Queensland

Parliamentary Debates
[Hansard]

Legislative Assembly

TUESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 1931

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TUESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER, 1931.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. C. Taylor, *Windsor*) took the chair at 2.30 p.m.

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAY CONSTRUCTION COSTS.

Mr. G. P. BARNES (*Warwick*) asked the Secretary for Railways—

"1. What was the total length of railways constructed up to year ended 1913-14:—(*a*) Capital expenditure on same; and (*b*) average cost per mile?

"2. Total length of railways constructed since 1914-15 to June, 1931:—(*a*) Capital cost expended; and (*b*) average cost per mile?

"3. What amount has been charged to revenue for all railways for renewals and repairs, etc., from date of construction to June, 1931?

"4. What was the cost of Roma Street Railway Station freehold from tunnel to Red Hill?

"5. What was the cost of Central Railway Station freehold from tunnel to tunnel?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. R. M. King, *Logan*), for the SECRETARY FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. Godfrey Morgan, *Murilla*), replied—

"1 to 5. The information is being prepared."

CANDIDATURE OF COLONEL CURRIE FOR CAPRICORNIA.

Mr. KIRWAN (*Brisbane*) asked the Secretary for Public Instruction—

"Following the Proclamation of the amended regulations in regard to the conduct of public servants in reference

to the Government's administrative acts and public questions, and the recent transfer of Messrs. Baker and Copley, what action, if any, has been taken by the Minister in regard to the position of Colonel Currie, the endorsed candidate for the Nationalist Country Party for Capricornia at the next Federal election, at present a head teacher in one of the Rockhampton State schools?"

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION (Hon. R. M. King, *Logan*) replied—

"The hon. member is incorrect in his premises—no action is contemplated."

APPLICATION TO COMMONWEALTH DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT FOR LOAN FOR RELIEF WORKS.

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*) asked the Secretary for Labour and Industry—

"Re the application made by the Minister for Labour and Industry to the Commonwealth Director of Development (Mr. J. Gunn) for a loan of £1,000,000 for relief works—

1. Will he table the full details of his proposals, including:—The terms and conditions of the agreements already made between the unemployed persons and landowners for the utilisation of surplus land?

2. Do such agreements provide for compensation for the tenant and/or his heirs for the enhanced value of the land created by the tenant's labour after the term of the agreement has expired? If so, will he show the method by which this compensation is to be determined?"

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY (Hon. H. E. Sizer, *Sandgate*) replied—

"1 and 2. I have pleasure in tabling a copy of my proposals submitted to the Commonwealth Director of Development to extend suitable activities to relieve unemployment. In reference to assistance already granted to persons to enable them to utilise surplus land of existing settlers, in each case the agreement was an individual one as between the landowner and the prospective settler, and partook of the nature of a share-farming agreement."

STATEMENT IN "WESTERN CHAMPION" IN RE CROWN FEES IN MUNGANA TRIAL.

Mr. A. JONES (*Burke*) asked the Attorney-General—

"1. Is the following statement, appearing in the 'Western Champion' of the 29th August, 1931, correct?—

'The Attorney-General (Macgroarty), McGill, and another barrister are appearing for the Government in the Mungana case. For the first day of the trial the Attorney-General and McGill draw £750 each, the fee marked on their briefs, for each of the other days of the trial they are each drawing thirty guineas a day, the junior counsel is on ten guineas a day; and, in addition to this there are the services of a private firm of solicitors engaged by the Crown to assist the Crown solicitor, another ten guineas per day or more.'

"2. If so, is the Attorney-General giving information to the Tory papers such as the 'Western Champion' that he refuses to give to this House, in reply to questions asked by members of the Opposition?"

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. N. F. Macgroarty, *South Brisbane*) replied—

"1. No.

"2. No. I do not refuse to give the information to the House. Same will be available when I render a memo. of fees on a reasonable date from the completion of the case according to my usual custom."

CHILDREN OF SCHOOL AGE SENT TO REFORMATORIES.

Mr. MULLAN (*Flinders*) asked the Home Secretary—

"What number of children of school age have been sent to reformatories during the last five years from—(1) Brisbane; (2) the remainder of Queensland?"

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. C. Peterson, *Normanby*) replied —

"1 and 2—

"REFORMATORY (FARM HOME FOR BOYS, WESTBROOK).

From Brisbane—	
1927, 4; 1928, 3; 1929, 2; 1930, 2; 1931, 3	14
From remainder of Queensland—	
1927, 6; 1928, 3; 1929, 2; 1930, 4; 1931, 3	18
Total	32

FARM HOME FOR BOYS, WESTBROOK, AND INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS.

From Brisbane—	
1927, 4; 1928, 3; 1929, 2; 1930, 2; 1931, 5	16
From remainder of Queensland—	
1927, 7; 1928, 5; 1929, 3; 1930, 6; 1931, 4	25
Total	41"

PRICE PAID FOR GOLD BY CHILLAGOE SMELTERS.

Mr. MULLAN (*Flinders*) asked the Secretary for Mines—

"What price is being paid to the producers for gold by the Chillagoe State Smelting Works?"

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. E. A. Atherton, *Chillagoe*) replied—

"Four pounds an ounce."

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR BRISBANE BANKS.

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*), without notice, asked the Treasurer —

"Has the Treasurer seen in the 'Courier' of to-day's date the report of the meeting held at Paddington last evening addressed by Mr. Beasley? In dealing with the banking system of Australia, Mr. Beasley, M.P., is reported to have said—

'In Queensland they had the spectacle of two members of the Legislative

Assembly, one of whom was Mr. Kelso, using their influence to have Government credits placed to buttress up the institutions in which they were interested!'

Will the Treasurer say if this information is correct?"

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*) replied—

"The statement made is entirely incorrect. For the information of the House I would point out that this is what occurred: When I read in the Saturday morning's paper of the suspension of one of the banks, and knowing that there had been a run on the bank, I immediately took into consideration the wisdom or otherwise of getting the bankers of the city together."

Mr. BRUCE: You did not worry about the Federal Deposit Bank or the Primary Producers' Bank.

The TREASURER: The hon. member is entirely wrong. I did not know that the Federal Deposit Bank was closing, and by the time I had called the meeting it had suspended operations. The point I want to make clearly is that the hon. members—the name of one has been mentioned—never approached me at all. I approached the bankers with a view to assisting Queensland at a critical time. I am very pleased, indeed, that the efforts which I took, and on which I had been congratulated on every hand, were entirely successful.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: Hear, hear! A very proper thing to do.

The TREASURER: I should have been wanting in my duty if I had not called the bankers together. Surely we are bigger than party in these things! I regret very much that I did not know that the other bank was likely to suspend. If I had known, I certainly would have taken action. Let me say that not one penny of Government money has gone into those banks.

Then, as to the other statement made by Mr. Beasley, to which I might be allowed to reply, as a matter of fact, no State has done more for unemployment than the State of Queensland.

PAPER.

The following paper was laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Forty-sixth Report of the Registrar of Friendly Societies, Building Societies, and Industrial and Provident Societies.

HEALTH ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. C. Peterson, *Normanby*): I beg to move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend 'The Health Acts, 1900 to 1922,' in certain particulars."

Question put and passed.

VAGRANTS, GAMING, AND OTHER OFFENCES BILL.

INITIATION.

The HOME SECRETARY (Hon. J. C. Peterson, *Normanby*) [2.42]: I beg to move—

"That the House will, at its next sitting, resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to make better provision for the prevention and punishment of offences by vagrants and disorderly persons, for the suppression of unlawful gaming and other offences, and for other purposes."

Question put and passed.

RACING REGULATION FURTHER AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Roberts, East Toowoomba, in the chair.*)

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*) [2.43]: I beg to move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Racing Regulation Amendment Act of 1930 in a certain particular."

The amendment proposed consists of making provision for an extra six days for trotting races. Hon. members may remember that last year under the Racing Regulation Amendment Act provision was made for the reduction of the number of racing days, and on that occasion only six days were allowed for trotting. Since then it has been found by the people who are conducting trotting races that it is impossible to make arrangements with some of the courses, at any rate, for the conduct of that particular class of sport except at a very high rate. This Bill proposes to give them the opportunity of racing on twelve days, conditional on their finding their own trotting course, and on no other condition. The extra days will be granted subject to the approval of the Minister on that condition. I am advised—I believe correctly—that it is quite impossible for people who engage in that kind of sport to run meetings only on six days in the year. They must have at least a dozen. I think hon. members will agree with me that, if the statement which is made by the parties conducting trotting meetings is correct, it is a question of allowing them a little more time, or practically putting them out of business.

Mr. POLLOCK: Is that the only principle contained in the Bill—to give the racing people an extra six days?

The TREASURER: Yes.

Mr. STOPFORD (*Mount Morgan*) [2.46]: I have no objection to the contents of the Bill as outlined by the Treasurer, but I do not think it goes far enough. We have just agreed to the initiatory motion in respect of a Bill dealing with unlawful gaming. The Treasurer should take this opportunity of endeavouring to remove an anomaly that exists under the Act we passed last year. Previously the tax on betting tickets was 3d., which was paid by the bookmaker, who had to purchase his tickets from the Treasurer. Last year's Act increased the tax to 1s., but provided that the bookmaker might charge the whole 1s. to

the punter. The result is that many men who previously made bets on legitimate racecourses have been driven to making bets elsewhere.

Wholesale betting goes on in hotels and betting shops; and, although the police may raid certain shops, the fact remains that many men who would go into the Leger stand if they could bet free of tax now adopt other means of making bets. I think the fairest way would be for the bookmaker to bear his fair share of the tax. Whoever wins the bet should pay the tax. If I win a bet, then the bookmaker should be entitled to deduct one shilling from my win; but, if I lose, then the bookmaker, who has won, should pay the tax. Prior to the amending legislation introduced last year the bookmaker contributed about £400 per annum towards the revenue of the State; but to-day he pays nothing beyond the license fee and the fee paid to the Queensland Turf Club. The difference between those fees and the £400 per annum is now borne by the punter.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! Is the hon. gentleman suggesting that the scope of the Bill should be widened?

Mr. STOPFORD: Yes.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. gentleman then should move in that direction.

Mr. STOPFORD: I beg to move the omission of the words—

"in a certain particular."

If a punter makes bets ranging in amounts from 5s. to 10s. on nine races, he has to pay a tax of 9s., although he may lose on seven events and win only on two. This injustice is forcing punters off the courses; and every little shop and hotel is now being utilised as an illegal betting place. If we are to adopt racing as an institution, we should conduct it as cleanly as possible, and encourage punters to make their bets on legitimate courses. In my opinion, the Premier of New South Wales, Mr. Lang, has introduced a grossly unfair betting tax. Although the law in New South Wales provides that a tax must be paid on a winning bet, there is no discrimination between the amount to be paid, whether the bet is one for 5s. or for £500. In Queensland the bookmaker can have a winning day; but he is not called upon to contribute anything by way of tax. Take the case of a punter who makes an even-money bet of £1 with the bookmaker. If the punter wins, he collects his £2, less the tax of 1s., or a net return of £1 19s., but, if the bookmaker wins, he retains the whole of the £2 involved in the bet, the tax having been paid by the punter. The Government should realise by now that this system is imposing a hardship upon genuine sporting men, and that it should be rectified. The amendment is one which should receive consideration from the Treasurer.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*) [2.54]: I have no intention whatever of accepting the amendment. The Bill provides for a certain class of people; and, that being so, we must just remain at that stage to-day, whatever may happen in the future.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: You can carry out your obligations to-day and do other things as well.

The TREASURER: As we go on, we may find we have other obligations, but in the meantime the Bill will remain as it is.

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*) [2.55]: Because of the legislation passed by the Government, the Treasurer is regarded throughout Queensland as the "bookies' friend." The reason for that is that, prior to the introduction of the racing legislation of last session, paddock bookmakers paid on an average about £300 per annum in taxation on betting tickets. When the Treasurer last session raised the betting tax from 3d. to 1s., instead of the bookmakers passing on the extra 9d. to the general public, they passed on the whole shilling. The result is that the average bookmaker, instead of paying a tax of £1,200, which the payment of the whole shilling would have meant, not only avoids paying the extra £900, but he is able to get out of paying the £300 which he cheerfully paid for years. He, therefore, can regard the Treasurer as one of his best friends. I am not arguing that provision should be made for that in this Bill, nor have I objection to the extra dates being allotted to trotting clubs; but I do believe that, in the administration of the racing law, quite a good deal could be done by the Government to help the general public. Not long ago an incident occurred at Ascot, through the action of one of the club officials. Quite a number of persons had made bets on a horse which was withdrawn by the action of the stipendiary stewards. Most of the bookmakers had issued from fifty to eighty tickets on the horse. When the horse was withdrawn from the race, it was discovered that in some cases punters had been refunded their shilling tax, while in other cases bookmakers held the tax until they obtained a refund from the Treasury in connection with the destroyed tickets. The Treasury Department has simply allowed this matter to remain where it was, and the bookmakers who had paid £4 or £5 in taxation back to the punters are out of pocket to that extent. If a horse is withdrawn without the consent of either the bookmaker or punter, but simply through the action of club officials, it is obvious that the tax should be refunded when the bets on that horse are declared off. I would ask the Treasurer to look into that question. It is an unfair action for the Government to take, and I hope the matter will be rectified.

Question—"That the words proposed to be omitted (*Mr. Stopford's amendment*) stand part of the resolution"—put; and the Committee divided:—

AYES, 32.

Mr. Atherton	Mr. King
,, Barnes, G. P.	Mrs. Longman
,, Barnes, W. H.	Mr. Macgroarty
,, Blackley	,, Maxwell
,, Boyd	,, Peterson
,, Brand	,, Russell, H. M.
,, Butler	,, Russell, W. A.
,, Carter	,, Swayne
,, Clayton	,, Tedman
,, Deacon	,, Tozer
,, Dunlop	,, Walker, H. F.
,, Edwards	,, Warren
,, Fry	,, Wienholt
,, Grimstone	
,, Kelso	*Tellers:*
,, Kerr	,, Duffy
Dr. Kerwin	,, Hill

Mr. Pollock.]

NOES, 23,

Mr. Barber	Mr. Mullan
„ Bow	„ O'Keefe
„ Bruce	„ Pease
„ Bulcock	„ Pollock
„ Conroy	„ Smith
„ Cooper	„ Stopford
„ Dash	„ Wellington
„ Foley	„ Winstanley
„ Hanlon	
„ Hanson	*Tellers:*
„ Hynes	„ Bedford
„ Jones, A.	„ Brassington
„ Kirwan	

PAIRS.

AYES.	NOES.
Mr. Maher	Mr. Wilson
„ Moore	„ Collins
„ Daniel	„ Jones, A. J.

Resolved in the affirmative.

Original motion (*Mr. W. H. Barnes*) agreed to.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

Resolution agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*) presented the Bill, and moved—

"That the Bill be now read a first time."

Question put and passed.

Second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

PEARL-SHELL AND BECHE-DE-MER FISHERY ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Roberts, East Toowoomba, in the chair.*)

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*) [3.10]: I beg to move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend 'The Pearl-shell and Beche-de-mer Fishery Acts, 1881 to 1913,' in certain particulars."

The purpose of the Bill is to obtain legislative authority to regulate the collection of trochus-shell in Queensland waters. The industry is carried on in Torres Strait and on the reefs off the northern portion of the Queensland coast in conjunction with the collection of pearl shell and beche-de-mer. The existing Acts do not deal with the collection of trochus shell specifically, and this is to be provided for by clauses 2 and 3 of this Bill.

Clause 4 provides for the fixing by proclamation of a minimum size of trochus shell which may be collected.

The investigations by the marine biologist show that the trochus grows rapidly; and, with reasonable protection of the young trochus, ample supplies for the future of the industry can be assured. In the absence, however, of any size limit, immature shell is being collected, and there are indications that the available supplies are becoming depleted.

Clause 5 provides for consequential amendments to the existing Acts so as to include trochus shell within the scope of the amended clauses.

The question of prohibiting the taking of immature trochus shell was under consideration during the year 1917; and the provisions of this Bill were embodied in a Bill which was drafted during that year. Since the year 1927 the quantity of this shell exported from Queensland annually has steadily decreased, having fallen from 1,089 tons in that year to 505 tons in 1930, the value in each of those years being £76,320 and £38,725 respectively.

Restrictions not only on the size of shell but also as to the months of the year in which shell may be taken have been imposed in New Caledonia and the Philippines. Information obtained from New Caledonia is to the effect that the trochus shell industry, which was nearly ruined by over-fishing, has developed during the last few years into one of considerable importance and value. In view of information such as that, it has been decided to introduce this Bill.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*) [3.13]: The Bill is certainly desirable, provided it does not contain anything that the Treasurer has not disclosed. It has been said by him that the industry requires some protection, which is probably quite true; and anything that has that objective will be supported by hon. members on this side.

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*) [3.14]: I would like to ask the Treasurer whether any provision is being made in this Bill to encourage Queenslanders to get a greater share of the marine wealth available along our coast. The majority of the persons engaged in the pearl-shell and beche-de-mer fisheries are aliens; and, seeing that unemployment in Queensland and the other States is so great, some effort might be made to enable Queenslanders to secure employment in these fisheries. Some time ago there was an agitation in that direction in Townsville and other parts of the North.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*) [3.15]: In answer to the hon. member, I would point out that these fisheries are occupations in which many persons do not care to take part; but, if at any time the hon. member can suggest anything by which more Queenslanders can be employed, the Government will be very pleased to assist in that direction.

Question put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

Resolution agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The TREASURER (Hon. W. H. Barnes, *Wynnum*) presented the Bill, and moved—

"That the Bill be now read a first time."

Question put and passed.

Second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for to-morrow.

COMPANIES BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE.

(*Mr. Roberts, East Toowoomba, in the chair.*)

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. N. F. Macgroarty, *South Brisbane*) [3.17]: I beg to move—

"That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to consolidate and amend the law relating to the incorporation, registration, regulation, and winding-up of trading companies and other associations."

The Queensland company law embraces legislation passed between the years 1863 and 1913. The principal Act was passed in 1863, and has been the main statute dealing with company law, although certain amendments were made at various times up to 1913. There has been no amendment of the company law since 1913. In 1908 a consolidated measure was passed in England, based upon the findings of a commission of inquiry held prior to that date. Certain Australian States, Victoria and Tasmania in particular, took advantage of the English Act of 1908, and brought their company law somewhat into line with the English Act. Queensland did not alter, in the main, its company law beyond extracting a few sections.

For fifteen or sixteen years there has been a movement afoot in Australia with a view to providing a comprehensive Commonwealth law relating to companies; but there were constitutional difficulties in the way of a Commonwealth Consolidated Act. At this stage I think I should refer to the leading cases on the matter. They are Huddart Parker Limited v. Morehead, and Appleton v. Morehead, reported in 8 Commonwealth Law Reports at p. 330. Those cases set forth the constitutional difficulty regarding the making of a uniform Commonwealth company law, or, in other words, the difficulty which appears to prohibit the Commonwealth from passing a uniform Commonwealth company law in the way it has done in the case of bankruptcy.

Mr. MULLAN: The difficulty is not insurmountable.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It appears to be so at the present time.

Mr. MULLAN: It requires an alteration of the Commonwealth Constitution.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes. Section 51, subsection (37), of the Commonwealth Constitution, however, gives the States power to delegate to the Commonwealth the right to enact a comprehensive company law, but that delegation of power has not been exercised. By that I mean that the whole of the States have not approached the Commonwealth as a body delegating power to the Commonwealth to provide a comprehensive Commonwealth company law.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: There is the further constitutional difficulty that the authorities that have the right to delegate their power have the right to withdraw it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That is so. Various conferences have been held in connection with this matter, and plans have been agreed upon from time to time by various Premiers. Hon. members opposite will realise that there has been a desire for a uniform Commonwealth company law for some time; but, for some reason or other, nothing has been done up to date; and the matter has been allowed to remain in abeyance. The Queensland Government have had the matter in mind ever since their return to office, and we have now framed a consolidated Bill in accordance with the needs of the times. Numerous commercial bodies have stressed the need for a consolidated measure, and only within the last few weeks the South Australian Government have introduced a consolidated measure somewhat similar to the comprehensive Queensland Bill now being considered. That Bill is now before the South Australian Parliament. It was found that the English Act of 1908 was deficient, and since 1926 various committees have met, and have recommended amendments of that statute. Following on the result of those investigations, a further Act was passed in England in 1928 amending the company law as it then stood; but that was not proclaimed until Parliament passed the consolidated Act in 1929, embracing the Act of 1908 as amended by the Act of 1928.

Before that Bill was passed, it was submitted to a select committee of the House of Lords and House of Commons; and, after a very severe scrutiny, it was assented to in 1929.

"The Law Institute Journal," Melbourne, in its issue of 1st July, 1931, states—

> "Two and a-half years ago the present Attorney-General of Victoria declared that the English Parliamentary Committees which examined the question of amending the company law had 'expressed the last modern view' on the subject. He urged that it was 'highly desirable that they should take advantage of the opportunity of incorporating it in their legislation.'
>
> "In England important amendments were made by the Companies Act 1928, as a result of the recommendation of the aforesaid committees, and were later incorporated in the Consolidating Act of 1929. Sir Leo Cussen, when before the Statute Law Revision Committee of the Victorian Parliament in 1928, said that he had 'not the slightest doubt that practically the whole of the English amendments should be embodied in our legislation.'"

In drafting this Bill the Imperial Act of 1929 has been taken as a basis, due regard being paid to local conditions. The Bill is a very long one, and is divided into fifteen parts. Part I. deals with preliminary matters; Part II. with administration; Part III. with the incorporation of companies and matters incidental thereto; Part IV. with share capital and debentures; Part V. with mortgages—registration; Part VI. with management and administration; Part VII. with winding-up; Part VIII. with receivers and managers; Part IX. with mining companies; Part X. with British companies; Part XI. with foreign companies; Part XII. with companies not formed under the Act authorised to register under this Act; Part XIII. with the winding-up of unregistered companies; Part XIV. with the restriction on sale of shares and offers of shares for sale; and Part XV. with miscellaneous and supplementary provisions.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: There must be a large number of clauses.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There are 383 clauses and eleven schedules. It would be ridiculous for me to attempt to deal with them all at this stage. The Bill is a very necessary and desirable one. An explanation of its provisions is really a matter for a second reading speech or in Committee.

I propose to mention the main features of the Bill at this stage in as concise language as possible. I can dispose of Part I. Part II. deals with the administration of the law.

That is practically as it is at present. Part III. deals with the incorporation of companies, and in the main follows the provisions of the present law, except that private companies are included.

Certain further provisions deal with the names of companies; and the provisions of "The Primary Producers' Co-operative Associations Act of 1923" as to the use of the word "co-operative" are preserved. Provisions dealing with the memorandum and articles of association are in the main similar in principle, but are concisely rearranged.

There is provision, however, that alterations in the memorandum or articles increasing liability to contribute to share capital are not binding on existing members without their consent.

Any copies of memoranda issued must contain all alterations. The law as to contracts by or with a company is left practically unaltered. Part IV. in regard to share capital and debentures, more particularly relating to prospectuses, differs from the present Queensland law, and follows in the main the Imperial Act of 1929.

Specific provisions are laid down governing prospectuses. These provisions no doubt were inserted in England in the public interests, and any honest company would have no cause to object to them. Certain provisions dealing with the liability for statements in prospectuses follow the English law.

Certain provisions deal with the prohibition of the allotment of share capital unless a minimum amount of subscription for certain specified matters is raised. Provisions deal with the commissions and discounts, which must be set forth in the balance-sheet.

Under certain conditions a company may issue shares at a discount, subject to the sanction of the court. There are new provisions dealing with variations of shareholders' rights, with protection to minorities.

Part V. deals with mortgages and registrations, and is practically a re-enactment of the 1909 Queensland Act.

Part VI. deals with administration, and the whole of the clauses are rearranged methodically and set forth in a simpler form. The principle in the main is this: There are certain added machinery provisions affording protection to the public. One of these provisions relates to certain restrictions on the commencement of business until certain matters have been complied with. This provision is similar to the Victorian and Tasmanian law on the subject. Further, a company is required to keep a proper list of members, and also a proper index. There is also a provision dealing with the making of annual returns and a list of shareholders. Annual returns are required under the old Companies Act, but the provisions are being elaborated for the better. The principle is the same, but more detailed information will be required from a company, this being a further safeguard to the public. There is additional power for inspection of minute-books, and provision for the keeping of proper books and accounts by companies, and the audit thereof. There are also further provisions dealing with balance-sheets, and also the question of loans to and the remuneration of directors, etc. There is also wider power of inspection by the Crown Law Office, which follows the English, Victorian, Tasmanian, and Canadian law. We are also providing that investigation may be made by the Auditor-General in certain cases. There are further provisions as to the appointment of directors and managers, who must have the prescribed qualification, and a registry of directors will be necessary. There are also provisions as to the specific duties of directors and a further special provision that directors shall convene an extraordinary general meeting at the requisition of members holding not less than one-tenth of the paid-up capital of the company.

Part VII. contains the winding-up provisions. The winding-up provisions at present are scattered through the various Companies Acts, and they have been rearranged in more convenient form. These provisions follow the 1929 English law. The advantage in that matter will be that we shall have the advantage of decisions in the English courts in regard to company matters. The general principles, in the main, are the same. There are some alterations in matters of detail, and further safeguards of shareholders and in the public interests. A statement of a company's affairs has to be submitted to the official trustee, who is empowered to make a preliminary report to the court.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: Who is the official trustee?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The Public Curator. There is power to order the examination of promoters and directors, and to restrain fraudulent persons from managing a company.

Mr. POLLOCK: What do you mean by "fraudulent persons"? People who have been caught?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: A fraudulent person would be a person who can be proved before the court to be fraudulent. There must be discovery first, and any person interested could bring him before the court and have him removed.

There are certain provisions dealing with the officers of a company in liquidation, the falsification of books, and the prosecution of delinquent officers.

Part IX. deals with mining companies; Part X. with English companies; Part XI. with foreign companies; and Part XII with companies not formed under the Act. Part XIII. deals with the winding-up of any registered company. The whole of these five parts are exactly as we have them today.

Part XIV. deals with restrictions on sale of shares and follows the Imperial Act, and incidentally deals with share-hawking. The provisions of this Part are no doubt framed to lessen the evils in regard to inducing people to buy shares without having a knowledge of the bona fides of companies. One cannot legislate wholly to prevent the unwary from being defrauded; but legislation can provide some safeguard or restrictions in that direction. Hon. members will agree that complaints have been numerous throughout Queensland in recent times as to the unjust system of selling shares which has been going on. The Bill completely covers that state of things.

Mr. BRAND: Are you going to cut out the hawking of shares?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No; we are not going to cut out the hawking of shares at all; people can still go round selling their shares.

Mr. BEDFORD: But under a proper prospectus.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Under a proper prospectus and with proper credentials, which must be approved of by the registrar under the Companies Act and registered with him.

Part XV. contains certain administrative sections, such as service of documents, the enforcement of the duty of a company to make returns to the registrar, and prosecutions for offences. There is also provision whereby the Governor in Council may require deposits from such companies as may be prescribed, following on the lines of "The Insurance Act of 1923" and "The Private Savings Banks Act of 1923," also the Union Trustees Act and the Queensland Trustees Act.

Mr. MULLAN: A guarantee as to bona fides?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Of course. There is the usual rule-making power. Then in the schedules there are various forms of articles of association and tables of fees.

The Bill is a lengthy one, and one that will no doubt require careful scrutiny before its assent. The Bill will remain on the table for some time; and I desire that anyone who is interested will come forward with any suggestion he may think fit to make, and any suggestion will receive every consideration. I would like to stress the fact that it has been a matter of very serious consideration so far as my department is concerned. I consider that the mature consideration of English experts should weigh very seriously when people bring opposition to bear on the Bill.

I take it that everybody who makes up his mind to oppose the Bill or to suggest alterations will take into consideration what has been done in England, and that great weight should be given to the views of English experts.

Mr. MULLAN: You are introducing the Bill with an open mind yourself?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Entirely. Hon. members will also notice that we have inserted in the marginal notes as far as possible references to the existing law, to the law of the other States, and to the Imperial Act. They will see opposite each clause references to the present Queensland law, the Victorian law, and the English law.

The Bill is far-reaching, and our desire is to put the company law of this State on a sound and up-to-date basis. I hope it will receive the serious consideration of hon. members. I commend the analysis of the contents of the Bill to hon. members. The Bill is a long one, and I am sure it will be very hard for some hon. members to wade through it; but, if they make a study of the analysis of the contents, they will see the idea of the Bill clause by clause.

Before I sit down I desire to compliment very highly the Parliamentary Draftsman in regard to this Bill. I know that a lot of people say this is a very desirable Bill and a very good Bill—perhaps I may get some undue credit for it—I have certainly interested myself in it; but I want to give credit to our Parliamentary Draftsman, Mr. J. E. Broadbent, for the splendid manner in which he has prepared the Bill. I think it is a remarkable piece of work on his part. The result is very creditable to him, and I do not think I would be doing my duty if I sat down without saying something about his work.

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*) [3.42]: I desire to say a word of appreciation of the fact that the Attorney-General has seen fit to deal rather fully with the Bill at this stage. There can be no doubt that the information he has given will be very valuable in determining the effect of some of the main provisions of the Bill. There can also be no doubt that a complete amendment of the law relating to companies is desirable, and to some extent urgently required. That has been recognised for some time. Probably the delay in dealing with such a matter is due to the fact that most people realise that sooner or later the Commonwealth will get power to deal with company law, with the result that uniform law on the subject will be brought about, which is a very desirable result.

The difficulty at present arises from the difference between the laws in force in the various States. Very often predatory companies who wish to evade the effects of the law in one State go to other States to register, with the result that they are not amenable to the laws of the firstmentioned State. It has been suggested from time to time that Parliament might delegate to the Commonwealth the power to legislate in this respect; but there is great difficulty in that direction. I have known cases where resolutions have been carried unanimously by conferences of State representatives to the effect that they should recommend to their Governments the adoption of a uniform Bill in respect of certain matters. Take, for instance, machinery and scaffolding, and stock foods. In such cases it sometimes happens that, when it comes to giving effect by legislation to such resolutions, a change of policy takes place, and nothing more is heard of the proposal. However, I am satisfied that in a Bill of this nature a lot of work is done by the Parliamentary Draftsman and the Crown Law Department, and I appreciate the delicate manner in which the Attorney-General claimed credit for the officers of his department—credit where it is due. It is proper that that should be done.

It will be rather difficult for most hon. members to get a thorough grasp of this Bill. As the Attorney-General says, it contains over 380 clauses and eleven schedules. I have been in Parliament for over sixteen years, and I do not recollect a Bill of such dimensions having been introduced here. I do not object to its size. I merely mention that fact as indicating how complete it is. In the ordinary course of the procedure of this Chamber, it will be very difficult for hon. members to understand the real meaning of many of the provisions. The Attorney-General has said that he introduces the Bill with an open mind, and he is prepared to accept any suggestions that are worth while, no matter from what source they come. That is a commendable attitude. In addition, in amending the law in such a comprehensive manner as we propose we need to see that nothing is unduly hurried and no

mistakes are made in what may be referred to later as a model company law.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: We do not propose to hurry.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: I suggest that it might be worthy of consideration whether we should not adopt the method which was followed in the British Parliament. The Attorney-General quite rightly pointed out that this measure was very largely the product of a full investigation at home. I think that, after the Royal Commission reported, the Bill itself was considered by Select Committees of both Houses, who made recommendations to Parliament.

The English Act of 1929 was the product of the work of that Commission, plus the recommendations of the parliamentarians who constituted the select committees. With the object of thoroughly surveying the whole scope of the Bill, and with the object of extending to the people outside an opportunity of making recommendations in a concrete fashion, I move the following amendment:—

"Add to the motion the words—

'and that the said Bill be referred to a select committee consisting of the following members:—Mr. Macgroarty, Mr. J. E. Walker, Mr. Kelso, Mr. Pease, and the mover, for the consideration of the purposes and probable effects of the said Bill, and with power to make recommendations for its improvement.

'That the aforesaid select committee shall have all the authority conferred on a select committee by Standing Orders Nos. 181 to 207, both inclusive.'"

I move for the appointment of a select committee, not with the object of obstructing the passage of the Bill, but rather to facilitate it. A number of interests are involved in the passing of a law of this nature, and associations of various kinds might desire to make recommendations to the select committee, and those recommendations could be considered and reported upon. In addition, the report of the select committee, when presented to Parliament, would be the basis for discussion, and would facilitate discussion. It would prevent unnecessary delay, and the debate, particularly during the second reading stage, would focus round the essentials contained in the report. The course that I recommend is one that should receive favourable consideration from the Government. We cannot afford to make mistakes in regard to this matter which is of far-reaching importance. We realise that the Bill is the result of the careful investigation and careful survey of the latest law dealing with the matter; but, when we are about it, we should at least see to it that, before placing the law on the statute-book, Parliament is assured that it understands what it is doing, and that what it is doing is devised in the best interests of the State. It is with that object that I move for the appointment of a select committee, and I commend the suggestion to the Government for consideration.

The CHAIRMAN: A similar amendment to this was proposed on the introductory stage of the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Act Amendment Bill on 6th August last, which had for its purpose the referring of the matter to a select committee for consideration and report.

On further consideration, I have come to the opinion that the form of that amendment was out of order. In the first place, the Committee can only consider matters which have been referred to it by the House. The matter which was referred to the Committee in that case was "the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend the Regulation of Sugar Cane Prices Acts in certain particulars," and the amendment proposed to replace that by referring the matter to a select committee. A Committee of the whole House cannot order the appointment of a select committee; and, although the amendment, if carried, would have to receive the concurrence of the House on being reported to it, I am of opinion that the amendment should not have been accepted at that stage. I, therefore, regret that I cannot accept the amendment as proposed by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*) [3.54]: When moving for the appointment of a select committee, I intended to remark that there were various stages at which such an amendment could be submitted, but it was not easy to do it in Committee. My object in proposing the appointment of a select committee at this stage was to affirm the desirability of introducing a Bill having for its object certain things. I am not in any way disputing the desirability of affirming that principle. The fact also exists that the Bill has been prepared by the Attorney-General and his department with that purpose in view. I thought this was the proper stage to move the motion. However, I accept your ruling, Mr. Roberts, and will move for the appointment of a select committee at the report stage.

Mr. PEASE (*Herbert*) [3.55]: The Minister has given us the best reason why this Bill should be referred to a select committee. He pointed out that the Act upon which this Bill is based was brought in only after the report of a commission of inquiry had been obtained. He further stated that the Imperial Act had been referred to select committees in the House of Commons and the House of Lords. The business men of this city are greatly concerned about this Bill, and have appointed a special committee, consisting of representatives of the Stock Exchange, Chamber of Commerce, and various incorporated accountancy institutes to study the Bill and make recommendations upon it. To whom are they going to make recommendations unless it be to a select committee of this House? If such a committee is not appointed, members of this House will not have made available to them the recommendations which that special committee of business men will make. They will pass them on to the Minister, who cannot pass them on to the House. The object of our leader in asking for the appointment of a select committee is to enable that committee to sift the evidence and make a comprehensive report upon it to Parliament. There is no urgency for this Bill. The Minister has pointed out that the second reading will not take place for some considerable time; and I hope that, when the motion which our leader proposes to move for the appointment of a select committee comes up for consideration, the Government will favourably consider it.

I have been perusing the report made by the special committee of the Government Party which was deputed to report upon the reduction or adjustment of capital of the Queensland railways. I find that that committee reports that the capital of the Queensland railways should be reduced. Here we are asking Parliament to reaffirm the principle of referring such matters to a committee for investigation and report. If it is good enough to refer a matter of urgent public importance to a special committee of the Government Party, then that principle should be adopted in respect of this important Bill. The Cabinet decided that the committee to consider the adjustment of the capital of the railways should consist of Mr. Kelso, the hon. member for Nundah, the Deputy Auditor-General, Mr. Glassey, and Mr. Murton, of the staff of the Railway Commissioner. We are speaking on behalf of the whole of the people, including those involved in this matter, and are merely asking for the extension of that principle which has been established by the Government Party and supported and acted upon by Cabinet.

The people are a good deal concerned about this measure; and the sole thought of our leader is to get the fullest information from everybody concerned, because Parliament must take the sole responsibility for the Bill, when passed. This is one of the most important measures that have ever come before this Parliament; and I hope that, when our leader moves the motion for the appointment of a select committee, it will be supported by hon. members in the same manner as they supported the appointment of a committee for the adjustment of the capital of our railways.

Mr. BEDFORD (*Warrego*) [3.58]: The introduction of this Bill fills a very long felt want. The whole scheme of company legislation in Australia requires modernising. Most of us who have lived and hoped for uniform action from the Commonwealth not only in this matter, but in regard to marriage, divorce, and other matters which have no interstate boundaries in the scope of their action, have been disappointed. We are sorry that the Commonwealth Government have not seen fit to go on with this very welcome measure long before this. Be that as it may, the Queensland Companies Act has been very far behind even those of the other States.

I was interested in hearing the Minister say that there was involved in this Bill the nomenclature of companies, and that the word "co-operative" was not to be used indiscriminately; similarly the words "Queensland," "Australia," or "Commonwealth" which have been undesirably used in the case of insurance companies which have come up and fallen down again leaving a trail of ruin behind them.

The decision to have a greater control over balance-sheets would have put an end long ago to such a ruffianly thing as the Citizens' Life Assurance Company issuing a true balance-sheet and a false balance-sheet, as they did for years—a true balance-sheet for the benefit of the registrar of companies, as evidently they did not like to be put under the stigma of a charge of perjury for making a false declaration; and a false balance-sheet, which went out to the public with such things as dividends mixed up with bonuses and surrenders never properly shown.

Similarly we have had cases in this city of insurance companies which would never have seen the light of day had there been proper prospectuses and proper publicity given to the prospectuses. Similarly in the case of banks: Everybody knows that under the limited liability companies law any bank can start in business—and they do start in business—in good times, and they invariably fail in bad times. Mergers take away a lot of the derelicts; and it is a fact that Australia has fewer individual banks to-day than it had twenty years ago. These bad times are finding out—not only banks, but the banking system. During the last few days one has gone, and two others are in jeopardy, although, on their balance-sheets, they are apparently quite sound. But this extraordinary thing called confidence has such an effect as to put them in jeopardy, seeing that people are stupid enough in Australia to be hoarding silver when there is only 2½d. worth of silver to the shilling, and are fond of hoarding notes; and, if they have a disbelief in their country, the £1 note is valueless. In the matter of trustee companies greater care needs to be taken to see that they have sufficient capital to give their clients a fair run. The Union Trustee Company and other trustee companies all ask the public to believe in their honour—to believe in their tremendous and supernal honour—yet the Union Trustee Company had one manager who received from a white man a large number of sovereigns, sold them to a Chinaman for 27s. each, and then returned paper to the white man; and that same company also had to have its right withdrawn as an agent making up income tax returns for two years because its next manager had been proved guilty of issuing a false income tax return. If that be the morality belonging to these trustee companies, which insist that they are there not for their own private profit, but for the public good, then the sooner this kind of legislation gets to them the better.

The matter of bond issues also requires great attention. If the basis of this Bill is that only the prospectus is the basis of the contract the people will be protected; and a company should be prevented from issuing bonds which are false because there is not a prospectus within the true sense of the term. There are cases such as the New Zealand forestry bond. I had a case come before me where a woman had purchased £100 worth of bonds. This woman, induced by the fine talk of the canvasser, bought these bonds; and, by-and-by, having paid £100, she discovered she could get only £20; but by adroit use of the bonds and by special arguments—which they called blackmail—I succeeded in getting £104 back.

Similarly the Government of the Commonwealth, by its new tariff, promoted the growth of tobacco in Australia and particularly in Queensland. Queensland is now the happy hunting ground of various tobacco bond issuers who are attempting to cultivate tobacco on private land while the Government have 400,000,000 acres of land, much of it suitable for tobacco growing, which they can give away. These people want curbing. Only within the last few days a new-rich uncle from Fiji, describing himself as a bond-issuer from England, has visited Brisbane. This scheme of

the British Sugar Industries proposes to issue 500,000 bonds at £30; and its tale is that it is not going to allow the rich brokers, millionaires, and Rothschilds of Britain to get hold of these bonds. It is kind and good enough in a time of trouble to decide to come here and get somewhere about £500,000 of money from the money savers of this State. I do hope that this Bill provides for these things; but it should have been referred to a committee so that we could get all possible information on every part of it. I do hope the Bill will be sufficiently comprehensive, and that later on the Attorney-General, seeing that he has a long-distance passage for this Bill—will agree to the appointment of this committee, so that we shall get every possible light thrown on every possible provision of it.

Mr. KERR (*Enoggera*) [4.6]: It is gratifying to learn from the speeches of hon. members opposite that they welcome this Bill. I think that everyone in Queensland and every institution concerned will welcome the measure.

With reference to the suggestion to appoint a select committee, I may say that when sitting in opposition for a number of years, whenever we suggested the appointment of select committees the Government of the day would not agree to it.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: When were they suggested?

Mr. KERR: On several occasions.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: We had two or three appointed.

Mr. KERR: The Government never saw fit to accept such a motion from us. I am not against the appointment of select committees at all; but I think that in connection with a Bill like this it would be next to impossible to get anywhere with a select committee. The Government have been very courteous in regard to this Bill. The Attorney-General has brought it down at this early stage of the session so that it can be printed, and any person, institution, or company will be able to secure a copy of it, and the subsequent discussion on the Bill will not take place for some considerable time. I am not concerned in regard to outside people getting advance copies after the first reading stage, but I consider that Parliament should decide these facts. We as a party are quite determined that this Bill shall not become public property until this House has first had the opportunity of perusing it. Hon. members will agree that no Bill should be distributed outside Parliament until we have discussed the Bill here. If we were to have a select committee, it would operate in various directions, one of which would be consultation with other bodies, and therefore Parliament would be the second body to hear what is proposed in the Bill. That is always the danger of a select committee. (Opposition dissent.) The proper thing is to have this Bill printed and distributed. The Opposition will have every opportunity of moving amendments and to obtain advice in regard to the Bill. The Government have been very generous and courteous in bringing in a Bill of over 300 clauses in the early stages of the session, so that hon. members opposite will have full opportunity of going thoroughly into the matter.

I trust the Bill will go through this stage. Many people are concerned in this measure, and it will be required to be gone into and advice sought about it. It is not a Bill of a controversial nature, but a measure that is for the benefit of all sections of the community.

Mr. POLLOCK (*Gregory*) [4.11]: Hon. members of all shades of political opinion are convinced of the desirableness of introducing a Bill to amend and consolidate the company law. We are prepared to co-operate fully with the Government in the effort to get a thoroughly workable Bill, and one that will as far as practicable meet the views of every section in the House. It may be that we cannot get a Bill that will suit the views of all; but we at least can have an opportunity of putting into the Bill those things that we feel should be there. A Bill of this kind containing nearly 400 clauses and eleven schedules is really a whole session's work for Parliament, if it is to be considered properly. We do not ask that the whole session be set apart for it, but that we be given the opportunity of setting it aside after it has been read a first time, so that everybody who has objection to certain phases of it will be able to come along to the select committee appointed by Parliament later on, if it is so decided, and give his views on the Bill, and show us whether the Bill is practicable, where it falls short of requirements, and how it can be improved.

Many people who are every day working under the aegis of company law will be able to tell us much better than the majority of hon. members what is needed in its amendment. Company law is a thing of which, perhaps, not half a dozen members of an Assembly such as this know very much about. I am sure that the Minister himself will agree that the knowledge of a barrister on some phases of company law is almost as slight as mine; and other hon. members are in a similar position. If we are to understand the clauses in the Bill, we should know exactly what they are intended to cover, and be able to read them so as to understand their effect. If there is any objection to any of them, it should be our aim to see that the persons who have valid objections are able to state them before we get to the second reading and ultimately the passing of the Bill. I would suggest to the Minister that, quite apart from his courtesy up to this stage, unless a measure of this kind is submitted to a select committee for examination, it should carry with it a precis showing exactly what the new provisions are and what they are intended to cover, giving us the reasons for the grouping of the other clauses and, in general, explaining every provision of it, so that we can intelligently follow it through Committee. That would be a great help to hon. members, even if it were decided not to go on with the select committee proposal.

So far as I know company law, it is generally intended as a protective law. Like most other laws, it is intended to protect the public against people who are unscrupulous or desire to gain something for themselves at the expense of others. The company law has been framed for a number of years with that object in view, so as to give the public a maximum of protection against what we popularly know as the "go-getter." To-day the average "go-getter" can get round any company law that has ever been framed. He can tell a story that

will leave the company law quite a long way behind. Share hawking, such as hawking of Roma oil shares, the hawking of shares in tobacco farms which will probably never be suitable for the growing of tobacco—which will probably mean that people who have spent a lifetime in saving a few hundred pounds will be robbed of that money—these and the hawking of mining shares and shares generally show that there is a necessity for far-reaching legislation to protect the public. It may be that, whilst the Minister and those advising him are satified that the Bill contains the provisions necessary for that purpose, we shall find on examination a hundred different ways in which the measure might be amended in order to cope with the situation more satisfactorily; and for that reason we are willing to co-operate with the Minister and the Government, provided that they are prepared to accept that co-operation. At any rate, we shall certainly give the Government the opportunity of meeting us half way at a later stage of the Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. N. F. Macgroarty, *South Brisbane*) [4.17]: I am prepared to give every consideration to the suggestions of the Leader of the Opposition, both as to the appointment of a select committee and a precis of the Bill. I think it is very desirable that we should have a precis of every clause of the Bill, if possible. Of course, I am fortunate in having gone through the Bill, not once, but several times; but it may be very desirable that a precis of the measure should be arranged before we go into Commitee. I shall give very serious consideration to the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition as to the appointment of a select committee.

I have been asked by a number of people to have advance copies of the Bill made available to them; but this I have emphatically refused to do, because I hold the view that no one outside Parliament should see a Bill before it is introduced into this Chamber. I am to receive representatives from various interests concerning the proposed measure, and I shall arrive at a decision concerning the appointment of a select committee before meeting any deputation.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*) [4.19]: I am glad that the Attorney-General has undertaken to provide a precis of the Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I shall endeavour to do so.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: It can be done. That practice has already been followed. When I was a member of the Government, a rather lengthy Land Act Amendment Bill was introduced and a precis provided in the Bill itself. I also know that, when drafting and submitting Bills to Cabinet, a precis is prepared for the information of all the Ministers. Discussion will be facilitated if a precis of this Bill is prepared; and, in view of the statement of the Attorney-General, I do not intend to carry out my purpose of moving on the report stage for the appointment of a select committee. I can move in that direction, if necessary, at a later stage. There are no politics associated with the Bill; and I believe that the appointment of a select committee would be of advantage to the Minister. I am concerned with having a company law in this State which, while not hampering legitimate enterprise, will provide the maximum of protection to the general public.

Question—"That the resolution (*Mr. N. F. Macgroarty's motion*) be agreed to"—put and passed.

The House resumed.

The CHAIRMAN reported that the Committee had come to a resolution.

Resolution agreed to.

FIRST READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. N. F. Macgroarty, *South Brisbane*) presented the Bill, and moved—

"That the Bill be now read a first time."

Question put and passed.

Second reading of the Bill made an Order of the Day for Tuesday, 22nd September.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS BILL.

SECOND READING.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. N. F. Macgroarty, *South Brisbane*) [4.25]: In 1929 the present Premier definitely pledged his party to an equitable redistribution of electorates. Amongst other things he made the following statement at Mackay:—

> "When we are returned to power, we intend to appoint an Electoral Committee to carry out a redistribution of seats. That work will be done by an independent commission free from party politics."

I desire to trace shortly the history of the Electoral Districts Act. I suggest that common sense suggested the Act of 1910, and a redistribution of seats was made about that time. At the elections in 1915 the Labour Party were returned to power with a big majority. They went along merrily as the Government of the day until 1920. In that year they found that they had lost some favour with the people. At the election held in that year the parties were returned in the following proportions:—Labour, 38; Opposition, 34. The Labour Party were returned to power with a very slender majority. The Government of the day evidently became alarmed at their slender majority, and in the following year resolved to have a redistribution of seats made.

We have heard a lot about what will be done by this Government, and what the late Government did in the matter of redistribution of seats; but facts speak for themselves. In 1922 the then Government had a redistribution. Notwithstanding that "The Electoral Districts Act of 1910" remained on the statute-book, they only altered it in 1922 in order that they might abolish seats held by the Opposition. "The Electoral Districts Act of 1922" abolished the electorates of Musgrave, Drayton, and Pittsworth—all seats held by Country Party members, who sat in opposition to the then Government. The following new seats were established—Sandgate, Wynnum, and Kelvin Grove. Evidently the Government expected that they would win those newly created electorates. They were not successful in winning either Sandgate or Wynnum, but were suc-

cessful in winning Kelvin Grove, so that, as a result of the rearrangement,, they gained one seat. There is no gainsaying the fact that the move of the Government of the day had one objective—that of gaining ground at a time when their majority was very slender.

In addition, the electorate of Kennedy had its boundaries very materially altered. Kennedy was represented by Mr. John Jones in the Country Party interests; but, owing to the manner in which the boundaries were altered, he never offered himself for re-election for his old seat, and Kennedy was won by the Labour Party.

There is no question that "The Electoral Districts Act of 1922" was introduced for the benefit of the Labour Party, the then Government. But that is a small detail. When we come to view the alterations made to the boundaries of the various electorates, we are almost astounded.

Mr. HYNES: Those seats were altered by the commission.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I suppose the Government had nothing to do with the commission. When we hear things like this, we cannot let them go unchallenged. The poor old Government of the day knew nothing about the commission! That compels me to say that at least one member of the commission who was a mining warden——

Mr. HYNES: You are not game to say who he is.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Oh, yes, I am! His name was Dunlop. The Government of the day knew nothing about the commission, but Mr. Dunlop, the warden, after the redistribution was promoted by the Labour Government to be a warden in the first division, over the heads of a number of men who were entitled to the position before him. He was put in the first division of wardens.

Mr. HYNES: That is a dirty insinuation.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That is a statement of fact. I will go further, and say that the same gentleman was, by the same Government, disrated and transferred to other districts which were in the second class; yet the selfsame Government allowed that man to retain the first class classification. He went originally to Cloncurry. Later it was deemed necessary to remove him to Chillagoe. Then he was sent to Gladstone, and later to Clermont; and he was allowed by the late Labour Government to retain a first class classification, although stationed in second class districts. He had a personal qualification. I do not know whether other men in the Government service had a similar qualification.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: As a matter of fact, you have already done the same thing. You have transferred officers to subordinate positions while retaining the higher classification.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I know nothing about that. Hon. members opposite say they had nothing to do with the commission. I make bold to state that they had something to do with the commission.

Mr. HANLON: Do you suggest that we bribed the commission?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not suggest that you bribed the commission, but I do suggest that your Government favoured Mr. Dunlop, who was one of the Commissioners.

Mr. HANLON: You should be the last to talk about anyone.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am talking about somebody. I claim that this man was favoured unjustly by the late Government. Hon. members opposite know as well as I do that he was allowed to retain a first class classification.

The 1922 redistribution was unsatisfactory, and I have no hesitation in saying that by 1926 there was a scandalous disproportion of voting strength in the seventy-two electorates. In the year 1926 four electorates had more than 9,000 voters on the roll while eleven had less than 5,000; fifteen members represented an aggregate constituency of 69,741 voters, and twelve members represented an aggregate constituency of 107,104 voters. All this favoured Labour; and the McCormack Government refused to alter that state of affairs. By 1929 the position had become worse. In the election of that year an aggregate of 82,400 electors returned eighteen members, while 125,428 electors returned only thirteen members.

Mr. PEASE: You won the election on that.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: One of the reasons why we won the election was because the people were disgusted with the attitude of the Labour Government in refusing to alter the boundaries.

Mr. PEASE: Why alter the boundaries now?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: We are altering the boundaries now to restore the position to an equitable basis, and so that we shall not be accused of perpetuating such an unfair state of affairs.

The Leader of the Opposition said at an earlier stage that in 1886 there were seventy-two members, and somebody else said at that time there were only 392,000 voters. The Leader of the Opposition asked, "Why reduce the number of members in 1931?" There are two answers to that question. The first is: At the present time we have a Commonwealth Government, and we send representatives to the Commonwealth Parliament; therefore, there is duplication of representation on behalf of the State. That is one reason why there should be a reduction now. The second reason is that everywhere you go the people are asking for a reduction in the number of members.

Mr. PEASE: They are asking when the elections are coming on.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There is no need for them to ask that.

There has also been some reference to unification. I have no hesitation in saying that I hope the time will never come for such a state of affairs to exist. So far as Queensland is concerned, we are too young for that. We have not the representation of the other States, and would not get the advantage which other States would get. The Queensland people would do well to preserve their State rights as long as pos-

sible. The Leader of the Opposition said on the initiation stage of the Bill —

> "The real facts are known—that the Government, having made preliminary surveys of all the electoral districts of the State, have discovered that by no other means can they so adjust those electorates as to secure the return of this House of a majority to support them. Therefore, they have devised this method, under which, by reducing the number of members by ten, they can so manipulate the boundaries of electorates as to keep themselves in power; so that the Bill could be aptly described as a 'Government Electoral Insurance Bill,' because, so far as legislation can contrive it, the dice are to be loaded in their favour."

Mr. HYNES: Everyone knows it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: It is laughable to hear the Leader of the Opposition or any of his party talk about manipulating the electorates. The Leader of the Opposition also said—

> "They propose to reduce the number of members of this House by ten and fix city quotas in such a way as to further their object in the direction I have indicated."

Let us examine that phrase—

> "Fix city quotas in such a way as to further their object in the direction I have indicated."

If we do fix the city quotas in an equitable way, does not that affect me and every other sitting member the same as anybody else?

Mr. POLLOCK: Not if you are a fixer.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes. It will only be a definite quota, and what could be more equitable than that? So far as the cities are concerned, we definitely cannot go below 8,029 votes. What is unjust about that? We are giving ourselves an equal chance with everybody else. What is the opposition to that? So far as I can make out, there are twenty country seats below the minimum quota of 6,424; there are eight Brisbane seats below the quota of 8,029; and there are six of the ten other cities below the quota of 7,600. Let me give this comparison. When the last election took place in 1929 there were four Ministers of the Crown, one of them the Minister in charge of the electoral law, holding seats under these conditions. The hon. member for Flinders had 2,652 on his roll. Imagine going for an election with 2,652 people on the roll!

Mr. POLLOCK: On the election day there might be 8,000 on that roll.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: But the fact is that there were not. The Home Secretary went to the last election with 3,357 on his roll. The hon. member for Brisbane, who was Secretary for Public Works, went to the electors with 5,359 electors on the roll, and the then Secretary for Public Lands, the late member for Gympie, went to the electors with 5,292 on his roll. Could anything be more ridiculous?

Mr. HYNES: That was the quota then.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Let me make a comparison with what we are doing to-day. The Premier's minimum quota is 6,424; he has 6,400 on his roll, and has therefore only twenty-four short. I am quoting the Ministers who are under the quota. We are not going to leave them under the quota, but intend to bring them up to it. We are going to ask them to go to the elections and face more electors than they have done in the past. The Secretary for Public Lands has 6,149, or a shortage of 275; the Secretary for Railways has 3,592, or a shortage of 1,032, and the Home Secretary has 4,552, or a shortage of 1,872. The Secretary for Mines has 3,386—a shortage of 3,038. I have 6,315—a shortage of 1,714. We are bound to make alterations with respect to the electorates of those six Ministers. They are all going into the melting pot—into the hands of the commission. What is going to happen to the electorate of the Secretary for Mines, that of the Home Secretary, or to my own? We are not going to the electors with those short figures. We are going to bring ourselves up to the quota, and perhaps above it, according to what the commissioners decide. In other words, we are entirely in the hands of the commissioners. Anything may happen to us, but we are doing it like men. We are not going to an election in the way hon. members opposite did. Surely they ought not to say a word about what we are doing, especially the hon. member for Flinders, who had a roll of 2,652 at election time, whilst my friend the Secretary for Public Instruction, had some 12,000.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The more the merrier—the bigger the majority.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am sure that everybody who thinks fairly will agree that it is time there was a redistribution, as well as that it is time that there was a reduction in the number of members. What was the position at the time of the 1929 general election? The number on the rolls was 490,338; the statutory quota was 6,810; the statutory minimum was 5,448; and the statutory maximum 8,172. The electorates which were above the statutory maximum numbered three held by members of the Government Party at that time, now the Opposition, and ten held by the Opposition at that time, now the Government. The latter—that is, the seats held by members of the then Opposition—had the following enrolments:—

Enoggera	...	...	11,739
Logan	...	...	11,583
Oxley	...	...	11,024
Nundah	...	...	10,251
Teowong	...	...	9,176
Sandgate	...	...	9,079
Windsor	...	...	8,900
Cooroora	...	...	8,722
Toombul	...	...	8,393
Wynnum	...	...	8,190

Of the seats which were held by members of the Government, now the Opposition, the seats above the quota were:—

Bulimba	...	...	11,575
Kelvin Grove	...	...	8,502
Herbert	...	...	8,289

The electorates below the statutory quota numbered eighteen, only one of which was held by a member of the present Government Party, then the Opposition, the remaining seventeen being held by members of the present Opposition, then the Government Party. The seventeen seats which were below the

quota and held by the members of the present Opposition were:—

Barcoo	...	...	5,415
Brisbane	...	...	5,359
Maranoa	...	...	5,336
Mitchell	...	...	5,319
Gympie	...	...	5,292
Rockhampton		...	5,227
Warrego	...	...	5,074
Townsville	...	...	5,016
Leichhardt	...	...	4,772
Burke	...	...	4,433
Cook	...	...	4,432
Chillagoe	...	...	4,369
Queenton	...	...	4,025
Gregory	...	...	3,927
Charters Towers		...	3,821
Mount Morgan		...	3,397
Flinders	...	...	2,652

The seat held by a member of the present Government Party, then the Opposition, was:—

Normanby	...	...	4,544

There can be no gainsaying the fact that nothing can be more unjust than that; and the Labour Party—the Government of the day—must take the responsibility for going to the electors after allowing their seats to fall so much below the minimum quota. That is their idea of justice; but the people showed that it was not their idea of justice by putting this Government into power.

Now I want to refer to some of the hon. members who betrayed alarm on the initiation of this measure. It is interesting to note that the hon. members who are most alarmed about the proposed redistribution are the hon. members for Flinders, Gregory, Leichhardt, Mount Morgan, and Warrego. The new electoral quota will be arrived at on the basis of the population as at 30th June, 1931; and in that connection it is interesting to observe these figures showing the number of electors on the roll at the dates mentioned—

Electorate.	Enrolment at 31st December, 1928.	Enrolment at 30th June, 1931.
Flinders ..	2,652	3,377
Gregory ..	3,927	3,686
Leichhardt ..	4,772	4,539
Mt. Morgan ..	3,387	3,120
Warrego ..	5,054	4,205

It must be remembered that at the last elections there were seventeen seats with numbers below the statutory minimum. I could continue to make comparisons to prove conclusively that the Government of that day were not just in the administration of the electoral laws. They proved by their actions that it was time that a redistribution was carried out. The hon. member for Gregory stated that the present Government proposed to create a big hurdle for Labour; but I would remind him that that hurdle was created by his own Government in fixing such a quota as to render a redistribution necessary. The present Government now propose only to set up an equitable redistribution with a view to righting a wrong that should have been corrected long ago.

The hon. member for Flinders stated that, if "The Electoral Districts Acts, 1910 to 1922" were repealed by this Bill, there would be no legal machinery to deal with a casual vacancy, but he is entirely wrong. In my opinion, clause 2 of the Bill retains all the power contained in the existing electoral law so far as that power may be required in connection with the present Parliament.

Mr. MULLAN: It covers only section 13 of the existing Act.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: In my opinion, clause 2 of the Bill reserves all the existing rights and powers. The hon. member for Flinders also complained that clause 15 was a dangerous clause, having regard to its relation to section 100 of the Elections Act. Clause 15 is only a machinery clause; but evidently the hon. member for Flinders considers it a dangerous clause, believing that a bad Government like the present Government—bad in his opinion—might do something terrible, and that we should be watched.

Mr. MULLAN: I did not say that.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The hon. member certainly gave me the impression that he believed that the present Government would do something terrible unless they were watched by a regular politician like the hon. member for Flinders. The hon. member was blindly followed by the hon. member for Mundingburra and the hon. member for Leichhardt, who decided to adopt the contention of the hon. member for Flinders as the basis for their speeches. They also contended that it was not right to leave the power referred to in the hands of the Government, because they might do something wrong.

It is really laughable to hear members of the Opposition talking like this. I am not going to enter into any generalities to prove my case; but I will tell this House what the hon. member for Flinders and his Government did at the last election. The hon. member for Flinders would have us believe that section 100 was only put into the Act passed by his Government to give the soldiers an opportunity of voting.

Mr. MULLAN: And to deal with general elections.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Section 100 says this—

> "The Governor in Council may from time to time make regulations providing for all or any purposes, whether general or to meet particular cases, that may be convenient for the administration of this Act or that may be necessary or expedient to carry out the objects and purposes of this Act, including provision for all matters enabling electors absent from Queensland to exercise the right to vote either personally or by persons nominated by them for that purpose."

I repeat that the hon. member for Flinders stressed that point. I certainly got the impression that that was the real purpose of that section—to enable soldiers to vote. Then the section goes on—

> "and, where there may be in this Act no provision or no sufficient provision in respect of any matter or thing necessary or expedient to give effect to this Act, providing for and supplying such omission or insufficiency."

Section 15 was put into this Bill purely for the purpose of providing the necessary machinery to help the commissioners to do

what is required of them in carrying out their job; and we do not propose to do anything that will be questionable. It will be found that the Government do not desire or intend to do anything that is questionable. The hon. member for Flinders did something under this section which was certainly questionable. The elections were held on 11th May, 1929. On 10th May, 1929, the hon. member for Flinders issued a regulation under section 100 which he gave us to believe was only put in the Act to give soldiers an opportunity of voting.

Mr. MULLAN: I did nothing of the sort.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That is the impression I got. I intend to read the regulation which the late Government made on 10th May, 1929. The hon. member for Flinders was then the Minister in charge of the administration of the Act.

Mr. MULLAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. I have been misrepresented by the Attorney-General in a manner that is not fair. I specifically stated in the discussion on the initiatory stage of this Bill that section 100 was introduced into the Act for the specific purpose, firstly, of giving the soldiers a vote, and, secondly, of giving the Government emergency powers to deal with anything during a general election. I insist upon the Minister withdrawing that misrepresentation.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to accept the explanation of the hon. member for Flinders, and to withdraw.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I do not propose to withdraw. I suggest, and repeat, that the hon. member for Flinders gave me that impression, and stressed the fact.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. gentleman must withdraw.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Withdraw what?

Mr. SPEAKER: The statement to which the hon. member for Flinders objects—the statement in which he says the hon. gentleman misrepresented him.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: What did I say?

Mr. MULLAN: I have told you. Don't you understand English?

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the hon. gentleman to withdraw.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: What did I say? Surely I am entitled to know what it is that the hon. member complains of?

Mr. MULLAN: If the Attorney-General does not understand what I said a few moments ago, then he does not understand English.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the hon. member for Flinders to repeat the matter he complains of.

Mr. MULLAN: On the first reading of the Bill I stated that section 100 of the Elections Act was introduced by the Government at the day for two specific reasons—namely, firstly, to confer the utmost facilities on the soldiers to give them an opportunity of voting, and, secondly, to give the Government emergency powers to cover every possible contingency which might arise in the conduct of a general election. When the Minister said that the only reason why the late Government issued the regulation was to deal with the soldiers' votes, I said that he was entirely wrong. I demand that he withdraw that statement, as it misrepresents my position.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member has taken an objection to what the Attorney-General has said. He says that what he said was quite different from what the Attorney-General has said; and, while the hon. member takes up that position in regard to what the Attorney-General said, it is only right and proper, according to parliamentary usage, that the Attorney-General should withdraw his statement.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: What statement?

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the Attorney-General to withdraw.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am not going to withdraw what I did not say. I said the hon. member gave me that impression.

Mr. SPEAKER: I ask the Attorney-General to withdraw. The hon. member said that the Attorney-General misrepresented the position, and the Attorney-General must withdraw the statement.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: In order to get on with the Bill, and in deference to you, Mr. Speaker, I withdraw.

Mr. MULLAN: Now your case has gone.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Only through parliamentary procedure. The hon. member for Flinders gave me the impression that one of the main reasons why he introduced section 100 was to give the soldiers a vote. He says now that he also said that it was also introduced to give the Government an opportunity to make an alteration to meet any emergency under the Elections Act. After I resume my seat, I will read the hon. member's speech the first opportunity I get. What the hon. member said was this—

> "One of the reasons why so much scope was allowed in that section was to enable the Government to give the men at the front a vote."

Mr. COOPER: Read the next paragraph.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The next paragraph reads—

> "There was also another good reason for the inclusion of section 100 in the Elections Act in 1915; that was to give the Government a wide latitude in the conduct of a general election."

I repeat that the hon. member gave me the impression that one of the main reasons for section 100 was to give the soldiers a vote. What did the hon. member for Flinders do on the eve of the 1929 election? The elections were held on 11th May, 1929, and the Government of the day, through the hon. member for Flinders, brought in a regulation on 10th May. Is that not an outlandish position? What was wrong with the 2nd May, or the 3rd May? But no, on 10th May—on the very eve of the election—they got an inspiration to bring in a regulation; and I unhesitatingly charge the hon. member for Flinders with doing something that was not right, particularly in bringing in a regulation on the eve of an election, such as it was, and in view of what transpired afterwards.

This regulation had reference to section 69, "Absent votes," and it read—

> "51. (*a*) For the purposes of section 69 of the said Act, if any elector is

unable to read or is blind, he may sign the endorsement upon the envelope as required by subsection (2) of the said section by making his mark thereto in the presence of the presiding officer and, if they desire to be present, in the presence and sight of the poll clerks, candidates, and scrutineers, and the presiding officer shall upon such endorsement certify that the questions and answers so endorsed on the envelope were previously read over and explained to such elector previously to his so making his mark and that such elector understood the nature and contents thereof.

"(*b*) For the purposes of subsections (6) and (7) of section 69 aforesaid, the presiding officer may record the vote of any elector referred to in the last preceding paragraph by writing for such elector, in the presence of the persons specified in the aforesaid paragraph hereof, the name of the candidate or (in the case of a contingent vote) the candidates for whom such elector desires to vote.

"(*c*) For all the purposes of section 69 aforesaid the mark so made by any such elector as hereinbefore specified shall be his signature."

That is the important part.

At the last election the hon. member for Brisbane won by a majority of twenty-eight votes. The absent votes cast in the Brisbane electorate under section 69 were—

Kirwan	214
Thatcher	162
Majority of absent votes for Kirwan over Thatcher	52

A most remarkable thing that the Government of the day saw fit to give an instruction to alter the position in regard to absent votes just the day before the election! That is one of the results—a most remarkable coincidence! It is further interesting to know that in section 69 it is provided—

"That the voter shall record his vote by writing on the second page of the ballot-paper the name of the candidate for whom he votes."

Mr. POLLOCK: What is wrong with that?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I think it is distinctly improper for the Government of the day to issue a regulation on the eve of the election. Under section 61 there is a provision whereby a voter who cannot write his name may vote by the presiding officer making a mark for him; but it is a most remarkable thing that the Government of the day saw fit to bring in such a regulation on the eve of the election. We find one of their members winning his seat on the absent vote!

A good deal has been said by the Opposition with regard to the alteration of the residential qualifications of electors. They criticise us, and say that in making the residential qualification three months we are disfranchising the nomad and the travelling worker. I say that is all nonsense and moonshine. Every respectable worker can retain his vote wherever his residence may be, whether in a hotel, boarding-house, or in a tent.

An OPPOSITION MEMBER: How is he going to do it?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: By leaving his name on the roll. That section was put in the Elections Act to cure a deliberate intention on the part of the past Government to have a crowd of working men taken up into a district to vote. (Opposition dissent.) The three months' qualification is to prevent any such thing being done, and it is a very desirable amendment.

The hon. member for Fassifern, when speaking at the initiatory stage of the Bill, said—

"This motion proposes that it is desirable to introduce a Bill, amongst other things, to make provision for the better representation of the people of Queensland in Parliament. I wonder if the people of Queensland will not themselves take a hand in making provision for their better representation in Parliament."

I am at a loss to understand what the hon. member meant by that.

Mr. WIENHOLT: Exactly what he said.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: If the hon. member means that the people of Queensland can take a hand and have better representation by, perhaps, puting me as well as others out and putting in sixty-two members of the same quality as himself, more power to them if they desire it. We are not frightened of the people. We will go before them with confidence; and, if they consider they must have better representation, we shall bow to them; and we hope that the next Government will do something that we have endeavoured to do while we have been in office. It has been unpopular to do certain things; but we have done them. We do not fear the people; and, if the hon. member for Fassifern means that the sting in the tail of the Bill is that the Government will go out, we shall bow to the will of the people.

There was also a leading article in the "Daily Mail" after the initiation of the Bill which complained bitterly of clause 14, whereby we give power to a future redistribution of electorates. I have no hesitation in saying that I entirely disagree with the "Daily Mail." Do they suggest that we should say that under this Bill there must be a redistribution in three years, five years, or ten years? It would be ridiculous for us to do that; but we shall leave that clause in the Bill. It was in the 1910 Act; and we give future Governments, whoever they may be, the power to say whenever they think fit that there shall be a redistribution. If we were to make it mandatory that it should be done in five years, and we were not then in power, the Government of the day would be entitled to say, "We are going to the country, and it is for us to say whether there shall be a redistribution." The only sensible thing to do is to put such a clause in the Bill.

We have no idea how these alterations will work out. Every member goes into the melting pot and is in the hands of the commissioners. Hon. members opposite cannot deny that nobody knows what will happen to a number of seats represented by members on this side. I have already instanced the seat of the Secretary for Mines and the seat of the Home Secretary. We are all in the melting pot; and we do not know what the commissioners will do. We leave it to

them to do the just thing. We have not decided upon the personnel of the commission; but we have decided that a redistribution of seats is highly desirable in the interests of the country and of the electors. All Parliament does is to decide the basis, which is set out in clause 7 of the Bill. No electorate will be below the minimum, and no electorate will be above the maximum. Every electorate will be equitably dealt with under the equitable basis set out in that clause, which provides that the commissioners may adopt a margin of allowance; but in no case shall the quota be departed from to a greater extent than one-fifth more or one-fifth less; so that, in respect of a proposed electoral district which is wholly comprised of a city or comprised of a part of a city the approximate number of electors shall not be less than the quota—that is to say, 8,029. In electorates wholly comprised of the ten cities set out in the Local Authorities Act, or in electorates which are comprised of part of those cities, the enrolment shall not be allowed to fall below the quota fixed—viz., 7,000. Electorates outside cities shall not contain fewer than 6,424 electors.

Mr. STOPFORD: Why should Gympie and Charters Towers be treated like that?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Because they are recognised as cities. We are endeavouring to prescribe a fair basis; and we consider that in that clause we have done so. I conclude by saying that I have confidence that the electorates will be equitably distributed in accordance with the Act, and that the commissioners will do a fair thing by everybody, no matter on which side of the House he may sit. I beg to move—

"That the Bill be now read a second time."

At 5.16 p.m.,

The CHAIRMAN OF COMMITTEES (*Mr. Roberts, East Toowoomba*) relieved Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH (*Mackay*) [5.16]: I followed the hon. gentleman's second reading speech very closely; and I must say that I have never heard a Minister moving the second reading of an important Bill making such heavy weather. This Bill contains definite principles, but there was no attempt by the Attorney-General to affirm those principles or explain what they mean.

A redistribution of seats is required frequently in a State like Queensland, where population moves from place to place, and the numbers within a given electorate are affected by changes in industry. The Minister pointed out that certain electorates now contain fewer electors than is allowable, having regard to the margin below the quota. There is an obvious and well-known reason for that. It is due to the slump in mining and the unfavourable conditions in the pastoral industry. All the electorates which the hon. gentleman quoted as having fewer than the permissible margin below the quota had their correct numbers of electors when our redistribution took place: but, with the slump in prices of metals, droughts, and the declining wool values, those electorates were naturally denuded of population, no employment being available there for the great bulk of the population. That is the reason why inevitably from time to time the enrolment in various electorates fluctuates. Nobody argues that a redistribution should not take place. A redistribution would have been required during the life of the present Parliament, whatever Government were in power. We are in no way making any complaints about a redistribution, provided that it is done in a proper manner in the interests of the country, and in a fair and equitable way.

The Bill deliberately provides for a reduction in the number of members of Parliament; but no argument has been put forward by the Attorney-General in support of that proposal. It is said that to some extent that might be justified on the ground that Sir Samuel Griffith provided for seventy-two members of Parliament in 1887; that federation has since taken place, and that the responsibilities of members of Parliament had declined to the extent of the powers that have been vested in the Commonwealth. When the number of electorates was first fixed at seventy-two, a Legislative Council was in existence in Queensland having powers co-equal to a very large extent with the Legislative Assembly. The Legislative Council has since been abolished, and the responsibility and the work of the Legislative Assembly has correspondingly increased. In addition, every student of political reform and of political events of the present day must realise that the ramifications of government have extended enormously during the past ten to twenty years; that Governments and Parliaments have entered into realms of activity that were not formerly regarded as the proper functions of the State; and that the complicated mechanism as a result of the economic development of the country has placed increased responsibilities upon members of Parliament in countless different directions; so that we cannot agree with the Attorney-General that any decline in the responsibilities of Parliament has any relation to the number of members; nor can it be urged as a reason for reducing the number by ten.

The Attorney-General later contradicted himself when he spoke against unification and argued for the preservation of our existing sovereign powers. A further reason must be found for the reduction of the number by ten. What particular merit is there in a Parliament of sixty-two members? If a reduction is required, then why not an adequate reduction? What particular merit is there in sixty-two or fifty-two members? No argument has been advanced in support of sixty-two as the figure to be adopted, which is an indication that my contention is correct—that the Government made a preliminary survey of the electoral boundaries on the basis of seventy-two members. They discovered that by no method that they could devise could a redistribution be carried out which would be likely to be in their favour; but they discovered that, as a result of reducing the number by ten, the electoral boundaries could be so manipulated as to be likely to be in their interests. The aim and purpose of legislation dealing with this matter should be to give to the people adequate representation, and to give them every opportunity of recording their votes so that the Parliament elected will be the final choice of the people.

In the final analysis it matters nothing which party obtains the advantage at a general election. That is the responsibility

of the people as a whole. They are entitled to whatever form of government they desire. They should be unrestricted, and they should be given the widest possible choice in selecting a Parliament. When a Government endeavours to introduce a Bill whereby the electoral boundaries can be so manipulated and the quotas so fixed as to give an advantage to one party over another, then the purposes of representative government are defeated, and the public, to some extent, are thwarted. The fixation of the number at sixty-two follows the discovery by the Government that that figure enables them to provide electoral boundaries which are likely to be in their favour.

Another reason for the reduction is to pave the way for the resuscitation of the Legislative Council, which is their aim and object. They desire not only to control Parliament but to establish another Parliament in another place which will add to the cost of Parliament, and be devised in such a way as to thwart any expression of the people's will as carried out at a general election. Their desire to establish a Legislative Council is based on a system whereby they can secure a Chamber that is likely to refuse to pass legislation which may be favoured by the Legislative Assembly. To that extent the public will is thwarted, and representative forms of government disappear. Fortunately, however, the Government are not likely to be able to secure the full advantage that they anticipate. We remember that, when the Allan-Peacock Government in Victoria introduced a Redistribution of Seats Bill that was devised in similar terms to the one we are now considering, the underlying principles of inequality of quotas was embodied in the belief that it would operate in the interests of the Government of the day. As a matter of fact, it availed them nothing. The public were so outraged at the apparent duplicity of the Government that at the general election the scheme, which was carefully prepared, was thrown aside by the general public, and the Government were defeated. A significant phase of activity of the party opposite, and their general attitude, is the fear of the general public. But by this and other measures introduced during the present session of Parliament they hope to escape the retribution which is their due when the public get the opportunity of dealing with them. While giving service to democracy, they endeavour in every way to prevent it being given effect to or being carried out. In addition to this measure, the electoral laws of the State have been altered in the direction of making it more difficult for people to get on the roll, and at the same time they have made it easy for people to be struck off the roll, while the collusion which is taking place at the present time between the Department of Labour and Industry and the electoral office in the direction of getting relief workers struck off the electoral roll on which they are enrolled is a significant step in that direction.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The Leader of the Opposition states that there is collusion between the Department of Labour and Industry and the electoral office for a certain purpose. I ask that he withdraw that statement. I have not seen the principal electoral officer, and have had no communication in any shape or form with him.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Leader of the Opposition to accept the assurance of the Secretary for Labour and Industry.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: In accordance with parliamentary procedure, I accept the denial of the Secretary for Labour and Industry.

Under the electoral laws of this State a man who is absent from his residence for a period of three months is liable to be struck off the roll; and it requires him to be resident in a district for a further three months before becoming entitled to be placed on the electoral roll for that district. By this means the Government hope to disfranchise workers in the sugar and pastoral industries, and workers who are engaged in occupations nomadic in character, and who are compelled to shift from place to place in search of employment. That is one of the means the Government hope to use in their interests and in their favour. The last redistribution which took place in this State was conducted under "The Electoral Districts Act of 1910," which was passed by the Kidston Government. We never introduced a special Act to deal with the situation, and the reference of the Attorney-General to the personnel of the commission which was appointed in 1921 was unbecoming in a person holding his high and honourable position. It is a common method on the part of some people having no case themselves to attempt to discredit other people. The attack made on the personnel of that commission by the Attorney-General is in keeping with his generally unfounded and unsupported inferences made from time to time in regard to this and other matters.

The members of that commission were appointed according to the provisions of an Act passed by a Government that was not a Labour Government; and they carried out the duties they were sworn to perform in accordance with the terms of their appointment. The suggestion made by the Attorney-General is one befitting a Minister who has failed to substantiate similar inferences in other directions. The Attorney-General will require to be much more convincing in another place than he has been this afternoon before he can get any intelligent jury to agree to any inferences that he may make at different times.

Another objection that I have to the Bill is because it is introduced in what is presumably the last session of Parliament. The Attorney-General referred to matters which he described as being improper. I cannot conceive of anything being more improper than for a Government to take power under a Bill such as this to appoint a commission to arrange for a general election to take place under conditions of which they have the control without Parliament having the opportunity to consider or rectify any redistribution.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Did you not do that?

Mr. MAXWELL: That is what you did.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Answer my question!

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: Yes, I will answer that question. I made the statement in the hope of getting the question. The point I am making is this: Under the

Bill we are now considering the Government are masters of the situation after the end of this session of Parliament. The report of the redistributing commission cannot be made available until February of next year, when, under normal conditions, Parliament will not be sitting; so this Assembly will have no opportunity whatever of discussing the work of the commission. The reply to the question put by the Attorney-General and the hon. member for Toowong, who so disastrously rushed to his aid, is that on the last three redistributions that took place Parliament had full and adequate opportunity of discussing the work of the commission in every detail, and took advantage of that opportunity. On this occasion that opportunity will not be available to Parliament, and from that point of view no Government should have the authority conferred upon them that they are asking within the scope of this Bill.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Who should have it?

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: We should have an opportunity of reviewing the work of the commission. The Minister cannot quote any instance where a redistribution has been carried out in the last session of a Parliament and the Assembly has been denied the opportunity of debating the work of the commissioners.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: We have had one special session. What is there to stop us having another?

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: To paraphrase Carlyle "There will be just as many sessions of Parliament as are required." I know the Minister and his colleagues will not be anxious to have any special sessions of Parliament and do not desire to continue the sitting of Parliament any longer than they can avoid. They desire to place certain legislation on the statute-book. They have already indicated their haste in that direction by cutting out private members' day and by providing for another sitting day. That indicates the intention of the Government to hurry into recess as early as possible, so that they can prepare whatever scheme they may consider to be necessary to give effect to this and other measures that they place on the statute-book. No matter how the Attorney-General or his colleague the Secretary for Labour and Industry may interject, I am prepared to meet them before the tribunal of the people at any time they desire it. One thing for which the present Government have been notorious is that shrinking shyness they have displayed in regard to meeting the electors on anything like equal terms. They go to functions where they occupy privileged positions, and where it would be rude and bad manners to reply to them: but not for twenty months at least has any member of the Government or any prominent member of the Government Party addressed a public meeting in the metropolitan area. They realise that the public have been outraged by their lack of principle.

They realise that, while they may be able with a supine majority such as they have in this Chamber to get away with some of the legislation they are introducing, at the first time of asking the people under this Bill or any other Bill will exact the penalty that is their due. (Government interjections.) I repeat that not only have the Government decided on the figure sixty-two with a view to loading the dice in their favour, but they have also fixed the maximum and minimum on the same basis, and have also selected the quota for cities or parts of cities for entirely the same reason.

On the basis of sixty-two seats the quota works out at 8,029. The possible minimum quota will be 6,424, and the possible maximum quota 9,635. Thus, it is apparent that the margin between an electoral division with the possible minimum quota and that with the maximum quota is no less than 3,211 votes.

Mr. KENNY: Give the country districts a chance!

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: The minimum for a metropolitan electorate would be 8,029. The quota for an electorate in whose boundaries will be included a part of a city—"city" being the term used in the Local Authorities Act—would be 7,009, the minimum for other electorates being 6,424. Thus, the minimum quota for Brisbane electorates is 25 per cent. more than the minimum quota upon which any electoral distribution should be based; in other words, a given number of electors in the metropolitan area may return four members to Parliament, while the same number would return five members in country districts.

Mr. KENNY: Is that not right?

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: On the basis of manipulating the quotas the number of members they can elect will be four as against other districts electing five. That is to say, the ratio which the Government consider to be in their favour in certain directions is five to four. The hon. member for Cook interjects "Is not that right?" He confirms my contention that the Government have selected the quotas they have for the definite reasons that I have stated. It is well known that maps have already been prepared for the Government—they know perfectly well what the redistribution of the basis of sixty-two is going to be.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I have never seen one map.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: The hon. gentleman may not have personally seen them; but it is generally known that preliminary maps are already in existence on the basis of sixty-two electorates for Queensland as determined by the provisions of this Bill. (Government dissent.)

The Attorney-General also referred to clause 15 of the Bill and its regulation-making power. It was shown conclusively during his speech that he was entirely wrong in the quotations he made from speeches of hon. members on this side. He was in error for the simple reason that he desired to evade the real issue. We are not concerned with the aim and object of the Act of Parliament; but we are justified in commenting on any considerable extension of any provisions in that Act.

If the Attorney-General thinks that under section 69 any regulation has been made which is wrong, his Government have had ample opportunity of repealing it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: So I did.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: In his speech he attacked his predecessor for certain things which he said he did. His attitude was determined by his desire to evade his

real responsibility. It is the duty of the Minister to tell this Parliament the reason for the inclusion of this clause in the Bill and the intention of the Government when they put it there; but he evaded that entirely.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That is not true.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: There is no regulation-making power in the 1910 Act. There is no definite regulation-making power in the Bill now before us, except under the provisions of clause 15, which means that the wide regulation-making power under the Elections Act is being availed of for the Government's purposes under this Bill. That is the real reason why this has been introduced. The Government bring in their Bill in the last session of Parliament. Parliament goes into recess. The commissioners appointed by the Government carry out their duties under the Act. The Government then are in the position of being able to introduce any regulations they please without Parliament having the opportunity of discussing them or disallowing them. My contention is that, if the Government desire a regulation-making power, it should be stated fairly and honestly in the Bill, and not inferentially, as is being done here.

The present Act is entirely adequate for its purpose. It was devised on the sound principle that as far as possible each vote should be of equal value. Do hon. members opposite argue against that principle? I believe that they are opposed to it. Every action which the Government have taken has been in the direction of limiting the power of the citizens of this State and placing it in the hands of fewer and fewer people. This measure indicates the extent to which the Government and their dictators outside are animated by Fascist ideals.

Mr. Bernays, in his work, "Queensland Politics during Sixty Years," referred to the 1910 Act in the following words:—

> "The session of 1910 produced the Electoral Districts Act (Appel). The object of this Act was to redistribute the seats and equalise the value of the votes of the electors."

One does not require to be an economist or a philosopher to determine that the figures I have quoted indicate that "the equalising of the value of the votes of the electors" is certainly not the principle underlying this measure.

The Minister does not like the criticism of the Bill by the "Daily Mail." It is interesting to note that even the "Daily Mail," and to some extent other Tory newspapers, have found it to be their public duty to protest against some of the acts of the present Government and some of their legislation. The men who write these articles realise the danger which lies in the Government proceeding too far or too obviously in certain directions; and they have often been called upon to comment adversely on many of the things which the Government are doing. The method of redistribution and the appointment of the commission—with which we shall deal later at the Committee stage—have been the subject of adverse comment in many circles in Queensland, including newspapers which ordinarily support the Attorney-General.

The "Daily Mail" of 3rd September remarks—

> "The need of reallocating sixty-two instead of seventy-two seats among the 497,806 electors of the State and at the same time preserving the present proportion of metropolitan and country representation will present some difficulties. . . ."

The "Daily Mail" realises the truth of what I have already contended—that the Government have no intention of preserving the principle of one vote one value. They have discounted that already by arranging for a quota in such a way as to secure the ratio of five to four, that being the ratio laid down in the method of securing the redistribution desired by this Government.

The author I have already quoted summarises the history of this State in connection with the evolutionary growth of the franchise, and concludes with an epitome of "The Elections Acts Amendment Act of 1915," placed on the statute-book by the Labour Government. That Act has since been altered in a serious manner. The author concludes his summary with this remark—

> "Step has followed step in widening and enlarging the electoral privileges of the people."

He also states—

> "It is said that all progress begins with a crime. There is little doubt that in earlier days the crime of disfranchising the people was rampant. By gradual processes the criminals were punished and the people came into their own."

That was written in commendation of an Act introduced in the session of 1915, and clearly shows that in the past Tory Governments manipulated electoral boundaries and the electoral law in such a way as to deny to the people the basic right of citizenship. One by one those barriers were set aside, and the people came into their own. The same author pays tribute to the same statute in the following words:—

> "If there is a more liberal franchise in any British or other Dominion than that in force in Queensland, it is hiding itself with marked success; and, if there are any men or women entitled to be on a roll who are not there, it is not because they have been obstructed by their representatives in Parliament."

In the final analysis the will of the majority of the people must prevail. It is a striking commentary upon the attitude of the present Government towards the people that a Bill of this kind can be introduced by the Attorney-General with such cynical disregard for basic principles of government. No attempt was made by the Attorney-General to justify the Bill on any sound premises. He merely commenced by accusing his predecessors of doing certain things, and inferentially argued that he was justified in following suit in other directions. In other words, if I were guilty of common assault, the Attorney-General would be justified in committing murder in the first degree. That is a reasonable inference to be drawn from his speech.

The Bill is inequitable in the extreme; it will not accomplish a fair redistribution, and it flouts and violates the principle of one vote one value. It is devised in the interests

of the Government; and it is hoped by means of this and other measures to escape the retribution which is their just due at the hands of the electors; but the public generally will be fully alive to, and will be made aware of the facts of, the position. Nothing that the Government can do can hide the fact that they have repudiated their solemn pledges and obligations to the people. Nothing will blunt the senses of the people to the injustices that they are suffering at the hands of the Government. This scheme, in common with many others proposed by the Government, will fail completely; and at the first time of asking the public generally will show their view of the Government and their policy in no hesitating fashion.

Mr. TOZER (*Gympie*) [5.54]: The Leader of the Opposition made certain insinuations and assertions against the Government for introducing this Bill. It is fair to ask him in that connection, is he judging the Government by his own party?

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: No, by your own record.

Mr. TOZER: The hon. member is judging this party by his own party for the simple reason that it has had the experience before, and he knows what it did on that occasion; therefore, he naturally thinks that our Government will do what his Government did in the past. In that connection he is making one of the greatest mistakes he ever made. We are not following in the bad footsteps of the late Government by adopting their bad principles and precedents. We are here to establish our own principles and precedents. Notwithstanding what hon. members opposite may say to the contrary, the Government are quite willing to meet the electors at any time.

The Leader of the Opposition made three assertions. First, he said that we were not game to meet the electors. When the time comes we will meet them. He knows perfectly well that this Parliament will expire about 11th May next. The Government will then have been in office for three years, and when those three years expire we shall be willing to meet the people. What have we done that would make us afraid to meet them?

Mr. PEASE: You are loading the dice against us.

Mr. TOZER: The hon. member for Herbert should not judge others by his own measure. It is a bad practice. When the time arrives, if the electors think that we have not done the right thing by the State, and believe that the Opposition can do better, then by all means let them return the Opposition to power and see what they can do. If they do return them they will soon regret that step. I do not believe that the people have lost their sanity. The Opposition may think so; but they should wait until they go before the electors and see what the result will be.

The Leader of the Opposition also said that we were rushing to get into recess, and were not keen on carrying on the session. The Opposition have had experience of two sessions in this Parliament. They were the longest sessions since 1915. When Labour was in power a session of Parliament lasted about eight weeks. They believed that they could do justice to the State by sitting for eight weeks only in a year! They are now having the experience of a third session under this Government; and by the time it terminates they will be pretty tired.

The third contention of the Leader of the Opposition was that the Government are not game to meet the electors at the present time. We are quite willing to meet the electors at any time; but what is the use of addressing a meeting now if the meetings are packed in order to stir up strife? When the time does arrive we will make our own speeches in our own way.

If hon. members opposite are honest in their beliefs, I cannot see what objection they can have to this Bill. If they were an honest party, they would have brought in a Bill while they were in power to cure the evil which this Bill sets out to cure. Why did they sit on the Government benches all those years when they knew they were representing electorates far below the quota set out in the Act of 1922? They were not game to redistribute the electorates on a fair basis.

At 7 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. TOZER: The Leader of the Opposition alleges that the Bill has been brought in with some ulterior object. He stated that a survey has been made of the electorates, that a plan has been prepared, and, that, as a result of that, this Bill has been introduced. I wish to remind hon. members opposite that a more equitable redistribution of seats was part of the platform of the Nationalist Party. Evidently hon. members opposite have forgotten that it was part of our platform; and in pursuance of that promise we are carrying out a redistribution of seats. Hon. members opposite remind me of the picture advertising Pears' soap—that of the little boy who was never happy till he got it; and even when he got it he was not happy. That is just the position of the Opposition. When we carry out our promises they are not happy, and allege that we have not carried out very many of our promises, whereas from the very start we have been endeavouring to carry out our promises, and we shall continue to do so. The reason for introducing this Bill is set out in the heading to the Bill; and, as some hon. members have apparently not read it, I will read it to remind them as to what is the object of the Bill—

> "A Bill to provide for the reduction of the number of members of the Legislative Assembly, and of the number of electoral districts to sixty-two; for the distribution of electoral districts, and to make provision for the better representation of the people of Queensland in Parliament."

"The Electoral Districts Acts of 1910" provided for seventy-two members; and "The Electoral Districts Act of 1922" also provided for seventy-two members. It was well within the power of the Government who were in power in 1922, and who continued in power until 1929, to have brought in a Bill providing for a redistribution of seats, because they must have known as well as anyone else that the electorates were not in accordance with the Act of 1910.

One reason for bringing in this Bill is that the number of electors has altered, and the quota has altered altogether. According to the electoral roll issued on 30th

June, 1931, the electoral district of Brisbane, which is represented by Labour, contained 4,790 electors. Now take as a comparison the Bulimba electorate, represented by a member on the Government side. The electoral district of Bulimba contained 12,294 electors. Is there any equity or justice in that? Now take Enoggera, represented by a Government member, and compare the number of voters on that roll with those on the Flinders roll. The electoral district of Enoggera contained 12,939 electors, while the Flinders electoral district contained only 3,377 voters. Is that equitable or just? Again, the electoral district of Logan contained 12,697 electors, while the electoral district of Mount Morgan contained only 3,120 electors. Those are three instances. Can it be said that there is an equality of votes in connection with those electorates? Then take Nundah with 11,162, and Oxley with 11,685, and compare them with Charters Towers, 3,925, and Burke with 3,905. That is the reason why the Government have brought in this Bill for the more equitable redistribution of seats in Queensland, and it is quite time the Bill was brought in. There was no justification at all for the late Government not bringing in such a Bill, because they had run from 1922 and knew exactly how the quota was working out; but no step was taken. If this Government had not taken this step, people would have said, "They are absolutely mad; here we have electorates with quotas working out like that"; and the only thing the Government can do and should do is to bring in this Bill.

The Leader of the Opposition said that he did not know of any reason why the number of members should be sixty-two, fifty, or any other number. At the same time he seems to have the knowledge that there has been a survey made and a plan prepared; but it is a peculiar thing that, while he has that knowledge, hon. members behind the Government do not know of it, and the Minister denies it. Where does the Leader of the Opposition get that information from? Has he got it in a straightforward, honest way, or is it pure imagination? We ought to have some knowledge of it on this side.

Mr. W. FORGAN SMITH: The hon. member for Toombul gave the show away.

Mr. TOZER: I can only speak for myself. I have no knowledge at all of the matter.

Mr. W FORGAN SMITH: It is a fact all the same.

Mr. TOZER: What is the reason for reducing the number of members? The Leader of the Opposition imputes some motive to the Government for doing it; but we all know there is a feeling outside that the people want a reduction in the number of members, and consider that there should be a bigger reduction than what the Government have decided to bring in. The public have different opinions as to what the number should be. The public, as a whole, do not understand the work that a member of Parliament has to do. I did not want to stand for Parliament at the time I was asked, but I was urged to do so. Those who approached me said, "Take last session, for instance; they sat only eight weeks in the year, and there is practically nothing for a member of Parliament to do except to go down to Brisbane and attend the session." If the public understood what a member of Parliament has to do, they would never make remarks like that. Hon. members have a lot of work to do going round the Government offices and conscientiously attending to the wants of their electors. If hon. members do their duty—and I do not know one in this House who does not attend to his duty to his constituents—their whole time is taken up. I cannot attend to my duties in Brisbane when Parliament is not in session under three days in a fortnight. In addition to that, a member has to attend to other duties besides coming to Brisbane and going round the Government offices. A lot of correspondence has to be attended to, and a great deal of work is done in that direction. There is a feeling outside that we should reduce the number and also the salaries of members, because people outside have had their incomes reduced. I have no doubt that the time will come when, with the reduction in the number of members, there will be a reduction in salaries.

Mr. O'KEEFE: Do you believe in it?

Mr. TOZER: Certainly, but I am not speaking for anybody else. I will be quite honest with hon. members. I do not think that a member of Parliament can live on his salary unless he has another job; and forcing members of Parliament to come down opens the way to graft, if a man is inclined in that direction. I give that as the reason why some members have come into Parliament and have been able to make money and leave Parliament altogether. I am not quoting any particular case. I do not know of any. I am speaking for myself on subjects like this. In this Bill the number of members has been fixed at sixty-two. I would have been quite satisfied if it had been brought down to fifty or to thirty-six, if that had been considered a convenient number; but sixty-two was agreed upon, and personally I do not know of any particular reason why that number was selected.

I do not know what is going to happen to any particular electorate; but I want to point out the necessity for some change. Take, for instance, the Gympie electorate. If you could see it on a map, you would see what a zigzag shape it has. If it had been an oblong or a circle, no one could have raised any objection. But what is the reason for wandering here, there, and everywhere with its boundaries?

Then take Wide Bay. It takes in Pialba and part of Maryborough on the north, goes out west to Kilkivan, then down round Glastonbury, and then to the east and south of Gympie again. It is north, east, south, and west of Gympie. It surrounds Gympie. What is the reason for that? I do not know of any particular reason; but the fact remains that the area to the south of Gympie could have gone into the electorate south of Gympie; and it seems to me that there must be some reason for making an electorate that shape. It is high time that a matter like that was rectified. The quota on the basis of sixty-two electorates and 497,806 electors works out at 8,025. I know that some calculations make the number slightly different. I think the Leader of the Opposition made it 8,029. Electoral districts including a city or part of a city shall not be less than 7,000, whilst the maximum for an electorate

comprised wholly of a city or part of a city is 9,620, and the minimum is 6,424.

Mr. BEDFORD: Is Gympie a city?

Mr. TOZER: It was constituted a city by hon. members opposite, so that they at one time had some wisdom, although they have lost it since. Gympie is leading in many things at the present time, including dairying, and timber and forest reserves; and, remembering that so much of the district is alluvial, one can realise that we may have another Gympie goldfield. I only hope that some of the mines will develop in that way.

In my opinion the Bill is an excellent one. It is a fair measure, although naturally we cannot expect to please every one of seventy-two members. The fact remains that we have to do something; we have to bow to public opinion. Public opinion is certainly against the present number of members of Parliament and the expenditure involved. Almost the whole of the press proclaim that the present trouble in Queensland can be attributed to politicians. I cannot be held responsible, because I have been a member of Parliament for only two years, but the accusation can be well directed against hon. members opposite.

Mr. MULLAN (*Flinders*) [7.19]: I was sorry to hear the Attorney-General cast reflections this afternoon upon the redistribution commissioners who acted in 1921. He stated that Mr. Dunlop, one of the members of the commission, had been unfairly promoted.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I repeat it.

Mr. MULLAN: The inference was that he was rewarded for services rendered. That would have been improper on the part of Mr. Dunlop and on the part of the Government. If such were the case, then both Mr. Dunlop and the Government would be equally guilty. If one of the commissioners did anything wrong, then all of the commissioners must have done something wrong, because the report by the commission was unanimous. One of the commissioners was Mr. Carter, the present Under Secretary, Department of Justice. Surely the Attorney-General would not have had as his Under Secretary for the past two years such a man if he thought for one moment that he was guilty of the impropriety with which he charged another commissioner this afternoon! Another member of the commission was Mr. Ferry, now Industrial Conciliation Commissioner, who was reappointed to that position by the present Government. Surely the Government would not reappoint a man to an important position of that kind if they considered him guilty of the practices alleged by the Attorney-General this afternoon! Coming as they did from the Attorney-General, the remarks were decidedly improper and out of place. The body of men to which he referred was a body of honourable, honest, upright men, who did their work capably and honourably.

The Attorney-General referred to action taken by me which he considered—to use his own words—improper. He stated that I had approved of a regulation on the eve of the last election. What was the regulation? It was framed to assist the blind and infirm by affording them additional facilities to record their votes. Another inference to be drawn from the remarks of the Attorney-General concerning my action was that the Brisbane electoral seat was won because of the passing of that regulation. The Government have been in office since 1929, and several by-elections have been held since then, but why has the regulation not been cancelled if it is wrong? The fact that it was not cancelled immediately discounts the contention by the Attorney-General. Many regulations were made by the Government in which I had the privilege of being Attorney-General, and were made for election purposes. Not one single regulation made by my department in connection with elections was challenged by the Opposition during the time we were in office.

The basis of the work of the commission appointed to redistribute the electorates, which the Bill states is to provide "for the better representation of the people of Queensland in Parliament," will be the electoral rolls; and the extent of the satisfactory nature of their work will depend on the efficiency of those rolls. The Commonwealth Government, not only Labour but even Tory Governments, in their wisdom considered that a six months' residence qualification in Australia, a three months' qualification in a State, and one month in an electorate is sufficient to entitle a person to a vote in the Federal elections; but the Queensland Government, in their apparent lack of wisdom, have decided that all adult males and females must be resident six months in Queensland and three months in an electorate before becoming entitled to the franchise. I admit that the enrolment problem is a difficult one; but the policy that the Labour Party and myself adopted was to make it as easy as possible to get on the roll and as difficult as possible to be put off. Under the policy of this Government the difficulties of getting on a roll are being intensified; and, owing to the economic crisis, this difficulty is becoming more aggravated. In Queensland we have seasonal workers, nomads, and unemployed by the thousands, none of whom can be three months in any particular electorate. The result is that they will be disfranchised at the next election, as I prophesied last year. Mr. Turner, the late chief electoral officer for Queensland, one of the greatest authorities on electoral work in Australia, stated before the Federal Royal Commission that the one month's residential qualification should be relaxed in the case of seasonal workers, nomads, and unemployed. The present Government have made the regulation more rigid, and, instead of a residence qualification of one month, a voter must now reside in an electorate three months before being entitled to exercise the franchise. Numerous unemployed are a source of danger to any State, but a voteless army of unemployed is a greater danger. The franchise is a safety valve in such a case, because it affords an opportunity to all shades of political opinion to secure a reflex of their views in Parliament.

The Attorney-General lives by imagination, if we can judge from his speech this afternoon, without my making any reference to his speeches elsewhere. To hear him, one would imagine that our Government never intended to have a redistribution. He accused the late Government of shady practices in connection with the last redistribution of seats, and said, "Why didn't you have another?" I have the laugh there on Mr. Atterney. If the redistribution of

1921 was such a dreadful one, then why this great anxiety that we should carry out another? For the hon. gentleman's benefit, I will mention that my Government carried out a redistribution of electorates six years after assuming power, whereas the previous Government, of which the present Government is a lineal descendant, took from 1887 to 1910—twenty-three years—to carry one out.

I want to make reference to a statement by the hon. member for Toombul dealing with the reduction in the number of representatives of this Chamber from seventy-two to sixty-two. He said—

> "This number has been arrived at after a great deal of investigation."

Who made that investigation? I also want to know from the Attorney-General, why was this investigation made?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: We did not make an investigation.

Mr. MULLAN: I expected the Attorney-General to fall in. The hon. member for Toombul said they had. He also said that this punishment had been long delayed. That is the reason for the reduction in the representation in this House and the redistribution of seats—a punishment for the Opposition. Why is this Opposition being punished?

Mr. H. M. RUSSELL: For your sins.

Mr. MULLAN: All I have to say is that a redistribution as a punitive measure is something new in politics. The hon. member for Toombul also said that on the Downs the quota will be 20 per cent. below that of the metropolitan area, and in the country beyond it will be 20 per cent. below that of the Downs. That is very valuable information. This statement of the hon. member means that electorates in the metropolitan area will have a maximum quota of 9,634 electors, that the electorates beyond the Downs will have a minimum below the quota of 6,42⅔, and that the Downs electorates will have the quota of 8,029. The hon. member for Toombul shows a remarkable knowledge of future happenings. He is a veritable political clairvoyant. I want to know how it is he knows all this. How could he know it unless, as I presume, the matter was openly, fully, and frankly discussed in the party caucus—a thing that is most improper in regard to a redistribution.

Another matter referred to by the Secretary for Railways, the hon. member for Toombul, and the Attorney-General, was what they described as the unfair deal that the Labour Government gave to the country districts in their redistribution. I want to state here—and I can prove it—that we gave better treatment to the country districts under the 1921 redistribution than was given by the Tory Government in 1911. Under the 1911 redistribution the average enrolment in the Downs and south-western districts was 3,789 electors—an average less than the enrolment for the metropolitan seats of 8.1 per cent. Under the 1921 redistribution the average enrolment on the Downs and the south-western districts was 5,765—an average less than the metropolitan area of 10.7 per cent., showing that we treated the country seats better than the Tories did by 2.6 per cent.

I wish to refer to the strictures—if you can call them so—that have been passed on the 1921 redistribution by the hon. member for Toombul and the Attorney-General. If all that these hon. members said about the 1921 redistribution were true, then they could never have got back into power.

Mr. BOYD: The electors were so fed up with you people that they put us here.

Mr. MULLAN: We won three elections in 1915, 1918, and 1920 under the Tory redistribution of 1911; and we only won two elections under our own redistribution, about which there has been so much comment. We won the 1923 and 1926 elections under the 1921 redistribution, and the Nationalists won the 1929 elections by a majority of twenty under our redistribution.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You said that I did not repeal that regulation that you made. I have looked it up to make certain, and I find that I did repeal it.

Mr. MULLAN: It was a paltry thing that the Attorney-General should deliberately, and I presume with malice aforethought, repeal a regulation that afforded a great facility to the unfortunate blind and infirm of this State. The Government, when they got into power, found themselves in a difficulty. They had promised the electors a redistribution; but, when they came back with a majority of twenty, the common expression amongst hon. members on the Government side was, "What do we want with a redistribution now? Any interference will do us harm instead of good." After the elections were over, they did not want a redistribution; and that, of course, is the experience of all Governments when they have a large majority. A way out had to be found, and the only way out that they could find for themselves to comply with the promise of a redistribution was to carry it out, plus a reduction of the number of members by ten. It may be asked: Why should the Opposition be more affected by a reduction of ten members than the Government Party? In the first place, because it must increase the quota; and the increasing of the quota will enormously increase the areas of the remote electorates, which are now too large—that is an objection. Hon. members opposite know that Opposition members hold a number of seats which come below the minimum. That is true. But why do they come below the minimum? It is because we hold, and have practically always held, the mining and pastoral seats that are most remote from the seat of Government, and are, therefore, of necessity entitled to have the least number of people on the roll. That is quite fair. It has been recognised by all Governments with any knowledge of the principle of redistribution at all that the remote seats should have consideration, and all those seats with small numbers of electors are mostly situated in the Gulf country and the central and south-western parts of the State.

The Attorney-General wasted a good deal of valuable time in dealing with the inequality in electorates. He wanted to know why this electorate had so many more on the roll than that electorate. Has the hon. gentleman just awakened? Surely he knows it is ten years since there was a redistribution! He got up with all the wisdom of a sage this afternoon, and read out a cumbrous document showing that I had so many

electors less than somebody else. But that is ten years after the redistribution. When the redistribution took place, as the Attorney-General knows, the numbers were there.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: My complaint was: Why did you go to the elections with such inequalities in the numbers?

Mr. MULLAN: The hon. gentleman shows very bad taste in trying to get this question in when he was afraid to let me ask him a couple of questions this afternoon. He gets up and gives us an instance of inequality in the electorates ten years after the redistribution. Of course, there are inequalities. You will have inequalities a year after redistribution—sometimes six months after, because of depression in one industry and prosperity in another.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Why did you put up with that inequality in 1929?

Mr. MULLAN: The hon. gentleman does not take into consideration those factors in the pastoral and mining areas which have made for decreasing electorates. The point that the Attorney-General cannot get away from is this—that immediately succeeding the redistribution we had the statutory numbers in every electorate.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Why did you not keep it up?

Mr. MULLAN: It is only a political child that would ask such a foolish question. How could I keep the Flinders up in the face of a world-wide mining depression? The inequalities the hon. gentleman was talking about were a mere bagatelle. I have here a few figures showing inequalities in Victoria, one of whose electorates—Boorcondara—had 78,156 electors, whilst another—Greenville—had 4,118, so that the former had nineteen times as many as the latter. That was during a Tory regime. In Western Australia the electorate of Canning had 14,051, whilst the electorate of Menzies had only 334, the former electorate having forty-two times as many electors as the latter.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: What has that to do with it?

Mr. MULLAN: It has everything to do with it to anybody who understands its importance.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I understand that you had a very sweet electorate, at any rate.

Mr. MULLAN: I shall continue to hold it. The hon. gentleman seems to be delighting in the fact that its boundaries will be altered; but he may find that by the time the hon. member for Kurilpa has got his quota from South Brisbane or the hon. gentleman has got his quota from Kurilpa there may be a nice little "scrap." There is always a difficulty in securing fair representation in Parliament. We have instances in every State and in the Commonwealth showing that it is possible for one party to hold more of the representation than the votes cast for them warrant. It frequently happens that, if there is a big swing in their favour, Governments or parties get more representation than they are entitled to. In 1912 hon. members opposite came back with forty-eight members and Labour with twenty-four, whereas on the pro rata basis they were entitled only to thirty-eight seats as against thirty-four for Labour. In the Federal election in 1925 all the Senate seats went to the Tories, and the Labour voters were disfranchised. In the 1917 Federal elections the votes were almost equally divided; but the whole of the Senate seats went to the Tory Party, and the Labour voters were disfranchised. In the Imperial Parliament in 1923 the Tory party had a majority of seventy-three in the House of Commons although they were in the minority of 3,300,000 in the country.

Mr. MAXWELL: Your party had a lot of dead men on the rolls.

Mr. MULLAN: And the hon. member has a lot of dead men in his electorate. In order to show the defects of the system, let me point out to hon. members that under it it is theoretically possible for a party with an aggregate majority of only seventy-two votes in the whole of Queensland to win all of the seats. I can give figures to show that; but I am not going to waste the time of the House. When the system works well, nobody complains. When it goes wrong, there are wild charges of rigged rolls and manipulation from all sides. The alternative, of course, is proportional representation, to which I do not subscribe, the danger of which is the number of small groups in Parliament, the encouragement of cranks and fanatics, and the danger of destroying the party system. Although the party system has many defects, it has done much to make parliamentary government not only possible but also popular and progressive. Under it in England we had the Whigs and the Tories, the Conservatives and the Liberals. In 1832 the Whigs enfranchised the middle classes. Gladstone later on proposed to enfranchise the working classes to help him in his fight against Conservatives or Tories. Disraeli later on defeated Gladstone, and did it himself. Gladstone, in his struggle with the Conservatives in 1884, enfranchised the agricultural labourer. So we see that the competition under the party system has benefited the great mass of the people, and made the English parliamentary system the model on which most parliamentary systems have been founded. For that reason I am not in favour of proportional representation, which would destroy that system; and I will accept the present system with all its defects, and try to remedy them.

It was argued the other night that there was something wrong when one political party could win the Federal electoral seats in Queensland whilst an opposing political party could win the State elections at the same time. I want to show that there is nothing in that contention. It is strange, but it is true, that in nearly every case the party that wins the Federal electoral seats in Queensland loses in this House; and that has been the experience for a number of years. In 1909 the Tory Party won in Queensland; and in 1910 the Labour Party won in the Federal sphere. In 1912 Mr. Denham swept the polls in Queensland. In 1913 the Labour Party beat the Tories in Queensland in the Federal elections. In 1917 the Tory representatives and Tory senators won in Queensland, and in 1918 the Labour Party won by two to one.

Mr. KELSO: Won on a minority vote.

Mr. MULLAN: I want to deal particularly with clause 2 of the Bill. I pointed out at an earlier stage that clause 2, which repeals the Electoral Districts Acts of 1910 and 1922, makes no provision for a general

election held between the repeal of those Acts and the proclamation of the new electoral districts. The Attorney-General contended this afternoon that there was sufficient power, and referred to clause 13, but that clause clearly deals only with by-elections. The marginal note is "by-election."

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I never mentioned clause 13.

Mr. MULLAN: The Attorney-General mentioned that there was power to hold a by-election, a dozen by-elections, or by-elections involving practically the whole House; but that is different from a general election. Does the Attorney-General contend that, if a crisis occurred, or if it was necessary to appeal to the people after the repeal of the Acts referred to, there is legislative machinery to carry out the elections between the repeal of the aforesaid law and the proclamation of the new electoral districts?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Yes.

Mr. MULLAN: Then it is a hidden power. I have read the Bill very carefully again since the remarks were made by the Attorney-General, and the only possibility of conducting a general election would be by an implied power in clause 15.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: My opinion is that clause 2 provides sufficient power.

Mr. MULLAN: The opinion of the hon. gentleman may be correct; but any reasonable man who read the clause would be astonished, particularly in view of the statement made by the Attorney-General when I was dealing with the Bill on the initiatory stage. The Attorney-General was not so emphatic upon the point then.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I did not reply to you at all then.

At 7.53 p.m.,

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved Mr. Speaker in the chair.

Mr. MULLAN: I gathered that the hon. gentleman was not quite sure on the matter. A similar clause appeared in the 1910 Act, and the then Opposition took the same objection that I am taking to-night. Mr. Appel, the Minister in charge of that Bill, and the Premier of the day, Mr. Kidston, both admitted the soundness of the argument, but thought that, if such an eventuality did occur, there was another way of getting out of it. I merely mention that for the purpose of asking the Attorney-General to reconsider the matter, and to make doubly sure that he is right before passing the measure.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You do not believe me when I say so.

Mr. MULLAN: Surely the Attorney-General does not come to the conclusion that I do not believe him because I differ from him?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You didn't accept what I said.

Mr. MULLAN: But I held strong views on the point.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You are entitled to do so.

Mr. MULLAN: I shall be very glad to have it argued further by the Attorney-General when we are dealing with this clause in Committee.

In clause 7 the Government make provision for certain matters to be taken into consideration when dealing with the quotas. The quota of an electoral district wholly comprised of a city or part of a city shall be not less than 8,029, while the quota of an electoral district within boundaries which include a city or part of a city shall be not less than 7,000. My opinion on that matter is decidedly adverse to the Attorney-General's, because it will work inequitably in connection with cities situated like Charters Towers, Cairns, Townsville, and Mackay, which, under the Bill, will be placed upon the same footing in the number of electors as Toowoomba, Ipswich, and similar places. The Attorney-General is a Brisbane man; and, in his desire to make the Government a Brisbane Government, can see this matter through Brisbane spectacles only. I want him to take a broad Queensland view of the subject. The members for Charters Towers, Townsville, and other places I have mentioned, have greater difficulty in getting to their electorates than representatives of cities which are being placed on an equal basis with them. Accessibility should count for something, but with the Attorney-General it has counted for nothing.

Remoteness from the seat of government should be a factor to be considered by the commissioners. There are other important factors for them to consider, such as means of communication, and remoteness of an electorate from the capital. I think that the words in paragraph (*d*) of clause 7, "The area of proposed districts which do not comprise any part of a city or town," should be modified. The area of proposed districts should be the main factor to be considered, irrespective of whether the area comprises part of a city or town. Very many electorates have within their area a town. In spite of that, they are enormously extensive. The fact that the area comprises a town should not be a detriment when the commissioners are considering the number of electors to which each electorate is entitled; therefore, when this Bill reaches the Committee stage the Attorney-General should give consideration to deleting the words—

> "which do not comprise any part of a city or town."

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Their minimum does not go much higher than the country minimum. What do you want?

Mr. MULLAN: I will give the hon. gentleman the details in Committee. I am pointing out that the principle contained in that clause is wrong. The area is an enormous difficulty. The Gregory electorate and other western electorates labour under disadvantages which cannot be visualised by a representative of a city electorate. The grievances of a city electorate can be dealt with by deputation at the centre of the administration.

At 7.59 p.m.,

Mr. SPEAKER resumed the chair.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member has exhausted the time allowed him under the Standing Orders.

Mr. HANSON (*Buranda*): I beg to move that the hon. member for Flinders be granted an extension of time to enable him to complete his speech.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is it the pleasure of the House that the hon. member for Flinders be

granted an extension of time to enable him to complete his speech?

HONOURABLE MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. MULLAN: I thank hon. members for their courtesy, and I can assure them that the privilege will not be abused.

We have a better means of communication to-day than we had in the past. We have motor cars, aeroplanes, and also wireless; but these do not equalise the difficulties of the enormous areas of the West and the North as compared with those reasonably near the city.

I want to show some of the difficulties members representing remote electorates suffer because of the size of their electorates. We have in Queensland eight electorates larger in area than Tasmania—viz., Balonne, Burke, Cook, Flinders, Gregory, Leichhardt, Mitchell, and Warrego. We have in Queensland two electorates larger in area than Victoria—viz., Cook and Gregory. We have in Queensland one electorate larger in area than New Zealand—viz., Gregory. We have electorates here larger in area than England and Wales—viz., Burke, Cook Gregory, and Warrego. We have two electorates in Queensland larger in area than Wales and Scotland combined—viz., Cook and Gregory. Then we have four electorates in Queensland larger in area than England—viz., Burke, Cook, Gregory, Warrego. The Gregory electorate is over twice the size of England; and the area of the Cook and Gregory electorates combined is almost as great as the area of France or Germany; and the combined areas of the Gregory, Cook, Warrego, Burke, Balonne, and Mitchell electorates are almost equal to the area of France and Germany combined. I mention the enormous areas of these electorates in order to point out that under this Bill those areas must be increased. That is one of the great inequities that will be brought about by the reduction in the number of members by ten.

Mr. BOYD: Do you want square miles or people to be represented?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: What is the good of representing trees?

Mr. MULLAN: If the hon. gentleman went out to those electorates and said that, he would cut a very sorry picture. There is a very fine type of man out there. Those electorates are sparsely populated, but they are the ones that make places like Brisbane grow and prosper. It is the men out there who have made Queensland.

Clause 15 is a very dangerous clause indeed. I dealt with it at considerable length at the initial stages of the Bill; and it is not necessary to deal with the question at great length now. The Attorney-General failed completely to answer the charges of the Opposition that that clause enables the commissioners to do almost anything. After the statement the Attorney-General has made—that he can carry out a general election after the repeal of the Electoral Districts Acts of 1910 and 1922 before the proclamation of the new electoral districts—I am more convinced than ever of the danger of this clause.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: When the new electoral districts are established, this measure will apply to them.

Mr. MULLAN: The Attorney-General fails to see my point.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I confess I cannot follow you.

Mr. MULLAN: I contend that there is no power under the Bill to hold a general election, or there is no machinery for the conduct of a general election, between the repeal of the Electoral Districts Acts and the proclamation of the new electoral districts. That is my contention. The Attorney-General has read something into the Bill that no one else can read into it—we are not all fools—and says there is provision to hold a general election, although the Bill is almost identical with the 1910 Act, which able barristers in this House admitted made no provision for a general election.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Who were they?

Mr. MULLAN: There were several.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Name one.

Mr. MULLAN: The present Chief Justice was in the House at the time.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: At what time?

Mr. MULLAN: In 1910. The point I want to make is that the redistribution in 1910 was carried out without any regulations at all. As any one can see, the 1910 Act provides definitely the duties that have to be discharged by the commissioners and without any regulation-making power. In 1910, therefore, the commission wanted no aid from regulations, and the commission in 1921 wanted no aid from regulations. The commission under this Bill should require no aid from regulations; yet the Attorney-General says there is no power to make regulations. Does the hon. gentleman suggest that he has not got the power to make regulations?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not for one minute. When did I say such a stupid thing?

Mr. MULLAN: The point I am making now is that the regulation-making power of section 100 of "The Elections Act of 1915" will be applied under this Bill. That gives the most far-reaching powers, and it was intended that it should do so. The regulations were all right, and can be justified in the conduct of elections. As I stated this afternoon and on the initiatory stage of the Bill, there were two specific reasons for the regulation-making section 100 of "The Elections Act of 1915." One was to give the Government complete power to provide facilities for the soldiers at the front to record their votes, and the other to give the Government reasonable and necessary facilities for the conduct of the general elections. They were the only grounds on which that regulation could be justified. Those regulations were all right when applied to those things; but under this Bill that regulation-making power applies to a redistribution of seats; and I say there is no justification for that, and the Attorney-General should give us a reason for it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I have already done so.

Mr. MULLAN: The hon. gentleman has not done so; nor can he do so. Can he say what the commission will do under this power? Can he think of one thing this commission can do that the other commission did not do? The Attorney-General

does not like the point that in giving this regulation-making power he is doing an unfair thing to the Opposition and an unfair thing to Queensland, and is over-reaching himself. This is a power that should not be put in any Bill, and it is a power which I hope the Opposition will oppose at every stage of the Bill.

Mr. DUNLOP (*Rockhampton*) [8.11]: After listening to the remarks of hon. members on both sides of the Chamber it gives me great pleasure to say a few words with reference to the reduction in the number of seats. There seems to be a lot of heart-burning as to what the quota should or should not be, the matter of facing the electors, and the shrewdness of the Government in making a reduction of only ten members. The Labour Party want to know why it is only a reduction of ten, and wish to have removed the doubt which they feel about it, which doubt also exists in my mind. I had the pleasure the other afternoon—although I suffered a tremendous defeat—of moving in favour of a reduction of members to fifty, and incidentally showing how nineteen Government members who hold comfortable seats broke the promises they made in 1920. As to why hon. members on this side have selected sixty-two as the number of members of the new Parliament, the Secretary for Railways, who was the only Minister with the courage to give a reasonable explanation, said quite honestly that he was still in favour of a reduction to fifty, but that he was overruled in caucus. That is the key to the situation; and, as one who works very largely on telepathy—(laughter)—I suggest that this is what happened: Members of the caucus said that, if the nineteen members I have named insisted on reducing the number to fifty, it would be an undue interference with many Nationalist seats. No doubt more than one wiseacre like the hon. member for Toombul carefully considered how they could cut out enough seats in order to give the Labour Party a tit for tat for what they alleged that party had given them some years ago in their redistribution; and, as a compromise, it was agreed that the caucus would have no objection to a reduction of 20 per cent. in their salaries if they could retain their seats. Hon. members opposite will do me the credit of admitting that I never pry into their business, and I have not spoken to any Government member on this question; but I forecast that within a month my suggestion will be proved to be correct, and that members will propose a 20 per cent. reduction in their salaries. Hon. members of the Government Party who in 1920, on account of the financial state of the country, declared that the number of members of this House should be reduced to fifty, and who —including the Secretary for Labour and Industry—declared that the affairs of the country could be managed just as efficiently by that number as by seventy-two, have to-day broken their promises on the understanding that that compromise should be carried out. I was defeated on my amendment the other day, and I do not propose to dilate on it, but leave the judgment to the electors of Queensland. The acid test which I would apply to hon. members on this side of the House would be this: I was a public servant for many years, and the Government have taken 20 per cent. off the salaries of my comrades, including railwaymen and others on low rates of wages, although the hon. member for Gympie talks about the expenses which members of Parliament have to face. He forgets that the public servant has just as much expense to meet as the parliamentarian. I have here some titbits from a leading article published in the Rockhampton "Bulletin" of August of last year, which I propose to quote as showing how hon. members on this side find it impossible to stick to their promises.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Will the hon. member connect his remarks with the Bill?

Mr. DUNLOP: If the Government are seriously anxious for economy, then they should reduce the number of members of Parliament still further. The "Courier" of 2nd September has this to say under the heading, "Reduced Members":—

> "The Government is to be congratulated on reducing the number of members, but it is a pity that it did not reduce it to about fifty. A Legislative Assembly of fifty and a Legislative Council of twenty-five would have been a guarantee of much better legislation. A party that goes into the House with a pledge that its members must sacrifice both judgment and intelligence, and support the majority decision of caucus, no matter what it may be, and a party whose members admittedly are delegates of unions, ought to cease talking about democracy."

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: Do you agree with that?

Mr. DUNLOP: Absolutely. The hon. gentleman agreed in 1920, when he said that he was in favour of reducing the number to fifty.

The SECRETARY FOR LABOUR AND INDUSTRY: Will you vote for the restoration of the Upper House?

Mr. DUNLOP: Certainly not. How can the Government be sincere in their desire for economy if they propose to restore an Upper House of thirty-one members? Only this morning the "Courier" took the Government to task, and again requested that the number of members of Parliament be reduced to fifty.

The Leader of the Opposition has pointed out that the increase in the number of members in this Parliament has followed the increase in the population of the State. That contention is based upon logical premises; but it is not the proper way to view the matter. There are too many members of Parliament. Does anyone claim that it is necessary to have three representatives to represent the electorates of Fitzroy, Keppel, and Rockhampton? The Rockhampton "Morning Bulletin" of 26th August, 1930, said—

> "When in opposition in 1920 members of the Moore Government urged upon the Theodore Government a reduction of parliamentary members from seventy-two to fifty. The Officials in Parliament Bill was before the House on 17th November, 1920, the object being to provide the salary for another Minister. Mr. Sizer, present Minister for Labour and Industry, moved an amendment for the above reduction, while the present Treasurer (Mr. W. H. Barnes) stated that it was part of the policy of the Nationalist Party; and Mr. Taylor, who now is Speaker, spoke strongly in favour

of the reduction. Mr. Morgan, Minister for Railways, stated that the amendment was of the greatest importance, as the result of a division would show the people of Queensland where members individually stood in regard to it.

"If a division on the subject was of the 'greatest importance' then, it is imperative now, and comparison of the division lists of 1920 and 1930 would indicate whether human nature or national service is the stronger. But it is difficult to see how the Moore Government can avoid taking now the division they clamoured for in 1920.

"The obsession under which politicians labour is that without their muddling hands at the helm the ship of State would founder. The cold facts are that for the next ten or more years the whole of Australia's affairs would be best managed by a commission of half a dozen men who have proved, by their achievements and not by their lung power, that they have inherent in them the power of organisation and administration. Their salary would be a matter of minor importance, as no six men could either muddle away or otherwise dispose of the colossal sums that the 429 members of one Australian Parliament or another manage to lose for us. For instance, in Queensland alone, a man who at a million per annum could put our railways upon a paying basis would still save the State half a million."

As the outcome of criticism on the part of the Taxpayers' Association, the "Telegraph" in its issue of to-day attempted to plead the unfairness of a reduction of members of Parliament from seventy-two to fifty, and to uphold the policy of the Government. I am pleased to say, however, that the majority of newspapers in Brisbane consider that the time has arrived when the number of members of Parliament should be still further reduced. The undeniable fact stands out that, whilst the Government propose to reduce the number of members of this Assembly by ten, they have resolved to recreate the Upper House with thirty-one members. The whole thing is ridiculous. The people are waking up to it. The Government have gulled the people long enough, and they will find that the "three honest men," as "Truth" describes the hon. members for Fassifern, Lockyer, and myself, who voted for a reduction in the number of members of this Assembly to fifty, will carry much weight when the issue goes to the electors. This will be a strong plank in my platform when I appear on the hustings in Rockhampton. I will denounce those nineteen members of the Government Party who, by their vote in this Chamber this session, betrayed the principles they espoused in 1929. In Rockhampton we have morning and afternoon newspapers with a big circulation; and that fact will do good service in showing the electors where they stand. The Labour Party stand for seventy-two representatives in this Chamber, but I am totally opposed to that. The Secretary for Railways was honest enough to admit that he was overruled in his own caucus; but before a month passes by there will be a compromise in the Government Party insofar as a reduction of ten members in this Assembly is concerned, and we shall have to take a reduction in salary as well.

The hon. members for Toombul and Gympie attempted to belittle me by stating that I entered Parliament by accident. I entered this Chamber on my merits; and, without attempting to be egotistical, I do not think that any other hon. member can claim the same credit for election as I can. I worked throughout the campaign without a committee. The hon. member for Toombul said that Rockhampton was a stronghold of Labour; but, as an Independent, I commanded a strong personal vote in addition to securing strong Labour support. I entered this House on my merits; and I have endeavoured to uphold the dignity of my position in deference to the electors who sent me here. Notwithstanding any scheme of redistribution, when the figures are up after the elections in 1932, irrespective of whether the Premier is my opponent or not, I have sufficient confidence in the sincerity of the electors to know that I shall be returned again.

I listened with great interest to the remarks of the hon. member for Flinders. He makes his points in a concise way. I agree with him that the quota for a country electorate should be lower than that of a city electorate. Only cities like Toowoomba, Brisbane, Townsville, Rockhampton, and Ipswich should have the full quota of 8,029, and places like Charters Towers and Mackay should not be brought up to the full quota. I believe in being fair.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: How many electors have you?

Mr. DUNLOP: I have only 5,318, but under this quota I shall have 8,029.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not at all.

Mr. DUNLOP: I do not care what the number is, but country electorates should be treated liberally on account of their large areas, and should not have the full quota.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You do not understand the Bill.

Mr. DUNLOP: I am speaking according to the hon. gentleman's own figures. To be fair to the country seats, they should not have over the quota.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You do not know what you are talking about.

Mr. DUNLOP: Ten seats are to be cut out. The total number of electors on the roll at 30th June last was 497,805. The quota is 8,029. The maximum will be one-fifth above that, making a total of 9,634, and the minimum one-fifth below, making 6,424. Supposing a country electorate has only to contain 6,000 voters, it will not be fair owing to the large areas. They should be treated liberally, and the electorates in the cities should contain a greater number of voters. The electorates of Enoggera, Logan, and Nundah contain over 12,000 voters, Oxley over 11,000, and Toowong 9,426. Why should Toowong have that number only and the other city electorates that I have mentioned a greater number? I appeal to the Attorney-General to give the country electorates a fair deal. I challenge the hon. gentleman; and I say that, when the figures are up, it will be seen that not one Nationalist seat will be cut out under the redistribution. It is only a question of one party getting even with another. That is the curse of this House. I remember quite distinctly the Secretary for Railways in the first session of

this Parliament interjecting very warmly to the Opposition, "We are only giving you some of your own medicine back. We are giving you what you gave us during the previous fourteen years." That is what the country has to pay for, instead of hon. members listening to reason and co-operating with one another. The Government intend to cut out ten Labour seats; but, when the figures are up, it will be seen that it will act like a boomerang and recoil on themselves. I know the people are sick and tired of the Government breaking their promises. They see what the country is paying for. People who have visited this House have told me that they got disgusted at the conduct of hon. members, and, if they had their way, they would reduce the salaries to £300 a year. When the figures are up, it will be found that there is a big change in this House. Why the heartburning about the redistribution of seats? The Opposition do not object to a redistribution, but they do object to the manner in which the Government are carrying out the redistribution. Let the Government mark my words. The country is behind the three members of this House who are against the proposed reduction to sixty-two and in favour of a reduction to fifty. The country is against paying seventy-two members of Parliament, and against the members of the present Parliament breaking their pledges and not reducing expenditure by cutting down salaries by a further 20 per cent., which the Government are not game to do. I would support the Government in that direction. I only hope that, when we go to the country, there will be a fair fight, and that the country members, above all, will be given a reasonable number of seats, and not be given the quota that the Government are trying to foist on to them. The distribution should be fairly made, and the country electorates protected. Let us put the increased quota over, say, my electorate, the Brisbane electorate, and other city electorates rather than on the country electorates. I do not care a jot how the figures go so far as I am concerned. I can trust my electors, even if the maximum quota is 9,000—the more the better.

Mr. BRASSINGTON (*Balonne*) [8.38]: This Bill, amongst other things, proposes to make provision for better representation; and on reading it I can see that it does not go very far on those lines. In order to make better representation so far as this House is concerned, the Bill should provide for the immediate retirement of the Government and for the party on this side to take control of the affairs of the State.

It is not my intention to speak for any length of time on this measure, as other hon. members on this side have fully dealt with it. They have pointed out its inconsistencies and its failure to meet the needs of the people of the State so far as equitable representation is concerned.

I shall content myself with again uttering an emphatic protest against cutting down the representation of the most important part of the State—Western Queensland. According to the many statements made by hon. members opposite from time to time, directly and by way of interjection, it is apparent that this scheme has already taken shape; and I would not be surprised if the Attorney-General could tell us the seats that are to go and the members who are to get the axe under this measure. The welfare of the western portion of the State should be above party politics and party considerations; and I plead to-night for equitable representation for that portion of the State, which will be in accordance with the justice of the case. It is most important to remember that the western portions of the State, particularly that part in which the pastoral industry is carried on, represents an area of 432,000 square miles, or more than half the total area of Queensland. There are only ten members representing that enormous area. As showing the importance of this part of the State, in 1928-29, out of the total value of Queensland production amounting to £60,000,000, the pastoral industry in the western portion of the State contributed the sum of £17,000,000, or slightly under one-third of the total value of the wealth production of this State. The point I want to emphasise is that an important industry, which is practically the backbone of this State, instead of receiving less representation in this House, should receive justice and retain its present representation.

When this Government came into power, the limited representation of Western Queensland foresaw what was likely to happen by way of decline in wool prices and the probable failure of the pastoral industry. Whilst the representatives of Western Queensland placed the case very well for the pastoral industry, and suggested to the Government ways and means whereby the approaching difficulties could be met and a way of escape found, I regret that the advice of those representatives was not favoured. Their representation was not sufficiently strong to prevent the Government from letting the position lapse. Representatives of Western Queensland have been foremost in drawing the attention of the people of this State to the effects of the Government's policy on the West. They have voiced a protest against the suspension of the station hands' award, and pointed out what would be the ultimate result in the West. They have voiced disapproval and opposition to the so-called wool relief scheme, and, last but not least, they have voiced a most emphatic protest against the extension of pastoral leases. All these things suggest the absolute necessity for not tinkering in any way with the representation of the western area of this State. I repeat that it is the duty of the Government to protect the most important part of Queensland by guaranteeing the representation as it is at present, instead of cutting it down.

A favourite argument with hon. members opposite is that an appalling position was created by the policy of the late Labour Government, as a result of which it was suggested that people were leaving the country districts and coming to the cities, with the result that the country districts were much poorer, and progress in the West was retarded. Are hon. members opposite in any way assisting against centralisation by the introduction of a measure which means nothing more or less than cutting down the representation of far Western Queensland in the interests of a Queen-street Government and saying that country districts are not worthy of equitable political representation? Hon. members opposite should at least be consistent; and from that point of view alone it is their duty to make good their boast of other days, and do as much as they can to encourage, not a drift from the country to the cities, but an exodus

from the cities to the country, so that the latter can be developed and made as productive as possible. As a Western man, representing one of the finest districts of the State, I say that much has yet to be done for the development of the West. Many millions of acres of fine land there must sooner or later be put under closer settlement. That can only be done provided the West has sufficient representation to enable it to continue to put a strong case in Parliament, so that the Government of the day will be forced to have regard to its arguments.

Hon. members opposite talk about the coastal belt and the resources of the North. Undoubtedly they are wonderful; but there is an immense amount of wealth yet to be produced from the outlying western areas of this State; and the sooner the Government realise it, and open them up by means of railways and providing water facilities, the sooner will prosperity come to Queensland. The only way by which a policy of development in the West can be made effective is by having adequate representation of the Western people in this House. I regret having to oppose this measure on the ground that it does nothing of the sort, but that it makes the West a political chopping block in order that this Government may be able to reduce the number of seats by ten, and, by establishing the Upper House, defeat for years the aims and aspirations of the Western people. If the Government persist with their policy of reducing the representation of Western Queensland, then, as a representative of a western district, I shall have no hesitation in urging the Western people to unite, organise, and agitate for the creation of a separate State. They will then be able to protect their own interests, and will not be the prey of the Government who at all times place their party and their political machine before the interests and the welfare of the people.

Mr. BEDFORD (*Warrego*) [8.50]: More than forty years ago, when the population of this country was less than half what it is to-day, seventy-two members was decided upon as the parliamentary representation of this State. That was done as some attempt to get over the disparity in the value of a vote. It was only natural that the man in a city electorate, with his representative always on the doorstep of Government offices, had a bigger pull than the elector in far-distant western electorates, who could not possibly have his representative continuously on the job, as in the case of the city member. That has been so much recognised by smaller States in the South that in Victoria they have a quota ranging from 24,000 for city electorates down to 6,000 for country electorates, although the whole State of Victoria is just a little larger than my own electorate, and about 18,000 square miles smaller than the electorate of Gregory. This being done, one would believe that the attempt to say "one vote one value" would at least give the Government greater elasticity in fixing the quota. But the attempt by the Government is not to get anything in the way of a scientific rearrangement of electorates. The attempt by the Government is to dodge their doom to which they were irrevocably committed when they selected the hon. member for Wynnum as Treasurer. If there was one force, or one lack of force, or one interest, or one factor, in the winning of the Treasury benches by the Labour Government in 1915, it was the fact that the hon. member for Wynnum had done a great deal in pulling down the Denham Government. Of course, he will assist very much in pulling down this Government, although they deserve to be pulled down for their own crimes, collectively and individually.

Dr. KERWIN: That is only your opinion.

Mr. BEDFORD: It is more than my opinion. The nomadic worker has been disfranchised.

Dr. KERWIN: Mind your voice!

Mr. BEDFORD: It will not go off into the crazy soprano jazz heights achieved by the hon. member for Gympie.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: Why are you jealous of the hon. member for Gympie?

Mr. BEDFORD: I am not. I can only admire the way that his voice can break between "Babylon" and "religion." When the Elections Act was being amended last year, the Attorney-General stated on the floor of this House that the nomadic worker who had his residence in a hotel or a camp would be disfranchised if he remained away for three months; but to-night he said the reverse. The facts are that such a man is automatically disfranchised, and cannot get on the roll again unless he is three months in an electorate. In reviewing the whole electoral programme of the Government, one is convinced that it is only an attempt to retain improperly the seats that they won at the last elections because the populace was temporarily out of its mind.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not entirely, because you were returned at the poll.

Mr. BEDFORD: They were quite sane so far as the West was concerned; though they might not have been but that the hon. gentleman came there and assured my return. He spoke there, and the people said, "What was that?" and "Well, that's that!" and they put me in again. The journalistic fuglemen of the Government have insisted during the last few months that somehow or another the Government must get back to power. This Bill, after all, is only a Bill to reduce the Labour representation of this State by ten seats, or at least nine. That is the only reason for it. During the last few months, as soon as the shadow of doom appeared on the horizon, the journalistic fuglemen of this Government started out with various reasons why the hand of time should either be averted or that its falling should be postponed. Unfortunately the "Courier" quoted Sir Samuel Griffith. Everyone knows that Sir Samuel Griffith, seeing the rising tide of Labour in 1892, reduced the salaries of members of Parliament to £150, because he thought that thereby he would make it less and less possible for Labour to get a majority. He considered that the economic factor would intervene to that end. After reducing the salaries of members of Parliament to £150 in the sacred name of economy, only a little later Sir Samuel Griffith put a Bill through Parliament to increase the salary of the Chief Justice to £3,500 per year as a necessary preliminary to taking the job himself. The "Courier" publishes this news item taken from its files of fifty years ago, which

is about the time their leader-writer is still living and thinking in—

> "Fifty years ago Mr. (afterwards Sir Samuel) Griffith endeavoured to change the length of Parliament from five years to three years. He failed, and met with no better success in the following year. The change was not made until 1890. Commenting on the first Griffith proposal, the 'Courier,' in an editorial on 17th August, 1881, said: 'Mr. Griffith has introduced a short but important Bill, by which it is proposed to alter the duration or life of our Legislative Assembly from five to three years. It is a change which has often been spoken about, but for which there has never been any very strong popular demand . . . It is emphatically a question with two sides, and the arguments both for and against it are weighty. It is true that Parliament may lose flexibility in keeping in touch with the growth and development of the colony, but the danger of losing flexibility is balanced by the gain of stable government—of a Ministry which has the time to develop its policy fairly. It must be remembered that a Minister is often a man who, although he may have displayed evident talent, has had no official experience. A new Minister has much to learn, and the lesson will be one of increasing difficulty as the community grows larger and its interests become more varied and complex. If the duration of a Parliament is fixed by law at three years a Ministry will hardly have time to master their work and mature their plans before the representative body begins to experience the disturbing influence of the next general election.'"

Just imagine this specious argument! We are told that this Government took the hon. member for Wynnum, who believes in five-year Parliaments, into the Cabinet because of his wonderful Cabinet experience, and the fact that they were without that experience—their modesty prevents them from telling us that they are incapable of the job now. Here is the "Courier" saying that a Government must be in office five years before they know their job! I am sorry their education is so incomplete. The article proceeded—

> "Politicians will be more tempted to shape their legislation in such a manner as to influence the verdict of the ballot-box than to consider the permanent interest of the colony."

They might have written that now, because they still think that this is a colony and not a State. After they decided for a moment to drop the scheme of quinquennial Parliaments, and after all their tremendous organisations had fluttered out, the natural stupidity of the Government Party, by more and more counsel with fools, decided that the next best thing was to do something which was exactly what "Iceberg" Irvine did in Victoria in 1903. There was already a regulation there, just like the regulation passed by the Government opposite the other day, preventing State servants from having any voice in public affairs. The Constitutional Reform Bill—allegedly a Reform Bill—put the State servants right out of the ordinary electoral roll. It gave them a separate constituency. It is unnecessary to go through the whole story of that Constitutional Reform Bill. It is not necessary to bring up the argument against the passage of a Bill which evidently disfranchised some scores of thousands of State servants; but, in order to give you the full result of what did happen, I give this extract from the "Parliamentary Debates, Victoria," for the session 1903, at page 2090—

> "PUBLIC SERVICE REPRESENTATION.
>
> "Mr. A. HARRIS (*Gippsland Central*) asked the Premier if, in view of the fact that 'The Constitution Act 1903' provided for public service representation in Parliament, he would inform the House—
>
> 1. If the various branches of the public service, including the police force, will be permitted to appoint delegates to representative meetings of public servants for the purpose of selecting candidates to contest the election?
>
> 2. If members of the public service, including the police force, may, at their election meetings, question the candidates, take the chair if desired so to do, move votes of confidence or otherwise, and generally comport themselves in all matters in a manner similar to reputable electors in other constituencies?"

"Iceberg" Irvine said it might be done. Having by that scheme disfranchised thousands of public servants—having put on the statute-book of that State a law by which 20,000, or it may be 30,000, public servants were not only given the grudging right to return a man to represent them, but they had to come with bated breath and ask if they might ask a question of a candidate, if they might select a candidate, and even if they might vote for him. After this "Iceberg" Irvine retired to the splendid seclusion of the bench—to which probably the author of this Bill will retire—if we are not in power.

The Premier said the other day in a talk to one of those little reporters to whom he seems to unbosom himself—

> "'Maybe the election for the Upper House will take place at the same time as that for the Assembly,' it was suggested to Mr. Moore. 'We have not got to that stage yet,' he replied.
>
> "The aspect of the expense was referred to the Premier. It was pointed out that if the membership of the Legislative Assembly was reduced to sixty-two, and an Upper House was created of thirty-one members, receiving £156 a year each, very little saving in the cost of government would be effected.
>
> "Mr. Moore said that he did not think there would be a great deal of difference in the cost, but he considered that the cost of an Upper House was more or less a minor matter.
>
> "'If we can save ½ per cent. interest by having a Legislative Council it will more than compensate for any extra cost that the State might be called upon to bear,' was Mr. Moore's view. He added: 'The creating of more stability and confidence in the country would be of great benefit to the State. That, in my opinion, is what the re-establishment of the Upper House would do.'"

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not dealing with the Bill.

Mr. BEDFORD: I am dealing with the Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not dealing with the Bill.

Mr. BEDFORD: I take your advice in good part, Mr. Speaker, but there is this fact to be considered: This is a Bill to reduce the representation of members of the Legislative Assembly. It has already been stated that the real reason for the reduction of members of the Legislative Assembly is a question of economy. On the other hand, it is proposed by the Government and by various newspapers to increase the cost of the Legislature by appointing an Upper House. I submit that I am in order in debating this question. It is germane to the question. As an illustration, I trust, Mr. Speaker, that you will permit me to pursue this line.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member will not be in order in dealing with that question.

Mr. BEDFORD: If I must get away from that question, I will leave it. The idea that this reduction of members is dictated by economy is in the same breath wiped out by the fact that an Upper House is proposed, and, leaving it at that, how can this Government talk of economy? The Government have now not only taken away the rum ration from the men at Dunwich, but they have also taken away the tobacco, and at the same time they have appointed a useless Bureau of Economies to cost £35,000 in seven years. I trust that I shall be in order in mentioning the urgers of the Government in this matter—the people who are urging the Government to do this. The fact of the Government having no intelligence of their own leaves them to be blown one way or the other by the latest cry that comes from the newspapers.

Dr. KERWIN: You must be a superman.

Mr. BEDFORD: Compared with yourself, I am. (Laughter.) If you will permit me, Mr. Speaker, to read this statement, it may cause you to decide that I am so much in order that I should be congratulated:—

> "The 'Courier' of even date carries some interesting information, such as that the cost of Parliamentary government is 4s. 5d. per head of population; and the Taxpayers' Association dictates a smaller parliament than sixty-two (now seventy-two) and the reduction of members' salaries by 20 per cent.—some ha'penny reduction in the cost. The 'Courier' wants fifty elected members of the Assembly (a false economy at the cost of service) and proposes to increase the cost of government by re-establishing a Legislative Council. It asks for a 'small' Legislative Council, and this could be improved by making a dictatorship of three, and if three, why not one?
>
> "Further, the 'Courier' quotes that stuttering prophet, S. M. Bruce, and his deprecation of 'this atmosphere of hopelessness.' This is merely impudent, as Mr. Bruce with his imports of £900,000,000 in six and a-half years, with foreign loans to ease the imports in, is more responsible for the hopelessness than any other man.
>
> "The idea of cutting down membership from the seventy-two fixed forty years ago when the population of the State was less than half the present figure is false economy; doubly false when the Legislative Council proposition is to provide thirty more members at a greater cost than the reduction of the elected members represents.
>
> "In the 'Courier' leader to-day, which lauds the spendthrift Bruce, ignores the real means of removing unemployment, and abuses the Victorian Labour Government for refusing State advances to farmers who are to pay labour £1 a week, you conclude, 'Confidence is the main factor in the recovery.'"

I believe that, if it were necessary for the general recovery of Australia that salaries should be chopped as representing the ten members to be cut out—if it were necessary, all of us would agree to have our salaries chopped to retain those ten members. But there is another way in which all these tremendous teachers of economy can help. Suppose, for instance, all these papers reduced the price of their papers from 2d. to the pre-war time 1d., that would be a saving of £1 6s. a year as against the 4s. 5d. per head which is the cost of parliamentary government; suppose they cut advertising rates down to pre-war prices, and agreed that they would help the Commonwealth to balance its Budget by giving a payable operating price for their press telegrams, which now cause a loss of £275,000 a year, there might be something in it. The whole of this business is not for the purpose of economy, not even if the Treasurer smiles like the saint he is, with a little of the suggestiveness of the trapped fox in the smile—not even although the Treasurer may smile and smile and smile. The Treasurer believes in a five-year Parliament. He is the heavy villain of the melodrama, and that virtuous yeoman, Labour, will yet meet him in the old mill at midnight and force him to make an honest woman of Our Nell. The whole position in regard to this Bill is that it was not brought here for the purpose of economy, but for no other purpose than to reduce the Labour representation in this State—not by three, but by nine—in the only way in which hon. members opposite think it safe to do it; but it will not have the effect they hope, because, if they led people to believe in their slogan of "Change the Government!"—because it was only five syllables long—they will find that Labour has a slogan which is a little longer still, but which will be just as effective, and that is, "Change the blanky Government!"

Mr. HYNES (*Townsville*) [9.13]: I desire to voice my protest against the passage of this Bill. I listened very attentively to the second reading speech of the Attorney-General, and the only fact that emerged from the torrent of words and abuse that fell from the lips of the hon. gentleman was that he justified it by alleging that during the time that Labour held office a redistribution of seats was made in which three Tories lost the numbers of their mess. That is very crude logic. There is no analogy between the two cases, because those three seats were eliminated by the commission, whereas here the Government are exercising their brutal majority in order arbitrarily to do something

which they are afraid to trust the commission to do. Why not leave it to the commission to say whether, in their wisdom, in the interests of Queensland, they are prepared to reduce the number of seats?

On the initiation of the Bill the chief reason advanced for it was that it was necessary in the interests of economy to save the taxpayers £5,000 per year. See the absurdity of such a statement! Even the Tory press has pointed out that the saving will be infinitesimal. There must be some other reason behind the action of the Government in doing this iniquitous thing. We on this side are not opposed to a redistribution of seats and an alteration of boundaries from time to time. We know that in a young country like Queensland, where the population is continuously shifting, a readjustment is necessary periodically, and we at all times have favoured such a policy.

Mr. KELSO: You did it only once in fourteen years.

Mr. HYNES: Because we thought it was not necessary at any other time. It was on the redistribution of seats made by this party that hon. members opposite got a substantial majority at the last election, so that there was some fairness in it. It was rather unfortunate that the Attorney-General saw fit to disparage the credit and the work of the commission in 1922. He disparaged one member in particular; but it must be apparent that, if you discredit the work of one, you must condemn the work of all. As the hon. member for Flinders very aptly pointed out in his excellent speech, their decisions were unanimous. The other two gentlemen who served on that occasion have been appointed since the Government took office to very responsible positions under the present Administration; so hon. members opposite must have confidence in their integrity, and it is unfortunate that a man in the responsible position of the Attorney-General should make such an irresponsible statement as that one of the commissioners was bribed by some preference over his fellow public servants for what he did.

The Bill is going to be instrumental in bringing about very little saving to the taxpayer, which, after all, is the chief justification advanced by hon. members opposite and the Tory press. It will only save something in the vicinity of five farthings per head of population. What an infinitesimal amount! The hon. member for Warrego pointed out that, if the daily newspaper companies which are making such splendid profits would only reduce the cost of their papers from 2d. to 1d., they would save the taxpayer 2½ per annum. If the price of the newspapers were reduced to the pre-war price of 1d. for two days, it would cover the whole cost of parliamentary government for one year; and it is silly to say to grown-up men that the action of the Government has been taken with a view to economy. That does not pay a high compliment to hon. members in this Chamber. This is an attempt on the part of the Government to hang on to office at all costs, even if the dignity of Parliament is to be sacrificed in the process. One has only to listen to the supporters of the Government outside—the lifelong supporters of anti-Labour political factions—who are already denouncing them, saying that they are guilty of a cowardly thing in introducing a Bill for the purpose of saving their own miserable political hides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. HYNES: I must withdraw that remark, Mr. Speaker. I feel very keenly on the matter by reason of the fact that there has been such an exhibition of hypocrisy on the part of hon. members opposite, who are endeavouring to justify this iniquitous proposal. It has been pointed out that there has been a reduction in the number of electors in many of the western and northern electorates on account of the migration of the population from those centres following on the decline in the mining and other industries, which previously attracted a large population. While Queensland is a State depending upon primary production, we must of necessity have a constantly shifting population; and we shall always have the spectacle of some of the electorates being numerically weaker than others. But that is no justification for introducing a Bill to place rural constituencies at a disadvantage as compared with the cities. Take Charters Towers as a glaring example! Under this Bill the absolute minimum that can be fixed for Charters Towers is 7,000. Charters Towers is a decadent town; and there has been a general exodus of population from that centre owing to the failure of the mining industry. Still, it is a city under the Local Authorities Act. That proposal is unfair to Charters Towers, which will not have the same adequate representation that it hitherto has had, and to which it is justly entitled. The same thing applies to other constituencies similarly placed. As the "Courier" very frankly points out, the ten seats that will be wiped out will be Labour seats. There is no gainsaying the fact that the present Administration have gone carefully into that aspect of the question. The first thing they have asked themselves is, "How is it going to affect our seats?" After looking back over the legislation introduced by the Government during the past two years, one finds that the first thing, and the thing uppermost in the minds of the Government, has been, "How is this going to affect our seats?" We know that an effort was made to work up an agitation for the extension of the life of Parliament, and we know that the "Courier," "Daily Mail," and other Tory papers in Queensland were opposed to the proposal unless there was an appeal to the electors on the issue. Last year the Attorney-General introduced a Bill to amend the Elections Act and thereby prevent a large number of migratory workers in Queensland from exercising a vote. That is a scandalous state of affairs when we consider the great service that this class of citizen has rendered to Queensland in functioning in the primary industries.

Take the shearer who is deprived of the luxury of town life while following shearing sheds to earn a livelihood. A shearer living in a boarding-house or hotel in Townsville will accept a run of sheds in the Hughenden district that will take him away from that town for three, four, and sometimes five months. Because he has not been at his place of residence for three months he is disfranchised. That is a scandalous state of affairs, which I never thought would come about again in Queensland. It is not only scandalous, but it is audacious and malicious on the part of the present Administration. The canecutter who works in the

canefields in Northern Queensland is in a similar position. Quite a number of them are obliged to be away from their residences for quite a long time when following their calling. We were told by the Attorney-General that men who were absent from their postal address following their usual occupation would not be debarred from having their names kept on the roll. The hon. gentleman said something quite different in 1930, when the Election Acts Amendment Bill was being considered in this House. The following is an extract from the discussion which I have taken from page 2882 of "Hansard":—

> "Mr. Pollock: Is the shearer or drover who has a hotel or boarding-house as his permanent place of address and is away working for six months to be disfranchised?
>
> "The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: He would be, because he has no home in the district."

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You know I corrected that statement on the second reading.

Mr. HYNES: Not only did the hon. gentleman make that statement, but he further on repeated it in another speech which appears in "Hansard." The hon. gentleman cannot accuse me of being guilty of dishonest advocacy, and I can assure him that, if he amended that statement at a later stage, I did not see it. I distinctly remember the hon. gentleman stating that these men would be disfranchised, and I remember him quoting a concrete instance of nine men living in a boarding-house in South Brisbane who had left their usual place of abode, and, therefore, were not entitled to vote. When we held office, we adopted the sound democratic dictum that every person, sane and out of gaol, over the age of twenty-one years, should have a voice in the affairs of the country. That is a principle for which we still stand. There are no mock heroics about this. This is a fundamental democratic principle, and it is a principle that we are going to stand for here. Every man, irrespective of what occupation he follows, is entitled to exercise the franchise, and the amendment of the Elections Act was designed specially to disfranchise that class of electors by reason of the fact that they invariably support Labour candidates. The Attorney-General is endeavouring to make out a case that this is not going to inflict any hardship on the migratory worker. Look at the position from the point of view of the three months' residential qualification. There are hundreds of men who have to travel about the country, and those men will surely be disfranchised under this measure. The number of migratory workers is increasing from day to day; and the policy of the Government in connection with unemployment in Queensland is in the direction of further disfranchising electors. We know the Government are building seaside huts and removing the unemployed from some of the congested electorates in the metropolitan area down to the Tory constituencies at the seaside.

Mr. EDWARDS: Do you object to that?

Mr. HYNES: I object to the Government using the position of the partly unemployed in order to protect their own miserable hides. Take the case of single men. Single men are compelled to keep on the tramp, and so they have no chance of getting their names on the roll. A single man cannot qualify for rations unless he is on the tramp or unless he becomes a hobo or a vagabond. That is the effect the Government's legislation has had; and it is all in the direction of preventing these men from exercising the franchise.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Do you say a single man has to become a hobo to look for work.

Mr. HYNES: The Government are making hobos and vagabonds of these men by the hundred. They are not qualified to secure rations from the Government unless they are prepared to disfranchise themselves.

The House adjourned at 9.30 p.m.