

I see no harm in the Bill, the second reading of which I support.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 7.56. p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 3rd December, 1947.

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

QUESTIONS.

HOUSING.

As to Material and Building Costs and Shortages.

Mr. STYANTS (on notice) asked the Premier:

(1) As the increase in the price of the 14 principal commodities connected with the building of houses, comprising bricks (wire-cut and pressed), tiles, corru-

gated roofing iron, baths, sinks, galvanised guttering and down piping, roofing nails, nails (2in. and 3in.), timber, jarrah (4in. x 4in. and 3in. x 2in.), T & G flooring, and wages paid to building artisans, as contained in answers given by him to the member for Forrest on the 22nd October, 1947, averaged only 30 per cent. above 1939 prices, will the Government appoint a Royal Commission to inquire into the reasons why the cost of completed houses has increased to approximately 100 per cent. above that of 1939?

(2) Is he aware that the completion of many houses is held up because T & G flooring is in short supply?

(3) Does he consider the reason for the short supply of flooring is due to the fact that the increase in price of this material is only allowed at about seven per cent. above 1939 prices, and that the mill owners will not supply full quantities required?

(4) If not, what does he consider to be the reason for the short supply of flooring boards?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) The Commonwealth Government has taken steps to exercise control of building prices, and it is understood that a special officer will be appointed. In the circumstances it is not proposed to appoint a Royal Commission at this juncture.

(2) Yes.

(3) and (4) No. The main reason for the short supply of flooring is that the stocks of dried timber were very low at the cessation of hostilities, and that considerable time must necessarily elapse before dried timber is available for use. The position in this respect will improve during the summer months. The Government also has under consideration proposals for encouraging the erection of additional drying kilns.

IRON-ORE.

As to Beneficiation Process of Treatment.

Mr. KELLY (on notice) asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) Has he given consideration to the possibilities of the treatment of iron-ore by the beneficiation system?

(2) Will he outline the process of the beneficiation plant for the treatment of iron-ore?

(3) Would beneficiation be suitable in the development and treatment of Western Australian iron-ores?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

(1) No.

(2) It is not possible to outline the process of a beneficiation plant in general terms because "beneficiation" includes any process of ore dressing for the improvement of ores before treatment.

(3) Possibly.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS.

As to Maps of Boundaries.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (without notice) asked the Premier:

Since we can anticipate a detailed and very considerable debate on the Electoral Districts Bill, will he arrange to have displayed in this Chamber the three maps which clearly depict the electoral boundaries in the different parts of the State?

The PREMIER replied:

I shall endeavour to have that done.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Road Closure.

2, Parks and Reserves Act Amendment.

3, Reserves.

Introduced by the Minister for Lands.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Leave to Introduce.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. S. Seward—Pingelly) [4.37]: 1 move—

That leave be given to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Government Railways Act, 1904-1939.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [4.38]: I do not know whether we are entitled to give the Minister leave to introduce another railway Bill because of what happened in connection with the previous measure which was submitted with a view to amending this Act, and in view of the fact that there is a Royal Commission at

present investigating the railways. It was a disgrace to bring down a Bill for such a purpose while two eminent engineers were here inquiring into railway matters. It would have made things easier for members in opposition if the Minister had given some indication of what the Bill under consideration is likely to contain. As I heard a member say in this Chamber on one occasion, with reference to another matter, this is like a stab in the dark. We do not know what is in the Bill. If the Minister had said it was to amend certain sections we would have had an idea of what it was about.

If we are going to have a repetition of the sort of thing that was contained in the previous Bill to which I have referred, I am not prepared to give the Minister permission to introduce this Bill, because I think nothing should be done with regard to railways until we have had the report of the Royal Commission. The Government would then be justified in introducing a measure to give effect to the Commission's recommendations. I am reminded that the Premier has refused to answer certain questions on housing on the ground that the matter is sub judice because it is the subject of inquiry by a Royal Commission, yet he is prepared to allow Bills to amend the Government Railways Act to be put before the House. I hope the Minister will give some indication whether this Bill is going to be somewhat similar to the previous measure. It may, of course, be designed to attend to some justifiable matter that needs attention and to which there can be no objection.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. H. S. Seward—Pingelly—in reply) [4.40]: I am pleased to give the House that information. The Bill consists of two clauses and is designed to give the railways authority to run road motor vehicles. I had a ruling from the Crown Law Department, to the effect that the Railway Department has not that authority at present. I endeavoured to have the necessary provision inserted in the previous Bill, but was informed that it could not be included there.

Question put and passed.

Bill introduced and read a first time.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—DRIED FRUITS.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE
(Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [4.42] in moving the second reading said: A Bill similar to this was before the House earlier in the session, and was debated fully by the Leader of the Opposition, who dealt in detail with the important features of the industry. As members know, at a later stage it was ruled that the Bill was improperly before the House. A new Bill has now been drafted and contains two amendments to the parent Act, dealing with voting and the system of voting. The dried fruits industry in Australia is most important, but in Western Australia we have barely touched its fringes. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, it could be extended greatly in this State. In the peak period of the industry the total production for the Commonwealth was 100,000 tons of dried fruits, of which Western Australia produced only 3,000 tons. It is therefore clear that the bulk of the industry is located in the Eastern States.

Without interfering with the control of prices operating, I feel that we can extend the industry in this State, with great advantage. In my view that extension must lie to the north of the Swan. An examination of the land north of the Swan district, and within a range of 50 miles, shows it to be eminently suitable for the production of dried fruits. In the Bindoon and Chittering districts some of the best fruit in this State is grown, but the plantings in that area are indeed small up-to-date. There is room for expansion in that direction and I feel that it would open an extra avenue for the settlement of returned soldiers on the land. The boards controlling the industry are doing good work.

The Western Australian board controls local sales only, while the Commonwealth Dried Fruits Board controls the export side. Each year it fixes the quota for export, after consultation with the State boards, thus allowing the State boards to

retain sufficient dried fruits to meet the requirements of the local market. During the war we over-exported, because the Old Country was in dire need of this valuable and concentrated food. We over-exported and left the local market bare. That was not of advantage to the grower, as the best prices are obtained on the local market, and the more fruit we export the lower is the return to the grower. The proceeds are pooled and it is the result of that pooling that controls the price paid to the grower.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: In order to get greater quantities for export during the war, was the quality of the product reduced?

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: No, the quality of the dried fruit has been maintained, but owing to the shortage of foodstuffs the Old Country was prepared to take lower grades of fruit. During the war different arrangements were made, and the Commonwealth Government took control of the marketing of dried fruits. Its advisers were the Commonwealth Dried Fruits Control Board. Arrangements were made with the British Department of Food and Health to take over the fruit from the Commonwealth at a price. That was an excellent arrangement and I hope it will be maintained in future, as there is nothing more satisfactory to the producer than an f.o.b. price. With an f.o.b. price he knows what he is to get, and there are not the irritating tactics usually encountered when dealing with big exporters. Before that arrangement was made there were such things as broken packages, ullages and so on.

The sampling of dried fruits in England reached tremendous proportions. They used to extract one pound of fruit from every cwt. sent over, as a sample, and in the aggregate that was a great deal of fruit. Such practices have been done away with, and the present arrangement for an f.o.b. price is much more satisfactory. These two boards, between them, control the industry. It is a sound method of stabilisation and is working to the advantage of the producers and all concerned, being a better arrangement than that previously in existence. The Bill is practically the original Act—placed on the statute-book in 1926—except for the new principles that I have mentioned. There is a new clause in the Bill dealing with the system of voting, and

one dealing with the taking of votes. Those are most important clauses. I have examined the Bill—which comes from another place—and am not quite satisfied with it. I desire to make a further amendment to do away with the Senate system of voting at present in operation.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: What system is that?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The exhaustive ballot system. My reasons for so doing are that in the past we have had growers of good standing topping the poll on the first preference, and the exhaustive ballot has led to their coming a bad last for the simple reason that there are different elements on the Swan—of which the Chamber is fully alive—that use the block vote. They put up a team of four and use the solid block vote which has the effect of getting that team home.

Mr. Marshall: That cannot be done under true preferential voting.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is under the Senate system of the exhaustive ballot, and I am looking for a principle whereby we can operate some preferential system.

Mr. Marshall: You want a proportional system.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I want a different system in order to defeat this special move. When the Potato Bill was before the House, mention was made of the fact that, if we were not careful in framing the voting system, the Italian potato growers would constitute the board. I am trying to avoid a situation occurring where we will have another nationality constituting the board on the Swan. As a matter of fact, those people control the position today and, if at all possible, we should correct it. I hope members will agree that the system ought to be altered.

Another amendment is to provide for polling booths in the district within a radius of seven miles so that a vote can be taken in the same way as a vote is taken for this House, instead of sending out the ballot papers. The present system is much abused. When the Potato Bill was before the House, I explained what happens in my district. The ballot papers are collected by the individuals interested and they fill them in in their own interests. I know of many

instances such as one where an interested party went to the wife—the Slav was out—and said he had called for the ballot papers.

Mr. Hegney: Is that current practice?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Very much so. He collected the ballot papers, took them away and signed them on behalf of the husband. In order to avoid these undesirable practices, provision is made in the Bill for a poll to be taken within a seven-mile radius, and all growers outside that radius will have ballot papers forwarded to them. I am interested in the industry and in seeing that these ballots are conducted fairly and above board. I am asking the House to accept these amendments, because I can assure members that these elections are not being conducted fairly at present.

Mr. Marshall: Do not you think that election under the Federal system is fair?

Hon. A. H. Panton: It is the only way to count to get an absolute majority unless you have four separate and distinct votes.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I know there are difficulties. The Senate election is a straight out vote amongst our own people and we are not objecting to that principle, but in districts where there are potato and dried-fruit growers, special difficulties arise. As members are aware, there is a very strong communist element on the Swan. Those people have built a hall of their own where they hold their meetings and decide their block.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: They will have their own member next!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: That is what I am afraid of. They put up their own block which is such a solid vote that it controls the position and I am trying to get a more democratic system of electing growers' representatives.

Mr. Marshall: That is wonderful phraseology!

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is a great term and I know it appeals to all members.

Mr. Marshall: Are unnaturalised producers eligible to vote?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: They have to be qualified as electors.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: They were entitled to vote some years ago, but we amended the Act. Two other small amendments have been requested by the secretary of the board which I think will be acceptable to the House. He desires that the life of the board be extended from two to three years to bring it into conformity with the term of Eastern States boards. That is a reasonable amendment. Another amendment requested is to extend the term of the chairman to coincide with the life of the board. To summarise the points, the measure provides for an alteration in the system of voting and the method of taking the poll, for extending the life of the board to three years, and making the term of the chairman coincide with the life of the board. I do not intend to take the Bill into Committee today, because I wish to re-examine the clause with a view to finding a more suitable system of voting. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [4.58]: I support the amendments to the 1926 Act as proposed in the Bill and referred to by the Minister. I am agreeable to the second reading being carried now because the proposals were debated when the previous measure, to which objection was taken, was before the House. I agree with the Minister in his concern as to the method of voting prescribed in the measure, and support the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 to 5—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—LOAN, £4,147,000.

Second Reading.

THE PREMIER (Hon. D. R. McLarty—Murray-Wellington) [5.2] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is to authorise the raising of money necessary to carry out the various works enumerated on the Estimates of expenditure from the General Loan Fund which are now before the

House. The various works for which the money is required are set out in the First Schedule, and in accordance with the usual practice, the amounts appearing therein are estimated to be sufficient, with the balances of previous authorisations, to enable the works to be kept going, where necessary, for six months after the close of the financial year. Several of the items on which expenditure is proposed as shown by the Estimates do not appear in the Schedule, for the reason that the amounts authorised to be raised for those works by previous Loan Acts have not been fully expended and there remains sufficient authority to cover the current year's expenditure.

It is unlikely that the whole amount for which authority is sought will be raised this year, as owing to difficulty in obtaining materials and scarcity of labour, it may not be possible to carry out all the work envisaged by the Estimates. We expect to obtain £2,000,000 out of the loan now being floated by the Commonwealth and further sums will be available from the Commonwealth Savings Bank under the Savings Bank Transfer Act of 1931, by which the State is entitled to 70 per cent. of the increase in the depositors' balances each quarter. During the war our drawings from this source were limited by arrangement between the Commonwealth and the State Governments and the Commonwealth Bank to £390,000 per annum and we have received that amount for several years past.

A review of the cash position may be made by the Loan Council early in the New Year and if necessary further funds will be provided. The Public Debt at the 30th June this year was £99,002,301, the average rate of interest being £3 5s. 1d. per cent. compared with £96,925,931 at £3 6s. 5d. per cent. on the corresponding date in 1946. Payments to the Sinking Fund for the current year, including the Commonwealth's contribution, will amount to approximately £1,000,000, and as there was a balance of £545,000 brought forward from last year, over £1,500,000 will be available for redemption of debt during the current year. The Bill authorises the re-appropriation of certain moneys which are not now required for the original purposes. These moneys and the Acts by which they were first authorised are shown in the Second Schedule, while the Third Schedule sets out the works

to which they will now be applied. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.5]: To facilitate the business of the House, I think it would be desirable for the Premier to allow the Bill to reach the Committee stage, in order that he may place it immediately below the Loan Estimates for passing when they are passed. I support the second reading to enable the Committee stage to be made an Order of the Day for the next sitting of the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Perkins in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Progress reported.

BILL—ELECTORAL DISTRICTS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th November.

HON. F. J. S. WISE (Gascoyne) [5.9]: This Bill is based on the legislation which forms the Legislative Assembly districts and the Legislative Council districts and which depends on the contents of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, as a point of commencement. In addition, it depends on the later Acts which define the districts. The Redistribution of Seats Act of 1929 is the measure which governs the position in this House today. The Bill for the Act was introduced by Hon. P. Collier.

If members have been sufficiently interested in this subject during the period it has been freely commented upon, they will know that the Bill introduced in 1910 by the Wilson Government, after that Government had been in office for three months—the Bill was introduced by the then Attorney General, Mr. Nanson—was the attempt made by Parliament to define the boundaries by Parliament. The Bill set out the boundaries which were to be prescribed as the boundaries of the seats to constitute the Legislative Assembly. It received violent opposition. As a matter of fact, the proceedings in the Legislative Assembly were described in the Press as pande-

monium. If members wish to know what happened in 1910, I am sure they will get an inspiration from the index of the bound volume of "Hansard" of that year. That index of the Redistribution of Seats Bill gives the order of the comment on the proceedings as they developed—

Leave to introduce, point of order, dissent from ruling, point of order on the motion to print, carried on division, motion amendment to refer to select committee, negatived on division, to fix Committee stage, point of order, disorder, point of order, dissent from Chairman's ruling, disorder, members suspended and removed, dissent from Chairman's ruling, privilege, inaccurate Press report, progress, Committee resumed, points of order, members suspended, dissent from Chairman's ruling, Opposition members leave Chamber, Committee concluded, Standing Orders suspension, point of order, member suspended, dissent from Speaker's ruling, passing and transmitting to the Council.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Those were the days!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: In looking for a datum peg, as it were, from which to commence my remarks on the Bill, it was obvious that that was the most appropriate one, the occasion on which the Bill was introduced in this Chamber when the Government attempted to fix the boundaries. Without any reference to the text in "Hansard," it can be seen what kind of passage the Bill received. As I said, there was violent opposition to it, in spite of the then Attorney General's claim that it was a fair and impartial Bill, and an honest and successful attempt to give a fair share of representation to each of the interests and aspirations which united to form the body politic of Western Australia at that time. That is the nature of the Bill as described by the Attorney General, who introduced it. But, of course, the House took a different view. In the course of the debate many violent words were used and actions taken.

The Premier: The Attorney General could truthfully use those words today.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: This Bill has not commenced on anything approaching the same lines as those of 1910, which I have recited. The Government at that time was accused of being actuated by the motive of retention of office. I do not think that is the only time that suggestion has been made to Governments introducing Bills to readjust the boundaries of the seats of the Legislative Assembly. Mr. Scaddan referred to

the Bill as an atrocious piece of gerrymandering and advocated the Queensland system of appointing a commission to arrange the boundaries. However, the Bill was passed and the Government went to the country and was routed in spite of its having fixed the boundaries. The new Government ran for about 5½ years. On the change of Government, Mr. Seaddan became Premier.

A Bill was introduced in 1913 to refer the matter to a Commission. That measure was somewhat on the lines of one later introduced by Sir James Mitchell, but it failed to pass the Legislative Assembly. Nothing was done from then until 1922 when Sir James Mitchell took a hand and introduced the legislation on which the present Act is based, and from which this Bill springs. Sir James Mitchell's Bill provided for the adjustment of the electoral boundaries by three commissioners. During the debate on that measure, some interesting comments were made, and the advantages of single electorates for Western Australian conditions were stressed. The Bill introduced by Sir James Mitchell contained the following provisions:—

For the purpose of determining the number of Electoral Districts to be allotted to each of the four areas described in the Schedule hereto, and named respectively the Metropolitan Area, the Agricultural Area, the Goldfields Central Area, and the Mining Area, the following provisions shall apply:—

(a) The number of electors, reduced by one-half, in the Metropolitan Area, and the number of electors in the Agricultural Area, and the number of electors in the Goldfields Central Area, and the number of electors in the Mining Area increased by one-half shall, in the aggregate, be divided by forty-six, and a quota be thereby obtained:

So, that measure acknowledged what is still acknowledged today, namely, the necessity for the weighting of the votes in certain electorates and the giving of generous concessions in others. That was the principle recommended and adopted. The fact of there being 46 seats gives the very clear indication that at that time it was appreciated that the North and North-West should have four seats. Whether there was any connection between that idea and the fact that the then Government held all the four seats, and whether the fact that the present Government holds none of them has any connection with the suggestion that the North-West seats be reduced, I think, very little comment and not much imagination. The Bill in-

troduced by Sir James Mitchell provided for the division of electorates according to the weighted quotas prescribed in the section to be found at page 125 of the bound volume of the Statutes for 1922-23.

The Government of that day was accused, again very strenuously if not violently, of killing the metropolitan area. It was said that no person who had the interests of the State at heart could support the Bill. These comments, of course, did not come from the Government side. The weighted formula was also criticised, and the Bill took a lot of getting through, but it did get through after an all-night sitting. The members of this Chamber who were present during that debate are unfortunately now few in number, but one member of the Legislative Assembly at that time is now a member of the Legislative Council—I refer to the Hon. C. G. Latham. During that debate, he said—

The metropolitan area will get very little consideration from me while I represent a country electorate. Country districts are much more entitled to seats than the city.

Some members strongly represented the principle of one-vote one-value. The Bill introduced by Sir James Mitchell in 1922-23 became law, but a measure based on its provisions was subsequently defeated; and, of course, as is well known, the Mitchell Government was defeated in 1924. In October, 1928, Mr. Collier, in introducing his Bill, made use of these words—

It is known to hon. members that there has not been any alteration of the boundaries of electoral districts since the passing of the Redistribution of Seats Act in 1911.

He went on to say—

The movement of population in this State has been very considerable for some years past, and the need for a re-arrangement of the boundaries of electoral districts is not disputed by any section of the community. The Bill leaves untouched all the provisions of the 1922 Act, except Section 4 of the Act.

Mr. Collier's Bill also sought to abolish the four areas provided for in the 1922 Act, namely, the metropolitan, the agricultural, the Goldfields central and the mining. Those four areas were reduced to three, and members will find, at page 222 of the Standing Orders in front of them, the Act which was then proclaimed with the formula now operating clearly shown, which formula members are now asked to amend by the Bill before the House. Mr.

Collier faced the sacrificing of three Goldfields seats of five in all. It was said by some that he faced manfully the walking of the plank. The Opposition supported the Bill. That is understandable. It had to approve a Bill by which the Government had to lose five seats, so the measure went through Committee without a division.

That was the most interesting development up to that stage in the history of the introduction of Bills, of this kind. It was spoken of by Mr. Latham, Mr. Stubbs and others as being a very fair Bill. It is this Act, No. 25 of 1928, that has been much criticised in what I call the misleading articles of some of our newspapers. Up to that stage, whenever a Government had introduced a Bill, it was obvious that the measure was weighted in favour of the Government introducing it. That can be proved by a reference to the discussions that took place. It is true that while the 1928 enactment, which contains the formula applying to today's electoral boundaries, has been the subject of much contention and unfair misrepresentation by certain leading-article writers, when the Bill of 1937 was introduced by Mr. Willcock it is interesting to observe that the then Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Latham, said that it was quite unnecessary; that there was not a demand for it; that it was only being introduced to save the Government from extinction; that it was a Bill prejudiced by the Government's authority and that it should be deferred for at least five years. Those are the types of comment made on the 1937 Bill. Mr. Latham quoted Mr. Gladstone as saying—

If the City of London had no representation at all, it would still have more representation than has Scotland with all its representation. Mr. Latham drew attention to the fact that he had used those words during the discussion on the 1923 Bill. At the same time he had this to say—

There has been no demand for this redistribution, there has been no criticism of the existing arrangement because the people know that the representation is a fair one.

Those words will be found in the recorded version of Mr. Latham's speech at page 2598, Vol. 2, of the 1937 "Hansard." Those remarks are interesting in the light of the observations of certain newspapers. No comment was made, at the time, in any leading

article in the Press of Western Australia, as far as I have been able to discover, on Mr. Willcock's Bill of 1937. I suppose the writers of such articles would have found it incumbent on them to mention what Mr. Latham had said, so they made no comment at all. The Bill, as members know, had only 25 supporters in this Chamber, and was defeated. The Government at that time had 26 members, but one of them was in the Chair and, although it had all its members voting, the Bill was defeated.

It is interesting to observe that when the Government went to the country, in spite of having introduced that Bill to "save its skin," as was stated at the time, it was returned with an increased majority. I draw attention to that point in a serious vein to emphasise just how any prognostication of what could happen with the existing or altered boundaries could be very wide of the mark. I may point out at this stage that, as far as I can ascertain, no Government has survived after redistribution has taken place.

The Premier: We are not going to be intimidated.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not raise the point for the purposes of intimidation but merely in order to state facts. I simply refer to it as an interesting point.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: Without any suggestion of prophesying?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: No. It is interesting because even if all the present boundaries were, so to speak, outlined on a blackboard and rubbed out, anything could easily happen with 10 or 12 of them, and who could say with any certainty what would be secured when the cards were dealt again? It is purely a matter of conjecture, even if those methods were adopted. I do not doubt, nor do I under-estimate, the Premier's astuteness in this matter, and that he is anxious that the Bill should go through.

The Premier: I think you are pleased with this Bill.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I will tell the Premier about that in a few moments, but I have not reached that stage yet. I am sure the Premier has assessed the position to mean the certain and deliberate abolition of three Labour seats, and he is satis-

fied that it must mean to him a tremendous advantage, otherwise the Bill would not be presented in its present form. Seeing that this is the first Bill of such a type to emanate from the present Government, the question we must face at the inception is whether, under the 1928 Act or under the proposals embodied in the Bill, a redistribution of seats in Western Australia is to a degree necessary.

The Premier: I do not think there is any question about that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I said that. It is a consideration we must face. The question then gets down to the point as to whether the proposals in the Bill are fair, reasonable and equitable.

The Premier: That is what we claim for them.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Naturally!

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: That is a point the Attorney General did not over-stress. I think he presented lucidly, with great care and very fairly, an analysis of what the Bill really means. He did not support that analysis with any strong convictions or contentions one way or another.

The Attorney General: I think you had better look at my speech.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I have had a close look at it, and I did not expect the hon. member to be exasperatingly enthusiastic about how it would advantage the Liberal Party particularly.

The Premier: I do not think he knows. How could he?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There is no doubt that there has been concentration upon depriving the Labour Party deliberately of three seats. We would be that much further behind scratch, and those seats would go to the metropolitan area, which would be to the distinct advantage of the Parties in power.

Mr. Rodoreda: But not to the country.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: It is a Liberal Party Bill.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: In this country of widely scattered electorates the effect is apparent. I purposely asked for maps to be displayed on the wall of the Chamber so that members might concentrate their attention upon the districts closest to them

and those in which they are personally interested. Some members know quite a lot of all parts of the State, but I think it necessary for them to look at the maps and appreciate the immense area that constitutes the State of Western Australia. I also suggest that they look at it from the centre of their own electorates. By that means they will get a clearer perspective and have a better understanding of the case I shall submit for an entirely different distribution and a different quota or formula from that mentioned in the Bill. Unless members can get a proper appreciation of the position, their minds will be heavily prejudiced with political bias. We must approach this question from the point of view of a distribution being necessary. In that respect we must consider what is the fairest and most equitable distribution of voting strength, if we acknowledge—I acknowledge it, and the Government does so as well—that there should be some weighting of votes where the electors are at an advantage.

The Premier: We all agree that that is a necessity.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: In this State of widely scattered interests, there is a concentration of 173,000 electors in the metropolitan area, out of a total of 298,000.

Mr. Marshall: There will be more before many years are out.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Those figures appear very much worse if we take into consideration the districts immediately adjoining the metropolitan area. If we review the position within a radius of 75 miles of the centre of the City of Perth, what does that mean? It is a mere stone's throw! A distance of 75 miles is only one quarter of that from the north to the south of my electorate, all of which is inhabited. We would find that in the area within the 75 mile radius, if one vote had one value, there would need to be 35 metropolitan seats out of a total of 50 in this House. I use that illustration deliberately. With regard to the question as to whether the metropolitan area should have a reduction in the value of its votes, the fact remains that if one vote were to have one value and we were to permit that evil to exist, it would mean 35 seats for the metropolitan area in this Assembly.

We have to regard the advisability of the principle governing the quota and formula and to give to those people who are not as fortunately situated as are urban dwellers, the consideration that should be extended to them. If we were to allow ourselves to be dominated by the idea of representation upon a population basis, an altogether disproportionate number of seats would be concentrated where the bulk of the population is located. That, of course, would include, as I have already mentioned, the areas immediately adjoining the metropolis. It would be foolish to adopt the line of argument followed by the Attorney General in making Queensland the basis of comparison. We cannot compare the incomparable, and Queensland, of which State I have very great knowledge, bears no resemblance in its distribution of population to the position obtaining in this State.

Queensland, as stated by the Attorney General, has the system of one-vote-one-value, and there is no State in the Commonwealth to which that principle could be better applied. It is the most decentralised State of all. I shall give some illustrations of just how decentralised it is along its thousand miles of coast line from north to south. Within 24 miles of Brisbane there is Ipswich, the town of my birth, with a present population of 26,000. Within 30 miles of Brisbane are 20 municipalities with over 4,000 people in each. Travelling north, 100 miles or so away, we come to such cities as Bundaberg, with 15,000 people, Gympie, with 9,000 people and Maryborough, with 15,000 people. In the shire councils in the central area there are many towns, such as Maroochy, with 13,000 people, and Widgee, with 8,000 people.

Further, in the Darling Downs division, some 90 miles from Brisbane, there is Toowoomba, with 34,000 people, Warwick, with 7,500 and Chinchilla, with a population of 5,000. If we take the area south of Brisbane, it is ridiculous to compare the situation there with that applying in Western Australia. We can go as far west as Charleville, within 150 miles of the Northern Territory boundary, down to Quilpie and Paroo, each with some thousands; we can travel north, and if we ignore the beautiful town of Roma, 250 miles west of Brisbane, we find further up the coast a number of other centres where the same basis of comparison obtains. There is Mackay, with 12,600

people, which is one of the most beautiful cities in the Commonwealth, and Mirani, with 5,000 people, and Pioneer, with 12,000. I am quoting these figures from the Queensland Year Book for 1946.

Then further north we have Townsville, with a population of 35,000. Right through these districts, where it was my privilege to live and work, are towns comparable with those, until we get to Cairns, with 16,000 people. Reaching out on to the Atherton Tablelands, we have the small shire of Atherton, with 4,370 people, 1,000 miles from Brisbane. Then there are Charters Towers, with 7,700 people, Hughenden, with 1,900, and Cloncurry, with 6,500 people. Again, there is Mt. Isa, another beautiful town in the heart of Queensland. All this gives Queensland the greatest advantage of any State, including Victoria, from the standpoint of decentralised population. It is idle and foolish to suggest that Western Australia, and particularly the northern portion of it, which is as large as Queensland itself, has any basis for comparison.

It has always been the desire in the case of a redistribution of seats to preserve the character of the seats. It will be found if members will go through the previous reviews in other years of this subject that Parliament has always been careful, although not giving to the Commissioners directions except in a single line, strongly to advocate the necessity for the retention in these individual electorates of that characteristic which is common if possible to the whole community within that electorate. That is a very important matter, in any direction given to the Commissioners who have the authority, the overpowering authority that is to be given to them, of saying just what sort of boundaries should be drawn and what sort of communities should live within them. We have had in past deliberations on the matter a determination to keep segregated urban, suburban, rural and mining and pastoral and timber and North-West.

If one-vote-one-value cannot be the rule—I submit that in this State it cannot—and if one-vote-one-value is acknowledged by the Government to be impracticable and unfair, the next point I come to is, is the proposal in this Bill fair? I submit it is not. Can we in any way give as a basis for comparison a one-vote-one-value basis, a vote at

Gosnells in the Swan electorate, a vote at Armadale or Kalamunda in the same electorate, delightful districts adjacent to the metropolis—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: And a delightful representative.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: With a very nice personality, the opportunity of access to the metropolis by 20 trains and buses a day—

Hon. A. H. Panton: All on time.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: —the same value as a vote at Koorda or Bruce Rock, or Nungarin or Ravensthorpe or Leonora or Meekatharra? Does the Government think that is fair or sound? It is ridiculous. Unless we are prepared in the weighting of the metropolitan area, to arrange for two people to represent one value, we are certainly not facing this proposition if we say that the electorates of Toodyay, Swan, and Murray-Wellington, all of which are electorates bordering on the metropolitan area, and which at some point provide the entire circumference of the electorates surrounding the metropolitan area, have a common interest with Wiluna or even Bluff Point. Does the Government think that is fair?

I think it is very necessary and desirable, in an attempt to rectify the position, that there shall be a weight applied to the inner agricultural areas, if we may call them such, so that in the case of the districts where the people take the train or a bus to work and return home every night, there shall be a fair weight applied to them and a tapering off provided for the areas which are not so advantaged. Can there be any objection to that? If this Bill is to be designated a fair Bill, that is the proposition to which the Government must give very serious attention. If we will spend a little time in the analysis of the figures shown in the last statistical return provided after the last election, we will find glaring inequalities which illustrate my point even more definitely.

Before reaching that stage I would like to draw the attention of the Government to the fact that in this Bill, which I will deal with in detail directly, there is provision that "elector" means a person who is listed on "a" roll. The roll may be 20 years old or may have been the one used in the case of the last election. The person whose name appears on a roll, however mutilated or old it may

be, is the person who is entitled to be regarded as an elector for the Legislative Assembly. In dealing in detail with the Bill I will illustrate the very great weakness in that subclause. Take the return printed by the electoral office following the last election! If these are to be the figures used for the basis of this calculation and submitted to the Commission, then I suggest an entirely fallacious starting point would be the starting point as the basis for this Bill.

In the case of the 15 seats that were uncontested at the last election I venture the opinion that in some instances there were 15 per cent. of the people off the roll, and have been off it in some seats which have been uncontested for years. In the contested seats there have been violent changes. We must be very careful, if this Bill is to become law or any activity is taken under the existing Act, that the first responsibility of the Government shall be to ensure as far as possible the maximum enrolment in the districts which constitute the Legislative Assembly districts of the State. There can be no other basis for a beginning. I am certain it will be found in some districts, if the rolls could be tested, that there are dozens of people on them who have been dead for years. I think an illustration of that kind was given in a facetious way when it was suggested that there might be a Karrakatta electorate. There may be certain difficulties in the way of deceased persons having a vote, but the main objection was that the boxes could not be returned.

It is a serious obligation, on the part of the Government to stimulate enrolment everywhere. If we examine the rolls for the last seats mentioned in the segregation given in the Second Schedule I am certain we will find a number of electorates below the minimum permissible within the quota and some over the maximum permissible. If the rolls were clean there could be ten seats which now on the basis of the Bill must be examined but alternatively would not require to be examined.

The Premier: What do you mean by stimulating the rolls? We have compulsory enrolment.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There are various ways of stimulation. Compulsory enrolment is no use if it has to be obtained by publishing advertisements in country newspapers. I will have something to say later

on the point of how the rolls should be cleaned. I offer this suggestion to the Premier and the Government that if the Bill becomes law and new electoral boundaries are proclaimed, and there can be several new seats, provided an inquiry is made in sufficient time—and it should be—there should be on that point no electors enrolled at all. There should be no elector regarded as an elector at that point, and the position should be reached where it is as necessary to be on the roll as it is for a person to collect a ration book. Unless you get back to a starting point at that time you will have the constant complaint that the roll contains the names of voters not entitled to vote, the names of people who are dead, for instance.

The Premier: That is watched very closely.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: In a numerically small electorate such as the Gascoyne I took eight names of people, who had been dead for years, off the roll before the last election. What must the position be in electorates like that of Nedlands, Mt. Hawthorn and Geraldton? To get a clean roll we must have a clean start.

Mr. Bovell: The electors become confused between the State and Federal rolls.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: If it is known that there is no elector enrolled for a seat, it will be found that people will line up just as they do to get their ration books. Everyone calls for his ration book. There is no defection there. I suggest as something worth turning over in the mind of the Premier, as a suggestion worth examining, that to get an accurate roll he should have a clean start. The greatest necessity is to have as clean a roll as possible and as accurate as one as possible before the Commissioners are given the right to say who shall be members of this Chamber. That is the right the Government proposes to give them. The Bill gives them the right to say that three seats shall disappear from this side of the House. It would be possible to pick out one of the individuals in the case of the North-West because it would be one out of four. They will have a right to say which electorate shall disappear.

The Premier: They are not concerned with individuals.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: No, but individuals are concerned in that the Commissioners will have an over-riding authority that will be

taken from Parliament by this Bill. I repeat that the basis to begin on is a roll that is made as clean as possible. I submit that a basis of that kind for the Commissioners to commence upon is more important than completing the roll at election time. Unless a clean roll is provided as soon as possible every conclusion the Commissioners arrive at will be wrong. Injustice will be done to many men in this Chamber unless this vital and basic matter is attended to.

The Premier: There can be only a small percentage of electors off the roll.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Thousands of them. That is so in the case of seats which have not been contested for a number of years. I know of one seat which has been uncontested since 1936, because I represent it.

The Premier: I know of one that has been uncontested for longer than that.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The seat I refer to has a numerically small number of electors but at least ten per cent. of them are off the roll. I am sure that in the case of a seat like that of Subiaco there would be hundreds of alterations if the roll were brought up to date, and I am certain the hon. member will agree with me in that. It is a vital point and I hope the Premier will not treat it flippantly.

The Premier: I am not treating anything flippantly.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Concentrating on the Bill, I am wondering why, simply because Victoria does this or South Australia does that it is incumbent on us to follow suit. In this case the Attorney General and his Government are following Victoria. I refer to the clause which provides for the three persons who shall be the Commissioners. I submit that the Surveyor General has a greater knowledge of the State as a whole than has any other individual in the Public Service. A Surveyor General will have traversed thousands of miles of roads and boundaries of properties and designations of road board districts, more so than any other individual.

But the Government has determined that because Victoria has decided that the Surveyor General shall not be one of the Commissioners we shall appoint the Under Secretary for Lands instead. I have no objection to either gentlemen as an in-

dividual. Both of them are men of the highest repute. They are industrious and knowledgeable. But as our legislation in the past has had a provision for the Surveyor General to be one of the Commissioners, I think it is too simple to suggest that because Victoria adopts a different practice we should do so. When this side of the House was in office the Government received trenchant criticism from one hon. member in this Chamber because it slavishly followed one of the other States. I mention no name, but members will recall the circumstances. Yet the only reason given for the change in this connection is that such a provision exists in the Victorian Act.

There is a clause in this Bill which provides that the Commissioners shall commence their duties "so soon as conveniently may be after the coming into operation of this Act." I propose to make that much more definite if this Bill reaches the Committee stage. I consider that their duties should commence from a fixed date. I also believe that there should be an alteration to a clause on page 5 of the Bill providing for their report and final recommendations to be referred to the Minister by a certain time. It is very vital that the Commissioners should have a dead-line from which to commence and a dead-line at which to finish their inquiry. The reason is obvious. It would be a distinctly unfair advantage for a Government to have the opportunity to proclaim a date which would not give sufficient time or not to proclaim a date at all so that the Commissioners could carry on for a year or two up to perhaps within a month or so of an election.

The Premier: That is most unlikely.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Let us avoid it. Has the Premier any objection to avoiding it? Let us make a starting date. Six months is a reasonable time.

The Premier: I think so.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Six months is a reasonable time for them to finish their labours. That would give every member in any session of Parliament a clear knowledge whether he would be a contender or not for Legislative Assembly honours. I think that is a fair proposal but it requires an amendment to two clauses. I intend to suggest, and I am sure other members will also, an alteration to the number of areas

into which the State is to be divided. I know there is a proposal that it shall be divided into five but I shall propose that there shall be four divisions. To some extent that is the most vital part of the Bill, because from that basis begins the arrangement for the application of the quota system which provides just how many values a vote has in different parts of the State. In the early part of the Bill it is necessary to make an amendment to provide for the inner agricultural areas and a deserving concession to the mining and pastoral sections of the State, which is most necessary.

We now come to the point—the vital point so far as four members are concerned—regarding the quotient, or the division of the electors in any group of areas by 47, however the votes may be weighted or loaded. I submit that the division should be as it has been from the commencement, namely by 46. The North-West should, as has been acknowledged from the commencement of legislation of this sort, retain the seats at present provided for. It is all very well for those who have never been there or those with a scanty knowledge of the circumstances to think there is nothing unfair in the proposal. It is idle to suggest that the North-West because of its population should not even have the doubtful honour of having an advantage over Gosnells and Armadale and that it should have, as prescribed in this Bill, three representatives only instead of four.

The Premier: They will still have an advantage over the places you mention—a considerable advantage.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: And they need it to an almost quadruple extent.

The Premier: They are getting it.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Attorney General said that with the advantages of modern development of air mails and aeroplane travel the representation that these far flung places had enjoyed was not now warranted. I would remind the hon. gentleman that there are several points in my district which receive their mails, in these enlightened and highly developed days, once a month. On the outskirts of my district there are 10 pedal sets which provide the only communication with the outside world. One value of that is that in the case of the residents requiring a

doctor one can perhaps be summoned to a station 100 miles away which would be the nearest landing ground for an aeroplane!

As for conversational contacts or communication by telegram or by letter, members who understand the conditions there will appreciate the position and will realise the necessity of those districts, on account of their transport difficulties and their isolation, retaining the four seats now allotted to them. The people in those areas have become accustomed to their Parliamentary representatives being their city agents. The number of people who get their members to undertake responsibilities for them, even to an intimate degree in the management of their business, is far greater in those constituencies than in any other place. They look upon the member for their district as a very important link with facilities that are available, to say nothing of the services now rendered by their members for which they would otherwise have to pay a heavy fee to a lawyer or a city agent. Heavens above! In my district I am executor of I do not know how many wills.

I know the genealogical tree of many of my electors. That is smilingly acknowledged by some people as a reason why, the number of people being so small, they should have a representative taken from them. I submit it is a reason he should be retained. People with no understanding of the position and no knowledge of the conditions in which they live in these advanced days should realise that those in isolated centres deserve and expect to have a case put up for them for the retention of the representative they now have. That applies, though not with the same weight, to districts or parts of districts outside the North-West. I hope there will be from the other side of the House a better understanding of these things. If they had a look at the maps they might have a real appreciation of the position. If some city electorates were put on that central map in red ink in the middle of the North-West they would not be seen. A half a dozen of them could be put in a horse paddock.

The Attorney General: You could put the metropolitan area in a horse paddock.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Yes.

The Attorney General: But you would give the people there more than one representative.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: Of course I would! If the Attorney General wants to argue that in reverse he will have a clear answer to any question I am posing in this connection. The disabilities of the people in those areas are understood by the members representing them and may be expected to be understood by the electors. The electors of those parts expect that this House will make a reasoned and impartial approach to their difficulties and disadvantages in living so far from the central community of interest in the metropolis.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I have referred to the serious disabilities under which those, in the substantial portion of the State represented by North-West seats, live. Those persons who are rendering yeoman service to this State are entitled to the representation which, through the years, has been decided in this legislature for them. As I interjected when the Attorney General was introducing the Bill, the division of the North-West into four seats has the strong advantage of precedent in all past legislation. I have instanced that there has never been an occasion—when a Government of the same complexion as the present Government introduced such a Bill—that it has proposed to alter the position. At that time, of course, that Government had either all the seats in the North, or three of them. I wonder whether there is any connection here—from that point of view—with the fact that under this proposal we are to lose one of the four North-West seats, while in the case of the province represented by three who are not of the Labour Party, the same boundaries are to obtain. Is there anything suggestive in that? It is said that those boundaries should not be altered. The North-West is still to have the same three Legislative Councillors and the same boundaries, but it is necessary, for the purposes of representation, to abolish one of our North-West seats. I ask—

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It is no use asking me.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I want members to look at the maps of the electoral districts and apply the measure, which applies to their own districts, to the case I have put forward on behalf not only of the North-West, but of other districts comparably

situated. Members will find that there is much that they are obliged to acknowledge in the case for the people who are not so fortunate as to have daily bus services, at frequent intervals, to the city itself. In the case of one of the outer suburban areas, or the inner agricultural areas—such as Murray-Wellington—one of those areas could be put in the horse paddock of Jubilee Station. I wonder if that brings home anything to the Premier.

Mr. Ackland: What about the whole of the Goldfields seats?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: The Goldfields seats represent an area and interest that will be specifically provided for, I am certain, in one list of amendments that will appear on the notice paper. They will be given an opportunity of representation that is fair to the four central seats. I will leave my comment on the North-West seats by citing the position as to Legislative Council representation specifically provided in the proviso, where the same numbers and the same boundaries will continue.

Mr. Marshall: And the same political colour.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There is in the Bill an interesting clause that I think requires close scrutiny. It deals with the authority to be given to the Commissioners to adjust electoral province boundaries, but makes no mention of any formula or any quota or adjustment in respect of figures. If that provision in the Bill is read, members will find that the Commissioners are charged with the responsibility of determining the boundaries of the 10 Legislative Council provinces. I notice there is an amendment proposed by one hon. member, referring to the two metropolitan seats. It will be found, on examination, that the balance of the seats have numbers of electors varying from 2,300 to 9,000, outside the metropolitan area.

There is no formula prescribed in the appropriate part of the Bill, and I wonder whether it is by oversight or by deliberate intent that it has been left as vague and hazy as it is, and providing a continuation of the representation in the Legislative Council by Councillors representing on the one hand the three North-West seats proposed, with 3,000 electors, and the metropolitan area representing approximately 20,000 electors, and other provinces—I am

speaking of the Legislative Assembly members in the North province—where they have only about 800 voters for the Legislative Council, a lot of them living in Perth. A large number of the voters for the Legislative Council, for the North Province, do not live in that province, and we are asked to believe that those three members should have preserved to them the same boundaries, while we remove one Assembly member. I wonder whether this Chamber realises what the public reaction in the North will be to that proposal. I will see that the people of the North understand it fully.

As to the other provinces, there is a differentiation in the figures given by the Attorney General, of from 2,300 to 9,000. Is not a quota needed? How are the Commissioners—in the words of the Bill—to adjust the boundaries of the 10 electoral provinces, as existing at the time of the commencement of the Act? How can they do it? There is no guidance to them provided. The number of electors can be anything from 2,000 to 22,000, under the Bill, but not under the proposed amendment. Under the Bill it can vary from 700 or 800 in the North to 2,000 in some agricultural or mining districts, and 32,000 in the metropolitan area.

I have mentioned the necessity of arranging for a date, or a prescribed period within which the Commissioners shall act, and that is an amendment that I propose to move, if the Bill goes into Committee, to make sure that a definite period is afforded, so that there shall be an opportunity of knowing, within a reasonable time before the boundaries are in fact altered, where they are to be. It is necessary that this Parliament should not derogate this right and give—from itself to other people—the opportunity and authority of saying, without further reference to Parliament, what are to be the boundaries of the electoral districts. The disabilities in that regard are many. There is not merely the giving away by Parliament to an authority—no matter how honourable or earnest the Commissioners may be—of the right to say that units of this Parliament and districts represented in the Parliaments shall cease to exist, but the giving to the Commissioners of power to make decisions which should not properly be theirs. Under the Bill, if it becomes law, when five seats show a variation

of more than 20 per cent. up or down from the quota, it is incumbent on the Commissioners to make the necessary adjustments.

Let us imagine a redistribution involving an alteration of 15 seats. New seats are created and new members enter the Chamber. They are men who sacrifice professions or business interests in order to give their lives to the public service. Adjoining those new districts something occurs—it may be a mining boom—to attract thousands of people. Within a matter of weeks that might affect two or three adjoining seats. It would need only one other seat to be out of plumb, during the currency of that Parliament, for the Commissioners to be obliged to act. It is within the bounds of possibility under the Bill that, during the currency of the first Parliament elected under its provisions, fresh boundaries would be proclaimed by the Commissioners, and new members would find themselves without seats. That is possible and feasible under the Bill. I recommend members to analyse it from that angle. Without reference to Parliament the Commissioners would have the responsibility of proclaiming the areas, and Parliament would have no say in the decision of the Commissioners.

The Premier: Does not that apply in the Federal sphere?

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: I do not care where it applies. That would not make it right. The Premier cannot defend the principle that I have illustrated and the possibility of members—nowadays with no security of tenure—giving up professional or other life to come into the Chamber, only to find themselves unwanted because the Commissioners said that their seats should not exist. That is the possibility that the Bill provides. Members can analyse it from any angle they wish: There can be no adequate or sufficient protection unless such matters are referred to Parliament. In this Chamber are the people who understand the circumstances and conditions, who have to live this life with all the strain and all the responsibilities, but a member may be scrapped without having the matter referred to Parliament at all. That is where we shall get if we endorse the principle that this matter, once decided and the final report, recommendations and plans having been drawn, shall become law.

The Premier: If personal interest entered into it, we would never get a Redistribution of Seats Bill.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE: There is no need for personal interest to dominate the position. This session we have had many instances of the anxiety on the part of the Government to get away from Parliamentary authority and say in such matters. This is just another instance of handing over to another body a very vexed question. That body should act in an advisory capacity and the question should be the subject of determination by Parliament.

If members wish to see some interesting comments on that aspect—I shall not weary the House by quoting them—let them look at the speeches on that point delivered by the Hon. P. Collier, and other members who are still in the House, during the debates on the Bills of 1923 and 1928. I am wondering what particular virtue there is in the retention of the five seats, the 20 per cent. under or above the quota. Why was that figure decided upon? Is it because that has been according to precedence and practice? Why did the Attorney General adopt that figure? I appreciate his silence. It would not suit him to answer the question because his so doing would involve his answering another question. If it is to be based on precedent, the five should remain five and, in another part of the Bill the figure should be made four.

The only other matter to which I desire to refer is the reference to the number of Commissioners who shall be present to validate any business they have transacted. The Bill provides that any two Commissioners shall form a quorum. That might be quite a reasonable proposal during the course of much of the inquiry, but it is very desirable and advisable that all members should be present when the final report is being prepared and when the final report and plans are being signed. If we are to give these three Commissioners a responsibility of this magnitude, there should be no doubt as to whether all of them are in agreement. Therefore it is very necessary that the Bill be amended in that particular to ensure that not only shall there be unanimity, but also that the Commissioners shall have the opportunity of consultation before the final report and recommendations are made.

My final word is that this is not a fair Bill, either in the representation it will afford or in the quota presented. It is not reasonable to suggest that votes should be equal at Yanchep and Ravensthorpe. It is not fair to suggest that the interests of people at Peak Hill warrant only the same voting power as that given to an area within 10 miles of the city. The Bill, in that and many other respects, I submit, is not a fair one, and on the argument advanced when similar Bills have been before the Chamber, it is not wanted by the community, even if it were a fair Bill.

MR. TRIAT (Mt. Magnet) [7.50]: It is very difficult to follow a speaker who has dealt with a subject so extensively as has the Leader of the Opposition, but he concluded on a note that he did not consider this a fair, just or generous Bill. I propose to start on that note. I am definitely of opinion that it is not fair; it is certainly not just and it is most ungenerous. The newspapers in most of their leading articles dealing with the subject when the Bill was announced adopted the same attitude, namely that this was a most fair, most just and most generous Bill. That was the only thing they seemed to be able to feature.

The Bill is generous—generous to the people that brought it in. Unquestionably one can be generous in giving an opponent a fair slug and taking away from him a number of assured seats. That sort of thing is generous to oneself, but not to one's opponent. However, I suppose that is politics and we cannot complain about it. When "The West Australian" and "The Daily News" set forth in their headlines and leading articles statements to the effect that the Bill was fair, just and generous, I was rather surprised. I do not say that the newspapers mould the opinion of the people, but they certainly do go a long way towards convincing the people, probably against their better judgment, especially when they read such matter at breakfast each morning.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Why spoil a good breakfast?

MR. TRIAT: It might spoil a good breakfast, because frequently we read such articles at breakfast. Take "The West Australian" of Friday the 28th November and

its leading article headed "Redistribution." It began—

In terms of politics by far the most important Bill that would be introduced during the lifetime of this State Parliament is the Electoral Districts Bill that was explained to the Legislative Assembly on Wednesday. This Bill may not be perfect—no Redistribution Bill ever is. It may not command unanimous support in Parliament—no Redistribution Bill ever does. But it is a good and necessary Bill, a fair and even generous Bill.

How can "The West Australian" support the statement that it is a generous Bill? Generous to whom?

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: To the Liberal Party.

MR. TRIAT: It is not even generous to the Country Party. I suggest that the members for Mt. Marshall, Beverley, Avon, Irwin-Moore and York, if they had the moral courage, would say it is not too generous to them.

The Minister for Lands: You will not get them over in that way.

MR. TRIAT: If men have the courage, they will come over. It is quite unnecessary to crack whips over men of moral courage. Show those members their electoral boundaries and see how they will react.

The Premier: We do not know what the boundaries will be.

MR. TRIAT: Of course, the Premier knows.

The Premier: Of course, we do not.

MR. TRIAT: That is why the Bill is so generous and that is why the Press says it is generous.

The Minister for Lands: Is not "The West Australian" an unbiased paper?

MR. TRIAT: It is the paper that supports the Liberal Party. A lot of tears will be shed by members of the Country Party if the Government proceeds with this Bill. Probably the Minister for Lands will yet have cause to shed tears.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Do not worry. He will lose his seat.

MR. TRIAT: Further on the newspaper article stated—

Since the Labour Party saw so much virtue in the present distribution of seats, with all its gross inconsistencies, that it could not be

persuaded to propose something fairer, it is not to be expected that it will fall in love with this measure.

There we have a newspaper feeding us with puerile piffle. That is not the sort of food calculated to build anyone up. It is pure piffle—

Hon. A. H. Panton: Pure piffle?

Mr. TRIAT: And it is untruthful, too. That is the part that hurts. When the Press publishes statements that are not truthful, it is time we drew attention to the fact. The article continued—

But the answer to that is that successive Labour Governments had 14 years in which to do better themselves.

According to the Press, the Labour Party had 14 years in office and was not prepared to take any action in the direction of altering the present inconsistent boundaries. Does not the Press know that the Labour Government in 1937 endeavoured to pass a Redistribution of Seats Bill? Did "The West Australian" ever realise that?

The Premier: It realised that a redistribution is 10 years overdue.

Mr. TRIAT: Why did not the newspaper tell the people that the Labour Government had tried to pass a Bill and that the present Premier himself had voted against it. The present Attorney General, the Minister for Lands and the Minister for Works all voted against it.

The Minister for Lands: Did I?

Mr. TRIAT: The Minister is probably as surprised as "The West Australian" will be to learn of the Bill of 1937. The then Premier, in introducing that Bill said—

On the occasion of the last redistribution, owing to a mistake in the estimate of the number of electors in the proposed areas, we found that at least two districts—Greenough and, I think, Nelson—were well over the quota on the first reprint of the electoral rolls.

At this point, the then member for Greenough, Mr. Patrick, interjected, "And at least one district in the metropolitan area." Mr. Sampson, the then member for Swan, interjected, "There is no anxiety for this measure at the present stage."

Hon. A. H. Panton: He did not want a redistribution.

Mr. TRIAT: He would have lost his seat; a redistribution would have been his Swan song. The Premier in 1937 also said—

It was preferable to wait until just previous to an election before setting about altering boundaries, because otherwise circumstances might have arisen to alter the position again.

The present Minister for Works interjected, "There is no guarantee that that will not be repeated under this Bill. There is still a big movement of population." That was before the war. In times of peace the population was rushing about, but now that the war is over and service personnel have returned and have not settled down, there is no movement of population! The population is quiescent! There will not be a 20 per cent. alteration in the electors of any district for the next 10 or 12 years!

Let me assure members that there is a big movement of population. In my district I can guarantee that there will be 1,000 men employed on the three big mines, which would represent an immediate increase of population of 30 to 40 per cent. In the Yilgarn-Coolgardie district, where there are several mining propositions, the increase will be in the same vicinity. As I have stated, the member for Williams-Narrogin said in 1937 that there was no guarantee that this would not be repeated under the Bill then before the House. That shows how anxious the Opposition of that time was for a redistribution of seats.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Two people left Narrogin in that year!

Mr. TRIAT: The Premier, in 1937, went on to say—

Nine years have passed since there was a redistribution, and it is a duty statutorily imposed upon the Government to bring in a Redistribution Bill.

Later in the debate we find recorded an interjection by Mr. Sampson, that there was a suggestion abroad that the Bill had been brought down too early, whereupon the then Leader of the Opposition, Hon. C. G. Latham, said, "It is too late in the session, anyhow." There are two expressions of opinion; one said it was too early and the other said it was too late.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Both of the same Party.

Mr. TRIAT: The then Premier introduced the Bill, but it did not get a chance to go to the second reading stage. When the second reading was called on, the first thing that the member for Swan did was to divide the House. The result of the division was,

ayes 21, noes 22. The Bill was not given a chance to go to the second reading.

The Minister for Lands: You would not do a thing like that, would you?

Mr. TRIAT: The Minister for Lands does not know what I am going to do and I shall not tell him. Anyhow, the then Leader of the Opposition resumed the debate. After a long address, which was quoted by the present Leader of the Opposition just recently, the final summing up of Mr. Latham was wonderful. He said that the Labour Government for 14 years never attempted to make an alteration and he wound up as follows, "I hope the Bill goes to the slaughterhouse." That is politics! That is great statesmanship! He hoped the Bill would go to the slaughterhouse! Members on the other side definitely had no intention in those days of permitting a redistribution of seats Bill to pass. I do not suppose that "The West Australian" said that the Bill introduced by the Labour Government was fair, just and generous.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: They did not say anything about it.

Mr. TRIAT: "The West Australian" did not feed members opposite with that piffle for breakfast at that time. Other members spoke to the Bill. The member for Kanowna made a speech on it. He spoke of the size of his electorate and compared it with other electorates on a population basis. That is a thing I wish to speak about. There are large numbers of people concentrated in a small area who do not produce anything at all. What do the people in the metropolitan area produce?

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: You would be surprised!

Mr. TRIAT: I would be. The wealth of the State is produced in the agricultural areas, in the timbergrowing areas and in the mining and pastoral areas.

Mr. Smith: At Byford, too.

Mr. TRIAT: That is a little outside the metropolitan area.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is in the outer suburban area.

Mr. TRIAT: I am speaking about the metropolitan area. Seven-twelfths of our people reside within the sound of the chimes of the Town Hall clock. They probably render service, but such service could be ob-

tained in other centres. Land values in the city have increased. To what extent? The increase is so phenomenal that one would be inclined to think that a city block is paved with gold and studded with diamonds. Yet the present Liberal Government has said, "We will give the city people three more seats at the expense of the people who produce the wealth of the State."

Mr. Hoar: The only thing the people in the metropolitan area produced is the Liberal Party.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Do not blame us for that, although we can stand a lot.

Mr. TRIAT: The Government is not showing much consideration to the people in the back country, who are forced to live under stressful and bad conditions. They work long hours and suffer all kinds of indignities. Their children remain uneducated in many instances, unless the people can afford to send them to the city to be educated.

Mr. Bovell: Country life is not as bad as all that.

Mr. TRIAT: Of course it is. What does the hon. member know about it? He has never been in the back country. I appreciate interjections from men like the member for Irwin-Moore or the member for Mt. Marshall, who do know a bit about the bush. There are some people who go to Kalgoorlie in a motorcar and claim that they have discovered the Goldfields. The men who really found Kalgoorlie pushed wheelbarrows.

The Minister for Lands: In the good old days!

Mr. TRIAT: As I was saying, the member for Kanowna drew the attention of the House to many of the metropolitan electorates. Let me mention some of them. Mt. Hawthorn is a big one, 23 square miles; Guildford, 5.5 square miles; Leederville, 2.2 square miles; North Perth, one square mile, and so on. But Kimberley has an area of 133,750 square miles and Murchison 165,510 square miles.

The Minister for Lands: What is the goldfields area?

Mr. TRIAT: I am telling the House. Does not the Minister know where the Murchison is?

The Minister for Lands: Murchison is in the pastoral area.

Mr. Stjants: Have a look at Kanowna.

Mr. TRIAT: If the Minister wishes to go to the Murchison, he can catch a train twice a week. He will pass through Mullewa.

The Minister for Lands: Thanks for the information.

Mr. TRIAT: When you get to the Murchison—

The Minister for Lands: You come back!

Mr. TRIAT:—you get into a district which has not the amenities enjoyed by people in the city.

The Minister for Lands: I have been there. I went when men pushed wheelbarrows and rode on bicycles.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. TRIAT: Pilbara has an area of 176,550 square miles. There are not a great many people in that district, I grant; but every man and woman there is a worker. They are the salt of the earth. They live under bad conditions and there is not a doctor around the door; the doctor is around the corner, 200 miles away. Compare them with the people who live in the one-square-mile electorate of North Perth. I presume that in time the city of Perth will grow extensively. Houses are being built in the city, but not in the country, and so the tendency will be for people to congregate in the city.

The Premier: We are building houses in 45 country centres.

Mr. TRIAT: Not in the Murchison, or at Mt. Magnet or Kanowna.

Mr. Styants: Not one in Kalgoorlie.

The Premier: They are being built in 45 different country centres.

Mr. TRIAT: Why build them in the city unless the Government wants to attract the people there?

The Premier: We must house the people in the city.

Mr. TRIAT: Send them out to the country.

The Premier: Our policy is decentralisation.

Mr. TRIAT: The people in the city are not producers. I heard a high official of the Perth City Council make a speech not long ago. He said he lived in hope that in the not too distant future the city of Perth would reach the half-million mark, and that

when it did he would agree that we should build cities in country areas.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I bet he would be knighted then!

Mr. TRIAT: If we had some Yankee idea, we could build four flats on four corners and accommodate 20,000 people in them. We could have an electorate in a flat. Some of the Yankee flats hold 4,000 people. We could give them all a vote. This leading article then deals with the amenities now existing in the North and says—

During the past 20 years . . . regular air services have brought most of the Goldfields within a few hours of Perth and all but the remoter areas of the Kimberleys within one day. The State Railways may have broken down under a long sustained policy of Governmental neglect, but air services have multiplied, radio has been developed to give an instantaneous State-wide coverage and roads have been improved to a remarkable degree.

The writer of that article, whoever he may be and however honest, wrote without a great deal of knowledge. Aeroplanes do go to the Kimberleys but they do not cover the Kimberleys or the Murchison. They go to isolated towns here and there. If one wants to take advantage of the air services to the Murchison one has to book ahead in order to obtain a seat on the plane. There was a case recently of a child in Sandstone who developed one of these modern diseases—Leukemia, I think it was—and the father decided to call on aerial transport for assistance. A plane was sent and it only cost £65 to bring the child to Perth! This wonderful new service is there. And it is easy to travel—if you have the money. Unfortunately, this man did not have the money and he was not able to pay. His child was brought down to Perth but the £65 had to be obtained from friends.

I cannot see what advantage there is in having an aeroplane flying overhead but not landing in one's area. The radio is a wonderful invention, too. If a man in the bush has a radio, however, he does not hook it on to an electric light socket. He cannot because there is no electricity. So he has what is called a battery set and when the battery runs down there is no place at which to charge it. So 90 per cent. of the people outback do not have radio sets at all. And as for good roads! The man who wrote this article had never been in the back country. No modern car could travel on those

roads in the Kimberleys. The Attorney General was up there recently and he will be able to verify my statement that the modern long-bodied car cannot travel on northern roads. It cannot take the dips. When the front goes down the car stops on her nose and will not come up on the other side. The man who wrote that article had St. George's-terrace in mind or the Canning highway, which cost £600 a mile. That is the sort of road this gentleman must have looked at when he wrote from his office in St. George's-terrace. Further on in this article he wrote—

That, in brief, is the Bill, but will it be carried? We believe and hope that it will. The Government will need the support of the Independents, but it can hardly be doubted that it will receive that support.

Well, people can vote as they think fit. This is a free country. The Independents are free and nobody can crack a whip over them.

Mr. Read: We hope so.

Mr. TRIAT: They can please themselves. They are free people. I sincerely believe they will please themselves and will not feel obliged to vote in accordance with the viewpoint of either Party.

The Minister for Lands: Hear, hear!

Mr. TRIAT: They will please themselves and if they vote for the second reading they may still please themselves how they vote for various parts of the Bill. I believe they have courage enough to please themselves about the second reading. Further on in this article the writer says—

It is doubtful whether even the Opposition would be unanimous just now in welcoming an extraordinary election.

What does that mean? That is the old threat, "If you do not do as we tell you we will take you to the country." That is what it means. What right has this paper to threaten any individual in this House that he will be taken to the country?

Mr. Fox: They are giving instructions as to what shall be done.

Mr. TRIAT: I am wondering whether they are telling the people opposite what to do.

Mr. Fox: Of course they are.

The Premier: If that is a question without notice the answer is "No."

Mr. TRIAT: It looks very bad.

Hon. A. H. Panton: I think it is sufficient to have a Royal Commission about. We have Royal Commissions inquiring into lesser matters at the moment.

Mr. TRIAT: I will not read the rest of the article dealing with the wonderful amenities that happen to exist in the North country where people live in good circumstances and have air transport and good roads and everything required! But I would mention that in today's paper appears an article written by somebody in the North-West. It appears in the same publication as the leading article to which I referred.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: The misleading article.

Mr. TRIAT: It is headed, "Hardships of North. Deterrent to Settlers." It is signed by R. F. Carville, a lady, I presume. The writer says—

1. I have noticed the efforts made to secure immigrants to this country and similar efforts to populate the North. I herewith attach a list of reasons why it should be depopulated.

This letter came from Broome and the reasons that are put forward are published under the headings of "sanitary service," "power," "water supply," "vermin," "shipping" and "roads." Here are the first paragraphs—

2. Sanitary service: I am not the only one who has been missed in the weekly round resulting in no change of pans for two weeks. There is no excuse for this, and we pay 26s. a quarter for this "service."

3. Power: For many months we were without any at all. Now it runs fitfully from 8.30 a.m. to midnight; no power Sundays until 4 p.m., and it is quite likely you will not have your evening meal by electric light; anyway, it is 1s. 6d. per unit when it is on.

That is one place where people pay only 1s. 6d. a unit. One could have a lot of lights going there! That is one of the good places the people of which should not have a representative in Parliament. The writer continues—

4. Water Supply: I have two young children, under three years. Yet we were without water for 20 days. The scheme was "repaired" and now runs at night, but during the day it is mostly hot air that comes from the taps. It must be filtered and even then is not fit to drink.

Vermis: The town is alive with cockroaches, amongst other things, and it is practically impossible to keep these repugnant creatures at bay; the wardrobe contents just have to suffer.

That is strange, because a new Government came in to wipe all these cobwebs away! Yet after a long period of office by the present Government, this person writes—

5. Shipping: A State Government responsibility. We are often four weeks without a ship; then two will arrive just two days apart. I need not describe the chaos and waste of hard-to-get vegetables when this occurs after shop-keepers place orders expecting ships to arrive fortnightly.

6. Roads: We pay the same license fee as Perth yet 50 per cent. of the roads are only sand tracks; on top of this, petrol is 3s. 4d. a gallon and oil 10s. a gallon.

It is possible to go on for hours but this is enough to turn a few faces red.

The Premier is already red.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the hon. member connect that with the North-West?

Mr. TRIAT: This letter is about the North-West. It is from Broome, which this leading article says is a wonderful place to live in because it has air transport and radio and good roads. Yet the same paper published that letter. Evidently their memory was short. "The Daily News" on the same day had a brief leading article. "The Daily News" is only part of a big concern and is not so strong. It said—

An ideal of pure democracy is that all votes should have nearly equal value.

This is rarely, if ever, obtainable; but gross disproportion between the electoral strength of electorates is avoided.

Where do they claim gross disproportion exists today?

Hon. A. H. Panton: In West Perth and Nedlands!

Mr. TRIAT: Is it not disproportionate to claim that a district of one square mile in the metropolitan area should claim equal votes with a Goldfields area of 150,000 square miles, where everybody is a producer? Of course, it is not. Every man and woman over 21 years of age, living in the Murchison, is entitled to have a proportionate value of 4 to 1. A fair and just claim can be made for them. But we have this paper saying that the proportion is totally wrong. But when it is suggested that there should be three seats in the metropolitan area, everything is totally right. The leading article goes on to say—

Ours is a vast territory, still in process of development, with varied interests and scattered population.

That is the only time the truth is told in that leading article. But the population will not be increased in the back areas unless there is representation by men who are prepared to listen to the people's complaints. As the Leader of the Opposition has told the House, every elector in the back country knows his representatives not only by name but personally. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the Parliamentary member is made the city agent for their requirements. If anything goes wrong, they wire him immediately and say, "Will you attend to this?" and the member does so and sends a reply. I suppose members representing country electorates experience the same sort of thing. But there are stores in the towns they represent whereas in some parts of my electorate there is a train only once a fortnight and a mail once a week. If the people living in those parts require anything to be put on a train in a hurry the only way to get it done is to wire me. But the gem of the lot in this leading article—I suppose the writer was getting tired; perhaps it was towards knock-off time—is this—

A rough and ready adjustment is proposed in the Bill.

He was off the track from the point of view of the paper, but he is quite right from our point of view. The paragraph reads—

A rough and ready adjustment is proposed in the Bill by counting two votes as one in determining electorate quotas and giving the metropolitan area three more members.

"Rough and ready," eh! I cannot understand members opposite permitting that to be circulated. They should have put the copies of this paper in cold storage.

Mr. Yates: We are not proud.

Mr. TRIAT: I should not think so.

The Premier: It is not too rough.

Mr. TRIAT: It is as rough as goat's knees. I promised members that I would tell the House how the Opposition—the present Government—voted on the redistribution Bill of 1937. It is astonishing to see how many of those members are still in the House. They are as follows: Messrs. Keenan, Mann, McDonald, North, Seward, Shearn, Watts and Doney. They voted so as to prevent the Government's redistribution Bill of 1937 being passed. It is true that the Labour Government did make some

endeavour to have a redistribution of seats. It missed by one vote. Unless someone from this side of the House walked over to vote with the Government we could do nothing. We walk over frequently.

The Minister for Lands: We have never noticed it.

Mr. TRIAT: But we are bound to follow our leader. Otherwise, we vote as we think fit.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: We do not crack the whip like the Government does.

The Premier: Some of you will come over this time.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is a pious hope.

Mr. TRIAT: I conclude by saying I sincerely hope that in Committee many of the amendments to be moved by the Labour Party, and which will be for the benefit of the people in general, will be favourably considered by some of the country members. I feel confident they will. When all is said and done, this State is not here for one Parliament or Party, and we are here for the betterment of the people of the State.

If the Bill passes the second reading the amendments can fairly be accepted by those members representing country electorates because they will benefit those areas without destroying the effect of the Bill. We are not going to allow one Party to pass legislation which will put it in power for years to the disadvantage of the other class of electors in the State. Such a position is not tolerated anywhere. I know members of the Government personally, and I have much liking for them, but when talking politics we talk as we feel and forget our likes and dislikes. I am confident that many members of the Ministerial bench will be in favour of giving a just and fair view of these matters.

MR. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [8.27]: Twice during the last nine months I have had occasion to approach the electors of Pilbara to point out the justification for my continuance as their representative. I am here this evening to give reasons why their electorate should not be abolished. Any remarks I make will not be of a personal nature. I shall try to rise above such an attitude and endeavour to submit reasons why the Bill should not be passed. Firstly I would like to congratulate the Leader of

the Opposition on his able contribution to the debate. I think every member, regardless of political colour, will agree with me when I offer those congratulations. I believe this Bill is the result of many minds joined to a particular line of thought and action because in the first analysis it has the effect of reducing the number of Labour representatives by three. It has the effect of reducing the representation of the people of the North-West by 25 per cent. That is, it is proposed to decrease the number of members from four to three.

The Bill is, if I read it aright, to be the immediate means of reducing the number of Goldfields seats by two and increasing the number in the metropolitan area by 18 per cent. I would like to make this remark at the outset, that it appears to me we are inclined to be dogmatic in our approach to problems concerning the State as a whole.

It would have been far better had the Government considered altering the Constitution Acts Amendment Act to provide a greater number of members for this State, rather than to take action, such as is indicated in the Bill, to reduce representation throughout the North-West. When the Attorney General introduced the Bill, he was at pains to compare Western Australia with Queensland and to point out the difference between the circumstances obtaining today in the North-West and those obtaining 20 or 25 years ago. It may be interesting to compare the area of Western Australia with the areas of the other States.

This State has an area of approximately 1,000,000 square miles and a population of about 500,000. With nearly one third of the total area of the Commonwealth, we have 50 members. New South Wales, with an area of 309,000 square miles, has 90 members and Queensland, with an area of 670,000 square miles, is represented by 62 members. I will not traverse the ground so ably covered by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to Queensland. South Australia, with an area of 380,000 square miles, has 39 members and Victoria, with 88,000 square miles, 65 members.

The Premier: Are you going to refer to population?

Mr. HEGNEY: The interjection is appropriate. I said earlier that circumstances obtaining in Western Australia are so different from those in the Eastern States that any

comparison on the lines indicated by the Premier would be unfair. I am amazed at the Premier, who holds the portfolio of Minister for the North-West, subscribing to a Bill the purpose of which is to take away 25 per cent. of the representation of the people of that area. If anyone should stand up for them and their interests, it is the Minister holding the portfolio of the North-West. I will now deal with the population of that area. Members who have never been through the North may visualise the vast area contained in this State, and realise that the four North-West seats represent about half the area of Western Australia.

I am consistent in my advocacy, as on previous occasions in this Chamber and at public gatherings I have advocated that this State should have far greater representation in the Commonwealth Parliament—owing to its vast area and sparsity of population—than is the case. I believe that the principle of one vote one value must be modified when all the circumstances are taken into account. Despite the statement of the Attorney General, who indicated the other evening that aeroplane services are operating in the North-West—whereas they did not, some years ago—I respectfully inform him that those who know the North-West realise that the planes land only at given points. I say—without regard to politics—that whoever adequately represents an area such as Kimberley, Pilbara, Roebourne or Gascoyne must travel thousands of miles by motor truck, car, or other means of transport—even though aeroplane services operate along the coastline and in a few inland areas—if he is to do his job properly.

It is idle for the Attorney General or anyone else to argue that the representation of those areas should be reduced because aeroplanes now travel through that portion of the State. The electoral population of Pilbara is certainly under 1,000, but the area is twice that of Victoria, and one member represents that district. No one would seriously argue the application of a ratio of one to one or two to one regarding electors in that and other parts of the State, as compared with those living in the city. Before the member for Kimberley meets even one of his electors he has to travel between 1,300 and 1,400 miles. I, as temporary representative of the Pilbara district, travel 950 miles before meeting my electors. Comparing State members of Parliament and

their functions with those in the Commonwealth sphere, members will agree that State representatives have a greater personal relationship to their constituents than have Federal representatives.

It would not be humanly possible for anyone reasonably and adequately to represent the North-West districts if the representation were reduced. Reference was made earlier in the evening to the provision for the quota system, which will have the effect of giving the metropolitan area three more seats. There is so much pressure from different organisations, including the Australian Labour Party, the Liberal Party, the Country Party and a multiplicity of other organisations—some of a political character, some semi-political and others non-political—concentrated in the metropolitan area, that they must have some influence on the deliberations of Parliament. Many members representing country constituencies live in the metropolitan area for the greater part of the year. They are public figures and take part in public activities, and although they do not represent the districts in which they live in the metropolitan area, they do contribute to public activities, and the views of their fellows in those districts are represented in this Parliament.

I do not argue that the representation of the metropolitan area should be reduced, but that, owing to the vast areas over which some members have to travel, that factor should be taken into account, and that no precedent should be sought in other States. From my reading of the Bill the Commission is to determine the boundaries, which in due course will be gazetted, and there will be no obligation on the part of the Commissioners to submit their report to Parliament. After all, Parliament is comprised of representatives of the people and, as such, it should endorse or otherwise the report of the Commissioners. If that is not done, it will be simply a matter of the Commission drawing up its report and, after the report has been gazetted, it will become law. One of the functions of Parliament should be to endorse or otherwise the report of the Commission. The measure is entitled—

A Bill for an Act to repeal the Redistribution of Seats Act, 1911, the Electoral Districts Act, 1922, and the Redistribution of Seats Act, 1929, and amendments thereto; and to make provision for the better representation of the people of Western Australia in Parliament.

I think it is a Bill for an Act to make worse provision for the representation of the people in the outlying areas of the State. I wish to take this opportunity, too, of pointing out that it is not really a Bill for an Act for the better representation of the people for, after all, members of another place will still have the authority to veto any legislation sent up from this Chamber. In that case the Title of the Bill is really a misnomer. If the Bill be passed, will the Legislative Council have power to over-ride anything that this House may seek to accomplish by Bills sent to another place, or shall we have to ask for a series of conferences, which may be abortive, and bow and bend the knee to the Council? That is the position.

How will there be better representation for the people of Western Australia if this Bill passes with the restricted franchise which operates for the Legislative Council? I am not speaking in any personal sense, as the members of the Legislative Council are a very fine body of men, but I am speaking of the principle, and the principle, as set out in the Bill is a misnomer. Hitherto, no timberworker and no mineworker, be he coal or gold-miner, and no wharf lumper not owning real estate to the value of £50 has been entitled to be represented in another place, which is part of the Parliament of this State. Thus the Title of the Bill, which is for an Act to make better representation for the people of Western Australia is entirely misleading.

Some time ago, on account of the position which obtained in the far-flung areas of this State, an organisation known as the Kimberley Advance Association was inaugurated with certain objectives. It has brought under the notice of members, and I understand under the notice of the Premier, and certainly under the notice of the Prime Minister, various recommendations for the better working and better treatment of the North-West of this State. Certainly, if there is any life in that organisation, it is not going to take the proposition of this Government lying down and is not going to stand for a reduction by one in the number of representatives for the people of the North-West. If there is any indication of pessimism about the future of the North, it is indicated in this measure.

I shall not support a measure that has for its object a reduction by one in the number of seats for the North-West or a reduction by two seats in the representation of the outlying Goldfields, and I am prepared to justify my attitude to the people of the North-West. It has been said—and there is an indication of it in the Bill—that there will be no alteration as regards the Council members for the North Province. I understand that members representing that province have their work cut out to attend to the present area and I am not proposing that the area should be increased, but I am suggesting that before any radical alteration is made to the boundaries of Assembly districts, adult franchise should operate for the people as a whole. Then there would be a semblance of justification for terming the Bill one for the better representation of the people of the State.

The depopulation of the North is a serious matter for the people living north of the Murchison River, which I understand, is the southern boundary of the Gascoyne electorate. If we are to encourage people to settle in the North-West and those who are there to remain, the best gesture Parliament can make is to continue the present representation. I repeat that I am speaking in no personal sense. I am trying to interpret the feelings of the people of the North because, during the election campaign in Pilbara, I said I believed that if the Liberal and Country Parties were returned to power, they would take an early opportunity to reduce the number of seats for the North-West by one certainly and possibly by two or three. I do not wish to say anything derogatory of my opponent in the election, but I mentioned that in Port Hedland and Nullagine my opponent had indicated—and now I am speaking subject to correction—that he had been advised that if the Liberal and Country Parties took office, they would not tamper with the North-West seats. I am open to correction on that point.

I do not want to misinterpret Mr. Taplin, but that is the impression I received during the Pilbara election campaign. I cannot subscribe to the principles of the Bill and hope it will be defeated. If it passes the second reading I shall fight certain of the provisions in the Committee stage. I recognise that every member

will, to a certain extent, have some hesitancy in speaking to a Bill of this character, because personal interests undoubtedly obtrude. I feel hesitant in speaking on a subject about which I might be considered to be selfish, but I hope the good sense of the House will prevail and that the rank and file on the Government side, if not the Ministers, will vote the Bill out on the second reading.

MR. KELLY (Yilgarn - Coolgardie) [8.52]: I think some form of redistribution of seats is feasible; but, to be just, the means of attaining that object must be devoid of prejudice if we are not to inflict injustice on some sections of the community. This Bill does not possess any semblance of equality in its provisions so far as concerns electors in remote areas. The Bill has been cleverly drawn with a distinct Liberal bias.

Mr. Styants: Hear, hear!

Mr. KELLY: The object aimed at is not so much the equalisation or the better representation of the electors of the State; it is to do a distinct disservice to the Goldfields and North-West of the State. The Bill is a complete failure from a decentralisation point of view.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Absolutely.

Mr. KELLY: I am surprised, after having listened to the oft-expressed opinion of the Government, comprised, as it is, of Country Party and Liberal supporters, that it should foist on the State a Bill reeking with injustice from a decentralisation point of view.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is one of the Premier's platitudes.

Mr. KELLY: The Government wants to deprive the North-West, the Goldfields and the agricultural areas of three seats. Remote areas are treated most harshly by the Bill; there is no gainsaying that fact. In every phase of the Bill we see a desire to bring to St. George's-terrace a voting strength of three more seats, which are to be filched from the Goldfields and agricultural areas. Other members have referred to the size of various electorates, apart from their population, and have said that these electorates should be given some consideration. Apparently they are not in the picture. When examined, this Bill

shows very clearly a desire to reduce the number on this side of the House, not a desire to do service to the electors of the State.

Mr. Styants: Very neatly put.

Mr. KELLY: Three electorates have been mentioned which may rightly be termed buffer electorates. Foremost of them is the electorate of Swan. The Leader of the Opposition and other members have pointed out the complete injustice of allowing the votes in a district within 15 miles of the capital city to retain the same value as the votes of people living in our far-flung areas. If for no other reason, the Bill should be amended in that direction. The representation proposed by the Bill is most unbalanced. I propose to give the House some facts and figures with respect to the electorates as they are now constituted. There are 17 metropolitan seats; the total area being 317 square miles, an average of 18 square miles per electorate. There are 21 agricultural electorates, comprising 97,274 square miles, an average of 4,679 square miles per electorate. There are eight mining electorates, comprising 455,529 square miles, an average per electorate of 56,941 square miles. These figures are illuminating; but, when analysed, the disparity that now exists is astounding.

The average mining and pastoral electorate is 3,163 times larger than the average metropolitan electorate; and the average mining and pastoral electorate is 12 times larger than the average agricultural electorate. Would any member say for a moment that the proposals in this Bill constitute equal representation? No-one with any decency of thought or by any stretch of the imagination could claim that there is any justice in a Bill of this nature. I desire to emphasise the enormous importance of the goldmining and other far distant electorates in the past history of the State. Production figures greatly strengthen the claim of these outback areas not only for the retention of the present representation, but also for an increase. I am going back for some time, I admit, but these are the figures which were available to me and I think members should be reminded of them at this stage.

From 1880 to 1944—which are the last figures I was able to obtain—I find that the

total production of wool, timber, wheat, flour and stock in this State amounted to £285,000,000. The electorates which the Bill of the Attorney General proposes to wipe out were responsible during that period for producing wealth for the State to the total value of £271,000,000. In other words, £14,000,000 short in one balanced period of the total amount produced in the State. Yet we have members opposite seeking to deprive some of these outback areas of the representation to which they are justly entitled. The Government has the colossal effrontery to ask us to support a measure of this type when it was not prepared to support one which provided an infinitely greater amount of justice for all parts of the State. If the Attorney General had stopped to analyse this Bill, he would have found that it is asking us to allow 25 per cent. of the representation of the Goldfields and outback areas to commit political suicide. I do not think any just man analysed it or he would never have put it forward.

Mr. Hoar: Is not the Attorney General a just man?

Mr. KELLY: I have always thought the Attorney General to be just, but I feel that he is not justified in doing what he has done. I desire to justify some of the remarks I have made regarding the area I represent because it is representative of many others that are coming under the sweeping axe of this Bill. Some goldfields electorates—in fact, I would be quite safe in saying all of them—are suffering the aftermath of war. During the war, most towns in outback areas were denuded of population and, because for many reasons that population has not returned to as great an extent as we might wish, the figures in some of those remote areas have remained low. There are a number of reasons why people have not returned.

A short time ago I mentioned some of the disabilities that were being suffered by the goldmining industry, and chief amongst those disabilities I mentioned high mining costs. Apart from that, there are other reasons why the population has not returned to outback districts. There are, for instance, the housing shortage, shortage of machinery and low priority on the purchasing list. Remote areas have received quite a lot of prominence and there is no need for me to amplify the injustice being meted out to

many people therein. Transport difficulties constitute a deterrent to the building up of the population in these electorates, and another factor is the scarcity of skilled labour for the various jobs waiting to be done. A moment ago I said I desired to make some reference to the electorate I represent firstly because I know it better than any other, and secondly, because I know it is in similar circumstances to many other electorates whose existence is in jeopardy today.

It might be interesting to members to know that Yilgarn-Coolgardie in acreage represents an area as big as that covered by 34 of the constituencies of this Assembly. It is 31,000 square miles in extent. Is it to be imagined that the people scattered in that area are not entitled to the fullest representation they can get? Of course they are! The dimensions of that electorate are 175 miles east and west and 225 miles north and south. It is an enormous area, and there are people ringed right around the electorate and in every section of it. Does any member realise that it takes me over 30 days to cover my electorate and visit only three-fifths of the people in it? And no time must be wasted if one is to cover the distance in that period.

Mr. Triat: Tell "The West Australian" leader-writer that; he will not believe you.

Mr. KELLY: I would like him to come on a trip with me to the electorate. It would open his eyes. There would be a lot less said along the lines he followed, and there would be a lot more meat in what he did say. The transport problems are enormous. There is no gainsaying that fact. Concerning the ridiculous statement that roads have improved, there may have been an improvement in St. George's-terrace and Riverside-drive, but there has been none in the outback areas; yet there is an attempt to have three more men elected so that other Riverside-drives may be improved. Is that justice? I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that you do not think so, for I know you to be a fair man.

There are three main industries in my electorate. Mining predominates, but there is a big portion devoted to agriculture and an increasing section is devoted to grazing. Each of these industries has its particular and separate difficulties, and is capable of expansion. If times had been normal, there is no doubt that pre-war figures of popula-

tion would have been reached long ago. Another important feature I want to mention is the history of this district since the amalgamation of Yilgarn and Coolgardie electorates about 1927. Right from its inception as a double-barrelled electorate, the number of voters increased at every election up till the time when war prevented a further increase. Here are the figures for the various years—

Year.	Number.
1927	2,338
1930	2,798
1933	3,287
1936	3,860
1939	3,922

From that period onwards, there was a considerable dwindling in the numbers because, the electorate being very patriotic, men and women responded to the call of their country and joined the Services. A further cause for the decrease in population was that a number of families, being deprived of the presence of their breadwinners, came to the city areas and, having tasted some of the good things enjoyed by city folk, have consistently refused to go back to their original homes. Is it any wonder they want to remain in the city? But have we given them any inducement to return to the back country? We have not. No encouragement has been given by this Government or indeed, to some extent, by the past Governments, to get the people back to these remote areas. There has been no satisfactory plan, even up to this stage, for the rehabilitation of the mining industry, or if there is a plan it has not been put into operation. We have an unattractive and inadequate prospecting allowance, and that is all that this Government, faced with the dire necessity of providing dollars not only in our own interests from a national point of view but also for the assistance of Great Britain, has made available.

The only thing that we can get from this present Government is an allowance of 30s. per week, which is being reviewed. It has been reviewed and reviewed and probably will continue to be reviewed! There is no justice being granted to prospectors. Why should we seek to deprive those men of the representation which they enjoy today? There has been too much dependence placed by State Governments on the Commonwealth so far as mining in this State is

concerned. The State Government is continually side-stepping its obligations to the goldmining areas. It seeks to extinguish their representation. But notwithstanding all this apathy of the Government towards the outlying districts of the State, particularly the goldmining areas, we find that the Yilgarn-Coolgardie electorate and others that have the lowest electoral figures in history are on the doorstep of prosperity. I say that not merely as propaganda and in the hope of swaying someone's views, for I know that the opinions of some members will not be swayed, but because I want to place before the House the picture that a cross-section of the Yilgarn-Coolgardie electors would put before members if they could be here.

There is no doubt that the electoral figures of some of these outback areas could, for the reasons I have given, and many others, easily be doubled. Yet the proposal is to cut two of the Goldfields electorates right out. I intend to show how today's figures could be doubled, and probably more than doubled. For the sake of being on the safe side, however, I will content myself with saying that they could be doubled. In Coolgardie we have the Tindals mine which has been active for several years. The original plant there, financed by the State Government, was capable of crushing 5,000 tons, and the mine could employ 180 men. The company succeeded in paying off its original indebtedness to the Government. When it became necessary to double the plant—and that coincided almost with the commencement of the war—the Government had again to come to the assistance of the company with another substantial amount. This was done.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Commonwealth authorities then pinched the engines.

Mr. KELLY: That is so. It was then not possible to double the output because of the intervention of the war. As the member for Leederville has pointed out, the company contributed three of its engines to the war effort. The mine was closed down although there were about 35,000 tons of broken ore in reserve and ready for crushing. But because men were needed, they were given willingly. That mine is today in the course of installing three engines totalling 1,000 h.p., which will make its total up to 2,000 h.p. and the mine will then be capable of

producing 10,000 tons of ore per month which will mean the employment of 350 or more men. The Premier mentioned something a while ago which, he said, was on the verge of being started. I did not contradict him at the time, but I knew of his assumption that a brickmaking enterprise was to be established in Coolgardie, and was on the point of commencing.

The actual position at the time was that the necessary engines were still on the Sydney wharf. But wishful thinking was sufficient to enable the statement to be made that the show was about to be started. It will commence in the near future, and we are hoping it will be an important adjunct to the activities of the district. I crave your tolerance, Mr. Speaker, while I mention one or two more circumstances that can alter considerably the figures now obtaining in the various districts. At Burbanks, eight miles from Coolgardie, a company at the present time is installing machinery, the engine of which can produce 600 h.p. The company is prepared to spend £53,000 in unwatering and on development work. It is not hard to visualise that in the event of a favourable result being achieved this mine will be capable of employing up to 200 men. It has done so in the past, and it has never been exploited to the full. A company that is prepared to spend £53,000 must have a very fine programme ahead of it.

There are two other main mines in the district. Although work in only a small way has been done on the Hampton Areas over the past 12 or 15 months, the shows have changed hands at a figure of approximately £200,000. This company, which is one of the most efficient in Australia in the exploitation of the goldmining industry, and is very thorough in its examination of the various shows that come under its control, is shortly to install adequate machinery and treatment plant, and it will employ a great number of men. There are many other promising developments in this mining area. Yilgarn is a separate section altogether. In its amalgamated form the electorate is extremely important, but even if the Yilgarn section were still a separate entity it would also be important, having its farming, grazing and goldmining. The Western Mining Company has extended its options on a number of promising shows in this locality. A great many men will be employed there in the not-far-distant future.

An English company, with £200,000 to spend, is getting under way not far from Southern Cross, and will contribute its quota to the at-present diminished figures for this electorate. Rich finds have been made at Marvel Loch and Parker's Range, but there has been no encouragement given to people to return to such remote areas. If it wishes to justify a Bill of this nature, the Government should give such districts a chance to regain the figures they enjoyed in pre-war years. The Yilgarn area is well known for its sulphide ores, of which it has the most valuable and extensive bodies in this State. If a sulphide ore treatment plant were established anywhere in the Yilgarn area it would attract an enormous influx of population. Members are justified in asking the Government to reconsider the ill-advised measure that has been brought before this House.

The Government says it does not know where the boundaries are to be, but the provisions in the Bill would remove two Goldfields electorates and one North-West electorate. Had the Attorney General brought down a Bill which stated that the electoral figures of Western Australia were unbalanced, and that some electorates required to have electors removed and added to other electorates, a body of men such as the proposed tribunal would not have placed a finger on the electorates singled out in the Bill by the Attorney General for special treatment. I appeal to members opposite to give this aspect consideration, and in loyalty to the people of the State to consider the merits and demerits of the measure. If they give it an unbiased examination the merits will be outweighed by the demerits. As I want the measure to go to the Committee stage I am prepared to support the second reading, but I will fight vigorously against many of the provisions in the Bill.

HON. A. A. M. COVERLEY (Kimberley) [9.25]: I have no intention of supporting the Bill, first and foremost because it proposes to take away a quarter of the representation of the people of the North-West. Those people have sufficient difficulties to contend with, without losing any of the representation which may, through force of numbers, be able in this House to improve the bad existing conditions. The Attorney General, when introducing the Bill and indicating his intention of depriving

the North-West of one Assembly member, gave as his reason the loss of population, the lack of numerical strength, and the improved conditions now enjoyed by people in that area. He spoke of the improved facilities from knowledge gained during a tour by aeroplane of the main centres in that area, but that knowledge has misled him. There is an aeroplane service to the main centres of population and some of the large stations, and to a degree it has broken down the isolation of the North, but the representative of a North-West area has still to do the majority of the agency work of people in the back country.

In spite of the air service, conditions are inconvenient for many of the electors of the North-West. Those living on stations have to send messengers to centres where the aeroplanes land, in order to get their mail, and so on—sometimes at great inconvenience. The Minister was not convincing in his argument that the isolation of the people in the North-West had disappeared, and that the aerial mail service had overcome the difficulties under which they suffered in the past. The loss of population can be accounted for in many ways. As pointed out by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie, many of the younger residents, who came to the city and experienced the greater amenities there, have now no wish to return to the North. Many of them enlisted and have not—at all events until recently—made any effort to return to that area.

During the last twelve months there has been an influx of young white people into the North, in the pastoral, pearling and other industries. Although the present roll indicates only 860 electors for Kimberley, I am positive that if the Electoral Office combed the district it could add at least another 250 names to the roll. The number of people I met—who were not enrolled—during my last trip to the area, convinces me that the roll is at least 250 short of what it should be. However that may be, the distance, isolation and lack of amenities are such that the North is entitled to all of its four representatives. The Attorney General pointed out that the three North-West province seats are not to be interfered with.

While the Minister and our leading Press have on many occasions referred to Labour pocket boroughs, I would draw attention to

the fact that, while it is proposed to take away from the North one Assembly representative, the Bill does not propose to interfere with the North-West province which, as members know, is there for the protection of wealthy people. On the limited franchise, the roll consists of 990 electors. Of that number, a large percentage do not live in the North but reside in comfortable circumstances in the suburbs. I have counted on the roll 158 names with other than northern addresses. I shall quote from page 10 of the electoral roll for the North province in order to draw the attention of members, and of "The West Australian" newspaper, if it will be good enough to publish the information, to facts in support of my statement.

I shall not delay the House by dealing with the whole 158, but here are the addresses of some to show the extent of the representation of the three members of the North province—Tranby Park, Serpentine; Carlaminda, Dardanup; Narrogin, Narrogin; Broomehill, Dardanup; Narrogin, Broomehill; Roberts-road, Subiaco; Queenslea-drive, Claremont, Johnston-street, Peppermint Grove; Hawkestone-street, Cottesloe; Mosman Park; Serpentine; Narrogin.

It is on record that an eminent person in years gone by, named Percy Brunton, on one occasion contested the Claremont seat and polled somewhat over 500 votes. Shortly after the election, he committed some small offence by holding a public meeting without the permission of the police, or something of the sort, and was fined and, in default of payment, sent to gaol. If members analyse the 990 names on the North province roll and deduct the 158 who, I should say, have never lived there, but who, by interests in pastoral holdings and other ways, have a right to vote for that province, and divide the 800 odd by the three representatives, they will find that each member for the North Province represents approximately 278 electors. If it be fair to permit the three members for the North Province to continue to represent 278 electors each, it is time the Government considered whether the population of the North is so small that it would be fair to retain the present number of members for the Assembly, for it is to those members the people living in the North-West actually look.

I am surprised that Country Party members are prepared to support a Bill of this

description. I was always of the impression that Country Party members preferred to give all the support they could to decentralisation. On this occasion they are being asked and evidently intend to support a measure to deprive the country areas of representation and give three extra seats to the metropolitan area. I am afraid I cannot understand their outlook as representatives of country districts. I have no intention of supporting the Bill. It is on record that the residents of the North-West are making every endeavour to stir the present Government, as they did the past Government, into activity to do something for that part of the State, but I am convinced that if this Bill is carried, it will seriously lower the morale of the people of the North-West and they will lose all confidence in their State representation for all time.

Organisations have been formed in the North with the idea of trying to get local autonomy for that part of the State. Organisations and public meetings have urged separation from the State with a view to becoming part of the Commonwealth. So far we have been able to appease the people, giving them to understand that when the war was over and manpower and material were available, the Government would try to improve their conditions. Those organisations are at least quiescent for the time being. But if this Bill becomes law there will be a greater agitation than ever before for Commonwealth control or local autonomy apart from the State. I hope the Bill will not be passed.

HCN. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [9.37]: I consider it very doubtful whether the present is a reasonable time for a redistribution of seats in this State. In my view there is a strong artificial element about the distribution of our population today in the various parts of the State. Those who remember the war years with any clearness will know that there was a considerable influx of population to the metropolitan area from the country districts. Although the war has been over for more than two years, not much of the country population that came to the metropolitan area during the war has yet returned to the country. Probably shortage of housing accommodation in country districts is the major reason why the population there is not greater than it is. There is a shortage of housing in the metropolitan area, as well

as in country districts, but it is a fact that the people appear to be able to find accommodation on a much denser scale in the metropolitan area than in the country.

When people left the country for the metropolis during the war, they became housed, in the majority of instances, with relatives and have continued to live with relatives. No matter how much they might wish to return to the country, no means are available by which they could be accommodated, even to a small extent, in the majority of country places. Therefore the population of the metropolitan area is swollen because of the operations of wartime factors, the effects of which are still to be felt. There are in all country districts very many opportunities for employment at present. I doubt whether there is any country town of any magnitude where more men and women and young people could not be employed if they were available there.

The members for Yilgarn-Coolgardie and Mt. Magnet have indicated how acutely short is the mining industry with regard to its manpower requirements. If the manpower essential for that industry were available, it is beyond doubt that the population of every district in the State, where goldmining is carried on to any extent, would be considerably increased. Hence we find the population of the metropolitan area is now artificially swollen because of the large number of people who came here during the war years and have not yet returned, with the result that the population of the country districts is artificially reduced for the same reason.

The Premier: I do not think there will be any reduction in the population of the metropolitan area but, with more industries being established, it is more likely to increase.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Because the population of the metropolitan area has been artificially increased and because that of the country districts has been artificially reduced owing to the operation of war causes, it seems to me that the present period may not be a fair and reasonable one in which to devise, and to put into operation, a scheme for the redistribution of electoral boundaries, the effect of which under the provisions of the Bill must be, first of all, that the country districts will lose three seats and three representatives in this

Assembly, while the metropolitan districts will gain three seats and three additional members to speak for them in this Chamber. Those are the two results that must happen under the Bill as drafted. There is no arguing against that. These are exactly the effects of the Bill which has been designed in its present form for that purpose.

The measure declares that the Commission which is to be appointed shall regard the State as divided into three areas, these being, first, the metropolitan area; secondly, the north-western area and, thirdly, the agricultural, mining and pastoral area. I ask any member of the House who knows Western Australia well—I take it for granted that every one of us has that knowledge—if it is a fair and reasonable way to divide a large State like Western Australia for the purpose of working out how the number of seats shall be allocated as between those three areas. Is it fair in any shape or form to lump the whole of the goldmining, pastoral and agricultural districts into one area?

Is it fair to do that and then say, as the Bill does, that every person living in that huge area shall have a vote that, in the election of members to this Assembly, shall be equal in value? By no stretch of imagination can it be logically argued that an elector at, say, Northam should have the same voting power as another residing at Laverton, Lawlers, Meekatharra or any other centre in the outlying portions of the State. No-one would dare to try to argue that such a basis would be fair or reasonable. If the Bill were one to give the same value to every voter in the State, it would be different altogether; but I am not suggesting for one moment that I would support such a proposition.

Hon. N. Keenan: It would mean there would be 172 members here!

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: But the Government in the Bill provides a formula which differentiates in the value to be given to the vote of an elector according to whether he resides in one or other of the three areas that will be established. By it, the Government declares that the resident of the metropolitan area shall, in effect, have a vote that will have only a 50 per cent. value. In other words two electors in the metropolitan area shall be regarded as one. Then the Government, through the Bill,

declares that all the rest of the State, with the exception of the North-West, shall be lumped into one area and every person there, no matter in what part of that huge area he or she resides, shall have a vote of the same value or, in other words, one elector will count as one elector.

In recent years we have heard endless talk and read a great deal about the virtue of decentralisation. Every one of us, within limits, has subscribed to the necessity for a policy of decentralisation for a State such as Western Australia. It has been the policy of all parties in this State for many years. The Premier, in his Policy Speech at the last election, underlined the decentralisation ideas and beliefs of his Party and the present Deputy Premier did the same on behalf of his Party. This Bill, however, by lumping every country district, except the North-West, together in one area and giving every person in it the same value in regard to voting, cuts right across any policy of decentralisation and inflicts a gross injustice upon the people furthest removed from the metropolitan area.

The Bill proposes that people living within a stone's throw of the metropolitan area shall have a voting power equal to people 400, 500, 600 and 700 miles removed from the metropolitan area. If there is justification for weighting electors differently in regard to the votes they shall register, and I admit there is, and if it is right to declare the metropolitan area a separate district for that purpose, then there is greater justification for zoning country districts on the basis of the same principle. I am positive the Premier could, if he would, give close attention to the zoning of the State; and if he allowed his innate fair-mindedness to influence him and left Party consideration completely out of account, he could bring down a formula much better than this one. He could divide the country areas into perhaps two or three zones instead of lumping them together, as this Bill does, in one area. He could give to the people living in those zones voting strength according to the distance they were removed from the centre of government and the metropolitan district.

It is all very well to say, as the Attorney General did, that modern invention has brought into existence machines some of which fly through the air and some of which travel on the road, and that as the result of such inventions the country districts have

been brought closer to the metropolitan area. It is all very well to say that the radio is available to almost every person in the country, no matter how far he may live from the metropolitan area, and that consequently country people have been brought closer to the centre of government and closer to the metropolitan area, and are thus far better off than they were before these machines were invented. Admittedly, the aeroplane, the motorcar, and the radio have given some benefit to the people in the remote parts of the State; but they have not, by any stretch of the imagination, conferred benefits upon them which would cause the power of their votes to decrease to such an extent as to bring them down to the level of the votes of the people living at Armadale, Byford, Pinjarra, Northam, York, Toodyay, or even Kellerberrin, Merredin or Narrogin.

Therefore, the part of the Bill, which provides that the State shall be divided by the commissioners into three areas, which shall be metropolitan, North-West and all the rest of the country districts lumped together in the third area, is unjust from whatever angle it is viewed. It is a complete negation of the policy of decentralisation that has been preached by all Parties over the years and preached particularly by the Country Party, which today is known as the Country and Democratic League. I hope when the Bill is in the Committee stage that part of the Bill will be drastically altered, and that the next succeeding part of the Bill will consequently also be drastically altered. If those two parts of the Bill are so altered as to give better representation to people living great distances from the metropolitan area and suffering because they are far removed from the centre of government, then the Bill will, after it has passed through Committee, have a much better chance of receiving my support when it is being reported and at a later stage when the third reading is being taken.

I very much doubt, as I said, whether this is a reasonable time to embark upon an alteration of the boundaries of the electoral districts of the State, in view of the fact that the artificial transfer of population from the country to the metropolitan area still exists. A Bill of this description, to deserve the support of the majority of members of this House and of the majority of members of another place, must be fair and just to the utmost extent possible. I am quite aware

that it is not humanly possible to devise a formula which would be 100 per cent. fair and reasonable; but it is humanly possible—in fact, it is easy—to devise a formula which would be reasonably fair and just and which would not, as this Bill proposes to do, grossly penalise people who live and work in districts far removed from the metropolitan area and from the centre of government.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [9.59]: It would be foolish for anyone to attempt to dispute that, with the altered trend of our population, a redistribution of seats is not justified and, provided it is on a fair and equitable basis, I do not think there should be much complaint from anyone. Of course, while the redistribution of seats can be agreed to, I doubt whether any fair-minded person would agree to the proposed alteration of the formula for arriving at quotas. Whilst we agree with the proposal for a redistribution of seats, concerning the very poor and inadequate explanation given by the Attorney General of the reasons why the formula for arriving at the quota was changed, we have very much to complain about. I believe that the proposals outlined in this measure safeguard and foster a policy of centralisation. It is proposed to take representation from the people in the far-flung districts of this State, and place it in the metropolitan area. I can understand that from the Liberal Party's point of view, but it astounds me that the Country and Democratic League members should ally themselves with such a proposal.

I do not know whether political expediency is going to compel the members of that Party to stultify the principle of decentralisation which they preached for years in this State or whether they are going to compromise with their conscience, for political expediency, and vote for this proposition. I want to warn members of the Country and Democratic League that this measure may not turn out to be the godsend to their coalition Government that they think it is going to be.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is made for the Liberal Party.

Mr. STYANTS: Of course it is! What I object to is seeing innocents abroad, or innocents being led to the slaughter, and

that is what is happening to the Country and Democratic League.

The Attorney General: I am afraid you have not read the Bill.

Mr. STYANTS: I propose to quote some figures. There has been a look of smug complacency on the faces of Country and Democratic League members, but when I have analysed the figures and shown that they will sacrifice a seat to build up the Liberal Party's seats in the metropolitan area, that look may be wiped off their faces.

The Minister for Lands: If you go on in that strain, you will cause a split.

Mr. STYANTS: I am not concerned about a split. It has never been my technique; neither have I made overtures to any member of the Opposition to rat on his Party.

The Minister for Lands: I know that; but you are not convincing at present.

Mr. STYANTS: That is all right. I would not attempt the impossible with the Minister. I would not attempt to convince him about anything so far as this Bill is concerned; but I am satisfied the measure has been submitted with the deliberate intention not of bringing about a redistribution of seats but to take three seats from the members of the Opposition party. That is the objective.

The Minister for Lands: Rot!

Mr. STYANTS: I do not know why it is, but some people seem to have got it into their minds that the proposed quota is going to take two seats from the Goldfields. I recommend to members of the Country and Democratic League, particularly those on the Great Southern, that they have a close look at the boundaries on the map and also at the figures, and if they can show me how they can escape losing a seat under the conditions of the quota and with the boundaries as they are at present, then I know nothing about arithmetic.

The Attorney General: You are destroying the arguments of your colleagues.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Three Labour seats and one Country Party seat will go to the Liberals.

Mr. STYANTS: I want to know how the member for York justifies any interference with the electorate of Kalgoorlie. Kalgoor-

lie has 4,981 electors on the roll, and York has been a pocket borough for many years, with 2,800 electors, and it is within 60 miles of the metropolitan area. The electorate of Beverley, which is alongside it, is hundreds below the quota required. Of all the seats held by the C.D.L. in the Great Southern, there is only one that measures up to the required quota, and that is Kataning. The Wagin electorate measures up to the minimum quota, but not to the full quota.

The Minister for Railways: What about Albany?

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is right.

The Minister for Railways: Of course! It is well over it.

Mr. STYANTS: I am not talking about Albany.

The Minister for Railways: You spoke of the Great Southern.

Mr. STYANTS: Well, let us exclude Albany. I had in mind York, Beverley, Wagin, Williams-Narrogin. They are all hundreds below the quota.

The Minister for Railways: Not too many hundreds.

Mr. STYANTS: I want C.D.L. members to realise that they will not meet in a Party room and arbitrarily decide the boundaries as they did the quota system. There will be a fair and impartial board. I have unbounded confidence in the people who it is proposed shall form the Electoral Commission. They will be impartial; and let me warn the C.D.L. members that those men will not be influenced. They will not be at Party meetings and arbitrarily decide the electoral boundaries as was done when the quota system was altered to suit political purposes. The member for Irwin-Moore is like many new members in this House. He has an idea that the Goldfields have a lot of pocket boroughs. I would recommend him to look at the numbers in his own electorate first and then compare them with the Goldfields electors on the Golden Mile. The member for Canning has enjoyed the privileges and concessions for a great number of years that the people on the Golden Mile have in certain directions. He had some slighting remarks to make about the electorate of Kalgoorlie and the area it covered. He endeavoured to establish a comparison with that of West Perth. He could not see the

difference. He could not realise that West Perth is in the centre of the capital city and Kalgoorlie is almost 400 miles distant.

If any mathematician, using even the load-quota proposed against the Labour Party, can show me how we are going to lose two seats on the Goldfields and the C.D.L. will not lose one seat on the Great Southern line, I will admit I know nothing about arithmetic. I am quite satisfied to leave it to the impartial tribunal it is proposed to appoint under this measure. It would be interesting if the Attorney General would give us a real and thorough explanation of the reasons for altering the quota system, because the reasons he gave were very unconvincing to members on this side of the House, and left us with the impression that it was a matter of political expediency and not a matter of justice or equity at all.

The Attorney General: Every redistribution Bill is a matter of expediency, according to the Opposition.

Mr. STYANTS: It is true that there has been a great movement of population. But I believe, if the Government had been sincere, and particularly that section of it comprised by members of the Country and Democratic League which preaches the policy of decentralisation, that instead of endeavouring to deprive the far-flung districts of the State of representation it would have been a simple matter to alter the Constitution Acts Amendment Act to provide another two or three members. Since 1899, when that Act was brought into operation, the number of members of the Legislative Assembly has been 50. The population of the State at that time was 184,000, and today it is slightly over half a million. So, no strong argument could be raised against the proposal to increase the number of members.

In 1921 the number of electors on the roll was 164,000, and in 1939—and members will recall that that was the first election held under the compulsory enrolment provisions of the Act—there were 265,000. Since 1939, a matter of eight years, the number has increased to 297,000. I would say, without fear of contradiction, that if the electoral rolls were put in order the number would be nearer 310,000 today. Quite a logical argument could be advanced for increasing the number of members by four or five, as is proposed

to be done in the Commonwealth Parliament. That Parliament does not propose to juggle boundaries for the purpose of political expediency, but to increase the number of members because the population of the various districts has grown. I believe that would be a much fairer proposition to adopt here than the proposal before us, which is to allow the number of seats to remain at 50, the same as in 1899 although the number of electors has increased by more than 200 per cent. and the population of the State by something like 300 per cent.

I want to touch on the point that the numbers on the roll for the 1947 election were not by any means a true representation of the number of people living in the electorates. I will quote my electorate as an example in point. There has not been a contest—which is lucky for me—since 1939. That has also been the case with Brown Hill-Ivanhoe and Boulder. Consequently, the roll for my electorate has not been kept up to the standard that it should have been. The number of electors for the Kalgoorlie electorate for March of this year is shown at 4,981. I made inquiry of the Chief Electoral Officer today to see if he had taken any action to bring the roll up to date, and he told me that 538 additional names had been put on the roll, and that is the net increase. That increase is as a result of making a canvass of the Kalgoorlie electorate. The number on the Brown Hill-Ivanhoe roll has risen by over 600 for the same reason. There have also been increases in the Boulder and Hannans rolls.

I am not arguing from the selfish point of view because I am satisfied that, on the formula, no alteration will be made in the four principal electorates of the Golden Mile. The average will warrant that there shall be no alteration. But I do make a plea for the outer-Goldfields and pastoral areas. For one reason and another they have fallen off considerably in population, although in many instances they have not fallen away since the passing of the last redistribution of seats legislation. The position of the roll at the time that measure was passed is rather interesting from the point of view of the Country and Democratic League, and because of what has occurred since. I have therefore, taken the figures as shown on the electoral roll for 1939 and each succeeding election up to 1947.

It will be found that in the case of the electorates on the Golden Mile there has been an increase in the number of electors to the extent of 60 or 65 per cent. while the electorates represented by Country and Democratic League members with the exception of one or two, show a decrease in population over the same period. Country and Democratic League members may not be so happy when an impartial tribunal decides to settle boundaries on the formula proposed in the Bill, if it becomes an Act. In 1930, when the first election after the last redistribution of seats legislation was passed was held, the number of electors for Kalgoorlie was 2,951, in 1947 it had increased to 4,981, and today it is 5,519.

In 1930 the electors for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe numbered 2,071 and in 1947 they were 3,872, an increase of 88 per cent. The increase, in the case of Kalgoorlie, was 60 per cent. In 1930 the number of electors for Boulder was 2,513, in 1947 it had risen to 3,468, an increase of 37 per cent. In 1930 there were 1,667 electors for Hannans, and in 1947 there were 3,277, an increase of 98 per cent. For Murchison in 1930, there were 1,780 electors and in 1947 there were 2,667, an increase of 50 per cent. It has to be admitted that in the case of Murchison there were 4,834 electors in 1930, and the considerable decrease since has been due principally to the town of Wiluna having gone almost out of existence. In 1930 there were 2,008 electors for Kanowna and in 1947 there were 2,101, an increase of five per cent. For Yilgarn-Coolgardie in 1930, there were 2,790 electors and in 1947 there were 2,207, a decrease of 22 per cent. Let us have a look at some of the country electorates, represented by the people who think they will come out of this proposition pretty well.

Mr. Perkins: Who thinks that?

Mr. STYANTS: The hon. member has been sitting all night with a smile of complacency on his face. I am trying to explain that he might alter his ideas if he looks at the boundaries and the figures of the quota system.

Mr. Perkins: Do not you think we might do things because they are right, rather than because they are expedient?

Mr. STYANTS: We will test the hon. member probably within the next hour on

that. In 1930 the electorate of Beverley had 4,232 electors and in 1947 there were 3,602, a decrease of 16 per cent. Katanning had 5,128 electors in 1930 and in 1947 it had 5,306, an increase of $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. Pingelly, in 1930, had 4,090 electors and in 1947 it had 3,915, a decrease of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. In 1930 Toodyay had 3,438 electors and in 1947 there were 5,082, an increase of 48 per cent. Between 1943 and 1947 Toodyay had a remarkable increase because at the time of the 1943 elections there were 4,302 electors enrolled and that number has now increased to 5,082, by something like 700, and it would be interesting to see where they came from. Perhaps a lot were off the roll in 1943, because it must be remembered that those who had joined the Services were not struck off the roll, but were indicated by an asterisk.

The Minister for Lands: There are still a lot off the roll.

Mr. STYANTS: It would be interesting to find out what the cause was, just as in the case of Sussex, which shows a gain of 600 or 700 in a few years. I do not think there has been any particular activity in the Toodyay electorate, or that of Sussex, to justify that number of names going on the roll. Again, in Wagin, there was a decrease of 10 per cent. in the number of electors. Under the quota system Wagin reaches the minimum but does not measure up to the quota required. As will be realised as I go along, there are only about four of the C.D.L. seats that measure up to the quota required under the measure. Members should not believe that all the nasty medicine will be handed out to the Goldfields, as some speakers tonight have seemed to think; that will be decided by an impartial tribunal.

In 1930 the number of electors for Williams-Narrogin was 3,456, and in 1947 it was 3,245, a decrease of 6 per cent. The member for Irwin-Moore interjected this evening, and wanted to know "how many there were on the Goldfields." In 1930 the Irwin-Moore electorate had 3,551 electors, and in 1947 there were 3,466, a decrease of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. The Kalgoorlie electorate in March of this year had 4,981, as against 3,466 for Irwin-Moore. I told the hon. member that I would inform him of the position, so that he would realise that the

electorate he has the honour to represent has considerably less voters than has the electorate of Kalgoorlie. If ever there was a pocket borough it is York, which is within 60 miles of Perth.

The Minister for Education: The centre of it is within 60 miles of Perth, but not the Eastern end of it.

Mr. STYANTS: It does not measure up to the 400 miles which is the distance of the Eastern Goldfields from the capital. The Bill provides that the second greatest consideration of the Commission, in arriving at the quotas and boundaries, is the distance and mode of communication to the centre, the capital city. In 1930 York had 3,099 electors, and today it has 2,871, a reduction of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. It will be seen that the sarcasm so often levelled at the Goldfields seat is unjustified, because that seat, 400 miles from the capital of the State, has gained since the last redistribution of seats in 1937-38. As is shown on the roll for the election in 1930, the Goldfields electorate has increased its number of electors by 65 per cent. or 70 per cent. while, with the exception of three or four cases, the C.D.L. seats have decreased in the number of electors since that time.

The Commission, if appointed, is charged to take into consideration the distance, and method of communication provided, between the capital city and the electorate concerned. I was surprised at the specious reasoning of the Attorney General who, when introducing the measure, said that the Eastern Goldfields were particularly favoured in the matter of communications, and that although that centre was 400 miles from the capital, it had an aeroplane service. Probably the Attorney General does not know the position, not having been brought up in the environment of the Goldfields worker, but I have yet to learn that many of the workers on the Eastern Goldfields can afford to bring their wives and children to Perth by aeroplane.

Mr. Perkins: What has that to do with the representation?

Mr. STYANTS: The Commission is charged to give consideration to the distance from the capital and the mode of communication, and the Attorney General said that the Eastern Goldfields were particularly favoured.

Mr. Perkins: Would not the member for the district be able to get backwards and forwards from his electorate to the capital by air?

Mr. STYANTS: The hon. member, having a considerable income apart from his Parliamentary salary, could probably pay his way by plane, but I am at my wits end—I think I live as frugally as any member in this Chamber on the paltry salary we receive—to meet the demands of my creditors.

The Premier: We will have to do something about that.

Mr. STYANTS: I am glad to hear that, as there is no doubt that the cause to which I referred is a worthy one. The plane fare from Kalgoorlie to Perth is greater than the first class train fare, including the cost of a sleeping berth. Ninety per cent. of Goldfields workers cannot afford to come to Perth first class, even on the railways, and I would be surprised if 1 per cent. of them could afford to bring their wives and children to Perth, and return, by air for their annual holidays. The aeroplane provides a fine mail service which is appreciated, and it allows business and mining company executives whose time is valuable—and who can pass the cost on to somebody else—to travel quickly to and fro. They are the only people who use the air passenger service to any great extent. It was specious reasoning on the part of the Attorney General when he said the Golden Mile electorate was especially favoured in the matter of air communications. He mentioned the weighted formula, which operates unfairly. That is the formula of 2 to 1.

Recently members of the Government have probably examined the position in Victoria, as a result of an election fought there on something that had nothing to do with State politics, which provided their Parties with a victory. I do not know whether members opposite have looked at the figures reported once—perhaps by accident—in "The West Australian," to see what the position in Victoria was as it affected the Labour Party. The figures were quoted by "The West Australian"—that is my authority for them—two or three days after the elections and before the final figures came through. At that stage the Labour Party had received 495,000 votes for 15 seats—later by a small margin, the Party got another two seats—and the Coun-

try Party had received 165,000 votes for 19 seats. I want to issue a word of warning to the Government that there were a lot of other considerations, apart from the question of the nationalisation of banking, that affected the result of the Victorian elections. The people of the metropolitan area had been without light and gas and trains for weeks on end. Having looked at the proposals contained in this Bill I consider that the Government got some inspiration from the gerrymandering of seats and boundaries in Victoria as far as the loading of the quota is concerned.

The redeeming feature of the Bill, I repeat, is that the electoral boundaries will be fixed by a thoroughly impartial tribunal. There will be no occasion to go to the Government party room to decide what the boundaries will be as was the case with the proposal for the quota system. There will be nothing arbitrary as regards the settling of the electoral boundaries. I am not concerned from a personal point of view because I do not think the measure will affect the four big electorates on the Golden Mile, one of which I hold. The people of the Golden Mile do not ask for or require any concessions.

When it was first mooted that the Government intended to bring down a Redistribution of Seats Bill, I said that so long as the quota for the Golden Mile was based on the same formula as that for the country districts, I would be satisfied. I am satisfied with that. We do not want any concessions or privileges. However, I feel that an injustice is being done to the people who are endeavouring to keep open the country in the electorates of Murchison, Mt. Magnet, Kanowna and Yilgarn-Coolgardie. If the measure reaches the Committee stage, I propose to move some amendments with a view to obtaining some concession for the people in those electorates. My amendments will appear on the notice paper tomorrow.

It has to be borne in mind that a member of Parliament for one of those districts covering hundreds or thousands of square miles is in a different category entirely from the member who lives closer to the seat of Government and all the Government offices. If such a member is doing his job well, as many members of the C.D.L. can testify, he must be the guide, philosopher and friend of his constituents and assist them with their personal and business matters. He has much

more detail work to do than has a member representing a metropolitan district. I emphasise the point made by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie that one never knows from one day to another when the population of those mining districts will increase rapidly. If a bonus or subsidy on the production of gold were paid by the Commonwealth Government or if America decided to increase the price of gold, the population of those districts would double inside a period of 12 months. I do not propose to vote for the second reading. On behalf of the people of the Eastern Goldfields, who I consider will not be affected by the measure, but who it is confidently expected by the Government will be affected—

The Premier: How do you know that?

Mr. STYANTS: Because it has been stated here and also in the Bible of the Government, "The West Australian" newspaper, that this measure will mean a loss of two goldfields seats and one North-West seat.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It might be the genesis today, but it might be the exodus tomorrow.

Mr. STYANTS: I know that that is the alpha and omega as far as the Government is concerned. "The West Australian" is the journal that tells the Government what is going to happen, what it should do, and even what it should not do.

The Premier: I must read it very carefully in future.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Some of the reports after consultation are interesting.

Mr. STYANTS: The Goldfields people would consider that I had been remiss if I gave the measure any support. I should like to have a fuller explanation as to why it was necessary to alter the formula for the quota so drastically as is proposed. Perhaps some sort of explanation or excuse had to be given in the endeavour to justify the taking of three seats from political opponents without giving anything in return. I think the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie expressed it neatly when he said that that was the objective of the Bill. On behalf of the electors of the Eastern Goldfields who, the Government hopes, will be robbed of one of their representatives, I shall register my disapproval of the Bill by voting against the second reading and, if the measure reaches the Committee stage, I hope the Government will be

amenable to reason and make it a fairer, and more just and equitable a Bill than it appears to be on the surface.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION

(Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning) [10.38]: I have been deeply touched by the observations that have been made by various members opposite, particularly by the member for Kalgoorlie, in regard to what he alleges is the position of the Party which, for some time, I have had the honour to lead. I feel that he entirely misinterpreted the attitude of the Government and my own attitude and the attitude of the members of the Party to which I have referred. I think the position was very neatly summed up by the interjection by the member for York a few moments ago when he said it was desirable to do that which was considered right rather than that which was regarded as expedient. That is the position in the present instance.

I am not suggesting for a moment that the seats that are held at present by any Party, even by the Party I have the honour to lead, should be sacrosanct. I submit that the time arrives when, through changes that have occurred in the economy, development and population of the country it is necessary to consider ways and means of setting an anomalous position right. The situation that had arisen under the existing method of distribution or quota system, was obviously a most anomalous one. Were the law not altered, it would not have been that the Goldfields seats might have lost, as the member for Kalgoorlie postulates, one or two seats but that they would have most assuredly have gained three or four.

As there would have been no overall increases, it was quite obvious in those circumstances that not only was there that grave risk—as indeed was exemplified in the 1937 measure—accruing to the Party which I have the honour to lead, whilst very substantially it also maintained the position where large centres of population would have continued to be represented in the manner they still are, which would have been a distinct possibility. It was obvious there must be some alteration in the status quo. It is no use postulating now that we should adhere to it because it affected the interest of this or the other Party. It was a question then, as the member for York put it, of doing what was considered right.

What sound objection can there be to a quota system which provides that the vote of a dweller outside the metropolitan area, and excluding the North-West, shall be accorded double the value of the vote of a dweller in the metropolitan area? What is fundamentally wrong with that proposition? It appears to me a very reasonable attitude that persons whose representatives are compelled to deal with matters a long way from the seat of government should be given some favourable handicap, because of that distance from the seat of government, combined perhaps with some recognition of the scattered nature of the population of that area.

I think that is a very reasonable attitude. It has certainly put the agricultural area, in which, as is well known I am considerably interested, in a better position than it would have been in relation to the metropolitan area, and certainly in comparison with the mining and pastoral areas. Hitherto it has had less than equality with those particular areas. A favourable handicap has so far been in favour of the latter. They have certainly been in a better position from the point of view of the quota in comparison with the metropolitan area than they will be, in view of the vast increase of population in the one and the almost negligible increase of population in the other. So there remains only the question to decide whether the quota system is reasonably fair to all parties concerned in the agricultural and pastoral areas.

I have no hesitation in saying that double the value of a vote of a man in the electorate of the member for York or others associated with the agricultural areas compared with the voting strength of an elector in the metropolitan district is, taking it over all, a very reasonable proposition.

Mr. Triat: Do you think it fair to quote Katanning as against Sandstone?

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I think it is quite as fair as the system that reigns today where an elector of the city of Kalgoorlie has a greater voting strength than the elector of the Greenough district. That is the position today. I cannot for the life of me see any necessity for a loading in favour of those areas as against the agricultural areas which we have been discussing. I rose to my feet to endeavour to clear the mind of the member for Kalgoorlie with regard to my own position and that of those associated with me in this matter, the point

being whether or no—it is a matter for the House to decide—there is sufficient justification for equality, as between the mining, pastoral and agricultural areas. I state quite clearly and frankly that I am satisfied a two to one weighting in favour of the agricultural districts as against the metropolitan area is not unreasonable.

Mr. Triat: So am I.

Mr. Rodoreda: It all depends on what you regard as an agricultural area.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is the point I want to stress, and I do not desire to be led along by-paths by the member for Mt. Magnet. I am interested in just one other aspect, one that has been voiced so freely this evening. That point is that it would appear to be the duty of a member of Parliament to represent acres rather than persons. That phase has been mentioned many times this evening. A mass of interesting statistics has been offered to us regarding the areas. We were told that the whole of Victoria could be placed inside the boundaries of the Pilbara electorate and that there would be some space left over. I frankly confess that that is quite correct. I suggest in all seriousness that while that phase should receive some consideration—and I repeat, it has received some consideration in the Bill—that is not the sole reason why one is a member of Parliament. The principal reason is that there are people to be represented. I was looking for a suitable argument to assist me in presenting this point of view to the House.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: There are pages on it.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I thought I would look at the remarks of the member for Kalgoorlie whose speeches, as is well known, although one may not agree with them, are usually exceptionally well reasoned. I looked up his speech in 1937, which is recorded on page 2611 of "Hansard" for that year, when dealing with a Bill, which incidentally he thoroughly supported and which deprived the Country Party of three seats. That was why I was not greatly impressed by his somewhat pathetic suggestions with regard to the effect of this law.

Mr. Styants: It was the law.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: It was unfair and remains unfair. That law still continues unless altered by the Bill under discussion. The member for Kalgoorlie

lie is entitled to his opinion, and I am not questioning his right to express it. During the course of his speech on the occasion I refer to, he said—

I have yet to know that voting strength is based on areas alone under any scale of computation ever effected, either in this Parliament or in any other Parliament in Australia. If we apply it to the Federal Parliament, the division of Kalgoorlie comprises eleven-tenths of the total area of this State, whereas we are allowed only one-fifth in the Commonwealth Parliament. So it is clear that area alone is not the only thing taken into consideration. If that were so, some of that sterile land and sand plain in that hon. member's district would be given representation in the shape of increased voting power, while the human intellectuals of Kalgoorlie would not be having a vote at all. If the hon. member made his comparison of Kalgoorlie as a pastoral and mining electorate, I assure the hon. member that the Kalgoorlie electorate comprises a proportion of the best section of the Eastern goldfields, and that we have evolved beyond the stage where we allowed bullocks and sheep to range the main streets of the town. That stage has not been arrived at in the hon. member's electorate, and so they there allow the cows to roam the streets, in the belief that they are all rate-payers.

Mr. Styants: I did not preach the area theory tonight.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I did not suggest that the hon. member did. I said it had been made use of by a great number of members, and I can find no more logical reply to it than the observations which the member for Kalgoorlie made in 1937, because undoubtedly we must take into consideration the question of how many of these human intellectuals we are to represent. Whilst we must consider, as we have done, the question of the distance away from the seat of government and the area of the country involved, we must not allow ourselves to be led away on the assumption that we are to represent only area and not people as well. Therefore, there has to be a nice juxtaposition—I think that is the word I might use—of the two things in arriving at a satisfactory solution of this difficulty, and I venture to say that this Bill has provided it. It has given consideration to all of those various aspects and I say, in all frankness and sincerity, that I marvel at its moderation.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [10.51]: In replying very briefly, but I hope sufficiently, to the observations of hon. members, I do not propose to take up much time

in speculating on any particular advantage which might or might not accrue to any Party in this House as the result of this Bill.

Mr. Styants: It is pretty obvious, is it not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I think it has been quite apparent from the remarks made here tonight that the Bill is likely to result as much one way as the other. The Leader of the Opposition drew my attention, with some air of satisfaction, to what he said had been the experience of all Governments which had brought in redistribution measures and which had met an untimely fate at the next succeeding election. In that case, if the same fate is to overtake this Government by reason of this Bill, then there will be an electoral advantage in favour of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition cannot have it both ways.

The Minister for Education: Quite so.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: That is a lawyer's one!

Mr. Graham: There is no need to be sarcastic.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Specious reasoning!

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There has been a lot of discussion about the terms of the Bill, but it is fortified in a great many matters which have been the subject of criticism by the fact that it follows exactly the terms of the Bill supported by a Government of the political complexion of the Opposition of today, because if we are to take nice distinctions about where one area starts and where another area finishes, and are to have a refined shade of political weighting according to progressive distances from the seat of government, then that idea never occurred to the Governments which brought in the 1929 Bill and the 1937 Bill, as in both those Bills the agricultural area, with a substantial electoral weighting in its favour, abutted the metropolitan area in precisely the same places as it would about the metropolitan area under the Bill now before the House. So that this element of electoral shading, which has now come to light for the first time, was not apparent when Bills were brought down by members of the Opposition when they formed the Government in prior years.

The Bill of 1937, which did not succeed in obtaining the necessary support, was

brought down in circumstances very different from the circumstances of today. I have the report of the Commissioners who made the redistribution proposals of 1937 and, without taking up the time of the House at this hour of the night, I would invite any interested members to look at the enrolments as at the 30th September, 1937, in the different areas of the State. They will find if they take, for example, the metropolitan area that the enrolments at that day were very largely uniform in number and that the disparity of two to one, or more than two to one, which exists today in the metropolitan area and in other areas, did not exist. The position today is such that it is not tenable from the point of view of balanced electorates for a moment longer than is possible. The term "elector" as defined in this Bill is taken exactly from the 1929 measure brought in by the Government of that day. There has been no alteration in the term. The term "elector" which was the subject of some question by the Leader of the Opposition is precisely the term upon which the Government of the day brought in its 1937 redistribution measure.

I desire to say a word or two about the North-West seats. The loading of those seats on the proposed basis will be nine to one, approximately, against the metropolitan area; and in view of all the circumstances and in view of the weighty observations and authoritative statements which have been made by members of the Opposition Party on prior occasions, there can be little argument that the proposals in the Bill are reasonable and justified in the circumstances. The adjustment of the Legislative Council provinces is a matter which is left to some extent without precise instruction to the Commissioners, but that follows the prior Bill which was good enough for the endorsement of the Government of the day in 1929, because in that measure—the measure on which our present electoral districts are based—it was stated that a Bill should be brought in by the Government of the day to implement the recommendation of the Commissioners as to Legislative Assembly districts and a Bill to adjust the provinces of the Legislative Council, that adjustment being in conformity with the new definition of the boundaries of the Legislative Assembly.

This Bill now before the House follows the same wording and direction as contained

in the measure on which the Government acted in 1929. The provision in this Bill that if five seats become out of alignment in electoral population to the extent of 20 per cent. or more there shall be a redistribution, is again taken precisely—or almost precisely—from the terms of the 1922-1929 measure which had the endorsement of the Party of the Leader of the Opposition in its legislation in 1929. What was good enough in 1929 is one of the things which I think is still good enough at the present time, although many other things are necessarily requiring adaptation owing to change. I believe there are some suggestions to be made in Committee by amendments by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Kalgoorlie and I will have an opportunity, I understand, of seeing those proposed amendments on the notice paper for tomorrow. I need only add that representation must come to a base of population and people. We cannot have representation based on productivity or based on area. I have quotations here from many members of the Party of my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, dealing with that matter, but I do not propose to take up time to repeat them now. The Bill divides the State into three areas—the Northern area, which occupies two-fifths of the total area of the State, and which is to have three seats and a weighting of approximately nine to one in its favour as against the metropolitan area.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: What about the Council representation? What is their weighting, and I do not mean avoirdupois?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have followed the provisions of the 1929 measure, which was endorsed by a Government of my friend's political complexion. They accepted that provision, which allowed the Central Province to have the same boundary. We have continued that provision which obtained support in 1929.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Why?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Because I think there is, regarding the Legislative Council and the balance of their representation, a reasonable case that they should represent that area. There are then six members, three of whom represent the area in each House of Parliament. I said that in the northern area we have two-fifths of the State and a special arbitrary representation

of nine to one approximately in their favour. The intermediate area has an electoral weighting of two to one, and the metropolitan area with three-fifths of the electoral population is to have two-fifths of the seats in the Assembly. In view of the fact that we find such difficulties as exist in regard to the electorate of Kalgoorlie, with a ratio of two to one in its favour occupying an area of 1.2 square miles, and Boulder 2.6 square miles, I think that on the whole the intermediate basis of a two to one ratio is as fair as we can expect.

Mr. Styants: That is larger than West Perth, is it not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: As I said, the representation still comes back to people. It is not a matter of production or area; and the people who drive trams, and are waterside workers, and work in shops, or are Public Servants or clerks, are entitled to their fair representation, and there is a limit to the extent to which they should be placed in an underprivileged position in relation to representation in the Parliament of the State.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: Twenty-six votes are needed in favour. I must count the House. I have counted the House and there is an absolute majority.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—CHARITABLE COLLECTIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. A. V. Abbott—North Perth) [11.5] in moving the second reading said: The Charitable Collections Act, 1946, was passed to provide for the regulation and control of the collection and distribution of money for charitable purposes, and to take over the functions previously carried on under the War Funds Regulation Act of 1939. Section 6 of the Act provides that no person shall collect any moneys for a charitable purpose unless he is the holder of a license under the Act. Section 7 provides that where, prior to the commencement of the Act, any war fund had been established or moneys had been collected for any war

fund by any person or organisation, the establishment of such war fund and the collection of such moneys should, for the purpose of the Act, be deemed to have been authorised by the Minister under and in accordance with the provisions of Section 6 of the Act and the authority already issued under the War Funds Regulation Act, 1939, should be deemed to be a license under the Act.

There is no provision in the Act, however, compelling trustees who are holding money (other than war funds) collected prior to the operation of the Act to take out a license under the Act. The position is that if any funds were collected after the operation of the Act, a license was required. Insofar as any funds collected before the Act came into force were concerned, no license was required, or the collectors were deemed to be licensed. Insofar as moneys were collected before the operation of the Act and still held by trustees, they were not deemed to be licensed and were not required to be licensed. A number of provisions follow Section 7 relating to the collection and distribution of moneys for charitable purposes by licenses.

For instance, Section 15 of the Act provides that every person to whom a license has been issued, or who collects money for a charitable purpose shall, at the time fixed by the license and also at any other time as required by the Minister, submit to the Minister an audited statement, but I have been advised by the Crown Law authorities that this provision does not apply to any organisation which collected moneys for charitable purposes, other than moneys collected for any war fund, prior to the operation of the Act—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: What is your own view?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: —although it still holds the same, as such an organisation is not required to take out a license and the section only applies to licensees. That I might say, is my own view as well. Such an organisation, therefore, is not required to furnish an audit of accounts.

Mr. Rodoreda: Why?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Because it is not a licensee, and this Act applies only to licensed persons.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Was the 1946 Act ever proclaimed?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. It is the 1946 Act to which I am referring. This results in an anomalous position, as in some cases very considerable amounts of money, collected prior to the operation of the Act, are held by organisations to which the provisions of the Act do not apply. It is thought that the same provisions should apply in respect of funds collected before the operation of the Act and still undistributed, as apply to charitable funds collected subsequent to the operation of the Act. The purpose of this Bill is to apply the provisions of the Act to all charitable funds irrespective of when they were collected. The Bill, therefore, will provide that, just as a person who is licensed has to furnish audited accounts with relation to charitable funds dealt with by him, so a person unlicensed will have to do likewise.

Section 16 of the Act provides that if the Governor is satisfied that any moneys collected by a war fund or held for a charitable purpose by any person to whom a license has been issued will not be required for that purpose, he may by proclamation declare that such moneys may be applied by such person to any other charitable purpose or shall be vested in and transferred to the Minister to be applied to any other charitable purpose. The Bill will make the section applicable to a person who has not been licensed. Section 17 of the Act provides that the Governor may by proclamation vest in the Minister the moneys, securities for money or goods held for charitable purposes by any trustees to whom a license has been issued, on being satisfied—

(a) that a majority of at least three-fourths in number of the persons who are trustees or have the control of moneys or securities for money or goods have consented thereto; or

(b) there has been maladministration of the moneys, securities for money or goods.

Here again this section applies only to trustees who have been licensed, and the Bill proposes to apply the provisions to trustees who hold charitable funds whether licensed or not. As I have said, Sections 16 and 17 give authority under certain conditions for moneys to be vested in the Minister and applied by him for charitable purposes. I have been advised by the Crown Law authorities that there is no

power for the Minister to appoint new trustees to administer any charitable fund so vested in him, but that the Minister is responsible for the administration of any funds so vested in him.

The Bill provides that the Minister may appoint new trustees for the purpose of administering charitable funds taken over by him. The Act does not now apply to land which may be held for charitable purposes. A definition has been inserted in the Bill so that land will be included in the term "securities for money." A definition has also been inserted defining what is meant for the purposes of the Act by "maladministration." The Bill is a result of advice received by me from the Crown Law authorities and is for the purpose of enabling the Charitable Collections Act to be efficiently administered. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. H. Panton, debate adjourned.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (No. 5).

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth) [11.16] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to increase the number of principal executive officers of the Crown from eight to nine. The Constitution Acts Amendment Act of 1899 provides for six principal officers of the Crown or, as we more commonly refer to them, Cabinet Ministers. In 1927, the number of Ministers was increased from six to eight. Since that time the number of executive officers has remained stationary for the last 20 years. Due to the great growth of Government activity it is considered justified to add an extra Minister. The Government, since 1927, has taken over many major activities in this State.

For example, there are the expanded activities of the Rural and Industries Bank, also the increased activities of the Department of Industrial Development, and such enterprises as those at Wundowie and Lake Chandler. These enterprises have received large amounts of capital and are of considerable magnitude. We find in addition,

to use a word which is not always received with favour in this House, that there are a great many boards which carry on services under the Government and under Ministers. I need refer to only some of them. There is the Housing Commission, which is a development of the old Workers' Homes Board, the Dairy Products Marketing Board, the Milk Board, the Egg Board, the Potato Board, the Barley Board, and many other activities of Government which have been developed and have greatly increased the productivity of our State.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Is the new Minister to be in this Chamber or the other one?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: He will be in the Legislative Council.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Will you have another Honorary Minister as well?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is a matter which has not been entertained.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It must be entertained.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not know that it need be.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It is necessary to know that to determine whether this Bill is required.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: What is considered necessary or desirable is that there should be two Ministers in the Legislative Council.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Why? There are two now.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: There should be two with full portfolios.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: Why?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: So that when there is a coalition Government there can be one each?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, that does not follow. No matter what the Government may be, the amount of work in the Legislative Assembly is sufficient to justify two full Ministers in the Council, bearing in mind that we have as many Ministers as we normally have in the Legislative Assembly. I am not concerned as to the particular kind of Government that may be in power. I think the importance of the work in the Legislative Council justifies the presence there of two full

Ministers or executive officers of the Crown.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: It will need a better argument than that.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The growth of public business has been considerable in the last 20 years, involving additional work for those charged with the responsibility of Government. In addition to the activities I have mentioned there has been an extension of departmental services and an increase in the number of employees. There has been an extension of public works of various kinds, including schemes of some magnitude, dealing with water supply and other activities that have engaged the attention of Parliament in the last two or three years. There are new activities such as the Electricity Commission, the Public Trustee and the State Insurance Office. All this makes further demands on the time of the principal executive officers of the Crown.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: If you are not to appoint another Honorary Minister, it will only mean that the present Honorary Minister will get full Ministerial pay.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It will give the Minister full Ministerial pay, which I think is justified.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I do not.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It provides for a full Minister, or two full Ministers, to discharge the work of the Government in the Legislative Council. No one who has watched the work of the one full Minister—

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: I have watched him in action. His work will not worry him.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: His work has been quite satisfactory.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: He took about three minutes to introduce the railway Bill.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The work of Ministers in the Legislative Council has for many years been arduous—no one can question that—and it is only reasonable to recognise the amount of work involved and share it among two Ministers, each carrying a full portfolio and the full authority of principal executive officers of the Crown. The measure provides that the number of executive officers, prescribed since 1927 as eight, shall be increased

to nine, and the necessary provision made under the Constitution Act to meet the salary of the additional Minister. From the point of view of governmental work and representation in the Legislative Council, I feel the additional appointment is both justified and desirable. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPERANNUATION, SICK, DEATH, INSURANCE, GUARANTEE AND ENDOWMENT (LOCAL GOVERNING BODIES' EMPLOYEES) FUNDS.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. A. F. Watts—Kataning) [11.25] in moving the second reading said: I am sorry that at the moment the member for Fremantle is not present. I would have preferred to introduce the Bill in his presence, as his representations were the genesis of its introduction to the House this evening. Those representations were made on behalf of the Fremantle City Council, which was extremely anxious to prepare and put into operation a superannuation scheme for its employees, but found that the provision to make by-laws that exists in the Municipal Corporations Act was hardly sufficient for its purposes. Legal advice appeared to confirm that view, and in any event there was a desirability that not only should municipal councils be able to undertake a scheme of this type—where it can be worked out satisfactorily—but the local authorities operating under the Road Districts Act, should have the same opportunity, and representations have been made for a considerable time on their behalf. It was therefore decided that legislation should be prepared to cover not only municipal corporations but also the boards of road districts constituted under the Road Districts Act.

It will be found in the Bill that both municipal corporations and road boards are included under the term "Corporation," and the powers conferred by the Bill—if it becomes an Act—will apply equally to municipal corporations and road boards, provided that the relevant provi-

sions of the Bill are put into effect. Those provisions set out that any corporation may formulate, and with the approval of the Governor put into effect, any scheme for establishing and administering superannuation, death insurance and guarantee funds for employees, and for that purpose may enter into agreements with other corporations—subject to the approval of the Governor—if they are considered necessary or convenient for carrying into effect or facilitating the operation of any scheme, and that the fund may be established and maintained, when approved, out of the ordinary revenue of the corporation and out of deductions from the remuneration of employees who voluntarily elect to enter the scheme.

There is provision also that any scheme entered into before the coming into operation of this Act—when approved by the Governor—shall be valid and effectual as though it had come into operation after the passing of the Act. There is also provision that the audit sections of the Local Government Act, which deal with the particular type of corporation, shall govern the financial aspects of the superannuation scheme. It is well known that under the Road Districts Act there is one of the most efficient types of audit inspection possible, the whole of the work being done by men who are highly skilled and part of the Local Government Branch.

Under the Municipal Corporations Act ratepayers still elect auditors, and while most of them are highly efficient and completely satisfactory there are one or two cases where, it is understood, it might be better if the local government officers could undertake the work. The present state of the law is that there is a separate method of providing auditors, and that will obtain so long as that state of affairs remains in relation to this measure. The Bill also provides that its provisions shall not be in reduction of the powers that exist under the Municipal Corporations Act, to which I referred, to make bylaws, but in addition thereto.

The last provision in the Bill is that the Governor may make regulations necessary or convenient for carrying into operation the purposes of the Bill. Summed up, the intention of the measure is to permit any corporation to formulate a scheme for

superannuation or death benefit for its employees. In order to ensure that such a scheme is soundly based, it will be necessary to obtain the approval of the Governor. This, of course, will involve investigation by officers qualified to undertake the work, and when they have satisfied themselves that the scheme is sound, in the same way as other such schemes for similar purposes are, there will be no difficulty in having them approved. When once approved they will remain in operation and be financed out of the revenue of the council and voluntary contributions of the employees. This will enable any corporation, which includes both a municipal council and a road board, effectively to carry into operation any scheme for superannuation for its employees that is found to be soundly based.

Mr. Marshall: What is the ratification provision in the measure?

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: That applies to past schemes. I understand that one or two schemes have been put into operation under the bylaws provision, and it is proposed that they shall be ratified by this measure and receive the approval of the Governor. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

BILL—LICENSING (PROVISIONAL CERTIFICATE).

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—CITY OF PERTH SCHEME FOR SUPERANNUATION (AMENDMENTS AUTHORISATION).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 26th November.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. A. F. Watts—Kataning) [11.32]: I have no objection to the second reading being carried. I have investigated, as well as I have been able to do, the requirements of the Perth City Council and the matter raised in support of the Bill by the member for Perth. I find that the Perth City Council has had these proposals inquired into in an actuarial

way and has been informed that they are sound. In a comparatively short period, the next five-yearly inquiry, as provided by the Act of 1934, will be made by an actuary into the scheme, and any modification or alteration found necessary can be put into operation under the existing Act.

For the time being this proposal is intended to bring in employees of the council who did not enter 10 years ago under the voluntary provisions and today are desirous of entering and paying up, not only the 10 years' subscriptions that they would have paid had they entered at the outset, but also interest at the rate of 4 per cent. on those subscriptions. Obviously, therefore, there will be no diminution of the funds that would have been in the hands of the superannuation board had those contributions been made during the intervening period.

The contribution by the Perth City Council itself has, of course, had to be increased. Already it has been increased twice since the original proposals came before Parliament, and it may be necessary for it to be increased again when the verdict of the actuary comes to hand. In these days I think we have to face up to a continuation of the superannuation schemes and to recognise that they are now almost a term of employment—in this case between the Perth City Council and its employees. Therefore, as the position appears to have been examined and it has been found that the financial basis is reasonably secure—as secure as these things ever can be; and I say that from past experience—we can safely support the measure.

MR. READ (Victoria Park) [11.35]: I support the second reading. Ten years ago the City of Perth superannuation fund was brought into effect. It also included the employees of the City Electricity and Gas Department, which has almost as many contributors to the fund as there are of the main employees of the City Council. In 1941, the men who had joined the Services commenced to return and a short amendment was passed to enable them to participate and contribute subscriptions that had elapsed during their absence. One of the leading actuaries in Australia propounded the scheme and over the years it has been found to be effective.

At the commencement of the scheme, 22 employees, for various reasons, did not join and contribute. Some of the officers and men were financing undertakings such as paying weekly sums for the purchase of their homes or for the education of their children and did not participate. The contribution of the City Council, I understand, will be about £500. These men will be able, without compulsion, to join the scheme and participate if they so wish by paying the sums that should have been contributed during the 10 years. The board consists of representatives of the Electricity and Gas Department, two councillors, the Electricity & Gas employees, and the manager of that department, and the scheme has been thoroughly investigated by that committee. The Bill has been introduced at this late stage of the session because some employees are approaching the retiring age and will be leaving the employ of the City Council early in the new year, and if the Bill were not passed, they would be precluded from participating. Consequently, it is desirable, in the interests of those employees and in order to confer upon them special benefits, that this Bill should be passed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee, etc.

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

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

House adjourned at 11.43 p.m.