Legislative Council

Tuesday, 3rd November, 1953.

CONTENTS.

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

ASSENT TO BILL.

Message from the Governor received and read notifying assent to the Wheat Marketing Bill.

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT.

War Service Homes Loans Papers.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Some weeks ago Mr. Griffith asked me about the tabling of certain papers relating to instructions received by the Housing Commission from the Commonwealth Government concerning loans under the War Service Homes Act. I informed him on that occasion that the Minister for Housing had written to the Federal Department regarding the papers. I have now a further notification on the subject which I would like to read to the House. It is from the Minister for Housing and reads as follows:—

> Regarding the request for the tabling of papers having reference to the forced waiting period of at least six months on the part of applicants for War Services Homes under the Special Advance Scheme, I have now received a reply from the Director, War Service Homes Division, Canberra, as follows:—
>
> I regret that I cannot agree to the request submitted by a member of Parliament in your State for a copy of my letter—Estimates for 1953-54—of 11/8/1953 to be tabled in the Legislative Council.
>
> This is an official document dealing with the administration of the War Service Homes Act, which is a Commonwealth Act and it would be quite improper for me to agree to the contents of the correspondence being tabled as requested. The hon. the Minister in the Upper House should be informed of my decision.
>
> If the member who has requested the tabling of the letter desires information generally as to the handling of building applications including special advance cases, this may be furnished in accordance with the policy which has been advised to your Commission or if he is interested in a particular case, this will be reviewed upon receipt of his representations.
>
> The waiting period imposed by the Commonwealth is disturbing to me as it is to ex-servicemen. The R.S.L., I understand, is seeking to interview the Federal Minister this week in connection with the matter.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £9,000,000.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, resolved:

That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to enable a Supply Bill to pass through all stages at any one sitting.

QUESTION.

SUPERPHOSPHATE.

As to Return of Excess Equalisation Payments.

Hon. A. L. LOTON asked the Chief Secretary:

In reply to my question on the 28th October regarding repayment to producers of the excess equalisation fund payment on superphosphate, the Minister said that payments could not be made until all claims had been lodged. Does this imply that claims will have to be lodged by individual farmers or by the distributors of superphosphate?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

The matter is to be discussed by the Superphosphate Conference on Wednesday, the 4th November, 1953. Conference will make a recommendation in respect of method of repayment, and on receipt by the Government of such recommendation, an answer to the question can be given.

BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

1, Adoption of Children Act Amendment (No. 1).

2, Government Employees (Promotions Appeal Board) Act Amendment.

Returned to the Assembly with an amendment.

3. Hospitals Act Amendment.

Passed.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT. (No. 1).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 27th October.

HON. C. H. HENNING (South-West) [4.45]: The Bill was described by Mr. Parker when he moved the second reading as a simple one. On perusal it may appear so, but it has engendered some extremely keen debate. Mr. Parker said that the sole object of the measure was to prevent people standing outside polling booths and handing out "how to vote" cards. I do not think that full provision is made in the Bill to give effect to that intention.

In the first place we have to remember that this measure, if it is incorporated in the Act, will apply equally to an election at which there is compulsory voting as it will to an election where there is voluntary voting, and what may be good for one type of election may not necessarily be good for the other. With voluntary voting, the greatest difficulty is to get people to go to the poll and exercise their franchise. Everyone will admit it is not an easy matter.

If we pass the Bill it will mean that anyone who interferes with an elector, either in the polling booth or within one mile from the entrance thereto from the nearest street or way with the intention of influencing him or advising him how to vote, will be committing an offence. I am doubtful whether in the metropolitan area we would find any abode further than one mile from a particular polling booth. What would happen on an election day? At present people go around asking the voters to go to the poll and vote for a particular candidate.

Should the Bill become law and its provisions be carried out in their entirety, no one will be able to go because he could be asked a question which would be definitely against the Act—"Whom will you vote for?" If a person were to suggest a particular name he would immediately, if he were found out, be guilty of exercising undue influence; and undue influence is not looked upon very lightly. The same more or less applies to the other provision under Section 183.

If by some chance the Bill were eventually passed, what percentage of electors would we get to the poll when there was voluntary voting? Even at present with all parties endeavouring to stir up interest, it is considered fortunate if we can get 50 per cent. of the people to vote. I am not saying for one moment that people who do not vote should be forced to exercise the franchise under those circumstances, but I think that anybody who is entitled to vote, from a moral point of view definitely should vote.

Another point raised by Mr. Parker was to the effect that no candidate will be permitted to distribute cards, and that this will be fair to all parties. That may be so, but let us take the country areas as an example. In those areas booths are definitely more than two miles apart, and a person could go out to some farm and bring in the people from that property. He could do all the talking he liked and give them as many cards as he liked, but once he came within the one-mile limit he would have to forget all about the election. In other words, a man could pick up people in the country and, provided he was outside the one-mile limit, could give them all the information he wished, whereas in the metropolitan area that would not be possible because of the one-mile provision.

Before we decide what to do with this Bill, we should ask ourselves, "Are these proposed amendments workable?" I think all members will agree that the provisions of this measure are definitely not workable, and even Mr. Parker stated that there will be many ways of overcoming them. That alone, in my opinion, is sufficient to make one wary about voting for the second reading. What is the good of passing a Bill the provisions of which we all know are impossible to police? As far as I can work out, the returning officer is responsible for policing the Act, and he has enough difficulties at present in trying to ensure that no undue influence is exercised upon voters within a radius of 50 yards of the polling booth; yet we are asked to include an area with a radius of one mile. It would be impossible to police, and I honestly and sincerely believe that it is ridiculous for us to attempt to insert a provision such as that. Perhaps it may be possible to amend the Bill in Committee, and in that direction there are two possibilities.

If "how to vote" cards were completely abolished, and in each polling compartment a list of candidates, with their party affiliations, was displayed, or that information was incorporated in the ballot papers, it would overcome all the objections. However, there should be an embargo on asking people, or telling people, how to vote and to go to the polls. The only complaints I have heard, other than those made in this House, have been in connection with the difference between the Federal and the State law. Under the Federal Act, people are permitted to hand out "how to vote" cards up to a distance of

20 feet from the polling booth, but under the State law the permissible distance is 50 yards. If we wish to amend the principal Act, we should amend it in such a way as to ensure uniformity with the Federal electoral laws. Although I intend to support the second reading, I shall move in Committee to reduce the distance to 20 feet.

HON. H. S. W. PARKER (Suburban —in reply) [4.55]: Naturally, I have been interested in the arguments that have been put forward. Some of the remarks made were not quite correct. For instance, Mr. Henning said that if this measure were passed it would not be possible for a person to advise another how to vote within a distance of one mile from a polling booth. I do not know how he reads that into the Bill, because Section 183 (4) says, "or in any way interferes with any elector," etc., and then it goes on, "with the intention of influencing him or advising him as to his vote." That does not stop an elector from seeking advice, but it does stop a person interfering with him.

The Minister for the North-West: Or advising him.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It does not say that. The Minister cannot take out certain words from the section. It says—

> Any person who—
> in any way interferes with any elector, either in the polling booth or within 50 yards thereof with the intention of influencing him or advising him as to his vote.

It says, "interferes with the intention of influencing him or advising him." "Influence" is the real verb.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Does not that amount to speaking to him?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It says, "if a person interferes with him." A person does not interfere with another if he speaks to him or advises him. That is my argument.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: What do you have to do to interfere with a man?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: There must be some actual interference. If a man stands on a highway and tries to make a bet, he will find that he is interfering with the traffic, but if a pedestrian stands and speaks to a friend, he is not interfering with him.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Suppose a man walked up to another person and said, "You vote for Parker"?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: He would be perfectly justified, and would not be committing any breach of any law. That can be done now; and up to a distance of 50 yards from a polling booth, a man can say, "Vote for Parker." Some member mentioned during the debate that if a man walked out of a polling booth, went across the road and, when asked by a person in a car how he should vote, said, "Like this," and handed the man in the car a "how to vote" card, he would be committing an offence. That is not so, nor is it my intention. I pointed out, when introducing the Bill, that its sole object was to prevent people from standing outside polling booths and handing out "how to vote" cards.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Do you suggest that the Bill will stop them handing out "how to vote" cards, but will not prevent them from giving advice?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It will prevent a man from rushing up to an elector, as he is going into a polling booth, and telling him how to vote, as is done now 50 yards from the polling booth.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: How?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Because that would be interfering with an elector. An elector may seek advice, but a person cannot go rushing round advising electors on how they should vote. My object is to stop all this wasted labour and effort outside polling booths. There are certain people who have said that there is something sinister and something underhand about the introduction of this measure. I can only suggest to those gentlemen that they read the motto above the President's head. That motto is, "Honi siot qui mal y pense".

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Translate it.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: It means, "Evil be to him who evil thinks". It is a simple motto, and I ask members to think about it.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What effect will the Bill have on a man who, in a motor-car, picks up people within the mile limit?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I would remind members of that motto—"Evil be to him who evil thinks", and I ask them to ponder it.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: Do not look at me.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Those members who have suggested that there is something sinister or underhand about the introduction of the Bill have not been able to tell me what is sinister or underhand about it. They apparently think that my enormous brain has some secret which even they, who think evil, have not been able to discover. I desire to inform all members that there is nothing sinister, evil or underhand about the introduction of this measure. The whole idea behind it is to prevent this army of people from handing out "how to vote" cards outside booths, and the candidate having to provide for and feed that army and look after it generally. If any member desires to amend the Bill to remove any of these so called sinister inferences, I will be pleased to assist him in his endeavour

so long as there is a provision which prevents people from handing out "how to vote" cards.

Hon. C. H. Henning: Who would you expect to police it?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Who would the hon. member expect to police any law?

Hon. C. H. Henning: Would it be the police or the returning officer?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Who does it at present?

Hon. C. H. Henning: I am asking you.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am not a quiz kid! This is the electoral law. It has been suggested that one cannot advise. The word is "interfere". If members look at Section 182 they will see that one is not allowed to buy a drink for a person on polling day and is not allowed to give him any food. That is true only if it is given with a view to influencing a vote. If a fellow is given a drink, who could possibly say that it is done with a view to influencing his vote?

The Minister for the North-West: It depends whether you buy before he has voted or after.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That seems a very sensible remark. One buys a man a drink, and who is to say that it has influenced him in his vote?

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: It would be a reward.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: But it would not be influencing him.

The Minister for the North-West: Where are "how to vote" cards mentioned in the Act or in the Bill?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I am sorry the Minister does not know that. I thought anyone who had contested an election would have known that the "how to vote" cards were not permitted to be handed out within 50 yards of the booth. That is in two sections of the Act. Apparently the Minister has not read my Bill and compared it with the Act. Section 192 sets out the following acts that should not be done on polling days:—

> In a polling booth or within 50 yards canvassing for votes, soliciting a vote.

Obviously "how to vote" cards constitute soliciting a vote.

The Minister for the North-West: It is not mentioned.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Of course it is not, but it is soliciting a vote. It has been suggested that people expect "how to vote" cards because they have had them for many years. It has also been suggested that without "how to vote" cards one would not get people to go to the poll. That seems a strange argument because the people have to go to the polling booth to get their cards and it is this practice that it is proposed to stop. The suggestion has been made that if "how to vote" cards were not handed out at the polling booth people would not remember that the election was taking place; they get their cards in the letter box the day before and that reminds them to go to the polling booth. At the present time they do not get their cards before they go to the polling booth.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: I said they were distributed at the houses in the letter-boxes.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Another member said that if there were no "how to vote" cards at the booth we would not get anyone there. My contention is that there is far more advertising before people go to the booth, so that in that case we will get them there. Compulsory voting was mentioned; but surely it is not suggested that we are putting on the roll people who do not know how to vote until they get to the polling booth, or do not know which party or which candidate's card they will take notice of when they get it? I like to give the people the credit for having some political knowledge when they do go to vote.

Hon. G. Bennetts: In the case of distributing "how to vote" cards to boarding-houses it is quite possible the landlady would put them in the fire before anyone had a chance of seeing them.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is very interesting, but I am afraid I have not stayed at one of those boarding-houses. The hon. member may have done so. What happens when the hon. member gets a card outside the polling booth? He tears it up and adds to the litter that is already there. So do many others. "How to vote" cards are a waste of money, and handing them out outside a polling booth is a great waste of effort. I believe the Australian voter is intelligent enough to decide how to vote from all the propaganda he gets before polling day. It has been suggested that the Bill does not go far enough and that it should prohibit entirely the distribution of any propaganda on polling day. I agree with that. But this is the first step towards that ultimate end and I hope that it may be included in later legislation.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: What about your large country areas where the card might arrive on Saturday?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Certainly it might, and that is all right. This is only to prevent them from standing outside a polling booth handing out "how to vote" cards. The expression " 'how to vote' cards" means, of course, any political propaganda outside a polling booth. It is to prohibit that being done within a mile of the polling booth that the Bill is intended. I have no objection to provision being made for half a mile or 500 yards, but it must not be outside the polling booth. It is a waste of energy and expense. Members who have been unfortunate enough to stand for elections will realise the enormous waste of energy, and I again assure them

that there is nothing here which savours of an ulterior motive. I am quite prepared to agree to an amendment if any member can point out that there is something wrong. If he can, I will be pleased to accept it.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Is it not a type of advertising at the polling booth?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Yes, but it is too late. The people ought to be advised beforehand and not at the booth.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Why not prohibit advertising in the paper on the same day and just say that there is an election?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: There are a great number of provisions I would have liked to include in this Bill, but I thought it would be easier to get one through at a time. It would be a very good thing indeed if the name of the party were put alongside the candidate's name on the ballot paper.

The Minister for the North-West: You did not think so three years ago.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: I do not think I ever voted against that.

The Minister for the North-West: Oh, my word, you did!

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If I did, I have gained more knowledge as I have grown older. The effect of this Bill will be that the electors will be well-informed before they go to the polling booth and will not have to wait for their instructions when they get there. I trust members will pass the Bill and give the suggestion a good and fair trial. There is an election next year for the Legislative Council; and if this provision does not work, the Act can be amended before the next general election.

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

Ayes	17
Noes	10
Majority for	7

Ayes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. J. McI. Thomson
Hon. C. H. Henning	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. F. R. Welsh
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. A. R. Jones
Hon. L. A. Logan	*(Teller.)*

Noes.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker	Hon. W. R. Hall
Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. R. J. Boylen	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery
	(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. C. H. Simpson in the Chair; Hon. H. S. W. Parker in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 183 amended:

Hon. C. H. HENNING: I move an amendment—

> That in line 6 the words "one mile" be struck out with a view to inserting the words "twenty feet".

My object in moving the amendment is to bring our Act into uniformity with the Federal law.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I support the amendment. The question regarding newspaper advertisements on election day has been raised. If the distance of one mile were adhered to, it would mean that "The West Australian" could not be distributed there on election day if it contained how to vote advice or any other information that might influence the vote of an elector.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: A good thing, too.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Perhaps so, but that would apply within one mile of any polling booth.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The Act prohibits interefering in any way with an elector with the intention of influencing or advising him as to his vote. I cannot see how the delivering of a newspaper within a mile of a polling booth would interfere with an elector, though it might advise him as to his vote. If so, nobody should at present have a copy of the paper within 50 yards of a booth on election day. That is not the intention.

People distributing "how to vote" cards are to be found right at the door of the polling booth and, if we are not going to prevent the practice, it might as well be made 20 feet because they could then be right against the door. I omitted to mention that the word "booth" appears in the Act, and I propose to move for the insertion of the word "place" in lieu to put the Act in order.

Point of Order.

Hon. A. L. Loton: On a point of order, should not we first discuss the deletion of the words "fifty yards"?

The Chairman: The clause provides for deleting certain words from the Act and then members may decide what words shall be substituted.

Hon. A. L. Loton: The point is that the words specified in the clause should first be deleted before other words are inserted.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: The question is that the words "one mile" be struck out.

The Chairman: We have passed the point raised by Mr. Loton and it is quite in order to consider Mr. Henning's amendment, which applies to only two words in line 6.

Hon. C. H. Henning: My amendment is to delete the words "one mile" with a view to inserting the words "twenty feet".

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: I direct attention to Standing Order 123.

The Chairman: That Standing Order provides that a question may be amended by leaving out certain words and inserting or adding other words, and that clearly covers the present position. Mr. Loton would have been in order had he directed attention to the earlier part of the clause before Mr. Henning moved his amendment. I rule that the amendment is in order.

Hon. A. L. Loton: I disagree, as I consider that the hon. member cannot move to insert the words "twenty feet".

The Chairman: Could not that be considered later on recommittal?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Mr. Henning's amendment applies to the Bill, not to the Act; and when the Bill is passed, it will have the effect of amending the Act. We must first put the Bill in order.

The Chairman: Does Mr. Loton wish to disagree with my ruling? If so, he must put his dissent in writing.

Hon. A. L. Loton: I still think that the words should be struck out before others are inserted.

Hon. L. C. Diver: The best course would be to move for the deletion of certain words and later move for the insertion of others in lieu.

Hon. C. H. Henning: That is what I have done.

The Chief Secretary: Will you state the question, Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: The question is that the words "one mile" be struck out with a view to inserting "twenty feet". If it be necessary to go back and make a further amendment, that must be done on recommittal.

The Chief Secretary: Since you have stated the question, Mr. Chairman, I would say the procedure is quite correct.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It will be understood that we cannot go back to deal with an earlier part of the clause.

The Chairman: Only on recommital.

The Chief Secretary: There is no necessity to go back.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Suppose we wanted to make an alteration to the words "fifty yards."

The Chief Secretary: If Mr. Henning's amendment is passed, the distance of 50 yards will be deleted from the Act. I am amazed that members should get into such a tangle.

Committee Resumed.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: A majority of members voted for the second reading, which proposes to make the prohibitive distance one mile. If the amendment is agreed to the position will be worse than was intended by Mr. Parker when he introduced the measure as the distance will then be 20 feet instead of 50 yards. There is some merit in having uniformity between the Commonwealth and State laws in this regard, but I submit that has nothing to do with the question here.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I think the amendment has more merit than the original proposal as it would bring us into uniformity with the Federal legislation. I think Mr. Parker unconsciously misled members because the Act at present makes it an offence where, "Any person in any way interferes with an elector with the intention of influencing him or advising him as to his vote". At present anyone who does that within 50 yards of a polling booth commits an offence, and the Bill proposes to make such an action an offence within a mile of the polling booth. Mr. Parker said the sole object of the measure is to prevent people standing outside polling booths and handing out cards, but if members can see an analogy or truthfulness in his statement—

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: I do not know whether the hon. member intended to imply that I was not telling the truth, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I renounce any suggestion that I had the slightest intention of imputing anything like that to Mr. Parker, for whose veracity I have the highest regard, but I think he did it unconsciously when he said that his only motive was to prevent people standing outside polling booths and handing out "how to vote" cards, while, in fact, the measure, if agreed to, would prevent people carrying on any electioneering activities within a mile of the polling booth.

Hon. L. A. Logan: I think that is an exaggeration.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: The words are, "Any person who in any way interferes with any elector with the intention of influencing him or advising him as to his vote".

Hon. L. A. Logan: Yes, interfering with the intention.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I can only read the provision and explain it. I cannot help the hon. member to understand it. The Committee will appear ridiculous if it agrees to the proposition contained in the Bill, but the amendment follows the Federal pattern. Mr. Parker's proposition, if agreed to, would restrict practically all forms of electioneering activity.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Do you suggest that it would not be possible for a person to call at a house and ask the residents whether they intended to vote?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I say, as a lawyer, that if a political agent or canvasser or other worker called at a house on election day and inquired whether the residents desired to vote or took them in his car to the polling booth the provision in the Bill would make it an offence. I support the amendment.

Hon. C. H. HENNING: Mr. Griffith said it would be wrong for one to support the second reading of the measure and then move this amendment. I would support the Bill in its entirety if we were living in Utopia, but we are living in a world of reality. Why agree to a provision that we all know could not be policed? The amendment, if agreed to, would reduce tremendously the number of electoral offences at present committed and it should be our prerogative to achieve that end.

Hon. R. J. BOYLEN: The clause, as worded, seems sinister and I think it reaches further than Mr. Parker intended. There might be a polling booth in a locality and another three-quarters of a mile from it, and so the person concerned would have to go a mile from the second booth. Another point is that a father or mother would not be able to advise a son or daughter how to fill in a ballot paper without committing an offence. I support the amendment.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I would like to hear Mr. Parker on the point that if the amendment is agreed to it will not be possible to canvass for votes or call at a house and inquire if an elector wishes to vote or transport him to the polling booth.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: If this were carried and it became law, it would not prevent a candidate from having committee rooms as long as electors were not interfered with.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: What about Subsections (1) and (2) of Section 192?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: A candidate does not canvass for votes on election day. He says to electors, "Have you voted? May I take you along to the polling booth?" It is too late for a candidate to solicit votes then. If the Bill becomes law, that is what a candidate will do. Canvassing cannot be proved any more than a breach of Section 111 can be proved, which provides that no candidate shall bribe an elector by supplying food or entertainment, or influence an elector in the way he shall vote on the way to or returning from the polling booth. I presume that section is broken daily during the course of a campaign, but to prove the breach is impossible. If I call for Mr. and Mrs. Smith on election day to take them to the polling booth and they ask me, "Whom do you represent?", and I say, "The Labour candidate," they can believe me or not. Who is to prove that I have canvassed their votes?

Hon. C. H. Henning: Does that mean that you can commit an offence so long as it cannot be proved?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: Most decidedly. Most of us have committed offences at some time or other but have not been caught. "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone."

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I voted for the second reading of the Bill because I thought it would achieve an objective; but after listening to other members, and now to Mr. Parker, I am not sure whether I will be doing right if I continue to approve of it. We all know that in Legislative Council elections a candidate's supporters convey people to the polling booth in motorcars. Could Mr. Parker advise me on a case such as this: Candidate "A." has a number of people assisting him in his campaign with motorcars on which they have attached placards with the words, "Vote 'A'.—I." One such supporter drives his motorcar to the front of the residence of an elector, enters the house and says, "Good morning, have you voted yet? May I take you to the polling booth to vote?"

I feel that such an action is obviously an offence. I am not so sure whether it is canvassing for a vote in so many words, but it is certainly canvassing for a vote when the supporter has a placard on his motorcar, bearing the name of a candidate. If that be the case, I do not think it is desirable that it should be proceeded with. Can Mr. Parker tell me what would be done if such a set of circumstances were challenged before the Court? Section 192 could be altered also; and if it is, is there to be no activity whatever on polling day?

Hon. L. C. Diver: That would be a good idea.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not know whether it would be. Certain people might be deprived of an opportunity to vote, such as the aged, who look forward to being taken to the polling booth by motorcar. We are not entitled to prevent an elector from voting by putting anything in his way. I agree that if all voting were made compulsory we would be better off.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: I do not think Mr. Griffith is correct in saying that an elector might be deprived of an opportunity to vote. A person has every right to ring up a friend who has a motorcar and ask if he can be taken to the polling booth. The Act provides that an elector must be interfered with in an attempt to influence him to do something, before there is a breach of the Act. A person telephoning a friend and requesting a ride in a motorcar to the polling booth is not interfering with anybody. If we are to carry such a position to its logical conclusion, everyone that drives to a polling booth in a car which bears a candidate's name will be committing an offence because he will be within 50 yards of the polling booth.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: They are dropped 50 yards from the polling booth.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is not so; an elector is dropped right at the door of the polling booth.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Not in the city.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: It is no good the hon. member arguing in that fashion, because it is done in the same way as during a Commonwealth election. Therefore, in fact, the law has been broken during past elections.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They are merely waiting for the elector to get out of the car.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That is not the argument. The object of the Bill is to endeavour to prevent "how to vote" cards from being handed out on polling day, but I do not think Mr. Parker has gone the right way about it. I think an amendment to Section 193 would overcome the problem. There is one portion of the Act relating to canvassing that might come into the picture, but not the one that Mr. Henning mentioned. Let us arrive at something more concrete, so that people will know how to vote on polling day.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: A great deal of stress has been placed on the words "interfering with an elector." The relevant section reads "in any way interferes with the intention of influencing him or advising him as to his vote."

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: That is why a canvasser gives an elector a card.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Mr. Parker has said that a candidate would have to go to an elector's house and ask him, "Have you voted yet? Can I drive you to the polling booth?" In the first place, if that were done a candidate would be trespassing; and, in the second place, he would be advising the elector how to vote. The section distinctly states that one must not advise an elector how he should vote.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: That is not advising him how to vote.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: There is nothing in the Act that has reference to the words "how to vote." It says, "as to his vote." If a person asks an elector whether he has voted, that elector is not being advised which way he should vote. A position will be reached whereby every candidate in the metropolitan area will be breaking the law if he drives an elector to the polling booth or if an elector approaches him and says, "Are you a candidate? How shall I vote?" In that case there is no activity within 50 yards of the polling booth.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Yes, there is.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: The only activity within 50 yards of the polling booth would be the dropping of an elector at the entrance.

Hon. Sir Frank Gibson: The returning officer could police that.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: A returning officer is not doing his job if he does not.

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: It would be all right as long as it was done out of the sight of the returning officer.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: Is the hon. member saying that he does not mind breaking the law so long as he is not caught?

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Yes, quite so. As long as a candidate was out of sight, it would be quite all right.

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST: I do not think we should inflict such a position on electors, or even on candidates.

Hon. G. BENNETTS: I am pleased that Mr. Henning has moved this amendment. Firstly, it seeks to bring the Act into conformity with the Commonwealth legislation. Members of this Chamber are considered to be honest men, and we do not want to be restricted with the clause in the Bill that refers to a distance of one mile. During the second reading debate Mr. Parker mentioned that "how to vote" cards could be left on the seat of a candidate's car so that an elector might pick them up. According to Mr. Parker, there is nothing in the Act to prevent a candidate from giving a card to an elector so long as it is done out of the returning officer's view. As the Minister for the North-West has said, if a candidate drives up to the front of an elector's residence in a car bearing a placard on which is printed the candidate's name, the person driving that car is going to that house for one purpose only, and that is to represent the candidate whose name appears on the sign attached to his car. Even without a placard, the electors are aware of the political party for which a person is canvassing. I hope the Committee will support the amendment.

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: Trivialities and side issues have been brought into this question, but every member knows the intention. If the Bill is passed, imposing a limit of a mile, then where activities were indulged in that would be influencing a voter. Going to the extreme, a man advising his wife in his home how to vote would be committing an illegal act, according to the interpretation of some members. No member would believe that what has been suggested today could be challenged. It has been suggested that the leaving of cards in a car is influencing an elector. I would not hesitate to leave cards in a car when taking electors to a booth. That would not be dishonest because, if electors do not wish to take a card, they need not do so. But if I went along and handed out cards 20 feet from a booth, that would be interference. The object of the Bill is to prevent such interference. No member of this Chamber would challenge a canvasser in an election if he were doing that sort of thing half a mile from a booth. The aim is to keep undesirable activities away from the booth.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: Why not say over half a mile from the booth?

Hon. J. M. A. CUNNINGHAM: The term "immediate vicinity" would be difficult to define. Half a mile would serve the purpose and achieve the aim of keeping undesirable activities from the immediate vicinity of the booth.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: In reply to a query whether sending someone in a motorcar canvassing votes for a candidate is an offence, in my opinion that would not constitute an offence. No one knows how an elector travelling in a person's car is going to vote. I have taken people to polling booths, but I do not know whether they vote according to the placard on my car. Each car takes a great many people to the booth.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: What is the intention of sending a motorcar?

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: The intention is to get them to vote for the candidate that I am assisting.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But you do not always know if they will do so.

Hon. H. S. W. PARKER: That is so. Very often people will pick up their friends from next door in their car. This Bill was drawn by the Parliamentary Draftsman in accordance with my views. It was suggested that the taking of an elector in a car to a polling booth is an endeavour to influence him. If that is so, an offence has been committed under this section, by attempting to interfere with his free choice. That is evident from Section 184. As pointed out by Mr. Loton, at every election thousands of people would be found to have committed offences, if the law were strictly enforced. Looking at the first portion of Section 184, it cannot be said that this is advising a voter. If that is the case, then every person driving a motorcar displaying a candidate's placard would be advising electors how to vote. The electors do not get out of such cars until they reach the entrances of the booth; certainly not when they are 50 yards away. This clause simply intends to make things easier, and if it is desired to limit the distance to 20 feet, by all means let us do so; or limit it to the entrance to the booth. The position today is that there are people handing out "how to vote" cards at every entrance to a booth, but 50 yards away. I am trying to eliminate that.

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

Ayes	11
Noes	14
Majority against	3

Ayes.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker	Hon. C. H. Henning
Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. J. Murray
Hon. G. Fraser	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. W. R. Hall	Hon. R. J. Boylen
Hon. E. M. Heenan	*(Teller.)*

Noes.

Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. Sir Frank Gibson	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. A. F. Griffith	Hon. H. L. Roche
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. J. McI. Thomson
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. J. Cunningham
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus negatived.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: This is our last opportunity of voting for Clause 2 or leaving the Act as it stands.

Progress reported.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Jury Act Amendment. (Hon H. S. W. Parker in charge).

2, Workers' Compensation Act Amendment.

3, Fertilisers Act Amendment. (Hon. L. A. Logan in charge).

Received from the Assembly.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 2), £9,000,000.

First Reading.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [7.36] in moving the second reading said: This is the second Supply Bill to be introduced during this session. The first was for the sum of £16,000,000, which was allocated to—

	£
Consolidated Revenue	10,500,000
General Loan	4,000,000
Advance to Treasurer	1,500,000

For the period the 1st July to the 31st September, 1953, expenditure mounted to £13,476,744, consisting of £10,302,508 from Consolidated Revenue; and £3,174,236 from General Loan Fund. During the same term revenue was £9,512,321, the deficit in Consolidated Revenue thus amounting to £790,187. The present Bill asks for £9,000,000—£6,000,000 being for Consolidated Revenue, and £3,000,000 for General Loan. The Revenue Estimates are now under consideration in another place and the Loan Estimates will be introduced soon.

With regard to the revenue deficit, I would point out this is little more than half of that experienced for the corresponding period of last year, the loss then amounting to £1,448,761: It is, however, a fact that the operations for the first quarter of the financial year are not always a true gauge of those which occur in the rest of the year. Revenue during the first quarter very often flows at less than the rate experienced later. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [7.37]: We know from experience in former years that when Supply Bills are submitted to this House, supply must be granted for the purpose of carrying on the necessary services of Government; but their introduction does give members the opportunity of bringing forward matters which they may desire to discuss, and which otherwise they might not have the chance of discussing. On this occasion one matter I want to bring to the notice of the House, and of the Government, is the question of the decisions taken regarding the chord line from Welshpool to Bassendean, and the other arrangements that were the subject of a Bill passed through both Houses of Parliament just on three years ago.

On the 6th December, 1950, a Bill was passed to authorise a chord line from Bassendean to Welshpool, and the construction of marshalling yards. In connection with that proposal, another Bill was passed that enabled special consideration to be given to the claims of people who were being disturbed on account of the rapid rise in values and the injustices that might be perpetrated in some instances if there were a hard-and-fast adherence to the values at the first day of the year, as provided under the Public Works Act.

There were, of course, a number of reactions to the Bill, as there always are when something of a necessary nature is proposed. As a matter of fact, an independent engineer was called in, and he did suggest a slight deviation from the original route chosen. But as was explained when the Bill was presented, the Commissioners and the railway staff had spent many months in exhaustively surveying the proposals, and all possible alternatives; and they advised the Government that the route they suggested was the cheapest and most practicable from a railway point of view and that, in order to carry out certain aspects of their proposals, no other route was feasible.

Certain work was done by way of resumption on the chord line route itself. About one-third of the area was traversed, and I would say that probably half of the claims in respect of the properties and houses along that route were finalised. The general reaction from all parties concerned was that they had a fair deal: not a generous deal, but a fair one; and the people along the route were more or less resigned to the prospect of that chord line going through. Later on, with the advent of Kwinana, the Government decided to resurvey the question in the light of the developments at Kwinana, which would provide harbour accommodation for certain bulk commodities, both imports and exports; which would relieve the strain at Fremantle; and which would obviously have some bearing on the location of the chord line, because the chord line would of necessity carry right through to Kwinana.

Before the previous Government left office, certain alternative proposals in regard to that survey were submitted to me, as Minister for Railways. Two alternatives were put forward, one of which was considerably cheaper than the other. It was estimated then, on the figures submitted to me, that the chord line that would then carry on to Kwinana and obviously serve all the required needs, would cost £2.1 million and the alternative route from Midland Junction would cost £3.3 million, so there was a saving of £1.2 million, in favour of the original chord line and its proposed extension to Kwinana. I was rather surprised to see, according to the information published in the Press, that the co-ordination committee, in its new proposal, estimated that there would be a saving of £1,000,000. Looking at the map which gives the route of the altered plan, I can understand that there would be a saving, because there would be less milage to cover.

Hon. H. K. Watson: A saving of £1,000,000 of the £2.1 million?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Yes, I think so. The figure of £3,000,000 was mentioned, which I cannot quite understand. The point I am getting at is that the new proposals still involve a further line going from Midland Junction to Kwinana, and a road route going from the Great Eastern Highway across Burswood Island and over the Swan River, and joining up with the road at East Perth. We have not seen these proposals, and I am only going on the facts as I know them and comparing them with what is proposed here. It seems to me that the final scheme will cost much more than the original one submitted to my Government. Not only is that original scheme coupled to an Act of Parliament already passed, but in connection with it a good deal of money has been spent on resumptions.

The original proposal for a chord line was compared with an alternative one put up by the late Mr. Davidson, the then Town Planner, who suggested that the marshalling yards might be at Welshpool, the line constructed over Burswood Island, and a new bridge built across the Swan River at that point. The railway engineers reckoned then that the cost of the bridge alone would be more than £750,000; and, judging by the time taken to build the Causeway, its construction would occupy a considerable number of years. As it was desirable, in the interests of bypassing the city and making a better clearance of bulk commodities, to have some sort of chord line, this fact, coupled with the extra expense, ruled it out.

The point I am getting at now is that the line depicted here will, I believe, when it is added to the line from Midland Junc-

tion to Kwinana, cost considerably more than the first proposals. When I hear, too, that the Government has suggested to those affected by the proposed resumptions that the land should be handed back to them, I think it would be wise to defer any such action until the co-ordination proposals have been laid on the Tables of both Houses and members have had a chance to see what they involve. If, as seems possible, the excess expenditure will be £2,000,000 or £3,000,000 more than was envisaged, the matter should be looked at very closely.

At the moment, railways are rather out of favour; and we all know that their receipts and expenditure affect the man in the country proportionately more than the man in the city. If there is going to be a big over-plus of expenditure in the building of a new line, then in the interests of the country users who provide most of the railway revenue, there should be, on the part of the Government, a policy of "wait and see" to a certain extent—at least until the proposals are thoroughly examined.

I make it quite clear that the original proposals were not hastily arrived at. Quite a number of the railway engineers spent months surveying them. They also kept in close liaison with the Town Planner. Although the late Mr. Davidson made quite a number of enemies because of his personal attitude towards certain things and people, no one questioned his ability. In fact, I think Sir Patrick Abercrombie, who visited Western Australia, paid a very high tribute to him as a man who knew his job as a town planner. Amongst the objects sought to be achieved by the construction of the chord line and the provision of the marshalling yards were these—

1. Relief from railway congestion in the city area.
2. Release of portion of railway city land for public use.
3. Easement of north-south flow of city traffic.
4. Adequate marshalling space for an expanding system to cover future needs for many years.
5. A chord line connection between two main lines to allow 60 per cent. of rail traffic to by-pass the city.
6. Locating such chord line so as to allow connection with a south of the river railway at a later date.

At that time, of course, an extension to Kwinana was just simply not thought of.

Hon. J. G. Hislop: Does not the present proposal alienate a lot of river frontage?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: That is a point I was going to mention. I am rather anxious to see the report of the co-ordination committee, and that of the railway commissioners, because some of the proposals that have been agreed to, apparently, were ruled out altogether when the railway commissioners gave their advice to the previous Government. I was not at all happy about the northern end of the chord line entering the marshalling yards near Bassendean. I myself proposed that that portion of the route might traverse the existing Belmont line and make its entry into the marshalling yards at the south-western end. But I was assured most emphatically that that would completely upset the railway design of handling traffic through the marshalling yards.

So I would be interested in knowing why that very point, which they so strongly objected to then, is now apparently agreed to. As I understood the position, the late Mr. Davidson, the Town Planner, had surveyed the various proposals which the engineers had under consideration from time to time, and when it was shown that his proposals would cost so much and take so much time, he agreed that the scheme they put up was definitely the better one, and he not only agreed to its adoption, but at the meeting with the heads of departments and the other people concerned, he was the one who moved the motion that the scheme be adopted. It is because I know how much work and thought were put into that planning in the first instance, and how careful the railway engineers were to adopt the cheapest and most practical line with a view to long-term service and development that I think that the Government, before it commits its self to a hard-and-fast policy in regard to any change, should survey the question, and, if necessary, have a Select Committee to deal with it before the proposals are adopted.

The plan, as suggested, follows quite a bit of the foreshore of the river, which was one reason, I understand, why in the first instance, the Railways Commission engineers were loath to suggest it. They felt that as far as possible the foreshores of the river should be preserved for the use of the people. I sincerely trust that the Government will allow members of both Houses to see and examine these proposals before it commits itself to adopting them because they might cost much more than we are at this moment led to believe. I support the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [7.54]: In speaking to the Supply Bill, I again express concern with respect to what happened before applications were called for the position of Conservator of Forests, and at the eventual appointment made. Before addressing myself to the point I want to make, I would like to read an extract from "The West Australian" of the 7th

October last. This is the report of a statement issued to the Press by the Minister in another place. The extract states—

> The Minister for Forests (Mr. Graham) said last night that he regarded Mr. Murray's action as contemptible in the extreme.
>
> "Without a tittle of evidence to support him, but merely because he embarked on a fishing expedition which proved disappointing to him, Mr. Murray saw fit to indulge in tactics rarely seen in the Western Australian Parliament," Mr. Graham said.

The report goes on—

> "It is utterly untrue for him to allege that I failed to table all files and papers relating to the calling of applications for the position of Conservator of Forests. Furthermore, it is a mean and despicable suggestion that a complete file was not tabled in the Legislative Council on September 30. The file intact, as passed to me by the Forests Department, was submitted. Is there no end to the muck-raking of certain members in relation to forestry matters?"

When I addressed myself to this subject during the Address-in-reply debate, I pointed out that in the Civil Service generally, there was a feeling of disquiet at the way certain appointments had been made. I mentioned one in particular, and suggested that another was going to be made, and I went on to speak at some length in regard to the Conservator of Forests. The position that has arisen is that the Government, in effect, has said not only to the qualified foresters in Western Australia who have grown up with the department, attended schools, and gained degrees and the like, but also to the high-ranking forestry officers in other States, that Western Australia does not want qualified men; that qualifications are nothing unless the possessors have this all-powerful and self-established standard of administration as required in the department here.

The other qualifications are of a secondary consideration, for the Government was given a choice of some of the best men in Australia, leaving Dr. Stoate out of it altogether; because, as I said when I addressed the House on the first occasion, whilst he had the right to reapply for the position, it was useless for him to do so. But the men who applied for the job included some of the highest-qualified foresters not only in Western Australia but also in the Eastern States. Instead of selecting one of those people, the Government ended up with a man from outside the department altogether. He had been in it, but had left it, and had gone to another sphere of influence altogether. He now has this top job in the department, not because of his qualifications—because they could not compare with those of many of the other men who applied for the job—but because some tribunal or individual who set a standard of what he called necessary administrative ability considered this particular man lived up to it.

In another place, the Minister has objected to certain members—including myself, I would say—asking questions aimed against another candidate for the appointment. It is strange that the Minister makes no mention of the fact that up to the 27th February of this year he was of the same opinion as we are as to who should have been appointed to the position. But because of certain circumstances that occurred, either on the 27th February or subsequent to that date, there was a complete change of front by the Minister. It would be rather interesting to know what led to that change of front, but we are still in the dark. All we know is the opinion he had on the 27th February.

So I would like to question the Government in regard to this appointment along these lines: It was known, and some papers on the file which we had here—the incomplete file—clearly showed, that the ex-Conservator had been out of tune with the Public Service Commissioner for a long period of time. The period during which he was out of step with the Public Service Commissioner probably started at the time the Conservator was first appointed to his position. However, the evidence on the file was to the effect that, of recent days at least, the Conservator was well and truly out of step with the Commissioner.

Consequently I question whether the applications for the position of Conservator should have gone before the Public Service Commissioner for adjudication. I doubt whether it was ethical for a Government to send applications for a high position of this character to a man who was known to be biased against one or more of the applicants. The Minister in another place has suggested that the questions asked here and in the Assembly were aimed at one particular applicant for the position. Probably that was true to a large degree and the person concerned is now the present Conservator.

But the Minister does not mention the fact that while all these questions were being levelled at the Government it was well known throughout the South-West portion of the State, and in the city of Perth, that the man concerned was earmarked for the job before it was ever thrown open. That is the position. The Government went through the motions of calling for applications throughout the whole of Australia for a top-line job in the Forests Department. It made a fool of the applicants because the job was already decided before Cabinet discussed it.

Hon. G. Bennetts: How do you know that?

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The birds are whispering.

Hon. J. MURRAY: Not only the birds; every dog in the South-West and every man in the Forests Department knew of the position months and months before. That is why these questions were asked, and I consider that the next step the Government took was most unethical. What did the Government do? It appointed a man, who was already ear-marked for the job of Conservator, as chairman of a committee which stood in judgment over the person who was to be superseded. Yet the Government thinks that is ethical.

Finally, I asked some questions the other night in regard to certain sawmilling activities of the present Conservator. The answer given was that the Government is satisfied that the requirements of Section 17 of the Forests Act have been complied with. I question whether it was right for the Government to consider this particular person for appointment to the position of Conservator. It is a position that carries a high responsibility. The present Conservator was formerly a divisional forest officer in the department, and in that position his duties took him into areas where there were considerable tracts of privately-owned property and Crown lands upon which there was a good deal of marketable timber. One particular block, of some 7,000 acres, was carrying three loads of timber to the acre. It was reasonably good bush country, although sleeper cutters had been over it.

Did this man, as a divisional officer of the Forests Department say, "There is a bit of country on a catchment area which has not been used by the present owner. Should not the department resume it so that the timber can be made available to sawmillers in and around Perth who are short of timber?" No. That was not the step he took. In fact, at the time, the department had no advice relating to that parcel of timber. Mr. Harris waited until he left the department and became general manager of the Wundowie Charcoal Iron Industry. Although he was still a public servant, he acquired this block of timber when it came on to the market to be sold in order to pay outstanding rates. A partnership, known as the Hardwood Timber Co., was formed, and the three partners were Mr. Alan C. Harris, Mr. A. W. Willner and Dr. B. Stein. Between them they purchased the 7,000 acres of land to which I have referred. At a conservative estimate, the value of the timber would be about £1 per load and the purchase prive was about 5s. an acre.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Were only the timber rights sold or was the land sold freehold?

Hon. J. MURRAY: Freehold. Not satisfied with having acquired a large area of timber at a cheap price, and making it available to other sawmillers for the cutting of timber, this partnership went further. These three men decided that the only way they could make a really interesting profit was to set up a sawmill of their own, and they discovered a mill which they could purchase. A proprietary company was formed known as Welshpool Sawmillers Pty. Ltd., and I asked some questions concerning it the other evening. When the mill first started operations, the shareholders of the company included Mr. Alan C. Harris; but upon notification of his appointment as Conservator he had to get rid of his sawmilling interests in order to comply with the requirements of the Forests Act. The shareholders of the company were Mr. Harris, Mr. I. P. Ilich—he was probably the log haulier for the firm; Mr. A. W. Willner—he is the same Mr. Willner mentioned in the Hardwood Timber Co. which bought the area I mentioned; and Dr. D. Stein. I would say that Dr. Stein is the man who financed the whole set-up, but that is purely assumption on my part. Mr. Willner is the manager of the mill at Welshpool; and as Mr. Harris had to get out of the firm, in order to comply with the requirements of the Forests Act, his shareholding was taken over by Mrs. Willner.

I still say that it was not ethical for this Government to appoint to the position of Conservator of Forests a man with that background. Everybody says that Mr. Harris has administrative ability, and he proved it when in charge of Wundowie. But I think his administrative ability is his only saving grace. The proceedings he took after leaving the Forests Department on the first occasion show that he has business acumen, but I doubt whether that business acumen will be an asset to the State in his administration of the Forests Act. As I said, before, I am gravely concerned about the effect his appointment will have not only on the Forests Department, but also on the Public Service generally.

The men in the Forests Department have all been led to believe that the more they study, in their own time and out of it, and the higher the degrees they obtain, the more chance they have of getting promotion. But by its recent act the Government has clearly shown that learning counts for nothing, and that it is a question of "who you know" and "who is pushing for you," when certain Governments are in power. I support the second reading of the Bill.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, debate adjourned.

BILL—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

HON. L. A. LOGAN (Midland) [8.16]: At first I was rather inclined to ridicule this Bill, and I had visions of voting against it. But having gone into the ques-

tion and obtained some more information on it, I find it is not quite as bad as it has been painted; and, indeed, in many respects it contains a lot of very excellent ideas. The only fault I can find is that it seems a little idealistic. Whether it could be toned down to the terms of practicability, I do not know; but it is possible that it could.

On inquiring from dentists just what the position of these trained girls would be, I was informed that the dentists would prefer to employ them in their dental surgeries rather than bring in new girls whom they would have to train. The difficulty or the unfairness of it, as I see the matter, is that these girls will have to do three years' training and put in an immense amount of study to pass their examinations, but they will not receive the remuneration to pay them for the amount of study they will have done. If they had to be paid the full amount to compensate them for their studies, then they would not be employed. That is where I think the ideology breaks down. It may be that we can train these girls sufficiently in perhaps two years to satisfy the requirements of dentists. In that case, the difference in the pay would not be quite so bad.

In different parts of the curriculum, it is provided that these girls are to be given a knowledge of soldering. This is not as stupid as it may seem at first sight, because that is apparently part and parcel of their job. It is necessary for them to solder wires, plates, and so on.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Do not they have to join the Plumbers' Union for that?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: This is what the dentists themselves have told me about the curriculum.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: The dentists want a mechanical nurse.

Hon. A. L. LOGAN: I should say a dentist, having seen and read the curriculum, would prefer the type of girl who had completed the curriculm, rather than the new chum who he would have to train. That being so, we must take into consideration the requirements of the dentist. Against the Bill, I would say that when I asked an ordinary nurse what she thought of the conditions pertaining to the study stipulated for the dental nurse, she said they were stupid.

Hon. R. J. Boylen: What do you call an ordinary nurse?

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: A girl trained for general nursing. This girl admitted that she did not know much about a dentist's requirements. But after getting the dentist's side of the picture, I see that there is a reason for girls to be trained in dentistry. I think that perhaps we might be able to curtail the period of training, which would enable us to get down to a practical proposition.

Hon. L. C. Diver: We cannot do that.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: We have the authority to do what we think right in this House. A number of members have spoken to the Bill without any knowledge of what the dentists want. I have a knowledge of what some of the dentists require.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You certainly have not, because those dentists to whom I have spoken say they want to train girls themselves.

Hon. L. A. LOGAN: That may be so; but today we find that as soon as these girls have finished their training they are snapped up by specialists in the Terrace. Many a dentist is waiting to employ one of these girls and cannot get one. I do believe there is a place for girls who are trained. I support the second reading. Perhaps we could cut down the period of training, the question of the curriculum can be dealt with at the Committee stage.

On motion by Hon. A. F. Griffith, debate adjourned.

BILL—COMPANIES ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central—in reply([8.22]: I want to thank members for having accepted this Bill; it looks as though it will go through the second reading. There are some amendments on the notice paper, most of which I propose to accept, subject, of course, to the Committee's agreeing with me.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Hon. W. R. Hall in the Chair; Hon. Sir Charles Latham in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2 agreed to.

Clause 3—Section 150 amended:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move an amendment—

> That paragraphs (a) and (b) be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—
>
> deleting subsection (2) and substituting therefor the following:—
>
> (2) The company, if its first directors are not appointed by the articles, shall within a period of twenty-eight days from the appointment of the first directors of the company send to the Registrar a return in the prescribed form containing the particulars specified in the said register.
>
> Provided that where the said return relates to the appointment of a director not resident in the Commonwealth of Australia, the

period within which the said return is to be sent shall be three months from the date of the appointment.

The clause as printed is designed to relieve co-operative companies from the necessity of rendering returns to the Registrar of Companies every time there is a change of directors, or every time a director changes his occupation or address. There is no reason why this amendment should not apply to any company besides co-operative companies. Its purport is to relieve any company from the obligation of lodging a return on a change of directors in between annual returns. Every March a company has to lodge a return wherein it discloses who the directors are and their occupations and addresses. So once a year full particulars of directors must go in, whether the company is a co-operative company or not. This will help the efficient working of the Act.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I have no objection to the amendment. It makes the operations of the Bill general where I restricted them to co-operative concerns. The views expressed by me about co-operative concerns no doubt affect ordinary companies.

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

Clauses 4 to 6—agreed to.

Clause 7—Section 397 amended:

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move an amendment —

That in paragraph (a) the words "a person named in the articles as" be struck out.

That would mean that any of the documents sent to the registrar which cannot be accepted by him unless it is certified by a solicitor or by a director named in the articles, could in future be signed by a solicitor or a director. So long as it is signed by a director it should not be necessary for him to be named in the articles.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I have no objection to the amendment. Mr. Watson has mentioned the persons who are qualified to sign the necessary documents.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: I move an amendment—

That in paragraph (b) the following words be struck out:—"or, if the company is a co-operative company, by the person for the time being holding the office of, or acting as, secretary of the Federation Trust Limited."

It is inadvisable that in any public Act provision should be made for a particular individual. If the words are struck out, co-operative companies will not be seriously inconvenienced, because the documents could still be signed by a director. If we retain them, however, it would be just as logical to provide for the secretary of Foy and Gibson's or Boan's.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: No, this is very different.

Hon. H. K. WATSON: The Act should prescribe in general and not in particular.

Hon. Sir CHARLES LATHAM: I hope the amendment will not be pressed. Many of these small concerns have got into financial difficulties through bad management and lack of knowledge of the Act. To protect the shareholders, there is an overriding management known as the Federation Trust Limited, which exercises more or less a managing control. This is very similar to the Wholesale Co-operative Federation in the Old Country. If co-operative companies find themselves in difficulties, they have a parent body to which they may appeal. The secretary is a highly-qualified man.

Many of these small companies have had a disappointing experience. Farmers have invested money they could ill afford to lose, and the capital has been lost. In some instances, the businesses have been sold to private individuals; and, in others, Westralian Farmers Ltd. has given assistance. Small co-operative concerns are established in almost every centre in the agricultural areas; there are a considerable number in the South-West and some in the metropolitan area.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I had no desire to cut into the duet between Mr. Watson and Sir Charles Latham, but I referred the amendment to the Registrar of Companies and he would prefer to have the words retained, especially as the clause relates to co-operative companies only.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause, as previously amended, put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

HON. C. H. SIMPSON (Midland) [8.40]: The Chief Secretary, in moving the second reading, said this was a small Bill and, of course, it is; but, in a sense, it is a big measure because of its great significance. It aims at amending the Constitution, and all amendments to the Constitution are rightly regarded as being serious, and it is laid down that any such amendments must be approved by an absolute majority of members of the House.

I think it may be said that, by and large, the members of this Chamber are very jealous of its rights and privileges

and that they examine very carefully any proposal, no matter how small, which may have the effect of amending the Constitution. There are only four small amendments in this measure, and, in a sense, they are perhaps not very important. One of them I might have felt inclined to support, but the other three I do not regard favourably; and, because I consider that the one I might possibly favour is not at all important or urgent, it is my present intention to vote against the second reading of the Bill.

The Chief Secretary: This was a matter your Government promised on the hustings to do.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: There always has been and, I suppose, always will be a tendency on the part of one Chamber to look for some alteration in the constitution of the other House in order to make its own job easier. But, when leaders of the respective parties now in Opposition in the other Chamber did agree to follow certain lines of policy, they did so without actually consulting members here. Had they done so, I feel sure that members of this Chamber would never have agreed to the proposals that were put forward.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Some candidates put them forward on the hustings.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I do not think that any member of this House committed himself to support any of these proposals, which were only a small proportion of the total policy items placed before the electors.

The Chief Secretary: Then they pick out the policy items that suit them and do not support the others.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I would not say that. Many attempts have been made over the last 50 years to amend the Constitution but very few of them have actually passed the second reading in this Chamber or, at least, they have not secured the necessary constitutional majority. I think our attitude is pretty well known and the position we take up is, by and large, that we, as a Chamber and a constituent part of the system of Government of this country, think we should have the right, when it comes to any amendments to our own Constitution, to initiate the legislation in our own House. I will suggest later on that there should be a convention, committee or conference of selected representatives of the two Houses to discuss the points of difference and possibly boil them down to points of agreement. As the result of such a meeting and understanding, points of legislation agreed to in that way might be initiated in this House.

The Chief Secretary: Your Government did not initiate its amending Bill in this Chamber.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am not dealing with the attitude of the Leaders of our respective political parties.

The Chief Secretary: I am just reminding you of the action of the Government you supported.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Over the years it has been a tendency for the attitude of the two Houses towards each other to be one of opposition, at least in regard to some matters. As members will recall, when this Bill was before another place, quite a number of the then Opposition actually supported the Government in the passing of it through that place. This, being a constitutional measure and having been introduced by the Government in another place, could not possibly have received the necessary majority on the floor of the House if it had not had the support of members of the Opposition. Why not state the position in reverse and say that had my party leader, when in office, brought forward something of that sort the party of the Chief Secretary would have opposed it as an entire party because its members would have been regimented into a combined vote without any dissentients?

The Chief Secretary: It was not a party leaders' Bill but a Cabinet Bill and was introduced by a Cabinet Minister in this House.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I agree, but in this House we have always preserved a traditional independence of viewpoints, particularly in matters affecting our Constitution and interests—

The Chief Secretary: Notwithstanding that they might mislead the public.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I do not think that could be said to mislead the public. They honestly told the public what they believed but had not a guarantee that a majority of members of this House would support it—that is a constitutional majority.

The Chief Secretary: They said nothing about that on the hustings.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am saying that if this House initiated a Bill to amend the constitutional powers of another place and it was carried here, it is easy to imagine what its fate would be when it reached the other Chamber. What is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander; and we, as a sovereign body, should certainly have a right to initiate legislation which we approve to amend any constitutional powers that we may have.

The Chief Secretary: Tell the public that when you are mentioning reforms in the future.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I have travelled quite a bit and believe that, by and large, the general public are quite happy with the exercise of the powers of this part of the State Parliament. Members will recall that in 1946 the Wise Government brought forward a proposal to hold a referendum on two points: whether the upper Chamber should be abolished, and

whether there should be adult franchise for the upper House. Those two questions could have been either adopted or refused, but my point at the moment is that that measure was rejected in this Chamber. Had there been that intense interest in the issue which we were told existed, when the Government went to the hustings at the following election it would have been returned with an increased majority because of the action of this House; but we all know that it was defeated. So much for the public reaction as far as this House is concerned.

I still adhere to the view I expressed just now—that if it is considered desirable to amend the Constitution of this Chamber the position might be discussed in a co-operative spirit between the two Houses. Surely there are some points of agreement, at least, that could be arrived at and made the subject of a Bill which would pass through both Houses. This Chamber has a fine record for impartiality and has, on the whole, been co-operative with whatever Government has been in power. During the long period for which a Labour Government was in office it achieved a reputation of being very moderate. Most people do not realise that that reputation was due largely to the fact that many possibly objectionable pieces of legislation had no chance of passing this Chamber, and in many cases were not even introduced for that reason.

There are only four real amendments contained in the Bill. The object of the first is to reduce the age of a candidate for election to this House from 30 to 21 years. With the expectation of life growing steadily, a man is not now considered old until he has reached 60 or 70 years, and the tendency should be at least to maintain the present age qualification—I do not suggest it should be increased—rather than to reduce it.

In 1946 the late Mr. J. B. Chifley, then Prime Minister, addressed a meeting in the Perth Town Hall and said afterwards that his outstanding impression on that occasion was that 90 per cent. of those who attended were 40 years of age or more, while his second strongest impression was that people did not seem to realise that the programme of legislation which his Government had in mind was designed to benefit not the older generation but the younger people, whose business it was to be present.

That confirms my own view that it is the older people, with experience and knowledge, who are required to enter a Chamber of review, and so I believe we would be well advised to retain the 30 years qualification. Having regard to the general reactions of electors to candidates for this Chamber, I feel that if there were candidates both over and under 30, only in rare cases would the younger men have much chance. At all events, I do not think there is any need to change that feature of our Constitution.

I do not think that the striking out of the word "sterling" would cause any trouble or that anyone would object to it. With regard to the franchise. I feel that the husband and wife might easily be admitted on equal terms to vote in regard to any single property on a property qualification. The same thing should apply to the leaseholder as to the householder, and I would remind members that the householder of a dwelling-house is the person liable for the payment of rent. It often happens in practice that husband and wife are both admitted as being entitled to enrolment because one pays the rent and the other, usually the husband, is regarded as the householder. If a married couple were the owners of such a property there could be another two votes in respect of it.

The Chief Secretary: Say that again.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: If a married couple, the property owners, were enrolled in respect of that property as joint owners, then the people occupying it—that is to say, the man recognised as the householder and the woman who paid the rates; one could pay the rent and the other the rates—could both be enrolled in regard to that property also, and so four individuals would be enrolled in that case.

According to the latest available statistics there are in this State roughly 160,000 dwellings. There were 149,062 at the 30th June, 1952, and in the 15 or 16 months since then, in view of the building rate, probably another 11,000 have been added, so we can agree that there would be 160,000 dwellings in this State at present. It is only reasonable to assume that two people would live in each, on the average; and if these amendments were accepted, the entitlement would probably be in the region of 320,000, whereas at the moment it is 83,193. The 320,000 that could possibly be enrolled would be about equal to the total enrolment for another place at the present time.

In the group of electoral provinces in the metropolitan area, the Metropolitan, Suburban and West Provinces, there are, on the Assembly rolls, 193,665 enrolments representing 20 seats; and for the same area there are 47,397 enrolled for this Chamber, representing 9 seats. For the North Province there are on the Assembly rolls 3,851 voters with an entitlement of three seats, and 1,280 voters with three seats for this Chamber. For the agricultural, mining and pastoral areas—that is the six provinces grouped—there are a total of 130,139 voters, having 27 seats in another place, and 33,516 voters with 18 seats for this Chamber. The totals, respectively, are for the Assembly 327,655 voters, representing 50 seats, and for this Chamber 83,193 voters, with 30 seats.

It has been said on a number of occasions in this House that there is a tremendous number of plural votes, but I do not think that is so. From my inquiries I believe that men who are entitled to enrol in two or three provinces generally do not bother to do so and are in fact, enrolled for one province only. I am convinced that many of those actually enrolled do not even vote on polling day, as we know from the actual enrolments, and the fact that of that number only from 30 to 50 per cent. exercise the franchise.

Hon. E. M. Davies: We are making provision for that, by enabling them to vote as absent voters.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: The hon. member means by an absentee vote.

Hon. E. M. Davies: No, in a compulsory vote; in Legislative Assembly elections.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: As the hon. member knows, a man has three prerogatives. He has the right to make a choice whether he will qualify; and if he makes that choice, he then has to decide whether he will become enrolled; and then, when he is enrolled, he has to decide whether he will vote or not. The whole thing is purely on a voluntary basis, and for that reason the response is not as great as we would hope. However, that is practically a world-wide trend. I have heard of co-operative societies that have sent out letters to their members on different occasions, and the response that they received was somewhere about 25 to 30 per cent. So the response by electors during the Legislative Council elections is at least as good as and, in fact, a good deal better than that.

Hon. E. M. Davies: The point is that people should have the franchise if they desire to use it.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I am coming to that. I am saying that most of the people who have the dual or treble voting qualification will be those enterprising men who have established a stake in the country over the years; and I should say that they would be more entitled to extra consideration because they are men who have not only created wealth for the State, but also, very often, have provided the means to employ many others. Quite a number of those who might have, say, two votes, would be men who had worked in the country most of their lives and who, in the evening of their days decide perhaps to come to the city to enjoy amenities that are not available to them in the country. I think they are entitled to do that. However, they still have a stake in the country, and are greatly interested in the quality of the representative who is to look after their country interests.

Hon. G. Bennetts: Would you say that a married couple without a family would be more entitled to a vote than a couple who had eight children, but did not have a house and were not able to rent one?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I do not think the two cases are comparable. The couple who had a family of eight might easly have eight persons who would each have a vote of their own, or if they turned out to be the sort of person I am talking about, might have two or three votes. However, the point I am making is that these individuals who have undoubtedly helped the State to progress are entitled to a little consideration, and are certainly entitled to have some say in regard to the election of the representative who is to look after their country interests.

Some of those men would not bother to come to the city if there were amenities available in their own district, or a sizable town in the vicinity of the property in which their main interests lie. They would not bother to reside in this capital city merely for the sake of having a vote, in much the same way as they would not want to live in Melbourne or Sydney. They merely come to the city because they feel that they have earned the amenities that are available to them in the metropolitan area. By and large, that particular aspect has far less effect than many people seem to imagine, and I certainly do not think that it warrants the disturbance of the existing position. What I have in mind at the moment is that while the Bill, in a sense, is rather innocuous, it could, to my mind, be a feeler to see what the reaction of the Legislative Council would be.

Hon. H. Hearn: They have had some experience already, you know.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: Over the years challenges have been launched to whittle down the powers of this House.

Hon. E. M. Davies: They thought the years might bring wisdom.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I hope they have. However, I can remember the fate of a small Bill that was sent from this House to another place last year. All it asked was that we should revise our Standing Orders to allow our Chairman of Committees to be Deputy President as and when the occasion arose. In effect, it was asking for something that the other Chamber had already. I was surprised when I read the speech made by the present Premier, because he was most hostile to the Bill. To a man, he and his party voted to deprive us of that small privilege, and because there were insufficient numbers in the party comprising the Government of the day, the Bill was defeated. That is an indication of the attitude adopted by members in another place.

Hon. E. M. Davies: You should not deprive electors of the franchise because of that.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I do not think it makes much difference so far as the electors are concerned. I am thinking that possibly further attempts to whittle away our powers may be made in the same way as on previous occasions.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Why do you say they are trying to whittle away our powers?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I remember a referendum being held as to whether this House should be abolished. I read all the debates and the pros and cons, and some of them were most interesting. If members have the time they should study two speeches in particular. One was by Hon. W. Hegney, who is now Minister for Native Welfare in another place. In his speech he went back over the history of Parliament generally to the time of Simon de Montefort. The second speech I would invite members to read, because it is most interesting, was that by Sir Norbert Keenan. He went further back in history than did the present Minister for Native Welfare. He referred to the ancient Greeks and the ancient Romans, and quoted John Stuart Mill, Lord Acton and Sir Sidney Webb. I am merely pointing out that the pros and cons of the whole question were debated at that time, and undoubtedly they are still in the minds of those active and prominent individuals who are members of the Government.

At this stage I think we should take a stand against this Bill to show what our attitude is. I know many of the questions that have been asked and the answers that have been given to them. One of the accusations that have been levelled against this House on many occasions by certain people is that we have short sitting hours during the session. What those people do not say is that in the Legislative Assembly there are 50 members to speak, but that in this House there are only 30. In the main the Legislative Assembly deals with the first stages of legislation, and in this House we are called upon to review matters which have been already discussed, threshed out and pretty well decided. We have been told that we should be content with the Federal franchise system.

We all know the value of the Federal Senate. Originally it was conceived as a States House to preserve the interests of each State by having an equal number of members from each State. But what has happened? It has developed into a party House which, in the main, is a rubber stamp for the Government that is in office, or a pain in the neck to the party in opposition. Not long ago this resulted in a double dissolution because well over a year was spent in trying to get legislation through for which the Government had a definite mandate.

Assembly members, as a rule, have the idea that theirs is a much more important Chamber than ours, and that they themselves are much more important than the members of this House. I do not wish to decry members in another place in any way, but I would remind them that each Legislative Council member has a much larger area to look after than any Assembly member has. A Council member also has many more calls on his time and on his purse than has a member of another place. He has, perhaps, more tasks to perform, too. A Council member has to try to keep his own electoral rolls in order, which a member of another place has no need to worry about. He has the entire responsibility of trying to persuade his electors to vote on election day.

Queensland has been cited as an example of a State where the legislature has done quite well without a second Chamber. It is the general assumption that the Queensland Legislative Council was disbanded by the wish of the people, but nothing is further from the truth. Actually, the Theodore Government took a referendum on the question of the abolition of the Upper House which, in any case, was a nominee House, whereas the Legislative Council in this State is constituted on an elective basis and its members are directly responsible to the people.

When the referendum was held, the Queensland people said, "No, we still want the Upper House to remain." It being a nominee House, extra members were appointed to vote for its abolition, but they did not do so. As a result, more members were nominated who were also pledged to vote for the abolition of the Upper House. I do not know what promises were made to them, but eventually, after that had been done, they did vote for its abolition. At a later stage, when the Moore Government was in office, for a short period only, its members were short-sighted enough not to restore the Legislative Council as a House of review, or as a House that was acting as a brake on any hasty legislation.

The result was that when the opponents of the Moore Government returned to power, they passed a redistribution of seats Bill, the result being that there has been a perpetual Labour Government in office in Queensland. Whether the Queensland people are satisfied with that position or not is revealed very clearly at each Senate election when the Queensland voters can generally be relied upon to register their votes for the party that is opposite in colour to their own Government. So much for the state of affairs in Queensland. However, we do not want that situation here.

Hon. E. M. Davies: You are trying to link the question of the abolition of the Legislative Council with the question of the franchise for the people.

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: They are quite happy with the Legislative Council and with the powers it enjoys. It is because it has those powers and does not hesitate to exercise them that it commands the respect of the people. While it has those powers, it recognises that it also has responsibilities. It has privileges, but also

obligations; it has rights, but also duties. We do not desire in any way to obstruct the functions of the Government; we know it is elected to do a job, and it has a right to carry out its responsibilities to the extent of its powers. If we are satisfied it is on the right track, we give it our co-operation and support, but we reserve the right to review, amend, or reject any legislation which we honestly think is not framed for the good of the people.

Hon. E. M. Davies: How do votes of husbands and wives affect the voting for this Chamber?

Hon. C. H. SIMPSON: I would not object to the question of husband and wife. It is not important enough to be dealt with now. There is more behind this Bill than appears on the surface. As an alternative, I suggest there should be a conference between the two houses to settle points of difference. If they can meet and try to understand each other they will agree on several points which can be amended. Such a move could result in a bill which could be initiated in this House, and it could be accepted by both Houses.

Some of these amendments would be beneficial. One is a definition of "flats." In these days, to all intents and purposes, a flat is a dwelling. Under the existing peculiar definition of flats there are many people of substance paying quite a substantial rent, who are responsible people in every way, and yet are denied a vote. I ask members generally to agree to the points I have made and accept my view that for the time being we should not accept the Bill before us, but that we would be prepared to discuss the matter with the object of a comprehensive Bill being agreed to by all parties, one embodying certain amendments to our Constitution which would be acceptable to both Houses. I oppose the Bill.

On motion by Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

BILL—ASSISTANCE BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN WIRING DWELLINGS FOR ELECTRICITY.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 28th October.

HON. J. G. HISLOP (Metropolitan) [9.20]: The reason I got an adjournment of this debate was because it appeared that local authorities were going to set up electric lighting and fitting departments of their own. I cannot see anything in the Act allowing them to provide funds for the electricians of a district to carry out the work under the system of private enterprise. The only power given to local bodies to raise funds for this purpose is by floating loans, but those bodies carry out the work themselves. It will be very much better if loans are permitted to enable electricians carrying on business in the towns to do the work rather than that the local bodies should do it. That is my only point. It is obvious the Bill will get some support in country towns where this is needed. We must decide on it as a vote for private enterprise against a vote for a form of State enterprise under local authorities. Otherwise I support the Bill.

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

BILL—FIREARMS AND GUNS ACT AMENDMENT.

As to Committee Stage.

Order of the Day read for the consideration of the Bill in Committee.

To Refer to Select Committee.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM (Central) [9.23]: I move—

> That the Bill be referred to a select committee.

This Bill passed another place by a majority of one. While there is much to commend in it, a good deal of consideration can be given to bring it up to date and to remove some of the anomalies which were discussed in this House. In referring it to a select committee we may satisfy some outside people who think it will impose great hardship, and we can clear up some misunderstanding in the minds of members as to whether there is justification for the Bill.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [9.24]: I do not agree to the motion. Evidently the debate has indicated that the Bill appears to be doing more than it sets out to do. If the motion is carried, it will mean the end of the Bill for this session. We are now within five weeks of the recess, and no select committee will be able to sit, take evidence, and submit a report, to enable the Bill to be amended or passed during the session.

The motion is aimed at killing the Bill. If the measure passes to the Committee stage, all angles can be discussed clause by clause. We can then get down to the kernel of the Bill. I ask members to let the Bill go into Committee. I said earlier that its main intention was to increase penalties for the illegal use of firearms. There are also other amendments designed to cover anomalies in the present Act. That is all this Bill sets out to do.

If members agree to the motion it will allow poor protection, because of the small penalties provided for the illegal use of firearms. By supporting the motion members will not discourage people in the habit of concealing weapons.

They will support those people. This measure is a genuine attempt by the police to handle the situation, and it is not asking too much of members to request them to agree to the Bill. I ask them to examine it clause by clause in Committee so that they can truly judge it. If they are not satisfied they can reject it on the third reading. I oppose the motion.

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

Ayes	12
Noes	11
Majority for	1

Ayes.

Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. L. Loton
Hon. H. Hearn	Hon. H. S. W. Parker
Hon. C. H. Henning	Hon. C. H. Simpson
Hon. J. G. Hislop	Hon. J. McI. Thomson
Hon. A. R. Jones	Hon. H. K. Watson
Hon. Sir Chas. Latham	Hon. J. Murray *(Teller.)*

Noes.

Hon. C. W. D. Barker	Hon. E. M. Heenan
Hon. N. E. Baxter	Hon. F. R. H. Lavery
Hon. G. Bennetts	Hon. L. A. Logan
Hon. E. M. Davies	Hon. H. C. Strickland
Hon. L. C. Diver	Hon. R. J. Boylen
Hon. G. Fraser	*(Teller.)*

Question thus passed.

Select Committee Appointed.

On motion by Hon. Sir Charles Latham, a select committee appointed consisting of Hon. C. W. D. Barker, Hon. C. H. Henning, Hon. F. R. H. Lavery, Hon. L. A. Logan and the mover, three members to form a quorum, the committee to have power to call for persons, papers, and documents, to adjourn from place to place; and to sit on days over which the Council stands adjourned and to report on Thursday, the 19th November.

House adjourned at 9.32 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Tuesday, 3rd November, 1953.

CONTENTS.

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

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Sale of Scrap Steel.

Mr. LAWRENCE asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Does he consider that in the past 12 months—

(a) there has been a shortage of scrap steel; or

(b) that all scrap steel has been readily saleable?

(2) If the answer to (b) is in the affirmative, will he explain why scrap steel was disposed of by private treaty and why public tenders were not called for its disposal?