

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**TUESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER 1919**

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY.**

TUESDAY, 30 SEPTEMBER, 1919.

The SPEAKER (Hon. W. Lennon, *Herbert*) took the chair at half-past 3 o'clock p.m.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT.**

The SPEAKER announced that he had received the Auditor-General's Report on the public accounts for the financial year 1918-19. Ordered to be printed.

**REPORT OF COMMISSIONER OF THE QUEENSLAND GOVERNMENT SAVINGS BANK.**

The SPEAKER: I have to inform the House that I have received from the Commissioner of the Queensland Government Savings Bank, a statement of accounts and balance-sheet of the Bank, dated 30th June, 1919. I might say that it is not necessary to print this paper, as it will be found as an appendix in a report of the Treasurer, which will be printed.

*Hon. W. Lennon.*]

## PAPERS.

The following papers, laid on the table, were ordered to be printed:—

Report of the Commissioner for State Enterprises for the year ended 30th June, 1919.

Thirty-fourth report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies and Building Societies.

Report of the Commissioner of the Queensland Government Savings Bank for the year ended 30th June, 1919.

## WORKERS' HOMES BILL.

## THIRD READING.

On the motion of the SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC WORKS (the Hon. E. G. Theodore, *Chillagoe*) this Bill was read a third time and ordered to be transmitted to the Legislative Council for their concurrence, by message in the usual form.

## STATISTICS RE INFLUENZA EPIDEMIC.

On the motion of Mr. SMITH (*Mackay*) it was formally resolved—

“That there be laid upon the table of the House a return showing—

1. The number of cases of influenza reported during the recent epidemic.
2. The number of cases which originated on ships at Queensland ports.
3. The total number of deaths in this State.
4. The expenditure incurred by the Government in the treatment of the epidemic.
5. The number of people passed through the quarantine stations at the Queensland border.
6. The total cost to the department of those quarantine stations.
7. The proportion of this expenditure which has been repaid to the department by individuals who were in quarantine.
8. The amount still owing to the department by any individuals so quarantined.
9. The number of cases of influenza reported in the Mackay district during the epidemic.
10. The number of deaths which occurred there.
11. The number of coloured people affected with the disease, and what was the mortality in that area.”

ELECTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.  
COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Bertram, Marree, in the chair.*)

Clause 1 put and passed.

On clause 2—“*Amendment of s. 4*”—

Mr. MACARTNEY (*Toowoong*): I would like the Minister to explain what is the object in transferring the conduct of the electoral laws from the Home Department to the Justice Department, and what benefit the change has brought about so far? I always understood that the electoral law was administered by the Home Department as a matter of convenience, in so far that the police are subject to that department, and it was in the best position to carry out the functions required.

[*Hon. E. G. Theodore.*]

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: I would like briefly to explain that a very important reason is that the Home Department is a very large department, and many branches of work have to be attended to by the Minister in charge of that department. As to the advantage of the change, the hon. gentleman may recollect the reply which I gave to the hon. member for Oxley the other night, which indicated that the card system, which now is in operation, has produced practically a pure and perfect roll. (Hear, hear!) I think those two reasons are a justification for the change which has taken place, which is sought to be ratified by this clause.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I do not understand what the card system has to do with it. The card system has been introduced by the Electoral Office itself. It was commenced, I understand, under the aegis of the Home Secretary in the first instance; it has not been an addition by the Department of Justice. I can appreciate the argument that the Home Department is a very busy department, covering a very large number of branches. There may be some reason in that. On the other hand, it has been a very great advantage in days gone by, when the matter was administered by the Home Department. I do not know that there was any branch of work the Home Department was more fully up in. I do not see that there has been any advantage in transferring it to the Department of Justice.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: All the electoral officers were Justice Department officers.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I can understand there being an argument in that. But I think that when the law was being administered by the Home Department, it was much more easy to get that reasonable information that members desire, than it has been since it has been in the hands of the Department of Justice.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: That is not what your supporters say.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I am speaking from personal experience. I have been there many times to get information in connection with soldiers' votes, and I have been faced with the position that I could not get it unless with the express authority of the Attorney-General, who happened to be absent in England or at the Perth conference, or somewhere else.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: No recent requests have been turned down.

Mr. MACARTNEY: If I understand that we can get information just as we used to be able to get it I do not suppose the alteration makes very much difference.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: I can see no reason why you cannot.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I can assure the hon. member that I have been informed, even during the period of administration by the Assistant Minister for Justice, that I could not get information unless with the express authority of the Attorney-General, and at that time the Attorney-General was not in the State.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: What information did you want?

Mr. MACARTNEY: I am referring to information for which I found it necessary to ask in connection with the soldiers' votes pertaining to the last election. At any rate,

if I understand that information is readily obtainable under the administration of the Justice Department, I shall say no more about it.

Mr. CORSER (*Burnett*): I am not enamoured of the alteration, and I doubt whether the Justice Department was capable of administering the Act at the last election.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: We were satisfied.

Mr. CORSER: No doubt, hon. members of that side were satisfied, but it is one thing for the Government to satisfy their own supporters and another thing to satisfy the House.

Mr. CARTER: You are a very small section.

Mr. CORSER: But the smallness of that section might be due to the administration. At any rate, it was apparent from the administration during the last election that the Justice Department was not able to administer the Act, and had to transfer to other departments some of the most important parts of the work. A great part of the administration of the soldiers' votes had nothing to do with the Justice Department. During the whole of last session questions stood in my name as to the cost of the cables with respect to soldiers' proxy votes, but they were evaded and the information was not provided. I think it was a pity to alter the administration just prior to the election, and it did not give the opportunity of doing the best for the country. It cannot be said that the Home Department did not administer the Act fairly. Otherwise, how did our friends get into office? It was administered, at any rate, in a way to make a majority of votes for them possible. A Minister, by interjection, states that the administration pleases his side. I cannot say that it pleases ours.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: You mean what is left of yours.

Mr. CORSER: There is a good bit left.

Question put and passed.

Clauses 3 and 4 put and passed.

Mr. MORGAN (*Murilla*): I have a new clause which I desire to have inserted before clause 5, reading as follows:—

“Notwithstanding anything contained in the Elections Act of 1915, all males or females who served in the Australian Imperial Forces or in the capacity of nurses outside Australia shall be entitled to enrolment and a vote.”

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: Do you know that is provided for in the next clause?

Mr. MORGAN: The next clause does make provision in certain directions, but it embraces only portion of my amendment. I would like to point out that there are a great many men who, owing to the fact that they are coloured, are disqualified under the 1915 Act. They were good enough to fight for Australia, and they should be good enough to vote.

Mr. HARTLEY: According to your argument Chinamen should have a vote.

Mr. MORGAN: If a Chinaman fought amongst the Australians, he should have a vote.

Mr. CARTER: All Australians have a vote.

Mr. MORGAN: All Australians have not. A number of men at Earambah and Taroom

are debarred owing to the fact that they are under the protection of the Protector of Aborigines.

The SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS: Would you give the Indians who fought a vote?

Mr. MORGAN: If they enlisted as Australians, and were under the same conditions as the Australians, they should have votes. My amendment means that any man who fought in the Australian Imperial Forces, no matter what his nationality or colour, should have a vote. I suppose that in the electorate of the hon. member for Gregory there was a number of aborigines who enlisted. Some will never come back, but the majority, no doubt, are going back to his electorate. They may vote for him or for anybody else, but in any case they should have a vote. We sent speakers to the aboriginal stations and asked men to volunteer, and we took the flower of the manhood of the Australian aborigines. Now the Government wish to prevent them from having a vote. My amendment also provides that nurses who were engaged outside Australia during the war, whether twenty-one years of age or not, shall be entitled to a vote. My new clause speaks for itself, and should be readily accepted by the Minister. I will admit that under clause 5 all Queenslanders of eighteen years and upwards may vote, but that will not include the aborigines.

Mr. POLLOCK: Would you give his gin a vote, too?

Mr. MORGAN: My amendment refers to those who went away and who fought or served alongside our own sons and brothers. It provides only for the individuals themselves who left Australia to take part in the war; it does not provide for the aborigines who did not go or for the wives of any of those who went. No true democrat, in my opinion, can vote against the amendment.

The CHAIRMAN: The amendment, in my opinion, might be made more properly after clause 5, but I shall put it as the hon. member has moved it.

Question stated.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: This proposal would be more properly considered under the heading of “Objections” when we come to them—and I would like to point out that those disqualifications were not imposed by the present Government, but by our predecessors years ago.

Mr. MORGAN: We have had a war since.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: Yes. The amendment, I would point out, opens up a much wider train of thought and reasoning than the hon. member, perhaps, is prepared to admit, because if we are prepared to extend the franchise as the hon. member suggests, then we must extend it also to the Indian who have fought for the Empire and to the “Japs.” who have fought in the allied combination. I say that the hon. member's discrimination is a narrow and illogical demarcation. There may be some individual hardship, but broad considerations of electoral ethics cannot be concerned with the particular individual cases that have been mentioned by the hon. member for Murilla. I am unable to accept the amendment, and, in any case, it has not been moved in the right place.

Mr. CORSER: I intend to support the amendment. In 1915, when amending the

*Mr. Corser.*]

Act, the then Home Secretary refused some amendments, particularly those with regard to granting votes for the Australian Imperial Forces, stating that the war would be over

[4 p.m.] before another election, and, as stated in "Hansard," if it was not, provision would then be made. Right up to the time of the election we knew that provision would not be made. We have now the opportunity to do so, and, even if it is provided two or three times in the Bill, it is better to have it that way than have no provision at all. (Hear, hear!) On the last occasion, the Minister claimed that it was provided but afterwards admitted it was not. I think the Minister would be wise in accepting this amendment, and provide for the whole of those who fought or served with the Australian Imperial Forces.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: Why not make it more comprehensive and embrace all who fought with the allies combination?

Mr. CORSER: That is for the Minister to suggest. If he wants to go further, let him do so.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: You know it would be a dangerous principle to accept.

Mr. CORSER: I am simply supporting this amendment. I am not going any further. This is the time for the Minister to accept this and not push it aside and say it might be provided somewhere else.

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*): I do not agree with the extension of this vote to aboriginals who fought in the war. I consider it is undesirable, because most of them are totally illiterate and have no conception of public duties. Most of them are, in the true sense of the term, absolutely irresponsible, and I can claim to know the average blackfellow as well as the average member of the Opposition.

Mr. CORSER: These fellows are above the average.

Mr. POLLOCK: I am not prepared to admit that. If the Opposition are so keen to extend the franchise to these men because they have fought for the Empire, why are they not so keen in having an amendment of the Aboriginal Protection Act, and allow these men to be freed from the Protector altogether?

Mr. CORSER: If you are asking a question, I ask you to give notice of it.

Mr. POLLOCK: The other objection is that members of the Opposition party—and I speak of the party generally—have been accustomed to distributing a good deal of largess at election time. I can picture the hon. member for Murilla and the hon. member for Burnett, both of whom have a large number of blackfellows employed on stations in their electorates, and both of whom have ardently supported this amendment, going round the country at election time with yards of red flannel and sticks of tobacco to distribute among the blacks. (Laughter.) For this reason also I oppose the amendment.

Mr. GUNN (*Carnarvon*): I do not know whether the hon. gentlemen are aware of the method now carried out regarding the half-caste aboriginal. If he applies to the Home Secretary for exemption under the Act—and in many cases he gets it—he is then allowed to vote. There is machinery in the present Act by which aboriginals can

vote, if they get exemption by the Aboriginal Department.

Mr. POLLOCK: No half-caste is debarred from voting now.

Mr. GUNN: Yes. Many of them are debarred at the present time. Many of them fought for the Empire, and are not allowed to vote, neither are they allowed, if they go into a town hotel with their comrades, to have a drink. This Bill seems to make a distinction which is invidious, and therefore I think this, or some other amendment should be made by which the half-caste and the aboriginal who served in the war should get a vote. It won't interfere with any of other races, because the provisions of the Aboriginals Protection Act do not apply to them.

Mr. MORGAN: I think the arguments of hon. members opposite are simply ridiculous. We are dealing now with the treatment of the soldier as distinct from the person who did not enlist. My amendment provides to give a soldier or a nurse who is eighteen years or over, a vote. Clause 5 of the Bill, I admit, provides to give all persons over eighteen a vote, but it will not give the aboriginal who fought for the Empire a vote. So far as the argument of the member for Gregory is concerned, if the Minister will inform me whether it is acceptable to exempt from the Aboriginal Protection Act all the aboriginals who enlisted and fought, it will meet my objection so far as they are concerned. Still, I am in favour of pressing my new clause, because there is a possibility that the Committee may reject clause 5, and then the Act would remain as it is. We, on this side, contend that soldiers and nurses are entitled to a vote at the next election whether they are twenty-one years of age or not, and whatever their qualifications may be.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! I remind the hon. gentleman that we are not dealing with clause 5.

Mr. MORGAN: If you will permit me to say so, Mr. Chairman, practically one and the same argument may be used in connection with my proposed clause and clause 5.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*): This seems to be a very fair amendment, and for the Minister to say that because you give these people a vote you have to give every other coloured man who fought for the Empire is carrying the thing to the extreme of absurdity. We are not now talking about voting for the Empire or on the affairs of the Empire. All we are asking is that those aboriginals who enlisted and took part in the great world struggle which meant so much to Queensland should be afforded the privilege of citizenship.

Hon. W. H. BARNES (*Bulimba*): I think the Minister in charge of the Bill has really missed the point regarding this amendment. The hon. member for Murilla simply says—and, I think rightly so—that these men, seeing that they were prepared to accept the responsibility of going to fight for Australia should be regarded by us as good enough to have a say in the management of the affairs of Queensland.

Mr. HARTLEY: Why didn't you give them a vote after the Boer War?

Hon. W. H. BARNES: I do not know that that is any argument in regard to this proposal. No one would, for one moment, suggest that the conditions in connection with the Boer War were as acute so far as

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the Empire was concerned, as in connection with the last war. I would like to point out further that at one period of the war coloured men were turned down, and a half-caste also, because it was thought unwise to accept their services. Further, at the commencement of the war, many men were turned down because their teeth were not sufficiently good. But, as the war progressed and the need for men became more acute, some of them who had been previously rejected were readily accepted by the Defence Department. I notice, Mr. Chairman, you are shaking your head, reminding me that I am getting off from the track. Therefore I shall not go any further away, as I always like to respect your ruling. The fact remains that the men for which this amendment provides were men who heard and responded to the country's call. Is our gratitude going to be shown by turning them down, when we ask that provision should be made for giving them a vote? The hon. member for Murilla has made out an absolutely strong case, and I cannot understand a democrat, like the hon. the Minister in charge of the Bill, turning this down. I can remember there was a steamer here at one time in connection with a strike, and the coloured men marched up to the Trades Hall and were accepted as brothers. (Laughter.) Here is an opportunity to show how great this brotherhood is, and the men are turned down. I hope that even at this late stage the Minister who is in charge of this Bill will see his way clear to accept the amendment.

HON. J. LARCOMBE: The hon. member for Murilla has illustrated the force of his argument and demonstrated the futility of his amendment. He asks me if I am prepared to extend the amendment to cover Indians and others who fought for the British Empire? That proves the futility of the amendment and its dangerous nature. The whole of Queensland could be swamped by Indian voters simply in order to meet what the hon. member for Murilla terms a recognition of the services of those men to their country. I think there are other ways of rewarding these men for their services besides giving them the franchise. I am not reflecting upon members of the Australian Imperial Forces in saying that bravery is not the foundation of the franchise at all. If we go back to Roman and Grecian history we will find that some of the bravest men were the most bloodthirsty and the least fitted to exercise the franchise. Human right, citizenship, the ability to discuss and interpret questions, and to judge the relative issues submitted—these, and not bravery, are the considerations that should govern the granting of the franchise. Further, we are providing for all those who fought, even though they are under twenty-one years of age, if they are not disqualified under this Act. That is a very great extension of the right previously recognised by our opponents. I think the fact that the hon. member for Murilla is prepared to extend that amendment to include hundreds of thousands of Indians and other aliens is sufficient proof of its dangerous nature and its futility.

MR. MACARTNEY: I must say I did not hear the remarks of the hon. member for Murilla, but I would be very much astonished if he said anything which would justify the Minister in speaking as he has done. The amendment which has been moved by the hon. member for Murilla is quite clear in its

terms. It is limited to members of the Australian Imperial Forces. The provision which deals with disqualification is to be found in section 11, and is in these terms—

“No aboriginal native of Australia, Asia, Africa, or the islands of the Pacific should be qualified to be enrolled upon any electoral roll”

I understand the hon. member for Murilla's amendment is limited to giving votes to boys of eighteen years of age who have served in the Australian Imperial Forces notwithstanding anything in the Act to the contrary in regard to disqualification. It is not at all likely that any aboriginal natives of Asia, Africa, or the islands of the Pacific have served in the Australian Imperial Forces. It is possible that there may be a few Australian aboriginals or half-caste aboriginals included. So that it does not by any means operate to the extent the Minister would suggest, and does not raise that great question of the enfranchisement of Asiatics and Africans which would lead to the fancied dangers to which the hon. gentleman referred. It is quite clear what the object of the amendment is. This side of the House is entirely opposed to the extension of the franchise to young people of eighteen years of age, but an exception is made in favour of those youngsters who served in the Australian Imperial Forces. I do not know that nowadays it is of very much consequence, because the young fellow of eighteen who served with the Australian Imperial Forces is probably now on the verge of twenty-one, or possibly will be before the next election is held. I do not think the Minister is fair to the hon. member for Murilla when he suggests that that hon. member has asked that the restriction provided in this Act against extending the franchise to Asiatics should be removed. The hon. member is now here, and will be able to make a statement himself. It is just as well that the correct position should be stated.

MR. HARTLEY: I intend to oppose the amendment, which is based on entirely false premises. It is based on the assumption that military duty is the supreme and the most important duty of an inhabitant to the State. That is absolutely incorrect.

MR. MORGAN: It was the most important duty a few months ago.

HON. W. H. BARNES: It is the most important duty cast upon anyone.

MR. HARTLEY: I will deal with the hon. gentleman directly. He does not know much about military duty or the duties of the individuals of the State. It is the continual attempt to pander to the militaristic spirit, when lately almost everybody has been celebrating the bringing of peace to the world, that has brought England to-day within sight of a very grave position, in which the lives of many subjects may be endangered. It is this continual pandering to military duty as the best accomplishment of a citizen which has done that. I say nothing against these men, but I think it is a pity anybody ever asked them to enlist. I do not think it was fair, considering their mental state and their ability to appreciate the position and their responsibility. At the same time, having asked them, it cannot be claimed that because they did it they are entitled to vote on questions affecting the future policy of this State and the future welfare of the white race. That claim cannot be sustained. I do not think the hon. gentlemen opposite are

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sincere in their appreciation of the military performances of these men. If they had been sincere on a past occasion, they would have shown it to a much greater extent to the men who fought in the Boer War.

Mr. MACARTNEY: How many years back are you going now?

Mr. HARTLEY: I am going nineteen years back, when hon. gentlemen opposite were in this House, and sent black men and half-castes away to fight.

Mr. MACARTNEY: How many of the members sitting on this side now were here then?

Mr. HARTLEY: I am not going to go into that point, but I know there are members sitting on that side who cheered the men away to the African war, and made no provision at all for them when they came back. They did not even find jobs for them or pay them money they were entitled to receive. The hon. member for Bulimba says there is no comparison between the two wars. I would advise him to read the history of the Boer war, and the opinions of Ian Hamilton and Lord Roberts, who showed that at the time the colonials came into that war England was depleted of every available man she could put to arms. She had not the big, powerful enemy then that she had recently. She had that powerful enemy waiting to come in at the least adverse turn of fortune against her, and it was as important for the man who fought then as now. If hon. gentlemen opposite were sincere in extolling the military duty to the height they do, and placing it above every duty of citizenship, they showed it in a very peculiar way on that occasion. There is no business in the amendment. It is purely window-dressing and humbug.

Mr. MORGAN: I do not wish to accuse the Minister in charge of this Bill of deliberately misrepresenting me in connection with this matter. It may be he did not quite understand. He said I practically was in favour of letting Chinamen, Indians, and others have the vote. My promise was that, if the Government would agree that the aboriginals who are under the Protector are exempt, it will then give them a vote and fulfil the conditions I am endeavouring to get in connection with my amendment. That was the only promise I made. It was only in respect of the aboriginals of Queensland who have fought. The very moment they become exempt they can enrol. If that exemption is made applicable to the half-castes and others who have fought it will certainly meet my contention. When the second reading of this Bill was in progress one of the arguments used by members on the Opposition side was that, if men were good enough to fight for the country, they were good enough to have a vote. An aboriginal is a man, although his skin may not be quite so clear as our own. Notwithstanding that fact, there is no reason why he should not be entitled to have a vote. We have now in Queensland a half-Chinaman, and he can vote. We have a half-Indian. Perhaps the father is a white man and the mother is an Indian or a Chinese, and they are entitled to vote.

Mr. CARTER: They are Australians.

Mr. MORGAN: Are not the aboriginals Australians? The fact is, Australia belonged to them before it belonged to the present race of white men. That is all the more reason why these men should have a vote, especially

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when we know that if a man happens to be a half-caste, with one parent a Chinaman, an Indian, or a member of any other foreign race, there is no restriction placed upon them, but they can record their vote at an election. My amendment applies only to those who actually enlisted in the A.I.F. and fought for Australia. I think the first duty of every Australian during the recent war was to help in fighting for his country. The men who fought, in my opinion, fulfilled their duty to a greater extent than those who did not. I am not one of those who think every man should have gone away and fought. A great number were not eligible, and there were weighty reasons why they should have remained in Australia. On the other hand, a great number remained in Australia who could honestly have seen their way clear to fight for Australia. Their first duty was to protect their country from foreign invasion.

Mr. PETRIE (*Toombul*): I think the amendment is a very reasonable one. It has been asserted by some hon. members that the half-castes are not intelligent and not educated. I understand they are educated and they are intelligent men. An hon. member on the opposite side said it was a pity these men were ever asked to go to the front. I do not think there was any asking. I understand they volunteered. These men went and fought, and they should have some say in the affairs of the country for which they fought. If they were good enough to go and fight for us, I do not see that we should exempt them from the provisions of the Act. We must remember that those men were the product of Queensland. They are entitled to have the same privilege as others, and it is only fair and reasonable that this amendment should have acceptance from the Minister.

New clause (*Mr. Morgan's*) put and negatived.

On clause 5—"Amendment of section 9"—(reducing voting age from 21 to 18 years)—

HON. W. H. BARNES: I cannot, for the life of me, see why such a proposal as this should be introduced. I say that if the Government are going to extend the age for electoral qualification, they should also extend the age for other qualifications. If boys and girls are entitled to give expression to their political opinions at eighteen, surely it is not unreasonable to suppose that they should have recourse to every advantage not now enjoyed by youths eighteen years of age. I should like to ask the Minister what are the reasons for this departure? What are the reasons for the change? I doubt if the Minister can honestly say that he is in favour of the change. Are we going to evolve out of the proposed amendment of the electoral law a better type of representative?

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Yes.

HON. W. H. BARNES: A Government member says yes, but I have my doubts. As I pointed out when the Bill was going through its second reading, a good deal of trouble is going to be experienced, not merely from the point of view of the actual voter, but from those who claim representation. Speaking generally, I think that the age of twenty-one years is a fair time for an elector to express his opinion, and I hope that the Minister may be influenced by the arguments which have been advanced from this side of the House.

HON. J. LARCOMBE: In reply to the hon. member I may say that I am strongly in favour of this amendment of the Act. A young man of eighteen is often charged with very serious responsibilities. He had to offer his life for the country during the currency of war, and surely it is only reasonable that he should be granted the full rights of citizenship. It is an important departure from our methods of electoral reforms, but the departure is justified. At the conscription referendum it was claimed that every youth eighteen years of age should go and fight for his country. I have before me section 59 of the Defence Act, which, *inter alia*, provides—

“All male inhabitants of Australia (excepting those who are exempt from service in the Defence Act) who have resided therein for six months, and are British subjects, and are between the ages of eighteen and sixty years shall, in time of war, be liable to serve in citizen forces.”

That is clear definite information as to the responsibility of the citizens of Australia, and I think that a man who has to go and fight for his country should have conferred upon him the full rights of citizenship. That is all that this clause proposes. I regard it as a great impertinence to say that a man should fight for his country and not have the right to cast a vote.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Are you going to alter the Marriage Act?

HON. J. LARCOMBE: We will deal with one Bill at a time. I know that the hon. member this afternoon tried to get a certain admission as to that matter, but we are discussing one Bill at the present time, and we will continue to discuss the measure which is before us. This proposal is subject not only to the opposition of hon. members opposite, but also to forces outside, but I think that a quotation from the Brisbane “Courier” will justify this proposal. And now the hon. member for Bulimba comes along and objects to a proposal which has been supported, and has received the impress of the leading Tory journal of this State. The “Courier,” in its issue of the 15th October, 1918, said, *inter alia*—

“The proposal to pass legislation to give soldiers over eighteen years of age, but under twenty-one years, a vote at State elections is one that is not likely to arouse much opposition. The principle has already been recognised in the Commonwealth. Its adoption is supported by the argument that if a person is mature enough to fight for his country in the ranks of the Australian Imperial Forces he is entitled to have a say in the Government of that country.”

Carefully note! “If a person is mature enough to fight for his country he is mature enough to vote for it.” There is no argument that bravery is to be the foundation of the franchise at all; the Brisbane “Courier” says that if a man is “mature enough” to fight for his country, he should have a vote. And I quite agree with them. They get down to bedrock of electoral ethics. The “Courier” admit the arguments adduced by members of this side. If the Brisbane “Courier” is behind us in this proposal, I do not see why I should spend much more time attempting to justify it.

HON. W. H. BARNES: Have you become a convert to the “Brisbane Courier”?

HON. J. LARCOMBE: No, but I think that when I can quote the “Courier” in support of any proposal I put to this House, I am able to show that it is not revolutionary.

MR. CORSER: Does that article support the general extension of the franchise to people of eighteen?

HON. J. LARCOMBE: I ask the hon. member for Burnett to listen to these words. “If a person is mature enough to fight for his country” he is mature enough to vote for it.

MR. CORSER: The people in some countries mature earlier than in others.

HON. J. LARCOMBE: The hon. member has a long way to go yet before he grows to full mental maturity. It has been said by psychologists that a man does not mature mentally until he is fifty, and listening to the hon. member I can quite agree with them. (Laughter.) It is a fact that in Australia the age of maturity is low. Men at eighteen are able to think quickly; they have a sense of judgment. We heard the other night of men who sat in Parliament at very early ages and did great things. It is true that we had Fox in Parliament at nineteen, and that Edmund Waller entered the House of Commons when only sixteen, but that argument is not altogether sound in the matter, because you cannot set up the standard of genius as the standard of mediocrity—or for the man of average intelligence. But by my reading of biography and history, I have come to the conclusion that the average man at eighteen has more common sense than the genius. He has had a fair education and he studies fairly, fully and seriously the problems of State and country, notwithstanding all the hon. member for Bulimba said about rotten eggs and other commodities. I am satisfied that any man at eighteen is competent to exercise sound judgment and cast a vote accordingly. I am not one who attempts to cast any reflection upon age. I would not like to see the land governed by men at eighty only or by men of eighteen only. Men of eighty have done great things in the history of the world. We have had Newton revising his writings at eighty-five, we have heard Gladstone thundering forth in the British House of Commons at eighty-four, and we have had the author of “Faust”—Goethe—at his best in his old age. As Tennyson said—

“For age is opportunity no less than youth itself,

Tho’ in another dress.”

I say that, to my mind, the best method of governing the country is by the blending of the young men, and all men who will give energy and stability to government, as it were. It has been argued that, if this Bill passed, people of eighteen will govern this country. That is not so, because, according to information from the Government Statistician, there are 45,000 between the ages of eighteen and twenty-one in Queensland, and there are 420,000 persons on the roll, so that about 10 per cent. on the new roll would be between eighteen and twenty-one. With their enfranchisement we will have obtained a sound, logical, and scientific blending of the necessary energy which, to my mind, is wanting in Queensland at the present time in electoral conditions, and we will have the stability that is given by men of much more mature years. I was going to speak upon this measure at its second reading, but in the meantime

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changes took place in the Cabinet and I became the Minister in charge of the Bill. I am pleased the hon. member for Bulimba's challenge has given me the opportunity to express my opinion on the amendment that I am endeavouring to pass, and I am sure will pass when the vote is taken.

Mr. CORSER: I do not know that the Minister has given any reason for the inclusion of persons under the age of twenty-one. He has certainly put up a defence for those of eighteen years of age as having the average intelligence of the human being. That is all very well, and we might agree with him, but he has not given us the real reason why they are to be included as electors. No Labour man can deny that the reason is that the Government hope that they will be of very valuable assistance to them at the ballot-box. The Minister may refer to the "Courier." So far as I have read their articles, they have claimed that people who developed sufficiently to go to the war should have a vote, and that is the sentiment of every man of this side, and I hope of that side, but I feel perfectly confident that the journal did not express the sentiment that the whole of those of eighteen years should be entitled to votes. The Minister is trying to read into that article a sentiment to which that paper has been absolutely opposed.

Hon. J. LARCOMBE: That is the plain English of it.

Mr. CORSER: No. It is all very well to drag in the question of conscription. The hon. member says that because conscription provided that those of eighteen could be called up, all men of eighteen should be included as voters. When that suggestion was made it was one of the biggest arguments with the whole of the Government members on the hustings that boys of eighteen should not be called up, and that they should not be asked to fight until they were twenty-one. Now they want to use an argument with which they would have nothing to do on that occasion.

Mr. WHITFORD: What did you say at Charters Towers—that you were too valuable to the State to go?

Mr. CORSER: Never. That is Mr. Ryan's statement. I said that parliamentarians were exempt, but that when my class came up I would certainly enlist.

Mr. WHITFORD: What about those who maintained a widowed mother?

Mr. CORSER: The widowed mother has a vote, has she not? And the son is provided with a vote if he enlisted. The Labour party are responsible for the Bill which compels men to go into military camps at eighteen, and this Bill is nothing but a bit of party engineering. It is a valuable instrument at election time, and it does not matter to the Government whether it is moral or not. I am not saying anything against the eighteeners, but I do not think they should have votes until they are twenty-one. When a decent argument comes along in that direction we might be disposed to listen.

Mr. FORDE (*Rockhampton*): I have been listening to insincere and ridiculous utterances by some hon. members opposite. The hon. member for Bulimba has cast a reflection on all those persons in the State who are under twenty-one years of age. He said that all those who create disturbances at public meetings are boys of eighteen. Such is not

the case. Disturbances at public meetings are sometimes a spontaneous outburst of disapproval of the actions of such public men as the hon. member for Bulimba. He said that he had never been subjected to such abuses, but I have a very vivid recollection of reading in some of the papers of his visiting Townsville on one occasion when he was a Minister and the people not only hooted but they stood and jumped on the chairs and threw eggs or tomatoes. In fact they nearly brought the building down, and the hon. member received an account for repairs to the property.

Hon. W. H. BARNES: That is absolutely incorrect.

Mr. FORDE: I can quite understand people, under extreme provocation, going even so far as to throw tomatoes, or dead cats at Ministers like the hon. member for Bulimba.

Now, the present Government won on the existing franchise, and there is no fear that they will not win again. The legislation of this Government has been such as to commend itself to a greater number of the people than on the last occasion, and I have every confidence that we will get a great majority of the votes again. The measure may to some extent benefit hon. members opposite—I am not going to say that any party will benefit more than another—but I am sure that this party does not look to the assistance of persons under eighteen years of age to enable them to get into power again. We feel that the more representative the vote of the community, the better the Government will be. Only 10 per cent. of the people are between eighteen and twenty-one years of age, and if they are privileged to vote with people above twenty-one years we will have more representative Government, and surely that is better for the whole community. The opposition from members opposite is characteristic of their conservative opposition to any progress in electoral matters in this State. They are opposed to any reform; they are fearful of any change. They think the country is going to ruin, but I would remind them that measures of this kind and other kinds which were considered extreme when proposed ten or fifteen years ago are merely moderate to-day. This is an age when reform in this and

[5 p.m.] other directions is necessary.

When the Reform Bills were introduced in the English Parliament in 1832 and in 1867 they were vehemently opposed by Conservatives of the calibre of hon. members opposite. There were ridiculous predictions of disaster for the country. But what was the result? Greater power for the people by better, more democratic and progressive government of the country. (Hear, hear!) I was recently reading an article in "Studies" for June, 1915, page 279, by A. E. Clery—a well-known writer—advocating that votes be given even at the age of twelve or fourteen, when a youth incurs responsibility for his actions. Yet hon. members opposite say the lowering of the voting age to eighteen is something novel and ridiculous. In America and other places it has been advocated that the voting age be reduced from twenty-one to even twelve and fourteen. We do not go so far, but we recognise that many of the young men of Queensland are earning their own livelihoods, especially sons of the working class. In fact, I know many of them who are keeping their mothers and younger brothers and sisters. They should

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be entitled to a vote as to who should be their representative in Parliament—

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORDE: Going back into history, we find examples of what young men were and accomplished at an early age. The poet Chatterton wrote many great poems when in his teens, and was only eighteen years of age at the time of his death. John Ruskin and the poet Keats wrote some of their best poems before their twenty-first birthday. William Pitt, the younger, entered Parliament at the age of twenty-one, and had been a student of political economy and other subjects for a number of years before. He became Prime Minister of England at the age of twenty-two. Charles James Fox, who was twice Prime Minister of England, became a member of the House of Commons at the age of nineteen. Marconi was about eighteen years of age when he carried out his first experiment in wireless telegraphy. Yet we are told by hon. members opposite that people of that age are not competent to form an intelligent opinion on any subject! It is only mediocrities, such as gentlemen on the opposite benches, who put forth such ridiculous remarks. According to "Knibbs," 1,186 males and 6,388 females under the age of twenty-one were married in Australia in the year 1917. They took upon themselves the responsibility of married life, and should be entitled to a vote as to who should be their representative in Parliament (Hear, hear!) The Queensland land law allows persons to become selectors at the age of eighteen, and about thirty-seven industrial awards in operation to-day regard as adults persons of eighteen years and upwards. I was recently reading the result of a Liberal convention in Tasmania. Mr. F. Proctor—a prominent Liberal delegate—had this to say regarding electoral reform when it was mentioned in the convention that the Queensland Labour party intended to reduce the voting age to eighteen years—

"The Liberals of the past have been too liberal in giving away too much. His branch thought that the giving of adult suffrage went too far."

It is not often that Tory delegates voice their opinions so frankly and candidly. They come along like hon. members opposite with a lot of camouflage, and say they believe in the adult franchise, whereas in their own hearts they do not believe in it, but believe in the restricted property franchise which existed before democracy took a stand. The hon. member for Dalby said he believed the voting age should be twenty-five. If he told what he really believed, he would say fifty-five, and confine it to the capitalists and employers, and not give the workers a vote at all. But hon. members do not come out in their true colours, unless they are behind closed doors in conference.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. FORDE: Mr. R. P. Kirkham, another Liberal delegate at the Tasmanian conference, said, regarding this matter of reducing the voting age—

"Manhood suffrage had done a lot of harm to the Liberal cause."

But it had done a great deal of good for the people of Australia, and, surely it is the majority we should consider, and not one small section of the exploiting class—the profiteers—who are represented by the hon. member for Toowong, who is a partner in a firm of solicitors for all these exploiting companies.

(Government laughter.) The Labour party forced adult suffrage at the point of the political bayonet. Any advancement that has been made in electoral matters in Australia has been forced by the Labour party, and this advance will have to be forced further, notwithstanding the opposition of conservatism and capitalism. If we do not get the measure through the Upper House at present, we must get it later on. When we have abolished the Legislative Council, we must get our way with this and other measures. The hon. member for Toowong is noted for his opposition to electoral reform. In 1904 he moved the following amendment:—

"The Act shall not come into operation nor have any effect until the coming into operation of an Act to be passed by the Parliament of Queensland whereby provision shall be made for the reduction of the number of members of the Legislative Assembly."

He was speaking on a measure to give the women of Queensland a vote, and his amendment was defeated. If it had been carried the women of Queensland would not have been able to get a vote up to the present time, as the number of members has not yet been reduced. I merely quote that amendment to show that the hon. member for Toowong is opposed to electoral reform; but he did not tell the Women's Electoral League that last night.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: Oh, no!

Mr. KIRWAN: Neither did the hon. member for Oxley tell them.

Mr. FORDE: Hon. members opposite are frightened of this measure, because they know the young people of Australia are broadminded, democratic, and progressive, and they are frightened to support this reform in the electoral franchise lest their party should not get a fair proportion of the votes. If they can put forward legislation that appeals to the people, they are justly entitled to their votes. I sincerely hope this measure will be passed by this Assembly and also get the approbation of members of the conservative Legislative Council.

Mr. LLOYD (*Enoggera*): I am not sure that my friend the hon. member for Rockhampton correctly quoted the hon. member for Bulimba. I understood the hon. member for Bulimba, when giving his reasons for the disqualification of young men, to say that he had known young men to throw eggs and tomatoes, but that he had never been hit. I think it is a fact that tomatoes and eggs, and things like that, are generally thrown by younger men, but, when you come to the opposite sex, the reverse is the case. I do not think young ladies of eighteen or twenty throw things at speakers; it is generally middle-aged women who offend this way. There is a story told of a policeman who arrested a Chinaman. The Chinaman began jabbering in his own language, and the policeman told him that anything he would say would be used against him later on. (Laughter.) I think that that is the trouble with hon. members opposite. They have no real reason for opposing this measure, but they have made up their minds that it is going to be passed, and are afraid of the consequences at election time. The only reason advanced is that it is likely to strengthen the power of the Government.

Mr. TAYLOR (*Windsor*): It has been said by members opposite that no arguments have

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been adduced by this side of the House to support our opposition to this proposed amendment. I have listened very carefully and attentively to what has been said by hon. members opposite, and fail to see where any argument has come to show the wisdom or justification for such an amendment. We have been told by hon. members that the present franchise which exists throughout Australia had been forced, practically at the point of the bayonet by the Labour party, from those who were opposed to it. My recollection of manhood suffrage goes back to over thirty-five or thirty-six years ago in Victoria, before there was a Labour party in existence in Australia at all.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. TAYLOR: So how hon. members can get up and tell us that these reforms were brought about solely by the instrumentality of the Labour party, I fail to understand.

Mr. FORDE: They were brought about by pressure from outside.

Mr. TAYLOR: I have never known yet where a minority has been able to force its opinions upon the majority. That position exists in this House to-day, and how hon. members can say that such things can be forced out of any majority in any Parliament, I fail to see. I have previously stated my argument in regard to this question. The hon. member told us that in several instances those men who have been quoted in this Chamber as having done splendid things were in their graves at the age of twenty-four or twenty-six. What does that prove? As I said before, those particular men—to whom we owe so much for the work they did in science, in art, in literature—were called upon to face such a nerve and brain strain that was more than their bodies could stand, and the majority of them went to an early grave. We do not want to run down youth. I had a very good time as a young man, and I like to see young men and women have a good time to-day. But no matter how educated a boy or a girl may be, no matter to what standard you may raise them in your public schools, or what degrees you may confer upon them, experience comes only from years. This afternoon the question has been brought up of members of the Australian Imperial Forces who enlisted at eighteen years of age and under twenty-one. Any member must admit that those particular young fellows crowded into the short space of two or three years an experience they probably would not have gained in a period extending, probably, over twenty, thirty, or forty years, on account of going to the war and mixing with men in the way they did. I regret that anyone went to the war at eighteen years of age. However, they went. I have no fear of this Bill affecting parties, because I think the balance, as they come up to the age of twenty-one, will practically be the same as at present. But I say that in the political life of Australia, or any country, it is a far better thing for the boys and girls to be kept out until they reach the age of twenty-one years. Figures have been brought forward to-day with regard to the number of marriages that were consummated in Australia during the last year. They mean nothing at all. There is not, in this House, a father who has a daughter eighteen years of age who would advocate that that daughter should take on matrimony at that age. I say that eighteen years is too young an age for boys and girls to take on matrimony. Notwithstanding the

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fact that they may be brought under various awards, and may have to choose their vocation in life, and notwithstanding the fact that many of them probably have to maintain mothers, sisters, and brothers, it does not prove anything against the argument I have adduced that it is only through experience that men and women can act intelligently. The Minister said he would not like to see a Parliament or a Government—I'm not quite sure which word he used—composed of all young men or all elderly men. I would like to ask the Minister which of those two sections of the community, if they were in power to-day, he considers would cause the greatest disasters to the country?—whether he considers that a Parliament or a Government of all young fellows from eighteen to twenty-one years of age, or a Parliament or a Government of men of more mature years, would be the greater danger to the community? If he speaks honestly and fairly, he must admit that the men of a more mature age would be very much better fitted to control the destinies of this country than the young people to whom this vote is proposed to be given. I hope the amendment will not be passed by this Chamber. The Bill will simply cause our legislation to be more chaotic than it is at present, and it is chaotic enough, in all conscience. I believe, if this vote is carried, instead of putting the clock forward as some members argue, it will be putting the clock back. Instead of progressing as we wish to do, we shall decline.

Mr. JAMES (*Logan*): I was very interested, a while back, in the remarks of one of the hon. members opposite—I forget which one it was—giving the reason why this Bill was being introduced. Those remarks reflected upon the political morality of this party, in that it was stated the only reason for the reduction in age was that we might get a bigger majority at the next election. I totally disagree with those opinions. I would like to say that the political morality of the Opposition, and of the Federal party of which this Opposition is a part, will not always bear the closest scrutiny. If I remember rightly, the reduction of the voting age to eighteen in the case of the soldiers was not in the interests of the soldiers at all, but it was done in the belief that soldiers who had enlisted would vote for conscription and in favour of Mr. Hughes and the National party. If Mr. Hughes had thought for one moment that those soldiers would have turned down conscription in the way that they did in the trenches, I do not think he would have considered this for a moment. Although we have never had the exact figures of the voting in the trenches on conscription, at the same time I have met very few, during the time I was away, who considered that conscription was carried in France among the fighting men. I do not think, even were that the case, that this Government are introducing this Bill in order to gain a greater political power. There is one other point: I do not remember the National Government, when introducing that amendment giving the vote to boys of eighteen years who had enlisted, extending the same privileges to their sisters who were engaged in war work at home. In my opinion the intelligence and education of a girl of eighteen is equivalent to that of a boy of eighteen, and they are equally patriotic. It shows that the National Government were not treating the matter on a logical basis, but simply as a matter of

self-interest, because they wanted votes and were out to catch them in any way whatever. If hon. members opposite will consider for a moment, I think they will agree that people do not vote either according to experience or wisdom, but according to their material interest in the country. That is why we should extend the voting age, so as to give the vote to all people who take an active part in the work of the world, taking an average age for their setting about it. Those who engage in the business of the world should not be left without representation in the country, because it is the interest represented by that person which should demand consideration. If a man has a farm and is of the age of nineteen years, is he to have no say in the rates and taxes he shall pay, or in the legislation of the country which will affect him in various ways? Hon. members opposite who allege they are farmers and sit in the farmers' interest, want to leave those men without representation altogether. When speaking on the second reading of the Bill, I crossed swords with the hon. member for Murilla on the point, and he admitted that it was so.

Mr. MORGAN: I did not admit anything.

Mr. JAMES: We can extend the same principle. Another person may have big financial interests, and they must be represented. In the same way, if a man of eighteen years of age has gone out to work with his hands, his labour and his service is worth as much to the country as that of any other elector. He is subjected to taxation, largely in an indirect form, and he should have a say in that taxation. This Parliament is composed of interests rather than individualities. For instance, the farmers of the Murilla, if they suddenly became meat workers, would probably become members of the Meatworkers' Union and vote solidly Labour; whereas if the meat workers became financiers we would probably find, because of their vested interests, they would vote the other way. Their brains would be the same. There would be scarcely any anatomical or physiological change. Their experience would be no greater. But their vote would be changed directly opposite to that recorded by them previously, simply because their interests had changed. At the age of eighteen a man or a woman branches out and is expected to earn his or her own living. We know that, at the age of eighteen, unless a lad is bred in the lap of luxury, he is expected to earn his own living and carry on the battle of life. It is the same with a girl. Therefore, so that all interests of the State should be represented in this House—so that there should be no persons and no interests left without representation—all persons of the age of eighteen years should be given the vote, to which they are justly entitled.

HON. W. H. BARNES: The hon. member for Rockhampton, Mr. Forde, in speaking this afternoon, I think was hardly consistent—if I may be allowed to say so—in suggesting that it was quite a fair thing, under certain conditions, for people to marry at the age of eighteen. If I may not be considered rude, it seems extraordinary that he has not practised it and has not been consistent in that particular regard. I imagine that he belongs to the bachelor class. Probably there may be some prospect of his hurrying up. I rose more particularly to say that the hon. member absolutely misre-

presented the Townsville incident. As a matter of fact, as a Minister of the Crown I was never in Townsville for the purpose of addressing a public meeting, and his remarks in that regard were an absolute misstatement. The fact is, I was in Townsville during the period when I was not sitting in this House, and spoke at a meeting at which certain happenings took place. When an hon. member gets up and deliberately makes a statement such as he has made this afternoon, what credit can be given to an hon. member? The big point has been missed in connection with this Bill. This afternoon we have been debating the question whether it should be twenty-one or eighteen years. I venture to say that the matter which is of the most importance to the people of Queensland to-day is a readjustment of the various seats to give equality, as far as possible, to the electors of the State. That is the big thing which the State is demanding to-day, yet this Government bring in a clause like this, and for what purpose? For the purpose, apparently, of dodging the issue, and—may I say—allowing members like the Acting Premier to continue in a seat where he has less than 2,000 people as voters. We can see exactly what the position is. This is something done in the direction of side-tracking. Reference was made by the member for Rockhampton to the leader of this party. That is many years ago; and let me say that many members sitting on this side of the House, myself included, voted at every opportunity for the women's franchise, and advocated it. The fact re-  
[5.30 p.m.] mains that we are asked to do a certain thing that is illogical, when considering the law in respect to other matters. It is difficult for me to think that the Bill has been introduced for anything but electioneering purposes.

Mr. HARTLEY: I do not think that we have heard any valid objection to men and women between eighteen and twenty-one years having a vote. If any argument could have been advanced, it would have been that we propose to put into their hands some instrument to express resentment against the legislation which governments and legislators at times imposed upon them. In my opinion, that is the only natural objection that could be taken. It must be admitted that the youth of the country are living under different conditions to those which existed some years ago, because of the competitive system which is intensified to-day. If you consider the conditions of twenty or thirty years ago, one must admit that life is harder and conditions more exacting on workers to-day than formerly. Youth begins to feel the effect of our legislation and system earlier; and to give youth a vote makes it possible to punish those who brought that state of affairs about. I think that when youth is called upon to bear the work of developing the country, when it is called upon to undergo the hardships of the present system, it is entitled to a vote. I want to point out that much of our legislation affects youths between eighteen and twenty-one, and, in some instances, our awards to-day are cutting out youths between those ages from engaging upon any but poor-paying occupations. If that is so, surely they have the right to choose legislators who shall pass legislation in conformity with their ideas! The hon. member for Windsor has spoken about the influence of experience, and said that the youths to-day should not have

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a vote because they had not had experience. I regard that as a contradiction, because he also said that youths between eighteen or twenty-one had gone to fight for their country, and in those four years had crowded—I think he said—half a lifetime into them. Have not those had half a lifetime crowded into their lives who remained here during those four years? It was a remarkable spectacle that the people of Australia should be asked to force the youth of this country into war, and yet that those same youths did not get a vote. Lads eighteen years of age in this country were subject to the Federal proclamation, but had no voice in the conscription referendum, which was a remarkable inconsistency.

Mr. FORDE: I wish to explain to the House that the hon. member for Bulimba has, I think, wilfully misrepresented what I said.

Mr. MACARTNEY: Is the hon. member in order in suggesting that the hon. member for Bulimba has wilfully misrepresented something that the hon. member has said?

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is not in order in saying that an hon. member has "wilfully misrepresented" something he has said. I think the hon. member qualified it by saying "I think."

Mr. FORDE: Yes, I did. The hon. member said that I advocated that youths and girls of eighteen years of age should get married.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I reasonably inferred that, anyhow.

Mr. FORDE: It was a misrepresentation. What I did say was that, if youths under twenty-one years of age decided to get married, it was a matter for themselves, but, in any case, they were entitled to a voice as to who should represent them in Parliament. I accept the assurance of the hon. member for Bulimba that he was not a Minister at the time the people of Townsville howled him down. But I know that the disturbance did occur, because I heard the hon. member telling someone himself. He said that he received an account for damage to furniture.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member who has just sat down has taken upon himself to utter what I regard as mere irrelevances. It is not to be wondered at that the youthful member in charge of the Bill, the youthful member for Rockhampton, and the likewise youthful member for Logan advocated that children or infants, as they are known to the law, should have votes. I must say that I have heard nothing of the substantial character which justifies the giving of a vote to infants of eighteen years in Queensland. It is very much beside the mark to say that Pitt, Fox, Marconi, and other eminent men should appear in the old country and acquired distinction in their youthful days. The hon. member who referred to young people who have accepted the responsibilities attached to matrimony only gave us some figures relating to Australia, but he did not give us figures relating to Queensland. We are dealing with matters relating to Queensland. The law at the present time said that minors should not be married without the consent of their parents, and it should be shown why these minors should have the franchise conferred upon them. It is my opinion that, amongst the party on the other side, there must be a large section who do not believe in this vote. It is quite clear that the younger section of

the community are not in favour of it; that they do not understand political questions, and do not wish to take any part in them. Even people of more mature age do not understand the questions involved in the giving of a vote, and how much less can those of less than twenty-one years, the majority of whom are particularly immature at eighteen? There may be a few who are more advanced than others, but that in itself is not an argument for giving votes to the whole of the class. It is quite true that in our Lands Act exception is made in favour of young men under twenty-one, but that is entirely exceptional, and is intended to give opportunities to young people to take up land in the vicinity of their parents, where they may under the direction of their parents lay the foundations of their homes, marry, and step into independent undertakings. There is no doubt that a very large number of youngsters of eighteen who are at work are apprentices, and you may find in union rules a distinction drawn between apprentices and journeymen—they do not have full rights or equal voting power. Of the rest of the young people of the State a very large number are still attending schools and other educational establishments inside the State. Some of them are attending the University.

Mr. JAMES: What is the maximum age limit for attendance at the University? Are you going to deny them a vote because they are thirty or forty?

Mr. MACARTNEY: We are only dealing with the question in the limits laid down in the Bill. Some of our young people are attending educational establishments outside the State. Are they in a position to record their votes? We are told that we are against reform. That is not so. We are not against giving reasonable and proper reform. It might be a very good thing from a vote-catching point of view to support a Bill of this kind; but that is not the principle on which members on this side act. It is not with them a case of party advantage, but what is going to be of benefit to the State. We certainly oppose so-called reforms which are in the nature of recklessness—recklessness which might, for instance, bring the State to what we might call financial jeopardy. We have several instances of that. We cannot say that the administration and legislation of the present Government have done much to put the State in a safe financial position. The hon. member for Rockhampton talks very lightly on this subject; but I say that he and other members opposite are in duty bound to have regard to these things, and the man who is not prepared to take the best interests of the State into consideration, quite apart from the votes it may give him, or lose him, is not doing his duty.

Mr. SMITH: The question of vote-catching was raised by a member of your side, the hon. member for Burnett.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member for Rockhampton himself—

Mr. FORDE: I did not say anything about vote-catching. I said I would not say whether we would get a majority or not.

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member said that we were against reform. I want to point out that members on this side consider so-called reforms from the point of view of the best interests of the State, although it may be an unpopular thing to do.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: You opposed adult suffrage

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Mr. MACARTNEY: I would like to tell the hon. member—if he is ignorant of the fact—that I entered this House on the express policy of adult suffrage, and I supported adult suffrage. At the same time I argued for and fought very hard for a reduction of members of this House, and I hope I shall be found again advocating that principle.

Mr. FORDE: When you thought you would lose the Brisbane seat you went to Toowong.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Order!

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member talks about things he knows nothing whatever about. I was member for Toowong many years before that; I only went back to my old seat. There is no doubt that the mind of the hon. member, as well as being youthful, is also irrelevant. I have also advocated, probably more than any other member in this House, when sitting on that side, the equal distribution of electors. I was representing—before Bulimba attained to its present champion position in that respect—the biggest number of electors in the State, and I advocated that alteration on the principle that every man's vote should be of equal value. I say that that principle stands good to-day, and if we were having something in the nature of just election reform we would have a redistribution of seats.

Mr. JAMES: Would you like this Government to do it?

Mr. MACARTNEY: I say that it is up to this Government to administer the laws as they find them on the statute-books, and there is on the statute-books a provision to enable them to do that, and the Administration is neglecting their duty to the people of the State by neglecting to put that provision into force. I say that it is monstrous that people calling themselves democrats should allow a condition of things to continue such that the vote of one individual is worth about one-sixth of that of another, and no more intelligent elector.

I say that not one substantial argument has been offered in favour of violating the comfort and happiness of the home by dragging the children into the political arena. (Government laughter.) We have had instances of labour parents where children appear in political halls and meetings only to interrupt and disturb; we have, on the part of people who are behind Labour, a certain carelessness in bringing up children. We have, in the case of liberty fair, running throughout the State, a similar neglect on the part of parents of the interests of home life. The hon. member for Rockhampton, in his endeavour to show some authority for this change, referred to a magazine in which some writer merely suggested the wisdom of giving votes to young people. But that was the only authority he could produce. He referred to America, but has not yet quoted one concrete instance of any country in the world where this youthful vote is actually in force. There may be—I am not prepared to say there is not—something of the kind in some small State in America, but I have looked through books dealing on the subject, and I have been unable to find an instance. On the other hand I have been able to find that in some States in America the franchise is very much more conservative than it is in Australia or Queensland. I have found that the franchise of all European countries is still largely more conservative than we have here to-day.

There is a general recognition that with age comes wisdom, and you find instances of the vote being limited to people of thirty years of age for different chambers where legislation for the people is framed.

Mr. O'SULLIVAN: Class legislation!

Mr. MACARTNEY: The hon. member should realise that it is not a question of class at all; it is a question of age, and until hon. members opposite are able to show something a little more substantial in favour of the alteration of the franchise, I think we are justified in opposing it. I feel certain that there are many men on the other side who, unfortunately, are bound by caucus rules to vote for this measure, but who, on the other hand, if they were at liberty to express their honest opinions, would not only express themselves against the proposal, but openly vote against it. That is one of the unfortunate circumstances surrounding the political position, but it is the position and we have to meet it. I am sorry to find that the debate has extended into something of the nature of a second reading debate, instead of being as it ought to be, one dealing with the details of the Bill, but, in view of the remarks made by the hon. member for Rockhampton, the hon. member for Fitzroy, and others, I felt impelled to express somewhat strongly the opinion which I hold.

The House resumed. The CHAIRMAN reported progress.

The further consideration of the Bill in Committee was made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

The ACTING PREMIER: I beg to move—That this House do now adjourn. The business to-morrow will be the further consideration in Committee of the Elections Act Amendment Bill, the consideration of the Council's amendments on the Brisbane Tramway Purchase Bill, and then the second reading of the Popular Initiative and Referendum Bill.

Mr. MACARTNEY: I would like to ask the hon. member when we may expect the Financial Statement.

The ACTING PREMIER: It is not possible to fix any definite date, but it will not be presented for at least a fortnight.

Mr. MACARTNEY: May I ask, also, when we may expect to have the Auditor-General's report and his report on State enterprises circulated amongst us?

The ACTING PREMIER: I think that, seeing that the House ordered it to be printed this afternoon, copies should be in members' boxes in the morning.

Mr. MACARTNEY: And, perhaps, the hon. member might enlighten us as to whom questions intended for the Premier should be addressed to in the next few days?

The ACTING PREMIER: Matters pertaining to the Chief Secretary's Department or his functions might be addressed to me, but matters which require the personal attention of the Premier might be deferred until his return to the State.

(Mr. MACARTNEY: Is he coming back? (Laughter.)

Question put and passed.

The House adjourned at 6 o'clock p.m.

*Hon. E. G. Theodore.]*