

Legislative Council.

Tuesday, 23rd September, 1924.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Urgency Motion: Horseshoe Bridge tramway ... | 894 |
| Leave of absence ... | 900 |
| Bills: Trust Funds Investment, 1R. ... | 900 |
| Fremantle Municipal Tramways, 1R. ... | 900 |
| Private Savings Bank, 2A., Com., recom. ... | 900 |
| Trade Unions Act Amendment, Com., report ... | 900 |
| Noxious Weeds, 2A. ... | 900 |
| Electoral Act Amendment, 2A. ... | 900 |

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

URGENCY MOTION—HORSESHOE BRIDGE TRAMWAY.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [4.33]: I have given notice to move the adjournment of the House in order to discuss a matter of urgency in relation to tramway traffic over the Horseshoe Bridge.

The PRESIDENT: It will be necessary for four members to indicate their support.

Four members having risen in their places,

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move—

That the House do now adjourn.

For a long time past the traffic authorities have endeavoured to devise means to lessen the congestion of traffic in our streets, and minimise the risk of accident to persons using the public thoroughfares. In opposition to this well-recognised plan the Government are proceeding with the construction of a tramway across the Horseshoe Bridge, with the object of linking up the cars proceeding down William-street with those at Newcastle-street. The Government believe, I understand, that this diversion of traffic will effect a certain saving, but such considerations should not weigh with Ministers in constructing a tramway when it involves loss of life, as I think will be the case if the construction of the tramway across the Horseshoe Bridge is continued. Every member knows the bridge well, and the subject has been so fully ventilated that few remarks are needed to augment what has been said, but even an ordinary layman proceeding over the bridge realises that, with its numerous curves and the large overhang of many of the trams now used, the risk of accident will be increased many times. There is a plan on the Table of the House, a reproduction of which appears in the Press this morning, and a study of it must impress anyone with the seriousness of the risk. The bridge is used by a large body of pedestrians from the north end of the town, and a large section of people who travel by vehicles other than trams. In the mornings and evenings particularly the

volume of traffic across the bridge is astonishing, and one can readily appreciate that with the addition of trams, accidents can hardly be avoided, while the hold-up of traffic that must arise will be a very serious drawback to the progress of the city.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: One of the principal exits from the railway station leads on to the bridge.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Quite so. Under the traffic regulations ordinary vehicles are bound to stop when stationary cars are setting down and taking up passengers. This in itself will cause great congestion. How the Government will handle the traffic is a difficulty that presents itself for solution, but they will not solve it by carrying tramway traffic over the bridge. There is a means to solve the difficulty, namely, by the Government constructing a bridge to take the trams across the railway at another point. Before the Horseshoe Bridge was constructed there was a dangerous crossing over the railway at William-street, and it was because of the dangers there that the new bridge was constructed. The object was to prevent accidents, and make it possible for traffic to continue in one endless flow from William-street across the railway line to other parts of the city. With a tramway across the Horseshoe Bridge the impeding of traffic will be almost as great as it was prior to the construction of the bridge. The Government should find another site—and suitable sites have been suggested—for a bridge to carry the trams across the railway. It would be difficult to take a bridge in a straight line across the railway because of the levels, and that is one reason why the Horseshoe Bridge was designed. That bridge has filled a much felt want, although it has not been all that could be wished. If the Government are sincere in their desire to save money, they could effect a similar saving by taking the traffic along another route. There is considerable difficulty in carrying all the traffic over the Beaufort-street Bridge, but this is no reason why the Government should interfere with the one outlet and inlet provided by the Horseshoe Bridge for people whose needs demand the use of that bridge. Pedestrians moving across that bridge move largely at angles, and one has only to watch the traffic to appreciate that. We can realise that the adding of tramways to the other traffic across the bridge, with the overhanging of the trams, would increase the risk enormously. I make a suggestion to the Government now. Other suggestions have been made. One from a competent engineer appears in this morning's paper probably may receive consideration from the Government. But if they are insistent upon taking the trams across William-street, surely they can construct another bridge for the special use of the trams, leaving the present bridge

for the use of vehicular traffic and foot passengers. If it is absolutely necessary that another Horseshoe Bridge should be built, there is ample land available for the purpose. It may mean the resumption of some property near the corner of the street. Whether such a scheme is practicable I do not venture to say, but competent engineers could be asked to report on it. If it should not be essential, however, to take the trams over that particular point, a bridge could be erected at some other suitable place, thereby saving the risks involved in the present scheme. The City Council have protested strongly, and have written to the Government regarding the use of the Horseshoe Bridge for tramways. I consider it is the duty of every member to emphasise the public protests against the continuation of the work, and I sincerely hope that the Government will take the matter seriously to heart and decide to discontinue the work now in progress. I submit the motion.

HON. J. DUFFELL (Metropolitan-Suburban) [4.48]: In seconding Mr. Nicholson's motion, I desire to refer to the circumstances which obtained prior to the construction of the Horseshoe Bridge. Those of us who knew the city of Perth in the years from 1900 to 1903 will remember a level crossing at William-street, a wooden overhead bridge being provided for foot traffic. Even at that early period the level crossing was realised to be extremely dangerous, and city representatives in both Houses often referred to the need for the construction of a bridge adequate to the traffic. About July, 1901, Mr. Randell asked a series of questions in this Chamber regarding the plans and specifications for a new bridge. He was told that the matter was receiving attention, and that the plans would be ready in about a month's time. Mr. C. J. Moran repeated those questions in the Legislative Assembly during September, 1901, and was informed that the plans would be complete in the course of a few days. The plans were completed, and in 1902 a sum of about £25,000 was placed on the Estimates for the construction of the bridge, that being the estimated cost. A sum of £10,000 was allocated to the work for the year. The bridge was completed, and was admitted to be a boon to the people of Perth, and more especially to residents of the northern suburbs. In 1905 Parliament passed an Act vesting the bridge and its maintenance in the Commissioner of Railways, a section of the measure stipulating that the footpaths and the roadway over the bridge were to be dedicated for all time to the people of Perth and its environs. It is not for a moment doubted that the Minister for Railways has the absolute right to do as he pleases with the bridge. In his wisdom he has decided that the time has arrived when tramway lines shall be laid across the Horseshoe Bridge for the purpose of somewhat shortening the dis-

tance to the northern suburbs as compared with the distance involved in the existing route over the Beaufort-street bridge. However, the traffic on Perth to-day is of such a nature that all right-thinking people acknowledge it would be a source of great danger to life and limb if such an event as the construction of tramway lines across the Horseshoe Bridge took place. The people have voiced with no uncertain sound the objections they entertain to the Government's proposal. It is beyond our ken to devise any means which would obviate accidents on the sharp turns inseparable from the bridge, more especially accidents to drivers of vehicles and to those foot passengers who cross the bridge.

HON. J. J. HOLMES: I do not think the Traffic Branch of the Police Department would issue a motor license until a driver showed that he could negotiate the Horseshoe Bridge under such conditions, as the bridge would then be one of the most difficult places in the city.

HON. J. DUFFELL: No doubt the proposal would materially affect the issue of motor licenses. It is not altogether a matter of the traffic, but also one of danger involved to people crossing the bridge, as frequently they have to do, at an angle. Some people will carelessly run into danger—do what one will to prevent them—if danger exists. It has been admitted by all authorities that the traffic of the city is a grave problem, one which will have to receive the fullest consideration not only of the Perth City Council but also of the legislature. If the proposed tramway construction is carried out it will reflect very seriously indeed, and in the very near future, upon those who are in power to-day. They will be subjecting the people to grave risks if they use their powers to carry out the work now starting. The power is undoubted, because the schedule to the Act of 1905 vests in the Commissioner of Railways the right to maintain the bridge and to prevent the erection of any building upon it, thus authorising him to do as he pleases with the structure so long as the people have the use of the road and the footpaths across it. This Chamber, I consider, will be doing its duty if it voices a most emphatic protest against the action of the Government. Mr. Nicholson referred to other parts of the city of which the Government could avail themselves for the purpose they have in view. Mr. Nicholson added that certain land resumptions would be involved in these alternative proposals, and I am mindful of the fact that the Government of the day are not financially flush and therefore cannot lay their hands upon the funds which would enable them to do what probably they know to be best in the circumstances. Therefore I suggest that since we have succeeded so far in handling the traffic without incurring the expenditure in question, it might be possible to continue the present system until the

traffic regulations have been so amended as to prevent the running of trams in certain of our crowded thoroughfares. The time has arrived when the trams should not be permitted to run, as they do to-day, in the centre of the city. In other parts of the world, one is struck by the fact that trams are excluded from the centre of the cities. It has been stated that no trams run in London city proper, but that is not strictly accurate. There is one line, and one line only, along the Thames Embankment, which, however, is a very wide thoroughfare. The running of trams along the Embankment does not affect the thickly congested traffic in the Strand and up Ludgate Hill. The time has arrived to consider the advisableness of following in Perth the example of other cities. Meantime the Government would be well advised to stay their hands in regard to the danger spot at the Horseshoe Bridge. Let them continue to run the trams over the Beaufort-street bridge until other arrangements are made. Some little time ago the Minister for Railways stated that if the Government did not use the Horseshoe Bridge for the trams people from the northern suburbs would have to make use of the Melbourne-road and the Pier-street crossings. To our sorrow we know that those are indeed dangerous crossings, especially the one at Pier-street. Many lives have been lost at that crossing and it would be very unwise to force the people travelling in motor buses to cross at Pier-street or at Melbourne-road, as those crossings exist to-day. I believe it is possible, in fact I am sure it is, to construct a bridge over the Melbourne-road crossing. This would relieve to a considerable extent the present congestion. But as I pointed out just now we could do a lot if we had the money, and I realise that the Government have not any funds at their disposal. Therefore the construction of a bridge at that point is out of the question for the time being. The Government have our sympathy in this connection, but if the Minister for Railways persists in his attitude in constructing the trams over the Horseshoe Bridge, instead of continuing to receive our sympathy, he will get our curses. Any Minister in authority is entitled to all the assistance he can get from the representatives of the people in Parliament and when he knows that he can command that assistance, and in defiance of the voices raised against such a proposal he carries out a work that is considered to be not in the best interests of the community, then he is acting in a manner that cannot possibly redound to his credit. I hope that every member will vote for the motion and show that he is opposed to the action it is contemplated taking.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW (Metropolitan)
[5.4]: I have much pleasure in supporting the motion because the matter is of con-

siderable importance to my constituents. The first thing that struck me in the controversy that has been going on in the Press is that the Minister for Railways seems to have consulted only one authority and to have been guided entirely in his action by that authority. I am referring of course to the tramway authority. I do not think that is right. The Horseshoe Bridge is used by all kinds of traffic, motor cars and horse-drawn vehicles, and also largely by pedestrians. Possibly a tramway can be run across the bridge, and I have no doubt that at the present juncture that would be of a certain advantage to the tramway system, but I doubt very much whether, even now, the tramways can be run across the bridge with absolute safety. I am perfectly satisfied trams cannot be run over that bridge without impeding and delaying the traffic that ordinarily passes over the bridge. Consequently I think that other sections of the community besides the tramway people should be consulted, and I have no hesitation in saying that every other class of vehicular traffic, whether motor or horse-driven, is opposed to the trams being taken across the bridge. During the course of many years I have frequently crossed that bridge, and I agree with those speakers who have declared that it is a very difficult bridge to negotiate. I can claim to be somewhat of an authority on that subject because I have driven a motor car since 1903, not only here but in many cities of the world, and I do not hesitate to declare that even now, without tram cars on that bridge, the passage over it involves a certain amount of anxiety to the man driving a car. There are two dangerous places, the first at the crest and the second at the bottom of the bridge when you approach the corner of Roe and William-streets.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Suicide corner.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: They are two nasty places and there is always the additional danger by reason of the manner in which pedestrians wander about the roadway in any direction they like. That is not peculiar to the Horseshoe Bridge. Unfortunately, it is a feature of the traffic all over the city, but it is more difficult even there because you see them meandering in all directions.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The pedestrian has to meander about to dodge the traffic.

Hon. A. J. H. SAW: Not at all. He can go straight across the road if he likes, but he prefers to cross diagonally, because by doing that he covers a shorter distance. Apart from the question of danger, trams running over that bridge will undoubtedly impede the traffic, and from that point of view alone it is not wise for the Government to carry out their intentions. If they do they will surely have to make other provision for the traffic to the north side of the city. Perth is badly provided indeed with means of communication to the sub-

urbs on the northern side of the line. There is not a single communication that is not open to objection. Beaufort-street itself is not a particularly good crossing and the others are just as bad, if not worse. If the Government persist in running trams across the bridge, the time will surely arrive when they must provide another bridge from the north to the south, probably at Melbourne-road. That crossing has been a disgrace ever since I have been here. The road is in a shocking state of disrepair and it is common to find the traffic held up there for 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour at a time. I noticed some time ago that the Minister suggested that motor traffic should go via the subway at West Perth. That is a veritable death trap; it is the worst crossing that could have been devised by anybody. Even walking through it involves a certain amount of danger for pedestrians and that danger is increased where motor cars are concerned. It is even worse than the subway in the vicinity of the show ground because, owing to the bend and the very narrow road, it is impossible to see the traffic that is approaching until you are right on it. I know the Government are faced with financial difficulties, but I am certain that they must shortly provide a considerable sum of money for the purpose of constructing a bridge over the railway line at some other locality, if they persist with their present proposal of carrying trams over the Horseshoe Bridge. I have no doubt that the tramway authorities will declare that the trams when going over the bridge, will give sufficient clearance. But that is not the point. With the congestion of traffic there will always be danger. In addition, I do not believe that there is another city in Australia where the pedestrian traffic is so badly regulated as is the case in Perth. The traffic authorities should have their expenses paid to other parts of the world in order to learn how traffic is regulated. I am glad to know that Inspector Smith has taken a trip to the Old Country with a view to getting some lessons in the regulation of traffic. I did not rise with any idea of embarrassing the Government, but because I felt certain, in the long run, that it would be more economical to stay the hand of the Government at the present time, so far as the construction of a tramway line across the bridge is concerned. I support the motion.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER (East) [5.10]: It is now some considerable time since I took up this matter, but, unfortunately, at the beginning it was not taken seriously. Since my first reference to it, we have had statement upon statement from the Minister, but notwithstanding the very strong objections that now exist to the carrying out of this work, we find that the Minister has gone right ahead with it and that yesterday morning a commencement was actually made with the work. Mr. Nicholson is to be com-

mended for bringing forward the motion, which I hope, will do some good in the way of compelling the Government to hold up the work until a thorough inquiry is made. It is not enough for the Minister to say that the matter has been considered by the departmental officers. The departmental officers look at a matter of this kind through their own spectacles only, and I am surprised that a Minister of the Crown should allow himself to be governed by officialdom in this way. In the statements he has made the responsible Minister said this—

If responsible engineers can disprove the statements of the departmental officers that there is not an ample margin of safety in all ordinary circumstances, then of course, reconsideration will have to be given to the matter.

I want to know what engineers are going to be concerned about making that investigation. One question I put to the Leader of the House is whether the Commissioner of Police—the man who is responsible for the traffic control of the city—has been called upon to express an opinion on this matter. If so, will the Leader tell members what stand that officer takes. So far as my knowledge goes, the Commissioner of Police has not been approached at all. It is interesting to know exactly what has transpired. One of the departments under the Minister's control is that of the railways, and by this time the Minister must know that the cost of running the railways is greatly increased by reason of the existence of the bottle-neck through which all the lines have to pass in Perth. If the tramlines are built across the Horseshoe Bridge we shall have a similar state of chaos with the tramway system. Why it should be desired to guide the traffic through the two channels—the Beaufort-street and the William-street bridges, is beyond my comprehension. The natural outlet for the traffic is in a westerly direction. Yet it is proposed to take it along thoroughfares which, as it is, are carrying nearly the whole of the traffic. The Minister declared that there is ample room on the bridge. But look at the space that will be taken up by bogey cars when they swing. A bogey, on taking a curve, will swing over some five or six feet. Then again the fact must be remembered that the traffic of to-day is not going to be the traffic of Perth eight or ten years hence. Surely it will be regarded as wise not to proceed with the construction of this tramline when we realise that trams on the bridge will make the position impossible within the next six or seven years. The expenditure of £3,000, to which reference has been made by the Minister, is a small matter indeed compared to the cost that will be involved in many ways if the intention of the Government is carried out. The Government would be well advised to stay their hand, and not turn a useful thoroughfare into a useless one. I doubt the Minister's estimate that a saving of five minutes will

be effected. It does not take more than six minutes to go to Newcastle-street from William-street along Wellington-street and up Beaufort-street. Even if that saving could be effected, the Government are not justified in establishing this menace to the people. Dr. Saw has referred to pedestrians. Pedestrian traffic is not controlled in the city. If a double set of tramlines is laid over the Horseshoe Bridge, the Commissioner of Police would be justified in prohibiting pedestrians from risking their lives in the attempt to cross that bridge. The Minister went on to say—

Apparently there is a desire by motorists to banish trams from the central city streets, and it is suggested that tram passengers, who consist of a majority of the people, should be obliged to alight at the foot of William-street or Beaufort-street on the north side, and then walk to Hay and Murray-streets.

I have never seen any suggestion of the sort. All that has been referred to is the danger of running the double line over the bridge. I cannot see why the Minister should take up that attitude. He goes on to say—

They unhesitatingly state that there is no necessity for alarm in the working of trams over the bridge. Extravagant statements about "ruthless juggernauts" and "death-traps" are not only unjustifiable, but disclose a prejudice which is entirely at variance with the facts as they are at the moment.

Whoever made that statement is not very wide of the mark. It is no uncommon thing for bogey trams to leave the rails. One recently crashed into a footpath, and, had it not been a raised footpath, the tram would have run into an adjoining house, as the Sydney tram did. If a bogey car took charge on the Horseshoe Bridge, what would happen to the passengers?

Hon. T. Moore: What would happen in such a case on the Beaufort-street bridge?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That is quite different. It does not matter how much money is spent on the Horseshoe Bridge, it cannot be made as safe as the Beaufort-street bridge. Even if the Governor Broome Hotel were removed it would not guard against the possibility of a bogey running into the railway yards. There has been a cheap sneer at the expense of motorists. They are ever caring for the safety of the public, and it is unbecoming in the Minister to make that remark concerning them. I am not a motor car owner, but am thinking of the convenience of the people, and the danger that exists through the present proposals of the Government. It would be interesting to know what reason beyond the suggested saving has induced the Government to go on with this project. Why congest the traffic in the centre of the city?

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: Do you not know the reason?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Minister should give it.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: The buses come down that way.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: In all progressive countries the motor bus and the truckless electric bus are displacing the old and cumbersome system of rails. We shall be wasting money if we lay down new lines, for in eight or ten years they will be obsolete. The Government have done wrong in lighting this through. It is a departmental matter, and the other departments should be consulted. Let the best brains possible be brought to bear on the subject. Before the Government construct this line against public opinion, let an inquiry first be held into the wisdom of the action. I hope the result of such inquiry will be a determination to run a line along Murray-street, and across the Melbourne-road crossing, or some other convenient place, so as to avoid a congestion of the traffic in one part of the city. I trust the motion will be agreed to, and that the Government will stay their hands pending an inquiry into the whole question. I have no doubt the result of such an inquiry would be to stop the work.

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [5.25]: I have much pleasure in supporting the motion. As one whose business is on the north side of the railway, I can speak with some feeling on this matter. Between seven in the morning and five in the evening the Melbourne-road crossing is closed on an average for two hours a day. Very often it is closed from 15 to 20 minutes at a time. Waggon, lories, and other vehicles cannot be kept waiting all that time, and are taken to the nearest other crossing, that is the Horseshoe Bridge. I use the Horseshoe Bridge on an average three times a day. It is no uncommon thing to be held up for two minutes, either going along Roe-street from the west towards the bridge, or coming from the east, before the traffic going either way can cut in towards William-street or Roe-street. If that is the case to-day, what is going to happen in the future? It is the most dangerous place in the Commonwealth to choose for a double line of trams. The Minister himself could not suggest any more dangerous place than the Horseshoe Bridge for such a purpose. When one is driving round the curve on the north side of the line one cannot see anything that is coming along Roe-street from the west. The position is nearly as bad on the east side. There is a large volume of pedestrian traffic. The Minister forgets there is a railway ticket office on the top of the bridge where people buy their tickets. Trains are emptying passengers at all hours of the day, and hundreds of men, women and children come out at that ticket office and rush on to the William-street bridge. There is also a gateway through which

pedestrians ascend to Wellington-street, and another gateway for people to reach Roe-street, where the goods office is.

Hon. J. Cornell: And the James-street school.

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: Yes. It is the most dangerous place I know of. It is suggested there will be a gain in time. I say without fear of contradiction, that in most cases it will take ten minutes longer for a tram to reach Newcastle-street by this route than if it went along the present route. I cannot understand the officials recommending the proposal. I am sure if departmental engineers other than those connected with the railways were asked for a report it would be an unfavourable one. I hope the Government will stay their hands, and cause further inquiry to be made. This is a death-trap, especially on the Roe-street side. All manner of traffic is forced away from the Melbourne-road crossing because of the delays that occur there. Goods traffic cannot be held up indefinitely at Melbourne-road, for the owners of the vehicles cannot afford to allow it. The traffic, therefore, has to go round via the Horseshoe Bridge. Unless the people can be given something in place of the present method, the same trouble will always exist. What is required is a bridge over the Melbourne-road crossing. Perth is spreading to the north and the west, and the traffic is increasing immensely every month.

Hon. E. H. Gray: This will relieve the traffic.

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: Far from it. It will cause greater delays than exist to-day. I will back my opinion in any reasonable manner. I hope the Government will postpone the work until they have obtained further opinions upon it.

Hon. E. H. GRAY (West) [5.25]: It is time a representative of the pedestrians had something to say. I oppose the motion.

Hon. A. Lovekin: It is not a party question.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: It seems like it.

Hon. J. Cornell: You are going to make it one.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: No. The motor bus controversy, and this Horseshoe Bridge question are a pre-arranged plan for a continued attack upon the Government.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I take exception to the hon. member's remark.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I should think so.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I made no suggestion of that sort, and must ask for a withdrawal of the statement. There is nothing in anything I said to indicate such a thing.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest to the hon. member that he should say things as little offensively as he can.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am not suggesting anything against any hon. member, but as a representative of the public I think it is my duty to express my opinion. Public meetings have been held upon the matter and the Press have taken it up. I am not ex-

ceeding my duty in stating my opinion regarding the source of the trouble. I agree with Dr. Saw when he says that this is the worst-conducted city in the world with respect to the control of traffic.

Hon. J. Cornell: Next to Fremantle.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I approach this matter from a difficult angle. There is no guarantee of safety for the people in the city, for too much attention is given to motor and other traffic. The reason why people have to walk in the streets is because in most of the suburbs there are no footpaths. As one who does not own a motor car I have every reason to complain of the present position, and of the treatment meted out to pedestrians by a large majority of motorists.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Wait until you are driving a motor.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: We have often to jump for our lives to get out of their way, especially after sundown.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: If that happens in the suburbs, what will happen on the bridge where there is no room?

Hon. E. H. GRAY: Dr. Saw and Mr. Nicholson complain that people walk all over the street.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Very true.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: If the traffic is so dense on the Horseshoe Bridge people will stick to the footpath. I have every confidence in the Minister, as a practical man. I would rather take his opinion than that of any member.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: He has not shown any signs of being practical.

Hon. J. Cornell: We question his judgment, not his practicability.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: We all admit that many reforms are required in the city in the matter of traffic conveniences. If there were any amount of cash available, a bridge would be built at East Perth and another at Melbourne-road for the relief of the traffic, and this would do away with the economic waste that takes place every day in the city. It is a question of finance. As a supporter of the Government, I am prepared to abide by the judgment of the Minister, knowing that he will do the best possible in the interests of the public. He is no new chum at the game. One phase of the question has not been put forward, and that is that ordinary people who have to walk along the streets should rise up in protest against the organisations that have been brought into existence and other movements which, in my opinion, have been fostered in order to take concerted action to embarrass the Government.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT (South-West) [5.31]: I was brought to my feet by the remarks of Mr. Gray. He seemed to contend—I do not think any hon. member listening to his speech could arrive at any other conclusion—that any hon. member

supporting the motion was supporting the owners of the private buses. That is what I gathered from his remarks.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: I gathered that he missed the bus.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: He also seemed to be contending that those supporting the motion desired to attack the Government and the tramway system. I do not care a snap of the fingers for the owners of private buses on a question such as that under discussion. I care, however, for the people's money that is being expended. It is absolutely wrong to spend money laying tramlines down across the Horseshoe Bridge. Members who have spoken have said that it will mean a saving of five minutes. I agree with Mr. Stephenson that there will be no such saving in time. Are people who will use the trams likely to agree to those conveyances stopping at either side of the bridge and not opposite the booking office? Not they! They will have every right to demand that the trams shall stop just where they desire to alight.

Hon. J. Cornell: That will be the only place that will be safe.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: They will also desire to board the trams there when they come out of the station.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Provided they are not killed in the meantime.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: When speaking recently I pointed out how the traffic had been held up in Hay-street, where one line only has been laid down. How much more will the traffic be held up on the Horseshoe Bridge, where it is proposed that two sets of tramlines shall be put down? What will be the position if we have one tramcar at one spot from which people are alighting to catch trains, and another queue of passengers waiting to board another car going in an opposite direction? Just imagine the passenger traffic there will be on that bridge, not on the level but on a grade. Irrespective of whether the traffic is going north or proceeding from the north to the city, vehicles will be held up on the grades on either side of the bridge. I can just shut my eyes and picture the position that will arise. I can hear the screams of blasphemy from the drivers of vehicles when the one ahead of another slips back and causes trouble. Whether a driver of a lorry with a pair of horses, or of a 1,000 guinea car, those using the bridge will be confronted with perpetual trouble on such grades as are there now. Those who are driving cars at the present time cannot all be classed as the best drivers in the world, and it is inevitable that in such circumstances cars will slip back, particularly when a start is being made. Half the people driving cars at the present time do not know enough to avoid crushing one on level ground. What will be the position on the Horseshoe Bridge? Then let us consider the position of pedestrians. It has always been my aim to do unto others as I

would they should do unto me. If I am walking I expect the motor driver to give me a reasonable chance to reach the other side of the road in safety, if I cross it at the proper place. People who walk across the Horseshoe Bridge to get to the other side do exactly the opposite of that. They proceed to the point nearest to their destination. As they say in Adelaide, they jazz across the bridge. At the present time pedestrians wander across the bridge and have no care. If motor drivers were not a particularly careful set of people, there would be far more accidents than are reported today. Then there is the greatest danger of all, the push bike. The youth on the bike comes scooting along and if he sees any of his acquaintances walking by, he lets go the handle bar and crosses the bridge in that fashion in order to show what a swanky chap he is, and how he is able to ride across the bridge without touching the handle bar.

Hon. T. Moore: And yet Mr. Stephenson told us he could not get over the bridge for minutes. The boy could do so, according to you.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Mr. Stephenson said that when coming from Roe-street he was held up for some minutes before he could turn on to the bridge. Then we have the motor cyclist. He whizzes round the bridge, often with a little friend sitting behind him, at a far greater pace than he should. If we had trams crossing the bridge as well, hung up on the top as they will be—

Hon. T. Moore: Why?

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: They will have to be hung up there. The people using the trams will not allow the Government to force them to alight at the Governor Broome Hotel, or on the other side of the bridge.

Hon. T. Moore: The Government will stop the trams where they like.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Will they?

Hon. A. J. H. Saw: They are autocratic.

Hon. T. Moore: All tramway boards do the same.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Is it to be thought for one moment that the Minister controlling the tramways will not allow the trams to be stopped if the passengers desire to alight?

Hon. J. Nicholson: The Government do not want passengers.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: The trams always stop in Beaufort-street opposite the booking office.

Hon. T. Moore: But not on the other side of the bridge there.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: And for a very good reason. If the hon. member asks any tramway man why, he will tell that hon. member that they stop on top of the bridge, where it is safer. Mr. Gray suggested that we were against motor buses. Here is a suggestion. We hear it said that the motor buses have handled the traffic along William-street. If that is the position, why should not the tramways run motor buses to act as

feeders to the cars? There could be no objection to that.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The Government should hand over the trams to the local authorities.

Hon. F. E. S. WILLMOTT: Let them do so, but if the trams are losing traffic, let the Government put on motor buses to act as feeders for the cars. This brings me to a point I have urged for years past. There is an ever-increasing necessity for one-way traffic streets being declared. If tramlines are to be put across the Horseshoe Bridge, most certainly Roe-street should be declared a one-way traffic street. Let us imagine what condition the traffic will develop into at that point. That provision should be agreed to without any argument. In my opinion the matter should be dealt with properly and a decision arrived at once and for all to define which streets shall be confined to one-way traffic only. People in William-street are probably wondering whether the trams will affect their businesses for well or ill. This takes my mind back to the time when it was proposed to run trams down Hay-street. Business people waited as a deputation on the Government and urged that the trams should not be run down that thoroughfare, as they considered their businesses would be adversely affected. They claimed that it would be far better if the trams did not go along Hay-street. They urged that people, instead of walking down the street, would use the cars and thus the shops would be deprived of so much business. The years went by and it was then deemed necessary to lift one of the tram tracks in Hay-street. Hon. members will remember what happened. A deputation of business people waited on the Minister to protest against the lifting of the tramline on the ground that injury would be wrought to their businesses. I have arrived at the conclusion that the presence of tramlines does not affect the businesses under circumstances such as I have mentioned. That is the only logical conclusion to arrive at. This morning, when coming across the Horseshoe Bridge, I noticed one thing that I think it well to mention. It will be handy to know, if the trams are run across the Horseshoe Bridge. On the left hand side of the road, going north, just near the bridge is an undertaker's shop with wreaths and so on displayed. Anyone requiring such services can be attended to at the shortest possible notice. I am sure a busy trade will be done if the trams go across the bridge.

Hon. J. EWING (South-West) [5.45]: When, this afternoon you, Sir, called for four members to rise in their places and so permit Mr. Nicholson to move his motion, I was impressed by the fact that two-thirds of the House stood up, thus affording clear evidence of the feeling of the House in respect of this question. There is no suggestion of party in the motion. The hon. member has merely done his duty to his

province in moving it. I only regret that he did not move it 14 days ago. Mr. Baxter, on the Address-in-reply, drew attention to this matter. But little notice was taken of his words at the time; for my part I did not then thoroughly understand the position. Subsequently, in another debate, Mr. Baxter emphasised the point, and on that occasion I also endeavoured to emphasise it. I am glad that practically all the metropolitan and metropolitan-suburban members have spoken to this question. I am sure no member of the House would be associated with the motion if he thought it was going to embarrass the Leader of the House, or if it appeared to be at all tinged with party. The usual practice in this House is that after the Minister has addressed himself to the motion, it is withdrawn. None of us want to embarrass the Leader of the House or the Government in any way, and so I hope our usual practice will be followed. Of course if such a motion were moved in another place it would be a totally different thing, but here, so long as members express their views on the motion, it is all that is required. The Minister for Railways finds himself in an awkward position. Of course he is merely endeavouring to do what he conceives to be his duty and carry the Leederville traffic more directly into Perth. His officers, it seems, have told him that it can best be done by bringing the trams over the Horseshoe Bridge. That may be so, but I have examined that bridge, have spent an hour on it watching the traffic, and I am appalled at the risk we are about to take. Crossing the bridge from the Wellington-street end, one can see nothing of the traffic at the other end of the bridge until he reaches the crest. It will be the most dangerous spot in Perth if the Government persist in running trams over it. I want the Minister for Railways to consider this as a practical man thoroughly in earnest about his work. I am sure he cannot be looking at it in the right light. No sane person having stood upon that bridge and watched the traffic, could with equanimity vote in favour of adding trams to the existing congestion of the bridge. The only satisfactory way of overcoming the traffic difficulty is to provide a railway crossing at Melbourne-road. There, too, the Government are awkwardly situated, for it has been said that such a crossing would cost £50,000, and in all probability the Government cannot see their way to the spending of so much upon that work. Because of that the Minister, feeling that he must do something to relieve the traffic and bring the people into the city by the more direct route, has allowed himself to be guided by his technical officers, who appear to see no danger in running trams over the Horseshoe Bridge. Officers who could thus advise the Minister without having considered the subject should be censured. The Minister has already started the work, but I am sure the Government will listen to an ex-

pression of opinion from this House, although no vote be actually taken; and since the opinion here is practically unanimous, I am sure the Leader of the House will convey it to his colleagues. There is no immediate hurry. The work could be stopped and a full investigation made with a view to discovering some satisfactory alternative. I agree with Mr. Stephenson that when the trams are running over the bridge, the place will be a veritable death trap. I hope the debate will bear good fruit, and that the Government will reconsider the position and will decide to do nothing to endanger human life.

Hon. J. CORNELL (South) [5.52]: Let me say at the outset that I do not own a motor car; that I cannot drive one, and that about the only time I ever ride in one is when some friend extends to me the hospitality of his car. Therefore I cannot be accused of holding a brief for the motorist; in fact he is my pet aversion. Were it not that the State owns the tramways, and that this work involves an expenditure by the State I, being a country member and familiar with the most up-to-date tramways in the State, namely, those of Kalgoorlie and Boulder, should be inclined to say nothing on this question.

Hon. J. Duffell: Do the trams up there pay well?

Hon. J. CORNELL: They are owned by a private company that, so far as I know, has never paid a dividend; but bad and all as those trams may be, they are a distinct improvement on what we have in Perth. As I say, this Horseshoe Bridge proposal involves the expenditure of a good deal of money. Personally, I can see no use, other than as a means of connection with the existing car barn, for running the trams down Barrack-street from the Beaufort-street Bridge, nor for running them down William-street. When we consider the number of people who come in to the city by train, as against those who come in by tram, it is seen that the great bulk of them come by train, and that the extra distance that would be involved in walking along either Barrack-street or William-street is about 75 yards. Therefore I see no necessity for having the trams in those two streets. But if the trams from the north must be continued through Perth, then as one who has observed the working of the most successful tramways in Australia, namely, those of Adelaide, I should say the trams ought to come into the city via Irwin-street, run along the Terrace and out again at Melbourne-road; while the Subiaco trams could run along the Terrace and out at George-street. Of course we have heard argument about the desecration of the Terrace by trams, but the same argument was used about the desecration of Victoria Square, Adelaide. Since the taking over of the tramway system by the Government we have had but the one

attempt at engineering. That was when Mr. Willmott's Government, taking the trams out of Hay-street into Murray-street, ran the lines up round that impossible corner of Havelock-street. Very soon afterwards the line had to be taken up and ran round the Melbourne-road corner. I venture to predict that within six months of the trams being taken over the Horseshoe Bridge they will be removed from that structure. The Minister for Railways is coming in for a good deal of criticism. Nobody would think of impeaching his integrity and honesty. No doubt he has been advised by his technical officers that the trams can be operated successfully over the Horseshoe Bridge. If there is one everlasting curse overshadowing Australians, it is their lack of desire to have a job done well on the capital expenditure. In consequence we are always in a state of pin-prick and irritation, and rarely have a job done properly. I know that the exchequer is short of funds, but if it be not too late I strongly advise the Minister to take a broad view and look at Perth, not as it is to-day, but as it will be in 10 or 15 years' time. If he does that he will surely find the ingenuity necessary to the raising of the money required. At West Subiaco within a mile and a half we have two subways under the railway. It should not be altogether the function of the Government to construct bridges under or over city railways. It is partly the function of the municipality, and if anyone has been lacking in acumen, foresight and initiative in respect of this work, it is the municipal council which has not grasped the situation as it should have done. Otherwise it would not have been necessary to make this appeal to-day.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES (North) [6.0]: I should not have risen to speak except for conscientious reasons and the remarks of Mr. Gray and Mr. Moore. I view this proposal very seriously, because if the project be carried out, I am confident that lives will be endangered. I have no desire to harass the Minister; rather do I desire to help him. I honestly believe members are viewing this proposal from a sober and sensible standpoint, and recognise the difficulty that must inevitably arise if this work be carried out. Mr. Gray has insinuated—and he did not withdraw the insinuation—that the motion has been prompted by the bus proprietors. I am satisfied that the bus proprietors do not require any push in this House, because they have sufficient influence to carry on almost in defiance of the Minister. Yesterday I had occasion to ride from Fremantle in a motor, and between Fremantle and Claremont I passed four big motor buses filled with passengers from Perth to Fremantle, and only one train with a few people in it. When the motor buses are receiving such support, they do

not want any support in this House. I make that observation in order that the Minister for Railways may not find himself at a dead-end in connection with motor traffic as he is being led into a dead-end by following the advice of the Railway Department officers. Surely the Works Department, who have a good deal to do with traffic, should have been consulted in this matter. I do not think they have been. I do not know whether the City Council have been consulted, but if they were, it would not matter much, because they seem to be divided on all subjects. The Traffic Department controlled by the police should have been asked to express an opinion as to whether this project was dangerous. If one wants a motor license from the Traffic Department he has to drive over the Horseshoe Bridge, and if he can satisfactorily handle his car amongst the existing traffic, the department are quite satisfied to grant a license. Given wise administration, this country will progress, and its progress will be reflected in the city. The city is so situated that growth must extend north and west. It cannot extend either south or east because of the river. Sooner or later we must have a proper outlet for the northern traffic. To suggest that we can force two lines of tramway over the Horsebridge and also cater for other traffic is simply leading ourselves into trouble, and the public into danger. Mr. Moore, while belonging to a democratic party, seems to have become an autocrat. He says trams will stop just where the department like to stop them. Assume the department adopt that attitude and that the trams with their loads of passengers stop at the foot of the Horseshoe Bridge in Roe-street: When people have to catch a train, they are intent upon catching it, and upon nothing else. They do not bother about the traffic in the streets. The trams would unload their traffic not opposite the station entrance on the bridge, but at the foot of the bridge in Wellington-street or Roe-street. Just imagine women folk with perambulators and children rushing from Wellington-street or Roe-street to catch a train with trams running in either direction across the bridge and other traffic also huddled in that section! The officer responsible for that will sooner or later get what he justly deserves. We have heard references to a member being opposed to the action of the Minister for party purposes. Surely we have got past that stage. If one wanted to direct attention to things that have been done for political purposes, one might refer to the late Government and point out how the tramway was extended to Claremont to run in competition with trains and at a time when the road traffic was being handled by buses. So to-day we have the railway trying to cater for the traffic, the Tramway Department trying to rob the Railway Department, and the bus proprietors getting the patronage. These are mistakes of the past, and

surely the country should not be asked to perpetuate similar mistakes. The extending of the tramway to Claremont was a political or departmental blunder, and I am satisfied the present project is a departmental blunder. The Minister, unfortunately, is backing his department instead of taking the advice of the people by whom he should be advised. If the Minister will listen to reason, call in expert advice as to the dangers likely to arise and give this matter the consideration it deserves, I am satisfied he will suspend the work and take steps to prevent those dangers. If the Minister does this, he will gain the respect, esteem and admiration of the whole community.

Hon. T. MOORE (Central) [6.9]: I have been drawn to my feet in consequence of my name having been mentioned. I have taken the trouble to look at the Horseshoe Bridge and see the traffic passing over it at different periods of the day. Therefore, I speak with first-hand knowledge. I have come to the conclusion there will be no more danger in having a set of tramlines on that bridge than there is in permitting big cumbersome buses swaying in all directions to use the bridge.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But you will have buses and trams.

Hon. T. MOORE: Have members considered the space required by one of these buses to negotiate the curves of the bridge? Have they thought of the danger at the present time? I do not think the danger will be increased in the slightest by the addition of trams to the traffic now being carried. I have seen trams working in many difficult places in the old world where traffic is more congested, and no fault is found there. Much more difficult angles are negotiated in the city of Glasgow.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Where are the more difficult angles in Glasgow?

Hon. T. MOORE: It has been claimed that Glasgow has the best system of tramways in the world.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I was born there, and I do not know of one angle that is bad or dangerous.

Hon. T. MOORE: In Glasgow one can enter a tram at almost any part and by a circuitous route work right through the city. I do not know what is in the minds of our officers as to stopping the trams on top of the bridge, but I interjected that it might not be necessary to do so. What is the difference between a person alighting at the foot of the Beaufort-street Bridge or at the foot of the Horseshoe Bridge in order to get to the railway station? I think it would be wrong to unload passengers on top of the Horseshoe Bridge, because they would have to negotiate the old wooden stairways in the station. The proper place for them to alight is at the foot of the bridge in Wellington-street. Of course, there will not be so many passengers alighting at the Wel-

lington-street end of the bridge as there will be at the other end.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Take the other side.

Hon. T. MOORE: If the people had to alight from the trams at the Roe-street end, they would be at no greater disadvantage than are the people who alight from the cars at Beaufort-street.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Has it been decided not to stop the cars on the top of the bridge?

Hon. T. MOORE: I do not know.

Hon. G. W. Miles: They stop on top of Beaufort-street bridge.

Hon. T. MOORE: Yes.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: But the Beaufort-street bridge is straight and you can see all the traffic.

Hon. T. MOORE: I have traversed the Horseshoe Bridge with a man who knows a lot about traffic and he pointed out that there one has a perfectly clear view. I invite any member to go there and see for himself.

Hon. J. Ewing: You cannot see what is on the other side of the Horseshoe Bridge.

Hon. T. MOORE: I admit that, but an improvement is to be made.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: By taking a lamp post down!

Hon. T. MOORE: No, a big concrete corner pillar is to be removed, and thus there will be a clear view at that part. I am satisfied there is no more likelihood of danger arising there than on the Beaufort-street bridge. No doubt there will be an outcry from the business people of Wellington-street. Whenever a tram has been removed from any central thoroughfare, there has always been a wail from someone. The Wellington-street landowners and business people will naturally object, because traffic will be diverted from their places of business. I hope it is not the voice of the business people of Perth that is making itself articulate here to-day. I believe many members are convinced that a real danger will exist, but after having looked for myself, I am satisfied there will be no greater danger than on the Beaufort-street Bridge.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: You have looked only once. We have been examining it every day for the last 10 years.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [7.30]: No one will question the right or the sincerity of Mr. Nicholson in moving the adjournment of the House on this question. The hon. member represents the Metropolitan Province, and the matter is one that comes within the region of his duties. Moreover those who know Mr. Nicholson will acquit him of any disposition to indulge in factious opposition. But the hon. member should recognise that the proposal to take the trams over the Horseshoe Bridge is not the result of a mere moment's thought. The step would

not have been contemplated had there been any reason to believe that it would be attended with any unusual element of danger. The tramway experts should be best qualified to decide the question. They have had years of training in this particular business and should be in a position to come to a wise conclusion as to whether the Horseshoe Bridge can be used for trams without undue danger to the public. If the tramway people were liable to err in this connection, then the Railway Department's officers should be of valuable assistance in the direction of enabling the tramway management to come to a safe conclusion. Evidently there is an impression, not exactly in this House but outside, that the Minister for Railways is embarking on the scheme without the concurrence of the responsible officers. That is not so. He is supported by the advice of those who, after many years of practical experience, are in a good position to guide him on this question. Again, it has been pointed out to me that this very bridge was originally designed and constructed with a view to its being eventually used for a tramway. That was in the days when a company operated the metropolitan tramways. Some difficulty arose between the company and the Government, and consequently the utilisation of the Horseshoe Bridge for the purposes of a tramway was not brought about. There has been a good deal of criticism as to the insufficiency of space for ordinary traffic if two trams should be on the bridge together; but, as indicated by the plan that is now lying on the Table of the House, there would be on the narrowest portion of the bridge at least 12 feet between the trams and the footpaths.

Hon. J. Duffell: When the tram is swinging!

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That is allowing for the sway of the trams in rounding the curves. In many instances there would be considerably more clearance than 12 feet. Now, under the Traffic Act no vehicle is permitted to have a greater width than 7ft. 6 in. Few vehicles are constructed of a greater width than 5 feet, and thus it is evident that there will be ample room for motors and vehicles on the bridge even if tramways are laid down and operated. There has been no complaint of the motor cars using the bridge, and yet they are infinitely more dangerous than tram cars. A tram car is driven by a trained man on defined lines according to the dictates of prudence; but motor cars, when in the hands of irresponsible drivers, as is often the case, sweep along the bridge at a terrific pace.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: You will have both trams and motors there presently.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The departmental engineers say definitely there is no need for alarm in connection with the working of the trams over the bridge, and surely they ought to know. They are

pecially trained to safeguard against the possibility of danger in the construction and operation of the lines, and as against their opinions we have only those of inexperienced persons, which would not carry much weight. I am not referring to the House, but to outside when I say it is asserted that motorists alone are responsible for the agitation against the trams going over the Horseshoe Bridge. They are anxious to retain control over that thoroughfare, and they have the audacity to say that the trams would be dangerous, would be juggernauts. About three months ago I stayed at the Royal Hotel for a fairly long period, and from the balcony I watched the motor cars scorching down the bridge across the intersection of Wellington-street and William-street. If they did not prove to be juggernauts, it certainly was not the fault of their drivers. The "Sunday Times," which is a vigilant observer of passing events, in an article appearing in its issue of the 14th September last, and headed "Horseshoe Bridge Thrills, 'Mobility' of Mad Motorists, Which Requires Drastic Measures," commented on the situation as follows:—

If the fastidious thrill-seeker for whom the "stunt" movies have become tame and tedious is in search of new sensations that will make an adequate appeal to his spine, he might be well advised to occupy for half an hour a point of observation on the Horseshoe Bridge and watch the unregulated motor traffic thereon. But because the observer will note a surprising amount of contributory negligence on the part of foot passengers, that is no reason why some drivers of motor vehicles should transgress all the laws of fair traffic. Motorists may be the salt of the earth, but that does not privilege them to pickle the pedestrians. On that congested thoroughfare not only do the delinquents disregard the safety limit of speed, but their motor horns are as silent as the grave to which they would appear to be willing to consign a possible victim. From this road, above all others, the reckless and the inexpert motorists ought to be banished, because it is the chief entrance way from the city to the large school for boys, girls, and infants.

The "Sunday Times" puts the case very well, and shows that some motorists are a menace to life and limb. The tram cars will serve at least one good purpose by causing the reckless motorist to regulate the speed of his car when passing over the bridge, a thing many motorists never do at present. As to the pedestrians, there are footpaths for them, and unless they deliberately court danger, they have absolutely nothing to fear. It has been suggested by some outside the House, and even by some inside the House, that tram car passengers should be dropped at the foot of William-street and Beaufort-street and forced to walk to the business centre of the city: in other words, that the comfort of thousands of

people should be sacrificed in order that motor cars should have a clear and uninterrupted run into the city. Mr. Willmott, I believe, suggested that Roe-street should be a one-way street. It is the intention of the Minister for Railways to endeavour to have Roe-street made a one-way street. This will get over much of the difficulty that has been anticipated. Mr. Baxter wanted to know whether the Commissioner of Police had been consulted. The Commissioner of Police is in charge of the administration of the Traffic Act, but he certainly is not qualified to express an opinion on this subject, or certainly not as well qualified as the expert officers of the Tramway and Railway Departments. Both sets of officers are in accord as to the possibility of carrying on operations over the Horseshoe Bridge without undue risk. The officers of the Tramway Department who have reported favourably on the project are the Traffic Superintendent, Mr. Shillington; the Permanent Way Engineer, Mr. Ogden; and the Electrical Engineer, Mr. Clarke. They strongly recommended the undertaking, and they say that not only will it give people living between William-street and Bulwer-street a quicker service into the city, but that it will save over £3,000 per annum in operating expenses. Then the Railway Department comes in. The Chief Engineer for Existing Lines has also reported favourably on the project. Both in the Railway Department and in the Tramway Department there is unanimity of opinion favourable to the proposal. The Government intend to use almost entirely single cars on the new route, and that is one way in which the possibility of danger will be minimised. Before I had notice of Mr. Nicholson's intention to move the adjournment of the House, all arrangements to carry out the work had been completed, and a start had been made. The matter has since been discussed by the City Council, and there are differences of opinion even among that body, who, as is well known, represent the ratepayers of Perth. There is no unanimity in the City Council relative to this matter. The experts say that the project is safe from the point of view of the quantity of traffic going over the bridge; they fail to see any unusual element of danger. I hope my statement will prove satisfactory to Mr. Nicholson and to all concerned. To-day the Minister for Railways received from the Mt. Hawthorn Progress Association, through the member for the district, Mr. Millington, a letter reading as follows:—

H. Millington, Esq., M.L.A., Dear Sir, At the last meeting of this association I was requested to convey to the powers that be through your goodness the congratulations of this association on the decision of the Government to adopt a new route via William-street bridge for the trams coming in this direction. It is believed this will considerably reduce the time taken for the journey from the city to our local terminus.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Who signed that letter? The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The honorary secretary of the Mt. Hawthorn Progress Association. I will take an early opportunity of conveying to the Government the views expressed by this House, and I would ask Mr. Nicholson to withdraw his motion.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan—in reply) [7.45]: I appreciate the fact that the Leader of the House has been so gracious as to acquit, not only me, but other members who have supported the motion, from any party feeling in regard to it, thereby dispelling the suggestion which was wrongly made by Mr. Gray. I regret that Mr. Gray should have been misled to even imputing anything so base in a matter of such serious importance as this. I need not assure the Minister, nor Mr. Gray, nor any other person who may have spoken in support of the motion, that only one motive actuated me in regard to the question, and that was the safety of the public. I had only that one desire because not only my constituents, but various bodies who were impressed by the apparent dangers if the work was proceeded with further, brought the matter forcibly before me. Those people believed that the work would be attended not only with danger but with possible loss of life, and it was for that reason that I brought the matter before the House. Mr. Ewing mentioned that he would like to have heard the subject debated earlier, but it was felt, not only by myself, but by other members, that we should have expected to find the City Council taking definite action. As the Leader of the House has pointed out, there is a difference of opinion amongst members of that body with regard to the seriousness attaching to the laying of tram lines over the bridge. That being the case, it devolved upon a member of this House to bring the matter forward by way of an urgency motion, in order to impress upon the Government how seriously the members of the metropolitan and metropolitan-suburban areas viewed the matter. I remind members that over a week ago I asked certain questions relating to the subject. That was a preliminary to this motion, and the replies I received not having achieved the result one would have desired, I was compelled to submit the urgency motion. It will be seen, therefore, that everything possible was done, and if any accident should arise—and we earnestly hope none will occur—then we as members will feel that we can be acquitted of blame in the matter. No one would regret more deeply than the Minister in charge of this department if a serious accident did take place. I feel sure that he, and the other members of the Government, will be impressed with what members of this Chamber have said to-day. I hope that their remarks may bear fruit. I realise from the reply given by the Colonial Secretary that owing to the opinions expressed

by responsible officers, the Government feel that the work can be carried out with safety. I have my views on the question and time only will prove whether or not I had good ground for my fears. I trust that no member will again impute to another member in this House anything but honourable motives. If there is a Chamber in existence in any State of Australia where members' ideas and motives are pure, it is this Chamber. We, as individual members and as a House, can claim that we at all times seek to do justice and to do that which is right. We endeavour to carry out our duties to the best of our ability. We endeavour to make representations, as it is our bounden duty to do, on behalf of our constituents, but when we see things done which we consider do not benefit the community, then, of course, we shall always be expected to make ourselves heard. Whilst I am impressed with what the Leader of the House said, I still think in regard to the bridge that the matter should be carefully weighed and considered more fully by the Government than has been done, and that the opinions of independent experts should be obtained. I trust the Government will not look upon it as being too late to secure those opinions. Having achieved the object I had in view, namely, the ventilation of this important matter, I will, in accordance with the procedure usually followed in these matters, ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. J. Ewing, leave of absence for 12 sittings granted to Hon. E. Rose (South-West) on the ground of urgent private business.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Trust Funds Investment.
 - 2, Fremantle Municipal Tramways.
- Received from the Assembly.

BILL—PRIVATE SAVINGS BANK.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 18th September.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [7.55]: Only two points have been raised in connection with this Bill, one by Mr. Ewing and the other by Mr. Willmott, and the reply that I shall make to the one will be the reply to the other. Mr. Ewing stated that a bank might need time to build up its funds and find the necessary deposit. Mr. Willmott wanted to know why the Governor may by proclamation exempt any private savings bank, either wholly or to any special extent, from the operation of the measure. This

subclause, like most of the Bill, has been taken from the Queensland Act, and its object is to meet such a position as that indicated by Mr. Ewing. A bank in its early stages may not be able to find the £10,000 deposit straight away, and it may not be necessary from the point of view of stability. A lesser amount might suffice for the time being. In the circumstances it might be advisable to exempt it for a period from the operation of the measure. Of course this will have to be done by proclamation. Everyone will know that the bank is exempted and if any objection is raised, that objection can be voiced in Parliament and the Government can be called upon to justify their conduct. The Primary Producers' Bank has been mentioned. Probably that is a bank to which this clause could, if necessary, be made to apply. The bank would have to convince the Government that it was in a stable condition as regards its finances and that there would be no reasonable ground for objection to the granting of these matters. So far as I know nobody has applied for exemption or contemplates applying. This is a provision that exists in the Queensland Act; in fact, the Bill is almost a copy of the Queensland legislation. It is desirable to have the provision in the Bill in case it is necessary to utilise it on just grounds.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan in the Chair: the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Interpretation:

Hon. H. SEDDON: Will permanent building societies come under the provisions of this Bill? They receive money and pay interest on it until the shares mature.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I am certain they would not come under the provisions of this measure.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 15—agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment.

Recommittal.

On motion by Hon. J. Nicholson, Bill recommitted for the purpose of further considering Clause 7.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan in the Chair: the Colonial Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 7—Quarterly investments with Minister:

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: Where a private savings bank provides the security, that is asked for in the shape of the £10,000, it gives an indication of its bona fides to carry on business and provide a substantial sum

towards its obligations. It should not, therefore, be called upon to give up 70 per cent. of its deposits to the Government. I understand this has been adopted from an arrangement that exists in Queensland between the State Savings Bank and the Commonwealth Bank, whereby 70 per cent. of the deposits are lodged with the Commonwealth Bank to prevent competition between the two institutions. In that case no lump sum deposit is paid. It seems hardly fair that the Western Australian Government should demand from those seeking to enter into this business, not only the £10,000, but also the 70 per cent. To avoid this unfairness the clause should be struck out. It means that no other bank could enter into competition with the State Savings Bank and that all the other provisions of the Bill are, in a sense, so much camouflage.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Mr. Nicholson cannot be serious, for his suggestion would mean that anyone who puts up £10,000 deposit would be able to start in competition with the State Savings Bank.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: You do not like the Government being attacked in the way they attack private people.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The State Savings Bank has done a great deal towards the development of the State, and in the early days financed all the loans to agriculturists at a low rate of interest. If any bank does make a deposit of £10,000, that is taken as consideration in connection with the payment of 70 per cent. of the deposits. That is quite a fair arrangement. The Government cannot accept the Bill unless the clause is included.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am with Mr. Nicholson to this extent, that if the Bill be passed with the clause included, the establishment of private savings banks will be prevented. Should there be a run on such private savings banks they would not be in a position to meet the demands until a lapse of three months, when they would receive their money back. Boiled down, the position is that the Bill will prevent the establishment of private savings banks.

Hon. J. Ewing: It is better to say that straight out.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Owing to the price of money to-day the State Savings Bank is not paying a fair return to depositors. If private savings banks were established and they paid a fair return, the State Savings Bank would have to follow suit. Despite what the Minister says, I believe the Bill will apply to societies that receive money on deposit now and they will be wiped out because they will not be able to comply with the provisions regarding the deposit of £10,000 that has to be put up, and the 70 per cent. of their deposits that have to be handed to the Government for the period set out.

Hon. J. EWING: If the position is as Mr. Seddon has stated, the Minister should advise the Committee as to the position of

the small societies. The Minister has stated that the Bill will not mean the wiping out of those bodies, but it might be as well to report progress so that he may the better explain the position.

Progress reported.

BILL—TRADE UNIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

In Committee, etc.

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

BILL—NOXIOUS WEEDS.

Second Reading.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [8.21] in moving the second reading said: The Noxious Weeds Act of 1904 has proved unsatisfactory for the reason that it did not provide effectively for dealing with noxious weeds in Western Australia. It made no provision for the seizure and destruction of imported noxious weeds and seeds at the ports or places of entry. If seeds were being imported into the State that contained noxious weed seeds the Agricultural Department would have no power to seize or destroy those consignments. At the present time stock of all kinds can be imported into Western Australia, and they may be covered with noxious weed seeds. There is no effective method of dealing with that position. The Bill provides for imported stock being placed in quarantine at the point of disembarkation to enable the stock to be examined and all necessary steps taken in order to destroy noxious weed seeds that may be adhering to them. The responsibility of seeing that the stock is clean rests with the importer in the first instance, and a penalty of £100 is provided for an infringement of that clause. Provision is made in the Bill for stock for exhibition purposes being exempted, provided suitable safeguards are adopted. Hon. members will realise the importance of the clause when I inform them that recently a large number of horses were imported from the Eastern States and on examination the animals were found to be literally covered with Bathurst Burr. The burrs were not only in the fetlocks but in the tails and manes of the animals. Fortunately the owner was prepared to take the steps suggested by the Department of Agriculture, and the horses were cleansed of the seeds which were suitably dealt with. As a matter of fact the department had no power to compel the owner to take that action. The Bill is intended to supply the department with the necessary powers. Under the 1904 Act the department was responsible for dealing with weeds and endeavoured to do so

by means of honorary inspectors. This has proved unsatisfactory as it has been found almost impossible to induce those honorary inspectors to carry out their duties. In the majority of instances they are afraid of the possibility of making enemies among people connected with the municipalities or road boards concerned. Under the Bill it is proposed, with the spirit of the times, to invest the local authorities with power to deal with matters which are essentially of purely local importance. The Bill gives them power to destroy noxious weeds in their districts and to force settlers to destroy them. It also provides that the local authorities shall destroy noxious weeds growing on the roads. In the event of the local authority proving negligent in carrying out those duties, the Bill provides that the Minister may take necessary action and the Minister can recover the expenses attached to the eradication of the weeds from the local authority, whether a municipality or a road board. The Government do not propose to compel others to take action without doing all that is necessary themselves. On the Minister for Lands and the Commissioner of Railways will devolve a certain amount of responsibility in this respect and they will have to carry the responsibility of clearing noxious weeds from railway reserves, stock routes, camping grounds and unoccupied land within one mile of cultivated land. We have already a number of noxious weeds in this State, including stinkwort, stinking Roger, Paterson's curse, Spurge weed, Bathurst burr, blackberries and carnation weed. Some of those are a serious menace in some country districts, but have not spread to other areas. It is desirable that those areas shall be controlled and the weeds prevented from getting a hold in clean districts. The carnation weed or, as it is also called, the Spurge weed, exists in the municipality of Geraldton but nowhere else. The efforts of the Government will be to confine that weed to that particular municipality. Within that area the weed will not, in all probability, be declared a noxious weed but every effort will be made to prevent it from spreading from there.

Hon. T. Moore: That has been so for several years past.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, in that district. It is desirable that steps should be taken to keep other districts clean from the weed.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Where is the local body to get the money necessary to eradicate noxious weeds?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: That responsibility becomes a charge upon the revenue of the municipality.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: Some municipalities could not stand the expense.

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Then it will open up another avenue for fresh

taxation. Noxious weeds are becoming more general and more varied each year. The fear of the Agricultural Department is that unless drastic steps are taken soon, the State will be faced with considerable risk and danger, not only to the agricultural industry but to the pastoral industry as well. As to the clauses of the Bill, Clause 2 provides that the Noxious Weeds Act passed in 1904 shall be repealed. Under Clause 4 the Governor may declare any plant a noxious weed. He may make a declaration apply to the whole State or may restrict it to certain districts. Clause 5 gives the Governor authority to appoint inspectors and to invest them with such powers as may be deemed necessary for the effective performance of their duties. Under Clause 6 the local authorities may appoint local inspectors, who shall not only have the power conferred by this Act, but also any additional powers given them by the local authority under by-laws made under the Act. Clause 7 gives the local authority power to order the destruction of noxious weeds within its district. If the owner or occupier fails to comply with the order, the local authority can step in, destroy the weeds and recover the cost from the owner in a court of law.

Hon. J. W. Kirwan: What will be done to the local authority if it does not destroy the weeds on its own land?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The Government will do the work and hold the local authority responsible.

Hon. J. Cornell: And what shall be done to the Government if they fail to destroy weeds on Crown lands?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Under Clause 8 the local authority is bound to destroy noxious weeds growing on any land under its control. This is only right. It would be farcical if the local authorities could force others to do what they themselves are not prepared to do.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Will the Railway authorities be held responsible for their own land?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: Yes, and so too will the Lands Department. Under Clause 9 the owner is to a certain extent protected. No person can be compelled to clear his land of noxious weeds while the local authority neglects to destroy weeds on roads and lands under its control. Clause 10 gives power of entry to the inspectors. In Clause 11 provision is made for the expenses of clearing land to be borne by the owner and occupier, but the proportions will be prescribed by regulation. An owner having only a partial interest in the land and feeling dissatisfied with his proportion of costs may take his case to a judge in Chambers.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Why not to a local magistrate in a country district?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: I have no objection to that. Under Clause 12 the owner and the occupier must not hinder one

another in carrying out any notice served under the provisions of the Act. Clause 13 enables a mortgagee to add to his mortgage debt the cost of any obligations imposed on him under the measure. Clauses 14 and 15 are the usual provisions to be found in a Bill of this sort, while Clauses 16, 17, 18, and 19 are of a machinery nature.

Hon. A. Burvill: Where does the Agricultural Bank come in?

The COLONIAL SECRETARY: The whole measure is designed largely in the interests of the Agricultural Bank. Clause 20 imposes a penalty of £10 on any person who introduces noxious weeds or seeds into the State. Clause 21 is important. It provides for the quarantining of all stock brought into the State until the inspector is satisfied they are entirely free from the seeds of noxious weeds. Sheep must be kept in quarantine until they are shorn, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the inspector that they are intended for exhibition purposes. Wool must not be sold within the State unless it is certified to be free from the seeds of noxious weeds. Under Clause 23 the local authorities may apply ordinary revenue to any expenses incurred under the Act. Clauses 24 and 25 are machinery provisions. Clause 26 gives the local authority power to make by-laws. Clause 28 provides that in the event of default by a local authority in carrying out its duties, the Minister can appoint a commissioner or an inspector, who will have all the powers of the local authority, and the local authority must pay the salary of the commissioner or inspector and all other expenses. Clause 29 compels the Minister for Lands and the Commissioner for Railways to clear lands under their respective control within a mile of cultivated land. Clause 30 gives power to make regulations. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. Ewing, debate adjourned.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from 10th September.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN (South) [8.36]: I intend to vote against the second reading. It is a Bill with very far-reaching consequences, and I ask hon. members to consider what the results may be if the Bill be brought into operation. Of course we are all human, and inclined to regard the Bill from the point of view of how it will affect ourselves personally or the respective parties to which we belong or are disposed to favour.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is not the view I take.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: We are all subject to unconscious bias, and may be in-

clined to take the personal view on a Bill like this. I have heard it said that had compulsory voting been in operation, the result of the recent general elections would have been quite different from what it was. Always after an election the defeated party, particularly if the majority be narrow, is inclined to consider that their defeat was brought about by those who refrained from voting, and that if compulsory voting had been in operation the result would have been different. I have heard that members of the Labour Party are equally convinced with the supporters of other parties that compulsory voting would mean perpetual office and power for their party.

Hon. E. H. Gray: There is no doubt about that.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I am not going to say which of those results would be the more likely to accrue if the Bill were brought into operation. But I think, as Mr. Ewing put it, that that is not the point from which to view an important reform like this, that higher considerations ought to weigh with us, that irrespective of whether we think the Bill will favour ourselves or the party we are inclined to support, there are much more important aspects that should be taken into account. It is an extremely dangerous Bill. During the many years I have been a member of the House no Bill brought before us has threatened to be so disastrous in its results. I will endeavour to show the reason why I make that statement. Compulsory voting has been in operation in Queensland for the last eight or nine years, despite which to a large extent the law there is not respected. Mr. Ewing spoke of letters received by him because of his having introduced the Bill, letters approving of what he has done. An interjection I happened to make indicating that I was hostile to the Bill was reported in the Press, and as a result I have received letters taking an altogether different view of the Bill from that put forward by Mr. Ewing. A letter I have here came from a lady whom I do not know and who is strongly opposed to the Bill. She is a resident of Fremantle. It is a very long letter, so I will not trouble the House by reading it. The writer sends me a short newspaper clipping that shows that the compulsory voting in Queensland is not effective, because some 1,400 electors failed to record their votes at a recent by-election and action has been taken against them. That so large a number should have refrained from voting shows that the people of Queensland in many cases prefer to be fined rather than go to a booth. Perhaps it should be said that they have been called upon to exercise a vote when they did not feel themselves capable of forming an opinion, or may be they were indifferent to the result of the voting. The principal argument advanced by Mr. Ewing in support of the Bill was that it has been in operation in Queensland. But, as I have shown, to some extent it is inoperative there. In

my opinion it is better not to have inoperative legislation on the statute-book, for it tends to bring the law into disrespect. Whatever the law may be, let it be enforced; if it cannot be enforced, let us not have it at all. The passing of compulsory voting through the Commonwealth Parliament was an illustration of rush legislation. The Bill was brought forward, a couple of speeches were delivered, and the measure was passed. Surely it will be time enough for us to follow the example of the Australian Parliament when we see how the law operates at Federal elections. At present Parliament, I am sorry to say, is not held in too high regard by the people. Throughout Australia there is a feeling that Parliament is different from what those who are in Parliament know it to be. I admit Parliament is not perfect. The longer we are in Parliament, the more readily we must admit that Parliament is a most inefficient instrument of government, but the difficulty is to find any better system so long as each individual in the community must have a voice in the government of the country. I fail to see how we are going to add to the efficiency of Parliament by forcing the inefficient voters to express an opinion on matters which they themselves imply they know nothing about. What possible gain can there be in dragging the unwilling voter to the poll, the indifferent individual who, by his desire to stay away, shows he does not really know the subject on which he is to be compelled to vote? Yet this Bill will require such men to be dragged to the poll to express opinions on something they know nothing about. I think it would be a great mistake and would incur considerable hardship. The number of arguments that might be advanced against the proposal is almost countless. I am one of those who believe if we are to improve the efficiency of Parliament, we should have government by the fit. Government by the fit is the ideal towards which men of advanced political thought ought to strive. There may be differences of opinion as to who are the people who are fit. I believe scholastic training or advanced education does not necessarily make a man or woman fit to exercise the franchise. There are many professional men, lawyers, doctors, commercial men who, in their particular walk of life, are men of great ability, but who know nothing about politics. They do not desire to interest themselves in political questions.

Hon. J. Ewing: They ought to be made to.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: I ask the House to consider that remark. It is the most unadulterated nonsense to talk in that way. Take a man who specialises in medicine, whose whole mind and thought is directed to something of great advantage to the community. If we wish to achieve anything in this world we must concentrate. It is concentration upon a subject that produces the best results. No man is of any real use in

any walk of life unless he concentrates in that way. Members of Parliament concentrate on politics. But take a doctor who may be concentrating on something of immense service to humanity. We are asked to say to him, "We compel you to devote time to politics. We want to drag you to the poll to vote whether you like it or not. No doubt you are doing good work and do not want to be disturbed, but we are going to drag you to the poll and you will have to vote." It is a waste of human energy to insist upon such a man going to the poll. What would I say if I were asked to concentrate in a direction I did not desire? Mr. Ewing would be greatly annoyed if I told him he was to concentrate in a particular direction and devote less time to politics. Why should we say to other people that they must concentrate on politics, when they may be doing far better public work in other directions? We should strive to get government by the fit. Let those who consider themselves fit go along and vote. We have that at present; people interested in politics do go along and do vote, and thus we are likely to get much better results than by dragging unwilling people to the poll to vote on some questions of which they know nothing, or for some candidates whose merits they have had no time to consider. There are members in this House who at times refrain from voting. How many members, having their lives insured in the A.M.P. Society every year receive a notice to vote for directors, and refrain from doing so? I have never voted for directors because I do not know the merits of the candidates and have not time to inquire who are the best men. I leave it to the people who take an interest in the matter and can exercise an intelligent vote. I have certain blocks of land that entitle me to votes in municipalities and road boards, and again and again I get notices asking me to vote at some election. The candidates are merely names to me; I cannot inquire into the merits of the various candidates of this road board or that municipal council, and so I refrain from voting. If I voted blindly I should be doing more harm than good. If I devoted my time to ascertaining who was the best man, I would regard it as time wasted. I leave those elections to the people who can cast an intelligent vote. If we leave it to the people who do vote to exercise this privilege, they are the best fitted to vote. If we drag in people who know nothing about politics, the results may be disastrous.

Hon. J. Ewing: They ought to do their duty, anyhow.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: The hon. member, too, is asking us to do something that is absolutely impossible of accomplishment. It would be utterly absurd for us to pass compulsory enrolment for the Legislative Council.

Hon. J. Ewing: That is a matter of opinion.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Even the hon. member will agree, I think, that it is absolutely impossible to bring about compulsory enrolment for the Legislative Council. If he wants to do that the first thing will be to alter the Constitution. A good deal of doubt exists as to whether certain individuals have qualifications for voting for the Legislative Council. One lawyer would give an opinion that a certain individual was qualified to vote for this House; another lawyer regarding that same individual might easily give an opinion that the person was not entitled, and, furthermore, that if he signed a declaration he might be prosecuted for making a false declaration, inasmuch as he was not entitled to a vote for the Council. If it becomes a matter of compulsion the unfortunate elector is in a most difficult position. If he signs the necessary declaration, he may be prosecuted. If he does not sign it, he is liable to be prosecuted for not being on the roll. What on earth is the elector to do? The people surely have enough difficulties to contend with and enough laws to interpret without having piled on to them this additional requirement. I direct attention to Section 16 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, which reads—

Where any premises are jointly owned, occupied, or held on lease or license within the meaning of the last preceding section, by more persons than one, each of such joint owners, occupiers, leaseholders, or licensees, not exceeding four, shall be entitled to be registered as an elector, and subject as aforesaid to vote in respect of the said premises in case the value of the individual interest therein of any such person separately considered, would, under the provisions of the last preceding section, entitle such person to be registered as an elector.

Where there are joint owners and occupiers they shall be entitled to be registered as voters, but the number for any particular property shall not exceed four. A property may be held by five or six people and nobody may be registered. Then who would be prosecuted and who would be let off?

Hon. E. H. Gray: Prosecute the lot.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Suppose two or three only were on the roll, how could we say who should be prosecuted?

Hon. E. H. Gray: The easiest way out would be to amend the Constitution.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: It is absolutely impossible to carry out the provisions of the Bill. Without compulsory enrolment, would not compulsory voting be an utter farce? I represent a province of vast extent. There is an immense number of prospectors, pastoralists, farmers and other men outback against whom compulsory voting would operate very harshly indeed. Some of those men have to travel five to 50 miles to reach the nearest polling booth. It is all very

well for Mr. Ewing to say we should have more booths, or that provision should be made for postal voting. We cannot provide a polling booth or postal vote officer wherever there may be only one or two electors. If this measure be passed, the hon. member will need to have an interpretation of the words "a valid and sufficient reason." Would it be a valid and sufficient reason for not voting that a man had to travel 50 miles?

Hon. E. H. Gray: Certainly.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: Would Mr. Ewing insert a clause specifying a distance? If he would, it would mean that the provision would increase the predominance of the city against the country vote. The Bill would operate harshly against electors outback as compared with electors living in the city, who merely have to cross the street to vote. Note the extraordinary position: It would give an immensely added power to the people in the city to the disadvantage of the pastoralists, farmers, miners, timber-getters, and so on. It would certainly help the city population as against the people pioneering the outback country, the most worthy of all residents of the State.

Hon. J. Cornell: There are electors in South Province who cannot vote because the time between the closing of nominations and polling day does not permit of their forwarding a postal vote.

Hon. J. W. KIRWAN: That is quite right. One district, to which Mr. Ewing proposes to apply the Bill, stretches eastward of a line that might be taken from Coolgardie South to Esperance. In the whole district to the east of that line there are a number of pastoralists, men who are pioneers and entitled to vote, but they would have to travel very quickly, and over hundreds of miles, to be at a booth in time to vote. Yet the hon. member proposes to fine them if they do not vote. The proposal is most unfair to the country electors. As regards the postal vote, there cannot be a postal vote officer everywhere—for instance, on a station where there might be only two or three voters. Take the North Province, which you, Mr. President, and Mr. Holmes and Mr. Miles represent: what hope would the electors of that province have? Some of them would have to travel hundreds of miles to vote, and yet the hon. member would fine them if they did not come to the poll. Take the case of the farmer and his wife with a number of children. The parents would not leave the children alone. The farmer would have to come to town one day to exercise a vote by post, leaving his wife at home, and after his return the wife would go in to vote, leaving the husband to look after the children. The hon. member would make it a crime if the farmer and his wife did not travel, say, 50 or 100 miles for the purpose of exercising a franchise that seems very important to the mover to the Bill, but much less important to the people out-

back. Many electors in country and mining districts would prefer paying the £2 fine rather than travel many miles in order to vote for one of various people about whose claims for election they are indifferent. I oppose the Bill for the following reasons:—First, I think we ought to wait until we see how the system of compulsory voting operates in the case of the Commonwealth. Secondly, compulsory voting would enormously increase the number of offenders against the law. The third reason is that by increasing the number of offenders against the law, we shall bring the law into contempt. The fourth reason is that the proposed measure would necessitate huge additional work for the Electoral Department, and so increase the State's electoral expenses. I have given one instance in Queensland, when 1,400 electors refrained from voting. Think of the number of defaulting electors after a general election and the work of sending out demands to show cause, and after that think of the proceedings in the courts. A fifth reason for my opposition to the Bill is that the enactment of the measure would entail but little trouble to city electors with polling booths close to their homes, but would be a severe hardship to electors in the outback, mining and pastoral districts, who might have to travel hundreds of miles in order to reach a polling booth. A sixth reason is that the Bill would increase the voting power of the city as against outback residents. A seventh reason is that compulsory enrolment for the Legislative Council is absolutely impossible. My last reason, and I regard it as the most important of all, is that it will not improve the efficiency of Parliament to force inefficient voters to vote.

On motion by Hon. E. H. Gray, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.6 p.m.