Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 29th October, 1947.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 7.30 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

ELECTRICITY METERS.

As to Shortage.

Mr. WILD (on notice) asked the Minister for Works:

(1) In view of the extreme shortage of electricity meters for household use, will immediate consideration be given to the transfer of certain householders now using two meters to D rate?

(2) If "Yes" is the answer to (1), will action be taken to have this alteration to D rate implemented and householders now awaiting meters connected as early as possible?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

CHILDREN'S COURT.

As to Appointment of Special Magistrate.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE (on notice) asked the Minister for Education:

Will he lay upon the Table of the House all papers dealing with the appointment of the new special magistrate of the Children's Court?

The MINISTER replied:

No; but the papers will be available to the hon. member, if he desire to peruse them, at the office of the Secretary of the Child Welfare Department.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION ROYAL COMMISSION.

As to Authority of Assessors.

Hon. F. J. S. WISE (on notice) asked the Premier:

What is the difference in the authority vested in the three Commissioners as compared with the authority vested in the two assessors appointed to inquire into Workers' Compensation?

The PREMIER replied:

The authority vested in Royal Commissioners is the same as for all Royal Commissioners and their powers are set out in the Royal Commissioners' Powers Act. The position of the two assessors is explained in the following extracts from a letter despatched to the General Secretary of the A.L.P. Executive confirming the proposal which had been discussed:—

Facilities to be made available for two assessors (one from your organisation and one from the Underwriters' Association)—

(a) to be enabled to peruse notes of evidence already taken;

(b) to be at liberty to attend remaining sittings of the Commission and hear evidence given and have copies of further notes of evidence taken;

(c) to be at liberty, when the Commissioners are considering their report, to be present at their deliberations and take part in the discussions;

(d) to submit to the Commissioners in writing within a time to be fixed by the Commission, any points on which the assessors (or either of them) disagree with any of the recommendations of the Commisport as an appendix or appendices.

BILL—GAS UNDERTAKINGS.

Introduced by Hon. J. T. Tonkin and read a first time.

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Mr. Rodoreda, leave of absence for the remainder of the session granted to Hon. P. Collier (Boulder) on the ground of ill-health.

BILL—LAND ALIENATION RESTRICTION ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

MOTION—COAL MINES REGULATION ACT.

To Disallow Ventilation Regulation.

MR. MAY (Collie) [7.35]: I move—

That Regulation No. 116, made under the Coal Mines Regulation Act, 1946, published in the "Government Gazette" on the 19th September, 1947, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 30th September, 1947, be and is hereby disallowed.

In order that members may have some idea of the regulation concerned, I will read it. It is as follows:—

Adequate Ventilation to be Provided.

116. (1) An adequate amount of ventilation shall circulate in every mine to dilute and render harmless inflammable or noxious gases to such an extent that the shafts, tunnels, levels and workings of the mine, and the travelling roads to and from those working places shall be in a fit state for working and passing therein.

Quantity of Air Required.

(2) The ventilation so circulated shall provide not less than 200 cubic feet of air per minute for every man or boy, nor less than 300 cubic feet per minute for each horse or other draught animal, employed in the mine, or such greater quantity as the inspector may direct, not exceeding fifty per cent. in excess of the above figures, and shall sweep along the airways and be forced as far as the face of and into each and every working place where any man, boy, horse or other animal is engaged or passing, main return airways only excepted.

Places Unfit for Working.

(3) No place shall be deemed in a fit state for working or passing therein if—

(a) the air contains either less than nineteen per cent. of oxygen, or more than one and a quarter per cent. of carbon dioxide;

(b) the wet bulb temperature exceeds 76° Fahrenheit, excepting where the air velocity is not less than 100 ft. per minute.

It is unfortunate that it is necessary to move for the disallowance of this regulation, when actually, as far as it goes, it is quite in order. No provision, however, has been made for the velocity of air when the temperature falls below 76°. Had the regulation contained that necessary provision I would not have had to move for its disallowance. When Dr. Cilento made his report to the Commonwealth in 1935, whilst a member of the committee set up by the Commonwealth Coal Inquiry, he had this to say about ventilation—

We recommend that in all working places where men are employed and where the "effective temperature" does not exceed 74° Fahrenheit, an air velocity sufficient to produce an air-movement of at least 50 feet per miunte at the worker, should be maintained. In all such working places where the "effective temperature" exceeds 74° Fahrenheit, but does not exceed 80° Fahrenheit, a minimum air-movement of 100 feet per minute at the worker should be maintained.

In working places where the "effective temperature" exceeds 80° Fahrenheit, either an air-movement at the worker should be maintained with a velocity sufficient to have an effect equivalent to the reduction of "effective temperature" to at least 78° Fahrenheit, or else hours of work should be reduced. The velocities required to have an effect equivalent to the reduction of "effective temperature" are set out in the following table:

For the purposes of this motion, the table does not matter. I point out that the working conditions for the men in the coalmines are very arduous, and all will agree it is essential that every precaution be taken to ensure that sufficient air of adequate velocity is directed towards the place where the men are operating. The regulation requires the addition of but a few words, and I trust that the Minister for Mines will see his way clear to adopt that course so that we may be able to safeguard the workers by requiring the proper air velocity to be provided while the men are working underground. Sometimes it is necessary when the velocity of the air has not been properly maintained and there is a rise in the temperature for the workers to reduce their hours of labour. We do not want that to happen under existing conditions where there is an acute shortage of coal. On the other hand, when the temperature has fallen below 76 degrees Fahrenheit the velocity of the air has to be reduced accordingly. I hope the House will agree to the disallowance of the regulation so that the

Minister may make the necessary adjustment to protect the workers in this respect.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

HAMPSHIRE & SONS' CATTLE AND T.B. SELECT COMMITTEE.

Consideration of Report.

Debate resumed from the 22nd October on the following motion by Mr. Hoar—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should give effect to the recommendations of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the incidence of T.B. in crtain dairy cattle.

THE MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [7.42]: In the first instance, the Government recognised that the member for Nelson had made out a case for an inquiry. At his suggestion a Select Committee was appointed and the desired inquiry has been held. Several members have discussed the report and dealt with the incidence of tuberculosis in our dairy herds in particular and in cattle in general. I do not desire to cover the ground they traversed, because I would merely be repeating and endorsing the views they expressed. I appreciate the work of the Select Committee, which has been well carried out, and I feel sure the report presented to Parliament will be of value. As far as possible, the Government will act upon its recommendations, which I will deal with briefly. The first was—

That consideration be given by the Government to the establishment of some form of compensation fund from which owners of diseased cattle can be compensated against loss.

I desire to inform the member for Nelson and those associated with him on the Select Committee that the Government has already discussed the establishment of a compensation fund and, if time permits this session, a Bill will be introduced to deal with that phase. The second recommendation submitted by the Select Committee was that the Government should give consideration—

to the inauguration of a scheme which will make it possible to have all cattle tested for T.B. and C.A.B. prior to sale.

The Agricultural Department is progressing steadily at present in the testing of dairy herds, a task that is most essential. I suggest, however, that this is a matter that has to be carefully handled. We must proceed cautiously, otherwise, to use the member for Nelson's own words, we would not have sufficient dairy cows left to provide a supply of milk for the State's requirements. We know from the testing of the herds to date that the incidence of T.B. is very serious. In the circumstances, we are moving along sound and logical lines. With regard to this recommendation, the House can be assured that the matter will be considered seriously. The Committee's third recommendation was—

That in view of the high prices received at the sale, and the great loss suffered by individual buyers, the Minister investigate the possibility of making some form of compensation available to them.

I am afraid that that suggestion is rather hard on the Government, for the reason that, as members must realise, Hampshire and Sons sold the cattle and got full value for them. Those people secured all the proceeds of the sale.

Mr. Triat: That is so.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The Government feels sympathetic towards those individual buyers who suffered the loss. As one who has been on the land, I know what it is for a settler who starts out to establish himself on a property, to sustain so great a blow at the very start. In this instance, the settlers concerned received a severe knock practically from the word "go." While the Government has the deepest sympathy for those men, it is hardly a fair proposition that Hampshire and Sons should collect the full benefit of the sale and should, so far as I can gather, have given no indication of their intention to play any part in compensating these unfortunate settlers.

I am afraid that at this stage I cannot commit the Government to acceptance of the third recommendation. I do not want to mislead members of the Select Committee by saying the matter will receive consideration. I could say that, but I am afraid the consideration would not be favourable because the Government honestly believes it is not fair that it should be asked to provide the desired compensation when Hampshire and Sons secured the full purchase price for the cattle. It is up to Hampshire and Sons to make some gesture in the interests of the unfortunate settlers, and if that were done there might be some encourage-

ment to the Government in the matter. I congratulate the members of the Select Committee on the work carried out, and can assure them that their report will be acted upon as far as the Government can possibly go.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd October.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning) [7.49]: This measure, which was introduced by the member for East Perth, purports to give local authorities power to require owners of properties where electricity is not supplied, to have it supplied by the issuing of orders upon the owner. I very much question whether, except in isolated places in Western Australia, there is any need for legislation of this type. When I say isolated places I do not mean isolated districts, but isolated dwellings in districts, because the great majority of premises where electricity supply is available—and I will deal with that aspect in a moment or two—are supplied with it. But the hon. member has made out a case for certain people with whom apparently he has personally come in contact and who, it would appear, are in reasonable range of electricity where electric current is readily available. So far as those people are concerned I would offer no objection to the measure.

But the member for East Perth has introduced this Bill, and its corollary, an amendment to the Road Districts Act, which will give this power to every local authority concerned, whether under the Municipal Corporations Act or the Road Districts Act, irrespective of how much electricity is available, the conditions in the district, the conditions of the people concerned or anything else. I therefore ask the House to think carefully before it makes legislation of this type of general application in every road board and every municipal district in Western Australia. We are well aware that in regard to the supply of electricity we have differing conditions in different areas. This proposal may be very fine and large in the metropolitan district, for example, although even there it would at the present time be impracticable in parts of the district.

I have heard requests made by more than one member during the past three or four years for electricity to be made available by the supply authorities, but it has been impossible for that supply to be given notwithstanding that the people were within reasonably close distance of large centres of population where the supply has existed for many years. We have also to bear in mind that in many districts—quite apart from the recently created central authority, the Electricity Commission—two sets of authorities are dealing with the supply of electricity. One is the supply authority itself which actually generates and puts the electricity through the main to the consumers. That authority may be the local authority or it may be a concessionaire of the local authority.

Then there is the local authority which makes arrangements with the concessionaire and which frequently ties him down in his activities, saying what he shall do and what he shall charge and so forth. My main objection to the measure is not so much the principle involved in it, to wit, the supplying of electricity to everybody upon reasonable terms where electricity is easily available. I must stress the position which will be created under this measure in places where electricity is not easily available or where the dwellings in question are considerably detached from the immediate sources of supply. Let me assume for a moment that the House decides to pass the second reading, then there are a number of objections to the measure which bear some relationship to the observations I have already made. The first is that no provision whatever is made that the local authority can only order electricity to be supplied if it is available; and, as I said, there are certain places where it is not readily available. Such a provision should be clearly set out in the measure if it is to become an Act. Then the distance of a quarter of a mile is somewhat unreasonable.

As I said, this measure will have a general application and consequently the cost of taking electricity to an isolated dwelling—as this Act makes provision for, there is no gainsaying that fact—might easily run into

£50 or £60. While that might be justified in certain parts of the State, I would certainly argue that it would be unreasonable to impose that cost upon the owner of the premises. Might I suggest, too, that some of the owners of these premises—not necessarily those to which the member for East Perth specifically referred—are by no means the wealthy and octopus-like creatures to whom he referred. I know of small premises which are owned by people who have no means of livelihood other than the rentals they receive from the premises.

I have said that the measure, if it becomes law, will be of general application whether the people live in the city or in small country areas. They can be compelled, whether they have the means or not—because there is no right of appeal in this measure to any authority—to pay the cost of supplying electricity from a quarter of a mile away in order to satisfy the requirements of a tenant. In my opinion, the House will think twice before it agrees to a measure which is so general in character as this one and which gives no right of appeal whatever to a person who is in that position. I go a step further. The Bill provides that when the order is made by a local authority it must be carried out within one month. I would like to find the person who today can guarantee to carry out anything in one month if he has anything whatever to do with alterations to buildings or electricity supply and matters of that nature.

Member: I would undertake to carry it out in two days.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: In some cases that might be possible, but this measure will have general application all over Western Australia. It will apply to every road board and every municipality which has an electricity supply. While it might be easy to supply the electricity in some districts it will not be easy to do so in all districts. What is mainly wrong with the measure is this: While the hon. member has explained his intentions, with which I said at the beginning I agreed, he has based his instructions for the preparation of this Bill on the actual conditions surrounding him in East Perth.

Mr. Styants: He has a metropolitan mind.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I can adopt the suggestion of the member for Kalgoorlie and say that the member for East Perth has displayed a metropolitan mind on this measure. He has introduced two measures which, as I say, will extend all over Western Australia and apply to many districts where conditions are exceedingly different from those in his district. Where it is a case of a whole neighbourhood enjoying the facility of electricity, close at hand and available to all, I appreciate the desire of the hon. member that some person should not be stuck there without it merely because somebody, who probably is realising a fair revenue from a series of dwellings or perhaps one dwelling, refuses to be amenable to reason. That is what he is after, but I do not think he will achieve it by this measure. I am afraid he will impose hardship on certain people. I am quite sure that if the provision relating to the quarter of a mile is not altered, he will. I am also sure that if he does not include a provision in the measure to make it quite plain that electricity is to be readily available from a supply, he will cause hardship to certain people. Moreover, the time limit he has fixed is unreasonable.

It is unfortunate that I have been unable to obtain the opinion of the local government groups on this question. I say the local government groups because the local governing bodies in Western Australia are, I think, divided into three associations. Unfortunately, the executive committees of those associations met comparatively recently and will not meet again for some time. Therefore, it has been impracticable to ask their point of view either in respect of townships, where municipalities are concerned, or in respect of road district areas, where municipalities are not concerned. I have only been able to express, therefore, the views I have formed in regard to this matter, not forming those views from any desire to prevent the hon. member from assisting those persons with whom he has been closely in contact on this matter, but deriving my opposition from a fairly considerable knowledge of conditions in Western Australia, which would, in my opinion, prevent a Bill drafted and passed in this form from ever being acceptable to me. So I can only say that I cannot support this measure. If the House passes the second reading, which I hope it will not, I

shall have to move a considerable number of amendments in Committee to try to make the measure a little more acceptable.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth—in reply) [8.3]: I think the Minister has done himself less than justice in the remarks and observations he has made. One would be inclined to think from what he said that local governing bodies will be compelled, if this Bill becomes law, to do certain things which may be distasteful to them.

The Minister for Local Government: I never used the word "compelled." I said "empowered."

Mr. GRAHAM: The Minister used the word "empowered," but the whole basis of his argument was that they may be in the position of having to do something which would not be applicable to certain areas.

The Minister for Local Government: You should not give people power you do not suppose they will exercise.

Mr. GRAHAM: I remember that only recently the Minister was jealous of the fact that if local governing authorities are given power they should be free to exercise that power without influence from Government departments, and I think it is generally accepted that the decisions made by local governing bodies are usually reasonably based. I have no desire to depart from that general conception. It is immaterial whether the Minister has secured the views of local governing bodies; because, if they do not like this measure, or if it is unworkable in particular areas, then obviously they would not give effect to it. I can appreciate, as I said when introducing the measure, that quite a number of people will not view this proposal with favour. That is to say, they will or may be compelled to do certain things which will entail the expenditure of money.

When introducing the measure, I pointed out that at the present moment under their various Acts and bylaws, the local governing bodies can compel owners of properties to expend considerable sums of money in order to conform with those bylaws and in fact have done so—I suppose to the chagrin of the owners, in exactly the same way as they would not be particularly pleased if they were called upon to incur expenditure amounting to £10 for the installation of electric wiring and fittings in a particular house. I suggest that our viewpoint regarding this question should not be so much one of concern for matters of that nature as the feeling that in the year 1947 every person who is living in a civilised community where public facilities are available should be entitled to enjoy those facilities.

It was delightfully suggested by interjection, that I may be metropolitan-minded. I cannot conceive any set of circumstances that would make this proposition unworkable in the country districts; but those in the best position to know would obviously be members of local governing bodies, supported by the advice of their officers, and if the town electricity supply was incapable of providing more current than that being used at the moment, then no municipal council would order the owner of certain premises to fit and equip a building which he owned with those installations for the purpose of supplying something which, in fact, could not be supplied. Members of local governing bodies are reasonable persons, and I think that that disposes of the Minister's suggestion that there are difficulties in supplying to whole communities at present in certain localities. If there are no electric mains through Forrestfield or elsewhere, what local governing body is going to compel owners of premises in that area to instal electric wiring and fittings?

It appears there is some sort of endeavour to make a simple Bill appear ridiculous by distortion of the facts. I feel that it is, or should be, appreciated by members generally that the passing of this Bill would do no more than grant authority to local governing bodies, which assume very many responsibilities at the moment, of which this would by no means be the greatest if it were passed; and as I said in my opening remarks, in those very houses of which I spoke, in the last 12 months the Perth City Council has compelled the installation of wash-houses costing approximately £50 in each case for every one of the seven buildings.

The Minister suggested that there may be a terrific expenditure of from £50 to £60 because of the distance the wires or mains would have to be extended. But it should be obvious, whether it be in any country town or in the metropolitan area, that the supplying authority, or the local governing body, which invariably has some say with regard to these matters, would be

hardly likely to compel the installation of wires and other electric fittings in a house a quarter of a mile away if it imposed upon that same authority the obligation to expend £50 or £60 to extend mains to serve that one house. I should say that, in any case, if the local governing authority considered that the burden would be too heavy upon a particular owner on account of the distance involved for one single house, the authority would refuse to issue the order.

The Minister for Local Government: By Jove, there are a lot of "ifs."

Mr. GRAHAM: Of course!

The Minister for Local Government: There should not be so many.

Mr. GRAHAM: The point I am seeking to establish is that if there were a group of houses, the local governing authority would not mind assuming the financial commitment of extending a main to the whole group. I point out to the Minister something of which he is perfectly well aware; namely, that there are no provisions for appeals or anything else with regard to these other orders that local governing authorities can issue.

The Minister for Local Government: Yes there are; many of them. In fact, under the Municipalities Act it is there as a general appeal in respect of a good number of things.

Mr. GRAHAM: Yes, but my Bill seeks to insert a new section which immediately follows provisions with regard to quite a number of different matters pertaining to building, wherein the municipal council can impose its will and exactly the same penalties for non-compliance would apply as in the case of the Bill under consideration by the House. Any member can confirm that point by consulting the sections immediately prior to the one I seek to have inserted in the Act. During the introduction of the measure, I informed the House that if members thought a quarter of a mile was too far distant, I was not wedded to that particular distance which could be reduced to whatever the House in its discretion thought might be reasonable. It might be half that distance, or only 100 yards. But no member is going to suggest to me that in cases—and I care not whether it be in Perth, Katanning or Kalgoorlie—where there are electric mains in close proximity to homes that are let to tenants who, because of circumstances, are unable to secure alternative accommodation, they must be compelled to use hurricane lamps and kerosene lamps generally.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That is what the Honorary Minister wanted.

Mr. GRAHAM: That probably provides one of the strongest arguments for members to support the Bill. I cannot understand the attitude of the Minister, when that is my desire and when, as he knows, he can limit the area of the application of this provision or reduce the distance, as I have suggested, or increase the time which I have laid down. Every member is aware that we are passing through somewhat unusual times, and it is difficult to have work undertaken as expeditiously as one would desire. But I would point out that the unfortunate occupant of the premises would probably, even with the insertion of this provision in the Act, be for two or three months without electric light, and I do not think that would be fair and reasonable when there are within handy distance facilities provided by some public authority.

Persons have a right to those facilities on general health grounds and from the viewpoint of amenities being provided wherever possible. The idea of people having needlessly to read and attend to their work and for children to study with the aid of hurricane lamps and other primitive methods of lighting is something the House should not tolerate in this modern age. I discussed the proposals with three authorities, and in no instance did they criticise a single phase of the Bill I have introduced. One of those authorities was the Town Clerk of the City of Perth, who thought the measure was long overdue. Another was the General Manager of the Electricity Commission, whose considered view it was that a quarter of a mile was a reasonable distance. Nevertheless if there are some members as conservative as appears to be the case, I have no objection to a reduction of that distance. The matter was further discussed by me with the Commissioner of Public Health, who made certain observations favourable to what I am seeking to achieve.

If a local governing body in a particular area does not favour the measure, there is nothing to compel it to do these things. In the first instance, the local governing

authority need not take advantage of this provision if it does not so desire. There may be cases where tenants do not desire to have electric light, and in those circumstances there would be no applications. Notwithstanding that an application was made, it would still be within the province of the local governing authority to reject it, either on the score that the house was too isolated or that it was too old and was likely to be condemned and demolished within a short period, or because there was a shortage of electricity supplies, and for the time being it would be unwise that any new premises should be connected owing to the extra load involved. I do not know, however, that that objection would be valid. The idea originated with the Minister for Local Government. If a new house was erected in the ordinary way and the owner was prepared to instal electricity for himself or his tenants, without this procedure, there would still be that additional load on the electricity supply.

I want members to appreciate that the Bill would have application only where it was desired that it should be applied, in the areas of a very few local governing authorities. There are only isolated cases where landlords are not doing the right and decent thing. It is quite possible that in the area of the City of Perth perhaps only two such applications would be made in the next five years, and in other areas there might be no such cases but, if there were—and I have shown one case covering seven houses—landlords who refused to supply reasonable facilities for their tenants, having had many years in which to connect up the premises with the electricity supply, could be brought under this measure.

I think that as a last resort it is the duty of Parliament to see that unfortunate people, suffering such disabilities, have an approach to some authority—the elected council or road board—to determine, after investigation, whether it will issue an order for the supply of electric current to the homes concerned. I emphasise that I hope all members will be reasonable in this matter. I do not think the principles involved can be denied, though there may be differences of opinion on certain details. As I have said, I do not intend to insist upon the details, but hope members will be as generous as possible so that there may be some relief for the people of whom I have spoken, and any others in similar circumstances.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Insertion of new section 300A in principal Act:

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of proposed new Section 300A the words "one-quarter of a mile" be struck out and the words "one hundred yards" inserted in lieu.

I have already dealt with this question to some extent and the member for East Perth has said he is prepared to consider such an amendment. The Electricity Act provides that if the supply to a proposed consumer necessitates the extension of the distribution main, a supply authority may refuse to carry out such extension, but arrangements may be made to extend the main, if the supply authority approves, by the prospective consumer paying the cost of such extension or a proportion thereof, such payments not being returnable. I therefore think it has become even more essential than the member for East Perth believes that the one-quarter of a mile should be substantially reduced. I am advised that not less than £50 and possibly £60 would be involved at the present time in an extension of up to a quarter of a mile. That would not be at the expense of the supply authority, but of the owner of the premises. When speaking on the second reading of this measure, I said I could conceive of cases where that would inflict hardship, as not all owners of properties are distinguished by their capacity for the retention of money. However, the House was apparently of the opinion that the Bill should pass the second reading with all its faults. I now seek to minimise them.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I move an amendment—

That in line 5 of proposed new Section 300A after the word "purposes" the words "and electricity supply from such main is available from the supply authority."

This amendment is to ensure that the local authority will not make an order in respect of something that cannot be carried out. I have already referred to the law regarding electricity supply authorities, which provides that the authority may refuse, except under certain conditions. Therefore the local authority will be reminded of that fact and compelled to take it into consideration when arriving at a decision whether to exercise the power that the member for East Perth proposes to confer on it. I do not think he desires for one moment that the provision should apply where electricity is not available. I wish to make it clear that the power cannot be exercised in such circumstances.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 9 of proposed new Section 300A the word "one" be struck out and the word "three" inserted in lieu.

I think it will be realised that one month is too short a time. Three months would be reasonable especially in view of the difficult conditions now existing.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 4, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 22nd October.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. A. F. Watts—Katanning) [8.33]: It is hardly necessary for me to traverse the ground I have just covered. This Bill is identical with the measure just dealt with except for the fact that it deals with the insertion of a proposed new Section 208B in the Road Districts Act whereas the other dealt with the insertion of a proposed new Section 300A in the Municipal Corporations Act. I think I can safely say that the objections I raised previously apply much more strongly in this case because, while it is true that the municipalities deal mainly with large centres of population, it is equally true that road boards do nothing of the sort. In consequence, the objections I raised to the other Bill are, in my opinion, the stronger on this measure.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth—in reply) [8.34]: There are cases, as the Minister is aware, where road districts have within their boundaries towns with populations even larger than have some municipalities, and in view of that fact, if members opposed this Bill, it would mean that a large town like Katanning would not come within the provisions of the Act, because it is controlled by a road board, while a smaller town like Wagin would come within the provision to permit of electricity being installed in these isolated cases.

Mr. Marshall: What area has the Perth road district?

Mr. GRAHAM: A much larger area than has the Perth City Council and a far smaller area than have the great majority of road boards. I think it will be found that in the more isolated places, the cases likely to come forward under the proposed amendment will be equally isolated, but the same principle applies to premises wherever they may be, and if they are situated within reasonable distance of electric mains, tenants should be entitled to make application to the local authority as proposed.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Insertion of new Section 208B in principal Act:

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: It is desirable to move similar amendments to this measure. Without dwelling on them, I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of the proposed new section, the words "one-quarter of a mile" be struck out and the words "one hundred yards" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I move an amendment—

That after the word "purposes" in line 5, the words "and electricity supply from such main is available from the supply authority" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

Mr. NEEDHAM: I move an amendment—

That in line 8, the word "one" be struck out and the word "three" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—FARMERS' DEBTS ADJUSTMENT ACT AMENDMENT. (CONTINUANCE).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. H. PANTON (Leederville) [8.41]: This is one of those innocents that come before us each session for an extension of 12 months. I am inclined to agree with the member for East Perth that we might give such measures an extended duration of three years. It seems that the Act will be with us for some time and I think we would be well advised to extend the duration to 1950 anyhow.

The Minister for Education: I have no objection to that.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: Otherwise there is no objection to the measure from this side of the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of Section 19:

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: Pursuant to the suggestion made by the member for Leederville, to which I indicated that I offered no objection, I move an amendment—

That in line 3, the word "forty-nine" be struck out and the word "fifty" inserted in lieu.

Then the duration of the measure will be extended from this date for approximately 2½ years instead of 1½ years as proposed.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—THE FREMANTLE GAS AND COKE COMPANY'S ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading—Amendment.

Debate resumed from the 23rd October.

HON. J. B. SLEEMAN (Fremantle) [8.45]: There are one or two reasons why I rise to speak against the passing of this Bill. One of the reasons is that the Minister for Lands was insistent the other evening in wanting to know what the member for Fremantle thought about it. Not once but several times during the debate he interjected that he wanted to know my views. Seeing that he is so anxious I am going to oblige him. In the first place I am not prepared to see this Bill go through at the present time, because the public at Fremantle, and not only Fremantle but nearly all the local governing bodies—nine of them—around the Fremantle district and up to Swanbourne and Claremont, are concerned. The conditions have been so bad that something has to be done about them. I have had several complaints, and generally at tea time, from some of my suffering electors, who want to know what I can do for them so that they may cook their tea as there is insufficient gas. I have had to tell them I was sorry and that it was not possible for me to do anything for them at present.

During the last two or three weeks, I have had complaints from people who have gas refrigerators that there was not enough gas to keep them going, and saying how awkward it was to suddenly have the gas cut off. We have to do something in the interests of the public at large. This concern is growing into a huge monopoly, covering as it does so many local governing bodies. Some people may think it is a small concern affecting only the centre of Fremantle, but such is not the case. A few years ago the company caused to have passed a Bill providing for a large extension of country to be served by it. I do not know whether it was fortunate or not for the company, but it was unfortunate for many people. Mains were rushed through further east of Fremantle while people nearer home had to go without gas. At present there are many Bicton and Palmyra people who cannot get the gas

laid on. I have also had complaints from people in the North-East Fremantle area to the effect that they could not get the gas laid on. In the more salubrious suburbs of Swanbourne and Cottesloe, apparently the mains were rushed through to provide the local people with the necessary gas. I should like to see the member for Claremont on the floor of the House this evening so that he could tell us how that particular district fares.

Mr. Rodoreda: People cannot cook their Sunday dinner there.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: It is a pity the member for Claremont could not rise in his place and see that some alteration was made in the position. Other countries have passed legislation dealing with gas companies, setting out the quantity, quality and pressure of the gas. There is also legislation dealing with the shares of gas companies. I propose to read what is done in New South Wales and will quote from page 23 of the Gas and Electricity Company Act of that State with regard to the standard of heat, power, purity and pressure of gas.—

The standard of heating power of the gas supplied by a gas company shall be not less than five hundred and fifty British thermal units gross: Provided that if the Minister is satisfied that it would be to the advantage of persons supplied with gas by a gas company he may by notification published in the Gazette, vary the standard of heating power of the gas to be supplied by such company.

A company supplying or distributing gas of a standard of heating power which at the commencement of this Act has been determined under the law for the time being in force may maintain that standard until varied by the Minister, as provided in paragraph (a) of this subsection.

The gas supplied by a gas company shall contain no sulphuretted hydrogen.

A gas company shall supply gas at such a pressure—

I will not read all this but would point out that—

A gas company which refuses or willfully neglects to give or to continue to supply that which it is required to give or continue under this Act shall upon summary conviction be liable to a penalty not exceeding 40s. in respect of each day during which such refusal or neglect continues.

If the Fremantle company was subject to that penalty there would be many days and many people that they would be compelled to pay for. I do not want to block the Bill from going through, but I do want to see it held up until something is done. Under the law in Great Britain and New South Wales, gas shares have to be auctioned. We find that under the Bill it is proposed to increase the shares by 130,000. The outsider will have no chance of getting any, for it is a case of preference to the present shareholders.

The Attorney General: Why does not your municipality take over the works?

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: That would be a good idea. I suppose the Attorney General stands for nationalisation of gas works and other things. Here is a chance for him to start out upon that project. It is possible under the Act for the Fremantle municipality to take over the works if it so desires. The Bill means that 130,000 shares are to be allotted to present shareholders only. They have the option of saying that they can be issued at par and this means giving about 13s. 6d. on each share to those who take up the 130,000 shares. That is another reason why something should be done. After the wonderful speech made by the member for North-East Fremantle, it is not my intention to delay the House much longer. I tell the Minister for Lands that we were prepared to allow the member for North-East Fremantle to state the case for Fremantle members, as he has done a lot of research work.

When the Minister for Lands seemed so anxious to know what the member for Fremantle thought about it all, I decided not to disappoint him and I have let him know what I do think. I am prepared to let the Bill to go through after certain things are done. It is my intention to move to strike out the word "now" with a view to inserting other words. My reason is that if we allow this Bill to go through, seeing that it has already been passed by another place, and to be placed on the statute-book, it will give the company a pretty fair go. If the other two Bills do not reach the statute-book the company will be able to snap its fingers at Parliament and need not do anything. This Bill should be held up until the other two gas Bills are considered by the legislature. I therefore move an amendment—

That the word "now" be struck out with a view to inserting in lieu the words "after

both Houses have given consideration to the two Bills on gas of which notice has already been given."

Amendment (to strike out word) put and a division taken with the following result:

Ayes	20
Noes	18
Majority for	2

AYES.

Mr. Coverley	Mr. Panton
Mr. Fox	Mr. Read
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Reynolds
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Shearn
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Smith
Mr. Leahy	Mr. Styants
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. May	Mr. Triat
Mr. Needham	Mr. Rodoreda (*Teller.*)

NOES.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Bovell	Mr. Nimmo
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doney	Mr. Seward
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hall	Mr. Watts
Mr. Leslie	Mr. Wild
Mr. McDonald	Mr. Yates
Mr. Murray	Mr. Brand (*Teller.*)

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Hill
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Mann
Mr. Wise	Mr. McLarty
Mr. Collier	Mr. Keenan
Mr. Graham	Mr. Abbott

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. J. B. SLEEMAN: I move—

That the words proposed to be inserted be inserted.

Amendment (to insert words) put and passed; the motion, as amended, agreed to.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (No. 4).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [9.0]: This Bill, as the Attorney General explained when introducing it, has as its main principles a proposal to give the right to vote for the Legislative Council to the wife or husband of any householder, to give a similar right to the occupier of a self-contained flat, and to abolish the existing practice of plural voting. In his speech, he said that the Bill contained four matters. I have mentioned three. The fourth, which the Attorney General mentioned, has to do with the deletion of the word "sterling" from Section 15. There is, however, another proposal in the Bill that the Attorney General did not even mention, let alone explain. That is the proposal to make it obligatory upon any person claiming to be enrolled to give proof to the satisfaction of the Chief Electoral Officer that he or she possesses one or other of the several qualifications which will be in the Act when this Bill is passed.

When the qualifications in Section 15 are studied, it will be seen that it will not be the easiest matter in the world for persons claiming to be enrolled to prove to the satisfaction of the Chief Electoral Officer that they possess one or other of them. I am sorry the Attorney General did not, when introducing the Bill, deal with this point because it seems to me that many people who will claim enrolment in the future will find some difficulty in proving to the Chief Electoral Officer that they are possessed of the qualification which they claim to hold. For instance, if this measure is passed the wife of any householder will be entitled to claim enrolment. I do not know what the Attorney General has in mind as to the proof which any woman would have to submit to the Chief Electoral Officer to demonstrate that she was indeed the wife of the householder of a particular house or self-contained flat. I presume she would have to produce her marriage certificate.

That might seem to be the simple and easy explanation, but there could be occasions when the marriage certificate would prove that the woman concerned was the wife of the householder, but she might not, in fact, be living in the house with her husband because of some separation, legal or otherwise. Whether such a woman would, under this Bill when it becomes part of the Act, be entitled to enrolment is, perhaps, doubtful, although it seems to me that the fact of a wife being separated from her husband so as not to be living with him would not have the effect, legally, of taking away from her the right which this Bill proposes to give, namely, that of claiming and obtaining enrolment if her husband is a householder. I do not know whether the Attorney General discussed this part of the Bill with the Chief Electoral Officer. If he did, he will be in possession of the general ideas of that officer as to the sort of proof he would

consider satisfactory under the various enrolment headings already set out in Section 15, and in connection with the additional qualifications which this Bill will insert into the principal Act, when it becomes law.

If the Attorney General has not already discussed this part of the Bill with the Chief Electoral Officer it is, of course, not possible for the Attorney General tonight to give us a general indication of the lines which the Chief Electoral Officer would follow in the event of this part of the Bill becoming law. As the Attorney General did not discuss this matter when explaining the Bill, members are not even aware of the reason for its inclusion. I think members are entitled to have this part justified to them by the Attorney General, before finally agreeing to accept it. I am inclined to think that, if this part of the measure becomes law, it will be found to be very difficult of administration in many instances. It might indeed become so difficult of administration by the Chief Electoral Officer as to be more or less a dead letter with the passing of time.

As far as my knowledge goes, the administration of the Act in regard to claims for enrolment has proceeded smoothly over the years. It might be that some cases could be instanced of people wrongfully claiming and obtaining enrolment, but I suggest that such cases will arise in the future no matter how strictly this part of the Bill is administered, in the event of its becoming law. There are several qualifications for enrolment for the Legislative Council and this Bill proposes to add to the number. They are, in addition, not easy of understanding to the ordinary person because, as we know, people take very little interest in Legislative Council affairs and consequently are not really well informed as to what gives a man or a woman the right to claim enrolment for the Council. Just how much proof the Chief Electoral Officer will want in some cases it is difficult to imagine.

In my view, this part of the Bill might very well be deleted and certainly should be deleted unless the Attorney General can demonstrate clearly two things: firstly, the justification for this proposal; and secondly, the necessity to set up in some detail just what the Chief Electoral Officer will consider to be adequate proof in regard to each and every qualification now in the Act and the additional ones this Bill proposes to insert. If the Attorney General is able to satisfy the House under both these headings, then the majority of members might be prepared to allow this part of the Bill to remain and become part of the parent Act. In every other respect, in regard to principle, this Bill follows exactly the lines of the Bill that it was my privilege to introduce some days ago. I am not going to ask the Attorney General to tell us just when the preparation of this Government Bill commenced. I am not even going to ask him to tell us whether the Government would have introduced this Bill this session if a private member had not introduced a similar Bill this session. I have my own ideas about that, but one can never be certain.

I suppose it would be possible for me to ask the Attorney General to table the file, or give me an opportunity to peruse it. If either of those courses were followed, it would be possible to obtain beyond any shadow of doubt clear-cut information as to when the preparation of the Bill was in fact started. However, I think at this stage of the proceedings there is not a great deal to be gained by going through that procedure except to show that the Government was really stirred into activity in connection with the matters set out in the Bill because of action taken earlier by a private member. Rather than go to any trouble at all to try to find out when the Attorney General first issued instructions for the preparation of his Bill, I think we might give thanks to Heaven for the fact that a Government made up, as it is, of representatives of the Liberal Party and the Country and Democratic League should have seen its way clear to introduce a Bill containing the principles in this one. There is no doubt that the path of reform in regard to the Legislative Council in Western Australia has been very difficult.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Very slow.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The progress made along that path has been pathetically slow over a period of 40 to 50 years. The proposals in the Bill represent an attempt to achieve what might fairly be described as major reforms in the franchise for the Council. The other evening the Premier, in a very quiet peaceful way, told us of the pledges given by the two Government

Parties to the electors of Western Australia during the last election campaign in connection with the principles in this Bill. The member for Nedlands, in a very wild, excitable way, also told us about those pledges. Therefore, I think we and the public can take it for granted that every member of the Liberal Party in this House and in the Legislative Council, and every member of the Country and Democratic League in this House and in the Council, is pledged to the support of this Bill.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The member for Geraldton does not believe that.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If that be not so, the pledges given by the two Government Parties to the people at the last election campaign in connection with this Bill and in connection with any other matter are pledges which are worthless.

Mr. Reynolds: We shall see.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Because it is nothing short of a confidence trick upon the electors if the members of the Government in this Assembly and their supporters in this Assembly support a Bill containing certain pledges made by the Government Parties to the electors, and members of the Government Parties in another place can dissociate themselves entirely from those pledges and defeat the Bill. I think the Ministers of the Government in this Assembly—and I should hope every member of each of the Government Parties in this Assembly—would regard such a development within the Parliament of the State as outright and discreditable repudiation by some of the Parliamentary members of the two Government Parties, and any action which might be taken in another place in that regard would be an action entirely to be condemned by the electors of the State as a whole. I make reference to that matter because I consider it to be one of very great importance in regard to the Government of the State at this particular period. I hope that the Ministers of this Government in particular will give very serious consideration to it as well. In my opinion, the Ministers of this Government would be put in an intolerable situation if members of their Parties in another place were to defeat a Bill of this kind which contains pledges solemnly and sacredly given to the electors on behalf of both Government Parties during the last election campaign.

Hon. A. H. Panton.: They would not do that!

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: He knows what they are going to do.

Member: And so does the Government!

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If members of the Government Parties in another place are true to their pledges, if they are honest with the public of the State, there can be no doubt this Bill will become law. If it does, it will confer on many hundreds of people within the State a right which they do not have at present, and a right which should have been given to them many years ago. So I am hopeful that the Bill will pass this Assembly, with perhaps some amendments as to procedure and detail—but none as regards principle—and that it will receive approval in another place and become the law of the State, so that a large new group of people will be entitled to claim enrolment in time to play a part in electing members to the Legislative Council at the elections that I believe are to take place in May of next year.

MR. HEGNEY (Pilbara) [9.21]: I am of the opinion that drastic reform of the Constitution, as indicated in this Bill, is overdue. After the foundation of the colonies in Australia, and long before the Commonwealth was inaugurated, the British Government instituted a system of Legislative Councils, an outstanding characteristic of which was the restricted franchise. In later years the bi-cameral system was introduced into the colonies and there was an Assembly and a Council functioning in each State. All down the years Legislative Council members have continued to be elected on the restricted franchise that I have mentioned. When the Commonwealth of Australia was established in 1901 the people of Australia as a whole were entitled to vote for both the House of Representatives and the Senate as long as they complied with certain requirements, which were that they should be over the age of 21 years, natural born or naturalised British subjects, and inhabitants of the Commonwealth for a period of six months. The people of the States are also the people of the Commonwealth who today, exercising the adult franchise, return members to the Commonwealth Parliament to legislate on both national and international affairs.

In these days of allegedly enlightened education, when every boy and girl must be educated to a certain standard, we find that when they reach manhood or womanhood they are not entitled, as State residents, to exercise the full rights of citizenship unless they can meet certain requirements that are set out in the Constitutions of the States. It is interesting to look at the Constitutions of the various States today. I need not deal with Queensland, because in that State the Legislative Council was a nominee Chamber and some 25 years ago the Government of that time abolished the Legislative Council. The political complexion of the Government of that day—in 1922—was Labour, and in only three of the ensuing 25 years has an anti-Labour Government been returned by the people of Queensland. The question before the House, however, is not one of the abolition of the second Chamber, but of an extension of the franchise. I turn now to New South Wales, where a peculiar position exists, inasmuch as the electors to the Legislative Council of that State are contituted of members elected by members of the Legislative Assembly and the Legislative Council.

I will deal next with the other States. It will be admitted, especially by younger members of the Government, that the time is long overdue in those States for radical reform of the second Chamber. In Tasmania—I quote from the Tasmanian Constitution—all people over the age of 21 years are entitled to vote at Legislative Assembly elections, but in Section 28 of that Constitution it is provided—

(1) Subject to the provisions of this Act, every person, male or female, of the age of twenty-one years, who is a natural-born or naturalised subject of His Majesty, and has been resident in the State for a period of 12 months, shall be qualified to vote at the election of a member to serve in the Council—

(i) If he is the owner of a freehold estate in possession, legal or equitable, within the Division for which his vote is to be given, of the annual value of ten pounds, or is the occupier of any property within the Division for which his vote is to be given of the annual value of thirty pounds.

(ii) If he possesses any of the following qualifications, and is resident in the Division for which his vote is to be given; that is to say if he is—

(a) A graduate of any university in the British Dominions, or an associate of art in Tasmania.

(b) A legal practitioner on the roll of the Supreme Court.

(c) A legally qualified medical practitioner.

(d) An officiating minister of religion.

(e) An officer or retired officer of His Majesty's land or sea forces not being on actual service, or a retired officer of the volunteer force of Tasmania—
or if having been a member of any land, sea, or air forces raised in any of His Majesty's Dominions for service in the war in which His Majesty was engaged, and which commenced on the fourth day of August, one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, and which shall be deemed to have terminated on the tenth day of January, one thousand nine hundred and twenty, he served therein outside the State or country in which such force was raised and was discharged therefrom, or ceased so to serve, otherwise than through any fault or misconduct on his part; or

(iii) If his name is on the electoral roll for any Council Division.

That is a hang-over from the time when that State was Van Dieman's Land. I turn now to South Australia where all people can exercise adult franchise for the Legislative Assembly, but the following requirements are laid down in the Constitution—

Mr. SPEAKER: Can the hon. member connect this up with the Bill later on?

Mr. HEGNEY: You will be surprised, Sir, at the strength of the links with which I will form an unbreakable chain, within a few minutes. The Constitution of South Australia provides—

(1) Subject to the next two succeeding sections, the following persons, and no others, shall be entitled to vote at the election of members of the Legislative Council, namely:—

(i) Any person who has a freehold estate in possession, either legal or equitable, in any land situate within the State, which estate is of the clear value of at least fifty pounds above all charges and encumbrances affecting the same.

(ii) Any person who has a leasehold estate in possession, in any land situate within the State, which estate is of the clear annual value of at least twenty pounds:
Provided that the lease thereof—

(a) has been registered in the Lands Titles Registration Office or the General Registry Office for the registration of deeds, and

(b) was, when granted, for a term of not less than three years, or contains a clause authorising the lessee to become the purchaser of the land thereby demised;

(3) Any person who is registered as the proprietor of a lease from the Crown of lands situated within the State upon which land

there are improvements to the value of at least fifty pounds, which improvements are the property of such person; and

(4) Any person who is an inhabitant-occupier, as owner or tenant of any dwelling house: Provided that no person shall be entitled to vote by reason of being a joint occupier of any dwelling house.

(5) Any person who—

(a) has been a member of the A.I.F. or of the R.A.N. or of any other Naval or Military Force raised in the Commonwealth by the Minister of Defence for service outside the Commonwealth in the war which commenced on 4th August, 1914, or has been a member of His Majesty's Army or Navy or of any Naval or Military Force raised in any country forming part of His Majesty's Dominions for service in the said war outside the country wherein the Force was raised, and

(b) has served in connection with the said war outside the Commonwealth or outside the United Kingdom, or outside the country wherein the Force of which he was a member was raised, as the case may be, and

(c) has received his discharge from service or has otherwise ceased to be on service, and

(d) was not so discharged or did not so cease to be on service because of his own default or misconduct.

Finally, I wish to quote the provisions applying in Victoria. There the following persons are entitled under Section 62 to enrol for the Legislative Council—

Any person over the age of 21 years—

(a) Being either the mortgagor or mortgagee of any lands or tenements if in the actual possession or in receipt of the rents and profit therefrom, or

(b) being the cestui qui trust in equal possession or in receipt of the rent and profits of any lands or tenements rated to some municipality upon a yearly value of not less than £10.

Section 63 reads—

A lessee or assignee of a lease created for a period not less than five years rated to a municipality upon a yearly value of not less than £15.

Section 67 provides —

(a) A graduate of any university in the British Dominions;

(b) A barrister and solicitor;

(c) A legally qualified medical practitioner;

(d) A duly appointed Minister of any church or religious denomination;

(e) A person possessing a certificate of fitness to teach issued by some competent authority appointed under any Act;

(f) An officer or retired officer of His Majesty's Land or Sea Forces;

(g) A person who has matriculated at the University of Melbourne.

I wish to draw the attention particularly of the younger and more liberal-minded members on the Government side to the existing position and endeavour to enlist their support in the direction of drastically altering the Constitution of the Legislative Council of this State. It will be agreed, I think, that the Constitutions I have quoted are long overdue for reform.

As regards Western Australia, we all know what the provisions of the Constitution are. I shall never rest so long as I am a member of this Chamber until reform of the Council is brought about, and I shall always raise my voice in support of the franchise being extended until every person over the age of 21 years has a right to vote for that Chamber the same as for the Legislative Assembly. This Bill represents a move in the direction I have indicated. We on this side of the House have tried over a long period of years to bring about the reform of the Council. In the earlier stages of the agitation by the Labour movement, it was argued with much vehemence and vigour, both by members of the Council and by members of the Assembly on the side opposed to Labour, that the Council should be sacrosanct, that the franchise should not be tampered with, because it was purely and simply a House of review, a House to keep a check on legislation and to prevent hasty legislation. I should like any member to say whether he believes in that today. Due to political progress and the methods obtaining under our Parliamentary system, government by one political party or the other is necessary, and would any member on the Government side deny that the Legislative Council is just as much a Party House today as is the Legislative Assembly?

Hon. A. H. Panton: More so.

Mr. HEGNEY: There is not more than one Independent, if there is one, in the Legislative Council. I do not propose to mention names, but the personnel of the Council includes members of the Country Party, active members of the Liberal Party, members even on the Liberal Party executive, and there are also members of the Labour Party who secured the endorsement of that party. So I wish to impress upon members on the Government side that the argument that the Legislative Council is a House of review and that only those people with a stake in the country should

have a vote for that House will no longer hold water.

Reference to the argument about having a stake in the country reminds me that thousands of young men and women who served in the recent war, both oversea and in Australia, if they do not own freehold to a value of £50 or pay rent to the amount of £17 a year are still not entitled to a vote for the Legislative Council. The member for Mt. Marshall is an active member of the R.S.L. and I suggest that this is a direction in which the R.S.L. could be of material assistance to a large number of young men and women by ensuring that they shall become entitled to vote for the Council by virtue of their service during the recent war. They are entitled to a vote at Commonwealth elections and should be entitled to a vote for the Legislative Council.

My remarks are not being made with any idea of scoring political advantage or with any idea of indulging in propaganda. I assure the House that I make that statement in all sincerity. I am not trying to harass or embarrass the Government or any member of the Government or to suggest anything improper of any particular organisation. I am acting sincerely because I believe that, as we have adult franchise for the election of members of the Commonwealth Parliament, we should also have it for the election of members of the Legislative Council, and more particularly that any preference or priority in this respect should be extended to the thousands of young men and women who served in the various branches of the Forces.

Quite a number of men who are part of the cream of the people in the South-West, and North-West are timber workers, miners and others. By virtue of their occupation, they may not own freehold to the value of £50 or pay rent to the amount of 6s. 9d. a week because the accommodation supplied is not worth it. Such men are entitled to a vote for the Assembly, but not for the Council. Over the years, members of the Labour Party have endeavoured to broaden the franchise of the Council. The Labour Government submitted a Bill for the taking of a referendum to ascertain whether the people desired the present franchise to continue. We endeavoured to restrict the unlimited power of the Council along the lines of the British Parliament Act of 1911. All those moves by the Labour Government, however, were frustrated and defeated in another place.

The Bill is one to which I think every member on this side of the House will subscribe. Personally, I am only sorry that it does not go much further in its provisions, as I believe the time is long overdue when we should adopt adult franchise for the Legislative Council. I mentioned in this Chamber on a previous occasion, and repeat it now, that if this Parliament is to retain the confidence of the people of the State in any State system of government as against a Federal system of government, and not hand over further powers to the Commonwealth, we must see to it that at an early date the people of the State are entitled to vote for both Houses. Every person today is educated and can understand the requirements and obligations of citizenship. Yet we retain the Constitution which we have had since 1832 and deny them the right to exercise the full rights of citizenship. I think you will agree, Mr. Speaker, that I have to the best of my ability, and in conformity with my promise, linked up my remarks with the provisions of the Bill. I hope it will soon be placed on the statute-book after having been passed this session by another place.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [9.42]: Like other speakers who have addressed themselves to this question, I welcome the Bill, although I am not optimistic enough to believe that it will become law. It certainly will leave this Chamber under different conditions from those under which similar Bills have left it. I am under the impression that it will leave this Chamber with the approbation of every member, because of the change of heart of the Government of today, a change of heart brought about very much against its will. Despite that fact, however, I am not optimistic enough to believe, as I said, that it will receive the sanction of the other branch of the Legislature. It certainly is a step forward. As the member for Pilbara said, it is an answer to the agitation that has been going on for the widening of the franchise of the Legislative Council.

The Bill does a little more than widen that franchise. It does a little more than give

the vote to the wife of the occupant of the house or to the flat-dweller. It proposes to abolish the pernicious system of plural voting, and that, to my mind, is the most important feature of the Bill. I shall be very much surprised if another place will go as far as to approve of a measure containing that particular provision. I quite agree with what the member for Pilbara said when he stated that the Legislative Council in the Parliament of a State is not simply a House of review. That remark can also be applied to the Senate. The Upper House of the Commonwealth Parliament, it has often been contended, is not a Party House, it is simply a State House, but that fallacy was exploded many years ago. The Senate became a pronounced Party House nearly 36 years ago. In 1910 or 1911 the then Leader of the anti-Labour Party in that Chamber, in my own hearing as a member of the Senate, announced the fact that he had been elected the Leader of His Majesty's Opposition. Prior to that there was no such thing. From that day to this, no matter what Party has been in office, the Senate has proved to be a pronounced Party Chamber. That applies also to this Parliament.

During the years when Labour happens to hold the reins of Government, invariably advanced legislation is put through the Legislative Assembly, but it has either been mutilated or rejected in another place. It is true that some of the advanced legislation sent from this Chamber by Labour Governments has left the Legislative Council in some kind of shape so that its authors would not know it when it came back to this Chamber. The Council has agreed to many measures passed by this Chamber, but measures of advanced legislation, as I have already said, were either rejected or altered beyond recognition. The Legislative Council has persistently used its powers to prevent the passage of advanced or reform legislation. It has often been said that the second Chamber of this Parliament is more strongly entrenched and has greater powers than has any second Chamber in the British Commonwealth of Nations, and I believe that statement to be true.

An argument that has often been adduced against legislation brought in by Labour Governments in this Chamber to broaden the franchise of the Legislative Council is that we should first pay attention to this Chamber, and alter the boundaries of the electorates to bring them into line with certain suggestions which it was contended would make the representation fairer and more equitable. That is a sorry argument against measures emanating in this Chamber for the extension of the franchise of another place. I dare say that the same argument will be brought forward now, notwithstanding that the Government is sponsoring the measure now before us.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: The Government ought to be had up for unlawful possession of this Bill!

Mr. NEEDHAM: Probably so.

The Attorney General: You stole the gas Bill!

Mr. NEEDHAM: I noticed in the Press a statement to the effect that before this measure became law, an alteration of boundaries Bill should be introduced. I dare say that that was a hint to another place to deal with this Bill in the way it has dealt with similar Bills.

Mr. Styants: Before long it will be a direction, not a hint.

Mr. NEEDHAM: Possibly it will get as far as that and consequently I shall not be at all surprised to see the Bill rejected.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Live in hope!

Mr. NEEDHAM: While there has been a clamour for an alteration of the boundaries of the electorates for this particular branch of the Legislature, there has been no clamour at all to alter the franchise of the other branch of the Legislature which has been in existence now for nearly 60 years. It may be necessary—and it might be the right thing—to alter the boundaries if this Chamber is not democratically or equitably representative. But why it should always be brought forward as a stock argument against extending the franchise of another place, or removing plural voting, or determining the powers of the Legislative Council, with regard to legislation, I cannot understand. I again welcome this opportunity to test the sincerity of the members of the Legislative Council by seeing if they will at last yield to what I think is a reasonable measure. As has been pointed out by the member for Pilbara, every man and woman in this country on attaining the age of 21 years

can exercise the full right of citizenship so far as the nation's Parliament is concerned.

Surely it will be admitted that the work of that Parliament is now, and has, for many years past, been of vast importance. Important though the legislation of our State Parliament is, in many instances it pales into insignificance when compared with that passed by the National Parliament. That was especially so during the war years, and we know it to be the position during the present transitional period. If every man and woman who attains the age of 21 years can exercise that right of citizenship for that Parliament, surely they are competent to exercise the right to vote for the members of another place in this State Parliament. It should not be necessary to have any kind of property qualifications. The men and women who elect the members of this Chamber should have the same opportunity to elect the members of another place. If ever the time was opportune to broaden the franchise of that Chamber, it is now.

Reference has been made to the returned men who fought in our defence during those six dark years. I agree with the member for Mt. Marshall that this is not a subject for the R.S.L. It is of a political and highly controversial nature. Whilst admitting that, I think the members of the R.S.L. who are also members of this House, can see the necessity for passing legislation which will give their ex comrades-in-arms the opportunity to vote for the members of another place. If, at the ages of 18, 19 and 20, they were competent to risk their lives in defence of the very property which our friends in another place represent, apart from their lives, I think they are entitled to vote. I support the Bill, but will be surprised if it becomes law.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. R. R. McDonald—West Perth—in reply) [9.55]: The member for Northam referred to words requiring that the qualification should be proved to the satisfaction of the Chief Electoral Officer. I regret, if inadvertently, I failed to mention those words. I did not attach any great importance to them because I think they are no more, or not very much more, than the present law. They are almost exactly the same words as those which appeared in the Bill introduced in another House some little time ago, and from which the clauses in this measure were largely taken. The same words were introduced into this Bill as were contained in the measure submitted in another place by an eminent member of that Chamber. When a man says he is entitled to vote either for the Legislative Assembly or the Legislative Council, he maintains that he possesses certain qualifications. It then becomes the duty of the Electoral Department to ascertain whether the qualifications are true.

Certain residential qualifications, both in the State and in the district, are necessary, even for the Assembly. In the case of a province certain other qualifications, usually referred to as property or family qualifications, are required. The Electoral Act provides by Section 46 Subsection (2) that, when a claim is made either for the Assembly or for a Council province, if the Registrar has reason to believe that the qualification of a claimant as set out in his claim is insufficient or incorrect he may do certain things. In the first place he has to satisfy himself that the qualifications are as claimed. If the Registrar is not satisfied, and rejects a claim there are certain rights of appeal which can be exercised against his decision.

I do not think these words represent much more than a conformity with the principles required by the Electoral Act. I do not regard them as being in any way material to the Bill. If it is preferred to take them out, it can be done without damaging or affecting the extension of the franchise sought to be achieved by the measure. This matter would then rest upon the terms laid down in the Act. I am quite easy about this. They were simply inserted because they had been used previously, and had a certain conformity with the Electoral Act. As I said in my opening remarks, two of the clauses represent policy statements contained in the Premier's Policy Speech. The third is a matter which is more open to individual opinion, and relates to voting. This House expressed a wish that it should be included and, in deference to that desire, a clause has been inserted.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have counted the House and assured myself that there is an

absolute majority of members present. I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

BILL—GOVERNMENT RAILWAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [10.0]: Before proceeding to deal with the contents of the Bill I want to protest against the position with regard to the consolidation of the Railway Acts. I do not know which Minister would be responsible or whether it would be the Premier, but I find that since 1904 there have been six or seven Railways Act amendment measures before the House and that the consolidation of those measures has not proceeded beyond the 1907 Act.

The Attorney General: The printing office cannot do the work.

Mr. STYANTS: I suppose every other member who has given any study to the proposed amendments has found himself in the same position as I of having to look up six or seven amending Acts. By the time one inserts amendments that were made under the 1907 measure, and finds that since that time there have been two or three other amendments, the position is so confusing as to make it almost unintelligible. There are about six amending measures that have to be consulted in order to ascertain what this Bill really means. In fairness to members, some effort should be made to effect a consolidation.

The Attorney General: I am afraid this has been in a very bad way for several years. We are trying very hard now to overcome the difficulty.

Mr. STYANTS: I thank the Attorney General. I want first to refer to the mystification of most members as to why a Bill dealing with railway matters, and such very important changes as are portended, should have been brought down while a Royal Commission is inquiring into the administration of railways in this State. I am wondering what the position will be if we pass this legislation and the Royal Commission, within a few weeks of our doing so, brings down a recommendation which will completely alter what this Bill proposes to effect. I think that is more than likely. It will surprise me very greatly if the Royal Commission recommends a directorate of the kind that is proposed in the measure.

I am very pleased to know that a Royal Commission is inquiring into the affairs of the Railway Department. I advocated such an inquiry, particularly into the Midland Junction workshops, over a number of years, not from my own personal knowledge of what was going on, but as the result of information that was given to me by reliable employees as to the unsatisfactory set-up of the whole establishment and its management. The report of the Commissioner on the workshops fully justified the appointment of that gentleman to inquire into the matter. Regarding the transport section of the investigation, I was very pleased to know that the Government had brought a man from South Africa to take part in the inquiry; because that country, while it cannot be compared with this State from the financial point of view, has the same railway gauge as ours, and I believe that the bringing of a Royal Commissioner from South Africa will be to our advantage when a report is made on the obsolescence of our railway equipment.

I was also surprised to find this Bill introduced in view of the strenuous opposition that was made by members of the Government when they were on this side of the House to the Bill introduced by the then Minister for Railways to alter the management of the system. The argument was used then that the present Leader of the Opposition had promised the House that a Royal Commission would be appointed from both sides of the Chamber to inquire into the management of the railways. But I think that what we have to consider is just what are the causes of the inefficiency of our railway system and see whether the proposals in the Bill will overcome any of the inefficiency. One of the chief reasons our railways have become obsolescent and in some instances obsolete, is that over a great number of years—as long as I can remember, and that goes back something like 37 years—there has been financial starvation. Successive Governments have not put into operation or even had a definite plan of

modernisation of the system and over the last 10 or 15 years we have scarcely been keeping up with the replacements that were necessary.

I do not think any particular Government can be selected for blame for the financial starvation. Each successive Government has found it almost impossible to provide the sums of money necessary to maintain the efficiency of the railways and provide for modernisation. In saying that, I have not in mind a railway on a 4ft. 8½in. standard gauge or a wider gauge, but modernisation along the lines of that which has been achieved in other countries, particularly Japan, Java and South Africa, with a gauge exactly the same as our own. I was looking up reports by the Commissioner of Railways and I think that it was in 1934 or 1935 that, due to the difficulty of keeping up even current repairs, the large sum of £120,000 had to be expended in carrying out belated work of that kind. I have a very vivid recollection of my experiences as a driver in the system during those years and of what the lack of repairs meant. I believe that a considerable amount of expenditure was involved in derailed vehicles and many other accidents that took place. In some information sent to me by the Commissioner of Railways in South Africa only last year, I read that as long ago as 30 years the Government there started to re-lay its main lines with 96lbs. to the yard rails.

Unfortunately, in this State, even today we are endeavouring to design a locomotive that will run on what is an anachronism in railway working—a 45lb. to the yard rail. We have only a short distance of even 80-lb. rails—the double line from Fremantle to Northam. We have about 1,800 or 1,900 miles of 60-lb. rails, and about 1,600 miles of the obsolete 45-lb. rails. I am hopeful that one of the recommendations of the Royal Commission will be not to go in for a large number of locomotives built to suit the 45-lb. rails—with all the disorganisation and confusion that are caused thereby, to say nothing of the lighter loads that must be hauled owing to the lighter type of engines—but to pull up the 45-lb. rails and install heavier rails so that all our locomotives will be able to run over them and haul heavier loads. It is not so much inefficient administration that has caused the unsatisfactory service that the railways are now rendering to the people of the State, but the inefficiency and inadequacy of the plant that we have provided and with which our railway administration must render service.

I have never held the view that the administration or working of the railways in this State was inefficient. Indeed, it would be a remarkable thing if the administrative and working staff of the railways were not efficient, because I know from experience—it may be proved, if any member is sufficiently interested to make an investigation—that almost the whole of the high administrative officers of the railways of this State started in lowly positions in the service and, by sheer merit, in 99 cases out of a hundred, rose to their present positions in the various branches of the system. If there is anything to be said for that system—I believe there is everything to be said in favour of it—when a man works from the bottom to the top he must have a full and comprehensive knowledge of what is required. I have full confidence in the present administrative staff of the railways and would not ask too much of them, as I know of the dilapidated condition of the rollingstock, locomotives and other appliances that we have given them over a period of years, and with which they must endeavour to render what the public are now demanding—a better type of railway service.

When introducing the Bill, the Minister said he thought the job had become too big for one person, but it is not a matter of one person, as I propose to show. The whole responsibility of running the railway service does not devolve on the Commissioner of Railways. He has many administrative chiefs—in every branch of the service—to assist him. I come now to the fact, mentioned by the member for Murchison last night, that during the peak period of traffic in the war years, in 1942 and 1943 when the country was in great danger, the administration of the State railways was carried on not by the Commissioner but by an Acting Commissioner of Railways. I have figures to prove that during those two years there was a greater number of train-miles run, with fewer locomotives, than was the case last year, 1946. In 1942 we had 390 locomotives, as the Commonwealth had commandeered 26, bringing the total down to 390. The train-miles run amounted to 6,497,115. In 1943, we had 392 locomotives and 6,469,660 train-miles were run. In 1946,

we had 424 locomotives, and only 6,409,278 train-miles were run. Our locomotive position was at its worst in 1942 and 1943, under an acting Commissioner, yet the locos. ran a greater number of miles then than they did in 1946 when we had many more engines to meet traffic requirements.

Mr. Nalder: The condition of the locomotives in that period was better than it was in 1946.

Mr. STYANTS: They were worse in 1942 and 1943 than in 1946. One has only to listen to the engines pulling loads now to think one is listening to a 100-head stamp battery. One hears the big ends and axleboxes knocking, wasting power and efficiency in the hauling of loads. It must be remembered that during 1942 and 1943 not only had many of the engineers from the repair shops at Midland Junction been called up, but engineers from the running depots had been called into the Army for defence purposes. Generally speaking, in 1942 and 1943 the engines were in a worse condition than they are today. I come now to the proposal for a directorate, as outlined in the Bill, and will give the reasons why I think it will not be an improvement but might, in fact, create a certain amount of confusion. The Bill proposes that there shall be a directorate consisting of five members. The first is to be one versed in railway administration and an engineer.

I cannot see why the qualification of engineering is necessary for the person who is to hold the position of Commissioner of Railways, as in every department there are already in charge men with the necessary engineering qualifications. We have the Chief Mechanical Engineer, who is in charge of the Midland Junction Workshops, the construction and maintenance of locomotives and rollingstock. Why say that the Commissioner of Railways must be an engineer? We have the Chief Engineer of Existing Lines, who is in charge of everything connected with every line that is built. Then we have the Chief Civil Engineer, who is in charge of construction of buildings, and work of that sort. Why lay down as a qualification that the Commissioner must be an engineer? From the qualifications that are proposed for the two nominee members of the directorate, I feel that there may be something in the suspicion of previous speakers that it is not a matter of making the man for the job but that the qualification has been made for the two men that the Government has in mind to fill these two positions. There is certainly suspicion attaching to that aspect of it, because I do not think it necessary to have the qualifications of an engineer in order to be a successful Commissioner of Railways. I consider that he should have a thorough knowledge of railways matters, administration and transport; he should have good administrative ability and a certain amount of business ability, because the principal job of the Commissioner is to act as a liaison between the public and the department.

I have no objection to the qualifications proposed for the second nominee member, who, it is provided, must be fully versed in railway transport and administration. While in a general way he would administer the transport system, he would have the same setup under him as has the Commissioner. We have the Chief Traffic Manager, who is the active administrative head of the transport system of the State. Branching out from him in all the different districts we have the district traffic superintendents and then another section including station masters and goods agents and their agents throughout the system from one end of the State to the other. What advantage it will be to have two Government nominee members, one with the degree of an engineer and the other with a full knowledge of administration and of the transport system, instead of one man in charge as at present, I fail to see. I believe that the one man would be quite capable of doing the work with the assistance of all those highly skilled technical officers in the various sections of the department.

Now I come to the proposal to appoint three members referred to as representative members. One is to represent the primary producers and is to be selected by the Farmers' Union. I fail to see what knowledge such a man could bring to bear with a view to improving the position of the railways and giving a better service to the people he represents, because he would not be able to overcome the difficulties that exist in regard to plant. And that is our main difficulty. I warrant that the Chief Traffic Manager and the Commissioner could tell us exactly what the shortcomings are. They could tell us just as well as could any

member representing the Farmers' Union or the primary producers when the traffic was being shifted from Lake Grace, Albany or Geraldton and could tell within two trucks every 24 hours what he required there. Of what greater assistance could the representative of the primary producers be in giving information than the means that the Commissioner has through his traffic superintendents, station masters and goods agents?

The most astonishing proposal, to my way of thinking, is that of appointing a representative of the Chamber of Commerce. If it were the Chamber of Manufactures, I should say there might be some merit in the proposal, if there is any merit at all in the suggestion to appoint a representative of the primary producers. I may be doing the Chamber of Commerce an injustice, but my opinion is that it does not produce anything but acts more or less in the role of a middleman who gets the profit between the primary producer and the consumer. So what advantage a representative of the Chamber of Commerce would be in the effort to provide a better service to the public is a mystery to me. I should certainly not favour the appointment of any representative of that body. If it is logical to say that the Chamber of Commerce should have a representative on the board, it is equally logical to say that Amalgamated Collieries in Collie, the Chamber of Mines in Kalgoorlie, or the Sawmillers' Association of Western Australia should be entitled to representation on the directorate. So the whole idea could be extended. I repeat that there is no merit at all in the suggestion that the Chamber of Commerce should be represented on the directorate.

I pass now to the other proposal that there should be a representative of the workers on the board. There might be some merit in this one, not that I think that it would lead to an improvement of the service because, as I have pointed out, he would be no more able to improve the plant available to the people he is representing than would be the other representatives proposed to be appointed. There is only one way to improve the plant and that is to provide finance so that more and better equipment than is available at present may be obtained. I should not like to occupy the position of representative of the workers on the board.

One contention by the Minister when moving the second reading, was that there is a lack of amenities as well as a lack of human relationship between the administrative heads and the workmen. I do not know that the workers' representative would be able to improve that to any great extent, and I do not believe that there will be any great improvement in the amenities. My mind reverts to 1912 and the years thence till I left the service in 1936, when amenities for the running staff were practically non-existent. The amenities provided in the shape of barracks were of the crudest possible type and, with one or two exceptions are still of the same class. I cannot see that any great improvement will be effected in that direction in the near future. Between 1912 and 1925 or 1926 men were being transferred to outstations where there was no habitation of any sort. Such a man had either to provide his own habitation in the shape of a tent and leave his wife and family at the depot from which he had been transferred or be told to get out. When we reach the Railway Estimates, I shall have something to say on the shocking conditions existing as regards the accommodation provided for permanent way gangs and the running staff, but at present I propose to deal with the contents of the Bill, making some comment on the reasons advanced by the Minister for altering the directorate of the railways.

To alter the administration of the railways along the lines suggested would be of no advantage whatever. The Western Australian railway system is a relatively small proposition. One has only to go to the Eastern States and study the systems of New South Wales and Victoria to realise what a small proposition ours is, and I consider that one administrative head with all his sub-managers to assist him would do just as good a job as would a directorate of five, and probably a much better job. It has always been my contention, as members know, that to a very great extent the Commissioner of Railways is under the direction of the Minister; but my opinion has not been confirmed, I understand, by rulings obtained from time to time from the Crown Law Department. I have on two occasions at least quoted 20 sections of the Act to prove that the Commissioner is under the direction of the Min-

ister. Despite that, it has been ruled that he is not under the direction of the Minister. I contend that if he is not, he should be, for these reasons.

The Commissioner is in charge of an undertaking which belongs to the taxpayers, the people of Western Australia. He is the largest employer of labour in the State and his department has a revenue of about £4,000,000 per annum. If the contention of the Crown Law Department and the Minister is correct, namely, that there is no ministerial control over the Commissioner, then the Commissioner is not responsible to anyone, notwithstanding that he is managing a public concern which is financed by the people's money, that he is the biggest employer of labour in the State and that the department's revenue is about £4,000,000 per annum. I say that that is an entirely wrong set-up. In my opinion, a democratic set-up in the circumstances outlined by me is that the Commissioner should be responsible to the Minister and the Minister, in turn, should be responsible to Parliament. We, as individual members, should be responsible to the people whom we represent. To my way of thinking, that is a democratic set-up.

Mr. Reynolds: And a very commonsense one, too.

Mr. STYANTS: If the Commissioner is not subject to the directions of the Minister and of this Parliament, then he should be made so. I am not saying that either Parliament or the Minister should interfere unduly in small matters, for instance, whether a train is to run at 1.30 a.m. or 3.30 a.m., or at what time a call-boy or an office boy is to go to work. The Minister would be very injudicious and foolish indeed if he attempted to do anything of that nature. But in big matters my contention is that the Commissioner should be under the direction and jurisdiction of the Minister. I recall that within the last two or three years there has been some difference of opinion between the Minister, representing the Government, and the Commissioner as to whether it was good policy to build the cream and green carriages for service in the metropolitan area, or whether it would be better to provide sheep and cattle trucks for use in the country. However, the fact that the Commissioner was not responsible to Parliament enabled him to decide whether he should build the coaches for passenger service in the metropolitan area or whether he should expend the revenue of the department in providing what we knew was very urgently needed in the country. In matters of this kind the Minister, representing the Government, should have control over the Commissioner, as the Government is obliged to carry out its policy and its commitments to the people of the State. As far as staff matters are concerned, as I said, it would be most injudicious and foolish for the Minister to interfere, nor should he interfere with the administration or the management of the railways.

I now wish to deal with the proposal in the Bill to make the railway accounts subject to the audit of the Auditor General. This is something that I advocated last year. It has always been my contention that the commercial accounts of the railways do not exhibit a true and correct record of the financial transactions of the department. The accounts in my opinion are simply a statement showing the amount of revenue that is received and, as an offset against that, working expenses and interest. Much more than that is involved in the accounts of the Railway Department. The department does not in its returns provide for a sinking fund, as it contends that a sinking fund, or a depreciation fund, is not necessary, as out of its revenue it keeps its assets up to 100 per cent. efficiency. If an assessor were engaged to assess the efficiency not only of the locomotives but of much of the rollingstock now in use, it would be found that the efficiency would fall far short of 100 per cent.

The department's deficit—and this evidence was given by Mr. Reid, the Under Treasurer—for the six years prior to 1945 was shown, by the department's method of account keeping, as £1,631,000. According to the Treasurer's estimate, however, the deficit is £2,996,000. That shows the variation between the method of accounting employed by the Railway Department and the method adopted by the Treasurer. The interest that accrues from time to time on the loan expenditure of the department—and loans have been principally made from oversea sources—is subject to a rate of exchange of 25 per cent. The department in its returns makes no allowance for this exchange. It will therefore be seen that while the department shows a deficit of something like £1,000,000

a year, plus exchange on the oversea loans, it is not making any allowance for the exchange in its financial returns. Therefore, the returns must be misleading. I have examined about a score of loans from which the department has drawn moneys for the purpose of providing rollingstock and I find that roughly the department is paying 4 per cent.

The practice which seems to have been adopted is that after a loan has been floated in London for say £6,000,000 for all purposes required by the Government of Western Australia, if the Railway Department required £500,000 of that amount to provide capital assets, it was charged the rate of interest which the State was paying on the whole loan, an average of about 4 per cent. Unfortunately the Railway Department did not receive any of the cheap money that the State obtained from the Commonwealth Government after the depression—the one per cent. debenture stock—for the purpose of getting any of its equipment. The department is actually paying about 4 per cent. It is desirable that the financial returns of the Railway Department be brought under the scrutiny of the Auditor General. We often hear of the proposal to write-down the railway capital, but I do not subscribe to that idea. There is no eventual advantage to the people who have to provide the money for the purpose of funding the deficit.

If we write down our railway capital from the present figure of approximately £27,000,000 to £10,000,000 we will possibly show a better financial return from the railways, but we would simply be transferring the liability to some other portion of the public debt. There would be an immediate clamour from those using the railways when they saw the department was showing a profit of, perhaps, half a million pounds instead of a loss, as at present, of over £1,000,000 annually. We would also have a claim by the employees of the department for better wages and conditions. The locomotive position, referred to by the Minister, is the most serious in the railways today. Over 85 per cent. of the 424 locomotives are more than 30 years old, and 30 years is regarded as the economic life of a locomotive. If we take 85 per cent. of our locomotives we find that we have 300 which are over 30 years of age, and that means a replacement of 14 annually. But if we are going to allow for any expansion, our commitments will be in the vicinity of 25 to 30 locomotives a year. That is far beyond the capacity of the Midland Junction Workshops at the present time, or what they could be enlarged to, to cope with during the next ten years.

Between our purchases, when we can get them, and our capacity to build in the Midland shops, we need at least 30 locomotives a year if we are going to provide for the replacement of those that have gone beyond their economic life, and for reasonable expansion. The most serious position we have to face in the railways is that of the locomotives. When we consider the annual cost of replacing 30 locomotives over a recurring period we get some idea of the expenditure necessary to maintain even our present traction power. The position is not very pleasant to contemplate. I noticed, when the Minister was in Kalgoorlie a few months after his appointment as Minister for Railways, it was reported in "The Kalgoorlie Miner" that he had stated at a meeting at Coolgardie that since his Government had been in power, which he said was a matter of only two or three months, it had ordered 65 locomotives. I thought that was pretty good.

I asked some questions, and I found in actual fact that the present Government had not ordered any locomotives! What happened was that just prior to the changeover, the previous Government had entered into a contract for the manufacture and purchase of 25 PR's. It called for tenders on two or three occasions, and eventually accepted one, subject to the present Government's acquiescence. I do not think this Government could claim that it had ordered those locomotives. I then asked just exactly what constituted the 65 locomotives ordered by the present Government. I was told that the number included the 25 PR locomotives which had been ordered by the previous Government, and that this Government had entered into a contract for the manufacture and purchase of 30 locomotives for the 45 lb., light rail sections. The Minister said that those locomotives were known as the 4-8-2 type. No 4-8-2 type, for a light rail, has yet been successful in the State, and I trust we will not have a repetition of the ASG's.

I hope that, prior to these locomotives being delivered, and the definite signing of the contract, the men who will operate them

will be consulted as to their suitability. There are some 4-8-2 type locomotives running on light rails, but they are not suitable. I find, however, that these engines have not been actually ordered. The Government proposes to get these 30 engines subject to the approval of the Royal Commissioner. I hope that gentleman will not approve of them, but will recommend that our light 45 lb. rails be torn up and 60 lb. rails laid down. Those replies accounted for 55 locomotives. The other 10 are to be built, over a period of years, at the Midland Junction Workshops. It seems to me that the position was exaggerated when it was said that the Government had ordered 65 locomotives. It had not ordered the 25 PR locomotives; the 30 locomotives for the light rail were ordered, subject to the approval of the Royal Commissioner, and the remaining 10 will, in the ordinary course of events over the years, be constructed in the Midland Junction Workshops.

The Minister for Railways: We confirmed your order for the 25.

Mr. STYANTS: The information I got in answer to my question was that the tender for 25 PR locomotives had been accepted by the outgoing Government subject the approval of the new Government.

The Minister for Railways: And it was accepted.

Mr. STYANTS: We are now told by the Minister that the earliest possible time that we can expect to get even the PR's is the middle of 1949, and unless we are particularly lucky, it will be towards the end of that year. Delivery of the 4-8-2 type locomotives, if the contract is gone on with, is not anticipated until 1950. The replenishment of locomotive stocks is one of our difficult problems. It is a very difficult matter. I say again that I do not think the proposal for a directorate of five will make for the efficiency of the railway service. That efficiency will be restored by the provision of up-to-date locomotives and rollingstock and better road beds. The proposal that the two Government nominee members on the directorate shall not be subject to the compulsory retiring age limit applying to other railway workers is preposterous. It means in effect that those two members are given a life tenure in their jobs in the service. The other three members are to have a period of five years. I suggest, with all due deference to the Minister, that it would be much preferable to delete that part of the Bill; and, if those two nominee members are to come from the Government, they should be under exactly the same conditions with regard to the termination of service and length of service as apply to the present Commissioner.

I am hopeful that the Government will not proceed with the measure until it has the report of the Royal Commission, because I feel that an anomalous position will be created if the two Houses of Parliament pass this measure for a directorate of five and in a few weeks' time the Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the administration recommends a different type of directorate. We would look extremely foolish in those circumstances. But if the Government intends to carry on with the measure and if the Bill reaches the Committee stage, I think a considerable amount of amendment will be necessary to make it a workable proposition that will afford any benefit over and above the system that has been operating for a number of years.

On motion by the Minister for Education, debate adjourned.

BILLS (2)—RETURNED.

1, Economic Stability Act Amendment (Continuance).

2, State Housing Act Amendment.

Without amendment.

BILL—INSPECTION OF MACHINERY ACT AMENDMENT.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendment made by the Assembly.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it insisted on its amendments.

House adjourned at 10.54 p.m.