

Legislative Council.

Thursday, 12th November, 1942.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation) Bill.

QUESTIONS (3).

ABATTOIRS, KALGOORLIE.

As to Blowfly Infestation.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Has the attention of the Minister been drawn to the position with regard to blowfly infestation at the Kalgoorlie abattoirs? 2, Will the Government take the necessary action to ensure that hygienic conditions are maintained in this institution?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1 and 2, Blowflies in plague form have appeared in a number of districts this year. The abattoirs at Kalgoorlie are maintained in a hygienic condition as far as the existing facilities permit. Owing to the difficulty of obtaining plant and equipment under war-time conditions, it may be impossible to increase facilities at the abattoirs at present.

MARGINAL AREAS.

Settlers' Equities, etc.

Hon. A. THOMSON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, How many settlers were transferred from the marginal areas to the Denmark group settlement? 2, Had these settlers any equity in the blocks they were removed from? 3, What became of the assets they possessed when they were transferred to Denmark? 4, How many of the

marginal area settlers are now remaining on the blocks that were allocated to them? 5, Had those settlers who were compelled to leave their Denmark blocks, any equity? If so, did they receive any compensation for their years of labour?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, 30. 2, When properties were valued under the marginal area scheme there was no equity. 3, Farm machinery, stock and material suitable to dairy farming, together with a quantity of wheat in certain cases, were taken by the settlers to their Denmark holdings, the balance of assets were sold and proceeds credited to the settlers' old accounts. 4, 11. 5, Yes, in one case—the property was sold and the equity was retained by the settler. None was compelled to leave a holding at Denmark. Moneys are provided under the Wheat Industry Assistance Act for development and stocking of individual properties for the purpose of rehabilitation of settlers.

FARM WORKERS' WAGES.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER asked the Chief Secretary: 1, In view of the fact that the wages for farm workers determined by the board appointed under Commonwealth Government Regulation must have consequences detrimental to the industry and the State, will the Government make a strong appeal to the Federal Government with a view of securing some measure of relief? 2, Does the Government consider that such wage conditions—(a) will greatly reduce the supply of necessary foodstuffs for the war effort; (b) will have a serious effect on the commerce of the State; (c) will throw more lands out of production; (d) will affect the revenue of public utilities; (e) will take away the livelihood of many people who are now producing? 3, Does the Government agree to the over-riding and setting-aside of the State's prerogative by the actions of the Commonwealth? 4, Will the Government state its reasons for agreeing or disagreeing?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: It is thought the difficulty of farmers will be mainly one of obtaining any efficient labour, no matter what rate of wage is offered. The Government has no information beyond a Press paragraph regarding any determination of rates of wages by Commonwealth regulations. A communication has been sent to the Commonwealth requesting that com-

plete advice in this matter be made available to the State Government.

BILL—GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time, and returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

BILL—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. TUCKEY (South-West) [2.24]: This is a small Bill, but if agreed to it will effect great improvements in the principal Act. For some considerable time past bush fires have been a serious danger in many districts, largely because of extensive cultivation and topdressing, and possibly there has been an increase in unavoidable risks resulting from fires caused by sparks from railway engines. It is not easy to decide what is necessary to make the Bush Fires Act perfect at a particular time. Varying conditions obtain throughout the State, and where farming interests and forestry interests are intermingled it is difficult to arrange legislation so as to suit all phases. I am sure, however, that the Act has already proved of great benefit and that the amendments which the Bill proposes will lead to improved working and also permit desirable action to be taken that cannot be carried out under the Act as it stands. These amendments, with one exception, have been carefully considered and have been recommended by the Bush Fires Prevention Committee. That committee comprises delegates from various districts concerned. I can assure the House that the amendments have been well considered, and are regarded as being appropriate for the different purposes. I hope the House will pass the Bill.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I support the Bill. I have gone very thoroughly into the proposed amendments, and studied their application to the parent Act. I find nothing that is not very desirable. One of the principal advantages is that the provision of fire-breaks is made easier. We have always contended that the burning of fire-breaks is not sufficient to prevent a fire,

particularly when it has a good spread, but the ploughing of fire-breaks is made very much easier by this Bill. I commend those responsible for its introduction.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—MOTOR SPIRIT AND SUBSTITUTE LIQUID FUELS.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan) [2.30]: I understand that this Bill, if passed, will not come into force until after the war, and will be brought into operation by proclamation. For that reason I do not intend to offer much opposition to or to say much about the measure; but I have certain ideas, and it is imperative that I express my opinions now, very much hoping that I shall prove to be entirely wrong.

I understand that one of the underlying reasons for the Bill is that a large amount of money—a million or a couple of million pounds—is to be spent in the establishment of distilleries for the manufacture of substitute fuels. The desire is that after the war, these factories shall be kept operating so that the money spent upon them will not prove to be entirely wasted. That is an idea with which all of us have the greatest sympathy, but I think we need to maintain a sense of proportion in considering these matters. We know that the war expenditure now is at the rate of something like £1,500,000 per day. Therefore it seems to me that the saving of £1,000,000, £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 must be considered with some regard to the real values and that the dominating consideration should be: Is it in the interests of the community that these distilleries shall be continued, or would it be wiser to act on the principle that guides private enterprise and makes it generally successful, by cutting the loss and jettisoning anything likely to be uneconomic in the future?

The Bill contains provision for the licensing of retailers. I do not know that any strong argument can be used against licensing the retailers of motor spirit, pro-

vided the power is not used for the purpose of establishing a monopoly. But the main question is this: Is it intended that these wartime facilities to manufacture a commodity that cannot now be imported in sufficient quantities shall be continued after the war, whether economically or not? Will the intention be to impose such a duty upon petrol as will enable the other commodity to compete with petrol? Unless I am misinformed, there is some direct or indirect interest in this matter on the part of a company that has long enjoyed a peculiar advantage not of customs duties but of prohibitions, which has enabled it to exploit the public to the extent of far more than £1,000,000 per annum. Is it intended by this Bill, is there any remote idea in this Bill, that the interests of that company shall be protected after the war so that, whether it is economical or not to produce these substitutes for petrol, their production shall be continued? Members will have in mind the terms of the Atlantic Charter, to which, I take it, we shall be bound in the same way as Great Britain, the United States of America, China, Russia and other nations.

Amongst other things, that charter provides that raw materials shall be available on equal terms to all countries. If that means anything at all, it means that petrol supplied to Australia by other countries will be supplied at a landed cost of not more than about 3d. per gallon, and the consumer will be required to pay that cost, plus such customs duty as might properly be imposed for revenue purposes or for the making of roads. But if there is an intention to put an excessive duty upon petrol in order that these substitutes may continue to be produced, and by that means deprive the people of this State of the advantage they should obtain from cheap petrol, or improvements in producer-gas, it will be a public disadvantage and it would be far better, in the interests of the development of Australia, that £1,000,000 or £2,000,000, or whatever the amount is that is being devoted to the establishment of this wartime industry, should be jettisoned entirely. I do not intend to oppose the Bill, but I do not feel disposed to support it without expressing fears for the future that I hope will not be realised.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East): I feel rather perturbed about the measure. So far as I can gather from the informa-

tion supplied, there is no intention to proclaim the legislation, if agreed to by Parliament, until after the war. In those circumstances the Government would be wise if it deferred the further consideration of the Bill until such time as it is actually needed. The Bill is highly technical and its provisions seek to extend very great powers. I confess that I have not the knowledge enabling me to determine what will be its ultimate results or the cost involved to the people. I understand that in another place the Premier stated by interjection that if the Bill were passed, a distillery would be erected in this State for the production of power alcohol from wheat. While that is very satisfactory from our point of view, seeing that we always have a large surplus of wheat, the points on which I desire to be satisfied are: What will be the ultimate result, and what will be the price paid for the wheat so utilised? It seems to me that the Bill will have the effect of providing a monopoly.

Frankly, I do not like the idea of all petrol retailers having to be licensed. Under existing conditions we know that they have been supplied with pumps by the oil companies, but if Parliament is to say that no one shall have the right to retail motor spirits unless he is licensed, we should be told what conditions will be attached to such licenses and we should have that information before we agree to the Bill. I would like more time at our disposal for the consideration of the legislation before it is allowed to go on the statute-book. Its importance is so great that it could very well be referred to a Select Committee before it passes its final stages. I most decidedly do not like agreeing to a measure without knowing what its effects are likely to be. Admittedly the Price Fixing Commissioner will be able to fix prices, but will it be possible for the motor spirits to be produced economically in Western Australia or even in Australia?

The problem of distillation of motor spirits from wheat has been under discussion for more than two years, and to my mind the legislation has arrived before us a little too late. Naturally I do not desire to prevent the erection of the distillery in this State. I understand the construction is already under way. An excellent site has been chosen at Collie, adjacent to coal and water supplies, where it can draw on large quantities of wheat that may not be

regarded as of first-class quality, thus providing an excellent avenue for the utilisation of that grain. At this stage I feel rather disposed to vote against the Bill, particularly as it will not be proclaimed until the end of the war.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Is that statement quite correct?

Hon. A. THOMSON: As far as I understand the position—the Chief Secretary can correct me if I am not right—the actual proclamation of the Bill and its application will take place only when the war has terminated. Under the National Security Regulations the authorities have complete control and can do as they like. It seems that we are asked to agree to legislation without having the slightest idea of what its effect will be on the people. I understand the Colonial Sugar Refining Company will enjoy a monopoly regarding this form of production. I may be wrong in that conclusion, but that is the impression I gained from statements that have been made. I certainly hesitate to vote for anything that might tend to place the producers and consumers of motor spirits in a position similar to that existing throughout Australia in connection with the sugar industry. I believe the time is not opportune to ask Parliament to pass this legislation, which will have such far-reaching effects.

As pointed out by Sir Hal Colebatch the motor spirit that was being used in days gone by, prior to the war, should have been sold at a considerably lower cost than was charged to the public. This Bill appears to mean that a monopoly will have the control, and that the Price Fixing Commissioner will say, "It is costing so much to produce power alcohol in Australia, and therefore we have to charge three or four times more than would ordinarily be the case because we have to bring the fuel into the country under the Atlantic Charter." I protest against the passage of the Bill under present conditions.

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

BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES (RESERVE FUNDS).

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

BILL—MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East) [2.47] in moving the second reading said: This small Bill seeks to delete two words from the parent Act and to insert two others in lieu thereof. The effect of the amendment will be to give to the producers equal representation on the board that will be constituted after the poll is taken. At present there is a minority of producers on the board, namely, two producers to three nominees of the Government. It has been freely stated, particularly in another place, that the egg producers do not want the Act and have no interest in it. Last session a Bill was introduced in another place, which, in a way, tried to set aside the Marketing of Eggs Act and put something else in its place. That Bill aroused so little interest that it did not have a sponsor in this House.

The Marketing of Eggs Act is wanted by the organised producers of Western Australia. They approached me recently asking me to have the measure amended so that they would have equal representation on the board. In connection with the poll taken recently, unfortunately there was a mix-up in the ballot papers. There were 132 informal votes and the poll showed a tie. Everything was, therefore, left as it was before. It is desired by the producers to have another poll in the near future. They think that if this amendment to the Act can be put through, giving them equal representation on the board, they will get a majority in favour of the establishment of the board. This House on two previous occasions supported me and passed a Bill to give the producers majority representation on the board.

Hon. C. B. Williams: The House did not support the member for Canning.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The egg producers and I were very grateful for that consideration. Unfortunately, however, when the Bills reached another place our proposals were rejected, and we were put back to the place where the producers were still in the minority. I have every confidence, in view of these circumstances, that this House will pass the Bill now under consideration. In view of what has happened, I ask the Chief Secretary not to oppose the measure. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

BILL—CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH (LANDS) AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE HONORARY MINISTER [2.52] in moving the second reading said: The object of the Bill is to amend an old Ordinance of 1855 so as to give the Congregational Church societies power to transfer land free of any trust, to mortgage land if so desired, and to lease land notwithstanding any trust. It also proposes that where any land was originally granted to the societies by the Crown, no transfer, exchange, mortgage or lease exceeding 21 years shall be valid unless approved by the Governor. In the Ordinance of 1855 authority was given to the Congregational societies to sell and to mortgage lands subject to the provision that money from any sale should be used for the purchase of freehold properties. The Ordinance did not give any authority to grant a free title to a purchaser. This power, however, has always been assumed by the church authorities.

The Bill arises out of a transaction involving the sale by the church of Bunbury Town Lot 210, which was granted in 1859 for church purposes. In 1906, after it had been found that land in a different locality was more suitable for church purposes, the trustees of the church sold Lot 210 to the Protestant Hall Company Limited, who subsequently resold it in 1913. On a recent application to the Titles Office for a freehold title it was found that no authority existed under the Ordinance to confer a clear title upon the purchaser. This Bill proposes to give the required authority free of any trust.

At the same time the measure makes provision to enable the validation of any other transaction of the Congregational Church societies which involves a sale, exchange, or mortgage. Such validation of past transactions is not new, a precedent being the Church of England Land Act of 1914 and the Roman Catholic Church Property Acts Amendment Act of 1916. The whole of the powers conferred by this Bill are at present being enjoyed by the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Presbyterian Church and the Hebrew Congre-

gation, and I trust there will be no objection to the granting of similar privileges to the Congregational Church societies. The Ordinance, as I have indicated, is interesting and lengthy, and goes back to the year 1855, the days of Queen Victoria. The amendment now proposed to the Ordinance will give to the Congregational Church facilities similar to those enjoyed by other religious bodies. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

(Question put and passed.)

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY DURATION AND GENERAL ELECTION POSTPONEMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East) [2.57]: I am opposed to this Bill. I have heard it stated that the measure merely affects the life of the Legislative Assembly, and because it does not concern this Chamber we should pass it. I submit that it is legislation having as its object an extension of the life of this Parliament. As the Legislative Council is an integral portion of this Parliament, I consider we must be prepared to accept our share of responsibility for any legislation which emanates from this Parliament. The position would arise—if we pass this Bill, and if those of us who are opposed to a further postponement of the elections are successful in defeating the Bill to extend the life of the Legislative Council—when members of the Legislative Council would have to face an election next year, whereas the life of the Legislative Assembly—that is the body which really makes and unmakes Governments—would be extended for a further 12 months.

That, to my mind, would be so ridiculous that I consider the issue ought to be decided on the Bill now before us; that would decide the question of whether the parliamentary elections are to be postponed for a further 12 months or whether an election will be held in March of next year. Parliament passed legislation of this nature 12 months ago. In view of the gravity and

uncertainty of the outlook at that time, I do not think we could have done otherwise; but I submit that the conditions prevailing then are not comparable with those that obtain now. We were then suffering from a sense of bewilderment and fear of developments in the immediate future. For the first time in over 100 years of its history, Australia had had withdrawn from it the shield of the British Navy, behind which we had until then sheltered. The "Prince of Wales" and the "Repulse" were lost.

The defences of Australia were such—particularly as regards Western Australia, as we well knew—that it was merely a "push-over" for any expeditionary force that the Japanese might have sent against us. It would not have taken a very large force to occupy the whole of this State. But those conditions, as I say, have altered very materially indeed. The defences of Australia have improved immensely. In New Guinea and the Solomons our soldiers and the soldiers of our Allies are now able to stand up against, and fight, the enemy and give him as good as in the past we had to take. The threat that then seemed so immediate has been, if not entirely removed, at least reduced. I am not suggesting for a moment that all danger to Australia has been removed or that the war will terminate at an early date. On the contrary, I think it highly probable that this struggle will continue for another four or five years. But if those arguments are to be used in favour of our passing this proposed legislation, then they will hold good until such time as the Japanese are defeated, or at least driven from the territories they have conquered. Australia is generally recognised as the advance base for the counter-offensive against the Japanese, and until such time as they have been driven back, we shall remain that advance base, and for so long will the potential threat to our country continue.

If we are to accept that dictum, we must reconcile ourselves to the fact that until we have practically disposed of the Japanese and recaptured Singapore, we shall have to be content to continue to deprive our people of the opportunity to express their opinion at the poll. Like other members, my experience and associations make me feel regret at the fact that many of our electors in the Armed Forces would be deprived of an opportunity to record a vote if we decide that an election shall be held next year. But

I think it should not be beyond the wit or capacity of this Parliament to devise some means whereby the men in the Services within Western Australia should be given the opportunity to exercise the franchise. I do not know the number—I do not suppose any civilian does—but I am led to believe that possibly a majority of Western Australians are in the Services of this State. I have not heard it seriously suggested that it is not possible for us to arrange for them to vote.

Hon. G. Fraser: We tried to come to an agreement last year on a similar type of Bill.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I do not know that we tried to come to an agreement. Something was put up, but not accepted.

Hon. G. Fraser: The same might happen today.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: Unless the youth of today are much more politically minded than they were 25 years ago, I doubt very much whether the lads in the Forces are concerning themselves greatly about an election for the State Parliament. No change in State policy and no State legislation can affect them personally in the slightest degree. They are under Commonwealth control and subject to Commonwealth legislation and decisions, and it would not be until such time as they returned to civil life that any change of Government, change of policy or legislation emanating from the State Parliament would affect the men who it is feared might be deprived of a vote, should an election be held in the early part of next year.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Do not you think it would affect their children?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I am not aware of that.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Would it not affect the future of Western Australia?

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: The fact that there is a percentage for whom it is not possible to provide voting facilities should not, in my opinion, be sufficient of itself to deny to the 200,000 or 250,000 electors of the State the right to express their opinion as to how and by whom they wish to be governed. If that is the sole argument to be advanced for the further deferment of the election, I submit it is not sufficient for this House to take that responsibility. If we are to accept the reported statements of men like Winston Churchill, the Secretary of the

American Navy and our leading public men, that this struggle is going to be a long and hard one, then if we defer the election next year on account of the men who are in uniform and for whom we cannot provide voting facilities, we must, if we take a realistic and sensible view, defer the election until such time as those men can return to civil life.

Taking an extremely optimistic view of the war situation, I do not think we can expect hostilities to cease within two years. A year will elapse after that before the men return, so that, even if we were fortunate enough to have peace two years from now, then, if we hold the election early next year, the new Parliament could run its full term of three years before our men return. They would then have an opportunity to record a decision as to how and by whom they wish to be governed. To postpone the election now seems to me to be altogether wrong, as it would be denying to the people in the State—by far the great majority of the electors—the right to record their votes. I am aware that an election will cost a certain amount of money. I have heard it variously estimated from £8,000 to £10,000. But any election costs money; even an election for the officials of a football team costs money or its equivalent in time and effort. To suggest that the electors in a democratic community should be deprived of their rights because a certain monetary expenditure is involved is, to my mind, approaching this matter from an altogether wrong angle. It is not the cost of an election that should influence members in any way. All elections cost money, but that is part of the price we pay for our democratic mode of life and for the democratic principles of government to which the community subscribes. It seems to me those expenses are inescapable, and we should be prepared willingly to face them in order that our people may not be deprived of that particular right.

I am convinced there is a growing feeling in favour of an election and against a further postponement. I am aware some members have expressed the opinion, privately and publicly, that they find no great enthusiasm among their constituents for an election; but I would suggest to those members that they have never yet found any great enthusiasm in November for an election that is so far distant as

March. On this occasion the electors are no different from what they have been on other occasions. I think it will be found that if this House decides an election must be held next year, when the times arrives considerable interest will be shown in the election, as great as that which was shown in some recent elections for the State Parliament. As regards the threat of a serious emergency, such as an invasion occurring during the election campaign, that I submit lies purely within the sphere of activity of the Commonwealth authorities. Whether a State Government was in power or not, if a military emergency arose in Western Australia, the Commonwealth Government would take control whether an election was proceeding or not. The Commonwealth would do so in order to use its powers for the defence of Australia.

I have not so far dealt with some matters that I could have raised and which, to my mind, would support the case for the holding of an election; neither shall I deal with them at any great length. There are, however, certain matters calling for criticism. No Government can escape criticism; but some of the criticism of the present Government has been such as to justify the people who make and unmake Governments, that is, the electors, recording their decision on the administration of the Government. In view of some of the charges made against the Government, the people should have that opportunity in the early part of next year, and they will have it if this House refuses to pass the Bill. Whatever our political affiliations, whatever our sectional or personal interests, we find ourselves called upon to observe the greatest duty that devolves upon us, namely, to strengthen our people and preserve their belief in these privileges and rights which are theirs. Even though we be too generous, perhaps, in our approach to matters of this kind, it were better to let our people exercise their rights at the poll than to do anything which might, and I think would to some degree, destroy their confidence in the democratic control of this State.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban): May I at the outset say that I was astonished at the attitude of the supporters of this Bill yesterday when they refused to accept the time-honoured practice of permitting an adjournment after the second reading had been moved. I just

wondered why. When one reflects upon the attitude of the Legislative Council during the session through which we are now passing, one finds that we have leisurely meandered through our legislative programme with no sign of haste at all. We have adjourned for a day; we have adjourned for a week, and we have adjourned for a fortnight. But yesterday, for some unexplained reason, this House suddenly bursts into activity; some undue haste is required to deal with a Bill that actually is not of any urgency at all. I do not know whether the Government has heard that a public meeting of protest has been called, to be held next Monday night. It might wish to forestall that meeting. However, the reason is not clear, but it seems to me that this haste is quite uncalled for.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Who is calling the meeting?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I could not say. I assume that one would not be entirely out of order if one made reference to both Bills during the course of this debate. The Chief Secretary emphasised two or three points when introducing the measure, and gave some reasons for the postponement of election. The first point that he stressed was this: An election might have the effect of disrupting the minds of the people and dividing them on party lines. It seems to me that there is little justification for such a claim. State elections in the past have not proved to have been very distracting affairs. Whether Western Australia holds an election or not will not affect the war effort greatly, but I do believe that the small amount of disruption that might be caused by the holding of an election is nothing to the seething discontent that will take place if the elections are further postponed.

A second point was made by the Chief Secretary when he dealt with the effect on the war effort. Whether Western Australia does or does not hold an election will not greatly affect the war effort, which is entirely in the hands of the Federal authorities. If we do hold our election, the munition workers will still be at their lathes; the members of the V.A.D. and A.T.C., and the Red Cross folk and other people who are doing such noble voluntary work, will still carry on their jobs and not be greatly disturbed. The sailor, the soldier and the airman will still be at their posts, whether we do or do not hold an election.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What about the important people, the farmers?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: They will continue to operate, and probably grow more grain. The Chief Secretary pointed out the difficulty of arranging for the votes of the electors absent from the State. Last year the Government did have some idea of making provision in that regard. I certainly admit that those provisions were not generally acceptable, but, as Mr. Roche pointed out, surely it is not beyond the ability of the Government to devise ways and means to secure the votes of Western Australian electors who are absent from their constituencies. Yesterday Mr. Fraser gave us the result of his experiences in various R.A.A.F. operational depots and service stations. I have visited operational squadrons in Western Australia, although not in the other States, and I found expressed an opinion contrary to that gathered by Mr. Fraser. I discovered a large body of men in the Services resentful of the idea of postponing the election. I suggest to Mr. Fraser that there are two schools of thought on this subject.

Hon. G. Fraser: One school is barred from voting because it is out of the State!

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: Another point the Chief Secretary raised dealt with the cost of holding an election. Mr. Wood seemed somewhat uncertain on that point. For his information and that of other members, I will give the actual cost. The cost of an Assembly election is approximately £6,000. The printing of the rolls and ballot papers runs into approximately £2,400, making a total of £8,400. The cost of a Legislative Council election is approximately £3,000. The printing of rolls and ballot papers runs into about £1,500, making a total of £4,500. Over and above these costs are the incidental expenses in connection with canvassing the various electorates in an endeavour to purify the rolls. An expenditure of £1,000 would more than cover that. The total cost, therefore, is £13,900, for an election of 50 Legislative Assembly candidates and 10 Legislative Council candidates.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Those costs are pre-war figures.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: They are the costs of the last elections.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You could double them now.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I would not say that. For every seat that is uncontested, a

saving of several hundred pounds would result, so that we could safely say that £14,000 would cover the total cost of holding an election. Everything is a matter of relativity, and £14,000, compared with the total expenditure by this Government of £12,000,000, is not a very large sum.

Hon. G. Fraser: You have forgotten the greatest cost of the lot—the staffing of the polling booths.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: That cost is included in these figures of £6,000 and £3,000. These are official figures.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: The Premier gave the amount as £9,000.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: These figures are official this morning. Surely the Treasurer must have given consideration to these costs when dealing with his Budget. He had no knowledge of the possibility of a postponement of the elections, so that it can be taken as a reasonable supposition that provision has been made for the money to pay for the elections. During the debate yesterday, the Chief Secretary said that the present Government had given every assistance to the Commonwealth Government in the prosecution of the war. Of course it has! That is expected. It is its duty. There is no need to extol the virtues of a Government for doing its obvious duty. The State would naturally expect that its Government would show the same spirit and loyalty as its individual citizens. The Chief Secretary also pointed out that if this Parliament finishes in December, the State will be without a Parliament until the next election. That is true, but legislation could be introduced to extend the life of Parliament for a statutory period until just prior to the election. Mr. Parker pointed out that very little consideration is given to Parliament; that the Government is conducted by Cabinet with little reference to Parliament. Cabinet and Executive Council will continue to function right up to the election day, so that the fear displayed by the Chief Secretary is practically groundless.

May I also point out that during the progress of the war all the other States of Australia have held their elections. The Commonwealth has held its election at the correct time, and apparently intends to hold another election when it is normally due. It is obvious that it intends to do something much more disturbing than the holding of an election, by putting before the

people of Australia a referendum on which there will be divided opinion; and during the referendum discussions there will be disruption in no uncertain way.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Would it not be a good idea to set an example?

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I do not think it is a good example. We should not deny the electors their right to select their Parliamentary representatives. The various aspects raised by the Chief Secretary seem to me to be herrings drawn across the trail rather than real arguments. When I spoke on the Bill dealing with the postponement of municipal elections members will remember that I said it was wrong that representatives on any governing body, whether it be road board, municipal council or State or Federal Parliaments, should become unresponsive to the criticisms and discipline of their electors. I am still of that opinion and I hope sufficient members of this Chamber will indicate a similar view when the vote is taken and will throw out the Bill. I shall vote against the second reading.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): I am very far from thinking that there is no room for two opinions regarding this matter. If I may seem to speak strongly in support of my own opinion, I hope that those members who think differently will understand that I have the greatest respect for their views. Unquestionably this is the most important Bill that has been brought before Parliament this session, and for this reason I find very little sympathy with the desires of the Chief Secretary to rush the measure through with undue haste. If it is so important that the Bill should be passed within a certain time, it might have been introduced at an earlier date. If the Chief Secretary still entertains the wish he expressed yesterday that the debate will be concluded today, why should other matters, important in themselves no doubt, have been placed on the notice paper ahead of this Bill? The Chief Secretary, I presume, was quite willing that every member should have an opportunity to express an opinion and, so long as that is the case, I have no desire to delay the passage of the second reading of the Bill.

I am entirely opposed to the reasons given by Mr. Parker for passing the Bill. They seem to reflect both upon Parliament and upon the people. He told us that the State

Parliament is now of no importance and that no worth-while person would be likely to offer for election. I profoundly disagree with both of those arguments. I admit that the State Parliament is not functioning as it ought to, but the fault lies with the Government, and that fact in itself furnishes a very strong reason why there should not be an extension of the present Government's period of office without the consent of the people. As to Mr. Parker's statement that no worth-while person would be likely to offer for election, I think that is a monstrous reflection.

Hon. G. Fraser: It is a reflection on us.

Members: Not at all.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: At the by-elections held since the war started there has been an abundance of candidates. I think we are agreed that the gentlemen who have been elected to the vacancies were men of the highest standing and will do honour to themselves and to this House, and I believe that we would have many worth-while men offering themselves at this juncture. I think it is a laudable ambition for any man to wish to serve his State in time of difficulty. I claim to work very hard in the interests of a number of things I believe in, and I am sure my opportunities for advancing those things which I consider are in the interests of the State would be small if I was not able to speak with the authority of a representative of the people. So I think those two arguments must be brushed aside. If there is an election, there will be an abundance of entirely desirable candidates offering themselves, and I would not be prepared to say that even those who were defeated were not just as worthy citizens and as capable of representing the people in Parliament as is any of us.

Another statement by Mr. Parker was that the Commonwealth Government might interfere and in some way block the election. Surely that is an absurd contention! If a matter of that kind lay in the hands of the Commonwealth Minister for Labour, I could understand any extraordinary action being taken by him, but the really responsible Minister, I take it, would not for one moment consent to a departure of that kind. I recognise a valid and strong objection to the holding of an election, and I recognise it fully and freely. That is the difficulty of reaching a number of the electors. We must all appreciate that objection, but I

think we ought to weigh against it the arguments on the other side, give due consideration to both sides and say whether it is better to face that difficulty or whether it is an insuperable difficulty and because of that we must postpone the election.

One question I should like to ask members to consider is: What value does the ordinary elector attach to his vote? So far as the Assembly elections are concerned, we have, wisely or unwisely—on that point I do not express an opinion—resorted to compulsory voting in order to obtain a reasonable expression of public opinion. Only by compulsion can we get the electors to recognise, not the privilege of the vote but the responsibility attaching to it. When we come to Legislative Council elections, in connection with which there is no compulsory voting, what do we find? Are we to assume that the Legislative Council electors are inferior in the appreciation of their responsibility to the public than are the electors of the Assembly? If so, it places us in a rather sorry position. If we do not think that, if we believe they value their vote just about as much as the rest of the community and that only under a system of compulsory voting can we get a big poll for the Legislative Assembly elections, what is the position?

In connection with the Legislative Council election in 1940, in the contested provinces, there were 82,000 electors and only 33,000, or 40 per cent. went to the poll. The other 60 per cent. did not value the privilege of the vote. If I am not mistaken in the constituency that so very wisely returned Mr. Parker, the percentage of voters was nearer 20 than 40. Is it not absolutely idle to say that we are going to impose injustice on a great many people by depriving them of the vote? Consider the position of the soldier who is out of the State at the present time. Is it not of infinitely greater importance to him that this State should be well governed during his absence than that he should have or should not have a vote at a particular election? We know that men of all classes and creeds have volunteered for service with the Fighting Forces and I think the chances are that from a party point of view, they would be about fifty-fifty and their absence would make no difference even if it were impossible—which I do not think it is—to give them an opportunity to vote.

The whole pith of the question is: Are we satisfied that the present Government is doing so good a job that it should be kept in office for a further period without reference to the people? Those supporters of the Government who say, "Yes" are bound upon their conscience to vote in favour of the Bill, but those of us who say "No," who consider that the Government is doing a very bad job—that is my conviction—must find it their duty to vote against the Bill. If the Government is to continue in office, it should do so with the support of the people. I believe there are certain members who have the idea that if an election is held now there will be practically no change in party strength, but that if the Government is given another year of office, a little more rope with which to hang itself, then a change will be certain. I hope the Chief Secretary and his colleagues will accept that support in the spirit in which it is given.

I regard this Bill as tantamount to a vote of confidence in the Government, and for that reason I cannot support it. I supported a measure to defer municipal and road board elections because the Government was good enough, at my suggestion, to include a further qualification. But I would remind members that there were several differences between that Bill and this one. I wonder whether the Government would be prepared to insert in this measure a proviso similar to that which appears in the other one, namely, to enable ten per cent. of the electors in any constituency to demand that their representative submit himself to the people. There is this other important difference. Municipal councils and road boards are not party concerns. Party politics enters into their activities to a very limited extent. All sections of the community are represented, and at the council table all sections have equal power. In Parliament all power practically lies on the one side.

It was the Imperial Parliament that set the example of deferring elections. At that time the Conservative Party—the Government Party—had an overwhelming majority in the House of Commons and in the Lords. But what did Mr. Churchill do? He immediately invited the collaboration of members of both the other parties on a very generous scale, not a scale in

any way regulated by the strength of those parties in the House, but on a very generous scale. The result was the formation of a Government in which no party can exercise dominance and in which all parties—those representing small numbers and those representing large numbers in the House of Commons—have practically an equal say in the affairs of government. I go a step further. On every occasion since the formation of the Churchill Government on which there has occurred anything in the nature of strong criticism or condemnation of Government action, the Prime Minister has gone to the House and asked for a vote of confidence, and everyone who knows anything of British politics will agree with me when I say that had those votes of confidence not been given by a large majority, the Government would at once have gone to the people. It would not have been necessary to obtain a majority against the Government; the mere fact of there being a minority such as to suggest public dissatisfaction would have been sufficient at all times to cause the Government to go to the country.

What do we find here? Our Government is not prepared to take this course. It is not prepared to admit to its ranks members of any other party. It is not prepared to recognise the important fact that it has the narrowest possible majority in one House and a small minority in the other House. Yet it arrogates to itself the idea that all the political wisdom and all the administrative ability are centred in its own party. It asks for its period of office to be renewed for another 12 months without any appeal to the people. America has held elections. Other States contemplate holding theirs. The Commonwealth has already had one election since the war started, and it will hold its next election at the appointed time or, as some have suggested, before the appointed time. Moreover, the Commonwealth contemplates submitting to the public a referendum on matters not only of high importance, but matters calculated to divide the Australian people as no other matter would divide them at the present time. In these circumstances, I repeat, there was only one consideration which I feel would justify me in voting for this Bill; and that is a belief that the public is satisfied with the present Government. I cannot indulge in that view. Let me give one or two reasons.

First of all, there is the matter to which Mr. Parker referred—the lighting regulations. Was this House, or this Parliament, responsible for the deplorable conditions under which those black-out and brown-out restrictions were continued for several weeks, I believe even for several months, after they had been partially abandoned in the other States? Whose responsibility was it that during that period of unnecessary restriction a large number of accidents, some fatal, others non-fatal, occurred? Whose responsibility was that? It was the fault entirely of our State Government, and of nobody else. When the resolution disallowing those regulations was passed in this House, and passed very largely on the convincing arguments used by Mr. Parker, it was clearly expressed that the desire of this Chamber was that the Government should give consideration to the matter and approach the military authorities, with a full grasp of local conditions, so that they could formulate new regulations which, while protecting the security of the State to the full extent, would minimise the risk of accidents.

But what did the Government do? Apparently in a spirit of contempt for this Chamber it rushed to the Commonwealth Government and used the Federal authorities to impose regulations which were impossible for us to interfere with. And so week after week went by until the Government itself had to make an appeal to the Federal authorities, long after the restrictions had been to a large extent waived in other States, on the very grounds that were advanced in this House months previously when the regulations were disallowed—disallowed on arguments put up by Mr. Parker. It is not Parliament that was defective; it was the Government that was defective—that Government which now asks for an extension of time without any appeal to the electors. But there are a great many other matters—I do not say matters of greater importance when we know that valuable lives were lost—but matters of more permanent importance so far as the State is concerned. I have no hesitation in saying that this Government has shown no conception of the great need there is for maintaining the economic stability of this State during the period of war—no conception whatever. I go further and say that this Government has connived with the Federal authorities to

use the war as an opportunity for advancing the Labour programme of socialism, of destruction of individual freedom, and of crippling of individual initiative.

We have an example of this in the action of the Government in over-riding the Arbitration Court, action of which this Chamber expressed its strongest possible disapproval only a couple of days ago. Mr. Baxter has made reference to the mining industry. In my opinion there is no doubt that the Government acted too little and too late in preserving that industry. Something has certainly been done recently; and I am in hope that what is left of the industry will be preserved, because I am fully convinced that, given anything like a decent chance this industry will be more active than any other industry in the absorption of returned men and others. Mr. Baxter made the suggestion that after this war is over gold would no longer be worth £10 per oz. I would recall that that assessment of £10 an oz. is the expression of the value of gold in Australian currency. I would ask Mr. Baxter to put to himself the question: What would be the value of the Australian £1 note once the war is over, if the activities of the present Government or of a large part of the supporters of the present Government are allowed to prevail?

Hon. C. F. Baxter: I would not like to answer that question.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Mr. Bolton has spoken on several occasions of the position of our manufacturing industries. There again we have the Commonwealth Government on the one hand and the State Government on the other showing no sympathy whatever towards our manufacturing industries—endeavouring, as a matter of fact, to divert from private enterprise into public undertakings whatever manufacturing industries we have. Let it not be forgotten that the two leading planks in Labour policy, both Federal and State—unless there is between them some division that I know not of—are nationalisation of all the instruments of production, distribution and exchange, and unification and destruction of State Parliaments—certainly the destruction of this section of State Parliaments. I consider that ours has been the least active of any of the State Governments in opposition to the proposals now before the Federal Parliament in regard to the referendum.

The suggestion was made in this Chamber some time ago that three-party resolutions might be drafted to which all of us could agree. I have yet to learn that the Government has shown any sympathy to a proposal of this kind. And what about our industries? Take the dairying industry. I do not know that the Government has made any protest to the Federal authorities against decisions in regard to that industry which are condemned by the entire industry, and which to my mind aim at making that industry entirely dependent on Government pleasure, on subsidies entirely inadequate and moreover incapable of anything like equitable distribution. Then we have the creation of boards overriding not only Arbitration Courts but concerning themselves with many of the major industries of the country; boards in every case so composed that trade union influence dominates the board. We do not hear of any protest by our State Government against boards of that kind.

Are we to lie down under it? Are we to suggest that this sort of thing should go on till the end of the war, no matter how long that may be, until there is no longer any private enterprise left and trade unions govern every one of our industries? Take the latest case, the board that sat to determine wages in connection with harvesting. Mr. Baxter asked a question on that subject, and what was the reply? To the effect that it was thought the difficulty of farmers would be mainly one of obtaining any efficient labour at all, no matter what rates of wages were offered. I cannot imagine that anyone with the least knowledge of conditions in our agricultural industry or with the least desire to protect the interests of those engaged in it would return such an answer.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: And it was not an answer to my question at all. It only dodges the issue.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: In many parts of the State numerous farmers are struggling along with great difficulty, employing men, mostly past their prime, men not fit for military service, who are doing their best and are being paid £3 a week and keep. What have the employers of such farm labour got to do? They have to increase the wages of those same men to £5 12s. 6d. per week and keep, and in certain occupations to £9 per week and keep

and overtime. Yet wages were supposed to be pegged in February of this year! Now this board comes along and overrides everything, overrides the pegging regulation and doubles, and in some cases more than doubles, wages in the farming industry at a time when it is least able to bear any additional imposition. The plain fact of the matter is that the industry cannot possibly pay those rates of wages, and it means that many farmers will dispense with the services of the men they have been employing at £3 a week and keep, because it is impossible to pay those men £5 12s. 6d. or £9 a week and keep. I have had conversations with numerous farmers since that decision was made.

Hon. T. Moore: With St. George's-terrace farmers?

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: No. Occasionally, in spite of petrol restrictions and that sort of thing, real live farmers come to town!

Hon. T. Moore: Very few are coming now.

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Since the hon. member is so curious, it happened that an esteemed friend of mine, one of the leading farmers in the State and once an esteemed member of this House, had a daughter married yesterday afternoon. I left this Chamber early to attend the ceremony. There I met old representative solid farmers.

Hon. G. W. Miles: There is one sitting behind you! He believes in what you are saying.

Hon. T. Moore: Nothing of the kind!

Hon. Sir HAL COLEBATCH: Some of them have ceased wondering what crop they will put in next season in order to wonder whether it will pay to take off the present crop. One farmer, a man of undoubted integrity and large experience, told me that so far as his barley crop was concerned, this wages decision was the last straw, and that he proposed to turn his cows into his barley crop of 200 acres, realising that it was the best thing that he could do. How long will it take our farming industry to recover from blows of this kind? And what protection can we hope for from a Government which states its belief that the difficulty of farmers would be mainly one of obtaining any efficient labour, no matter what rates of wages were offered? And

then there is a lot of absolutely hypocritical, insincere prating about equality of sacrifice! One reason for the shortage of farm labour at the present time is the absence of thousands of farmers' sons who have gone to the war. Now as the result of the decision of this board the farmer may have to pay—I do not speak at all deprecatingly—to inexperienced and only partially efficient labourers considerably more than double what his sons are receiving for fighting for their country! And this is what we call austerity, equality of sacrifice, and many high-sounding but meaningless phrases of that kind!

Do not forget this: The reason for the great depression was the fall in the price of agricultural products. So far as Western Australia is concerned, we were tided over it partly by the revival in the gold-mining industry, but Australia as a whole survived that depression because the wool-growers and the wheatgrowers stuck to their jobs, no matter whether there was a small or a large return from them. They faced their responsibilities and difficulties. It is because we were able to send their products oversea at no profit to them that we were able to buy requirements from oversea without which we could not carry on. When the history of that depression is written, I venture to say that the greatest credit will be given not to Governments or Parliaments but to the men on the land who battled along in the face of extreme difficulties. But for them we would have been in a sorry plight. I do not know whether other members have been honoured in the same way as I, but I received a letter from the Wheat and Woolgrowers' Association asking me to advocate the provision of debt-free credit for the farmers. Although I could not agree to the suggestion I recognise that if farmers are compelled to pay the wages and observe the conditions set up by this Commonwealth Government board, they will require a great deal of debt-free credit and they will need to be free not only from the obligation of paying interest but also of returning the loan at any time.

Then we have the action of the Government in regard to liquor hours. Is it thought that people are satisfied with what was done or that the Government fulfilled its promise to the Prime Minister when it said, "Let us have this power of reducing hours and we will reduce them," and then reduced the

hours by one, which did not help one bit! Again there is the subject of starting-price betting. I withdrew my motion for the appointment of a Select Committee on receiving an assurance that the Government had agreed to appoint a Royal Commission. What has happened since? All I know is what I have been told, namely, that the Government has asked Mr. Curtin to help it. It seems to me that no self-respecting Government, when grave reflections were cast upon certain of its members—reflections behind which I venture to say a considerable section of the public feels there is a great deal—would go to the Prime Minister and say, "What can we do about this? Can you recommend anybody?" Do members not think that a self-respecting Government could find somebody to act as a Royal Commissioner to make an investigation which, in the mind of the public, is desirable?

Those, roughly, are the circumstances under which we are asked to extend the Government's tenure of office without reference to the people. The Commonwealth Government is following a purely class policy which I, and many others in this House, believe will wreck our industries and undermine the economic structure of our country. The State Government is aiding and abetting that policy either through indifference or by deliberate design. Are we the members of this House, to make ourselves party to such an action? What attempt has the Government made to exploit the proper usefulness of Parliament? A couple of sessions ago I made the suggestion that the Government should do as previous Governments had done and introduce into this Chamber Bills that could properly have their origin here. Nothing has been done in that direction. Such a course of action would have balanced the work. Instead, this House has been adjourned week after week and, if we are going to deal with all the business that has accumulated in the other place, we shall have the usual end of the session rush to which we have become accustomed but which is entirely unnecessary. A little while ago the Premier gave an assurance that the Companies Bill would be dealt with in time to enable it to come before this House for consideration in a proper manner. What chance is there of that happening? It seems to me there is plenty of time for measures giving effect to trade union policy but no time for measures dealing with public requirements.

I contend that it is the undoubted right of the people to pass judgment on their representatives at the duly appointed time. It was with a good deal of diffidence that I supported a Bill of this kind 12 months ago. But the circumstances then were very different from those prevailing today. I am not going to suggest that the Government or this House or another place was wrong in the decision reached on that occasion. But I do feel that it weakened the esteem for Parliament in the minds of the people. There is a very strong feeling, not only in the city but—even much more pronounced—in the country against a further postponement, and personally I feel that such a postponement will further weaken public confidence in the State legislature at a time when it is of supreme importance that people should have faith in their State Parliament and should be jealous in the protection of its rights and privileges, as the chief safeguard of their own liberties and the most potent influence in the protection of their interests. For the reasons I have given, I shall vote against the second reading of the Bill.

HON. E. M. HEENAN (North-East): This is a most important Bill and I am a little disappointed that the debate has not been conducted on a higher plane. It seems to me that it has been one respecting the merits or demerits of the existing Government. I draw attention to the fact that the Bill proposes to prolong the existence of the present Legislative Assembly for 12 months or a shorter period. Apparently the Government in another place, supported by a large majority, had some reason for thinking that its efforts in the past had not been altogether as bad as has been suggested by Sir Hal Colebatch. I agree that a measure of this nature has to receive very serious consideration and that we have to think a great deal before we pass Bills to extend the life of Parliament.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Has not your thinking been done for you by your party?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: No!

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Oh, yes it has!

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: That is an unworthy suggestion and in keeping with the remarks the hon. member made when speaking on the Bill. I hope the hon. member will give others besides himself credit for approaching this subject in a disinterested manner and in conformity with the obliga-

tions of the position which we all hold here. Sir Hal has pointed out that the subject is one in respect of which there can be adduced strong arguments both for and against. The point that impresses me is that our obligation is to the people. It is to give the electors a fair opportunity of voting for the members who represent them in both Houses of Parliament.

Hon. G. W. Miles: In that case you will not support the Bill!

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Can any one say that at the present time the electors of Western Australia will have a fair opportunity of passing judgment on the various men who represent them in Parliament?

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Not if this Bill is passed. They will not have any opportunity.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: They will not have an opportunity if the Bill is not passed because a great majority of them are overseas.

Several members interjected.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Not a great majority but a great number.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: That is in keeping with your other statements.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Anyone who has visited the goldfields during recent months will have some conception of what the war has done to our goldfields towns.

Hon. H. V. Piessé: You need to visit the country, too.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The hon. member can speak for the country; I am speaking about something I know at first hand. Many of our goldfields towns have just about ceased to exist.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And you want members to represent those towns that do not exist.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Many people who own mining leases, and humble homes and properties in Laverton, Menzies and many other towns I could mention, have left them and are now in the Eastern States or in America, or are fighting in New Guinea or somewhere else. But those places are their homes, to which they hope to go back when this frightful catastrophe has ended. I received news the other day of a young fellow who has a mine at Menzies which yields three or four ounces to every crushing. He and his brother have been called up and are now in the Eastern States. What is

to be done about them? They are only typical of thousands of prospectors and miners on the eastern goldfields.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: How will a postponement of the elections help them?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Is this an opportune time to go to the people?

Hon. H. L. Roche: When will be an opportune time?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I do not know. I only hope it will be inside 12 months. Who can answer a question like that? If an election were held at this time, a great number of the very best people in this country would be disfranchised. Surely they should have an opportunity of saying who shall represent them. I feel very strongly about the position on the eastern goldfields. Sir Hal Colebatch has unfairly criticised the Government's attitude to the mining industry. I am sure that not one member who represents a goldfields constituency will agree with his remarks on that subject. We know that the Government has assisted the industry and has been sympathetic in every way possible. It has granted assistance and has headed deputations to the Commonwealth Government, but in spite of all its efforts, no industry has been more afflicted than the mining industry. Members representing the North-East Province have had calls from people in Laverton, Murrin-Murrin, and Morgans, where for 20 years past there has never been fewer than one train a week. During recent years, there have been two trains a week; but so many people have now left the district that there is a proposal to run only one train a fortnight. That gives some indication of what has happened in the gold-mining districts. I hope, therefore, that aspect will receive consideration. I hold the opinion that the present is most inopportune for holding either a State election or a Federal referendum. I support the second reading of the Bill.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: I move—
That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	..	..	17
					—
Majority against	..				6
					—

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. J. G. Hislop
Hon. G. W. Miles

Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. E. H. H. Hall
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. C. R. Cornish
Hon. L. Craig
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. W. H. Kitson

Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. T. Moore
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. C. D. Williams
Hon. G. Fraser
(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived.

HON. E. H. H. HALL (Central): I wish to deal with a few of the arguments advanced by those who support the Bill. It has been suggested that there will be extensive use of paper. I remind members of the very bad example set by the Commonwealth Government in that respect. I have here two pamphlets that I, in common with other members, have received—every elector in the State has received one of them—advising us to support something that not one of us needs to be adjured to support—I refer to the Austerity Loan. I consider that the issuing of those pamphlets constitutes a gross example of waste of paper. Then we heard about the cost of the election. One member interjected to the effect that the Premier had indicated that the cost of the election would be about £9,000. What influences me in refusing to support the Bill is the obstinacy of the State Government in declining to follow the very fine lead given by the British Government by taking into the Cabinet representatives of other political parties. Had that course been adopted I think members would rightly have regarded the Bill with much greater satisfaction than they do at present.

Another point mentioned referred to the very slender majority possessed by the Government in another place. If that majority were large, I would be more inclined to be in sympathy with the proposal to extend its life, but in view of the slender majority the Government possesses, I do not think I would be justified in voting it a further extension of political life. Last year, in view of the circumstances then existing Parliament quite rightly passed similar legislation with little discussion or dissension. I am supported by many men, who know more than I profess to do, in my view that the position to-day is in an entirely different category. I

will be remembered that the legislation passed last year embodied a provision that left it optional for the Government to hold an election at any time it deemed fit. The Bill now before us precludes any such possibility before the 21st February of next year. If any steps were taken in that direction, it would probably result in the poll being taken several months after that date. I trust that those members who have not already made up their minds regarding the attitude they will adopt on this Bill, will consider whether they will be content to allow the present Government, with its slender majority, to continue in office for a further 15 or 18 months, irrespective of what the conditions may be overseas. That is the point. Those who have supported the Bill have asserted that we have no right to divide the people on political issues while the Empire is at war. Ever since the Bill was introduced in another place, the war situation has improved to an extent that exceeded our wildest hopes. The fact is that in every State of Australia, elections have been held while the war has been in progress.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Except in Western Australia.

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: That is so. In those circumstances, we need not go to America or Canada for an example. We know the position in Great Britain, and if the State and Commonwealth Governments were to follow the lead of the Mother Country, we would have a national Government. But what is the position? No matter who urges that course, or where it is urged, deaf ears are bent to the proposition. Why is that? Is it because the question has received the earnest consideration of either the Commonwealth Government or the State Government? Not at all. I believe that if the members of those two Cabinets were allowed to reach a free and unfettered decision on the point, they would have called in the leaders of other political parties to assist them while we are confronted with the present crisis. But they are not allowed to form composite Governments. That would be against the decisions of their masters. To-day we do not have government by Labour Administrations in both the State and Commonwealth spheres; it is the Labour Congress that gives instructions to Cabinets and those instructions are rigidly adhered to.

Hon. G. Fraser: You have not drawn even a bite!

Hon. E. H. H. HALL: Mr. Heenan referred to elections on the goldfields, and I forbore to interject while he was speaking. How often are elections held on the goldfields? When one is held, is there ever any change in the representation in the Legislative Assembly? Mr. Heenan implored members to consider the poor chap at Laver-ton, and the cost of going to the poll. The fact is that the eastern goldfields and Murchison seats have been held ever since responsible government—I am wrong there, because I remember that the late Judge Moorehead represented a goldfields constituency at one time, but in the main my statement is correct—the constituents have remained true to the Labour cause. It matters not whether an election is held, because the representation will not be altered. That applies to the Labour Party representation in another place just as it does to members in this Chamber. We have been told that the Commonwealth Government intends to hold a referendum and if the amendment of the Constitution is agreed to it will practically mean the end of the powers and functions of State Governments.

As I have already indicated, if a question of that moment is submitted to the people it will divide them much more than will a State election. Though I may be wrong, I maintain that if we postpone the State elections indefinitely—that is what it will really mean—the Government will then be able to come down next year and say that as the war has not terminated but they think that the position is much clearer, they will risk a vote of the people! Will that be the position? The longer we postpone the State elections, the more will the people be convinced that the Government has given itself a further term of office and will not trouble to go before the electors. When ultimately the time comes for the people to give it the coup de grace—and I certainly hope that will not be too long—I think it will be given with a will. For that and the other reasons I have advanced, I think members should take the opportunity to go before the electors who have the right to say whether we shall continue to represent them or not. Last year it was an entirely different matter. This year the situation is much brighter and so I think it is up to the representatives of the people to go back to their masters to

let them decide whether they are satisfied to give their representatives a further term of office; but Parliament will not get an extension of life on my vote.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I shall try to be as brief as possible in my remarks on this Bill, but I do not wish to record a silent vote. My reason for being brief is that I do not think any remarks I may make will alter one iota the opinion of members or their attitude to the measure. I have studied the debate in another place and was amazed to find among the supporters of the measure so many pessimists as to the war position. Fully ten members in another place seemed suddenly to have discovered an immediate threat of invasion by the enemy. That was the principal reason they advanced in favour of the Bill. When I supported a similar measure last session, I honestly believed that Australia was in danger of invasion by the Japanese, but that threat is very much less than it was 12 months ago. Therefore, that argument does not carry any weight with me as to whether I should support or oppose the Bill.

I wonder whether the Government and the Premier were serious in favouring the postponement of the election, especially in view of the interest which Ministers are showing in the York by-election. The Premier, according to an advertisement I saw, is himself going to speak at York. Already one Minister has spoken at that centre, and I feel sure that if the Premier finds he cannot attend, another Minister will take his place. I am not raising any objection to this, but are they serious when they say the people should not be divided by an election? Yet we find them taking such an active interest in the York by-election! Much has been said about the proposed Commonwealth referendum, but that cannot be compared with a State election. A referendum might divide the people, but it is not comparable with a State election. Therefore, that argument will not weigh with me. We have heard much about the interest that the people will take in the election. I made it my business to ask numbers of people what they think of the holding of an election. The answer I got was generally that they did not care whether an election was or was not held. I then put up an argument to the contrary and they came round to my way of thinking. I therefore came to the conclusion that they did not

care whether an election was to be held or was to be postponed.

I face the question in this way: We must take into consideration the vote on this matter in another place. That vote in favour of the Bill was 29 to 11. Seven members were absent, but probably they would have voted with the majority. I have to take some notice of that division list, and so I find myself at the crossroads. If we hold an election, I honestly think it would not make any difference whatever to our war effort. At York the people are rushing to attend the meetings; apparently they have the petrol to spare. Unquestionably, the people at York are taking an interest in that by-election. So I weigh the arguments on one side and on the other. Should I, as a member of this House, vote against the opinion of another place on a matter which directly concerns it? That is what I have to ask myself. At the moment, I shall leave it at that.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	11
Noes	..	..	..	..	18

Majority against .. 7

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. H. V. Plasse
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. J. G. Hialop	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. C. R. Cornish	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. F. E. Gibson	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. C. B. Williams
	(Teller.)

Motion thus negatived.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East): I am astonished at the unseemly haste with which this measure is being rushed through the House. Some weeks ago I submitted a motion which, in my opinion, should have the earnest consideration of this Chamber. I submitted the motion with a view to opening up a discussion on the proposed Commonwealth referendum, and I had sincerely hoped that we would be unanimous in opposition to it. The motion was submitted

to the House on the 21st October, but has not been deemed of sufficient importance to be discussed since then, although the matter is vital to the welfare of this State.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: There is no hurry at all.

Hon. A. THOMSON: When it comes to extending the life of Parliament, it is amazing how members suddenly have taken a keen, active interest in the doings of this House. This measure was introduced in another place on the 3rd November. It was adjourned until Thursday the 5th November, when it passed through the second reading and Committee stages. Then the Standing Orders were suspended to enable it to pass the third reading. It is the most hasty piece of legislation that I have come across in my long parliamentary experience. It was rushed through in an unseemly manner. Had the Government been sincere in its desire to protect or assist the people of Western Australia, it would have given both Houses an opportunity to pass the motions relating to the Federal referendum. The Government has said that if an election is held early next year, the people will be divided. But why did the Government not suspend the Standing Orders to discuss a matter of such vital importance as the motion dealing with the proposed Commonwealth referendum? Mr. E. H. H. Hall has pointed out that we are supposed to be living in an austere age and must save every possible penny. We must not even fall sick. It is unfortunate that the Prime Minister should be one to go contrary to the views he tendered to the public a few days ago in the Capitol Theatre. We all regret his ill-health and realise the heavy task imposed on him, which requires every bit of stamina and strength that a man possesses.

We are told by the Prime Minister and the Treasurer—and incidentally by the Premier of this State and the Chief Secretary—that it is not advisable to waste money. Therefore we should grant ourselves a renewal of parliamentary life. I wonder whether the arguments adduced are sound. We have suggested—and I may be accused of a desire to secure office—that we should have in this State a combination of all the brains and ability of both Houses in regard to the administration of State affairs. Of course, that has not been granted. I would probably have voted more cheerfully on this

Bill if it had been under those conditions. The Government apparently is determined to force the issue. Although this important piece of legislation was only introduced yesterday, an adjournment was refused then and has been on three different occasions since. The Government is entitled to exercise its rights, but it does seem to me that unseemly haste has been exhibited in connection with this Bill dealing with the extension, for another year, of the life of Parliament. There are sound reasons for it, and there are sound reasons against it.

I wish to compliment Sir Hal Colebatch on the excellent and well-considered speech he delivered on this subject. Mr. E. H. H. Hall also put up a rather good point. Mr. Heenan in the interests of the goldmining industry pleaded that the elections should be postponed because so many men were away. Well, the same things applies to other districts. As Mr. Hall pointed out there has apparently not been a change of heart on the goldfields regarding the representation of those parts in the Legislative Council. They have continued to send the same members back year after year. Mr. Heenan put up rather a weak case in his argument in connection with the goldfields.

I have heard a great deal about the difficulties in obtaining the votes of soldiers who are in the various parts of the Commonwealth. If there is a will there is a way! If the Government had been sincere in its attempt to give these soldiers an opportunity to record their votes, it could have amended the Electoral Act accordingly. I am the last to debar a soldier from recording his vote if he so wishes. We are told that the public does not wish to be disturbed; it does not want to be asked to take part in an election. One of the objectives we are fighting for today as a nation is the right to maintain the privileges for which our forefathers fought and obtained for us. Among these privileges is the right to send men, and women, to Parliament, to represent the people and voice their views. As to the election, we are in a rather unfortunate position, because it is only Parliament itself that can arrive at a decision, either to hold the election or postpone it. If some tribunal could make that decision then members would not be accused of voting in their own self-interests. We have seen a number of

letters in the Press, and that applies also to the country districts. Many people are firmly of the opinion that we should not without giving the electors an opportunity to say who should, or should not, represent them in Parliament, postpone the elections.

If one can judge by the weekly fines imposed on those who break the law by S.P. betting, one would think that those people would pay more attention to the affairs of their State if they took more interest in the government of it. After all we claim for our Constitution that it is government of the people, for the people, by the people. As far as our amusements are concerned we find that the theatres are packed to the doors nightly. One of the picture shows has advertised that while all the reserved seats are booked for certain days, a certain number are still vacant. That shows that the members of the public are vitally interested, and rightly so—I have no desire to deprive them of their amusement—in their personal recreations. The Government proposed last year that the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition should deal with the votes of soldiers who are serving overseas and elsewhere. Had the Government been sincere in its desire to provide the opportunity which it deemed essential to enable the soldiers to vote, it seems that we could have made some such provision. One cannot help drawing attention to the fact that there is a certain section of this House which is so interested in this discussion that is only present when a division is called for!

The PRESIDENT: Order! The hon. member should not have said that.

Hon. A. THOMSON: I have no desire to transgress the rules of good manners. Having made statements publicly that it was my intention to vote against the extension of the life of Parliament, it seemed to me that I would be wanting in my duty, and could even be accused of not being game, if I did not stand up and express my views here. I have therefore taken this opportunity to put on record my reasons for considering that the life of Parliament should not be extended. Mr. Wood said that the vote in another place, as it affected members there, gave him cause for thought. That may be so, but there have been scores of important measures in which members of this House have not taken into consideration the views of another place. Frequently the majority of this House has

out-voted another place on legislation which it was desirous of bringing into effect. We have only to go back to the beginning of this week when we dealt with the Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment Bill. That measure was defeated here although a majority in another place strongly approved of it. The fact that a majority in another place voted for the measure should not give members here cause for grave concern.

I deplore the unseemly haste with which this Bill is being pushed through. As I pointed out, we have had on our notice paper for the last 20 days a motion which, in my opinion, is of vital importance, on which Parliament should express its opinion. It is of a non-party nature urging both Houses to pass a resolution so that it could be made public through the whole of Western Australia and the Commonwealth, that both Houses of this Parliament are strongly opposed to the Commonwealth Government imposing upon the people, while we are at war, an attempt to amend the Constitution so as to take away from this Parliament the rights and privileges it has had for many years. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East): Having spoken over the air and consulted with many of the people I represent, I am satisfied that the consensus of opinion is that an election should be held, and I am a strong supporter of that view. I was not in the House when Mr. Wood referred to what had happened in another place, but I heard Mr. Thomson's remarks and they certainly gave food for thought. I was led to believe that the whip had been cracked. With the exception of the Minister who introduced the Bill, not a Government supporter in another place spoke on the measure.

Hon. A. Thomson: And Government supporters are conspicuous by their silence in this House, too.

Hon. H. V. PIESSE: This is the most important Bill that has been presented to Parliament this session. The measure could have been introduced earlier in order to allow ample time for its discussion, and it seems unfortunate that we should have to rush it through today. I shall vote against the second reading.

HON. F. R. WELSH (North): I think I am right in saying that this question has been discussed inside and outside the House during the last three weeks. Party meetings have been held to consider the proposal, and I think the purpose of the Bill is thoroughly understood and that there was no need for the comment about rushing it through with unseemly haste. The voting in another place to which Mr. Wood referred was on non-party lines. Members of each party supported the measure. There is no doubt that this gives one food for thought. I rose largely to refute the suggestion that the Bill is being rushed through with unseemly haste when its purport has been well known for weeks. I cannot see any objection to dealing with it today and getting this item off the notice paper. Every member knows how he is going to vote and he knows how other members propose to vote, so there is no question of waiting to see how the cat jumps. I object to the suggestion that we are being dragooned or stampeded into voting on this legislation. I shall support the second reading.

HON. G. W. MILES (North): I shall be very brief. Being a non-party man, I have not discussed the Bill with any party. I congratulate supporters of the Government on having refrained from saying too much, just as they did in another place. They left other members to do the arguing for and against the measure.

Hon. T. Moore: This is not a party measure.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: This is not a party House.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I wish to correct a slip in "Hansard" in recording an interjection recently. I am aware that interjections are disorderly and that this one should not have been made. On the 21st October, Mr. Heenan, when speaking on the Public Authorities (Postponement of Elections) Bill, referred to the fact that Mr. Craig had pointed out, how, without much hesitation, we had passed the measure of last year. I am reported as having interjected, "And are likely to pass it again."

Hon. J. Cornell: The hon. member is quoting from "Hansard" of this session.

Hon. G. W. MILES: The interjection should have read, "And are not likely to pass it again."

The **PRESIDENT**: Is the hon. member making a personal explanation?

Hon. G. W. MILES: Yes. I was opposed to the Bill then and I am opposed to the measure now before us. It is the right of the electors to say who shall govern the State during the ensuing year. As one who normally should have faced an election last May, I would feel far more satisfied if I went before my electors and found that I had their support than I would be if I continued to occupy my seat in Parliament for another year by a vote of members instead of the electors. The latter are the people who should have the say. If they had not wanted me last May, somebody would have been occupying my place and the position would have been more satisfactory for all concerned.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East): Last year we postponed the election and it was the right thing to do in view of the very serious position then confronting the country. Nobody at that stage could be sure that within a few weeks the country might not be subjected to enemy invasion, and any suggestion for not postponing the election in the circumstances would have been ridiculed from one end of the State to the other. This year, however, the circumstances are different and I am satisfied that the people would regard it as nothing short of a scandal if we further postponed the election. I have discussed the matter with many people and found that they hold views that coincide with my own. To choose their representatives is one of the rights of the people, and it is for this House to safeguard those rights. Any attempt on our part to break them down would be shameful. Some people incline to the view that State Parliaments are no longer necessary and that control should be handed to the Commonwealth authority.

Hon. A. Thomson: God help us if we do!

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: I agree. Any action we take now will be closely watched and carefully weighed by the public. Mr. Baxter quoted a telegram and I have received letters on the subject of this Bill. In the last few days I have been informed that a very serious view is being taken of the Press reports regarding the postponement of the election. I feel concerned about the constitutional position, which is a very important matter. We have no right whatever

to extend the life of Parliament on the pretext advanced by some members that many of our voters are absent from the State on military service. My view is that those voters from a party point of view would be about fifty-fifty. I am ready to meet my electors, and am prepared to accept their verdict, even if it goes against me. I cannot see what object members can have in wishing to dodge the issue. If the electors do not want a certain member, he should be prepared to abide by their decision. If members are game to face up to an election, the electors will think much more highly of them. It would be in the best interests of the country if an election were held. We have had experience of one postponement for 12 months and we do not want to repeat it. I shall oppose the second reading.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East): I cannot cast a silent vote on this measure. I intend to express my opinion, especially with regard to the action of the House and the persons who are electors of this House. I oppose the idea that we should endeavour, in the case of any election for the Legislative Assembly, to let the men fighting for this country express an opinion regarding the future government of the country.

Hon. J. A. Dimmitt: Cannot arrangements be made?

Hon. H. SEDDON: It has been pointed out that many of our fighting men are in such a position that they would be unable to cast their votes. A few days ago I opposed the Bill to postpone the elections of public authorities, and I pointed out the very grave danger existing in the attitude of electors to returning members to represent them. One member has pointed out that this Bill has been the subject of discussion for some weeks, and has been under consideration in another place. It is a rather remarkable indication of the attitude of the electors that there has been no public meeting of protest in any electorate against the proposal to postpone the Assembly election. Considering the fact that we have compulsory voting for that House, I say that is an indication of the attitude of the people to the House that represents the popular vote.

I wish to be fair. I believe that much of this apathy is due to the fact that people believe that the whole of the efforts and ener-

gies of the country should be concentrated on winning the war. There was much in Sir Hal Colebatch's remarks with which I can heartily agree. When the postponement Bill of last year was brought forward, I indicated my opinion that, in order that the best effort of the country might be exerted, the Government should take into the Cabinet representatives of the Opposition parties in another place. I still hold that view. Even now I believe the Government would be well-advised to include those party leaders in the Cabinet for the duration of the war in order to show the people that we are unanimous in our efforts to win this life and death struggle. I recognise that the Government agreed to consult with those members, but only thought of taking the leaders into its counsels with a view to carrying on its work and prosecuting the war. The matters for which the Government must take the entire responsibility are, firstly, any omission it may have made with regard to the prosecution of the war and, secondly, any failure to safeguard the interests of the country. The Government must accept the whole of the responsibility for its inactivity, up to the present, in protesting against the attempt to unify Australia, to exploit the present occasion for a party objective. I am greatly disappointed that an important motion has for so long been kept at the bottom of the notice paper.

As regards the position of the Legislative Assembly, only a very short time ago a motion of no-confidence was moved there by an Independent, and some very serious things were said in the course of the debate. Although that was an opportunity for the Opposition to challenge the Government, there was not even a seconder to that motion of want of confidence. From that fact I take it that the Legislative Assembly has committed itself to an expression of approval of the continuance in office of the present Government. Therefore the Assembly must abide by its conclusion. I intend to cast my vote on this Bill in the direction of allowing the Legislative Assembly to cut out the impending election, so that it may be impressed on the voters of this State that if they do not take sufficient interest in their representation in another place to protest against the proposal to omit the election, they must accept the consequences.

HON. L. B. BOLTON (Metropolitan): I cannot cast a silent vote on this question. However, I shall follow Mr. Seddon's lead and support the Bill. I do so for this reason, briefly, that like every other member of the Chamber I have given the matter careful consideration and while opposed to rushing legislation at any time, I heartily agree with some of the remarks that have been made. For weeks and weeks we have discussed this measure, and I feel sure that most of us made up our minds some time ago as to what we will do.

Hon. A. Thomson: The Bill was only introduced a fortnight ago!

Hon. L. B. BOLTON: But we all knew that it was to be introduced. It was said by the public and by members of this House that the Legislative Council would have the final say as to whether or not there should be an Assembly election. For the last three weeks I have taken every opportunity offering itself to discuss the measure with leading business men, men who count, men who are doing work for the war, men who have big war jobs in hand; and in almost every instance they have said that this is no time to hold an election. Why should we spend money on an election and disunite the people in times like these? In 12 months' time we may be in a better position to fight an election. We are not out of the war yet. We still have a long way to go before we shall be out of trouble so far as the war is concerned. We should wait for 12 months after our soldiers, or most of them, have come back, so that they may be in a position to vote as they think fit. They perhaps may vote for representatives who would be better fitted than some of us are to legislate for Western Australia. If I am doing the wrong thing today, my electors will take me to task when I go before them. I feel that I am doing the right thing in the interests of the State by supporting the Bill.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (in reply): I shall not detain the House long, mainly because I feel that every member present has made up his mind how he will cast his vote, and that nothing I could say at this stage would have any influence whatever. I do desire, however, to emphasise what one member has been generous enough to say—that this is a non-party measure. I do particularly wish to stress that fact, and to state that the voting in another place disclosed

clearly that the Bill was similarly regarded there. The criticisms offered during this discussion covered quite a number of subjects. If I attempted to reply to them in detail, I would speak far too long. Let me say, however, that had it not been for the introductory remarks of Sir Hal Colebatch when he asked me not to take too seriously any severe criticism he might offer because he felt so seriously on the subject, I might not have risen to reply. Were I now to reply to the major portion of the issues raised by the hon. member, there would, I feel, be quite a long discussion. As regards the mining industry, Sir Hal said we were slow in coming to its aid. I say definitely that this Government took the earliest possible action it could take in that respect.

Hon. J. Cornell: I can bear that out!

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Even before Sir Hal took any action to aid the industry, the Government was active. I could say a lot on that aspect. As regards the black-out and the brown-out, we had to abide by a decision reached as the result of a conference called by the Commonwealth Government. That matter, however, has been already ventilated so often that I am surprised Sir Hal should have misrepresented the position. Then, as regards a reply I gave to a question asked by Mr. Baxter, Sir Hal quoted a few words of that reply—not the whole of it. That resulted in gross misrepresentation, because, in the course of my reply, I pointed out that the Government had no knowledge of the actual position, but was seeking the necessary information. If the Commonwealth Government care to use a National Security Regulation, we have to respect it. We shall always do our best to carry out such regulations. I might say more regarding numerous other matters mentioned by the hon. member, but I will refrain at this juncture. The position has been adequately covered by previous speakers. I do hope, however, that the Legislative Council will agree that this is not the time to divide the people by an election.

On the proposal of the Commonwealth Government to hold a convention prior to taking a referendum, all I want to say is that those who criticise the fact of a certain motion being still on the notice paper must have knowledge of a statement made by the Premier in another place. Until such time as the Premier had

made his statement on behalf of the Government, I was not in a position to reply in this House. Really, that is all there is to it. Had I the time, I daresay I could interest many members on various subjects mentioned in the course of the debate. I do hope the House will deal today not only with this Bill but also with the measure succeeding it. The Premier and the Leader of the Opposition are about to proceed to Canberra for the proposed convention, and they should know exactly what the position is going to be in regard to elections.

Question put.

The PRESIDENT: As it is necessary that the question be passed by an absolute majority, a division will have to be taken.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	19
Noes	..	..	..	..	10
Majority for	..	..	..	..	9

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. C. R. Cornish
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. W. H. Kitson

Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. T. Moore
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. L. Craig

(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt
Hon. E. H. Hall
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. J. G. Hislop

Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch

(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: There being more than an absolute majority of the total number of members of the Council voting with the "Ayes," I declare the second reading carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Standing Orders Suspension.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Bill to pass through its remaining stage at this sitting.

Question put.

The PRESIDENT: As it is necessary that the question be passed by an absolute majority, a division will have to be taken.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	20
Noes	..	..	..	..	8
Majority for	..	..	..	..	12

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. C. R. Cornish
Hon. L. Craig
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan

Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. T. Moore

(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch
Hon. E. H. Hall
Hon. V. Hamersley

Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt

(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: There being an absolute majority of the total number of members of the Council voting with the "Ayes," I declare the question passed.

Question thus passed.

Third Reading.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

Question put.

The PRESIDENT: As there must be an absolute majority, a division will have to be taken.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	19
Noes	..	..	..	..	9
Majority for	..	..	..	..	10

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. C. R. Cornish
Hon. L. Craig
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. E. M. Heenan

Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. T. Moore
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. C. B. Williams

(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch
Hon. E. H. Hall
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. G. W. Miles

Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt

(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: There being more than an absolute majority of the total number of members of the Council voting with the "Ayes," I declare the third reading carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTION).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [5.40]: I secured the adjournment of the debate really for the purpose of obtaining a little illumination on one or two of the clauses because I confess I found them very hard to understand. However, I have had an opportunity to discuss the position with the Crown Law authorities and the matter has now been cleared up to my satisfaction.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Explain it, then!

Hon. H. SEDDON: The Bill is to be read in conjunction with Section 8 of the Constitution Act which deals with the election of members to the Legislative Council. I intend to support the Bill.

HON. SIR HAL COLEBATCH (Metropolitan): I spoke against the second reading of the previous Bill but since I am always prepared to accept the majority decision, while opposing this one, I shall not repeat my arguments. I rise merely to refer to one matter, namely, the criticism I levelled against the Government in connection with the mining industry on the ground that action was too long delayed. I am prepared to accept without reserve the assurance of the Chief Secretary that long before there was any public reference to the matter the Government did take action, and I am sensible of the good effect that action of the Government subsequently had.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East): Having spoken at length on the Bill to postpone the Legislative Assembly elections, I feel I should at least give my reasons for opposing the present Bill. I would not like it to be said that I opposed one Bill but when it came to a measure affecting the Legislative Council I exercised a silent vote. I recognise that the majority of members have made up their minds regarding the measure, and therefore, while I shall vote against it, I shall not further delay its progress.

HON. G. B. WOOD (East): I desire to state briefly why I intend to oppose the

Bill. I made myself clear regarding the earlier measure, which I supported because of the large majority that favoured it in the Legislative Assembly, in consequence of which I did not feel myself competent to offer opposition. In this instance the position is different. The Bill affects this House and me personally. If it is not agreed to, I shall have to face the electors shortly, although I am not afraid of that prospect. For that reason, and for those I previously stressed on the earlier Bill, I shall oppose the measure.

HON. J. A. DIMMITT (Metropolitan-Suburban): I have been interested in the changed attitude indicated by Mr. Wood.

Hon. G. B. Wood: There is no change at all.

Hon. J. A. DIMMITT: I understood the hon. member to say he intended to oppose this Bill. It has been stated that the destiny of the Legislative Assembly should remain in the hands of that House and because the Assembly voted for an extension of its term we should support that measure. If that argument is sound, then the destiny of the Legislative Council should remain in our own hands, and that will afford others an opportunity to do exactly what Mr. Wood has done. I hope the Bill will be rejected so that the electors will recognise that we desire them to retain their right to elect the members of this Chamber at the time appointed by the Electoral Act.

HON. T. MOORE (Central): I cast a silent vote on the Bill to postpone the Legislative Assembly elections believing that I would have an opportunity to make my position clear when the present Bill was under discussion. I dissociate myself from those who have claimed we are in a different position from the standpoint of the war situation than we were 12 months ago. I would like to believe that we were, but I cannot get it into my head that we are out of the wood by any means.

Hon. J. Cornell: You have a fair knowledge of old Fritz!

Hon. T. MOORE: I believe we have a long way to go yet. On that account I voted in favour of the Assembly's Bill and will vote in favour of the measure now under consideration.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Hear, hear!

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member is fond of interjecting and Lord knows why he ever talks. He cannot keep quiet; he is quite irrepresible. However, to be serious, I would remind members that the Prime Minister of Australia was recently in Perth. He knows more about the war situation than does any member of this Chamber because he must know more than he can tell. He told us all that he possibly could.

Hon. G. W. Miles: He told the Labour Party, not the public.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Whom did he tell?

Hon. T. MOORE: He told the people that we were passing through a very critical time.

Hon. G. B. Wood: What did he say about the referendum?

Hon. T. MOORE: That interjection is not relevant! The Prime Minister emphasised that Australia was facing a very critical six months. While we are doing well today, there is a possibility that those who are opposed to us in the North must make a move. They may decide that it is a case of—now or never. We must realise that the bulk of the American Forces have been hurled into the fray in another zone and the Japanese may seize this opportunity. If they do not do so, we shall be very lucky. On that account I believe that we are facing a very critical period during which it would be ridiculous in the extreme to force any election on the people. I move around the country as much as most people and each week I travel 700 miles to and from the city. I meet people in all sections of life and I have not yet heard one say that he desired an election forced upon the country. I feel perfectly justified in voting in favour of the Bill now before the House, as I did regarding the measure affecting the Legislative Assembly.

HON. J. CORNELL (South): As one of those who, if there should be no postponement of the election, will have to kneel at the penitent stool before my electors, I shall take this opportunity to add a few words to the debate. I was silent when the Bill dealing with the Legislative Assembly elections was dealt with because I felt it was no concern of this House.

Hon. A. Thomson: Why submit it to this Chamber if it is no concern of ours?

Hon. J. CORNELL: It is in another place that the Government of the country can be

changed. It is there that seven out of the eight Cabinet Ministers have their seats. Three-quarters of the members of that House favoured a postponement of the Legislative Assembly election.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Are you sure of that?

Hon. J. CORNELL: Yes. Six Labour men did not vote. In this Chamber one-third of the members have to submit to re-election at intervals and only one-third are affected at a time. Our position is entirely different from the Assembly inasmuch as the electors' powers are somewhat circumscribed. In view of all the circumstances, it would have been impertinence on my part to stand in the way of a postponement of the election for that House. I endorse what Mr. Seddon said regarding the attitude on the goldfields to Assembly elections. Personally I would have preferred to seek re-election last May but I am not afraid of going before the electors next May, because I have closely followed the motto of Oliver Cromwell—"Put your trust in God but always keep your powder dry." I have done so, and although hundreds have left the South Province I have not received one single request or reference from any electors on the goldfields or in the metropolitan area on the subject of the postponement of parliamentary elections. If I were accused of trying to secure an extra year of office in this Chamber without being prepared to go before the electors, my answer would be, "What could be more ludicrous or incongruous than a member voting against a Bill for the postponement for a year of the election of ten retiring members of this House, where we have so small a say in the government of the State, when the postponement of the elections for the Legislative Assembly was agreed to by an overwhelming majority in the House where Governments are made or unmade."

HON. G. W. MILES (North): I oppose the Bill for the same reasons I advanced in opposing the Bill relating to the Assembly elections.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East): I oppose the Bill for reasons similar to those I advanced in opposing the Bill relating to the Legislative Assembly elections. It seems to me ridiculous that members could suggest that a Bill to extend the life of the Legislative Assembly had nothing to do with us as members of the Legislative Council.

We are either part and parcel of the Parliament of Western Australia or we are not. If we are not, then the sooner this institution is abolished, the sooner will those that hold that view cease to mislead the electors. It is not much use talking at length about this subject or opposing the Bill. I regard the attitude of some members as altogether too absurd. To be consistent, if they are opposed to the prolongation of the life of Parliament they should be prepared to reject both Bills. There is no rhyme or reason in favouring one simply because it is endorsed by the majority of members of another Chamber. Members have the same responsibility in dealing with both measures.

Question put.

The PRESIDENT: A division must be taken on this question, as an absolute majority is required to pass it.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	..	10

Majority for 8

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. C. R. Cornish
Hon. L. Craig
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. E. M. Heenan

Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. T. Moore
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. W. R. Hall
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt
Hon. V. Hamersley
Hon. G. W. Miles

Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. E. H. H. Hall
(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: There being more than an absolute majority of the total number of members of the Council voting with the "Ayes," I declare the second reading carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

Standing Orders Suspension.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable the Bill to pass through its remaining stage at this sitting.

Question put.

The PRESIDENT: I have counted the House, and assured myself there is an absolute majority of members present. There being no dissentient voice, I declare the question duly passed.

Question thus passed.

Third Reading.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—
That the Bill be now read a third time.
Question put.

The PRESIDENT: There must be a division also on the third reading.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	..	10

Majority for 8

AYES.

Hon. L. B. Bolton
Hon. J. Cornell
Hon. C. R. Cornish
Hon. L. Craig
Hon. J. M. Drew
Hon. G. Fraser
Hon. F. E. Gibson
Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. W. R. Hall

Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. T. Moore
Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. H. Tuckey
(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter
Hon. Sir Hal Colebatch
Hon. J. A. Dimmitt
Hon. E. H. H. Hall
Hon. V. Hamersley

Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. H. V. Plesse
Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. G. B. Wood
Hon. H. L. Roche
(Teller.)

The PRESIDENT: There being more than an absolute majority of the total number of members of the Council voting with the "Ayes," I declare the third reading carried.

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

House adjourned at 6.9 p.m.