we find that an advance of £1,269,000, made by the Commonwealth to the State of Western Australia as a grant, has been put upon the persons who received assistance under the Act as an obligation which they have been called upon to pay by instalments over a period of years.

I admit, of course, that there has, of recent months, been some minor amendment to the Rural Relief Fund Act enabling the trustees, in certain circumstances, to write-off the whole or portion of the obligation

of individual farmers. If, for example, the mortgagee has already, since the advance was made, written-down his debt, the trustees are at liberty to write-off the whole or portion of the advance under the Rural Relief Fund Act. If the farmer who received the advance is on active service or has become a member of the Forces, they are entitled to give consideration to his case. There are one or two other instances where a writing-off of the amount can be done. But as the Minister informed us the other night, the amount that has been written off out of the £1,269,000 is the sum of only £24,000, which, members will agree, is a very small fraction indeed. So this State, having obtained a million and a quarter free and gratis from the Commonwealth for the purpose of solving or partially solving the difficulties of the excess debt structure of the farming community, imposed upon the farmers an obligation for repayment. The reason given for requiring repayment was that other farmers might be assisted out of the proceeds as they came in. Actually I suggest it was nothing of the kind, and it has inflicted in many instances some hardship upon the original applications for debt relief.

Broadly speaking the trustees did not make advances towards the reduction of farmers' liabilities unless they were satisfied that the debts owing were greater than the value of the assets. I was told by the first director that the object was to reduce their liability to a figure comparable with the value of the assets they possessed. I believe that in this regard the director and his colleagues made a genuine effort and did exceptionally good work insofar as they were able in the circumstances of the legislation. Having reduced the obligations to the value of the property by making an advance of £300, £400 or £500 to compound obligations possibly of £600, £800, or £1,000, an obligation was placed on the farmer to repay the amount advanced, thereby making his liability once again, though not quite so much, greater than the value of the asset he possessed. I contend that there was no justification for requiring this grant to be repaid by the applicant and that the reason given in regard to this revolving fund is totally insufficient to justify the requirements of the law. I have no hesitation in saying the time is long past when this matter of requiring repayment from an appli-

cant who has received assistance should continue.

I want the House to remember that the trustees of the Rural Relief Fund were not allowed to make advances unless they were satisfied that the assistance they would render would enable the farmer to carry on with some prospect of success. Therefore, if they did their duty, as I believe they did, they should not have made advances to persons who were not, so far as they could judge, likely to carry on their properties in future with some prospect of success. The great majority of those who received this assistance, so far as carrying on was concerned, have been able to do so, and in some instances have substantially improved their position.

The Premier: Some of them have had further adjustment.

Mr. WATTS: There is no objection to that under the law. There may have been ethical objections to it, but the ruling of the director and the trustees was that they were entitled to do it and, if the circumstances of a particular case appeared to justify it, they would do it. I have no quarrel with their point of view in that regard.

The Premier interjected.

Mr. WATTS: Two wrongs do not make a right. A free grant was made by the Commonwealth to the State, and on the first night I entered the House—I well remember the occasion; it was the 10th September, 1935—this legislation was before the House. The first division I voted on was the one that proposed to make this money a free grant to the farmers. I voted for it then and would vote for it again now or at any other time. The free grant should have been passed on the farming community. In all that time I have not had any occasion to change the opinion I formed on the first night I was in the Chamber.

The Minister for Works: You must remember that the State participated in the write-down very considerably.

Mr. WATTS: Not out of the Rural Relief Fund.

The Minister for Works: No, but the State did write down.

Mr. WATTS: Yes; I am not objecting to that. It was absolutely essential for the State to do so. My argument is that the money, which was used to compound the claims of creditors other than State instrumentalities—under the Act they could not

participate—was given to the State by the Commonwealth as a free grant and was charged up by the State to the farmers as a debt, which will hang over their heads for the next 20 years.

Mr. Marshall: Twenty years or more.

Mr. WATTS: Well, about 20 years from now. The member for Murchison will not quarrel with me over a year or two in 20.

Mr. Doney: Other States made it a free grant.

Mr. WATTS: Yes, some of the other States, which received a proportionately greater amount out of the £12,000,000 made available, made it a free grant, and in my view there was no justification for this State not doing the same thing.

There is another aspect of the matter I should like to mention. The persons who had their debts compounded were those who had no security. No provision was made in the Act for the trustees, except with the consent of the mortgagee, which only in rare instances was forthcoming, to make any adjustment of any account to a secured first mortgage creditor. The result was that most of the people who took compositions of their debts were merchants, local authorities and country storekeepers. I find that merchants, machinery merchants and others, for example, did fairly well. According to the report of the Rural Relief Trustees for the year ended the 30th June, 1942, machinery agents having debts of £597,000 received by way of compensation £334,000, wrote off £127,000, and had still owing to them for future payment by the farmers £134,000. So out of £597,000, the machinery agents were either paid or were likely to collect £468,000, or approximately 80 per cent. of their original obligation.

The Premier: I suppose their profits were about 30 per cent.

Mr. WATTS: I do not intend to discuss that question. The fact remains that they received approximately 16s. in the pound on the amount owed to them by the farmers collectively for whom these adjustments were made. Merchants were owed £459,000 in respect of the number of applications made and they received £144,000 in cash and wrote off only £31,000. They received 18s. in the pound. Local authorities were owed £100,000 and received £63,000 and wrote off £27,000.

Now I come to the unsecured creditors, men without remedy of any kind. They

were the persons responsible in many instances for keeping a number of these farmers on the land; they were the people who had to supply the every day necessities of life without which the farmers could not have carried on and without which there would have been little or no production, without which the machinery merchants would not have been able to receive any dividend at all. They were in the happy position of receiving 5s. 10d. in the £. The Rural Relief Trustees made special mention of the fact. They do the calculating in this case, for they say that the amount received was approximately 5s. 10d. in the £. Of the 5,563 cases, 999 received less than 3s. 4d. in the £, and 836 more received from 3s. 5d. to 5s. So it is quite obvious that the sacrifice which sprang from the tremendous financial difficulties and collapse of prices, and the partial ruin which befell agriculture in this State, has not been equally borne by any means. It has been borne substantially by a section of the community which in itself had big overdrafts and obligations standing in its way, but which had been substantially responsible in a great number of cases for keeping production going when there was no sign of relief for these people.

When we have endeavoured to bring about some legislation for the Rural Relief Trustees to handle first mortgages when there were still some funds available to adjust the debts of mortgagees and financial houses and others so that there might be some measure of justice done to all parties, what have we found? Unremitting opposition from all members on the Government side! Both the Ministers for Lands who have held office while I have been in this House have taken up exactly the same attitude. They have opposed or damned with the faintest praise proposals coming from this side of the Chamber repeatedly during the last four or five years. Finally, as a last resort, we moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the problems of rural industry with a view to some legislation which may yet resolve these problems to the mutual satisfaction of both sides of the House. I regret the absence of the Minister for Lands, and still more the reason for that absence. The hon. gentleman said—

The idea is excellent. But it is not our duty to inquire into matters on which we already have full and complete information.

Those remarks will be found in "Hansard," and they show that the Minister, with all due respect to him, was completely unable to appreciate even for one minute the necessity for legislation which would deal with both parties equitably. I have no hesitation in saying that there will have to be an answer given by this Government to the farming community of Western Australia before very long as to why these continued refusals or neglects to tackle this problem have taken place. And lastly I would remind the House that a motion was carried here, despite the fact that its form was somewhat mutilated, calling upon the Government, by resolution of this House, to take action in regard to this matter. We still find, although two years have elapsed, that nothing has been done, and that all that can be offered to this House is a renewal of the existing legislation, which, being half a loaf, is better than no bread at all. Therefore I must support the second reading of the Bill.

But the time is overdue when the other half of the loaf should be dealt with. I think there is every need for it today, despite the belief of some people that there is a considerable improvement of the position in the agricultural areas. There may be improvement in isolated cases, but it is not general; and if members of this House would take the opportunity, as I take the opportunity, to discuss with these people the financial position in which they find themselves, they will realise, as I realise, that it is still necessary to do more than is contained in this Act, to do more than to crucify with the worry of composition of their debts the country storekeepers, and to ask for some measure of equality from those people who went into the business of advancing money as a commercial proposition, who have built up adequate reserve funds for such losses as they might be called upon to make in regard to adjustments such as I have referred to, and up to date, so far as I know, have made but slender use of the reserves so built up. I support the second reading.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington): We who occupy these benches support wholeheartedly this Bill, for we realise there is still necessity for the Act; and, as pointed out by the Leader of the Opposition, it is closely related to the Rural Debts Relief Fund Act. This legislation, of course, was

introduced as the result of the depression years, when the best farmers went behind, no matter how hard they worked or how well they farmed. There is justification for the Leader of the Opposition to ask at this stage that the money which was provided for these men should now be given to them. I cannot be accused of wanting Government money dealt out lavishly. I feel that when the Commonwealth Government made this money available, that Government had a very good idea that we would not get it back. I have had some dealings with the trustees in relation to this fund, and I have heard from certain farmers in connection with it. But the district I represent has not by any means been as hard hit as districts represented by some members on the Opposition benches. The trustees, so far as I know them, have been prepared to listen to reason. I have brought cases under their notice. But even the trustees realise that a great deal of this money cannot be paid back, and that if it were paid back it would create hardship.

Owing to the conditions, I think it is a reasonable request that this money should be provided for the farmers, and that they should not be asked to pay it back. It is to be hoped that farmers will never in future be asked again to accept low and unpayable prices for that which they produce. If we regard the whole matter dispassionately, I think every member of the House will admit that the prices which prevailed when this legislation was introduced were such that farmers could not meet their obligations. Unless there is stabilisation and we ensure that farmers in future shall not produce at a loss, we will have this class of legislation and plenty of it. After all, there is no reason why a farmer should be asked to produce at a loss. Whether he produces wool, wheat, butter, fruit or any other product required by the people, surely he is not only legally entitled to a just return, but also morally entitled to it. He did not receive this return in the past, hence the necessity for this legislation. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT (FUNDS APPROPRIATION).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 31st August.

MR. DONEY (Williams - Narrogin) [9.33]: The Minister in charge of the Bill will not, I imagine, be surprised when I say that I shall oppose the second reading of this measure.

Members: Oh!

Mr. DONEY: Time has in no way tempered my dislike of the principles upon which the Bill is founded. May I be permitted just for a few minutes to state the position which, according to the Government, has given rise to the Bill? First of all, for the purpose of comparison, I need to use the main road figures of 1941, that being the last normal year.

The Premier: This is the first discordant note we have had all day.

Mr. DONEY: I am sorry to be responsible for it; it is far from being my intention. But let me proceed. The Commonwealth Grants Commission's report for 1941 intimated that because Western Australia did not debit its Main Roads Trust Account with the cost of servicing expenditure from that account, the £695,000 due to this State that year would be cut by £65,000 down to £630,000. This threat had the effect that the Commission desired, for the Government came to the decision to find the necessary sum. This was done by taking 22½ per cent. of the metropolitan traffic fees into Consolidated Revenue, instead of putting it into the Metropolitan Traffic Trust Fund. In 1941-42 that percentage represented £30,000, and up to the 30th June of the 1942-43 year the estimate was £20,000. The metropolitan road construction and improvement programme, therefore, lost those two quite substantial sums, or would have lost them had not the Government promised to recoup to the metropolitan road authorities precisely the same sums as had been taken from them. The Government, of course, honoured that promise. The metropolitan bodies were, therefore, quite plainly no worse off than they were before and consequently had left to them no ground of complaint in regard to the money taken from them. I agree that that is so.

If I were a member of a metropolitan constituency I perhaps would not be voicing the objection I am raising now. It is at this

juncture, however, that the Minister tells the country local governing bodies that they have absolutely no ground whatever for complaint because they, unlike the metropolitan bodies, have not been penalised; that is to say, they had not had their traffic fees tampered with in any way. Strange to say, some local governing bodies accept that view. I ask the Minister again this year—and members may recall that I have done so for some four years in succession—to explain, if he deigns to reply to the debate, which he usually does, just exactly where these sums of £30,000 and £20,000, or whatever the latter amount may happen to be, that it is proposed to extract from the metropolitan bodies under this Bill, will come from.

I submit to the Minister that this money certainly comes from somewhere. I imagine he will agree with that. In past years I have referred to the Treasury's method of financing these extractions—these levies, rather—and the Treasury's method of explaining it away, as juggling. I am not alleging, of course, anything unfair about it. I regard it as being shrewd and will let it go at that. I have told the Minister in charge of the Bill that even the cleverest of jugglers must get his rabbit from somewhere. Whence, I ask, comes the £30,000 or the £22,000? Very certainly, it does not come from Consolidated Revenue; that much will be granted. Equally, it does not come from metropolitan road funds. There is only one other fund from which it could come and that is the petrol tax fund, 91 per cent. of which goes to the maintenance and construction of country roads.

The Minister for Works: A very generous percentage.

Mr. DONEY: The Minister invariably falls back upon that excuse.

The Minister for Works: It is not an excuse.

Mr. DONEY: I ask him to say precisely where the money is extracted from; and then invariably does he reply that 91 per cent., after all, implies very generous treatment to country roads on the part of the Government and of the metropolitan bodies, which latter have, I might explain, very little indeed to do with the proportion—that is, 91 one-hundredths of the petrol tax to the country areas and the remaining 9 per cent. only to the metropolitan bodies. When that 91 per cent. is handed over to the country, it is merely in keeping with the

agreement arrived at and does not indicate, as the Minister claimed, any generosity at all but merely fair play on the part of the Minister. The Minister should agree with that. The matter of generosity does not come into it at all.

The Minister for Works: There is no agreement except that it had to be spent on roads.

Mr. DONEY: Precisely who laid that down?

The Minister for Works: It was done between the Commonwealth and the States.

Mr. DONEY: Which implies an agreement, as I said. So at this time of day it is not quite proper for the Government to claim any undue generosity in the arrangement. The arrangement was come to for the reason that the state of country roads requires that amount and the metropolitan district gets no more than 9 per cent. because the length and nature of its roads require no more to keep them in a sound condition for traffic. Let me admit that if I could accept dictation generally from the Grants Commission as to how our road funds should be expended, and if because of that I agreed that the road funds of this State should be debited with the cost of their own servicing, I then would raise no objection whatever to these costs being debited proportionately to the country and metropolitan road boards roughly, as I have explained, in the proportion of nine-tenths to one-tenth. But I still—and this is what I particularly draw the Minister's attention to—would raise very strong objection to this pretence—insisted on by the Government year by year—that the country roads are no worse off than before and that this recoup to the metropolitan authorities does not come from the country's share of the petrol tax. The Minister insists that it does not. I insist that that is precisely where it does come from and that each year country road boards are less the amount that has been extracted by the Government from the metropolitan traffic fund.

The Minister's annual excuse for raiding the metropolitan road fund is that the Grants Commission requires him to do so. I quite readily admit that in a piece of writing which the Minister has read to the Chamber on two or three occasions the Commission suggests that some such procedure is desirable, but that does not make it incumbent upon the Government to follow that direction. The Commission put it in that

form and used that threat in order to indicate to the Government that there would be, unless the Government agreed, a dockage in the grant. I admit the existence of the Commission and that it is a factor that cannot be ignored, but I say the Commission is prone to put claimant States on the spot altogether too much. I put this to the Minister: Are the Commission's threats or promises always carried out? I say they are not. I would like the Minister to inform me, if he is able to, whether this State did get an increased grant in 1942-43 because the Government stripped the country roads of the amount I have referred to. I think myself it cannot be shown that the State did get that increase.

The Minister for Works: You can read it in their own report.

Mr. DONEY: I am far from believing that the Commission would have carried out its threat or fulfilled its promise had the Minister not taken the bait. I dare say that the Premier and the previous Treasurer, the member for Boulder, can recall that from 1930-31 onwards the pet taunt—not that that is the word, but it is the nearest I can get to it at the moment—of the Grants Commission was that Western Australia could not expect increased grants while yet her per capita taxation was so much lower than that of the donor States. Whether it was that which prompted the huge tax increases that then followed I leave to the Premier and the ex-Premier to explain. But certain it is that the per capita taxation of Western Australia, which was only £3 6s. in 1931-32, was increased to £8 6s. in 1940-41. I do not think it can be shown that this very dutiful compliance with the Commission's injunctions produced the promised reward of an increased grant. I think that is a fair instance to quote of where something was promised by the Commonwealth Government if something were done, and when that something was done, the promise was not fulfilled. I put this to the House, too: That this dominance by the Grants Commission is a most galling reminder of our dependence on Federal bounty. No less galling is it to South Australia and Tasmania.

The Minister for Works: I do not mind how strong your criticism is on that point.

Mr. DONEY: I quite agree with the Minister. It has always seemed to me as being not at all a pleasing situation for a

free and independent people, like Western Australians, to find themselves in.

The Minister for Works: Free but not independent!

Mr. DONEY: Possessed of very independent feelings.

The Minister for Works: Oh, yes!

Mr. DONEY: And therefore, of course, prone to feel keenly the galling position in which they are placed by reason of the manner in which the Grants Commission deals with them. Here we have a Commission consisting of three public servants usually drawn from the older States and who, in matters of finance, wield in certain directions—though not all—powers that exceed those of our own State Government. I may say—and I am sure the Minister agrees with me—that this is a form of penance of which we would all like to see this State relieved.

Mr. Watts: Never was truer word spoken!

Mr. DONEY: These sentiments are uppermost in my mind every time we have this Bill before us for debate. It has to be admitted that sometimes we get what we ask for from the Grants Commission, but more often we do not. But whether we do or do not, always we are treated to a lecture that is darned hard for Western Australians to bear. In the case immediately under review the Grants Commission has apparently insisted on certain economies under threats of punishment. No economies have ensued. The Minister's explanation of the manner in which the fine—and that is the proper description—is collected does not involve any economy in the servicing of the Commonwealth road grants. All that it secures is that certain substantial sums each year are withdrawn from that fund which maintains and constructs country roads in this State. That is far from being the intention of the Grants Commission. If that body has ever been satisfied with what has been submitted to it in regard to this matter, I am afraid it has not examined the position very carefully. Anyhow, I need not say more in respect of this matter. It is, I know from my experience in past years, futile to expect a majority of the House to join me in disagreeing with the measure because the National members on this side of the House have been dealt with slightly better than have country members and consequently have not

the same ground for complaining with the intention of the Bill.

MR. HILL (Albany): I also oppose the Bill because the position should never have arisen. In 1929 the Commonwealth Government appointed a committee to report upon the co-ordination of transport in Australia. That committee recommended that when loan money was spent on roads the expenditure should be limited to the economic needs, and further that provision should be made so that interest and sinking fund payments would not be a charge on Consolidated Revenue. Our Government carried out neither of those recommendations, but spent something like £160,000 a year of loan money on roads; not because of economic need, but to provide work for the unemployed. My contention is that work for the unemployed should have been financed through the financial emergency tax. Then the Government made no provision for interest and sinking fund payments. On this return for the current year the loan liability is £3,343,985 on our roads. Interest charges amount to £129,000; sinking fund, £20,000; exchange, £17,000, with a net earning of £33,717, which gives a deficiency of £133,000. This Bill has as its object the reduction of that deficiency. The Government has advanced the excuse that it is practically forced to do this because of the recommendations of the Grants Commission. My contention is that while the users of the roads should be prepared to pay for them they should not be called upon to pay interest on loan money for the relief of unemployment.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (in reply): I think the remarks of the member for Williams-Narrogin deserve a reply. He always insists on having an explanation of how the people of his district are not penalised. He forgets that there are two funds from which roads are built, not only the petrol tax, but loan moneys. It is quite true that as far as the petrol tax is concerned he has been penalised to a certain extent.

Mr. Doney: It is the first time you have made that admission.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I wish the hon. member would keep quiet if he wants an explanation. If we maintain the very generous treatment of the country districts and give them 91 per cent. of the petrol tax I agree that to a certain extent they would

be penalised. We introduced this not only at the suggestion of the Grants Commission but because we have an amount of, I think, £3,400,000 odd sunk in roads on which the Treasury and Consolidated Revenue has to pay interest each year amounting to £167,000. The Grants Commission took exception to the fact that nothing was paid from the revenue received from license fees in this State to finance the interest debt on that loan. The hon. member can lecture us and the Grants Commission if he likes, but the fact is that the Commission penalised the State because it did not do that to the extent of £65,000 in one year, and said so.

On the other hand, when we did transfer an amount and complied with its suggestion or request, the Commission said in plain language that it had not penalised the State because of what we had done. The Commission mentioned three things and because of those three things it did not penalise this State. That means that not only did the Consolidated Revenue benefit by the £30,000, but by an additional £65,000 or, in all, nearly £100,000 by adhering to the Commission's request. I would say that the country districts have benefited there, although when the hon. member asks me if they are not penalised in comparison with the benefit gained by the metropolitan area, my reply is that he loses sight altogether of the fact that 97 per cent. of this £3,400,000 was spent on country roads.

Mr. Doney: I know.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It also means that 95 per cent. of the £165,000 interest has to be found to finance that debt. The arrangement we have come to is, therefore, a very fair one and the country districts are treated fairly. I will not use the word "generously," but say fairly. As to whether we are under agreement with the Commonwealth to spend the petrol money, I assure the hon. member that the agreement said plainly that it is to be spent on the construction, reconstruction and maintenance of roads, but does not mention any district at all. It can legitimately be spent on roads anywhere in the State. So, even as far as the country is concerned the administration has been fair.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

**BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT
CONTINUANCE.***Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 31st August.

MR. BOYLE (Avon) [10.1]: The annual continuance of an Act of this sort, which involves several millions of pounds, is a most extraordinary piece of legislation. A little over 30 years ago industries assistance legislation was introduced mainly to meet the drought conditions prevailing at that time. With the exception of the years 1914-17, the Act has been continued annually, and the purpose of this Bill is to continue it for a further period from March, 1944, to March, 1945. What I object to in the Act is the unfair discrimination between types of debtors. Part II of the Act has reference to assistance to farmers, and Part III provides for assistance to business concerns, mines, fisheries, etc. But the discrimination shown in the Act is most extraordinary, and my repeated opposition has not induced the Government to amend the Agricultural Bank Act in order to give the Bank Commissioners, exercising their functions as such, power to advance money under their Act instead of under the Industries Assistance Act.

I do not think members are aware of the extent to which this Act has been used for subsidising and assisting private business. I have the report of the Auditor General for last year and it is illuminating to find amongst the business concerns assisted the W.A. Meat Export Company with an amount of over £160,000 and interest £6,892, a total in round figures of £167,000. These works have since been purchased by the State. The W.A. Worsted and Woollen Mills at Albany had a total under the Act of £11,160. The Auditor General remarked that there were no collections during the year and the amount outstanding increased by £396 16s. 6d. There was also a guarantee by the Treasurer of £57,500 in respect of the company's bank overdraft. I have no intention of criticising the assistance given to deserving concerns of that sort. Going a little further in the Auditor General's report, however, we find that there are concerns not operating which have resulted

in a total loss to the State of £504,024 10s. 5d. Included in the number are such firms as the Calyx Porcelain Works and the W.A. Manganese Company, which lost £143,691 2s. 9d.

I have recited those figures to show that colossal losses have been incurred under the Industries Assistance Act, but when we come to the farmer, who willynilly is forced under this Act if any advance is made to him to carry on, we find the discrimination of which I spoke. The business firms are required by the Treasurer to forward only an annual balance sheet. I think that is the sole obligation imposed upon them. With the farmer under Part II of the Act, however—and this is a section I object to—the position is very different. Members will recall that I sought to repeal that portion of the Act, but the House would not accept my proposal and I have to content myself with opposing the continuance Bill. This House ruled—and the Premier and the Leader of the National Party supported the Speaker's ruling—that the proceeds of a farmer under the Act become the property of the Crown. That is a most extraordinary position in which to place farmers who are compelled to seek assistance under the Act. They find their proceeds becoming the property of the State, and in effect they are reduced to the position of common serfs.

Their proceeds are being seized under the Act, and I use the word "seized" advisedly, because drought relief was granted to the farmers with a period of repayment extending over seven years, and in the first favourable year—that was the second crop—the Bank Commissioners who constitute the I.A.B. seized the whole of the proceeds, and they are now lodged in the Treasury for repayment of a loan which does not fall due until about 1947. That is what I object to. I spoke of unfair discrimination, and that is ample proof of my statement. The paltry monthly allowance granted to farmers under the Industries Assistance Act is chargeable with interest and is subject, not to an annual balance sheet, not to any consideration as between board and farmer, but to the arbitrary receipt by the bank of the farmers' proceeds to secure the return of the money advanced.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: What was done about the manganese company?

Mr. BOYLE: I had better quote the Auditor General on that. He said that details regarding this expenditure had appeared in previous reports for 1939-40. The amount of £4,166 0s. 4d. was credited to the account during the year for material taken over by the Railway Department.

Mr. Cross: The department took £75,000 worth of sleepers.

Mr. BOYLE: Took them back! That does not alter the fact I am stressing that the company was required under the Act to furnish no more than an annual balance sheet. It was only when the company was abandoned and the sleepers were lying there that the State took them back. That was merely a matter of taking an available asset. Had the company operated—I doubt whether it did so—the only obligation to which it would have been subject was to submit an annual balance sheet. The Industries Assistance Board would not have seized the whole of the proceeds of the company. But that does not apply to the farmers; they are dealt with differently.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: You are very innocent with regard to the question of security.

Mr. BOYLE: What security was there? As far as the farmer is concerned, his security is entirely in the hands of the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank. Under Section 15, paragraph (d) the Industries Assistance Act definitely says that any advances under the Act—

shall be, and, until fully paid shall continue, a charge on all other livestock, implements, machinery, plant, and movable structure of the applicant.

What more security would the board require than that? It has practically everything. Not only that, but the debtor is brought under the provisions of Section 51 of the Agricultural Bank Act. That is the drag-net section to which I objected as providing discrimination between different types of debtors under the Industries Assistance Act. Why that should be allowed to continue I am at a loss to understand. So long as I am a member of this House, I shall always oppose the re-enactment of this legislation. This is possibly the 28th or 29th time it has been before Parliament for re-enactment, and that very fact in itself is indicative of the weakness of the structure of this particular measure. If it were indispensable or analagous to other Acts, its provisions would be made permanent.

On the other hand, here we have a measure under which, literally, advances running into millions of pounds have been made in connection with transactions extending from 1913 until today, and yet is dependent upon annual re-enactment! If the House should decide to reject the Bill for the continuance of the Act, what would happen? The Government would be forced to introduce a measure of a permanent character. I do not intend to divide the House on the second reading. I tried that last year, and I am afraid the response was not to my satisfaction.

Mr. Marshall: You have emptied your own benches this evening!

Mr. BOYLE: I would not say that I have done that; I am afraid it was a voluntary action on the part of members. Perhaps time has something to do with it, although I did anticipate that when I rose to my feet those members would have flocked back to the Chamber. They did not do so. I content myself with registering my opposition to the Bill and shall oppose its second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 8th September, 1943.

	PAGE
Question: Phosphate supplies, as to local deposits	355
Bills: Financial Emergency Act Amendment, 1A.	376
Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment, 1A.	376
Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act Amendment, 1A.	376
Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation), 1A.	376
Industries Assistance Act Continuance, 1A.	376
Address-in-reply, twelfth day—conclusion	360
Resolution: Daylight saving, Assembly's message	376
Adjournment, special	376

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

QUESTION—PHOSPHATE SUPPLIES.

As to Local Deposits.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Has the report on the recent