

street is about the same width as Hay-street, Perth. It does seem hard to make commercial instincts follow the great ideals set by town planners.

Mr. Lindsay: Rundle-street, Adelaide, is just the same.

Mr. NORTH: That is so. I have nothing more to say. If members become voluble on this Bill, we may be here for a long time, but I am one of those who are brief in their remarks. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 10.16 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 30th November, 1927.

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

QUESTION—VERMIN ACT, MINERS' HOMESTEAD LEASES.

Hon. J. CORNELL (for Hon. J. E. Dodd) asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Are the Government aware that 124 miners' homestead leaseholders within the area covered by the Phillips River Road Board, holding an aggregate acreage of 17,401

acres, are exempt from taxation under the Vermin Act, and, as a result, the said board did not strike a vermin tax for the year 1927-28? 2, If so, do they intend introducing an amending Bill this session to include miners' homestead leases within the scope of the Vermin Act?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, The matter will receive consideration.

QUESTION—SHEEP DISEASE.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is the Minister aware that mortality from Beverley or braxy-like sheep disease has been heavy this year? 2, Is he aware that the area of infection is increasing? 3, If so, what steps have been taken to advise owners of sheep? 4, Has any report or interim report, of the investigation, made some years ago by Mr. Bennett, been published? If not, when will it be published?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Yes. 2, Yes. 3 (a), By personal visits of Veterinary Pathologist and other officers of the Veterinary Branch to settlers in localities where mortality has been reported. (b) By distribution of the bulletin containing the progress report of the Veterinary Pathologist. 2, Investigations were commenced in 1925, and at the conclusion of the first season a progress report was printed and distributed. This contained advice regarding suggested methods for reducing losses.

QUESTION—KANGAROO SKINS, ROYALTY.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM asked the Honorary Minister: What amount has been received by the Government in connection with the royalty on kangaroo skins from the pastoral areas?

The HONORARY MINISTER replied: It is impossible to differentiate between kangaroo skins coming in from pastoral areas and those received from other areas. During the last five years the average amount received annually by way of royalty upon red kangaroo skins (these marsupials frequent that portion of the State where pastoral areas are situated) was £1,403.

SITTINGS—ADDITIONAL HOURS AND DAY.

Standing Orders Suspension.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.35]: I move—

That for the remainder of the session, commencing on Tuesday next, the House do meet at 3 o'clock, p.m., on Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday. That for the remainder of the session so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable Bills to be put through all stages in one sitting, and Messages to be taken into consideration forthwith, and that Standing Order 62 be suspended during the same period.

This is the usual motion that I, as Leader of the House, am expected to move when the session is nearing the end. The Government are desirous of closing down to-morrow week. That being so, it is necessary, in order to expedite the business, to have the Standing Orders suspended, and the days and hours of sitting extended. No variation in the sitting days and hours will take place until next week. Provision is made that if we have to sit on Friday we may do so under this motion.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [4.37]: I do not oppose the motion, but I should like an assurance from the Leader of the House that we shall have an opportunity to look into some of the Bills that will be brought before us. I see from the Notice Paper of another place that four new Bills are about to be introduced, and there are five others that we have not yet seen. We already have nine Bills on our Notice Paper that we have not yet disposed of. This makes a total of 18 Bills, and we are asked to close down in a week.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And then there is the Appropriation Bill.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I should like an assurance from the Chief Secretary that when Bills are introduced here the second reading and Committee stages will not be taken at once, and that members will not be deprived of an opportunity to study the measures. I see no occasion to rush the session through in a week if we are going to deal with all these measures. There is a possibility of members being called back early in January to deal with another matter. Perhaps some of these Bills might be dealt with then.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central—in reply) [4.40]: I am entirely in the hands of the House. If members consider they have not sufficient time in which to peruse carefully the Bills submitted to them and come to a conclusion as to their contents, there will be no objection to the House sitting a further day. The Assembly will have finished its business on Wednesday next. The Premier has given me that assurance. A few days ago he suggested we might close down this week, but I stated that was not possible. Probably we can close down on Thursday next, but if we cannot do so and at the same time give proper consideration to the measures submitted to us, we can sit in the following week. Several Bills are nearly finalised. I am certain from a perusal of the Notice Paper and from my knowledge of the measures that are coming forward, we shall be able to get through quite easily.

Question put and passed.

MOTION—WHEAT BELT AREAS, GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION.

HON. A. BURVILL (South-East) [4.41]: I move—

That a map be laid on the table showing the wheat belt areas geographically within the ambit of Fremantle, Bunbury, and Albany, irrespective of railway construction; the total (approximate) area within the ambit of each port, and the total (approximate) area of wheat belt within the ambit of each port.

I asked a question on these lines, but instead of receiving an answer I was given a railway map, which carried me no further. It should not be a difficult matter to secure an answer to this question. We have reports from the Engineer-in-Chief and Mr. Camm. In Mr. Camm's report certain classified areas are marked on a plan, just as is the case with the Engineer-in-Chief's report. When comparing the latter report with what is supposed to be the geographical area of the railways within the ambit of the various ports mentioned, we find the position, contained in the report of the Engineer-in-Chief, is not set out with regard to the wheat lands. Members will be able to see this by glancing at the map and studying the geographical position. The Engineer-in-Chief says in his report—

Of the total agricultural area no less than 42 per cent. has Fremantle as its nearest port, 29 per cent. is nearest to Esperance, 14 per

cent. to Geraldton, and the remaining 15 per cent. would be served by Albany and Bunbury, approximately in the proportion of three to two.

Later on he says—

The probable limits on the northern and north-eastern sides of the future wheat belt are shown thereon, while the southern limit would be represented by a line drawn through Seaddan on the Esperance railway, to include Ravensthorpe, and produced to enclose the Ongerup to Tambellup line.

I understand there will be a probability of defining this particular area. It appears to me from the Engineer-in-Chief's report that the area of wheat growing lands is already defined so far as the western boundary is concerned. In this question I have not included the exact area of Esperance or Geraldton. I understand that on the eastern wheat belt the position is more or less undefined. To comprehend this map and to give members a clear interpretation of future railway construction, it is essential we should know the geographical positions of these ports.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about the strategical position?

Hon. A. BURVILL: That may have a bearing upon the matter. If we could get the geographical position, it would be a great help to members. It will be no trouble to include the ambit of the wheat areas as between each port. That will have a definite bearing on anything that is done in the way of opening up the natural ports, or constructing any future railways to their natural ports. I am not anxious that the map shall be exactly accurate, and it can be compiled under conditions similar to those applying to the map included in Mr. Stileman's report. If we can get that it will be quite sufficient.

Hon. J. Cornell: You can get all you want if you go to the Lands Department with a rule and measure it up.

Hon. A. BURVILL: I do not happen to be a draftsman, and if it is such a simple matter, it will be quite easy for an official of the Lands Department to provide what I require.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is already done for you.

Hon. A. BURVILL: It is not to be found in the report furnished by Mr. Stileman.

HON. H. STEWART (South-East) [4.46]: I second the motion because, as indicated by Mr. Cornell when he interjected, it is a matter that will involve no appreciable expense. The map can be provided in a very little while. Although any hon. member may be able to get out the information he requires, it will not carry the same weight as if it is compiled by an official of the Lands Department. As a Government document it will carry more weight.

The Chief Secretary: I have it here.

Hon. H. STEWART: Then I need say no more.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [4.47]: After I had replied to a question by Mr. Burvill a few days ago, he stated that my reply was not satisfactory, and that the information should have been furnished by the Lands Department, not by the Railways Department. In order to facilitate the matter, I suggested that Mr. Burvill should confer with the officials of the Lands Department and point out exactly what he required. I understand that he did that, subsequent to which it was an easy matter for the department to supply his requirements. I have here a map showing the wheat belt areas geographically within the ambits of the ports referred to. If that information is not complete, and Mr. Burvill will explain the deficiencies of the map, I will have the matter dealt with further to meet his requirements.

Question put and passed.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Audit Act Amendment.

2, Land Tax and Income Tax.

Passed.

MOTION—TUBERCULOSIS.

Dairy Herd, Hospital for the Insane.

Debate resumed from 15th November on the following motion by Hon. A. J. H. Saw:—

That, in the opinion of this House, the policy of hush-hush adopted by both the previous and present Governments in connection with the presence of tuberculosis in the dairy herd at the Claremont Hospital for the Insane,

which supplies milk to the Children's Hospital, is not in the best interests of the health of the people.

HON. A. LOVEKIN (Metropolitan) [4.52]: If no other hon. member wishes to speak to the motion, I will say a few words only. We all regret that Dr. Saw is still unable to be present on account of ill-health. We all hope that the period of rest he is having will enable him to recuperate and to be present with us on a future occasion. Regarding the motion that Dr. Saw moved, I think it may be truly said that it was justified by the statements and admissions of the Chief Secretary himself. He admitted that a recent inspection showed that 52 per cent. of the cattle were tubercular and that the department had not made the number of inspections that should have been carried out owing to the shortage of staff. Dr. Saw's motion has had the effect of drawing attention to that position, and I am sure the result will be that we shall have improvements effected later on. The Chief Secretary was evidently hard pressed to reply to Dr. Saw, because he put up a case along the lines of the Old Bailey lawyers, for he started to criticise the other fellow and to misinterpret or misquote in order to find arguments for use against the motion. One point he made was in connection with an interjection of mine to Sir Edward Wittenoom. At the outset Dr. Saw referred to what had happened at the Children's Hospital in 1911 and 1912. Sir Edward Wittenoom had come into the Chamber late. When Dr. Saw was proceeding to deal with some other matter, Sir Edward asked a question and Dr. Saw replied to the effect that if he had been here earlier, he, Sir Edward, would have known what he, Dr. Saw, had been alluding to in connection with the Children's Hospital in 1911-12. Referring to that time, I interjected that the children had died like flies. My interjection was reported to the effect that the children were dying like flies. What I said was that they had died like flies. I could not have said that they were dying like flies at the present time, because I have had no association with the Children's Hospital for several years. Obviously, I was referring back to the time to which Dr. Saw was alluding. My interjection was really intended as a complimentary remark to the Government.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Your remark was very definite.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Yes. What I said was really to the credit of the Government, because in 1911 and 1912 the mortality was high. In the figures produced by the Chief Secretary the death rate for those particular years was omitted. In other words, the death rate for the "died like flies year" is not to be found in the table. The mortality in that year was very bad indeed. I was chairman of the board at the time and the doctors attributed the death rate to the milk supply. To begin with, I got eight or ten sterilised bottles and bought 3d. worth of milk from all the milk carts I could come across. I had that milk tested and in no instance was the milk pronounced to be fit for human consumption. In each instance the milk was shown to be deleterious.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Have you those reports?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: That was in 1911-12; I suppose the reports can be found. However, at that time we went further into the question and Mr. Titus Lander, who was then secretary of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Dr. Battye, the Government Librarian, and I paid a visit of inspection to the dairy from which we were getting our milk. I have the report here. I do not desire to read it at this stage because I do not wish to do anyone an injury. Any hon. member can see the report, which is signed by the three individuals I have mentioned. The report disclosed a shocking state of affairs at that particular dairy.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Are all the consumers of milk from that dairy now dead?

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: I do not know. Probably some took whisky in the milk to fortify it and have continued to live. We came to the conclusion that the position was very acute and we asked the Premier, Mr. Collier, and the then Minister for Lands, Mr. Angwin, to come to the hospital to discuss the position with us. They were good enough to do so and we explained the position. We brought the doctors before them and also showed them the report I have referred to. We suggested that as the Government had good cows at Brunswick, they might make some of those cows available, seeing that the death-rate at the Children's Hospital was so high. Whether that was on account of the milk, I cannot say, but the death-rate was abnormal and the doctors attributed it to the milk. As laymen we had to accept that view. Mr. Collier and Mr.

Angwin after going into the matter made this remark, "Mr. Wilson has had a special train for electioneering purposes, so why should not the children have a special train to bring them some decent cows from the country so that they shall have good milk? It shall be done." Then what followed was done in the quickest time in which I have ever known anything to be done by a Government department. Within three days ten cows were brought from Brunswick, they were properly housed, hot water supplies were provided and other necessities installed, and the milk tested and special provision made for conveying it to the Children's Hospital. When I interjected during the course of Dr. Saw's speech that "they died like flies" it was intended to be a reminder to the Chief Secretary of what his present chief did on that occasion in 1911.

The Chief Secretary: The hon. member said I misquoted him.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: Yes, because I said they "died," not they "die."

The Chief Secretary: It was what I took down myself at the time.

Hon. A. LOVEKIN: It would be quite easy to misunderstand an interjection such as that. I admit that it was not intentionally misquoted either by the Minister or by the "Hansard" reporters. But my intention at that time was to pay a tribute to the action of the then Government. I make that explanation because it justifies the remark I actually made. At this stage I do not intend to discuss the merits or demerits of the pasteurisation of milk. That is a scientific subject for scientists and not laymen such as myself, to probe and pronounce an opinion upon. I do say, however, that not only the cows supplying milk to the Children's Hospital and other public institutions, but the cows supplying milk to the general public should be properly inspected from time to time, and steps taken to see that the milk is conveyed in a wholesome and clean state to the public. If the motion does nothing more than to draw the attention of the Government to that need it will have served its purpose. Further than that I do not intend to proceed. Dr. Saw has authorised me—I can produce his letter if necessary—to use my judgment in respect of the motion and I shall do so by asking the leave of the House to withdraw it.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

BILL—STATE INSURANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. J. M. MACFARLANE (Metropolitan) [5.4]: There is a marked difference between the way the Leader of the House dealt with the measure last year and the manner in which he introduced it a few weeks ago. Last year the outstanding reason for its introduction was that attention might be given to the parlous condition of the men affected by miners' phthisis, and with that idea this House was very sympathetic and gave an assurance to the men concerned in the most convincing terms. While expressing those views, it was also, to my mind, clearly shown by the House that it had sympathy with the measure it was then desired to introduce, and it showed that sympathy on the second reading by agreeing to the Bill on a division by a majority of one vote. This year the Leader of the House, in my opinion, has not made out a case in any way. The Chief Secretary told us that the Government had a mandate from the people to again submit the Bill. Last session my views, and the vote I recorded, were based on opposition to State enterprises. While I was very strong on that point, I had every sympathy with the affected miners and I suggested then that if the Government dealt with the question on the basis on which views had been generally expressed, it would have been dealt with satisfactorily. The question of dealing with the miners under the Miners' Phthisis Act is purely a State matter, and whatever is done should be done with funds provided from Consolidated Revenue. That course might have been taken at the outset, and the mines might have been cleaned up and the laboratory retained. The mine-owners would then have known where they were, and the men would have been relieved from the position of anxiety in which they found themselves. But the Government did not choose to look at the position from that standpoint. They preferred to take the view that it was desirable to enter into competition with insurance companies and to take miners' phthisis risks themselves. That, however, is not the point of view adopted in connection with the introduction of the Bill; the point of view is that the Government have a mandate from the people. The desire of the Government now is not particularly to look after the miners,

but to engage in insurance in a general way. For that reason I feel certain that members, when voting, will remember that there is only one issue and that is the question of another State enterprise. I have looked over the views expressed for and against the measure last session, and I have reviewed my own attitude towards the State engaging in this form of business to see whether I might be influenced to vote in a manner different from that of last year. I feel that the view advanced by the Chief Secretary that the Government received a mandate from the people to engage in State insurance can hardly be substantiated, because State insurance, whilst it may have been the subject of discussion during the elections, was never made a specific question.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Oh, yes, it was.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Not so far as I know.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You could not have seen any of the circulars that were issued on the goldfields.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I am speaking of the province I represent and of which I have some knowledge. To my mind there was no special mention made of State insurance, other than was made in a general way, and therefore there was no question as to whether there should be private insurance or State insurance.

Hon. J. Cornell: State insurance is part of their policy.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: In my opinion the main plank of the Labour Party's platform was "Keep Collier Premier," rather than any question such as State insurance.

Hon. J. Cornell: And the 33½ per cent. reduction on the income tax.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Yes, but the principal point was to retain possession of the Treasury bench.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: It seemed to be more a personal vote at the last Assembly elections, since all with one exception were returned.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The point I wish to make is that it cannot be said the Government received a distinct mandate from the people, as the Leader of the House would have us believe was the case.

The Chief Secretary: I do not think I said that.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: No, it is only inference. The statement was made last night that Mr. Collier had withdrawn from that position, which I am glad to hear.

My opposition to State enterprise is such that I must also oppose the Government except where it is proposed to serve some special purpose such as getting rid of an abuse created by an individual or a company, an abuse that reflects against the people. Even then I consider the Government should withdraw from the field as soon as they have attained their end. The Bill asks us to sanction State insurance as a general enterprise; and validate the actions of the Government over a period. Last year this House definitely stated that the measure should be reduced in strength and that its operation should be for one year only. We are now considering it again and we have to determine whether it shall have one year's life or longer. The Leader of the House claims support on the ground that the question was made a special feature at the elections, and also because this House endorsed the principle last year. I do not know how other members feel, but I can safely say that I did not endorse the principle. I gave the Government such support as would relieve the position of the miners as it was disclosed to us, but I did not endorse the principle of State insurance in any way. State insurance may have been supported during the elections, largely because of the fear that if the Government were changed, the incoming Government would adopt a policy of economy and retrenchment. A good many votes, I am sure, were cast on that basis. The position existing here may be described as similar to that existing in South Australia. There the people are paying dearly for over-manning, over-capitalisation, and excessive Government expenditure. Many South Australians, indeed, are now looking for employment here in competition with our own people, who I am sorry to say are themselves not too well supplied with work. Another question is whether the weight of evidence is in favour of the Government requiring this measure. Hon. members who have spoken in opposition to the Bill have made it clear that there is nothing in the claim about the Government being called upon to redress a wrong by establishing State insurance in competition with the companies. Mr. Potter's figures of percentages of business done by insurance companies in the Eastern States and New Zealand after many years of competition with State Insurance Offices show that the public generally do not view the State offices as being needed for the righting of

any abuse. I rather think the Government have introduced the Bill not so much because they believe in the necessity for State competition with the insurance companies as in order to carry out a plank of the Labour platform. At the risk of repetition I think it worth mentioning again that that plank is the socialisation of industry, production, and distribution. Naturally, any Labour representative would have to bring that plank before the representatives of the people with a view to putting it into effect. The Labour Party believe in that sort of thing; but I hold that it does not make for good administration, and therefore I hope the House will turn the Bill down, if only from that aspect. In introducing last year's Bill the Minister said it was needed because the companies refused to grant cover under the Miners' Phthisis Act. On their part the companies said they refused to quote because the Government would not make available to them the figures showing the risks to be taken under the Act. At that I can leave the matter, because the present Bill is not being discussed from that aspect. A very clear answer has been given to the Government, who certainly had not disclosed the full facts of the case, especially the results of the medical examinations, to the companies up to the time of the introduction of last session's measure. I believe the taxpayer would have supported the idea of meeting the need for insurance under the Miners' Phthisis Act, and the mines would have got much more suitable relief and would have been able to give more employment, had the matter been decided last year. I realise that the laboratory must be continued, and I am sorry to gather that this year's results disclose conditions somewhat worse even than last year's. If the laboratory were abolished—

Hon. J. Cornell: The laboratory is a Commonwealth institution.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: If it were abolished, the job would be only half done, and I therefore hope the laboratory never will be abolished. Such an institution is required not only in Western Australia, but in the whole of the States, so that men showing the first signs of silicosis may be withdrawn. That can be achieved only by laboratories operating in Western Australia and in the Eastern States. Mr. Potter quoted figures in rebuttal of the

charge that State insurance offices had been found necessary in various Eastern States and New Zealand in order to curb the predatory practices of the companies. His figures were fairly convincing, and he travelled over a good deal of ground, omitting, however, to travel as far as one point on which the Minister dwelt, the case of America. It has been shown that New York State does less than 9 per cent. of the business of workers' compensation, that Maryland does 16 per cent., Michigan 5, and Pennsylvania 20 per cent. Those figures are derived from the reports of companies which I have been able to secure. Even where the State Insurance Office has the benefit of all the influence that can be exerted by the State, it cannot compete with the free companies.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The Pennsylvania office failed altogether.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: I have quoted those States, though I regard them as bad examples. America is not the pattern Great Britain is in the matter of insurance. However, the object of my quotation is to emphasise Mr. Potter's figures.

Hon. G. Potter: The British companies were the only ones that stood up to their obligations after the San Francisco disaster.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The figures I have cited, together with those previously given to the House, indicate clearly that there is nothing to justify the Government in entering into competition with the companies.

Hon. E. H. Harris: But the companies would not quote, and therefore there was no competition.

Hon. A. Lovekin: They would not quote because they could not get the necessary information.

Hon. E. H. Harris: That may be, but that is not the point. There was not, in fact, any competition from the companies.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Mr. Potter's quotations of local companies' rates and transactions during past years in my opinion afford good reason for non-interference by the State. Indeed, such competition represents a great wrong, especially as the companies established here, have large investments in Western Australia, and therefore are deeply interested in its welfare. Further, they are doing

their part in the payment of rates and taxes, and are assisting to develop the State. Again, a great deal of personal money is involved in shareholdings in the companies. Indeed, some of the companies are almost entirely owned by local shareholders. That the State should enter into competition with them means the destruction of a satisfactory condition of affairs, and ultimately must lead to the withdrawal of the companies. If I were a company director who had been told that his company was not wanted, and if I could go elsewhere and find better investments—

Hon. J. Cornell: If the companies could find better investments elsewhere, then, State insurance or no State insurance, they would go.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: The position to-day is satisfactory, but introduce State insurance, with the State paying neither rates nor taxes, and in some instances paying managerial expenses out of Consolidated Revenue—

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: And also law costs.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: —paying all charges out of Consolidated Revenue, and dealing with the companies as is proposed, to-day's position would change, and the companies would find other countries more congenial than Western Australia for investment. To us that would be a calamity.

Hon. J. Nicholson: There would be loss of revenue to the State.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Yes. We need all the help we can obtain, both locally and abroad, to develop Western Australia. Somewhat singularly, the Minister admits the need for caution, in spite of the methods and circumstances that enable the Government to run the State Insurance Office advantageously. It has to be borne in mind that the Government carry no reserves at all, and that in the event of any calamity they would have to call on the Consolidated Revenue to make good the losses.

Hon. A. Lovekin: They are already paying managerial costs out of Consolidated Revenue.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Many considerations must be taken into account before one can definitely declare that a profit has resulted from insurance business. The Minister, while admitting the need for caution, says that the object of State competition is to cheapen insurance. However, it

is strange that according to the Auditor General's report the rates ruling among the companies were the rates adopted by the State Insurance Office. On that line of reasoning there seems not much chance of reduction in insurance rates, even though that is claimed to be the objective of the Bill.

Hon. J. Cornell: But the State gets the profit.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: In my opinion the profit shown is problematical, as we have not the complete accounts.

Hon. A. Lovekin: The Auditor General says the State Insurance Office have taken the premiums into account and have not shown the liabilities.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Possibly the trading of the State Insurance Office has not continued long enough to allow of complete information being furnished. In my opinion, having regard to all the circumstances, the State is doing something in the nature of a dishonourable action in entering into competition with the companies. I speak as a commercial man who considers that the effort of private enterprise is worth more to the community than any effort dualised by State intervention. It is more dishonourable when we consider that the Government have exacted from the companies some £600,000, which they hold as deposit and which, it is inferred, they are using as a basis for capital to carry on competition with the insurance companies themselves. The companies, thinking that, feel very strongly about it. They say the State is starting off without capital to do a risky business, and that the companies' money is held at 4½ per cent. interest, and that it is obvious the companies will be in competition with their own money. The Chief Secretary did not quote England as an example of insurance. It is generally admitted that the British insurance companies are on the best basis in the world. They are about the only companies that could again face a disaster like that they met with in the Californian earthquake or in the Japanese earthquake. The Minister did not quote those companies, nor the fact that a Royal Commission was appointed to consider the establishment of State insurance in England, and recommended strongly against it, since the work was already being very well done. I think it is worth citing, that in the country of good insurance a Royal Commission found no case for State insurance. Therefore we, who

model our work and public life upon the British system, should find no case either. Coming to State insurance in Pennsylvania, let me quote this paragraph from the "Montreal Chronicle"—

Some attention has been attracted to the condition of the Pennsylvania State fire insurance fund, which has been almost wiped out through the use of its money for the rehabilitation of State property destroyed in two disastrous fires this spring. On May the 31st the fund is reported to have had a balance in cash and investments of approximately £520,000, and it is understood that it will take in excess of £400,000 to replace the main building at the Morganza training school, and the equipment lost when the State printery was destroyed. Perhaps those who instigated the establishment of the fund now realise that the fire insurance business is not to be depended upon for certainty or stability.

That ought to be recognised by the Government here. Even though they have the Consolidated Revenue, as proposed in Clause 8 of the Bill, to support them, I do not think it right that they should endeavour to establish State insurance on that basis. If they had to call up their own capital, as separate from that of the taxpayers, to do this work, they might not be so ready to rush into the enterprise. Again, the employees of the insurance companies, who should have some consideration at the hands of the Government, are somewhat concerned about this proposal. They have carried a strongly worded resolution in opposition to it, for they realise that the livelihood of many of them is at stake. It has been said that of all the claims made upon the companies, totalling some £60,000, only a very small proportion were contested, and in quite a few of those cases the companies proved to be right. It will be remembered that recently Mr. McKenzie, of the Timber Workers' Union, was shot at by an unfortunate man who lost his own life. In giving evidence before the jury, Mr. McKenzie made the following statement, as reported in the newspapers:—

Witness said that in May, 1924, when he (witness) was secretary of the Pemberton branch of the union, Saunders met with an accident. He advised Saunders not to accept £75, which was offered by the State Saw Mills as compensation until the general secretary (the late Mr. J. B. Holman) had considered the matter. Subsequently he was instrumental in obtaining compensation amounting to £213 3s. In addition the deceased received half pay during the period that he was under the doctor at Pemberton.

This is a Government proposing to institute State insurance in order to give the people

better treatment than the companies have given them. Yet we find they have been taking their own risks in the insurance of the State Sawmills and that, when an injured man was entitled to £213, they offered him only £75.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Then they have State insurance down there.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: Yes, they have a special insurance carrying their own risks. When a man has a claim that is finally settled for £213, they offer him only £75. Either they were trying to get out of paying a just claim or, due to the pressure brought by Mr. McKenzie, they overpaid the claim.

Hon. J. Cornell: Scores of similar cases have been cited against the companies.

Hon. J. M. MACFARLANE: But the Government say they are going to give better service to the people. Yet we find them adopting the premium scale of the companies and adopting also the tactics of those few companies that haggle over a claim. I should like to quote from an address by Mr. Arthur E. Wall, assistant manager of the London and Lancashire Insurance Co. Ltd. This was delivered to the members of the Insurance Institute of London. Mr. Wall, referring to the fact that a Royal Commission had been appointed to investigate the working of insurance companies, remarked that the Commission had reported as follows:—

The rates (determined by Tariff Associations) represent the combined experience of offices connected with the Association, which, in the absence of a complete scheme of classification and tabulation of risks and losses, such as that referred to in Section 24, appears to furnish a fairly satisfactory method of determining a reasonable basis of operations. An objection which is sometimes urged against a tariff association is that it tends to maintain rates at an unduly high level, and that if there were unrestricted competition amongst the offices, the public would benefit. Your Commissioners are of opinion that this view is largely erroneous, and that the supervision of the insurance commissioner, the possibility of injustice arising from agreement amongst the companies as to rates of premium would be negligible.

I think those losses have been overlooked by the Government in introducing the Bill. I am opposed to the principle of any more State enterprises. I am convinced that the case as it stands to-day with the companies does not warrant any interference from the Government. Mr. Potter last night said he would oppose the second reading with regret. I will oppose it without regret.

HON. SIR EDWARD WITTENOOM

(North) [5.41]: I do not propose to attempt to interest the House for as long as my friend has done. Indeed I rise with diffidence, feeling that a great deal of what I might say will be superfluous for the reason that we have heard some very good speeches on this subject, speeches that indicate that the Bill should not pass the second reading. I am not going to take into consideration the question how State insurance will affect the insurance companies. I do not think that should interest us. The question is, should the Government use the funds of the people in order to go into a hazardous enterprise? Is this to be an additional public utility, like railways and other things that it is absolutely necessary the country should run? I do not think the Government should use the funds of the taxpayers upon this enterprise. I am only a poor man, but I had to pay £1,000 into the Taxation Department before I went to Java. Why did the Government use my money for this hazardous business of State insurance? Let me quote two or three clauses of the Bill. Clause 2 reads as follows:—

2. In this Act, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms shall have the meaning set against them respectively, that is to say—"Commissioner" means Insurance Commissioner for Western Australia appointed under this Act. "Insurance" means workers' compensation insurance business as herein defined. "Insured" means the person in whose name a policy is issued, or for whose benefit it enures. "Minister" means the Treasurer, or other Minister of the Crown for the time being charged with the administration of this Act. "Policy" means a policy of insurance covering any insurance risk, including a cover note or other contract in writing covering or purporting to cover or insure against any such risk. "Workers' compensation insurance business" means the insurance of employers against liability in relation to compensation under the Workers' Compensation Act, 1912-1924, the Employers' Liability Act, 1894, or otherwise.

Could we have anything more comprehensive than that? Clause 7 reads as follows—

7. (1.) In respect of insurance business undertaken and carried on by the Commissioner, a fund shall be created under this Act at the Treasury, to be called the "State Government Insurance Fund." (2.) All moneys appropriated by Parliament for the purposes of this Act, and all premiums and other moneys received by the Commissioner, shall be paid into the fund. (3.) All payments in respect of policies, and all expenses and outgoings incurred in carrying on the business of the State Government Insurance Office, shall be payable out of the fund. (4.) The salaries

and allowances of any officers or employees of the public service who are, and so far as they may be, employed for any purpose under this Act shall, if paid out of the Consolidated Revenue, be recouped from the fund.

What right have they to take my money and put it into a hazardous business like insurance?

Hon. W. H. Kitson: They have not used any of your money yet.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: And I will take good care that they do not, if I can stop them. Clause 8 is the most dangerous of the lot. It reads as follows:—

8. (1.) Every policy issued by the Commissioner under this Act shall be issued on behalf of, and is hereby guaranteed by, the Government of the State. (2.) Such sum as the Treasurer may at any time certify to be required to secure any payment under and pursuant to a policy issued by the Commissioner under this Act, so far as the same cannot be paid out of the fund, is hereby appropriated out of the Consolidated Revenue.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: That is a better guarantee than you get from a private company.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Is it fair to take my £1,000 and use it for insurance business?

Hon. A. Lovekin: You have not the right to have £1,000.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: We shall not discuss that. Subclause 3 of Clause 8 reads—

Any sum so appropriated shall be deemed to be an advance to the fund, and shall remain a charge thereon to be recouped when moneys are available.

It is obvious that this is not a public utility. Were it a public utility such as railways, telegraphs, or lighthouses, there might be some justification for it.

Hon. E. H. Gray: There are no profits in lighthouses.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: The hon. member is unfortunate in having referred to profits because the Government have never known of a profit from trading concerns. There is some excuse for providing public utilities and I think we all agree to excuse them, but this is not a public utility and it is not necessary. Were I to enter into details I could point out that the State Insurance Office pays no taxes and no rent, and should be able to quote low rates because it has no expenses to pay, and it will use the funds of Consolidated Revenue if anything goes wrong. The Bill seeks to ratify illegal contracts, contracts that were made in de-

fiance of the decision of Parliament last year. Suppose the Government did embark on the insurance business and a thousand acres of wheat insured in the Government office were burnt. It is quite easy for a thousand acres of wheat to be burnt when a big fire sweeps across the country. Where would the money be found with which to pay the claim? How many premiums would be required to make up that amount? The money would have to come out of Consolidated Revenue.

Hon. H. Stewart: The Government office would reinsure with an industrial insurance company.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Perhaps so. A thousand acres of wheat can easily be burnt in a big fire.

Hon. V. Hamersley: They set fire to crops themselves.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Who, the farmers?

Hon. V. Hamersley: The trains.

Hon. H. Stewart: Locomotives are often responsible for starting fires.

Hon. Sir EDWARD WITTENOOM: Apart from the Government Insurance Office using the funds of the country for nothing, whenever there was any trouble with a client, the officials would employ the Crown Law Officers, whom they would not have to pay. If I had a dispute with them I should have to pay my lawyer, Mr. Nicholson, probably 10 guineas an hour, for his assistance and advice. But what do the Government do? They get one of the Crown Law officers to do the work for nothing. I do not intend to discuss workers' compensation because I do not understand it; I prefer to deal with matters that I do understand. I hope the Bill will be thrown out on the second reading and I for one shall vote against it.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.50]: I rise to say I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill and to give my reasons briefly for so doing. I claim it is not the province of the Government to embark on insurance business. The province of the Government is to maintain law and order principally and to attend to the health and education of the people.

Hon. J. Nicholson: And introduce wise legislation.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes. Insurance companies doing business in this State, we admit, are not here for the good of their health. They are here to make a profit and I am pleased to learn from the figures quoted

by Mr. Macfarlane that the State Insurance company is fighting illegitimate claims and offering about one-third of the amount that the claimants can prove they are justly entitled to.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is business, is it not?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I want the House clearly to understand my views. If we throw out this Bill, we must hold up the Appropriation Bill until we get a definite promise from the Government that they will vacate the field of insurance.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Is that a threat?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There is no threat about it; it is the only logical conclusion to defeating the Bill, and it is the position I am prepared to face. On one occasion I did try to face it, when a Nationalist Government were in power, but the Appropriation Bill on that occasion was passed on the casting vote of the President. If Parliament says that State insurance shall not be carried on and the Government, in defiance of Parliament, engage in the business, the only logical thing for us to do is to hold up the Appropriation Bill until the Government agree to vacate the field of insurance, and I am prepared to do it. State insurance is State trading, and we have fixed by Act of Parliament the conditions governing State trading concerns. We have laid down what is a State trading concern and we have fixed the amount of capital for them, and Parliament has declared that there shall be no increase either of State trading concerns or of capital without the consent of Parliament. The Auditor General in his report of 1925 said—

The State Trading Concerns Act provides that when the revenue receipts are insufficient to meet the working expenses during the financial year, the deficiency shall be provided by Parliamentary appropriation, but that is not done. It is paid out of the Treasurer's Advance.

In other words, when the revenue of State trading concerns is not sufficient to meet the expenditure, Parliament should be consulted and asked to vote the money. But that is not done. The Auditor General's report for the year ended the 30th June, 1927, points out that £568,000 of trust funds have been advanced to trading concerns. That has been done without the consent of Parliament. The question arises whether Parliament is satisfied to give decisions and have the Government defy

them. If the Government are going to defy the decisions of Parliament, surely there is only one course open to us and that is to hold up the Appropriation Bill! Now let us consider the question of profits made. State insurance has been carried on during the past year, as the Auditor General points out, without legislative authority. It is carried on under a minute of the Governor issued in Executive Council. The minute was put up to the Governor, who signed it, and that is considered by the Government to be sufficient authority for all requirements. The Auditor General says it is not sufficient, but that legislation should be passed.

Hon. H. Stewart: If you have the Auditor General's report for the previous year, read out the minute.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The minute reads—

Towards the close of the year a State Insurance Office was established. The minute of the Governor dealing with the matter reads as follows:—

Authorise the Government Actuary to undertake on behalf of the State Government the insurance of employers against liability under the Workers' Compensation Act, 1912-24, the Employers' Liability Act, 1894, and at common law, at such premiums and on such considerations as, with the approval of the Minister for Labour, the Government Actuary may determine, and to issue cover notes and policies.

Authorise the Government Actuary to employ clerks of Local Courts and of petty sessions, and A. E. Jensen, of Kalgoorlie, as local agents, etc.

Hon. H. Stewart: I asked you to read it because there is provision in the minute of the previous year for forms of insurance in addition to workers' compensation. You have not yet come to that part.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Then I shall read the rest—

Authorise the issue, to employers engaged in mining in those parts of the State to which liability to compensate for pneumoconiosis, miners' phthisis, ankylostomiasis, and nystagmus has been extended by proclamation, and who may already hold current policies obtained prior to that proclamation, of policies limited for an apportioned period to liability for such diseases at the premium at the rate of £4 10s. per cent. per annum for such apportioned period, and at the full premium covering all risks for the remainder of the term of the policy.

Indemnify the Government Actuary against personal liability to the insured in respect of cover notes and policies.

Hon. H. Stewart: Is that the end of it?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Yes.

Hon. H. Stewart: There is no authority in that.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Parliament is the authority to set up State insurance and not the Executive Council or some other body.

Hon. H. Stewart: One report of the Auditor General points out that while the State office is still operating under that minute, it is also doing ordinary insurance.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I find that the State has been carrying on workers' compensation insurance for some years. On the 1st July, 1925, there was a balance in hand of £46,400. By July, 1926, that balance had dwindled to £27,000, and by July, 1927, it was down to £19,000. There was a drift on, and the drift is increasing. In another year, without any allowance for administrative expenses and so on, instead of a profit there will be a loss, and the loss will become a debit against Consolidated Revenue fund in addition to all their other expenditure. On this small fund alone the Government went back £8,000 last year.

Hon. H. Seddon: Are they not increasing the rates now?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Judging from the figures they are increasing the rates. Reference has been made to the profit from other insurances the Government are carrying on. The Auditor General points out that he is not dealing with details, but with the figures before him, and the claims that have been made, and not with all the other claims that have come in. On safe insurance business like departmental insurances, the Government have drifted at the rate of anything from £10,000 to £15,000 a year. They want to go only another year, and instead of having a credit on the account they will have a debit. If they cannot control the small insurances, to which no outside risk is attached and for which no agents have to be employed, and make a profit, they have no hope of making a profit on mining insurance, which is considered the most risky business of all. But this is a minor matter. Parliament should decide what has to be, and what has not to be a trading concern. Parliament should control the funds to be invested in these enterprises, but the decisions of Parliament have been set at defiance. The only solution of the difficulty

I can find is to do as we have done in the past, hold up the Appropriation Bill until we get a promise that the will of Parliament shall be obeyed. There is the other issue of the Government embarking upon a State trading concern, in competition with people who pay rates and taxes, income tax and all kinds of imposts to the State. It is the duty of the Government to confine themselves to certain avenues, and not dabble in trading concerns of this description. After considering everything, from all points of view, I am forced to the conclusion that I must vote against the second reading of this Bill.

HON. H. A. STEPHENSON (Metropolitan-Suburban) [6.5]: Last session when a Bill such as this was brought down I strongly opposed it, and dealt at great length with arguments against it. Those arguments hold good to-day, but I am not going to weary the House by repeating many of them. It is well known by every member of the House and by every business man outside it that I am strongly opposed to State trading. I have opposed it for many years. The older I get and the more I see of State trading, the stronger I feel against it. It is the duty of the Government to govern and not to trade, especially in Western Australia where there is so much to do and so little done. The State is crying out for development, for roads, bridges, railways and harbour improvements. These are the things we expect Governments to undertake. We do not want them to dabble in such things as State trading concerns, which have already been carried on for many years. It is about 200 years since the insurance system was established in the Old Country. From that time on it has been improved upon until to-day it is a very scientific business. It has been carried out on lines that stand as a great credit to the ability of the British people. The system has been continuously carried on ever since. The various companies which have been associated with the business have from time to time made profits, but these profits have been carefully husbanded and have been reserved for a rainy day. What a Godsend it was that these profits were reserved and built up when we had the last war! These moneys were available for the Government, and proved of great assistance to them. State insurance interferes with private individualism, that which builds up the State. The more it is restricted the less independent

and virile the State becomes, with ill consequences to its well being and prosperity. General insurance is the essence of trade and commerce, which in turn are the backbone and the lifeblood of the British Empire. It is only right and proper that private enterprise should be allowed to carry on this business, especially as it has been built up to the stage of perfection it has now reached. In his second reading speech the Chief Secretary said the country was in favour of State insurance. I have the honour to represent a province containing over 21,000 electors. Out of that vast number not one person has told me that he is in favour of State insurance or is at all anxious for it. The Minister also said that the Legislative Council last year endorsed the principle. That is incorrect. The Council agreed to allow the Government to cover mining companies by allowing the illegally constituted State office to transact such business as related to the compensation of employees engaged in mining, quarrying, and stone-cutting, or any of the State trading concerns. This was to operate only for 12 months to enable the Government to put their house in order. A clause was inserted in the Bill reading—

This Act shall remain in force until the 31st December, 1927, and no longer.

The Council did not endorse the principle of State insurance. It merely gave the Government such assistance as would enable them to get out of a very difficult position. The Government declined to accept the amendment we made to the Bill, and they now bring down this comprehensive measure. I stated last session that that Bill was only the thin edge of the wedge. It was brought down with the intention of assisting miners under the Miners' Phthisis Act, because the Government said they were in a very awkward position and that the insurance companies had refused to take that class of business, and that therefore the Government had no alternative but to insure the men themselves. I said then that if the Bill were passed it would be only the thin end of the wedge, and that immediately the Government got that far they would endeavour to enlarge the scope of their operations and take on general insurance. The Bill before us is proof of the correctness of my prognostication. The Chief Secretary stated that the Government could provide cheaper insurances than could private companies. Previous speakers have pointed out that this is almost an impossibility. The statement

is not borne out by the facts. If the Government can conduct their insurance business so cheaply, how is it that private companies cannot conduct their business on a cheaper basis? We have State brickworks but we are not getting cheaper bricks.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: And the Government have not brought down the price of beer.

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: They are no cheaper than before the State went into the business.

Hon. E. H. Gray: It is a good thing we have State brickworks.

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: The hon. member may know something about baking, but he knows nothing about bricks. The State timber mills were showing a loss soon after they started. The only way the Government could make them pay was to co-operate with the private timber companies and to-day they are having a good time. They have come together and fixed the price of timber so that the State concern now shows a decent profit.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: And it has no taxes to pay.

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: That is so.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: Before the tea adjournment I was replying to certain statements made by the Chief Secretary in which he said that the Government would be able to provide the public with cheaper insurance. How can that be possible in the face of the figures quoted by previous speakers? Those figures are authentic; they are not fictitious as some people seem to imagine. They are taken from accounts that have been audited and have been passed as correct. They show that the ratio is 99.8 per cent. against premiums earned. I am sorry I have to stress these figures again, but I think it is absolutely necessary, because some members may not have regarded them as seriously as they should. The experience of the private companies during the past two years in connection with workers' compensation business shows that the premiums earned amounted to £250,247 against which claims were paid amounting to £197,708, which is equal to 78.6 per cent. In addition to that, there was £53,257, equal to 21.2 per cent., paid for medical and ambulance fees. These two amounts total £249,765, which works out at a ratio of 99.8 per cent. It

must be remembered in addition, that the private companies have to add £2 6s. per cent. to each premium as the dividend duty payable to the Government on gross revenue. That works out at over 100 per cent. cost to get the business. How is it possible under those conditions for the Government to do the business at a lower price, especially when we know that the Government office has not been established for any appreciable length of time. The State officers have had practically no experience and, to my mind, it is like asking a raw apprentice to do a journeyman's job when we ask the State Insurance Office to bring about a reduction upon the figures that have been quoted during the course of the debate. There are many people who seem to think that all companies, whether insurance or of some other description, must be wealthy and must be making a lot of money out of the public. Quite a number of the private insurance companies have made investments with their capital and that goes to show that business acumen and ability has enabled them to place their spare capital to advantage, thus rendering it possible for them to pay dividends and build up reserves as well. The Minister quoted figures from many parts of the world in his endeavour to prove that it was absolutely necessary for the Government to conduct a State insurance office. He travelled from Victoria to New South Wales, thence to Queensland and New Zealand, and finally to America. In not one single instance has he been able to prove that State insurance has been necessary to benefit the people mentioned by him. On the contrary, he proved conclusively to my mind that where State insurance has been put into operation, it has not been successful in the ordinary sense of the word, notwithstanding the privileges it enjoyed by not having to pay rent, taxes or other charges that have to be borne by private companies. I want to know what Great Britain has to show. What has the Old Country done? I noticed that the Chief Secretary passed the Motherland by. He went to America and to New Zealand, but he ignored the Old Country where the insurance business sprang originally from private enterprise and individualism. Do we look to the Mother Country or to America for guidance in matters of national policy? Where are the insurance offices strongest and most stable? They are in England, not in America. In the latter country they have tried such experimental

and fantastic legislation. I have an address delivered before the South Australian Parliament on the Insurance Bill in 1924. It is a speech by Mr. S. T. Rutter and in the course of it he remarks that State insurance is unnecessary and undesirable. I will not quote much from his speech, but in referring to the financial aspect he said that the insurance business required a large amount of capital to enable it to be carried on successfully and to be in a position to meet losses should they occur. It has to be remembered that those losses occur very often when they are least expected. Referring to the South Australian Government, Mr. Rutter said—

Since the Government possesses unlimited powers of taxation, it is perhaps hardly worth while raising the question of the provision of adequate capital which will be raised should a State department be opened in South Australia. But if such is to be the case, and the capital is to be adequate, it will have to be a large sum, and one can only hope that the taxpayer who puts up the money will be satisfied that his wherewithal is being used for a necessary activity.

I think these remarks aptly apply to the position in this State. He goes on to say—

The United States of America has been the scene of many State insurance experiments, some fantastic and doomed from the inception to disaster, some struggling along for years without producing any of the wonderful results hoped for, and as a result of the generally unsatisfactory position much publicity has been given to the question.

Mr. Rutter proceeded to give the views of certain Americans. In the course of his speech he said—

I give hereunder a few of the opinions of some of the more prominent men who have spoken, and in no case has the State department, with which it may be noted the speaker has been in practical touch, any support. Mr. F. W. Mansfield, Counsel for the American Federation of Labour, is on record to have said:—"In my position I come into touch with labouring men generally. From my acquaintance with the entire subject I am satisfied with the present system of competitive insurance, and I am very strongly of the opinion that anything in the nature of State insurance is opposed to the interests of organised labour and against the better interests of the working classes generally." Samuel Gompers, President of the American Labour Federation:—"So far as I am concerned, I have believed in voluntary systems of insurance. I do not believe that the Government of a country should be absolved from performing its customary functions, but I do believe that what 'he citizen could do of his own initiative should be done by him.'" T. H. McGregor of the Texas Industrial Board:—"I

regard the principle underlying State insurance is wrong theoretically, practically, and politically, and as indefensible economically, when considered as a function of the Government. Insurance is both a technical and scientific business, and challenges skill, energy, knowledge, and efficiency not found as a rule in the public service."

Those remarks are by representatives of labour in America. Mr. Rutter goes on to say—

Many more condemnatory utterances by prominent men could be quoted, but one must stop somewhere. I should like, however, to draw attention to the findings of the Royal Commission which, appointed by the Commonwealth Government some years back, went exhaustively into the question of national insurance, and, after careful deliberation and exhaustive and detailed examination of both the methods employed, the charges made, and the results obtained by the insurance companies operating in Australia, was fully satisfied that the business could be safely left in their hands, and that there was nothing to be gained for the public by the Government entering in the business.

The position in the Old Country and in Australia to-day is practically the same as when those commissions were appointed and their reports were presented. The Minister further referred to the Victorian State Office which was established to do workers' compensation business only. The total revenue for that business last year was £353,450, and of that the State office did £74,798 worth. One third was for Government business, namely, £24,933. If we add to this the insurance of all shire councils, road boards, Government contractors and such other business that the State Government can command, and which cost the State office nothing to secure, it can readily be seen that there is very little business done by the Victorian State Office. Seeing that the premiums paid to the State office come out of Consolidated Revenue, it follows that the cost of collection is small; also that the business of private insurers who elect to do their business with the State office comes from the whole of the taxpayers and is distributed amongst a few, although practically everyone subscribes. That makes it impossible to arrive at the actual cost of conducting the Victorian State office. With regard to Queensland, that State office has a monopoly of workers' compensation business, and the rates have been kept so high that the State office has been able to transfer £130,000 to meet claims under the miners' diseases section of the Workers' Compensation Act. It will be seen that they made the rates so high on the workers' compensation

business that they were able to transfer that £130,000. This means that employers, other than the mine owners, are paying claims which the mining industry creates. A similar proposal to that was made to the associated companies in Western Australia.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Who made that proposal?

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: I think the hon. member can guess without my telling him. It was put up to the insurance companies at the time negotiations were carried on with regard to premiums to be paid in connection with miners' diseases. The proposal was put up that the general workers' compensation insurance rates should be increased to cover any deficit on the miners' diseases section, but to this the companies could not agree. This, of course, is not insurance, it is taxing a class of industry to pay for another class.

Hon. E. H. Harris: If it was paid out of Consolidated Revenue, all classes would contribute.

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: I agree with that. With regard to New Zealand, the Minister said that the State life office came into existence in 1896. Various hon. members have dealt with life insurance business of New Zealand, and I should like to say in that regard that although it has been established such a long time and has had various advantages over the private companies, the figures show it is gradually slipping back. New Zealand fire and accident business was missed by some of the speakers. On referring to a list I have here I find that in 1915 the State office proportion of accident premiums was 6.9, but at the end of 1924, nine years later, it had dropped to 4.6. Fancy that! What a wonderful business this must be when in nine years it drops from 6.9 which, goodness knows, is low enough, to 4.6! I am quoting these figures to show what the Minister has proved by going all round the compass to demonstrate how necessary it is to establish a State insurance office in Western Australia. Between the years 1916 and 1924 the State office's proportion of fire premiums to the whole of the fire premiums of the Dominion was 8.5, and at the end of 1924 it had just reached 9 per cent. In those years the whole of the premiums of the Dominion had increased by 51 per cent., and in spite of that, the State office increase was less than 1 per cent. The Premier has been reported to have quoted an extract from the New Zealand Year Book of 1926 wherein it was claimed that owing to the reduction of rates,

together with the institution of the rebate system, the insurance public of New Zealand had been saved at least £4,000,000 in 20 years. It is very easy to make a statement of that description, but it is another thing to prove it. So far as I am aware, nothing has been brought forward to prove that assertion. In all probability the private insurance companies of New Zealand would have reduced their rates whether there was a State insurance office or not. We all know that during the last ten or 15 years there has been a great alteration in the appliances for fire fighting, such as improved machinery and sprinklers, and the erection of a different class of building. The insurance companies pay a large amount towards the upkeep of fire brigades. I think their share is something in the vicinity of 50 per cent. So it will be seen that they do a great deal in that direction. In Western Australia during the last 18 years the private companies have saved the insuring public a very large amount. Proportionately, it has been quite as much as can be claimed for New Zealand. The insurance companies in Western Australia have done that without any opposition from a State Insurance office. In 1909 the fire insurance rate on crops was 30s. per cent. for two months. Since 1925 it has been 17s. 6d., a reduction of over 40 per cent., and on last year's crop there was a saving to the farmers of over £30,000 as compared with 1909. Of course, the reduction did not take place two years ago. It has been gradual since 1909 as the volume of business has increased. In addition to that, during the last 18 years the rates in 13 country towns have been reduced. Brick dwellings, offices and churches have been reduced 17 per cent. already, and on iron buildings 21 per cent. On trade risks—shops and the like—the reduction has been 20 per cent., and on iron buildings 11 per cent.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Do you think that such an assertion as the Premier is alleged to have made can be of value unless all the towns in New Zealand are in a similar state of development as the towns here?

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: No, it cuts no ice at all.

Hon. J. Cornell: Do the reductions you have quoted apply to the towns of Kalgoorlie and Boulder?

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: In the suburbs of Perth and Fremantle there have been reductions on brick dwellings, offices churches, etc., to the extent of 33 per cent.

On wood buildings, offices and churches 28 per cent., on trade risks—shops and the like—25 per cent., on brick, wood and iron buildings 22 per cent. All this has been done without any opposition from the State office. The Chief Secretary also referred to what had been done in New South Wales. It was unwise for the Minister to refer to anything in that State. Everyone knows that trade and commerce there are in a state of chaos, and that it will take years to straighten things out owing to faulty and misguided legislation. In 1924 the then Treasurer of New South Wales, after careful investigation, stated that no less than seven millions of money had been squandered by indulging in socialistic fads. I think I am safe in saying that since 1924 three or four millions have been added. That, in my opinion, is quite sufficient money to give State insurance a trial; and it is time we called a halt. The Minister has stated that the office has been able to meet all legitimate claims made on it, and to provide reserves to meet outstanding claims, and yet to complete the year showing a profit. That profit is shown, such as it is, at the expense of the Consolidated Revenue. No tax has been paid by the State Insurance Office. The insurance companies would have been called upon to pay dividend duty on the whole of the premium income received by the State Insurance Office, whether any profit was shown or not. In any case, one year is not sufficient time to enable one to decide definitely as to the results of the business. It takes years and years to build up the insurance business and work out the rates and the financial basis; and therefore it is impossible for newcomers—I use the term advisedly—to arrive at anything like a reasonable estimate of the position. The Minister also referred to the Industries Assistance Board business. The year before the State Insurance Office did the Industries Assistance Board business, the companies received from the board £15,429 in premiums for hail insurance of assisted settlers' crops, and they paid away in the same year to the Industries Assistance Board, on account of losses in that insurance £15,906—having received only £15,429 in premiums. It must also be remembered that the State called upon the companies to pay £2 6s. on every £100 of premium received. Notwithstanding that they made a loss, paying away more than they received, they were compelled by the State to pay £2 6s. on every £100 of premium income. In the face

of those figures, how on earth can the Government claim that they do the business more cheaply than the private companies? It is further stated that the State Insurance Office shows a profit of about £1,400. Is not that a wonderful result for the year after the office has been placed in such a position, paying no rates or taxes, and paying no lawyers' fees although having had a large number of cases to contest? I regret to say experience enables me to state that legal expenses have a way of totting up at such a rate that one loses sight of them. Only yesterday there was a case in which the plaintiff claimed £600 and was allowed £250, whilst the law costs ran into more than the amount allowed to the man. In that case over £250 went into the pockets of our learned friends. Any ordinary business man will understand what would have become of the £1,400 profit if the Government had had to pay away £2 6s. on every £100 of premium received, and this over a sum of £52,000. In that case, where would the profit have been? The trouble is that although £1,400 is shown as profit, no living soul to-day can say that that is a true statement. The Auditor General's report declares that at the time the accounts were audited they were not complete, and that all the auditor could do was to deal with the cash account. Every business man, even every man in the street, knows that a true position cannot be arrived at by that manner of balancing accounts.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And what about the claims that are coming in every day?

Hon. H. A. STEPHENSON: That is so. The Auditor General's statement reminds me strongly of many such statements seen by me during my 40 years in business. They are generally made by a business man who is riding for a fall, and who sooner or later comes down. First he goes round among the merchants and buys as many goods as he possibly can on the longest terms he is able to obtain, and next day he sells those goods for cash at less than cost, puts the cash in the bank, and believes himself to be sailing along all right. He is all right as long as he can keep going, but unfortunately it generally happens that if he gets over the first obstacle he comes down at the second, and then the true position is disclosed. It generally means that the creditors are left in the lurch. In this case the creditors will be the taxpayers of Western Australia. I wish to state decidedly that I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [8.10]: By this Bill we are asked once more to vest the Government with authority to embark upon the enterprise of insurance. Some 12 months ago we debated the question, and the principles of State insurance, at length, the second reading of the Bill being carried by a small majority and the measure being subsequently amended in Committee. I was one of those who voted for the second reading. Having listened to to-day's debate, I would like to draw hon. members' attention to some of their former actions here, when we were dealing with a measure amending the Workers' Compensation Act—I refer to the amending Bill of 1924. Hon. members may recall that in that measure we provided that insurance of the worker in certain callings should be obligatory upon the employer, who had to take out an insurance policy for the full amount of his liability to pay compensation to those whom he employed. Section 11 of the Amendment Act of 1924 provides for penalties, which I propose to quote—

Any employer who fails to comply with this section shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £5 in respect to each uninsured worker employed by him, and after the date of conviction for a contravention of this section he shall from time to time be liable to further penalties not exceeding £20 for every week during which he fails to comply with this section.

Both Houses of Parliament passed that amending measure, which made it obligatory upon the employer in certain vocations to insure his employees. Various members have stated that they will not vote for the second reading of the present Bill. The operation of the Bill of 1926 was restricted by this Chamber to workers' compensation. The point I want to impress upon hon. members opposing the Bill is that the Act in question still remains on the statute-book. What is the effect going to be if the private companies will not quote for this class of business and we will not allow the Government to transact it?

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: Let the Government pull out, and you will find the companies will quote.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The companies said they could not quote previously because the Government would not supply certain necessary information.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: They have not got that information now.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Then it is logical to say that they will not quote for the bus-

iness at all. The result will be that the employer will refuse to employ men unless he can get cover from the State or the Government. Now, 5,500 men are working in the mining industry, and if they cannot be insured the mines will close, and some of those mines, if they close, will not re-open in a hurry. At present the Government are paying premiums in respect of miners to the State Insurance Office. I do not know the intentions of the Government. My idea is to preserve the continuity of the mining industry, whoever pays the premium.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: But losses will come out of the pockets of the taxpayers.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I draw attention to the circumstance that the rejection of the Bill may mean the closing down of the mining industry. The Government have pointed out that the private companies will not quote. The Government may say, "We asked Parliament for authority to insure, and we did not secure it. Then we proposed the Bill a second time, and authority was once more refused." Thereupon the Government may decide to close the State Insurance Office, and the companies may still refuse to accept the liability imposed upon them by the Act? Let us say, for the sake of argument, that members of this Chamber retiring next May by effluxion of time were faced with a law which provided that a candidate had to possess a medical certificate of good health before being allowed to nominate, and suppose the medical fraternity refused to examine candidates? Would members take that lying down, or would they say to the Government, "Bring along your State doctor. I am not going to be pushed aside because private enterprise would not examine me"? They would demand that the State came to the rescue in order that they could nominate for their seats.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: Did the State go to the rescue of these men?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: They have done so to some extent. Some members have advocated that the liability of years past should be carried by the Government. Then another member pointed out that the Government ought not to use his money for that purpose. I say that if Consolidated Revenue is going to be committed it will extract something out of everybody's pocket. It has been said that of the 66 companies operating in Western Australia 65 are foreign. The Chief Secretary told us that there was only one local company. I understand

that when the State effects insurance it distributes some of it, as other firms do. I should like to know whether the State hands over all the business to the local company or whether it distributes it amongst the foreign companies as well.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: Are British companies foreign companies?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No, but I say they have been designated as foreign companies. I want to know whether the Government, when distributing their insurance business, give preference to the local company or to those that are not local?

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Are not all the mining companies more or less foreign companies?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Some of them are, but quite a number are Western Australian companies. In 1926, when the Government introduced the original Bill they said, "We are reluctantly compelled to introduce this measure to protect the unfortunate miners afflicted with the dread diseases of miners' phthisis and silicosis." The goldfields representatives then urged members of this House to pass the Bill, and members yielded to the appeal made to them. We had a very narrow majority. We voted for it believing that the Government were going to redeem their promise to safeguard the men working in the industry. The mine employees, believing the same thing, were elated. But what did the Government do? Here we had a Bill passed by Parliament following on the plea made that we should protect the unfortunate men suffering from phthisis. The Government have the business of insurance restricted to cover that class of risk. But they did not put it into operation. They dropped the Bill, which almost leads one to believe that they were going to make it the sport of party politics and make political capital out of it and out of the misfortunes of the men. They had a chance to protect them, but they dropped the Bill.

Hon. J. Cornell: They dropped the Bill when the workers' compensation business was taken out of it—rightly, too, I think.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I have here a circular issued by the Labour Party immediately before the last election. It has relation to workers' compensation and State insurance. In it, among other things, we read the following—

The men who have been unfortunate enough to contract the dread disease are now comforted by the knowledge that the Government does not intend to throw them on the scrap-heap of industry.

That was prior to the election, but after we had passed the Bill to give the worker the protection that we said he richly deserved. The circular continues—

The Government's humane law aims at restoring them to health and strength, and grants them financial help when most needed It is more economical, because no canvassers are needed.

In the schedule of the Bill before us, provision is made for the insurance officer to employ agents and pay them commission. Furthermore, to say that no canvassers are needed is contrary to the Government's policy, frequently put forward by the Labour Party, because, of course, the employment of canvassers will provide more work. The next point claimed in this circular for State insurance is that it gives greater benefits because the cost of administration is much less. But members know that the benefits are provided by the State. It does not matter twopence what the cost of administration may be, or whether they get it from State insurance or from private enterprise, since the amount of money the men are going to get is fixed. Another point claimed in this circular for State insurance is that it does not wrangle with claimants before paying over compensation that is due. But Mr. Baxter quoted some extracts here the other day, and Mr. Macfarlane quoted some this afternoon, and I have some here that I do not propose to quote beyond two or three lines. Let me quote this from an article in the "Worker"—

The Workers' Compensation Act has conferred a deal of benefit on maimed and incapacitated industrialists, but its incidence, particularly regarding its third schedule is surrounded by so many defences that claimants incapacitated by disease may well be said to be faced with difficulties that in all but exceptional cases are high insurmountable.

That is the considered opinion of the secretary of the A.W.U. It emphasises the point that it is difficult to establish claims. In a later part of the same article we read this—

Under the Crown Solicitor's ruling a man may be incapacitated by, say, toxemia, and also by silicosis, but as he is incapacitated by the former he is debarred from compensation, and his incapacity through the latter is ignored.

The unions have been fighting the case to such an extent that they induced the Premier and the Minister for Mines to proceed to the goldfields last week-end, when the case was laid before them. Naturally when

there is trouble with the department the case is submitted to the Crown Law authority.

Hon. H. A. Stephenson: They get their law for nothing.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: That does not get away from my point, namely, that the circular issued during the election declared that the Government did not intend to desert the afflicted miners. Yet here we have the union's secretary appealing to the Government to consider the claims of those men.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Owing to the conversation going on round the House it is impossible for either me or the "Hansard" reporter to hear the hon member addressing the House.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: On the hustings at the general election that phase of the question was exploited to its utmost limits. These unfortunate men affected by T.B. do not come under the scheme. They had already had one experience of a Labour Government endeavouring to pass them off on 25s. per week, instead of the standard rate of wages, which subsequently had to be provided out of the Treasurer's advance. Those men are still in the position they were in formerly. There is no guarantee of any continuity. They are like the railway employees, who number many thousands. The men receiving long service leave are entitled to get it so long as the Government of the day remain in power, but there is no legislation providing for any continuity. In the same election circular we read this—

In 1921, when a National Government was in office in Western Australia, the following motion was debated in the Legislative Assembly, and was carried by six votes:—"That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that the Government should immediately do all things necessary to establish a State life, accident, sickness, fire, and general insurance office.

That is in conformity with item 5 of the fighting platform of the Australian Labour Party. I presume the object of the Government is not to limit its compensation as it was limited in this House a year ago, but to extend the sphere of State insurance. The Government in that circular said also—

The National Government refused to carry out the direction of the Assembly. The Collier Government asks for a mandate on this great question.

An hon. member this afternoon pointed out that the Government had not asked for it. The hon. member who made that speech does not live in an indus-

trial district where dray loads of the circulars are distributed and everyone is appealed to for his vote in order to give the Government a mandate. I do not think they got a mandate from the people to submit the Bill, but notwithstanding what the Government have done or have failed to do regarding the further protection of the men, I cannot ignore the attitude of the insurance companies, who deliberately refused—they were quite within their rights in doing so—to quote a line of business that they probably thought was no good to them. Having by an Act of Parliament provided that it was obligatory on the employer to insure, either the mines had to close down, that section of the Compensation Act had to be repealed, or the Government had to go to the rescue. I regret very much they did not accept the Bill as this House amended it 12 months ago.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I would have been wise if they had accepted it.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: My only regret on this occasion is that some of the members who voted for the Bill on the previous occasion have definitely said that they will not vote for it this time. I will vote for the second reading, but I am not in favour of giving the Government an opportunity to launch out into general insurance. Should the Bill pass the second reading, I shall move an amendment to provide that the Government shall not launch into general insurance as indicated by the scope of the Bill before us, or if someone else moves an amendment to that effect I shall support it. I intend to vote for the second reading.

On motion by Hon. H. Seddon, debate adjourned.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1. University Endowment Act Amendment.
2. Meekatharra-Wiluna Railway.
3. Constitution Act Amendment (No. 2),
Received from the Assembly.

BILL—EMPLOYMENT BROKERS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Amendment withdrawn.

Debate resumed from 23rd November, on the motion for the second reading and on the amendment by the Hon. Sir Edward

Wittenoom, "That the word 'now' be struck out and the words 'this day six months' added."

HON. W. H. KITSON (West) [8.36]: I hope the amendment will not be carried.

Hon. A. Lovekin: I understand it is to be withdrawn.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: I am pleased to hear that, because I regard the Bill as being of far greater importance than some members evidently do. Some members have treated it with a certain amount of levity that certainly is not deserved. The measure touches on a subject that has been receiving consideration throughout the civilised world for several years, and on more than one occasion has been discussed at the International Labour Conference at Geneva. That conference, in dealing with the question, came to the conclusion that all private labour offices should be abolished and that it was the function of the State to conduct labour bureaux. The Bill does not provide for the abolition of private registry offices, but it contains provisions for the more effective control of such establishments. One clause deals with the fees to be charged. I am surprised that such a large number of members are prepared to say that the worker should pay for the services rendered, rather than the employer.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: You do not exempt the employer.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: At present, unfortunately, the employer is exempted only too often. I remind members there are many instances on the departmental files showing that workers have been misled. They have paid fees for engagements and the positions have not proved to be what was represented to them, and they have not lasted longer than a week or two. On some occasions men have secured positions through labour offices and have derived a benefit equal to not much more than 50 per cent. of the actual wages, because of the extortionate fees demanded by some of the offices.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: May I rise on a point of explanation, Mr. President? I wish to withdraw the amendment.

The PRESIDENT: If it is the wish of the House, the hon. member may withdraw the amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: I know from personal experience extending over a good many years that quite a large number of workers have had to pay considerable sums during the course of the year for the employment they received.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Could not they hold their jobs down? It seems not if they had to get so many different positions.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: Many of the positions obtained through private offices and also through the State Labour Bureau are seasonal occupations. Sometimes a job could not possibly last longer than three or four months; sometimes it does not last longer than two or three weeks. That cannot be helped. It arises from the fact that we rely largely on primary industries for much employment, but unfortunately the wages paid to the workers are not sufficient to leave them a margin. When I was acting secretary of the Trades Hall men passed through my hands who were desirous of securing positions and were denied an opportunity to take them because they had not the money with which to pay the fees of the employment broker. That is not fair. Scores of times I have advanced money, money of my own and of the organisation, so that men could accept positions that were offering. I have come across numerous instances where the work was not what it was represented to be, and where the duration of the job was not what the workers were led to believe it would be.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The men are not always what they represent themselves to be.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: Often after paying their travelling expenses, they have nothing left for themselves. One might say that that is incidental to their calling. Perhaps so, but if anyone has to pay for the services rendered in bringing employees into touch with employers, surely it should be the employers who desire the labour and not the labourer who desires the work. I have stated that there are scores of instances in which the employers have been exempted from payment. Only to-day a case was heard in the Fremantle court. An employment broker was proceeded against for having charged a man nine times and for not having charged the employer at all. It is an interesting case that throws light on the attitude of some employment brokers. I wish it to be understood that I do

not class all employment brokers in the same category.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I hope you will tell us something of the employees before you finish. Give us that side, too!

Hon. W. H. KITSON: Yes, I can do that. An employment broker at Fremantle was charged with having carried on business in a district not covered by his license, and with having charged a fee to an employee and not charged a similar fee to the employer. The evidence showed that the employment broker had charged the man a fee nine times, but had subsequently refunded the money when pressure was brought to bear upon him by Inspector Cooke. The defendant said that all Crofts did was to forward the details of the contract, and he, the defendant, engaged the man. The charge was proved, and a fine of 10s. was imposed with £10 11s. 10d. costs. On the second charge, that of obtaining a fee in excess of that to which the employment broker was entitled, the evidence tendered was to the effect that the defendant had charged the same individual nine times, but did not charge the employer anything. The defendant said he told Inspector Cooke he intended to forward an account to the employer. He refunded the money to the worker on the advice of the inspector. That is only one case. If any member takes the trouble to inspect the departmental files, he will find scores of complaints from workers who have been misled in many ways. I do not think any worker should be called upon to pay a fee to any labour bureau for the purpose of securing a position.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: Do not you think that it would improve the position considerably if it were brought under the Factories Act?

Hon. W. H. KITSON: That might be so. Unemployment is one of the most serious problems Australia has to deal with.

Hon. H. Stewart: There will be a good deal of that in connection with the shipping trouble.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: I am afraid that is likely. One member referred to the activities of the State Labour Bureau, and compared them with those of private bureaus. In order to substantiate his argument he quoted figures relating to the money that had been advanced to various workers who were seeking employment, and also the amounts that had been repaid. I do not know whether

the hon. member was suggesting that the State Labour Bureau did something it should not have done. It was perfectly justified in what it did. Only a few days ago the Premier when meeting a deputation of some unemployed in the metropolitan area said the Government were prepared to advance railway fares to the men, so that they might go to any work that was available in the country. That is the function of the Government. When men are stranded in the metropolitan area and cannot get to work that is available in the country, the Government should provide them with the means to do so. Private people cannot be expected to do that. Any criticism members may level at the Government on that score should not carry much weight. Another member said the conditions laid down by this Bill were so onerous that they would force private employment brokers out of business. I can hardly follow that argument. Many employers of labour are not prepared to go to the State Labour Bureau. In the past they have not desired that the State office should meet their requirements, and they have consistently patronised the private broker. That applies particularly to certain occupations. Mr. Harris said the State Labour Bureau only provided employment for 25 per cent. of those who sought employment at the hands of any bureau keeper. That is not because the State Labour Bureau is not efficient, but it is due to the fact that a large number of private employers will not allow the State Labour Bureau to cater for their requirements, with the result that it is impossible for that office to fill positions. The Bill provides that the Minister shall have power to prescribe the maximum fee that the employment broker shall be allowed to charge. There is nothing wrong with that. It is a protection to the employer, as well as to the employee, particularly if the latter has not to pay the fee he has had to pay in the past. Another member rather amused me when referring to this as a State enterprise. It may be looked upon as such, but I think it is something the State should undertake. I would like to see only the State charged with a duty of this kind. As the Bill does not go as far as that, I am supporting it as it is.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: If it is a State enterprise, it is another failure.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: If it is a State enterprise, if I may use the term in support of my argument, we shall find that the condi-

tions of labour laid down by the various awards and agreements will be carried out. Some private bureaux have been the means of men and women being engaged in work at lower rates and under worse conditions than are provided by the industrial agreements or awards covering their callings. I do not say that some of the more reputable bureaux do that willingly, but I know it is done in many cases. If all employment went through the State Labour Bureau, there would be very little risk of anything like that. Criticism was aimed at the Honorary Minister because he quoted certain figures relating to the earnings of a particular employment broker. He said that if that man had received all the money he was entitled to for the positions that were advertised as being available for the work, the individual would have had something over £70.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: You are not quoting that correctly.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: It is near enough.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: He said £150.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: The Honorary Minister said it was something over £70, provided the employer and employee both paid the fee to which the employment broker would be entitled.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: He got £30 in actual cash.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: I have on two or three occasions analysed the advertisements that are prepared in the interest of some of these employment brokers. Knowing their offices as I do and the staffs they employ, I suggest they have been on a particularly good wicket if they have been able to fill all the positions they have advertised, and charged the fees they were entitled to charge. That lends a good deal of colour to the statement I have made that in many cases they do not charge the employer, but only the employee. There is good reason for that.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That is not my experience.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: The employment broker who can show that he has a large number of positions available always gets the business. If he can truthfully advertise that he has so many positions that are vacant on a particular day, he is giving the office to any men who urgently need work to go there in order to secure a position.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: My experience is that each side pays half.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: Then the hon. member has been strictly within the law. We can well afford to give consideration to this Bill. We should be prepared to help unfortunate people who are compelled to go to labour bureaux to seek employment. We should relieve them of the burden of having to pay for the privilege of getting work. If any fee has to be paid, it is only fair that the employer should pay it, and that it should not be a charge upon the employee.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: If you can give a guarantee that the worker will not leave the week after he reaches the place!

Hon. W. H. KITSON: I understand there are difficulties occasionally in that direction. In many cases a man may secure a position, and find that the conditions are not as they were represented to be. He is not prepared to stay any longer than is necessary for him to raise enough money to take him away from the place.

Hon. E. H. Harris: What advantage would it be to the State in the end? Would it not put all unionists into the bureau and cause non-unionists to go elsewhere, into the arms of the employers?

Hon. W. H. KITSON: I am glad the hon. member has made that interjection.

Hon. E. H. Harris: I should like you to clear up that matter from your point of view.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: The hon. member puts forward the bogey of preference to unionists as being one reason why the Government were keen on getting this Bill made law.

Hon. E. H. Harris: It is not a bogey; it is a fact.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: It is nothing but a bogey. The policy of the Government is to give preference to unionists in Government work. I agree entirely with that policy. No man or woman following any particular avocation should decline to be a member of the organisation covering that avocation.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You are going all round the question. You are not answering me.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: If every worker were sent through the State Labour Bureau I do not know that it would make any appreciable difference to the unions. Mention was made of domestics. They have no union, and preference to unionists does not apply to them. There are many workers in the country, such as rural workers, who have no award or industrial agreement covering them.

Preference to unionists would not apply to them.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: You may have a few clever people who do not want to be unionists.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: If they do not want to be unionists they will have to be very clever people in some industries to maintain that attitude. Generally speaking, before a man can get a job in the pastoral industry he must be a member of the union. In the majority of cases the employer is prepared to see that he becomes one. Both the employer and employee are organised, and naturally they look after their own interests. Those who are going to reap the benefit of their respective efforts, that is the employer and employee, should be prepared to become part and parcel of their respective organisations and pay their whack of the expenses.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: The employers are not organised.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: I wish the hon. member meant that.

Hon. V. Hamersley: You do not know anything about it if you think we are.

Hon. W. H. KITSON: This question of preference to unionists is only a bogey. If the work were centred in the State Labour Bureau it would affect only Government work, and would not affect callings not covered by awards or agreements. What hardship would there be if a man or woman were told that he or she must belong to the particular organisations which made it possible for them to work under existing conditions and for existing wages?

Hon. E. H. Harris: Suppose they are getting employment in a calling with regard to which there is no award?

Hon. W. H. KITSON: Then the principle of preference to unionists would not apply.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Oh no!

Hon. W. H. KITSON: However, I will leave the matter at that. I trust the second reading will be agreed to, and if members take exception to any particular phase of the Bill we can deal with it in Committee so as to meet the wishes of the majority of the House.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [9.1]: I intend to support the Bill in the hope that one or two amendments will be made during the Committee stage. I wish to refer to the remarks made by Mr. Kitson. He quoted the instance of a man who had ex-

tracted exorbitant charges from men who had been looking for work. I understand that individual is not licensed and therefore he is discounted by the others engaged in this type of business. It is only fair that that position should be made clear. I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by the Honorary Minister, debate adjourned.

BILL--ROADS CLOSURE.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. W. J. MANN (South-West) [9.3]: The Bill is intended to liberalise the already generous conditions governing enrolment for the Legislative Council and to eliminate certain provisions of the parent Act regarding the exercise of the franchise in more than one province. We have listened to lengthy speeches dealing with the constitutional aspect of the measure, and I do not propose to traverse the ground already covered by other hon. members. I have been asking myself one or two questions regarding the reintroduction of the Bill this year. I have a lively recollection of the fate of a similar Bill in this House last year. I am wondering what is in the mind of the Government when they bring the Bill before the same House and what fate they can expect for it. The more I look at the Bill the more I am convinced that it is a carefully studied attempt in the direction of reaching the desired state of affairs that will lead to the abolition of the Upper House. Early in the debate someone mentioned that one of the prominent planks in the Labour platform dealt with the abolition of the Legislative Council. The Bill, to my mind is merely another effort in that direction. Speaking recently the Premier said that two successive general elections had shown the people of the country had endorsed the introduction of a Bill of this description, while other speakers have said that the Government had a mandate to introduce the legislation.

Hon. H. Stewart: They have had a lot of mandates.

Hon. W. J. MANN: I have amused myself for an hour or two in an endeavour to discover how the mandate arose and when it was received. I believe the Government take their cue from those outside Parliament who wish to direct the policy of the State in that direction. In the "Westralian Worker," the official organ of the Labour Party, I read the following statement that appeared on the 4th March, a few days before the last general election:—

We need a decisive majority because Labour's real legislative struggle is in the Upper House, and a mandate that cannot be questioned is required to ensure that the Council will be in no doubt as to the desires of the people.

Plainer English could not be written to express what is in the minds of the people responsible for that statement. In introducing the Bill, the Leader of the House said, in effect, it was the second time a Bill of this description had been submitted to the Legislative Council and on this occasion it had been presented after the Government had come fresh from the country, and after Legislative Council reform had been one of the prominent features of the election. There is no direct statement there regarding a mandate, but I think we can fairly draw an inference from the Leader's statement in that direction. I will make a brief survey of the figures disclosed by the last two Legislative Assembly elections and the last Legislative Council election to see whether we can discover any mandate from those returns. Before doing so, I want to point out that I find it very difficult to get an absolutely accurate statement, because the Labour Party succeeded in securing a number of seats without contests. Consequently, I have had to make some allowances and I think I have made generous provision in the figures I will quote. In 1924 Labour contested 30 seats and gained a total of 41,831 votes. At the same election Labour secured 11 seats without contest. The aggregate number of votes for those 11 constituencies was 29,940. There are some who may possibly claim that all those are Labour votes, but I do not think any sane person would countenance such a statement for a moment. There must of necessity be a number of anti-Labour votes included in that number.

Hon. E. H. Gray: At any rate, the constituencies were well satisfied with their members.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Mr. Gray should wait until I have finished. I will then show how satisfied the electors are. I am going to assume that 66 per cent. of the people on the rolls for the uncontested constituencies were in favour of the Labour candidates. I want to be generous because Mr. Gray says that the people were satisfied to send back Labour supporters.

Hon. E. H. Harris: In this instance you can afford to be generous.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Assuming that 66 per cent. of the 29,940 electors voted for Labour, that would give Labour an additional 19,960 votes, which, added to their other total, gives them 61,791 votes. That is the most, I think, Labour can fairly and decently claim as representing the support given to Labour candidates. Let us look at the anti-Labour side. The anti-Labour parties contested 38 seats and secured 56,982 votes. Add to that the 33 per cent. of anti-Labour votes in the uncontested seats and we get a total of 66,962 votes. Comparing the two totals we find that on that basis, Labour was in the minority to the extent of 4,471 votes. That is not an outrageous claim. I think it is generous to a degree.

Hon. J. Cornell: Even if the voting was 50-50 they could not claim to have a mandate.

Hon. W. J. MANN: Coming to the election of 1927, Labour contested 35 seats and gained 64,361 votes. They also gained seats in nine electorates without a contest and the voters in those electorates totalled 16,862. Allowing Labour their quota of 66 per cent., we have an additional 11,240 votes which, added to those recorded, gives Labour a total of 75,601. I want the House to keep those figures in mind and contrast them with the anti-Labour figures. Anti-Labour in 1927 contested 41 seats and gained 76,145 votes. Give them 33 per cent. of the voters on the roll in the uncontested electorates and their grand total is 81,765, compared with 71,601 scored by Labour or a deficiency on this occasion of 6,164. In 1924 Labour's deficiency on this reckoning was 4,171. Three years later, when the Government had had that period of service, the deficiency increased to 6,164.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Another form of deficit.

Hon. W. J. MANN: In other words, after three years of administration they failed to gain a seat, and they went to the bad on

their previous deficit, as Mr. Nicholson calls it, to the extent of 1,993. If anyone can tell me that Labour got a mandate on those figures, then it is a form of reckoning that I have not been able to see for the moment. I have referred to the two Assembly elections and I am going to refer now to the Legislative Council, because I shall have something to say about it afterwards. In the Legislative Council elections in 1926 Labour contested seven seats and gained 11,384 first preference votes. Anti-Labour contested the same number of seats and gained 20,192 votes. Labour's deficit on that occasion was 8,808, but anti-Labour, on this occasion scored three seats without contest and in those three seats there was an aggregate of 14,491 votes. On the same basis, if we give them their 66 per cent. on this occasion, we find that Labour would get as its 33 per cent., 4,980 votes, making a grand total of 16,364, while anti-Labour would receive 9,960, making their grand total 30,152, and the final figures in that election would be, anti-Labour 30,152 and Labour 16,364, or an anti-Labour majority of 13,788. There were three elections in which the voice of the people was fairly well heard.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Thousands of people did not vote.

Hon. W. J. MANN: The thousands of people who did not vote did not affect the question one iota. I am pointing out that the anti-Labour majority on this occasion was 13,788, and they lost one seat. Where then is the mandate, or anything approaching a mandate? There is no such thing. My friend Mr. Gray's line of thought has not escaped me and I am going to show in a few words that in the composition of this House at the present time, Labour has practically got its quota of members.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Gee whiz!

Hon. W. J. MANN: I can understand my friend saying "Gee whiz" but he will not say it so readily when I have finished. In the "Industrial Gazette" of this State, which is a publication not tightly to be considered, there is given the grand total of unionists in Western Australia. The figure is 43,544. Those are the people who, a few minutes ago, we were told had to become unionists whether they wanted to or not in order to get a job. The Chief Electoral Officer's report on the Legislative Assembly elections last March, gives the total number of the voters for the Assembly as 210,949. If we divide 43,000 into 210,000, we arrive at the statement I have just made

Presuming all unionists vote Labour at the Legislative Council elections, and I am sure they do not, they constitute only one-fifth of the aggregate on the Legislative Assembly rolls. There are five members of the Labour Party in this House and divide that number into 30 and we see how near I am. One gained no little interest from working out these figures.

Hon. H. Stewart: You worked them out very well.

Hon. E. H. Harris: They are very instructive.

Hon. W. J. MANN: While I realise that there are some difficulties in arriving at a really accurate computation on account of places where there were no elections, I think the House will agree that the basis I have taken is fairly equitable and for that reason any proposal to put this Bill through is out of the question. For the reasons I have given I cannot support the Bill, and I think other hon. members, if they look into the matter in a similar way, will come to the same conclusion.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [9.22]: I approach this Bill with the knowledge that it is the admitted policy of the Labour Party to abolish the Legislative Council at the first opportunity.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is not proposed in the Bill.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No, but I am pointing out that it is the objective, that the Bill is a stepping stone towards that objective.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Are you afraid of the vote of the people?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am not afraid of anything, not even the vote of the people, whether it be for the abolition of the Legislative Council or the abolition of the Legislative Assembly, or both Houses. I am pointing out that the first plank of the fighting platform of the Labour Party is the abolition of the Legislative Council, and by the utterances from the platform and the declaration of Ministers and prominent members of the party from time to time, and having regard to the 14th plank of the Federal Labour Party's fighting platform it is intended also to abolish the Senate. If that objective is not reached by a straight road, well then a circuitous road will suit the Labour Party just as well. The Leader of the House has told us that this is the second occasion in the life of the Government on which this Bill has been introduced. True, but it is the fifth occasion on which it has been

introduced by Mr. Collier. The Leader of the House said there were two objects, and I draw attention to the fact that no hon. member has set out to combat the figures quoted by the Chief Secretary, or in fact anything against this argument which he said was to popularise the House and not abolish it. He also told us that the second point was to abolish plural voting. First let me ask whether this House is not popular. I say that it stands as high in the estimation of the public of Western Australia as does the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. H. Stewart: Is that all?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: If all householders or dwellers in Western Australia had a vote for this House, would it be any more popular than it is?

Hon. W. H. Kitson: It would be more representative of the people, perhaps.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Perhaps! I like the "perhaps." If all adults had a vote would this House be more popular? The object of the Labour Party is to abolish the House, and that is the purpose of the Bill, not to amend the franchise. The Premier said that the object of the Government was to strengthen the Legislative Council. I say that this House is quite strong enough, and that was proved the other day when we pressed a request and pressed it hard. The word "garlic" has also been used in connection with this House. Therefore, it must be strong enough for anything. The Chief Secretary said that from time to time people qualified to enrol were overlooked. Knowing that there was a Constitution Act Amendment Bill to be introduced—for it was referred to by the Premier in his Policy Speech in September last—I called for a return from the Electoral Department. It might be of interest to indicate the number of claim cards that were sent out by the Electoral Department to people who were not enrolled in connection with the 1924 and 1926 Council elections. That return was laid on the Table of the House. Some hon. members may not have seen it, and for the benefit of those who are not aware of what it contains I might mention that the Chief Electoral Officer furnished this information—I shall quote the figures in thousands. There were 24,000 claim cards sent out from the Electoral Office, and of that number 10,000 were enrolled. There were 14,000 people qualified to vote, and though notices were sent to them they failed to respond.

Hon. E. H. Gray: Joint rolls would prevent that.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Let not the hon. member talk about joint rolls after that shandygaff Bill!

Hon. J. Cornell: The joint rolls were never intended to apply to the Legislative Council, anyhow.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The preliminary object of joint rolls is to provide for the Electoral Department keeping the Legislative Council rolls when the electoral districts of Western Australia are settled in groups, as the Premier will probably attempt to arrange before this Parliament closes. In 1924, roughly 44 per cent. of persons qualified and notified either refused or forgot to fill in claim cards.

Hon. E. H. Gray: People are so confused as to the present system.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: People upon whom the hon. member interjecting called would never refuse to enrol. It is said that the hon. member would put anything down on a claim card.

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member cannot say that.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Very well, Sir; I will withdraw it and say that the hon. member will submit a claim card to the Electoral Department saying, "If it is not right you can throw it out"—which is practically the same thing as I had to withdraw.

Hon. E. H. Gray: I ask for a withdrawal of that statement, which is not true.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member must withdraw the remark which has been objected to by Mr. Gray.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Very well, Sir; in deference to the wishes of the House I withdraw the remark; but presently I shall make some quotations relating to those qualified to enrol which, I think, will support my contention. In 1926 the claim cards sent out by the Electoral Department numbered 30,000 odd, and on that occasion 16,000 odd enrolled, leaving 14,000 qualified persons unenrolled. In 1924, 14,000 claim cards were not filled in, and again there were 14,000 in 1926. In the latter case, the Chief Electoral Officer gave figures relating to each of the provinces. That, I consider, sufficiently answers the Chief Secretary's argument that where active canvassers enrol, few persons are overlooked. He said a few people were eligible to enrol in the metropolitan area, but had failed to do so. A

few! Here is the high authority of the Chief Electoral Officer, who sends out cards only to persons who he has reason to believe are qualified. If I may quote an extract from another high authority, under date of the 9th March, 1926, preceding the Council elections of that year—

It is patent that the workers are so numerous that it is but needful for them to enrol as electors for the Council and be united at the polls, to make a decisive change in the political complexion not only possible but probable. The first and paramount step towards this end is to realise that hundreds who have never voted for the Upper House elections are qualified to enrol as voters if only they will take the trouble to attend to this vital requirement.

Hon. J. Nicholson: From whom are you quoting?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: From the "Worker."

Hon. J. Nicholson: I thought it was the Chief Electoral Officer.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No. I quoted the Chief Electoral Officer only to show what he had done to enrol eligible persons.

Hon. J. Cornell: What you have quoted is only election thunder.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I submit that the writer of that article had some better knowledge of the position, inasmuch as he was aware that numbers of workers in Western Australia were eligible to enrol for the Legislative Council, notwithstanding that franchise which is held up to derision.

Hon. J. Cornell: But we must not remind them too often, or we may do it to our sorrow.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: They were very much awake in the province I had the pleasure of contesting in 1926, together with the President. If the figures are looked up, it will be found that practically only 24½ per cent. of the persons eligible to enrol failed according to the figures given by the Chief Electoral Officer, in the South Province, the North-East Province, and the Central Province, the three seats which apparently were most keenly contested.

Member: That is some enrolment!

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Mr. Drew referred to the enrolment figures and said that in the Forrest electorate there were 2,868 electors, and that less than 100 of them were on the Upper House roll. That statement has repeatedly been made, but here the "Worker" writes—

Timber workers living in houses at nominal rents leased from the timber companies can claim to be enrolled under the following provision:—"If rent is not paid on the annual value of the average reasonable rental prevailing in the locality after deducting rates and taxes, £17"

The provision entitles hundreds of married timber workers to be enrolled as Legislative Council electors. I hope the Chief Secretary will take a note of that fact.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I thought the complaint was always that they could not get the men on the roll.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: That was contended, but this important and high authority writes—

This important provision in these days of high rentals has been overlooked. Ten years ago timber workers could not claim. But under the average high rents prevailing all over the State at the present time, they can now do so.

There is the official statement, and it is true that there are hundreds of timber workers eligible.

Hon. E. H. Gray: But they are bluffed.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I do not think so. When introducing the Bill the Chief Secretary said that the passing of the measure would increase enrolment by roughly 20 per cent. of the total on the roll. That is an important statement. There are on the roll 68,770 persons. Of that number, 20 per cent. would be 13,754, or roughly 14,000 enrolled as householders, ratepayers, freeholders and leaseholders. For the three provinces in the metropolitan area there are 35,593 enrolments, and according to the "Statistical Register" for 1926-27, the total number of dwellings in the metropolitan road board districts alone, at the 30th June, 1926, was 11,826; and on the 31st October, 1926, the total of dwellings in the municipalities was 26,864. This gives a total of 38,690 dwellings. If the Bill should pass, any person who lives in any dwelling would be eligible for enrolment, as the Chief Secretary has said.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: That is not quite correct, is it?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am quoting from the "Statistical Register."

Hon. W. H. Kitson: I mean your other statement, that any person living in a dwelling would be entitled to enrol.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I say it means a person not in a dwelling but in a camp. However, that will suffice for my argument.

Now, if 50 per cent. of the present 35,593 persons enrolled in the three metropolitan provinces are, say, householders, that would be 17,796. If we deduct those householders from the total of 38,690 dwellings, 20,920 more householders are eligible to enrol in the metropolitan area alone. Mr. Kitson may make a mental note of that, as he is a representative of the metropolitan area. I say definitely that from the statistics supplied by the department, assuming that half the enrolments are householders—a fair assumption—there would be over 20,000 additional names, while the Chief Secretary indicated that he thought 14,000 would be roughly the number enrolled in addition to those already on the roll. Taking the same dates, on the 30th June, 1926, the total of dwellings in the 125 road boards of Western Australia was 48,758, and in the municipalities on the 31st October, 1926, the total was 35,832. That makes the total number of dwellings in Western Australia, according to the "Statistical Register," 84,590. If half of those total enrolments—which is a fair estimate—were deemed to be householders, it would mean that there would be 50,205 householders eligible to enrol as at the 31st October, 1926, the date of the last statistics available. So I say that if the definition of "dwelling house" in the Bill were given effect to, there would be over 50,000 electors in Western Australia who could enrol and are not already enrolled. In the Bill we find these words—

Where a person inhabits a dwelling-house, or any structure of a permanent character being a fixture to the soil, which is ordinarily capable of being used for human habitation

I submit that for instance a person in a hut or a camp or a tent would be eligible. The Chief Secretary in his speech said a tent was not covered by the definition, but I say there are many tents lived in by people from year to year that are fixtures to the soil, and of a permanent character.

Hon. J. Nicholson: There is no definition of "permanent character."

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: No. Any dwelling would be a structure, and any structure would be a dwelling, under the definition. Will anyone deny that that includes a cheap and nasty structure to be erected at a cost of, say, ten shillings? I suppose it will be contended that that is not so, but on the 28th October, 1920, on page 1324 of "Hansard," Mr. Collier, replying to an interjec-

tion from a member of the Country Party, is reported as having said—

If the hon. member will look at the definition of "Dwelling-house" he will see it will not prevent the farmer's son from getting on the roll, because a cheap structure that can be erected in a few hours comes under the definition of "dwelling-house."

Therefore we see that the present Premier seven years ago said that a structure that could be erected in a few hours at a cost of a few shillings would enable anyone to enrol for the Council. It indicates that that clause would enable almost anybody in Western Australia to enrol.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Does anyone doubt it?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am stressing the point because it was one given by the Premier when he introduced a similar Bill years ago. The Bill goes on to say that where a person inhabits a dwelling by virtue of any office, service or employment. I should say that that would cover employees on timber concessions in timber areas, or on the goldfields under various leases, nurses in hospitals, homes, religious institutions, shearers, stewards, caretakers, waitresses, housemaids, jockeys, jackaroos, railway employees in cottages or barracks. That is a fairly comprehensive list of unionists who would be eligible to enrol. All those employees would be in some office of service with an employer. The Bill proceeds, "And the dwelling-house is not inhabited by anyone under whom such persons serve." That is the dwelling or structure in which the worker sleeps. If it is not also inhabited by the manager or foreman, then such person shall be deemed to be a tenant and shall be qualified to vote. Therefore all following the vocations I have mentioned would assist in giving a vote to the first plank of the party's platform, namely the abolition of the Legislative Council. If the day should arrive when there shall be only one House, I suppose it would be possible for the members of that House to carry a Bill making their tenure five years or even ten years. And there would be no appeal, no House of review. To show the continuity of policy as regards the Bill before us and the policy of the Labour Party, I may point out that in 1918 the same Bill was introduced in another place by the present Premier. He then said its object was to broaden the franchise. In 1919 he proposed the abolition of the Council. He said he was sorry the Government, even if they could not go so far as to pro-

pose the abolition of another place, did not attempt to liberalise the franchise. And he made a bid for the soldiers' vote on sentimental grounds. He said their fathers and mothers and relatives were denied the full rights of citizenship. Those were the arguments he used. We get this from the head of a Government whose policy is preference to unionists, not preference to the men who fought for their country, but to men who have a union ticket; that is the point. They used that argument during the war period about the fathers and the mothers and the uncles and the cousins and aunts who did not have the full right to citizenship, and the suggestion was that those people should have a vote. I ask, "Does the Bill before us provide a vote for the hero who fought for his country?" Not at all. There we have the expressions used in 1918 and in 1919, and if we turn to 1920 we find that the Premier said—

The recruit that walked in was not asked his property qualifications. No one demanded to know whether he had a block of land valued at £50 or a house of a rental value of £17 per annum. He was a hero possessing the true spirit of British manhood.

The suggestion is that they would give that recruit a vote, but when we get beyond those war days, if there is any Government employment about, that recruit cannot get it unless he can produce a union ticket. In 1920 Mr. Collier, then in Opposition, said that the Bill sought to repeal the whole of Section 15 of the Constitution Act Amendment Act of 1899. Amongst other things he said, "We shall abolish all restrictions so that every man and woman over 21 years shall be entitled to the franchise." Therefore we may summarise it and say that in 1918 the Bill was to broaden the franchise, in 1919 it was for the abolition of the Council, in 1920 it was for adult suffrage, in 1923 it was for household suffrage, and in 1927 it is to popularise the House and abolish plural voting. So on five different occasions we have had the same Bill, and on each occasion a new shade of argument. Let me in conclusion say a word about plural voting. In 1915 the Electoral Department went to some trouble to ascertain the number of persons entitled to more than one vote. With 44,194 persons on the roll, the plural votes amounted to 2,485. Taking that on a pro rata basis with the 67,000 persons on the roll now, there would be very few people disfranchised. I would be inclined to support the Bill to abolish plural voting, but I

should first like to see the Labour Party establish the one-vote one-value system in their unions and executives and the whole of the ramifications of the movement.

Hon. H. Stewart: Have they not one-vote one-value?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: If they have in a union 1,000 members, they can get eight or ten delegates at the conference, while if another organisation has only 100 members it would have a lesser number of delegates and would pay a lesser fee.

Hon. H. Stewart: Representation in accordance with numbers.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: And with what you pay. We had a Bill to amend the Road Boards Act or the Road Districts Act, I forget which, to the extent of abolishing this obnoxious system of plural voting. Yet the Labour Party has the same principle in vogue in their own organisation.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is not correct.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Will the hon. member tell me they provide for one union one vote? Of course one man stands up and says, "I represent a thousand men and I have a card vote."

Hon. E. H. Gray: You do not suggest that a union of 30 members should have the same voting power as a union with a thousand members?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: We have a Bill providing that a man in a road board district paying half a crown in rates should have the same voting power as a mining company paying £1,000. The hon. member supported that, but on this occasion he is opposing the same principle. I could refer to a conference at which Mr. Gray represented a society with two votes, whilst Mr. Hickey represented another society with ten votes. The Chief Secretary was there, but he did not have a vote at all. Whilst those members are desirous of embodying something in the Bill before the House, they do not seek to put the same principles in operation in their own organisations. This clause in the Bill with its definition of dwelling is too vague altogether. Just to clear up an interjection by Mr. Kitson, may I say it means any structure of a permanent character, being a fixture of the soil, which is ordinarily capable of being used for habitation.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: That is not what I challenged. I challenged your statement that any person living in a dwelling was entitled to be enrolled.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The Bill provides that no person shall be qualified to vote by reason of sharing the occupancy of one dwelling. Those in flats will get no votes at all.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: You said that any person living in a dwelling would be entitled to be enrolled. The Bill does not provide that.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Where a person inhabits any dwelling-house by virtue of any office, service or employment, and that dwelling-house is not inhabited by anyone under whom such a person serves in such office—

Hon. J. Nicholson: You might have a whole family living in one house. You mean to say that the occupier or householder would be entitled to a vote.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: My interpretation is the occupier of any structure capable, as the Premier said, of being erected in a few hours and at the cost of a few shillings. On the definition of what is known as a dwelling-house, we shall, according to the statistics, get another 50,000 electors, the major proportion of whom will be unionists. The definition can be stretched to almost any point until a few sticks of wood and a piece of canvas set up in a permanent fashion would entitle the occupant to a vote. Let us have a proper definition of dwelling-house. It should be a place at least that is rated by some authority. In the Road Districts Act there is a minimum for rating and we might provide for any structure rated by a local authority, which would be better than the ambiguous terms employed in this measure. As I have supported household suffrage on a former occasion and still adhere to that principle, I shall vote for the second reading, but in Committee I shall desire a better definition of dwelling-house than that given in the Bill.

On motion by Hon. E. Rose, debate adjourned.

BILL—BRIDGETOWN LOT 39A

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. J. M. Drew—Central) [10.3] in moving the second reading said: The Bridgetown Mechanics' Institute is erected on Bridgetown town lot 39A, area 1 rood, and is held in trust for a mechanics' institute by Messrs. John Allnutt, Edmund Chapperton Dean

and Joseph Kelkar Smith, all of Bridgetown. With the approval of the trustees, the Bridgetown Road Board made application to the Titles Office for the transfer to the board of the land on which the institute stands, but this could not be effected as the transfer is expressed to be subject to the trust contained in the original grant from the Crown—that it be held in trust for the Mechanics' Institute, Bridgetown. The object of having the land transferred to the board was to raise a loan to enable the board to erect a new building as a public hall and public library to take the place of the Mechanics' Institute. The trustees have already transferred town Lot 39A to the road board, but the Titles Office will transfer it to the board not direct but only as trustees for the Mechanics' Institute, and at the present time the board stands in the same position as regards the land as the three trustees previously mentioned. The Bill will enable Lot 39A to be vested in the board absolutely free from all trust, and it is for that purpose that the Bill is now presented. The new building will be utilised in a manner similar to that in which the Mechanics' Institute buildings are used, but will give better facilities to the public. The institute was built in 1895 and the Government made several grants towards the erection and additions, amounting to £650, as follows:—£100 on the 29th March, 1895; £200 on the 16th December, 1900; £50 on the 24th January, 1903; £200 on the 7th February, 1908; £100 on the 27th July, 1908. The residents subscribed £200 towards the additions in 1908. So far as I can gather there is no difference of opinion amongst the people of Bridgetown regarding the advisableness of transferring the block to the road board. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

House adjourned at 10.8 p.m.