

# Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 13th November, 1935.

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

## ASSENT TO BILLS.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read notifying assent to the following Bills:—

- 1, Supply Bill (No. 2) £1,500,000.
- 2, Brands Act Amendment.
- 3, Droving Act Amendment.
- 4, Tenants, Purchasers and Mortgagors' Relief Act Amendment.
- 5, Health Act Amendment.
- 6, Rural Relief Fund.

## QUESTION—INCOME TAXATION.

### *Excess Payments, Refunds.*

Hon. E. H. H. HALL asked the Chief Secretary: 1, How many applications were made to the Taxation Department for refunds of excess amounts paid on income tax assessments during the years ended 30th June, 1933, 1934, and 1935? 2, What was the total amount refunded during each of the abovenamed periods—(a) on applications submitted by principals; (b) on applications submitted by agents? 3, Is there any record as to the number of ex-Taxation Department officers who are now in business as taxation specialists or compilers? 4, If so, what is the number?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, 1933, 196; 1934, 197; 1935, 178. 2, The total amounts are:—1933, £1,241; 1934, £1,033; 1935, £648; but these cannot be distinguished as between (a) and (b). 3, No. 4, See No. 3.

## QUESTION—LOTTERIES COMMISSION.

### *Sales of Tickets.*

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: 1, How much commission was paid during the last year by the Lotteries Commission? 2, What was the greatest amount of commission paid to any one agency or agent? 3, What percentage of the tickets was sold at headquarters; was commission paid on these sales, and if so, who collected the same? 4, What amount was paid in newspaper advertisements during the same period?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: The data given is compiled from 1st January, 1935, to the end of No. 32 Consultation, drawn on 8th October, 1935—1, £15,651 2s. 2d. 2, The greatest amount of commission paid to any agent or agency out of one consultation was £419 10s. 3d.; the total greatest amount paid during the period was £3,725 9s. 9d., and was paid to the same agent. 3, 8.13 per cent., on which no commission was paid. 4, £2,064 9s. 8d.

## BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Workers' Homes Act Amendment (No. 3).

Transmitted to the Assembly.

- 2, Financial Emergency Tax.  
*Passed.*

## BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Metropolitan Whole Milk Act Amendment.
- 2, Lotteries (Control) Continuance.  
Received from Assembly.

## BILL—LOAN, £2,627,000.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from 7th November.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.45]: Western Australia in common with other countries requiring development commenced in the early days a policy of borrowing. That policy was continued on sound lines for many years. The money was used for developmental purposes and in its train provided many assets, and increased exports, all of which justified the borrowing that took place. As time went on the policy was extended, but the borrowing got away from the purpose for which it was commenced. Go-

vernments are borrowing to-day not for the former useful purposes, but simply to provide work and the wherewithal to carry on the State. If a person, company, or corporation were to borrow on the same lines they would soon be facing a meeting of creditors and pass through the Bankruptcy Court. What is passing strange to me with respect to State borrowing is the manner in which it is supported by the very commercial and professional men who in their own line of business would be most careful not to over-borrow. Tradesmen of any description welcome Government borrowing. Many of the electors look forward with pleasure to the Government that can borrow a huge amount each year. We often talk about the despised aboriginal. Does not our present method of finding pleasure in borrowing huge amounts coincide with the aboriginal who thinks only of to-day and not of to-morrow? This borrowing must come to an end some time. My mind goes back to the period when a few of us tried our best to bring about sound administration in the group settlements. This will show how people were thinking at the time. I was chided because I opposed, as it was said, the scheme for group settlement. I realised what had occurred before in connection with the Victorian group settlement. I know it ended there in two or three men taking over the properties that were held by a hundred men. Even though I knew the scheme had not succeeded in Victoria, I was not opposed to group settlement as such, but was opposed to the administration. I realised that the wonderful country in the South-West could be developed very slowly in a natural way, and that it could not be of much benefit to the State for a long time under such a method. Politically I had no friend in the world because I spoke in opposition to the administration. All political parties were behind group settlements.

Hon. G. W. Miles: My colleague from the North was not.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I remember when I was interviewed and gave my opinion. I expected any amount of castigation to come from the Premier, Sir James Mitchell. I knew he was very much concerned about the scheme, and naturally thought I would get it from that direction. To my astonishment I heard nothing from that source. The castigation came from Mr. Angwin, who was subsequently Minister in charge of group

settlement. At that time business and commercial men in the city gave me the worst doing. I was told that I objected to money coming into the State.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Cheap money, it was called.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The policy was to borrow as much as possible, and never to think of the day of reckoning. If by borrowing we could show some return, we should borrow. I do not mean that this State can stop borrowing, because it cannot do so, although it must borrow within limitations. Take our loan expenditure, and the six years of Labour Government prior to their present term of office. In that term they borrowed £26,000,000, which is earning a little over one half per cent. To-day we are no better off in that direction. To-day it may be said that out of the money we are borrowing only a part of it will earn interest and sinking fund. That will be so only in the case of the sewerage extensions and water supplies of the metropolitan area. The interest on those two works will not advance the State one penny. What we badly need is outside money. We must export to bring that money here. Money that will come from the expenditure on sewerage and water supply extensions will be our own money. That will not help us. It will only mean locking up more money from which we shall get no appreciable benefit.

Hon. G. Fraser: The expenditure of that money will do a lot of good locally.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: We must find some avenue where we can increase production and export more. We must get money in from outside sources. That is the only way in which we can hope to return to prosperity.

The Honorary Minister: What do you suggest?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I was a member of the Mitchell Government for three years. I do not remember any occasion when an appeal was made to a member of Parliament by the Government for suggestions as to how to administer the affairs of the country. The Government have eight Ministers, who are well supported by the Civil Service. Surely that combination would not require an outside member to get his brains to work and find out how the Government should expend their borrowed money.

The Honorary Minister: That is a chestnut. I thought you might have some new ideas.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Deep sea fishing.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: To what end are we drifting? The public debt at the 30th June last was £88,590,176. This is an increase of a little over £2,580,000 over the previous years. The loans approved by the Loan Council for the current year amount to £2,680,000, with an additional £200,000 for the East Perth power station, making a total of £2,880,000. At the 30th June next the indebtedness will be £91,470,176. This amount is growing to an alarming degree and is building up every year. The drift must be arrested, and this must be done gradually. Practically every member of the community is urging the Government to borrow all they can. The more they can borrow the more pleased people are, never thinking of to-morrow.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That does not apply to every member of the community.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Our borrowings must be reduced. As compared with previous years, the Government are receiving greatly increased sums from taxation and other sources. The emergency tax brings in £685,000, and the tax on gold £84,000. These amounts are building up. The present Government cannot say they have not increased the taxes, because they have done so. The emergency tax is a national one, and should be spread over the whole community. Those who receive free services should contribute toward the State funds in good times, and much more so when there is a financial crisis such as we are passing through and will continue for some time to pass through. The Government have made it a sectional tax. If a large proportion of the £685,000 were left in the hands of private enterprise, far better use could be made of the money than any Government could make of it. Moneys in the hands of the Government can be of little use in the direction of increasing our revenue from outside sources. We started upon a campaign of economy. That was all right for a while, but all Governments are now getting away from that policy. All they can think of is borrowing money and spending it lavishly. We know how much is being spent by Governments to-day. They go on with that policy, and have little consideration for the evil day that has yet to come. I am afraid it will come first of all to this State. Notwithstanding the large savings of interest by reason of loan conversions, that has all

been swallowed up by the increase in the public debt.

It takes close upon half of our revenue to meet interest, sinking fund and exchange. Moreover, this is increasing each year, and it will at the present rate reach saturation point, and then we shall no longer be able to meet our obligations, except in one way, namely by further increasing taxation. The question then arises, in which direction are we going to impose those increases? What are we going to tax next? The Honorary Minister said the other evening that this State was the lowest taxed of all. I remind him that we cannot afford to be heavily taxed like the other States of the Commonwealth, the reason being that we are a pioneering State, and we have practically no secondary industries. We are slowly building them up, and a campaign has been on foot for a number of years in the direction of fostering our local industries. All the urging in the world, however, will not produce the article that is required and at a cost to suit the purchaser, and we must study his pocket before we can expect him to purchase what we produce. Regarding the expenditure of loan money, I agree that there must be an amount spent annually, but it should be expended judiciously. Public buildings may be in need of repairs, and we know that the carrying out of those repairs provides work. At the same time, our public buildings do not require a sum of money spent on them to the extent of making them show-places or attractive-looking, as would be done where there might be prospective purchasers. Can anyone tell me that £1,700 spent on the buildings of the Public Works Department was necessary, or that the expenditure of £1,800 on the refurbishing of the Agricultural Bank was urgently required? Can we afford to make our public buildings show places by the expenditure of loan money? I say we cannot. Considerably less should have been spent on those two buildings, and the balance used to better advantage. There are any number of public buildings which for years have required a coat of paint to preserve them, and which have not had this expenditure. I contend that too much altogether was spent on the two buildings I named. Unnecessary expenditure in another direction—I suppose there are some members here who will not agree with

me—is in the beautification of the Perth waterfront, and the work of reclamation. Can we afford luxuries of this description so as to make Perth a show place? Again I say we cannot, and we shall have to go on imposing taxation if we wish to avoid being taken over by the Commonwealth. Can we afford all this expenditure? I can see some metropolitan members smiling. We cannot afford to spend money on luxuries. It is no use saying that an undertaking like the river reclamation will provide work for a number of men. As a fact it provides very little work. Western Australia is a large State with very few people in it, and yet we find that in recent months the Government have spent £10,000 in deporting families.

Hon. G. Fraser: People we did not want.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Some of them broke windows in this building.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: But even people of that description would, in the end, settle down, and their families would become good citizens. We want the people here, but what have we done? We have borrowed money and we are spending some of it in sending people back to England, people we encouraged to come here in the first place with the assistance also of the Federal and the Imperial Governments.

Hon. G. Fraser: The trouble is we are not sending enough of those people back.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Australia has a very small population, and I advise the hon. member to think more seriously about this question.

Hon. G. Fraser: We want a different class of people here.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: You will always come across discontented people, wherever you go.

Hon. G. Fraser: I am thinking about the unfit; they are the people we do not want.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There are very few who are mentally affected, or in that condition of health that demands that they should be sent back. Some of the men that were deported were a darned sight healthier than I am. I admire the present Government for the manner in which they have looked after the interests of those constituencies that returned Labour supporters. There is no doubt that the Government have kept faith with those constituencies. In the city and some of the suburbs we have the

extension of sewerage works in progress, on which a considerable sum of money is being spent, and the same can be said about the water supply. Then there is the river beautification to which I have already referred, and the extension of the East Perth Power House. Next we find that improvements out of loan are being carried out at the Fremantle harbour, the receipts from which port are being paid into Consolidated Revenue. Then we have the jetty at Esperance built recently at a cost of £76,000. I do not say that I disagree with the construction of these works. We find also that the Ashburton jetty replacement is costing £19,000.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Are you just mentioning these items to indicate that the expenditure could be cut down and the amount of loans raised reduced?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am showing how the supporters of the present Government are being looked after—that a considerable amount is being spent in the electorates that are returning Government supporters. The total estimated expenditure at the Ashburton jetty is £44,000, and at Point Sampson £22,000.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That money should have been spent years ago.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Then there is £29,000 provided for sewerage work at Northam. The Government supporters should be very loyal in view of what has been and is being spent in their electorates. I repeat that I am not disagreeing with this expenditure, and I do not want it to be thought that I am against borrowing absolutely. What I am opposed to is that with the increased returns from income tax, public utilities, dividend tax, etc., there should be a gradual reduction in the borrowing policy, and instead of appealing to the Loan Council for increased amounts, we should endeavour to make an appreciable reduction each year comparable with the increased amount we are receiving from taxation. The trouble is that if we do not voluntarily cut down our borrowing, it may be done for us compulsorily, and to such an extent that extreme hardship will follow. If it is done gradually, we can get back to a reasonable financial basis. We must not forget that the last loan of £12,500,000 raised by the Federal Government at an increased rate of interest was not fully subscribed, and that the underwriters had to take up a large amount. Therefore every State of the Com-

monwealth should set about to cut down its loan policy. After all, we cannot go on borrowing fabulous amounts for all time. During the last two years the Loan Council has raised something in the vicinity of £50,000,000. That money has been locked up, so to speak. If a good deal of it had been allowed to remain in the hands of private enterprise, our position would have been improved in the way of increasing our exports. When year after year we are borrowing millions and taking so much money out of circulation, nothing is left for investment in industry.

Hon. H. Seddon: In which direction do you suggest we should concentrate our investments?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: In every direction. I am not opposed to borrowing but I do object to the amount of our loans being increased year after year.

Hon. G. W. Miles: The Loan Council are forcing us to reduce our loan requests.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: We are aware of what took place at the recent meeting of the Loan Council, and that is another indication that future loans may not be fully subscribed unless the demands of the States are curtailed. At the same time, I hope that the reduction will not be too big because as far as our own State is concerned it would be a calamity. I trust that if a reduction is made in the amount it will be such as not to cause any hardship or suffering. In any event, it is time we made a start to balance our borrowings with the increased amounts we are receiving by way of taxation, revenue, etc. After all, taxation seems to be considered as revenue in every part of the world, though I take it the term "revenue" has a meaning foreign to that generally placed upon it nowadays. I conclude by repeating that we should reduce our borrowings to bring them into conformity with the money being received by the Government from other sources. Subject to those remarks, I support the second reading.

HON. J. J. HOLMES (North) [5.16]: First of all I desire to thank the Chief Secretary for the very explicit statement he gave the House and the country when he introduced this measure a few days ago. I also desire to thank the Honorary Minister for the statement he put up to the House last week in the course of the debate on the financial emergency legislation. It was in-

formation which I think the country should have been given from year to year in the past. Ministers, both Nationalist and Labour, have in a measure side-tracked the figures which have been put up from time to time, but the present Government have come to our rescue and have confirmed the figures quoted here that the alarming financial drift is continuing. The only explanation I can find for the action of the present Government is that we are getting nearer to the dead-end that some of us have anticipated, and it places the present Government in the position of being able to say eventually, "We told you so on such-and-such a date in 1935." If we analyse the figures given by the Chief Secretary, we must admit that we are heading to bankruptcy, and I say that in all sincerity. It seems to me that the socialistic policy has gained a hold in certain parts of the Empire, and that this is one part which is afflicted with the socialistic idea, namely, to borrow, spend and ultimately repudiate. I say that in all sincerity because I cannot see how we can escape it.

Hon. E. H. Gray: That is not a socialistic idea.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Not to spend money?

Hon. G. Fraser: You do not get money under socialism, so how could you spend it?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There are two matters that concern us greatly, both of them connected with the Agricultural Bank. I approach the discussion of those matters with all diffidence and in all seriousness and with one object and one object only, namely to clear up the existing position and endeavour to get the bank placed on a more satisfactory footing.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Mr. Grogan has been appointed as manager. That is very satisfactory.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The hon. member can deal with that point. According to statistical returns, at least £30,000,000 of borrowed money has been utilised for the development of agriculture, and all of it more or less comes under the jurisdiction of the Agricultural Bank. The loan expenditure of the State aggregates about £90,000,000, so that the money utilised for the development of agriculture represents about one-third of our total loan expenditure.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Socialising the agricultural industry! Worse than Russia!

Hon. G. Fraser: So long as we do not socialise the pastoral industry, I suppose it will be all right.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The Bill proposes to allocate another £365,000 for the development of agriculture. According to my calculations, a sum of £30,000,000 at the present rate of interest involves a commitment of about £1,000,000 a year. Thus the Agricultural Bank and the agricultural industry have to find £275,000 a day for 365 days in the year for interest alone. I cannot see where they can possibly get that amount of revenue.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It cannot be done.

The Honorary Minister: You said £275,000 a day. Is that right?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I should have said £2,750 per day. I wish members to bear in mind that I am dealing with agricultural development, in which we have so much loan money invested, namely £30,000,000.

The Honorary Minister: Are your figures correct?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Well, according to the statistical returns, in 1934 the aggregate amount was £29,275,000. A sum of £365,000 is being provided under this Bill, and we have also to include the amount spent between July, 1934, and June, 1935, so I do not think I have exaggerated the total by setting it down as £30,000,000. I generally use round figures for convenience. The first matter that cropped up in connection with the Agricultural Bank was an attempt, not by the Chief Secretary and not by the Honorary Minister, to mislead the House and the country regarding the appointment of the chairman of the Commissioners of the Bank. I gave the Chief Secretary an opportunity immediately to rectify the position so far as he was concerned. The fact remains that the chairmanship of the Agricultural Bank was never offered to any person other than the present occupant of the position.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall: It is just as well to make that quite clear.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: According to information now supplied by the Chief Secretary, the position was never offered to anyone except the present occupant. True, the president of the Primary Producers' Association was offered a position as one of the Commissioners at a salary of not less than £1,000 a year. I understand that an offer was also made to a member of this House

to be one of the Commissioners on somewhat similar conditions. The Chief Secretary, on behalf of the Government, naturally claimed that the Government had displayed generosity by going to people outside of the Labour Party in order to fill one of the positions. However, I take the opposite view. I claim that the president of the Primary Producers' Association was approached to take a position as one of the Commissioners at £1,000 a year.

The Honorary Minister: That is not correct.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: Well, at not less than £1,000 a year. I assume that he was representing the Country Party or the Primary Producers' Association. Then a Nationalist member of this House was approached for similar reasons. Those reasons, so far as I judge, were to put up smoke screens to cover the big appointment which had already been decided upon. If that is the way we are going to start the reorganisation of an institution responsible together with the Agricultural Department for £30,000,000 of our loan expenditure, where shall we end? The irony of the position is this, that when the present chairman of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners was Minister for Works, he set about reorganising the Public Works Department. He said that those were the days of experts and claimed that he went abroad in the world to get an expert to reorganise the Public Works Department. I believe he succeeded in getting an expert. That gentleman is not in the position now, but that is due to no fault of the appointee. A subsequent Government did not see eye to eye with the expert in charge of the Public Works Department and he is no longer there. But I understand that when he left here, he was straightway appointed to another important position which he is well qualified to fill. When the then Minister for Works wanted to reorganise the Public Works Department he secured an expert, but when it comes to a reorganisation of the Agricultural Bank with £30,000,000 invested in agricultural development, then—

Hon. C. B. Williams: We get a politician.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: That is so; the hon. member was quick to see the point. Right through the debates on the Agricultural Bank measure, emphasis was laid upon the necessity for tightening up the Bank and the affairs of clients of the Bank to ensure

that the institution would be placed on a sound basis. I assisted the Government in every way to bring about that result. Members will recall statements made at the time that some of the wheatgrowers were getting away with wheat that really belonged to the Bank; that people in the South-West were getting away with pigs that really belonged to the Bank, and that poor widows, about whom we heard something yesterday, were selling a few eggs. The whole of the business of the Bank had to be put on a sound and proper basis. Let me say at this stage that, apart from service in another place, I have been over 22 years a member of this House, and only on one previous occasion, so far as I can recall, have I found it necessary to mention any public servant by name. That occasion arose when the then Agent General, Sir James Connolly, took the agency of the Wyndham meat, which was the property of the growers, away from the agents who were given satisfaction to the growers and gave it to a company of which he was about to become a director when he severed his connection with the Agent-Generalship. There was need on that occasion to mention an individual, and I feel that the necessity has again arisen to clarify the position. I propose to deal specifically with the matter in the interests of all parties and in the hope that a complete explanation will be forthcoming. I merely propose to refer hon. members to pages 51 and 54 of the report of the Federal Commissioner of Taxation for the year 1933-34 and part 1934-35. On page 51 this appears—

The department by investigation of taxpayers' books and accounts, and other means, has discovered a number of cases in which questionable returns have been lodged by taxpayers. In some cases there has been little room for doubt to a lay mind that fraud has been present, but the difficulty of proving fraud in accordance with legal rules has been so great that in practically every such case the department has refrained from prosecution, and has claimed the maximum penalty imposed by Section 67 of the Act, namely, double the amount of the tax that has been avoided.

I do not wish to go any further on that aspect, except to refer the Chief Secretary to page 54 of the report, where he will see the connection between this matter and the Agricultural Bank. This is a very delicate subject, and it is only a sense of public duty that compels me to draw atten-

tion to it. It is about the most thankless job I have ever undertaken either in public or in private life. But attention has to be drawn to this in the interests of the Agricultural Bank, and in the interests of clients who have been talked about and scandalised for getting away with things they should never have got away with, and which I would try to prevent them from getting away with. Attention has to be drawn to the matter in the interests of the whole business. I hope a satisfactory explanation will be forthcoming. My object is to silence criticism of the control of the bank, and not only to-day, but for all time, so that we shall start out from a proper basis. Coming now to the authorisation in the Bill, in round figures it will bring the State's indebtedness up to about £90,000,000, representing without interest and without exchange or sinking fund a charge on revenue of about £3,250,000. The first feature to be noted is this—a feature confirmed by the Chief Secretary's speech—that since 1928, when we accepted the Financial Agreement, our total deficit to the 30th June last has amounted to £5,316,500. On page 14, the Financial Agreement, paragraph (d) sets out this—

In respect of any loan raised after 30th June, 1927, by a State or by the Commonwealth for and on behalf of a State to meet a revenue deficit accruing after that date no sinking fund contribution shall be payable by the Commonwealth, but that State shall pay from revenue a sinking fund contribution at a rate of not less than 4 per centum per annum on the amount of that loan.

That is the agreement which we signed seven years ago, an agreement under which we undertook to pay a sinking fund of four per cent. The Chief Secretary says that when we do commence to pay it will mean £52,500 per million per annum charged on the revenue. That is 3½ per cent. Of course if we cannot borrow at that rate, the amount will be more. But at 3½ per cent. there is a charge against revenue of £52,500 per million per annum. That is the charge looming before us, a charge of £275,000 per annum to liquidate a revenue liability which has been dodged since 1928. The deficit, we are told, has been financed by short-dated Treasury bills. The dictate of commonsense is that we should pick up the short-dated Treasury bills and begin to pay the sinking fund we have undertaken to pay. Then we come to—and

I think I am using the Chief Secretary's own words—belated repairs to public buildings. Here again we are dodging our responsibility, and putting it on somebody else. We are told that £362,000 has been taken out of loan funds to repair public buildings, and will have to be recouped from revenue at a later date. These are not my figures; they are the Chief Secretary's figures. The hon. gentleman speaks of belated repairs to Government railways which have to be done out of loan money, with repayment to be taken out of revenue at a later date, perhaps not by the present Government but by some other Government. Then there is the extension of the Goldfields Water Supply, to which I offer only this objection, that some of the goldfields companies are, I understand, providing money for which they are to be recouped in water. Thus the present Government will get payment for water which some other Government will supply. Is that honest finance? Surely the payment for the water should go to the credit of the Government providing the service: the present Government should not take the money in anticipation. The Chief Secretary has told us it is still necessary to expend loan moneys on the restoration of public buildings. We are going to incur that expenditure out of loan and make it a charge upon this year's revenue, and next year's revenue, and the revenues of many more years. It should not be done. If this kind of thing were done in the commercial world, it would be described as fraudulent bankruptcy. I for my part fail to see any difference between the control of State affairs and the control of the affairs of a financial institution. As I do not see how we are going to repay the money, I cannot be a party to any more borrowing. Consequently I oppose the Bill.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

## **BILL—DIVORCE AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

Order of the day read for the resumption, from the 7th November, of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

### *In Committee.*

Hon. J. Nicholson in the Chair; Hon. G. Fraser in charge of the Bill.

#### Clause 1—Short Title:

Hon. G. W. MILES: May I ask the hon. member in charge of the Bill to report progress? I understand that some amendments are to be placed on the Notice Paper by Mr. Parker.

The CHAIRMAN: It would be better to have the amendments placed on the Notice Paper. That is the usual thing.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I understand that the practice of the House is not to put amendments on the Notice Paper until the second reading has been passed.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not know that there is any rule on the subject. Having regard to the impression which Mr. Parker had, I feel sure that the member in charge of the Bill will meet Mr. Parker's desire. It is when the second reading has been moved, not after it has been carried, that hon. members may put their amendments on the Notice Paper.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I think it is after the second reading of the Bill has been carried, in view of the possibility that the measure may never get into Committee. The Bill may not pass the second reading, and consequently large expenditure on printing amendments may be incurred without justification.

The CHAIRMAN: The whole business of the House could easily be held up if all Bills were at the same stage. Mr. Leake calls my attention to Standing Order 185, which sets out—

Notices of amendments to a Bill when in Committee may be received at the Table at any time after the second reading has been moved, and may be printed on the Notice Paper.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Why should not Mr. Parker give the Committee information regarding the amendments he desires to deal with?

The CHAIRMAN: I think the hon. member is quite right. Others may like to know what Mr. Parker proposes.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That was my object.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps Mr. Fraser is willing to meet the Committee's desires.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am prepared to do so and am agreeable to progress being reported so that Mr. Parker may have an



opportunity to place his amendments on the Notice Paper.

Progress reported.

**BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT ACT, 1899, AMENDMENT (No. 2).**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 5th November.

**HON. E. H. H. HALL** (Central) [5.47]: There may be some reason for retaining provisions that are included in the Bill, but I must plead my ignorance in that respect. When the Chief Secretary replies, I would like him to say why they are being continued. I quite understand that it may not be desirable that a judge of the Supreme Court shall be eligible to stand as a member of Parliament.

**Hon. J. Nicholson**: But that is in accordance with the Constitution Act now.

**Hon. E. H. H. HALL**: The same applies to the Sheriff of Western Australia.

**Hon. H. S. W. Parker**: Perhaps they ought to be here.

**Hon. E. H. H. HALL**: If members think they ought to be here, I do not see any reason why they should not. I do not know why we should continue to deprive a clergyman or a minister of religion of the right of being chosen to sit as a member of Parliament. At some time in the history of the State or of some other country in the world there may have been good reason for the adoption of that principle, but I cannot imagine what it was. Why should we place that ban upon a minister of religion?

**Hon. H. S. W. Parker**: If we did not, it might restrict conversation in the corridor.

**Hon. E. H. H. HALL**: The practice has been handed on and perhaps for some good reason. I hope the Chief Secretary will tell us the reason for continuing the prohibition.

**Hon. C. F. Baxter**: Do you think the select committee went to sleep on their job?

**Hon. E. H. H. HALL**: I do not make any such charge against the select committee. I merely desire some information to indicate why a minister of religion should not be eligible to stand for Parliament.

**Hon. R. G. Moore** interjected.

**Hon. E. H. H. HALL**: Mr. R. G. Moore in sotto voce says that the clergyman could not be expected to do the two jobs.

**Hon. R. G. Moore**: I did not say anything of the sort; I said he could not do the two jobs.

**Hon. E. H. H. HALL**: Why should he be expected to carry out the two jobs? Why should the minister of religion be forced to resign his ministerial position if he were elected to Parliament?

**Hon. G. Fraser**: If he resigned, he would not be a minister of religion any longer.

**Hon. E. H. H. HALL**: Apparently quite a number of members are anxious to give me the explanation, but I would much prefer that it came from the Chief Secretary. There are some members of this House who still continue to undertake work that they were associated with before they were elected to this Chamber. In the same way I do not understand why a member who may be a minister of religion should not be allowed to continue to preach on Sundays, visit the sick, and so on. This seems to me a ridiculous restriction. I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by **Hon. H. Tuckey**, debate adjourned.

**BILL—ELECTORAL.**

*In Committee.*

Resumed from the previous day. **Hon. J. W. Kirwan** in the Chair; the Chief Secretary in charge of the Bill.

Clause 18—Qualification for Council (partly considered):

**Hon. H. SEDDON**: I move an amendment—

That in the interpretation of "lives" in Subclause 5, the words "provided such absence is for a period not longer than twelve months" be struck out.

If a person is a freeholder there can be no sound reason for deleting his name from the roll. Such an individual may leave the State for a time and may return in due course. Should he do so, he would naturally expect to be able to exercise the franchise, but if the provision in the Bill is allowed to remain as at present, he will be prevented from doing so.

**The CHIEF SECRETARY**: The reason given to me by the Chief Electoral Officer for this particular provision in the Bill is that the names of such persons may remain on the roll for years, although the individuals concerned may be absent from the State. It may be known that they are not

likely to return, and in such circumstances it is desired to strike their names off. Should they return they can take steps to have their names reinstated. If such names are allowed to remain on the roll it may lead to impersonation.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That after the interpretation of the term "lives," the following words be inserted:—

"Registered" in relation to any freehold or leasehold means registered in any registry prescribed by the laws of the State for the purpose of registering the titles to land or dealings in land, and includes any estate or interest in respect of which a caveat or other cautionary dealing has been lodged in the registry.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The interpretation of "registered" should exclude the words "any estate or interest in respect of which." Without those words, the interpretation would be more correct.

Hon. H. Seddon: Would that mean a loan? Suppose I raised a loan on my property?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Then a caveat could be put on to claim the equity of the mortgage. But no man can get a vote merely by reason of being a mortgagee. I move an amendment on the amendment—

That the words "any estate or interest in respect of which" be struck out.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I should like a little more explanation of the amendment on the amendment, for my amendment was drafted by the Crown Law authorities, and so probably it is perfectly sound. It might be better to pass the amendment as it stands and, if later Mr. Parker still thinks his amendment necessary, the Bill can be recommitted.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I will withdraw the amendment on the amendment.

Amendment on the amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHAIRMAN: The question now is that Clause 18 stand as amended.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The position in regard to this clause seems to be fraught with considerable danger to this House because, if we pass the clause and transfer it from the sections of the Constitution Act into the Electoral Act, we shall be doing an injustice to this House; because, so long as the qualification of the electors is con-

tained in the Constitution Act, it is part of the Constitution Act and entitled to the protection given under Section 73 of the Act of 1889, which requires that an absolute majority of the House must agree to any amendment before it can become effective. That being so, I suggest that on consideration of this clause members should weigh the position, realising that the clause may do a great injustice to this House, and that, having regard to the way in which this House is constituted and to the qualifications that have existed since the Constitution Act was originally passed, it is desirable that we should maintain those qualifications. I hope the clause will be negatived.

Clause 18, as amended, put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes .. .. .	11
Noes .. .. .	12
Majority against .. .. .	1

#### AYES.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. C. B. Williams
Hon. C. G. Elliott	Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. E. H. Gray	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. L. E. Bolton	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. E. H. Hall	Hon. R. G. Moore
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. J. T. Franklin
	(Teller.)

#### PALE.

Aye.	No.
Hon. T. Moore	Hon. H. V. Piesse

Clause thus negatived.

[Hon. J. Nicholson took the Chair.]

Clause 19—A province elector is qualified to vote if he has property qualification at date of issue of writ, notwithstanding he may lose it before election:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I may not be quite in order, but I should like to ask members to see what they have done in negativing Clause 18. They will find that it contains the qualification of Assembly electors.

The CHAIRMAN: It may be necessary to restore that portion of Clause 18 dealing with the Assembly. That can be done on recommitment. Clause 19 also contains matter affecting the Assembly. The Assembly qualifications are contained in the Bill, and

so it will be necessary to agree to these provisions.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Since Clause 18 has been defeated, will it be necessary to strike out Clause 19?

The CHAIRMAN: It can be negatived, and reinstated on recommitment.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The reason why I am asking is that it appears to me that, having negatived Clause 18, the whole Bill will have to be reconsidered.

Hon. E. H. Gray: The Bill is slaughtered now.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I do not say it is slaughtered.

Hon. C. B. Williams: All that is now required is to read the burial service.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

The CHAIRMAN: In view of the striking out of Clause 18, it may be necessary also to strike out references to the Council in Subclause 1 as well as in Clause 20.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I move an amendment—

That Subclause 1 be struck out.

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

*[Hon. Sir John Kirwan took the Chair.]*

Clause 20—Disqualifications:

Hon. G. W. MILES: The reference to the Council ought to come out of this clause. I refer to paragraph (ii).

Hon. C. B. Williams: Why not move the Chairman out of the Chair and let us be done with it?

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That after the word "elector" in line 2 of Subclause 1 the words "for the Assembly" be inserted.

Hon. G. FRASER: Will this mean that the disqualifications will apply only to the Assembly? If so, we shall be permitting people of unsound mind, aboriginal natives, etc., to vote for the Council.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: All the qualifications in Clause 18 relating to the Council have been struck out. It will be necessary to recommit the Bill and reinsert the provisions relating to the Assembly. The qualifications and disqualifications of members of the Assembly were put into the Electoral Act in 1907. No such qualifications or dis-

qualifications relating to the Council were previously put into the Act.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member might postpone his amendment until what he desires is inserted in Clause 18 on recommitment.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The matter had better be left over until the Bill is recommitted and we see what has been passed. I will withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I want to move an amendment, to strike out paragraph (iv).

Hon. H. SEDDON: The position has become involved as a result of Clause 18 being deleted. Further amendments are now necessary. The best thing to do is to refrain from any action in this matter until Mr. Nicholson has drafted his amendments in conformity with the subject matter of Clause 18. Meanwhile we should go on with Mr. Cornell's amendments.

Hon. G. W. Miles: We should postpone further consideration of Clause 20.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That further consideration of Clause 20 be postponed.

If all references to the Council are to be removed from the Bill, another measure altogether will be required for the Council.

Hon. C. B. Williams: Are we not entitled to that?

Motion put and passed; further consideration of the clause postponed.

Clauses 21 to 29—agreed to.

Clause 30—Supplementary Rolls:

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 2 (e) after the word "roll" in the second line of the paragraph the words "have against" be inserted, and the words "shall have" in the third line be struck out.

Amendment put and passed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 2 (f) after the word "supplement" in the second line of the paragraph insert the words "have against," and strike out the words "shall have" in the third line.

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

Clauses 31 to 43—agreed to.

Clause 44—Time for altering rolls:

Hon. H. SEDDON: There is an amendment on the Notice Paper in the name of Mr. Cornell, who unfortunately is not with us to-day and which I have been asked to submit. I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 1 after "received" in the first line the following words be inserted:—

"(i) (a) for a province not later than 28 days prior to the hour of 6 o'clock in the afternoon of the issue of the writ for a province election.

(b) for a district."

Mr. Cornell intends to split up the conditions referred to with regard to the receiving of claims as far as the province is concerned and as far as the Assembly district is concerned. Perhaps it would be advisable to deal with the amendments (a) and (b) separately. We can deal with the first now.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I do not see why a distinction should be made with regard to the enrolment of claims for a province and claims for an Assembly district. I fail to see how a case can be made out for allowing names for the Assembly to be received not later than 6 o'clock on the day of the issue of the writ, and insisting that claims for a province shall be made 28 days before. Mr. Cornell's amendment would not affect members of Parliament who represent metropolitan provinces and who might be standing for re-election, but it would seriously affect members representing country districts, and especially if Parliament sat after the Christmas holidays. As the law stands now, the roll closes 14 days before the issue of the writ. Mr. Cornell would make the date not later than 28 days prior to the issue of the writ for the province election. He says "not later." That would mean earlier, even then at the discretion of the Chief Electoral Officer. In Clause 61 in the case of the Central, North-East and South Provinces Mr. Cornell provides that the writs shall issue before the 8th day of March. It could even be in February. Say the date of the issue of the writ were the 8th March, Mr. Cornell would have the rolls closed not later than 28 days before that date. How would it be possible for a member of Parliament going up for re-election to do so under that proposal. It would suit one who was not a member of Parliament, but who was standing for election, but certainly not a member of Parliament who was going up for

re-election. It might be all right in the Metropolitan Province.

Hon. G. Fraser: And not too right there either.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If the session continued into January as has happened in the past, the member who was seeking re-election would have no chance because he could not give attention to his province in the direction of seeing that those who were qualified were enrolled.

Hon. H. SEDDON: If the Government had considered that phase before, there might be something in the Chief Secretary's contention. Sufficient time should be allowed for Council claims to be thoroughly examined and for objection to be taken to any person trying to get on the roll fraudulently. Fourteen days is all too short. I have a vivid recollection of my colleague wishing to object to a number of persons on the ground that they were fraudulently enrolled and the time was insufficient owing to the intervention of the Easter holidays. The amendment would ensure ample time for the examination of claims by the candidate and for taking objection to the enrolment of any of them.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Ample means are provided to secure the defeat of a claim by a person not entitled to be enrolled. The objection could be lodged and the court could sit and decide the matter. If the court decided that a certain person was not entitled to be enrolled, although he might have voted at an election, his vote would not be counted.

Hon. G. W. Miles: How could the electoral officers know whether he had voted?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A record of the vote would be kept.

Hon. W. J. Mann: The vote would be set aside?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Yes. Provision to that effect is made in the Bill.

Hon. G. W. MILES: If a vote were recorded in those circumstances, it might have the effect of electing a certain candidate, but the object of the amendment would not be achieved. The desire is to give time to inquire into the qualifications of claimants. If a claimant were enrolled subject to objection, he could vote and his vote could not be traced.

The Chief Secretary: Provision is made for such a person to vote in a certain way.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The provision mentioned by the Chief Secretary would be ineffective as regards a person objecting to a claimant for enrolment. A candidate might have to peruse a large number of claim cards, and there would not be time to comply with the conditions laid down. I am prepared to agree to 21 days, but ample time should be provided for examination by a person other than the electoral officer. In the case of the Council the governing factor is the date on which the writs shall be returned, and the aim of the department is to get as much time as possible between polling day and the day on which the writs are returnable. Consequently the time suggested is reasonable. Under the measure claim cards might be received up to 6 p.m. on the day of the issue of the writ. Those cards, after being dealt with by the registrar, must be forwarded to the Chief Electoral Officer to be checked. What chance would the candidate have to examine them? Unless the period were extended, the time would be altogether insufficient. Provision is made to mark on the roll the name of any elector who may be challenged. What chance would the electoral registrar have to make the necessary marks against the names queried and get his rolls into the hands of returning officers in time? The time is quite inadequate to enable the Chief Electoral Officer to carry out his part, let alone to enable any person to object to enrolments.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: When a person is enrolled, objection may be lodged on the ground that he has not the necessary qualification. Appeal may be made to the electoral registrar and, if that is turned down, appeal may be made to a magistrate. If the magistrate sustains the objection, the name must be removed from the roll. The elector objected to may lodge a postal or absent vote, and that vote must be retained until the final decision is given on the objection. Thus every safeguard is provided. The process could continue from the time of enrolment almost until the date of the election.

Hon. H. SEDDON: The Chief Secretary has not appreciated the position as I have explained it, namely, the position of the person lodging an objection. Say 500 claims were lodged. They have to be forwarded to the Chief Electoral Officer in order that he might do his part. If they

were retained until a candidate could check them—

Hon. V. Hamersley: The candidate might be far away in the country.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I am supposing that the candidate is present. If he had to check them all, there would be considerable delay before they reached the Chief Electoral Officer. Consequently the candidate would be deprived of an opportunity to check them until the names came back. The roll has to be printed and the claims first have to be checked by the Chief Electoral Officer. When the roll is received, that will be the first opportunity to check the names. What time would be left for the objector to make a check? The time is inadequate if the candidate is to be given an opportunity to do the work.

Hon. G. FRASER: Is the electoral law being framed for the benefit of the candidate or the elector? Surely the elector should receive first consideration. To ensure that, we should allow the longest possible time for him to get his name on the roll. To close the roll at the time suggested would not give people an opportunity to become enrolled for their correct addresses. People are constantly changing their place of residence, especially people in the metropolitan area. Our object should be to defer the closing of the roll as long as possible in order to get a clean roll on election day.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: You are speaking of people who are lazy or careless about getting on the roll.

Hon. G. FRASER: They are not careless; they might be moving from one district to another.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: There is always a great rush just before election day.

Hon. G. FRASER: That is inevitable. If 12 months were allowed there would still be a rush. The hon. member knows—

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: I know that I am supporting the 28 days.

Hon. G. FRASER: I am always prepared to trust the electoral officers to do the right thing. I have never yet checked, nor objected to, one card in the Electoral Office. I have always been too busy getting people on the roll to worry about claim cards. My objective has been to give the public every opportunity, and the very latest opportunity, to get their names on the roll, so that there may be on election day a full roll with correct addresses.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Prior to one Council election the Electoral Department were aware that numerous cards had not been put in until the last minute. The result was to overwhelm the department, and candidates had no chance to lodge objections. There is bound to be overlapping in such circumstances, but the candidate cannot discover it unless there is time to make a thorough examination of the claim cards. There is always a liability that cards will be shot in to the department on the chance of the names being included in the roll. The time available to the registrar to get the rolls into the hands of the presiding officers is too short. Under the amendment the roll will be rather more incorrect on election day than at any other period of the year.

The Honorary Minister: Where does the candidate obtain authority to inspect the cards?

Hon. H. SEDDON: The cards are available for inspection at the electoral office.

The Honorary Minister: Where is that provided?

Hon. H. SEDDON: In the Bill.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I agree with Mr. Seddon's intention, but what he proposes will not have the effect desired. The provision merely lays down that the roll shall not be altered after the issue of the writ, except in certain circumstances. Mr. Seddon proposes to make it that the roll shall not be altered after the issue of the writ except by the inclusion of names submitted 28 days previously. Under the amendment there is nothing to stop the names from being put in up to the issue of the writ, and those names from being placed on the roll. But names cannot be put on after the issue of the writ.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	17
Noes	..	..	..	..	5
Majority for					12

# AYES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. R. G. Moore
Hon. L. B. Bolton	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. J. T. Franklin	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. C. G. Elliott
Hon. W. J. Mann	(Teller.)

# NOES.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale	Hon. W. H. Kilson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. E. H. Gray
Hon. G. Fraser	(Teller.)

# PAIR.

AVE.	NO.
Hon. H. V. Piesse	Hon. T. Moore

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause 3, before the word "election," there be inserted "district."

The idea is to provide for continuity, as applying to a district election.

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

Clauses 45 to 49—agreed to.

Clause 50—Registration of claims:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to Subclause 3:—

"Provided that if the claim for enrolment is in respect of a leasehold estate in land of the clear annual value of seventeen pounds at least, or as an inhabitant occupier of a dwellinghouse of the clear annual value of seventeen pounds at least, the registrar shall compare the claim with the annual value as assessed by the current valuation (if any) under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1906, or the Road Districts Act, 1919-1933, as the case may be, and if by such valuation the annual value is assessed at less than seventeen pounds the registrar shall reject the claim, and send to the claimant a notification that the claim has been rejected on that ground."

If the claims are found to be not up to the £17 annual value, they are to be summarily rejected by the electoral registrar. The effect will be an immediate check and immediate action.

Hon. G. FRASER: The inhabitant-occupier would claim enrolment as the householder. It is quite possible that an individual might be paying rent on a property of a clear annual value of £60, in which case he would be entitled to a vote, but because of the method adopted by the local governing authority, the property might have a rateable value of £15 only.

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

Hon. G. FRASER: It has happened in many instances.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: But it cannot be less than 4 per cent. of the capital value.

Hon. G. FRASER: The point is that most local authorities carry out valuations once in 10 or 15 years. In my own district I know of only one revaluation in the

last 20 years. In those circumstances, the fault lies, not with the individual, but with the local governing authority. A man could be paying rental of 30s. a week and, under the proposal before the Committee, would not be able to exercise the franchise for this Chamber. It must be remembered, too, that many local authorities do not increase the rateable value but, should they require additional funds, merely increase the rate in the pound. I do not know if there has been any revaluation of properties on the goldfields.

Hon. H. Seddon: They carry out one every year.

Hon. G. FRASER: Then they are exceptional in that respect.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: I have had some experience regarding what goes on in the city of Perth. In most instances the rates are levied at a higher figure than the authorities are entitled to on the rental basis. The municipal valuer made it quite clear to me that he was bound by the provisions of the Act and, irrespective of what the rent might be, he was bound to fix the rate on the basis of 4 per cent. of the capital value, which includes all improvements.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I have always found, when land was being submitted for probate, that the land tax valuation was taken, not that of the local governing authority. If the local authority's under-valuation were submitted when probate was applied for, the taxation authorities would have something to say. If any local authority has been neglectful in not fixing a proper valuation, the residents suffer because they may be deprived of the franchise for this Chamber.

Hon. G. Fraser: But instead of increasing the valuations, the local authority may increase the rate in the pound.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is not the proper way. The Act provides what is to be the annual value.

Hon. G. FRASER: I have known of instances of different values attaching to properties in the records of the Taxation Department and those of the local authority.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Which was the higher?

Hon. G. FRASER: That of the Taxation Department.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Land taxation has nothing whatever to do with this matter. It should be remembered that a rental value of 10s. a week—not the rateable value—entitles an individual to have his name on

the rolls, and surely that is low enough. It is surprising to me to think that a man may pay 30s. a week as rent for a house and yet his property may appear in the local authority's rate book at less than 10s. a week.

Hon. G. Fraser: I did not say that.

Hon. R. G. MOORE: Yes, you did, and you said that such a man could not be enrolled.

Hon. G. Fraser: I was referring to another phase of the question.

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

Clause 51—agreed to.

Clause 52—Registrar General to furnish monthly lists:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That after paragraph (b) the following new paragraph be inserted:—

“(c) The Registrar of Titles during every month in each year shall forward to the Chief Electoral Officer a list in the prescribed form of the transfers of titles and caveats lodged against titles of land which have been effected during the preceding month together with the names of the transferee and transferor.”

This amendment was moved in the Assembly, but I understand from a statement I read that it was contended that it would involve a certain amount of expense. From the standpoint of the clarity of the rolls, I think that expense would be well worth incurring, because the registrar would be able to keep his rolls up to date. Under this amendment he would be in a position immediately to deal with any claim that came in or to remove the names of persons who were no longer qualified.

Hon. G. W. MILES: On a point of order, I ask whether this amendment can go into the clause, or whether it should not be in the form of a new clause?

The CHAIRMAN: That can be looked into later.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am opposed to the amendment, for it is quite unnecessary. In the Titles Office every document received is entered into what is known as the journal, and next morning one can trace every movement in land dealing. If the Registrar of Titles were to forward to the Chief Electoral Officer each month a list of those movements in alphabetical order, he would have also to forward the details of the land. The whole information is already there for the Chief Electoral Officer to go

and consult. The amendment would mean a serious duplication of work.

The CHAIRMAN: On reading through this amendment I am inclined to agree with Mr. Miles that it ought to be in the form of a new clause. Therefore I suggest that Mr. Seddon withdraw the amendment now and move it later as a new clause.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I will withdraw my amendment.

Amendment, by leave, withdrawn.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 53 to 60—agreed to.

Clause 61—Issue of writs:

Hon. H. SEDDON: On behalf of Mr. Cornell I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (a) of Subclause 3 the words "or any other province which the Minister may from time to time specify by notification in the 'Gazette'" be struck out.

The position will then be that all the provinces will be on the same footing as the North Province in regard to the issue of the writs. The idea is to give as much time as possible for the work in the North Province rather than to have the time for the other provinces lessened.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I suggest that the next succeeding words "as a province to which this paragraph shall apply" should also be struck out.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Yes, I agree with that and so I add to my amendment to strike out certain words the further words, "as a province to which this paragraph shall apply."

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That after "and" in line 6 of paragraph (a) the following be inserted:—" (b) In the case of a writ to fill a vacancy for the Central, North-East, and South Provinces before the 8th day of March next preceeding such vacancy; and"

It is already provided that for the North Province writs shall be issued before the 20th day of February, and under the amendment in the three provinces mentioned the writs shall issue before the 8th day of March. In the Bill there is provision that for the remaining provinces the date shall be the 22nd March. In those provinces named in the amendment, owing to their size and remoteness, it is necessary that the time should be extended to the 8th March.

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

Clause 62—Form of Writ:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That in lines 21-23 of Subclause 2 the following words be struck out:—"or any province to which paragraph (a) of subsection (3) of the preceding section may apply," and that after the word "and" in line 24 the following words be inserted:—" (b) In the case of a writ to fill vacancy for the Central, North-East, and South Provinces the date shall not be more than seventy-five days after the issue of the writ; and"

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That in lines 13 to 15 of Subclause 4 the following words be deleted:—"North Province, or any other province to which paragraph (a) of subsection (3) of section sixty-one applies," and substitute "Central, North, North-East, and South Provinces."

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. G. W. MILES: I move an amendment—

That in line 15 of paragraph (a) the figure "14" be struck out and "21" inserted in lieu.

Six years ago the Government instructed the electoral officer to hold an election within ten days of the nominations. This was a deliberate attempt to steal the North and South province seats. I do not want any Government to have power to indulge in those tactics again.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That in Subclause 5 (a) the figure "60" be struck out and "30" inserted in lieu.

A period of 30 days will provide sufficient time in which to carry out the work between the nominations and the polling, and more time after polling for the cleaning up of the election.

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

Clauses 63 to 76—agreed to.

Clause 77—Voting in absence:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That after paragraph (a) a paragraph to stand as paragraph (b) be inserted as follows:—"Who being a woman has reason to believe that she will, on account of ill-health, be unable on polling day to attend a polling place to vote; or"

Amendment put and passed.



Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That all the words after "may" in line 1 of page 40 to the end of the subclause be struck out, with a view to inserting other words.

This is the beginning of a series of amendments Mr. Cornell proposes to submit to provide for postal voting. It was his intention to divide the system into two parts, one to deal with postal voting and the other to deal with the principle of voting in absence, and the amendments appearing on the Notice Paper will be proposed to the clause with which we are now dealing, and clauses 78, 79 and 80.

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

Ayes .. .. .	16
Noes .. .. .	6

Majority for .. ..	10
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## AYES.

Hon. E. H. Angelo	Hon. J. M. Macfarlane
Hon. L. B. Brown	Hon. W. J. Mann
Hon. L. Craig	Hon. G. W. Miles
Hon. C. G. Elliott	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. J. T. Franklin	Hon. H. Seddon
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. H. Tuckey
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. H. J. Yelland
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. R. G. Moore

(Teller.)

## NOES.

Hon. A. M. Clydesdale	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. M. Drew	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. E. H. Gray

(Teller.)

## PAIR.

AYE.	NO.
Hon. H. V. Piesse	Hon. T. Moore

Amendment thus passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move—

That the following words be inserted in lieu of the words struck out:—"after the nominations have been declared, attend before a magistrate, or other person appointed by the Minister in that behalf (in this Part of this Act referred to as a 'postal vote officer'), and vote by post.

Notice of every appointment, or suspension, or removal of a postal vote officer shall be published in the "Government Gazette."

Hon. G. FRASER: I hope the Committee will not agree to the insertion of these words. During the past few years we have had enough examples of the abuse of the Electoral Act and therefore we should not reintroduce the system of postal vote officers. We should evolve a better system. That which existed in the past was anything but satisfactory.

Hon. L. Craig: The wrong men were always appointed.

Hon. G. FRASER: The trouble was to get the right men. There have been abuses and in recent years they have been discovered and made public.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: What about the Trades Hall official who went to a house in North-East Fremantle to take a woman's vote?

Hon. G. FRASER: Now that the hon. member has mentioned that matter it might be as well to relate just what happened.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Oh, no; let it go.

Hon. G. FRASER: It has been referred to and it will be as well to explain what happened. A note was sent to the Trades Hall asking that the vote of a sick person should be taken. The name of this person was passed on to a postal vote officer who called at the address given. On the officer arriving at the premises it was found that the lady was not at home, and actually was not ill. She wanted to cast her vote because she intended leaving the State before the election. The postal vote officer informed the person who was in the house that he was not permitted to take the vote, and that if the lady who was leaving the State wished to vote she would have to visit the officer. Shortly afterwards the lady herself returned, and after a conversation the officer agreed to take her vote. They entered the house, and whilst there our friend, Mr. Parker, who was a candidate for the seat, together with the lady's husband and another postal vote officer, came on the scene from the rear of the house. Evidently they too, were there with the intention of taking the lady's vote. I merely quote this incident to show how it is possible to get around the Act. I shall be surprised if this Chamber perpetuates that system which in the past lent itself to all the abuses it was possible to indulge in. What was proposed by the Royal Commission was a system that would leave no loopholes. Yet it appears that the Chamber is not prepared to accept that recommendation. I am surprised at members wanting to endorse a system similar to that which existed in the past and particularly in view of the disclosures made in recent years regarding postal voting.

Hon. H. SEDDON: It was not the system so much as the personnel who were concerned in the abuses which arose under the old system of postal voting. It might work satisfactorily as far as the Assembly is concerned but it would certainly be the means

of depriving many people of a vote for the Legislative Council. Regarding the defects associated with the old system, Mr. Cornell has endeavoured to overcome those by providing that the postal vote officer shall only be chosen from amongst certain persons. Those persons are mentioned in the list adopted under the Commonwealth system. The list includes those who can be regarded as being responsible and capable of carrying out duties of this description. I think the arrangement would work quite satisfactorily.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That Subclauses 2 to 12 be struck out.

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

Clause 78—Prohibition on voting at polling place:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I ask that this clause be deleted because it is intended to substitute a new clause on recommittal.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 79—General application to vote by post:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I ask that this clause also be struck out.

Clause put and negatived.

Clause 80 put and negatived.

Clause 81—Elector may vote in person on polling day at certain specified polling places outside his district:

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move an amendment—

That in lines 6 to 8 of Subclause 1 the words "or obtained a ballot paper under and in accordance with the provisions of Sections seventy-seven or seventy-nine" be struck out and the words "and obtained a ballot paper to vote by post" inserted in lieu.

The clauses mentioned have been deleted and the amendment is really consequential.

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

The CHAIRMAN: Will not the further amendments set down be consequential on the carrying of the new clauses of which notice has been given?

Hon. H. SEDDON: The difficulty is to keep the clauses in sequence. The amendment just made relates to a clause of the

Bill, but the ensuing amendments, of which notice has been given, relate to proposed new clauses.

The CHAIRMAN: Then I suggest that Clauses 82 and 83 be postponed.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the consideration of Clauses 82 and 83 be postponed.

Motion put and passed.

Clauses 84 to 93—agreed to.

Progress reported.

### PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

*Hon. J. J. Holmes and Federal Taxation Commissioner's Report.*

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: With the permission of the House I should like to make a personal explanation. I have been informed that my reference to page 54 of the report of the Federal Taxation Commissioner might have left a wrong impression and that my remarks could have been construed to apply to the chairman of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners. I desire to say definitely, distinctly and emphatically that no such inference was intended by me.

Hon. G. Fraser: I am very pleased to hear that.

*House adjourned at 9.45 p.m.*