

that would lead to a reduction of the cost of litigation to be faced by those who approach the courts of this State.

On motion by Mr. Sleeman, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.35 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 7th September, 1933.

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

QUESTIONS (2)—UNEMPLOYMENT.

Part-time Work and Sustenance.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary: 1, How many married men were employed on part-time work on 8th April, 1933? 2, How many single men were employed on part-time work on 8th April, 1933. 3, What was the amount received weekly, at the same date, by (a) a married man without children; (b) a married man with one child; (c) a married man with two children; (d) a married man with three children; (e) a married man with four children; (f) a single man? 4, How many married men were receiving sustenance on 8th April, 1933? 5, How many single men were receiving sustenance on 8th April, 1933?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1. 6,754. 2, 2,419. 3, (a), (b), (c), (d), and (e), £1 per week above sustenance; (f) 25s. 3d. 4, 3,262. 5, 1,227.

Sustenance, Relief Work, Prospecting.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary: 1, How many married men were receiving sustenance on 2nd September, 1933? 2, How many single men were receiving sustenance on 2nd September, 1933? 3, How many married men were employed on relief work on 2nd September, 1933? 4, How many single men were employed on relief work on 2nd September, 1933? 5, How many single men have been sent out under the prospecting scheme?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, 2, and 3, The Government have instituted a system of employment of married men for a period at full time, in accordance with domestic responsibilities. This is followed by an adjusting period on sustenance. The altered system makes it difficult to give definite figures on the lines requested, inasmuch as an ever-changing number of men are now adjusting on sustenance, whereas previously they were compelled to adjust their earnings without any sustenance being provided. 4, 2,719. 5, 1,067.

PAPERS—ENGINE-DRIVER'S CERTIFICATE.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [4.35]: I move—

That all papers, documents, and records of the Inspection of Machinery Department relating to the restriction endorsed on the first-class engine-driver's certificate of service, No. 834, issued to John Henry Fox, be laid on the Table of the House.

I move the motion with a view to satisfying myself that the Inspection of Machinery Department has acted in accordance with the regulations under the Act. May I explain to members that under the Inspection of Machinery Act, inspectors are appointed and they look into the operations of the Act, issuing certificates for all machinery and boilers, and holding examinations for engine-drivers and those qualified to have control of the various engines. Provision is also made that any act of insubordination shall be reported to the board, whereupon it shall be considered by the board. A dispute has arisen between the holder of certificate No. 834 as to whether the board were justified in dealing with his certificate as they have done. The case has been brought under my notice and, not knowing

the full facts, I ask that the papers be laid on the Table in order that I might satisfy myself on that regard.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.37]: I have no objection to the motion. I will lay the papers on the Table when the motion is carried.

Question put and passed.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Government Tramways Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Assembly.

2, Health Act Amendment.

Passed.

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX ASSESSMENT ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—MINE WORKERS' RELIEF ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [4.41] in moving the second reading said: The Act which the Bill seeks to amend came into operation only on the 1st February of this year. It really takes the place of the Miners' Phthisis Act of 1922. When the Act was passed, it was considered that it would adequately safeguard all the miners employed in the gold mining industry, but several anomalies have become apparent which inflict great hardship and injustice on a small number of men. The Bill is to rectify that position. To those not acquainted with the gold mining industry the matters dealt with in the Bill may appear to be of a somewhat intricate nature, and therefore a memorandum has been affixed to the Bill in order to help members understand those matters. One of the great drawbacks to employment in the gold mining industry is the fact that the men so employed are subject to a disease commonly spoken of as miners' phthisis. It is a dreadful complaint and has taken a great toll of the men who have been employed in the industry for many years. In order to safeguard the lives of those in the industry, a laboratory has been established

where the men are examined once a year, and more frequently if considered necessary. If as a result of the examination men are found to be suffering from tuberclosis, or silicosis, or silicosis in an advanced stage, they are so certified, and in many cases are prohibited from continuing to be employed in the industry. If they are prohibited from employment they are entitled to compensation in accordance with the scale laid down in the principal Act, which this Bill seeks to amend. The Workers' Compensation Act covers some cases, and the Miners' Phthisis Act also contains certain provisions dealing with compensation. It was thought when this Act came into operation that all men in the industry would be adequately safeguarded, if it turned out they were suffering from diseases of this nature and were prohibited from employment in the industry. All men who are certified as suffering from one of these diseases or a particular stage of one of them, are not prohibited from employment because in some cases it is considered they would not be dangerous to their fellow men. As they would prefer to remain in the industry for the time being, they are allowed to continue in the mine in which they are working, until the stage is reached when it is thought advisable they should not be employed any longer. At the time the Act was passed there were 15 men who were certified to be suffering from T.B. with silicosis. It turns out now that they are suffering an injustice, which it is desired by this Bill to rectify. The doctor in these cases certified that the T.B. was not active. As the men were anxious to continue at work they were allowed to do so. The then Minister for Mines was satisfied they did not constitute a source of danger to their fellow workers, and they were not prohibited from working as they might have been had the Minister decided otherwise.

Hon. E. H. Harris: But he limited them to surface work, did he not?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I believe so. The men continued their work and received their wages, and were not a charge upon the fund. Eventually one of these men became ill and was not able to work. When an attempt was made to prohibit him from working in the industry under the provisions of the Miners' Phthisis Act, the Crown Law Department ruled against it, for the reason that immediately the Mine Workers' Relief Act was proclaimed, the Miners' Phthisis Act ceased to apply. Under

this ruling the man could not be prohibited from working, and as he was not able to work he should have been entitled to compensation, but unfortunately could not get it. These men were certified as unfit for work while the Miners' Phthisis Act was in operation. As it has now been superseded by another Act, I suppose it is correct to say, with the Crown Law authorities, that no action can be taken under that Act. One part of the Bill, therefore, is designed to remove that anomaly and render it possible for the men to be prohibited from working in the industry, and give them the right to the compensation to which they are entitled. Another amendment is designed to give relief in the case of three men. In this respect a greater injustice has been inflicted than in the cases to which I have just referred. I will quote the specific instance of a man who was found on examination at the laboratory to be suffering from silicosis advanced. Under the Mine Workers' Relief Act he would immediately be entitled to £750 compensation. At the time he was examined that particular Act had not come into operation. This man became ill and went into hospital, and whilst there the Act was proclaimed. When he left hospital he thought he was fit to return to work. On returning to his employers, expecting to be re-engaged, he was told it would be necessary for him to get a certificate. He therefore had to be examined a second time. He was found to be suffering from silicosis advanced, plus T.B., and consequently he could not get his certificate to return to work. He could not be prohibited from working under the Miners' Phthisis Act, because this had been superseded by the Mine Workers' Relief Act, and under the latter Act, because he was not a worker within the meaning of the Act when it was proclaimed, he was not entitled to any consideration under that Act. The Mine Workers' Relief Act provides that a man shall be entitled to compensation only when he is employed in the industry at the time he is prohibited from working. This man was in hospital, and was therefore deemed to be unemployed. He could get no redress either under the Miners' Phthisis Act or the Mine Workers' Relief Act. Attached to the Bill is a memorandum which may put the matter more clearly than I have done, but I have done my best with what to me is an intricate position. The Bill contains other amendments to the Act. One deals with the constitution of the board to ad-

minister the Act. The board will consist of two employees nominated or elected by the workers, two representatives of the employers, and a chairman appointed by the Government. The Mine Workers' Relief Fund Board have asked that no beneficiary under the Act shall be a member of the board. It seems a fair and reasonable request. Another amendment is to define those men who are entitled to compensation, and the date from which their compensation shall commence. There have been certain difficulties in this connection, and it is considered that the amendment will overcome them. One of these difficulties is as follows: Men may be out of employment because prohibition notices have been served upon them. It may take several weeks for the department to obtain the necessary information to ensure that men shall be entitled to compensation under the Act. By the proposed amendment a man may get his compensation from the date of ceasing work. If he was absent from work through sickness, and on examination was found to be suffering from T.B., compensation would be payable from the date of the examination, otherwise it would be payable from the date of prohibition. I believe several cases have occurred in which men with large families have been certified as suffering from disease. They have been prohibited from working on the mines, and have suffered great hardship because several weeks have elapsed before finality has been reached as to whether they are entitled to compensation under the Act or not. This particular amendment is designed to put the matter in order. A further amendment is intended to clarify the position regarding a man who is recovering compensation. Under the Act a man is entitled to draw up to the amount of wages actually received, no matter what that amount may be. It was never intended that this should be so, but that a man should be entitled to half wages plus 7s. 6d. for each child, with a maximum of £3 10s. a week. If the board were satisfied he was suffering hardship in consequence, it would be permitted to extend the payment at the rate of 7s. 6d. per week for each dependant, until the amount reached the basic wage. That was the intention when the Act was before Parliament. Owing to the wording of the particular section it is now interpreted to mean that a man shall be entitled to draw up to the equivalent of the wages he was receiving

before, no matter how much they might be. This amendment will fix the maximum rate on the basis of the basic wage operating in the district where he was living when prohibited from working. Another provision in the Bill dealing with compensation sets out that in the case of a man who is entitled to compensation, he may draw that compensation in a lump sum if he desires, though of course it will be smaller in amount than that provided for in the Act. If he elects to take it in a lump sum he will not be able to fall back upon the fund provided for in the Act until the period has elapsed when he would have exhausted the full amount he would be entitled to at the rate of £3 10s. a week. If a man who is entitled to compensation elects to take the smaller sum that the £750 to which he is entitled, because he will be getting it in a lump, he will not come under the provisions of this Act until the time has elapsed that would be necessary to exhaust the £750 at the rate of £3 10s. a week, irrespective of the amount he decided to accept as a lump-sum settlement. There is a further amendment dealing with prospectors only. This is necessary to bring the measure into line with the amendment to Section 49, with which I have already dealt. I am sure there are several members associated with the mining industry who may have a much better knowledge of this subject than I have. If any further information is required, I shall be only too pleased to give it in Committee. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.15] in moving the second reading said: This is another Bill that deals with the gold mining industry. The amending Bill which was introduced last session dealt with certain phases of the industry, and it is now found that an error was made by inserting in the wrong section certain provisions in regard to tributings. The object of the Bill is to rectify the error. There were two provisions made for tributings. The first one dealt with tributings on a royalty basis and provided that the

lessee could charge the tributer on a sliding scale; the second made provision for the lessee and the tributer each to take 50 per cent. of the actual gross gold won, the tributer to deliver the ore at the shaft and the lessee to pull it. It was in connection with this amendment that the error occurred, as the scale of charges was inserted in Section 145 of the Act, which gives definite instructions to the warden in connection with the registration of all tributes, with the result that the warden, when registering a tribute is now compelled to put in the scale of charges, and, no matter where the ore comes from, the lessee is not allowed to charge anything in excess of the scale provided, a scale which was only intended to apply to ore obtained on a royalty basis. This has led to a lot of trouble and the Minister for Mines found it necessary to have a conference with the people concerned. It was agreed then that this amending legislation should be introduced to satisfy all concerned.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is hoped that it will be more satisfactory than the result of the Royal Commission inquiry at one time.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I hope so. The Bill proposes to remove the scale of charges from Section 145 to Section 145 (b) which is the section that actually deals with tributes on a royalty basis. Further trouble was occasioned in respect to the scale of charges on account of the owners of treatment plants refusing to treat ore outside on that scale unless they were allowed to collect the royalty from it. It was found that at no mine unless it had its own treatment plant, and provided the company were prepared to let a tribute on a fifty-fifty basis, could any man, either lessee or tributer, get his ore treated. The outside lessee naturally refused to allow the treatment plant owners to collect the royalty, with the result that there was a hold-up affecting a number of shows, for the warden was unable to register a tribute unless the scale was included in it. The provisions in the Act to which I have referred, and which are dealt with in the Bill, have been slightly altered in the wording, but the principle has not been altered in any way. The alteration of the wording is absolutely necessary in order that there may be no mistake as to what is actually meant. There is a further amendment dealing with tributes which provides that instead of the tributer

having to land his ore at a shaft and the lessee to pull it, the tributer on an outside lease must land the ore at the surface instead of at the shaft. This will mean that the tributer will be put to the expense of landing at the surface, but from then on the lessee takes charge of the ore and makes his own arrangements with the treatment plant owner, and the tributer is entitled to 50 per cent. of the extraction value. All the parties have agreed to this amendment, and it is now considered that there will be no difficulty regarding the treatment or the registration of tributes outside of where the lessee owns the treatment plant. As I said in connection with the previous Bill, I shall be glad to supply any further information hon. members desire to have. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

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

BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [5.20] in moving the second reading said: In dealing with the Financial Emergency Tax Assessment Bill, I used matter which applies also to this Bill, and which need not be repeated. I will, therefore, be as brief as possible. The present Bill is different in many respects from the original Financial Emergency Tax Act that was passed in December last. For instance: The flat rate of 4½d. in the pound is to be replaced by the step system of rating, commencing at 4d. in the pound and increasing by steps of 5d., 6d., 8d., and 9d., and on incomes from £104 per annum including salary and wages up to incomes, including salary and wages of £416 per annum and over.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Bill will not fit in with the Assessment Bill now.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: The step system submitted is considered a much fairer and more equitable means of taxation than the flat rate of 4½d. previously imposed, and the system is in keeping with the joint recommendation of the State Commissioner of Taxation, the Assistant Under Treasurer, and the Government Statistician, which was submitted to the late Government on 6th April, 1932. A distinction is made between

a married person or a person with a "member of a family" to support or maintain, and a person having no such liability. In the case of the former, an exemption is enjoyed up to an amount less than £3 10s. per week, or with an income of less than £182 per annum, whereas in the case of the latter, the exemption only applies where the salary or wage is less than £2 per week or less than £104 per annum. The rates of tax are:—

INCOMES.

4d., 5d., 6d., 8d., and 9d. in the £ and on the amounts of incomes salary and wages as set out hereunder:—

- (a) Incomes from £104 to less than £182 p.a. ... 4d. in the £
(All incomes less than £104 p.a. are exempt from taxation).
(b) Incomes from £182 to £234 p.a. ... 5d. in the £
(This rate applies only to persons with "members of a family" to support or maintain).
(c) Incomes from £182 to less than £312 p.a. ... 5d. in the £
(d) Incomes in excess of £234 to £312 p.a. ... 5d. in the £
(This rate also applies to persons with "members of a family" to support or maintain).
(e) Incomes of £312 to less than £364 p.a. ... 6d. in the £
(f) Incomes in excess of £312 and less than £364 p.a. ... 6d. in the £
(This rate also applies to persons with "members of a family" to support or maintain).
(g) Incomes of £364 and less than £416 p.a. ... 8d. in the £
(h) Incomes of £416 p.a. and over ... 9d. in the £

The rates applicable to persons in receipt of salary and wages are on the same principle and apply as under:—

SALARIES AND WAGES.

- (a) Where the amount of salary or wages is £2 per week and less than £3 10s. per week ... 4d. in the £
(b) Where the amount of salary or wages is £3 10s. per week, and does not exceed £4 10s. per week ... 4d. in the £
(This rate and step system is to apply to persons who have "members of a family" to support or maintain).
(c) Where the amount of salary or wages is £4 10s. per week, and is less than £5 per week ... 5d. in the £
(d) Where the amount of salary or wages exceeds £4 10s. per week and does not exceed £6 per week ... 5d. in the £
(This rate and step system applies only to persons who have "members of a family" to support or maintain).
(e) Where the amount of salary or wages is £6 per week and is less than £7 per week ... 6d. in the £
(f) Where the amount of salary or wages exceeds £6 per week, and is less than £7 per week ... 6d. in the £
(This rate and step system applies only to persons who have "members of a family" to support or maintain).
(g) Where the amount of salary or wages is £7 per week, and is less than £8 per week ... 8d. in the £
(h) Where the amount of salary or wages is £8 per week and over ... 8d. in the £

The special rate set out in Clause 2 paragraph (c) applies to insurance or assurance companies. The Government are of the opinion that 6d. is a fair and reasonable fixed rate to apply to premium incomes. Clause 3 provides for the operation of the Act in respect to salaries and wages as from

the 1st day of August, 1933, it not being the desire of the Government to tax past payments of salaries and wages made during July. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. C. F. Baxter, debate adjourned.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [5.13] in moving the second reading said: There is only one principle involved in this Bill and that is the principle of plural voting as applied to municipalities. For many years this State had a reputation for the democratic thoughts expressed by its public men, and also for the legislation which from time to time was agreed upon by the Parliament of the State.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Do not you feel reluctant to introduce this Bill?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: No. The time is more than ripe for the introduction of legislation of this description. It is long overdue.

Hon. E. H. Harris: How long?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Years.

Hon. E. H. Harris: It was your party who introduced it.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: We have had a reputation in the past for our legislation. Some people have called it advanced legislation, and for a time perhaps it was. For a time we led the world in industrial and social legislation. In the matter of plural voting, however, we have lagged behind. We are one of the few countries of the world that still retain plural voting for municipalities.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Has it ever done any harm?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know whether the hon. member would describe its effects as harmful.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It has never done any good.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: It would be a great improvement if plural voting were abolished and the franchise for municipalities were the same as for the national Parliament.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: I question whether it would be any improvement.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: The hon. member is entitled to his opinion. He will have an opportunity to express it later on, and I hope he will do so. Plural voting has been abolished in most countries of the world, and it is time we in this State got away from the idea that a man's worth in the community is to be gauged by the amount of property he owns. In years gone by property was the main consideration. If a man could show that he owned property worth many thousands of pounds, by virtue of that fact alone, he was entitled to privileges. That was quite right because it was the law. Still, I think we have the right to suggest that greater consideration should be given to humanity than to the value of property possessed by an individual.

Several members interjected.

THE PRESIDENT: Order! I ask members to allow the Honorary Minister to proceed.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I realise that in no circumstances would quite a number of members agree to the proposal; they are so conservative-minded that they cannot get away from the ideas of yesterday or look to the future in matters of this kind.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Do not you think brains are required to accumulate property?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: I am sure they are not in every case.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Then you should be a very rich man.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: It is not many years since plural voting operated in every State of the Commonwealth. Now, however, at least two States have broken away from the system, and we are anxious that Western Australia should break away from it and introduce a more democratic and equitable system, namely, that of one ratepayer one vote.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Why break away from the majority?

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Under existing legislation one ratepayer might exercise two votes for an election for councillor of a municipality and four votes for an election for mayor. Is it right that any man should have four times the voting power of another man at a mayoral election simply because he happens to possess property of a higher value?

Hon. G. W. Miles: Of course he should.

THE HONORARY MINISTER: Is there any sense, reason or equity in it?

Hon. G. W. Miles: Yes.

The HONORARY MINISTER: At a referendum on the raising of a road board loan, plural voting is not permitted. Only a single vote is allowed to each ratepayer and that applies only to resident ratepayers, not to absentee ratepayers. Where is the consistency? If members argue that because money is involved there is sufficient reason for giving one individual more votes than another, why does not that principle apply to a poll on the raising of a loan in that case.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It should.

The HONORARY MINISTER: To that extent the Act is inconsistent.

Hon. E. Rose: Does it apply to taxation—one man one tax?

Hon. G. W. Miles: No, it does not apply there.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not see any analogy between the two.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Of course there is.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: A man owning valuable property pays more tax.

The HONORARY MINISTER: So he should. When a poll is taken on the raising of a loan for a road board, an individual ratepayer is not given two, three, or four votes. In national affairs, when electing representatives, we subscribe to the principle of one man one vote.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And it has ruined the country.

The HONORARY MINISTER: But when it comes to municipal affairs, something on a much smaller scale, the Act provides that some men shall have four votes, while other men have only one vote. It is inequitable.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom interjected.

The HONORARY MINISTER: I could not hear the interjection.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Try to hear this one—

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. E. H. Harris: I wanted to ask the Honorary Minister—

The PRESIDENT: Order! I ask members to refrain from interjecting.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Members who approve of plural voting, to be logical and consistent, should carry their ideas further. For the election of a councillor in a municipality, the maximum number of votes allowed is two, whereas four votes are allowed for the election of a mayor. This is the basis on which the votes are allotted.

Where the annual value is £25 and under, the ratepayer shall have one vote; where the annual value is £25 and does not exceed £50 the ratepayer shall have two votes. If the annual value of a man's property is £25, he is entitled to one vote only, but if his neighbour has property of an annual value of £26, he is entitled to two votes. A difference of only £1 in the annual value gives one man twice the voting power possessed by the other. Is there any equity in that? The maximum number of votes is four where the annual value is over £75, and we could make a similar comparison between the man having three votes and the man having four votes. One man owning property of an annual value of £74 would have three votes; another man with property of an annual value of £76 would have four votes. That discrimination cannot be justified. Let me direct attention to another phase of plural voting. Although the Act limits the maximum number of votes to four, more than that number of votes might be recorded for a particular property. The Act provides that joint owners may have equal rights, and according to the value of the property, so the joint owners may claim the right to vote. There are numerous examples of that; it applies to many business houses. A private company may possess property with a high annual value, and the members of the company may be registered as joint owners. Registered in that way, it is possible, by dividing the value of the property by the number of joint owners for each member of the company to have four votes at a mayoral election.

Hon. R. G. Moore: But one man is still limited to four votes.

The HONORARY MINISTER: More than one man may be interested in the particular property.

Hon. J. Nicholson: He would get vote only according to his proportion of the value.

The HONORARY MINISTER: But the proportion in such cases might be so high that each would be entitled to record two votes for a councillor and four votes for a mayor.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That is the principle of the Act; the voting is decided by the value.

The HONORARY MINISTER: In my opinion that is quite unfair. I agree that it is in accordance with the Act, but it is time we altered the Act.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Which are the two States that have adopted the method you suggest?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Queensland and New South Wales.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Have they adopted the method you propose?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I will give a comparison of the whole of the States.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: A man may own £10,000 worth of property and only the occupier might have the vote.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is so.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Is that reasonable?

The HONORARY MINISTER: In my opinion it is. In this State an elector may, according to the annual value of his property, have maximum votes as follows:—For a mayoral election, four votes.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: We do not want that.

The HONORARY MINISTER: If the hon. member does not care to listen, he need not do so. I have been asked to make the comparison and I intend to do so. Where the annual value is £25 or under, one vote is allowed; where the annual value is £25 and does not exceed £50, two votes; where the annual value is £50 and does not exceed £75, three votes; and where the annual value exceeds £75, four votes. For the election of councillor two votes are allowed in each ward as a maximum. Where the annual value is £50 and under one vote is allowed, and where the annual value is over £50, two votes. Where the poll is for a loan, voting is the same as for a mayoral election, but is limited to the owner. As regards the other States, in Queensland we find that for mayoralty, councillor, or loan, there is only one vote in the whole municipality, irrespective of wards or value of property.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is to a ratepayer; not one man, one vote.

The HONORARY MINISTER: Each ratepayer. If the municipality is divided into half a dozen wards and the ratepayer has property in each of those wards, he can register only one vote in one ward, instead of, as elsewhere, one vote in each ward, or, in some places where plural voting exists, up

to four votes, and in one State up to even six. In Queensland there is one vote only. The position in New South Wales is the same as that in Queensland. In Victoria an elector has votes according to property qualifications in each municipality and in each ward. Wherever he has property he is entitled to a vote or votes. He is entitled to register those properties in every ward if he has votes in every ward.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That is not so here.

The HONORARY MINISTER: In South Australia a ratepayer has only one vote for each ward in which he owns or occupies property, but for polls as to loans the owner or occupier may have up to six votes, as follows:—For annual value of £25 or under, one vote; £26 to £35, two votes; £36 to £45, three votes; £46 to £55, four votes; £56 to £65, five votes; upwards of £65, six votes. That is the reverse of what applies in this State.

Hon. H. J. Yelland: Is that on the annual value?

The HONORARY MINISTER: Yes.

Hon. J. Nicholson: But that applies only to a loan referendum.

The HONORARY MINISTER: That is so. But those votes are based on annual value. For the election of councillor there is only one vote in the wards. Tasmania has a different system again. In undivided municipalities an elector has up to six votes according to annual value, as follows:—Under £30, one vote; £30 and under £80, two votes; £80 and under £160, three votes; £160 and under £240, four votes; £240 and under £360, five votes; £360 and upwards, six votes. In subdivided municipalities an elector has up to six votes in each ward, according to the annual value shown in the schedule I have quoted. That, to my way of thinking, is far and away the worst system of plural voting in existence to-day.

Hon. J. Cornell: Has any evil resulted?

The HONORARY MINISTER: I do not know whether the hon. member would call it evil or not, but it has caused a tremendous amount of dissatisfaction. That completes the comparison between this State and other States. As I have remarked, the Bill involves only one principle. I feel that the time has arrived when we might well agree to the alteration proposed by the measure. The Bill does not provide for what has been termed adult suffrage; it merely provides

that each ratepayer shall be entitled to one vote only.

Hon. J. Cornell: The Boulder Municipal Council is all Labour, and the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council is the opposite, and there is no difference in the voting basis.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The principle of the Bill is that each ratepayer shall have one vote irrespective of the value of the property owned or occupied by the ratepayer. That is a democratic proposal to which at this stage of our history we should, I think, be prepared to agree. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [5.37]: The Municipalities Act of this State is administered by public men functioning in an honorary capacity. For a long term of years those men have been working under what may be termed an obsolete Act, and have had to battle against great difficulties. They have been helped through by a generous department, which solves for them many of their difficulties. As Minister administering the Act I received many deputations, and to each of those deputations I suggested the need for municipalities to get together and agree upon the amendments required in the Act. The unfortunate feature in the past has been that while associations of the various municipalities would agree on certain amendments, when those amendments were submitted to Parliament isolated boards would, through their members, put up other amendments which rendered it most difficult to enact a measure suitable to the requirements of every part of Western Australia. There is urgent need for amendment of the Municipalities Act.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I presume you mean an amending Bill not on the lines of this one.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: During 30 years of public life I have never heard of a public body asking for an amendment of the kind proposed by the Bill. Further, during the long time I have served in Parliament, I have never before known a Government to have the temerity to put before the Legislature an amending Bill and say, "Unless you carry this Bill, we will not amend an Act which is in urgent need of amendment." I do not know whether to regard such an attitude as in the nature of coercion. Certainly it is unprecedented. It is an attitude that re-

flects on the Government administering the State. I do not blame the Minister for Public Works individually. This is a Government Bill. I hope reason and justice will prevail with the Government and induce them to submit other amendments. I shall oppose the amendment contained in this Bill. The Honorary Minister talked of equity. What experience have we had of equity in this connection? Surely the persons who find the money should have a say in the spending of it. Under the Bill the amount of rates a man pays does not matter one iota; he is to have only one vote, the same as a man who pays only a few shillings annually in rates. Take the case of an occupier paying rent and rates. He is to have equal rights with the man paying six or seven times as much in rates. Further, he is in the happy position of being able to go to what he considers a better place should a crisis overtake the State. The person who finds the money to carry on the district cannot go away. He is compelled to remain. Where, then, is the equity spoken of by the Honorary Minister? We have had enough of that kind of thing. Under the Electoral Act, youths and girls—which term I extend up to the age of 28 or 30—have an undue share in the government of the country. Is the same sort of thing to be introduced into municipal life? Surely the Government firstly and Parliament afterwards are prepared to pass a good workable Municipalities Act for the benefit of men working in an honorary capacity on municipal councils. The same remark applies to road boards. I was absolutely astonished at the Honorary Minister's assurance in bringing the Bill forward.

Hon. E. H. Harris: He has to do it.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The Bill is not being fathered by the Leader of the House. I admire that hon. gentleman's choice and discretion.

Hon. J. Cornell: He has had enough trouble already.

Hon. A. Thomson: What about the other poor fellow?

The Honorary Minister: What is the inference with regard to the Leader of the House?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The inference is that he shows wisdom in not putting this Bill before the House.

Hon. T. Moore: The Bill comes in the Honorary Minister's department.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: It does not. I hope the Bill will be rejected, and by a heavy majority, thus showing the people who find the money that they will be protected in regard to its expenditure. The same remark applies to another Bill. The present measure is a kind of bait to us. We are told that if we pass this Bill, other amendments will be proposed. Let us lay this Bill aside, and then, if the Government are not prepared to amend an Act so urgently needing amendment, let the public, at the proper time, do their utmost to put in a Government that will introduce the needed amendments. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.45]: I shall not delay the House long on the Bill. There is one municipality in the South Province. I refer to Boulder. For the last six years, despite the franchise, the ratepayers have returned a full Labour council of 12 members. In order, perhaps, to add a little tone, they have practically unanimously elected a Nationalist Mayor. I was in the municipality for some days recently and not a single individual asked the question, "How will the Municipal Corporations Act Amendment Bill get on?" They did not put that query for me, for the simple reason that even if the Bill were agreed to with its altered franchise, the position there would not be different from that of to-day. I shall vote against the Bill.

HON. R. G. MOORE (North-East) [5.46]: I do not intend to say much on the Bill. I shall oppose it because I do not think there has been any call for it on the part of the people concerned. I have been connected with municipal councils for many years, and I have faced the ratepayers on many occasions. Never once have I heard the matters dealt with in the Bill mentioned at such times. Not a single individual has ever complained to me about plural voting. I do not think the principle of plural voting has had any harmful effect. Those who pay the most in rates should possess adequate voting power, in order to have a proper say regarding the expenditure of the money they have to provide. The Honorary Minister referred to the effect of plural voting. The point he made is one that obviously

must arise and the position he indicated cannot be avoided, seeing that there must be a dividing line somewhere.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That applies equally to the taxation proposals we have been dealing with.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Of course, the same principle applies there. The Government themselves say that the man who receives £104 a year will have to pay the tax, whereas the man who receives £103 19s. 6d. a year will be exempt from the financial emergency tax. Obviously in that instance, too, there must be some dividing line. I have received a letter from the Kalgoorlie Municipal Council asking me to oppose the Bill because they do not desire such legislation. I was a member of that council for eight years and never once at municipal elections did I hear this subject raised. It is peculiar that although the Government seek to apply the principle embodied in the Bill and to do away with plural voting, an advertisement appeared in the Press the other day convening a meeting of shareholders in connection with "the people's paper," and it indicated that the person who held 50 shares would be allowed to exercise one vote, the person who held 100 shares, two votes, and the holder of 150 shares, three votes. They did not suggest that the man who held 50 shares had less intelligence than the man with 150 shares.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What is "the people's paper?"

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Don't you know who "the" people are?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Which paper are you referring to?

Hon. R. G. MOORE: "The Worker." It suits Labour to have that system of voting when that party's paper is concerned.

Hon. E. H. Gray: The principle is not the same.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: That is the point I am making; the principle is the same.

Hon. J. Cornell: Exactly.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Labour realises that the person who is financially interested in the organisation's paper to a greater extent than another, should have a greater say in the affairs of that paper. It was said in another place that a certain person did not have a vote because he did not own a block of land, but immediately he did so, he became entitled to four votes. The

moment that individual bought the land he had an interest at stake, and that is why he got that voting power. Some reference has been made to adult franchise and it was contended that a good case could be made out in favour of it. That may be quite so. In any event, I shall not support the Bill principally because very few people, if any, have asked for it. There are plenty of other matters of urgent importance that we could be asked to devote our attention to without wasting time on a Bill that no one wants.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East) [5.52]: I had a good deal of sympathy for the Honorary Minister who moved the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. G. W. Miles: He does not want your sympathy; he wants your vote.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I read with interest the statement made in another place by the Minister who moved the second reading of the Bill there. Ever since I have been connected with public life, I know that municipalities have requested an amendment of the Municipal Corporations Act. Two or three Bills have been introduced from time to time to amend the Road Districts Act, and I cannot understand why various Governments have not acceded to the wishes of municipal councils for an amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act, although such requests have been made on various occasions by municipal conferences. The Minister who introduced the Bill in the Legislative Assembly, admitted that if a metropolitan board of works were established, which many of us consider is long overdue in Western Australia, it would be of advantage to the people concerned. We believe that by handing over the control of the various activities that would be covered by such a board, cheaper administration would be secured and, under present conditions, more money would be available for the provision of work for the unemployed. Despite the fact that the Minister admitted the benefits that would accrue to the metropolitan area if legislation were introduced with that object in view, the Government take up the attitude that unless Parliament agrees to the Bill before the House now, they will not introduce legislation to provide for a metropolitan board of works. They will not do so unless we allow them to have their way in respect of a principle that they regard as essential from the stand-

point of policy. I am sorry to think that we have arrived at the stage where any party, irrespective of their political brand, would stoop to place their political beliefs before the interests of the people. For that reason, if for no other, I shall not support the second reading of the Bill. While I have some sympathy for the Honorary Minister who was charged with the duty of moving the second reading of the Bill in this Chamber, I am wondering whether it is a try-on. In these days we should endeavour as far as possible to get together to pull the State out of the mess it is in and one way in which we could help would be to reduce the rates that have to be paid by the people in the metropolitan area. That could be accomplished if a board were appointed to take over works in the metropolitan area. It would be easy to draw comparisons. For instance, much time has been taken up in discussing the financial emergency taxation legislation. It is considered just by those who sponsored the Bills dealing with that form of taxation that those who have a little more shall pay a little more. It does not appear that they apply the same logical reasoning when it comes to municipal matters, because they do not provide that those who have a greater stake shall have a little more consideration regarding the determination of how their money shall be spent. I shall support the continuance of the present system that enables those who pay the piper to have a little extra say regarding the expenditure of rate they pay. I am sorry that the Honorary Minister had to introduce such a Bill.

HON. J. T. FRANKLIN (Metropolitan) [5.58]: I shall move that the debate be adjourned.

Members: No!

Hon. J. T. FRANKLIN: I thought perhaps some members who are not present might like to speak on the Bill. The Honorary Minister, when moving the second reading, accurately described the municipal voting system in this State. The Bill will provide that the owner of property will be entitled to one vote in one ward, and that may give rise to great difficulty. In what ward will the owner vote? In the City of Perth there are eight wards, but although a man may have a property in each ward he will be allowed to exercise a vote in one ward only. Then, again, the tenant will have

the same voting power in connection with loans as the property owner. That is not fair. Those who are responsible for the payment of interest and sinking fund on the loans and for their ultimate repayment, are required to find the money for those purposes, and I maintain that property owners are the only ones who should be able to vote on questions affecting a loan flotation. I do not regard as a threat emanating from a Minister in the Legislative Assembly, the assertion that if we do not pass the Bill, he will not introduce legislation that we may desire. Members of this House will not be coerced regarding the way they shall vote. Members vote in accordance with their conscience and their convictions. No such threat should be held over our heads. If the Government were earnest in their endeavours to amend the Municipal Corporations Act, they should bring down a new one altogether. I do not know whether it would be in order for a private member to move for the appointment of a select committee to go into the question of the advisability of bringing down an entirely new Act; for the existing Act is obsolete, and if we could get an up to date Act it would be better for those who represent the rate-payers in an honorary capacity, for it would give them opportunity to carry out their duties in a manner satisfactory to all. I will vote against the second reading of the Bill, the object of which is merely to abolish plural voting. The property owner in many instances does not have a vote at all, the tenant having the vote, whilst the property owner is not entitled to a vote. Certainly the tenant is entitled to a vote, but in my view the property owner should have one as well. Just after the 1st September of last year a tenant left a cottage in which I was interested, and when the appeal board for putting names on the roll was held a couple of months later, I applied to have the name of the new tenant enrolled. The previous tenant, who had vacated the place on the 1st September, still had the vote, and when he was notified of the objection raised to his having the vote for that cottage he successfully appealed against the objection; because the Act distinctly states that tenants in occupation on the 1st September are entitled to the vote, even though they have since left the premises. That is one good reason why an entirely new Act should be brought down.

HON. J. NICHOLSON (Metropolitan) [6.3]: The Bill fails to reflect that credit which one would like to confer on the Government for having introduced a measure of this nature. The Honorary Minister advanced as an argument in favour of the Bill the fact that certain States of the Commonwealth had recently abolished plural voting. But that is no reason why we should follow in the footsteps of those two States. As Mr. Cornell said, it has been freely declared that Queensland is keenly desirous of getting back to plural voting. It is evident that those who have interests in property in any municipality are entitled, just as shareholders in a company are entitled, to a greater voice in determining the various matters that might come before the local authorities from time to time. The only way that can be maintained is by retaining this system of plural voting. Our State, as the Honorary Minister has shown, has a system of plural voting which is much fairer than many others. He has quoted the instances of Tasmania and South Australia, where votes up to six can be recorded, whereas the maximum number that can be recorded in our State is four for the election of mayor, and two for that of a councillor. In 1906, when the parent Act was passed, no doubt those responsible for the passage of that Act weighed fully the provisions of the Acts in other States, and I think they arrived at a very fair basis indeed, as shown in the methods of voting embodied in the Act. Until the Honorary Minister announced that someone had said it was desirable to abolish plural voting, I had never heard of the suggestion. On the contrary, I have consistently heard, not from one but from many—

Hon. G. W. Miles: You have never been down to the Trades Hall.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No, but I have consistently heard from many, of the desirability of retaining plural voting.

Hon. E. H. Gray: You have not taken part in recent elections.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I have taken part in many elections in times gone by; I was both councillor and mayor of the City in former years. I know what the feeling of the people was then, and I have tried to keep in touch with it ever since. I can see no justification whatever for the Bill. The Honorary Minister called attention to what he regarded as an inconsistency, in that the

Act provides for only single votes, not a plurality of votes, at a referendum. If such an inconsistency exists I am quite prepared to assist the Honorary Minister so to amend the Act that provision may be made to apply plural voting to a referendum. That would render the Act consistent, and would meet any objection the Honorary Minister has to offer. The attitude of the Government, or of some Ministers of the Government, in having declared that until this measure is passed the Government will not introduce any other amendment to the Municipal Corporations Act, makes it clear that the Bill is not a true reflex of the opinion of the people, and so I must vote against it.

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

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Assembly's Message.

Message received from the Assembly notifying that it had agreed to amendments Nos. 1, 2 and 4 made by the Council, and agreed to amendment No. 3 subject to a further amendment in which the Assembly desired the concurrence of the Council.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 7th September, 1933.

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

QUESTION—BULK HANDLING.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Minister for Railways: Does he intend to table all the papers relating to the bulk handling of wheat in the Fremantle zone, and all papers dealing with the arrangements and proposals to date between the Government, Railway Department, Harbour Trust, Co-operative Wheat Pool and wheat firms for the bulk handling of wheat in the State?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: As many of the matters involved in these papers are the subject of correspondence and are still under consideration by the Government, it would be inadvisable for them to be made available at this stage.

BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

1, Lotteries (Control) Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Police,

2, Fruit Cases Act Amendment.

3, Plant Diseases Act Amendment.

4, Feeding Stuffs Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture.

BILL—MORTGAGEES' RIGHTS RESTRICTION ACT CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. M. F. Troy—Mt. Magnet) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: This Act has