

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**FRIDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 1934**

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## SUPPLY.

RESUMPTION OF COMMITTEE—ESTIMATES—  
FIFTEENTH ALLOTTED DAY.

(Mr. Gladson, Ipswich, in the chair.)

ESTIMATES IN CHIEF, 1934-35.

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC LANDS.

IRRIGATION AND WATER SUPPLY.

Question—"That £18,511 be granted for 'Irrigation and Water Supply'"—put and passed.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC LANDS (Hon. P. Pease, *Herbert*): I move—

"That £1,100 be granted for 'Miscellaneous.'" "

Item agreed to.

## DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE.

## CHIEF OFFICE.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Carpentaria*): I move—

"That £21,450 be granted for 'Department of Justice—Chief Office.'" "

Mr. R. M. KING (*Logan*) [10.36 a.m.]: I notice that the appropriation for the Chief Office this year shows an increase of £1,398 on the amount appropriated last year, although the number of officers is the same. The increased expenditure appears to be in respect of salary increases, and I presume the increase in the contingencies, so far as the retiring allowance is concerned, is in respect of Mr. Harris, who retired some time ago from the position of City Coroner.

In dealing with the activities of the Department of Justice, I wish particularly to refer to the question of divorce and matters incidental thereto—matters that are attracting the attention of a great number of people at the present time. One matter concerns the domicile of a wife. The law throughout the British Dominions seems to be that the wife's domicile follows the husband's domicile, and this rule of law creates very great difficulty. For instance, a husband may have differences with his wife and go to live in a country outside the jurisdiction of the Queensland courts. Up till quite recently it was impossible for the wife to get a divorce unless, having under this rule of law acquired the domicile of her husband, she sued in the new jurisdiction where he had taken up residence. In 1923 an amending Act was passed by the Labour Administration, and under section 3 thereof provision was made for a wife to retain her Queensland domicile, notwithstanding that her husband had acquired a foreign domicile. It was generally accepted that the law would be applicable in almost every case, but a year or so ago we had the startling announcement by Mr. Justice Henchman that that section was peculiar to Queensland, and was only valid in so far as it related to a remarriage in Queensland by a petitioning wife or a divorcee. That creates a state of affairs which should not be tolerated and which should be overcome at the first opportunity. I know, of course, that it is impossible for any State to make a uniform law for Australia—that is the duty of the Commonwealth—and my object in raising the matter this morning is to impress upon the Attorney-General the desirableness

*Mr. R. M. King.*]

## FRIDAY, 2 NOVEMBER, 1934.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. G. Pollock, *Gregory*) took the chair at 10.30 a.m.

## QUESTION OF ORDER.

Mr. KENNY (*Cook*), having given notice of a question—

Mr. BRASSINGTON: You are a smug-faced hypocrite to ask a question like that.

Mr. KENNY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to a point of order. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley referred to me as a "smug-faced hypocrite." I desire that you ask him to withdraw.

Mr. SPEAKER: Did the hon. member for Fortitude Valley use those words?

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I admit that, Mr. Speaker. I withdraw and—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker; but that does not alter my opinion.

Mr. SPEAKER: I did not catch what the hon. member said.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I said I will withdraw; but that cannot alter my opinion.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I ask the hon. member to withdraw unreservedly.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: If you have it that way, Mr. Speaker, I will.

of making such representation to the Commonwealth authorities as may be necessary to secure uniformity in that and other matters concerning divorce laws. I do not wish to be misunderstood. I am by no means in favour of doing anything that will make the marriage tie less binding than it is—for the marriage tie is something more than a civil contract—but it seems to me to be ridiculous that within the Commonwealth different divorce laws should be operating in the various States. The divorce laws should be uniform, and I am asking the Attorney-General to take up the matter with the Commonwealth authorities. Under section 51 of the Constitution Act provision is made that the Commonwealth Parliament shall, subject to the Constitution, have full powers to make laws for the peace, order, and good Government of the Commonwealth, with respect to, *inter alia* (vide subsection 22) divorce and matrimonial causes, and in relation thereto parental rights and guardianship of infants. These are matters of importance to Queensland and Australia generally. I should be glad if the hon. gentleman would take the matter up with the Commonwealth Attorney-General with a view to the passage of a uniform divorce law throughout Australia, including this alteration in relation to the wife's domicile. We have many laws that are uniform throughout the Commonwealth, including the Bankruptcy Acts. We should have a uniform Company Act: that would be appreciated throughout Australia.

There is another condition in relation to our divorce laws that I wish to mention. A ruling was given many years ago by the Crown Solicitor's Office to the effect that divorcees could not get married for a certain period after the judgment absolute had been granted. That ruling was entirely wrong. I took the matter up with the present Crown Solicitor, and he was pleased I did so: and that ruling has since been altered. In divorce cases, if the petitioner is successful, a judgment nisi is granted, and that judgment can be made absolute after the expiration of three months. Years ago it used to be six months, but the common practice now is to make it three months. That judgment nisi is what one might call a temporary judgment, and within that three months there is a right of intervention by the Attorney-General or any other interested person. This old ruling I refer to was that to the effect that the judgment absolute was to be regarded in the same way as any other judgment of the court, and a certain time would have to elapse before either party could be remarried. The Registrar-General would not marry such a person till a certain time had elapsed after the judgment absolute was made.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: When was that ruling given, and by whom?

Mr. R. M. KING: I do not know by whom it was given. I am not attributing it to the present officials. That old ruling prevailed until I drew the attention of the Crown Solicitor to it. A case had been brought under my notice where the Registrar had refused to celebrate a marriage immediately after judgment had been granted by the court on the ground that a further period had to elapse in order to allow the parties the right of appeal, the same as

with any ordinary judgment in the Supreme Court.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Suppose a divorcee got married and the appeal succeeded?

Mr. R. M. KING: No person can legally marry before the order nisi is made absolute. As soon as the order absolute is made he is entitled to get married.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Don't you believe in the right of appeal?

Mr. R. M. KING: The right of appeal can be exercised between the time of the judgment nisi and the judgment absolute.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Not after the judgment absolute?

Mr. R. M. KING: No, certainly not. The opinion seemed to prevail in the minds of the registrars and of the clergy throughout Queensland that they could not marry divorcees until a further period, probably twenty-one days, elapsed after the judgment absolute. I simply raise this matter at the present time in order that publicity may be given to it and to bring it under the notice of those divorced persons who desire to remarry. It is very often desirable that a divorcee should be married immediately after the judgment absolute. I refer to such persons as have been living together "on the wrong side of the blanket," as it were. I think it desirable that the conventions should be observed as soon as possible. In the interests of public morality these people should have the opportunity of marrying as soon as possible, and it is with this end in view that I raise the matter this morning. There is a wrong impression in the minds of the Registrar-General and also the clergy of Queensland in connection with this matter, and that erroneous impression should be dissipated.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: When did the hon. member raise the question with the Crown Solicitor?

Mr. R. M. KING: It is only within the last month that I raised that particular point. I had never heard of the ruling. My opinion was sought by a client, and my advice was that he could marry immediately the judgment nisi was made absolute. I was then told that the Registrar-General would not permit it. I then interviewed that official and was informed that it was illegal. I then proceeded to the Crown Solicitor, and he informed me that that was so. A little time afterwards the Crown Solicitor informed me that that ruling had been varied. I desire to let the public know that a remarriage can be solemnised as soon as the order nisi has been made absolute.

We appreciate the work of the Registrar-General's Department, not only in respect of the ordinary work of registering births, deaths, and marriages, but also in connection with the valuable statistics prepared for the information of members of Parliament and the public generally. The Registrar-General is doing very fine work in that capacity, and also as Registrar of Friendly Societies. Mr. Porter is held in very high esteem by the members of these societies. I am a member of a friendly society, and we value the excellence of his statistical work. It is unfortunate that very often statistics are misused. I do not say that that practice is confined to hon. members on the Government side of the Chamber. In a report that was recently issued a comparison is made

[Mr. R. M. King.]

between present costs of living in Brisbane and the other capital cities of the Commonwealth on the basis of the average cost for all capital cities in 1911. In connection with forty-six commodities and house rentals the report to which I refer shows the position as follows:—

	COST OF FOOD, GROCERIES, AND HOUSE RENT.			
	1911.		1934.	
	Average.			
	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>	<i>s. d.</i>
Brisbane ... ..	20 0	...	24 8	...
Melbourne ... ..	20 0	...	26 7	...
Adelaide ... ..	20 0	...	26 2	...
Hobart ... ..	20 0	...	28 2	...
Sydney ... ..	20 0	...	29 0	...
Perth ... ..	20 0	...	28 2	...

In the report to which I have referred the sum of 20s. is taken as a basis for comparison, but that does not represent the purchasing power of these cities in 1911. The following table shows the purchasing power of the six capital cities in 1911:—

	<i>s. d.</i>
Brisbane ... ..	17 4
Melbourne ... ..	18 8
Adelaide ... ..	21 5
Hobart ... ..	18 9
Sydney ... ..	21 0
Perth ... ..	23 3

In 1934 the amount required to purchase a similar quantity of commodities and pay for rent was as follows:—

	<i>s. d.</i>
Brisbane ... ..	24 8
Melbourne ... ..	26 7
Adelaide ... ..	26 2
Hobart ... ..	28 2
Sydney ... ..	29 0
Perth ... ..	28 2

The report is absolutely misleading because the figures are based on the assumption that the purchasing power of all the capital cities in 1911 was 20s., whereas the purchasing power at that time in most cases was in excess of that amount. The increase in the six capital cities for these particular commodities is very much greater than appears in the report to which I have referred. These are the correct figures, showing the increases between 1911 and 1934—

	<i>s. d.</i>	Per cent.
Brisbane ... ..	7 4	42.3
Melbourne ... ..	7 11	42.4
Adelaide ... ..	4 9	22.1
Hobart ... ..	9 5	50.2
Sydney ... ..	8 0	38.1
Perth ... ..	4 11	21.1

The report to which I have referred is absolutely misleading. It makes it appear that the cost of living in Brisbane in 1934 is the least of all the capital cities of Australia, but when the proper comparison is made Brisbane has shown the fourth highest increase. The astounding part is that this report comes from a public officer, the Commissioner of Prices, Mr. Ferry, whose report is untrue and absolutely misleading from beginning to end. I deeply regret that Mr. Ferry in this capacity should issue such a misleading report.

Mr. W. T. KING (*Maree*) [10.57 a.m.]: I wish to pay a tribute to the Attorney-General himself for the unflinching courtesy that he has extended to me during my time as a member of this Queensland Parliament.

I listened with interest and attention to the remarks of the hon. member for Logan concerning the law of domicile in its application to actions for divorce. The law courts, of course, are bound to interpret the law as it exists. I agree with the hon. member that in the interpretation of the law of domicile there is a possibility of grave inconvenience, and, perhaps at times, some injustice. I join with him in expressing the hope that in the very near future we shall see a uniform divorce law throughout the Commonwealth, which will satisfactorily settle the question of domicile from the point of view of justice.

I also desire to pay a tribute to the magistrates of Queensland generally for the good work that they do throughout the State from year to year. I recognise that none of these gentlemen enjoys a professional status in the true sense of the term, but I unhesitatingly say that they carry out their duties with the utmost efficiency, and just as well as any person would do who belonged to the legal profession. I have appeared as an advocate on frequent occasions before these gentlemen, and I can unhesitatingly state that all legal points that are raised are readily appreciated and considered and promptly adjudicated upon. Queensland is to be congratulated on the efficiency of her magistracy, gentlemen endowed with ability and imbued with the highest qualities of impartiality and justice. I should say that no magistracy throughout the British Empire could be more sincere, impartial, or just than the Queensland magistracy.

I desire also to pay a tribute to the electoral registration branch of the Department of Justice. I am always particularly struck by the orderliness which prevails at State elections, which contrasts very sharply with the disorder that I saw prevailing at the City Hall during the progress of the recent Federal elections. Under the guidance of the Principal Electoral Registrar of Queensland we have always had that necessary order at State elections. It is necessary that order should prevail in order that the people may exercise the franchise. Judging by the recent arrangements at the City Hall, the Commonwealth authorities can take a lesson from the arrangements and supervision in both State and municipal elections. It was quite unfair to the people to subject them to the ordeal that they suffered at the City Hall on the occasion of polling day at the Federal elections. I hope that at the next Federal election lack of system and disorder will not be in evidence.

I wish to pay a tribute to the Registrar-General on the performance of the duties appertaining to his office. He is responsible for giving us statistics—that meat which, adequately and judiciously used, can be of advantage in debates in this Committee.

It is natural that I should be particularly interested in the Supreme Court and the officers of the Supreme Court. I pay a tribute to the good work they do, and to the courtesy they extend to the general public. On this subject I intend to make certain recommendations to the Attorney-General concerning the legal liability of the sheriff, and for that purpose I propose to have an interview with the hon. gentleman at a time suitable to both of us. The sheriff should not be made the object of a "sitting shot" for certain people in this State. I recognise

*Mr. W. T. King.]*

that no personal responsibility attaches to the sheriff himself, and that the Government assume all liability, but I think that the Government themselves should be protected. The sheriff, in certain respects, is only an agency through which the litigant portion of the community move, particularly at the instance of execution creditors. Certain legislation could be passed to protect him and the Government. People have certain rights; and to enforce those rights the sheriff is made their agent. Therefore, he should not be forced into a position of defending an action, and, perhaps, rendering himself liable to damages.

The Titles Office has always been well conducted. It is a responsible office. It deals with the important affairs of the people. I know that there was a Real Property Assurance Fund, and there is such a fund to-day, to be used to meet judgments against officials in this office on account of any act done in their official capacity, and also to protect persons who act on the faith of the register and suffer damage which they cannot recover from the other parties concerned. I regret to learn that the Opposition, whilst in charge of the government of Queensland, took away portion of that assurance fund and placed it in general revenue. That fund was established for a specific purpose, and was transferred by the Leader of the Opposition, as Premier of the State, to consolidated revenue without any legislative sanction at the time. It is true that he introduced a validating Bill at a later date to justify his action. I hope that in the future no such assurance funds will be touched. They are there for a purpose; and that being so, it should be the duty of the Government to safeguard them and reserve them for the purpose for which the money has been contributed and accumulated through the years.

In general, I congratulate the hon. gentleman administering this department, together with the Under Secretary, officials, and staff, who display an admirable system of co-ordination in the discharge of their public duties. Queensland indeed is very fortunate in having such fine administrative and executive officers to carry our system of justice to fruition.

Mr. TOZER (*Gympie*) [11.5 a.m.]: I certainly endorse the remarks of the hon. member for Logan, and to a certain extent the remarks of the hon. member for Maree. I find that in any business with this department in its various ramifications one is treated with unvarying courtesy. Apart altogether from members of Parliament, the legal profession receive the utmost courtesy from the officers of the Department of Justice. We in the country are brought more in contact with courts of petty sessions, those in the city with the Supreme Court and the court of petty sessions, but throughout every assistance is given by the officials of the department and the police magistrates are ever ready to assist legal practitioners. The satisfactory way in which business is carried on and the good feeling existing between the departmental officials and the legal profession are to the advantage of both parties and of benefit to the State.

Undoubtedly uniform divorce laws throughout the Commonwealth would be of material advantage. Not only on the question of domicile, but on the question of the grounds on which divorce may be applied

for, there is diversity between the laws of the various States. We are one people in the Commonwealth and in a matter of so much importance it is advisable that uniformity should prevail. I urge the Attorney-General to use his influence to bring about that uniformity.

A uniform company law for the Commonwealth is also desirable. Queensland has possibly the most up-to-date company law of all the States, Victoria ranking second, but in view of the existing mining boom it would be advisable to have uniform legislation in regard to companies. Certain companies which are working Queensland mines are registered in New South Wales, where conditions are simpler and not so strict and where registration fees and stamp duties are less than in Queensland. That is not to the advantage of the State, for it is advisable that companies carrying on operations in this State should be registered here. Otherwise Queensland shareholders have to go on the Sydney register, involving many complications, particularly in the case of the estates of deceased persons, where probate is taken out in Queensland and a reseat obtained in New South Wales. In the "Courier-Mail" this week a case was quoted where in respect of a probate taken out in New South Wales, action had to be taken for reseat in Queensland, where certain property of the deceased existed. Although the property in Queensland was only worth £10,000, it attracted a duty of £13,000. Something is radically wrong when a case such as that can occur.

Another matter to which I draw attention is really one of Government policy. At Brisbane, Gympie, and Mackay certain senior magistrates are now arriving at the age at which, in accordance with the regulations, they must retire. These men, who have had a wealth of experience, are in the prime of life and have the ability to continue satisfactorily to perform their duties. Where a man through infirmity or sickness is not capable of performing his duties it is only right that he should be retired, but to retire men in the full possession of their faculties, whose accumulated experience might still be of benefit to the State, simply because they reach 65 years of age is not in their interests or in the interests of the State. There have been extensions of something like eighteen months in some cases, and in a few instances I believe there have been further extensions. I regret that these experienced men have to go out whilst in full possession of all their faculties. It is said that there are as good fish in the sea as ever came out of it, but I consider it would be of greater advantage to the country if the services of these experienced men were retained. The young men, of course, consider that these senior officers are getting on in years and they are quite capable of occupying their positions; but their time will come later on. When they reach the age when they are due to retire their opinions will probably alter! Employees should be retained provided they are not incapacitated through ill-health.

There is an increase in the vote for this department of £27,494. Presumably that is largely accounted for by the increase in the vote for "Electoral Registration," amounting to £17,933, which is probably due to the fact that the elections will take place next year. I notice that the vote for "Friendly Societies" has been decreased by £896, and

[Mr. W. T. King.]

I should like to know the reason for that. I presume they are increasing their members and still carrying on the good work they have been doing in the past. In this case there are some figures which I do not quite appreciate. I notice that in the Chief Office six clerks received an increase of just over £22 each, presumably the automatic increases, and five clerks in the clerk of petty sessions office on £320 a year each received an increase of only £4 each. In the chief office the Assistant Under Secretary receives an increase of £50, and there are several clerks on salaries ranging from £320 to £500 who do not get any increase at all.

There is an increase in postage, telegrams, and incidentals of £651. I should like to know the reason for that. I also notice that there is an increase in railway fares and freights, printing, and stationery, but in the office of the Principal Electoral Registrar there is a decrease in the postage, telegrams, and incidentals of £278. I will mention those matters when we are dealing with the individual votes.

On the whole, everything is working satisfactorily so far as our courts are concerned, and it is a matter for congratulation that we have officials who carry out their duties as capably as our court officials are doing. If complaints about small matters crop up—and every now and again there are complaints—they should be made through the Incorporated Law Society. The society does not think it advisable to publish any of these matters, and, therefore, I think it is inadvisable to bring before this Committee subjects that are of small importance so far as the country is concerned.

Mr. WATERS (*Kelvin Grove*) [11.19 a.m.]: As has been mentioned by the hon. member for Maree and other speakers, the matter of having uniformity in divorce law throughout the Commonwealth should receive attention. If necessary, the powers of the Commonwealth Parliament should be invoked.

The Department of Justice controls the system of legal aid for the poor. There is a need for the establishment of a more effective system than operates at the present time. Unfortunately, despite the operations of the system of rendering aid to the poor, many people do not have the opportunity of getting justice. That branch of the department seems to be run on more or less purely business lines at the present time. Many poor people seeking justice are sent by the department to members of the legal profession outside it. I understand from the officers of the department that their activities are circumscribed by the Act at present in force. A department should be established for the specific purpose of providing legal aid for the poor and destitute, not only in criminal but also in civil actions. There should at any rate be more adequate facilities than exist at the present time. A relief worker or a working man in receipt of only the basic wage, however genuine his case may be, cannot obtain justice because of the fact that he lacks the necessary finance. Naturally, legal practitioners are in the profession only as a business proposition. They cannot afford to spend their own money in taking up a case, the issue of which may be doubtful. They might never recover their outlay.

Mr. R. M. KING: It is unprofessional for them to look for work of that kind.

Mr. WATERS: Despite the fact that it is unprofessional, many of them do. In any case that does not disprove the fact that a poor litigant at the present time does not get that meed of justice to which he is entitled. So far as he is concerned, justice is a negligible quantity, whatever may be the justice of his case. I consider that the State should establish a legal aid department and give to necessitous cases the assistance that is required. I know my suggestion will provoke a certain amount of opposition from the legal profession.

Mr. R. M. KING: I do not think so.

Mr. WATERS: Naturally, they would be concerned about it. When the Government proposed to extend facilities for dental treatment by enlarging the dental hospital in George street their action was assailed in certain quarters. It was contended that this should not be done, as it would interfere with the interests of members of the profession. I have no doubt that if the Government extended the benefits of legal aid to those who were unable to pay the legal profession as a body would make a definite protest.

The relationship between solicitors and barristers should also receive the attention of the Government. In Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, and Tasmania, I understand, barristers and solicitors can practise in either branch of the profession. If this were done in Queensland the natural corollary would be the reduction of legal costs. At the present time we have the spectacle of two legal men being required in an undefended divorce case. The solicitor performs the bulk of the necessary work. It is he who prepares the affidavits, statements, and necessary documents. All that the barrister does is to appear in court and read the documents that have already been prepared by the solicitor. The litigant is called upon to pay anything from eight guineas to fifteen guineas for that work. I think that the law might well be amended to provide that both branches of the legal profession may appear in any court.

I hope the Attorney-General will give some consideration to these matters.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL (Hon. J. Mullan, *Carpentaria*) [11.25 a.m.]: In the first place, I wish to refer to the remarks by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition in connection with the domicile of women in its application to the divorce laws of the State. He also made reference to the Act passed by the Labour Government in 1923 amending the Matrimonial Causes Act. When that Act was passed we imagined that we were conferring a boon upon women who found it necessary to seek redress by way of divorce, but later our law courts raised very serious doubts in our minds on this point. Then we came to the conclusion, as reasonable men, that what we really required in Australia was a uniform divorce law. I have stated over and over again in this Chamber and elsewhere—in this connection I believe that I have the unanimous support of hon. members—that the Commonwealth should accept its share of the responsibility under the constitution and that therein lies the real solution of the question.

Mr. R. M. KING: No one State could bring about a solution.

*Hon. J. Mullan.]*

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: No. In view of what we have done and what was done in Victoria to some extent under the Shields Act it is patent that something definite should be done on this subject. I asked the Premier to list this very question for discussion at the Constitutional Conference held in Melbourne in March last. The matter came up for discussion, but I do not propose to weary hon. members by reading the whole report. I presented the case as it was presented to-day by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and as I have presented it in this Chamber and outside on more than one occasion. I urged the need for uniform divorce laws throughout the Commonwealth. I also pointed out that if the Commonwealth would not go so far as that at least it might do something in the direction of providing for an Australian domicile.

Mr. R. M. KING: Hear, hear!

At 11.27 a.m.,

Mr. W. T. KING (*Maree*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved Mr. Gledson in the chair.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I am not going to read what I said on that occasion but it is interesting to know the viewpoint of the other representatives at that conference. The Commonwealth Attorney-General, Mr. Latham, in reply to my statement of the case, said—

"In 1929, I made a rough draft of a Bill which was designed to enable State courts, in so far as domicile was concerned, to act on the basis of Australian domicile, but to act on the grounds provided in State legislation in respect to other matters. I sent that Bill for criticism by a number of judges with wide experience in divorce, and it was evident from their replies that very grave issues are involved. Shortly after that, the Government with which I was associated went out of office, and nothing further was done."

Here is the important part—

"I now undertake to look up the draft Bill, have it considered by the Attorney-General's Department, and, if it is possible to do anything, I shall communicate with the various States."

I understand that Mr. Latham did take action, and that the matter is now under consideration by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department with a view to evolving a suitable law, not embracing the whole of the divorce laws, but one that would at least give us an Australian domicile so that a woman, say, at Cairns, will not have to chase her husband over to Perth, where he is a resident, to get a divorce. That would be very unfair and in most cases almost impossible. I can assure the hon. member that so far we have done everything possible to accomplish what he asks us to do.

The hon. member also referred to the question of divorcees marrying after the order absolute has been made. I can confirm his statement that up till recently it was thought that no party to a divorce could remarry until after a lapse of three weeks from the granting of the order absolute without getting himself into difficulties with the law. I can also confirm his statement that when he brought the matter under the notice of the Crown Solicitor this official gave suitable

advice and the necessary action was taken. That state of affairs no longer exists.

Mr. R. M. KING: Probably the Crown Solicitor did not know that such a practice was in existence.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: That is so. He did not know, but when the matter was brought under his notice he gave instructions which had the effect of dissipating that idea.

I was glad to hear the complimentary remarks made by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition about the Registrar-General, as Registrar-General and Registrar of Friendly Societies, and the officers of the department generally, who are carrying out their duties in a very satisfactory manner. That hon. member also referred to certain statistical tables. The Registrar-General only compiles statistics based on information supplied to him in conjunction with the Commonwealth Statistician. In fact, the statistics of the two officials are supposed to be uniform as far as possible, and that is so in all the States. I cannot accept the responsibility for that.

The hon. member for Maree made complimentary remarks about the officers of the department generally, particularising the officials of the Registrar-General's office, the Titles Office, and Supreme Court. Those remarks are much appreciated. We like, of course, to learn that hon. members are well satisfied with the way the administration is being conducted. I have noted his opinion that the sheriffs of the various courts have not the protection they are entitled to receive. They are, of course, personally protected by the Crown. The hon. member thinks that the Crown, too, should be protected. He has stated his intention of conferring with me and pointing out how this difficulty might be overcome. I appreciate his offer and would ask him to call on me at any time for the purpose of placing his views before me.

The hon. member for Gympie referred to the necessity for a uniform company law, and the great convenience such an enactment would be to the public. There is no doubt that we have an up-to-date company law in Queensland, and because of that fact, together with the additional fact that similar laws in other States are not so strict, certain companies do register in other States. It would be more satisfactory for everybody concerned if companies operating in Queensland were registered in Queensland. There again the Commonwealth might do something. There are constitutional difficulties to be overcome. This matter also was discussed at the Constitutional Conference held in March last—the question of a uniform company law was definitely raised. There can be no disguising the fact that if one may judge from the opinions expressed at that conference there is a distinct disinclination on the part of the majority of the States to approve of such a law. At that conference, however, very complimentary remarks were made about the company law in Queensland. That law was modelled on the English Act. The Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department has prepared a very comprehensive company law which I do not think is very much in advance of our law; nevertheless, it is the latest in the way of draft company laws. Mr. Latham in February last transmitted that draft Bill to

[Hon. J. Mullan.

every State so that the States, whilst not agreeing to surrender power to the Commonwealth, would pass uniform company laws. I understand that action in that direction is now being taken; if successful, it will go a long way to meeting the suggestions made by the hon. member for Gympie.

That hon. member also referred to the retirement of certain police magistrates. I understand the police magistrate in his own district will retire at the end of the present financial year, and that other police magistrates are due for retirement at the end of the calendar year. It is not a very pleasant thing for a man to contemplate retirement. Sooner or later we all have to retire, and some policy must be formulated to deal with the matter. The Government have not acted harshly in these matters. However, the Government's policy in the matter is known. These gentlemen will retire, but I take this opportunity of paying my tribute to them. They have all been exceptionally fine men; in fact, we are singularly fortunate in the gentlemen we have had in the important positions of police magistrates. No complaints are made as to the way in which they perform their judicial functions, which is the highest tribute I can pay to them.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN (*Murilla*) [11.38 a.m.]: The Minister would be well advised to give some information as to why the proposed redistribution of electorates is necessary.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: What redistribution are you talking about—the last one?

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: When the Moore Government decided to reduce the number of members of Parliament from seventy-two to sixty-two, a redistribution commission was necessary, but irrespective of the number of members being reduced the Moore Government would have been justified in realloiting the electorates, because, in some cases, even in the Minister's own electorate, only a small quota of voters existed.

Mr. MAHER: The number there was 2,652.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: Yes, although, in some other electorates, the number went as high as 12,000 and 13,000 electors. We found at that time that Brisbane, with an area of approximately a square mile, only had a voting strength of between 6,000 and 7,000 electors, whilst electorates such as Murilla, with many thousands of square miles of country, had a greater voting strength. That is not in accordance with the Electoral Districts Act, which allows a margin of 20 per cent. above or below. The Moore Government, in their wisdom, thought we could do with fewer members of Parliament, and reduced the number from seventy-two to sixty-two. Personally, I was in favour of a greater reduction—to fifty-two. I am still of opinion that if the Government are going to do anything in the way of the redistribution of electorates they should introduce a Bill to reduce the number of members of Parliament from sixty-two to fifty-two. We have not lost to any extent by the reduction of ten in the number of members. After an experience of nearly three years with sixty-two members of Parliament I think it can be said that the work of Parliament is equally as good with sixty-two members as with seventy-two, and I claim that we could do the work just as well with fifty-two. The

people of Australia are clamouring for a reduction in the cost of government. Throughout Australia it represents an enormous amount of money, and has influenced many people in favour of unification. Personally, I am not in favour of the abolition of State Parliaments. I consider we are able to attend to our domestic affairs much more efficiently than if we were governed from Canberra. The States with the small populations would suffer under unification. If representation were purely on a population basis Queensland would suffer because our population is much less than that of Victoria or New South Wales. It would mean that we should be practically handing over the government of this State to those States with the larger populations.

According to the press a redistribution of electorates is to take place. I cannot say whether that is true or not. Surely the Minister will not refuse to give us information on that matter! Why is it necessary to have a redistribution of electorates? So far as we can discover the voting strength in the electorates is in accordance with the Act, which makes provision that electoral boundaries are to be fixed with certain margins above or below a certain quota. The far northern or western electorates are entitled to a number 20 per cent. below the quota, and city electorates shall not contain more than 20 per cent. above the quota. That was a wise provision made by the Moore Government. During the time of the previous Labour Governments the Act read, that the quota "may be" 20 per cent. above or below. The Moore Government had the wording altered so that it now must not be more than 20 per cent. below or above. In a redistribution of electorates the commission must respect the law in that regard. I feel sure hon. members on the Government side representing western electorates will see that the electorates are adjusted accordingly. I am not in favour of Brisbane controlling the Parliament of this State.

Mr. BEDFORD: You cut out four country seats because they were safe for Labour.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: It was in accordance with the quota. I am sure the hon. member for Warrego would not be prepared to allow his electorate be increased in area in order to get the same voting strength in his electorate as the Brisbane electorate. I think the hon. member will agree with me that the far western and northern electorates, which are sparsely populated, are entitled to some consideration. I am sure the hon. member for Warrego is not in favour of allowing Brisbane to have complete control of the Parliament of this State. That is what the position would be if a redistribution took place on the basis of the same quota for the whole of Queensland. The hon. member for Enoggera said that he did not believe in gum trees having a vote. It would be useless to give a gum tree a vote because it could not exercise it; but we know that in some cases it appeared as though the dead had recorded votes. I should like to know what the intention of the Government is in regard to the redistribution of electorates, and if the Government have decided on a redistribution I should like to know by what means they intend to justify such action. If it can be shown that since the last redistribution there has been practically no alteration in the

*Mr. Morgan.]*



numbers of electors in the different electorates, and no electorate has had its voting strength reduced or increased, then the Minister cannot justify the redistribution, and if they made one, it would be apparent that it was being done from a party political point of view. I do not think it right for any Government to gerrymander the electorates. The adding of an area where the Country-Nationalist vote is strong to an adjoining Country-Nationalist electorate, and of a strong Labour voting area to a Labour electorate, thus making those electorates safe for Labour or Country-Nationalists is wrong and amounts to gerrymandering. I do not believe in it. Moreover, there is an old Scottish saying, "The best laid schemes o' mice and men gang aft agley."

The hon. gentleman knows that the Moore Government had no option but to redistribute, because of the fact that the number of electorates was being reduced from seventy-two to sixty-two. A commission was appointed and, as far as I know—and I think I am justified in saying as far as any of my colleagues knew—that commission was allowed a free hand. It could distribute the seats just as it desired without any interference from the Government. That is an altogether different proposition from altering the boundaries of the electorates when there is going to be neither an increase nor reduction in the number of parliamentary representatives. Were the Government desirous of increasing or reducing the number of parliamentary seats they would have to bring a Bill before Parliament to alter the constitution, whereas if there is no intention to alter the number of representatives, they can do so without coming to Parliament. According to the press that is going to be done. We are told by some hon. members that certain seats are to be made absolutely safe and solid for members of the Government Party by a redistribution. In other instances seats now considered safe from the Nationalist point of view are to be made still safer for particular candidates. I do not believe in that. During my parliamentary career my own electorate had been redistributed on many occasions, the first time being in 1912. The result has not been affected in any way. It would be difficult for the Government or any commission to make alterations that would affect the result in this electorate. I ask the Attorney-General to tell this Committee why this proposed redistribution is necessary; if there are good reasons, then he should have no hesitation in informing hon. members. It may be that certain electorates contain a greater number of voters than they should and others contain fewer. If there is a great disproportion in the numbers of electors I am perfectly satisfied that there should be redistribution. The Moore Government took action when it was found that the hon. gentleman represented an electorate containing only 2,600 electors, whereas some other electorates in Queensland contained 11,000. That principle was unfair. The margin between the two was too great. I am a firm believer that the voting strength of country electorates should be 20 per cent. below that of the city electorates. The representative of an electorate in the city of Brisbane can walk from one end of his electorate to the other. He incurs no expense. Representatives of electorates such as Warrego, Maranoa, and my own are put to great expense. If we wish to visit certain

[Mr. Morgan.

centres in our electorates it requires at least a week's journey.

Mr. WATERS: Are you resigning for Mr. McGill?

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: What is the good of asking a silly question like that? A country electorate like Murilla would not on any account have a city man as its representative. Country electorates require that their representative shall have an interest in the district. He knows its requirements, and in looking after his own interests he is also looking after the interests of the rest of his community. Although it may be done in the Labour Party, we cannot foist a city man on a country electorate. The farmers and producers in those electorates would not stand for that. They have men of brains and ability in their electorates who are capable of representing them. The day has gone when a city barrister could be sent from Brisbane to be elected to Parliament by the people in the country. That could have been done in years gone by, but it cannot be done to-day so far as the Country-Nationalist Party is concerned. It may be possible to do that to-day in the Labour Party.

Mr. KEOGH: Do you think that the Opposition is more popular to-day than it was before the last State elections?

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: I think that the Opposition is becoming more popular every day, and that it is only a matter of a short time when the Labour Government will kill themselves, just as they did on a previous occasion. The Labour Government were beaten in 1929, not because of anything that was done by the Opposition, but because of the foolish things they did during their term of office. The people got sick and tired of them and threw them out, just as the people will get sick and tired of them again and throw them out. It is only a matter of time. However, that is not the point that I wish to discuss. I want the Attorney-General to tell hon. members and the people why it is necessary that a redistribution should take place. If he can satisfy us that there is a need for something in that direction, then I shall have nothing further to say. I am not concerned specifically about my own seat. I am not afraid of what any redistribution might do in connection with my own electorate. I have seen four or five redistributions during my time, this being done here and that being done there, a little off here, and a little on there, but it does not seem to affect the result. If the Government commence to gerrymander the electorates, the people will resent it. Generally speaking, the people of Australia are really good sports. Go to any place where man is opposed to man—whether a foreigner, blackfellow, or anyone else—the people like to see fairplay and to see the better man win, but they object to anything of a cowardly nature. Go to the Stadium. If a blackfellow is fighting a white man, and the fight is a fair one, the audience is indifferent as to what man wins, so long as he is the better man. That is characteristic of the majority of Australian people—they believe in fairplay. So far as the elections are concerned, the people also believe in fairplay; they will not approve of anything that is not in accordance with British fairplay. That is all that we as an Opposition ask for—British fairplay. We do not ask for any special consideration. We know perfectly well that if we did we would not

get it. We shall take just what is coming to us and contest the seats as they are. I want the Minister to tell this Chamber why a redistribution is necessary.

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR (*Enoggera*) [11.57 a.m.]: It is rather amusing to see the hon. member for Murilla on this bright, sunny morning posing as the political Izaak Walton in the hope that he will be able to take home a very heavy catch. Unfortunately for the hon. gentleman, fishing is an art, and he has not yet learned it. To change the metaphor, the hon. member has been sent out to salvage the political wreck for hon. members on his own side. He spoke in favour of a reduction of members of Parliament to fifty-two, but that hardly coincides with his advocacy for the re-establishment of the Legislative Council. It is quite apparent why he can be consistent in his inconsistency. He knows perfectly well that the alleged equitable redistribution carried out by his Government did not contain all the equity that was claimed for it. Take as a case in point the Enoggera electorate, which I represent. In their alleged desire to deal fairly by the people, and particularly the residents of the city of Brisbane, they added 2,100 farmers and rural workers to a metropolitan constituency, and even went so far as to include the Redcliffe division in the Enoggera electorate to make it safe for the then sitting member. There is no doubt that was the obvious intention that hon. members opposite had when they were the Government of the day. The question arises as to whether the redistribution made by them is not just as valuable to the Labour Party to-day as it was in 1932. There may be no necessity for the Government to bother their heads about a redistribution. Hon. members opposite evidently considered that they had effected a redistribution which was practically water-tight and was to be of greater avail to them than to the present Government Party. The result of that redistribution disclosed that members on this side had nothing to fear from it. On the present boundaries the Government would come back with an additional three or four members. After all, the hon. member for Murilla has simply indulged in a wonderful fishing stunt, but found that the trout were not biting.

Mr. MAHER (*West Morston*) [12.1 p.m.]: Unlike the hon. member for Murilla I possess some doubt as to whether the Government have power to effect a redistribution of the existing electoral boundaries without bringing an amending Bill before Parliament. The clause of the Electoral Districts Act passed in 1931 that covers this point is clause 14. It reads—

“Whenever at any time the number of electors appearing upon the electoral roll of any district or districts is or are, as the case may be, so much above or so much below the prescribed quota of electors, after taking into consideration the margin of allowance herein referred to, that, in the opinion of the Governor in Council, it has become necessary to reduce or increase, as the case may be, the number of such electors so as to approximate the same to the said quota or to make a complete or partial redistribution of the electoral districts of the State, the Governor in Council may appoint three electoral commissioners in the manner aforesaid for the purposes of this section.”

Where is the evidence that there has been such an increase or decrease in the number of electors on the roll of the different districts as to make this action necessary? Only two and a-half years have elapsed since we went to the electors under this Act. Can anyone say that in two and a-half years there has been such an enormous change in the distribution of the various electoral districts as to make the proposed redistribution necessary? I gravely doubt whether the Government have power to take this action under the terms of the present law. An amending Bill would probably give the Government constitutional powers, but what conditions have arisen, during the last two and a-half years particularly, to warrant any interference with the redistribution made under the Act that was passed to provide for a reduction in the number of members of Parliament from seventy-two to sixty-two, and under which a redistribution was effected by the commissioners who worked on a definite basis laid down in the Act? The result of that redistribution was certainly more favourable to the Labour Party than our party. That is indicated by the fact that when the redistribution became known the present Premier, as Leader of the Opposition, had no criticism whatever to make. I have searched the files of the “*Courier*” and “*Daily Mail*” at that particular time, but can find no adverse criticism by that hon. gentleman. In fact, the only protest from members opposite that I was able to trace came from the present Secretary for Public Works, who was dissatisfied with the redistribution of the boundaries of the Kennedy electorate. He lodged a protest with the commissioners within the prescribed time. But there were many protests from the members of the then Government Party. Those protests quite outnumbered the protests from members of the Labour Party, indicating that the redistribution effected was a perfectly fair one to all concerned. No redistribution can satisfy every person. It is obvious that members who lose seats, and districts which previously gave them favourable majorities, must feel a little hurt, but, taking into consideration the difficulties of the time and the fact that ten seats had to be abolished, a remarkably fair redistribution was effected by the three commissioners appointed by the Moore Government. The fact remains that no protest was made by the then Leader of the Opposition, the present Premier, and that in the absence of any protest his party were apparently satisfied with the results achieved by that commission. Only two and a-half years have elapsed and where is the warrant for any further interference with a perfectly fair and reasonable redistribution? I think it is an outrage.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Why set up an Aunt Sally?

Mr. MAHER: There is no Aunt Sally about that. Why interfere with that when the work has been properly carried out? What motive can there be for any interference with this perfectly fair redistribution? After all, this is the basis on which the commissioners operated, and it is worth repeating in view of the Government's attitude—

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: There is no necessity to repeat it: the basis is set out in the Act.

*Mr. Maher.]*

Mr. MAHER: Nevertheless, it will not hurt to repeat it. This matter is going before the public, and I feel justified in quoting the basis on which the commissioners operated, namely:—

"1. Metropolitan electorates to range between 9,000 and 9,635 voters.

"2. The more thickly populated centres outside the metropolitan areas, such as Ipswich, Toowoomba, Rockhampton, and Townsville, and those districts containing part of the city area such as Wynnum, Logan, and Enoggera, to range between 8,000 and 9,000 electors.

"3. The closely populated parts adjoining the greater cities, and also the districts, including the smaller cities and larger towns, to range between 7,000 and 8,000 electors.

"4. The closely settled farming and pastoral districts to range between 7,000 and 7,500 electors.

"5. The districts of great distances and of sparse population to range between 6,423 and 7,000 electors.

"In arranging electoral districts in accordance with the scheme the commissioners had given due consideration to—

(a) Community or diversity of interest.

(b) Means of communication.

(c) Physical features.

(d) Areas of proposed districts which do not comprise any part of a city."

The Brisbane "Courier" of 22nd December, 1931, had this to say in regard to the redistribution:—

"The consensus of opinion in political circles is that the redistribution of electoral districts formed a fair decision of a free and independent commission."

The truth of what the "Courier" said then was recognised by the present Premier, because he offered no criticism whatever, and anyone who knows the Premier knows full well that if he felt there was any ground for strong or trenchant criticism of the commissioners' redistribution proposal he would not have hesitated to launch an attack with all the vigour of which he is capable.

The hon. member for Murilla, in the course of his observations this morning, made reference to the most undemocratic conditions that operated from 1920 to 1929 so far as the electoral districts of the State are concerned. Is there any suggestion in the Government's proposals to create conditions within the limits of the present sixty-two electoral districts such as existed during the period to which I have referred. Prior to "The Electoral Districts Act of 1931," we were governed by the Act of 1910, which provided for a quota of one-seventy-second of the total enrolment, with a margin of one-fifth above and below. That Act was outrageously defied by successive Governments, so that in the rolls of December, 1928, ten electorates of the State held by the Opposition were above the statutory maximum of 8,172, whilst only three Government seats were so held. Moreover, there were seventeen Government seats below the minimum of 5,448, and only one Opposition seat. So it is apparent that the Labour

Government at that time had the Opposition both ways—to use a colloquialism—going and coming. Of a total of seventy-two seats no fewer than thirty-one were outside the statutory limits during that period, which indicates that the Government wholly disregarded the statutory obligations as far as the electoral districts of the State were concerned. People have often wondered why the Labour Government secured majorities in succeeding election campaigns over such a long period of time. The obvious explanation is that the electoral districts were stacked against their opponents. In the game of political hazard during those years members of the Labour Party were playing with loaded dice against their opponents.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: You stacked them.

Mr. MAHER: We did not. These electorates had reached the condition to which I have referred, and the Government of the day took no action to alter them, and it took a revulsion of public opinion in 1929 to throw them out of power; and it was not until the Moore Government came in that a fair and just redistribution of electoral boundaries in this State took place. The fact the Labour Government held power over that length of time when thirty-one of the electoral divisions were outside the statutory limitations was a travesty on democracy. What do the Government intend to do in this matter? A number of kites have been flown in respect of redistribution proposals. The first proposal that reached the press was the restoration of the ten seats abolished by the Moore Government; but apparently the Government were satisfied that it would be dangerous to proceed with that proposal. However, owing to the pressure of enthusiastic place-hunters within the Labour movement another kite was flown. This time the proposal was to restore five seats. That proposal was canvassed for some considerable time, but apparently the party were not enthusiastic about the reception it got, and eventually the number was altered to three, and about Exhibition time it was understood that the Government proposals provided for an increase of three seats. Prospective candidates at different centres were enthusiastic about their prospects of winning plebiscites which would be conducted to select candidates to contest those visionary seats. Apparently the Government found that this proposal was not being well received in the best Labour circles. At any rate, they weakened in regard to the proposition to restore three seats. We are now led to believe that a commission has been appointed to carry out a redistribution or a reshuffle of the existing districts. I challenge the Government to justify such an action. Only two and a-half years have elapsed since the last redistribution and there has not been any big change in population in that short period. What is at the back of all this? Is it not an effort on the part of the Government to manipulate the electorates once again? Is it not an attempt on the part of the Government to secure a party political advantage? Is it not an attempt on the part of the Government to go back to the conditions that obtained from 1920 to 1929, when they held power by unfair means? The Government during that period were in the position of a dictator. The Labour Party profess to resent the idea of a dictatorship. They object to every

[Mr. Maher.

type of dictator in this Chamber; but for a period of nine years they were virtually dictators, because on a normal vote by the people it was impossible for the Opposition to win, no matter how well they were led or how able their campaigners were, because the electoral districts were stacked against them. It necessitated a revolution of public thought to remove the Labour Government from power under those conditions. I submit that, in these proposals, the redistribution proposal that the Government is designed to tempt the electors of this State to support them under the present conditions of hardship throughout the State. The Government are attempting gradually to regain that form of unfair and undemocratic control of Queensland which they held from 1920 to 1929. I submit that there is no evidence at all in favour of the proposal, no argument that can be reasonably adduced in favour of it. I reiterate: the whole thing has been engineered for the express purpose of making certain seats held by hon. members of the Government Party as safe as possible and making certain seats held by hon. members of the Opposition as dangerous as possible. The whole thing is being designed in the interests of the political party opposite and against the best interests of the people of the State.

Mr. MOORE (*Aubigny*) [12.20 p.m.]: I quite agree with the statements made by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. He has put the case very well and very clearly. On the 17th of October, the following paragraph appeared in the "Courier-Mail":—

"STATE SEATS.

"COMMISSION TO REALLOCATE.

"No Change in Number."

"A commission is about to be appointed by the Government to reallocate the electoral boundaries of Queensland. It probably will consist of Mr. T. A. Ferry, Conciliation Commissioner of the Industrial Court, the Chief Electoral Officer Mr. A. E. Cole, and either the Under Secretary for Justice (Mr. G. A. Carter), or the Assistant Under Secretary (Mr. J. D. O'Hagan).

"No alteration is to be made in the number of seats, which was reduced from seventy-two to sixty-two by the Moore Government in 1931. Several months ago the possibility of an increase in the number to sixty-five, to reduce the size of the immense Western and North-Western electorates, was mooted. More recently it was suggested that the Government, for strategic reasons, might decide upon a reduction to sixty. Neither course will be pursued.

"The Government will appoint the commission simply to carry out a reallocation of boundaries, as distinct from a redistribution of seats. The commission will be selected soon, and possibly will be functioning by the middle of next month. One reason prompting the Parliamentary Labour Party to have the matter dealt with in the near future is the need for having electoral boundaries decided before the Labour in Politics Convention meets at Maryborough in February."

That appeared in the press just after caucus met, and showed exactly what happened. We

know perfectly well what has been happening. We know Cabinet discussed it, and the Premier said, "We are in a position to win. We have the confidence of the people of Queensland without any reallocation of boundaries. We will go to the country and show them. On the present boundaries everything will be all right. We have obtained the confidence of the people." But when it came to caucus it was quite another matter. The Premier, after boasting in the Cabinet room as to what he would do, had to climb down. In caucus some of his members said, "Our seats are in jeopardy. For weeks and weeks we have been going through the maps so that the boundaries may be placed where we desire them." They have been sitting in the room down there surrounded by maps with markings all over them. They have been dropping them round the passages. The markings show where the boundaries have been made so that they will have suggestions to make when the commission is appointed.

This commission will be appointed without any justification. As a matter of fact, the numbers in the various electorates are infinitely better now than when the distribution was made. There is very little difference. There was one seat, Merthyr, which had 11,682 in 1932. To-day, the number is only 10,238. In the nineteen Brisbane seats in 1932-33 there were 190,207 votes. In December last, the last roll that we have, the number is 189,350, a difference of only 997. There is but one seat nearly down to the margin below quota. There is one seat above the permissible variation. The opinion of the electors is reflected in the representatives in this Chamber almost exactly as it ought to be, according to the number of electors and the votes cast for either party. There could be no possible suggestion that anything was wrong and nobody ever thought that it was going to be wrong. The redistribution was carried out in a very fair and equitable manner.

Mr. KEOGH: Of course you think so.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member was returned under that redistribution, so that he has nothing to complain about. I rely on the policy I put forward to secure the approval of the people, not on the gerrymandering of electorates, by taking a hotel from here and including it in another electorate there and putting a few shops in somewhere else. (Government interjections.)

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask hon. members on my right to preserve order.

Mr. MOORE: It is rather extraordinary that there should be a suggestion of an alteration of boundaries when the redistribution has proved to be so fair. The matter has already been mentioned; the dogs are barking it round the town that Mr. Ferry has already been appointed; that he has been up to the North; that he has come back; and that he has been picked for the job. We know very well that these things will leak out, and that it is talked all round the town. We know the suggestions that are being made. How could any commission comply with the Act and provide a more equal redistribution of seats? The numbers in the various electorates are right to-day in accordance with the Act. Just as the hon. member for West Moreton has pointed

*Mr. Moore.]*

out, there cannot be any fair alteration unless the Act is amended, or unless another course is taken—and I hate to think that hon. members opposite would connive at such a proposal—that is, to place false figures on the electoral rolls so as to make the boundaries suitable and then afterwards to say that the people must have gone away or that they must have died. There is the suggestion that that can be done, and, in fact, it has been done.

THE SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Falsify the rolls?

Mr. MOORE: Yes. I make no secret of it; it has been done before. A very fertile imagination has been responsible for the suggestion that people may be placed on the various rolls, and then, after the elections, it could be said that they must have gone somewhere else. There must have been a certain amount of imagination along these lines when 132 people are placed in a boarding-house that can hold only five and they are kept there, and when twenty-seven people are put in a private house, the owner of which has never heard of them, although he has lived in the house for thirteen years. He wanted to know where they were, where they had been, and from whence they came. One can understand how the rolls can be inflated. It is suggested that there is to be a reallocation of boundaries. "Reallocation" is a delightful word. It does not mean a redistribution. It means a reallocation of boundaries, so that they can be favourable to the present Government. The Electoral Districts Act does not provide for a reallocation of boundaries; it provides for a redistribution of seats, and it was done for a very definite purpose—to comply with the democratic will of the people. But a reallocation has to be done for quite another purpose! The decision has to be placed before the Labour in Politics Convention in February, to see whether it approves or not. It is not to be done in the interests of the community. No. The commissioner has to be appointed, the work carried out, and members have to scratch their heads and take bits out of one electorate to substitute for bits out of another, and Labour in Politics Convention has to approve of it. I can appreciate the difficulty experienced by Government members downstairs when they got together to decide the matter, when they said, "I will take that bit out of Bulimba and put it in my electorate, and I will take this bit out of Buranda to make my seat a bit safer." The member representing the safe Labour seat then exclaimed, "But where do I come in?" And then they had to go over the whole thing again in order to come to some agreement. It is gratifying to know how much interest has been taken by hon. members opposite on this question so as to assist the commissioner to carry out his duties. It shows a charming interest on their part. After all, they know that public servants are very hard workers, and they want to give these individuals all the assistance they can in explaining what parts should be taken away and what parts should not, so that the Labour in Politics Convention will be able to approve. They want to be in a position of saying that the commissioners should accept the expert advice of these people who know most about it. They know where the votes are in their electorates that they are anxious to be rid of; they know the hotel-

keeper who can exercise influence in a certain direction, who can influence a number of votes in their favour, and they are anxious to have him in their electorates. I suppose it is quite all right to take advantage of the opportunity to make representation to the persons to be appointed.

At 12.30 p.m.,

Mr. GLEDSON resumed the chair.

Mr. MOORE: Of course, one difficulty they evidently found was that they did not know whether they would appoint four officials to reallocate the seats; three ought to be enough, but the question is: who are the persons most likely to relish the suggestions we offer in the interests of the Labour in Politics Convention? That is what hon. members opposite look at. It is not a question of what they can do in the interests of Queensland. No, that does not matter. This has all to be done for a particular reason—without justification, because the electorates are now so good, and the voting at the last election was exactly reflected in this Chamber. It seems extraordinary that a party which prates so much about ascertaining the will of the people, and about democracy, and giving the people the right to govern, should endeavour to thwart the will of the people in this manner. You will remember, Mr. Gledson, the redistribution of seats that was made about 1922. Certain hon. members opposite then asserted that they as a party were safe for twenty years. They said, "We have fixed the boundaries in such a way that the Opposition cannot possibly win again for that period."

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: You are repeating the statement made by a member of your Government.

Mr. MOORE: No, that statement was made by a Minister of the hon. gentleman's Government, but it would be unfair to mention his name. (Laughter.)

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: As a matter of fact, that very statement was made by a member of your Government.

Mr. MOORE: I do not want to embarrass the Minister by bringing his name before the public like that. (Laughter.)

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I will embarrass you enough.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. gentleman is embarrassed enough already. He said, "I have made one or two alterations in my own boundaries, and having done so, my seat is perfectly safe and secure for twenty years." It was not safe for twenty years, because the mismanagement of the affairs of State by the party in power, even with such a redistribution of seats, did not serve to protect hon. members opposite from the wrath of the people. The people recognised that the mismanagement was dreadful. It was an extraordinary piece of good fortune for hon. members opposite that the depression occurred while our Government were in power, because that gave them an excuse to induce the people to return them to power. But for that reason they would still be in opposition, and no necessity for a reallocation of seats would exist. If the Government are so satisfied with the work they have been doing, and if the prosperity of the State has been so great, and if sunshine and happiness have been radiating

[Mr. Moore.

throughout the State as they say, what necessity is there for a reallocation of boundaries? Of course, there would not be any. It is only because they fear—that is what has brought this about—that they may lose some of their seats, and possibly lose their position as a Government that they desire a reallocation. We know that there are members on our side who can be got rid of by a slight alteration of boundaries.

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: The people cannot have much confidence in you in that case.

Mr. MOORE: We know perfectly well that there were inconvenient members on this side whom the Government would like to get rid of by taking some safe votes from an absolutely safe seat and putting them into seats which are difficult to hold for this side.

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR interjected.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Enoggera not to interject. He will have an opportunity of speaking later.

Mr. MOORE: We know that it can be done. Hon. members opposite know that it can be done. They have repeatedly thrown interjections across this Chamber to the hon. member for Cook, "This is your last time in this Chamber; we will get rid of you." They have made similar suggestions to two or three other hon. members on this side. They know perfectly well that they could not be got rid of because the people of their electorates wanted to get rid of them, but they know that by a reallocation of boundaries they can make the position of hon. members on this side insecure. That is what is behind that threat. We recognise that the threat is being carried out. It shows that they do not want the people of Queensland to rule and govern, but that they simply want to get rid of inconvenient members who criticise them too freely and who are doing too much for their electorates. Every possible means is being adopted by hon. members opposite to discredit certain hon. members of the Opposition Party. They are not even given fair treatment. Ministers take the opportunity every day of sending up paragraphs to the newspapers in their electorates pointing out what they have done for them. In one instance the Minister concerned did not know what was going forward to the press; but out of courtesy the department wrote to him and said, "On your representations such and such a work is being carried out." He immediately rushed to the paper in the hope that everybody would say, "This fellow is looking after our electorate well. We did not even ask him for this work, and he has carried it out."

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: The medical adviser of the hon. member for Cook ordered him to go to Sandgate to get a little sea air!

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member need not worry about the hon. member for Cook, who is capable of looking after himself. No one looks after his electorate better than the hon. member for Cook. If the hon. member for Enoggera would spend as much time in looking after his electorate as he spends in fussing around to see what parts he can cut out and what parts he can put into his electorate, it would be better for the State. That sort of thing is going on,

and so much chopping out and putting in is going on that a map of the electoral boundaries prepared in accordance with the wishes of the members of the Government must look like a jigsaw puzzle.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: Did you ever see your South Brisbane electorate?

Mr. MOORE: I saw all the electorates, and they were allocated in accordance with community of interest. The Secretary for Public Instruction should know that in Brisbane there are such things as trams and that community of interest must be studied for the sake of the community generally. Even the Opposition of that time had no complaint. The members of the then Opposition did not deny that it was a fair and square redistribution.

The SECRETARY FOR PUBLIC INSTRUCTION: The worst you could do would help us!

Mr. MOORE: I am not deceived by the proposal. I know what the reallocation is for. I know it is not being done in any altruistic way to help the Opposition. The difficulty is that the Government can do this reallocation so successfully that it will be sufficient for a number of years. Trouble will occur with those members of the Government who do not wish to lose their majorities. One can imagine hon. members opposite scratching their heads and each looking at the other with suspicion, wondering whether the other fellow is trying to pinch some of his majority. (Opposition laughter.) It is all very amusing, but these things sometimes do not turn out in the way anticipated. Some members can be annoyed when they find that undue influence is brought to bear on them. I really think it would be better for the Government to take the matter into their own hands and appoint three of their own members to allocate the districts. It would be more honest to do that than to appoint public officials to carry out suggestions made to them or in the alternative to lose their jobs. It would be more honest to appoint three members on the Government side to carry out the reallocation of boundaries.

Mr. KEOSH: You thoroughly understood that from what happened last time.

Mr. MOORE: The hon. member may be quite surprised to know that I did not have any idea of any boundary as it was being altered, I took no interest in the matter.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: You were in it up to your neck.

Mr. MOORE: These matters can be easily proved. The fact is that I did not make any suggestion. There is no excuse for a reallocation. In a reallocation that is endeavoured to be made for a specific purpose, as has been said openly by hon. members on the Government side, it would be much better to appoint three Government members and place the responsibility upon them. Let the matter be open and aboveboard. I am not worried about it, but I think it is preferable to do that than to place public officers in the position of having to accept advice, if one can call it that, or else be discriminated against later on. Let the press and everybody know what the reallocation of electorates is for. Let the Government appoint the hon. member for Enoggera as one member and the hon. member for Maree

*Mr. Moore.]*

as another member of the proposed redistribution commission. I do not mention them because they are more honourable than others; but I would like to see them after the job was done! (Opposition laughter.)

Mr. W. T. KING (*Maree*) [12.42 p.m.]: I have listened with a great deal of amusement to the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition. I have seen him play many roles whilst I have been in this Chamber, but the role he played to-day was the most ridiculous one I have seen him in. The Leader of the Opposition soared into the realms of imagination. Naturally, being worried because the party I have the honour to be associated with will be returned to power at the next election—as they will with a bigger majority than on the last occasion—he endeavours to picture hon. members of my party running round the country and the rooms of this building with maps. The hon. gentleman is facetious when he talks in that strain. If he were serious he would say there were no maps, there were no hon. members running round with maps, and that hon. members were satisfied to rely upon the good sense of their constituents to return them; because the record of the party of which I have the honour to be a member is in itself sufficient to return every member of that party. I can quite understand some hon. members singing their "Swan Song." I can quite understand the Leader of the Opposition endeavouring to sing his "Swan Song" in his particular way.

Mr. MAXWELL: You might be singing yours.

Mr. W. T. KING: The hon. member's is a "Swan Song," too. Let me test the sincerity of the Opposition in that regard. The Leader of the Opposition would have it that the redistribution scheme brought forward by his Government was in no way tainted, that it was clean and pure, and had all the essentials that the present Opposition do not possess.

Mr. KENNY: It was one of the fairest redistributions ever made in Queensland.

Mr. W. T. KING: The hon. member for Cook says it was the fairest of redistributions. The only spirit of fairness about the redistribution was that it was responsible for returning to power a sufficient number of Labourites to govern Queensland. It was an illustration of the fact that when the people of Queensland make up their mind or when the people of any State or country make up their mind that a party has to go, no matter how that party endeavours to entrench itself with the aid of redistribution schemes it is unceremoniously thrown out into political darkness—into the limbo of politically forgotten things. The views expounded by the Leader of the Opposition—and they were good from his point of view—were put forward in a semi-comic opera strain. He endeavoured to cloud the issue. There is no evidence that a redistribution scheme is contemplated. There is no evidence that any of those gentlemen whose names have been mentioned, gentlemen of estimable character, who would at all times carry out their duties honestly and fearlessly, have been appointed a commission. At the next election the Opposition will have to take the cane from the electors. The Leader of the Opposition contended that the redistribution scheme which was introduced three

[*Mr. Moore.*

years ago was a fair one. In my own electorate of Maree—

Mr. MAXWELL: You were lucky.

Mr. W. T. KING: If I was lucky on that occasion I shall be lucky again. When I come back to this Chamber I shall be consoled by the thought that I represent an electorate with the euphonious name of Maree and not a seat with the graveyard name of Toowong. The Leader of the Opposition would have us believe that the redistribution made three years ago was a fair one. Mrs. Longman represented Bulimba at that time. She desired to come to the Maree electorate. She told the people of that electorate that she wanted them. She had the temerity to stand in the Nationalist plebiscite—temerity, because she was defeated. She knew Bulimba and she knew what part of that electorate would help her most were it transferred to the Maree electorate, when she came across. Ready for her were 2,500 dainty morsels of Norman Park, as daintily served for political palates, as any dish that could be served up by the best chef in any leading hotel throughout Australia. Notwithstanding that appetizing morsel and the manner of its service, Mrs. Longman did not come forward for Maree, because she was not selected. The hon. member for Bulimba won the Bulimba seat, and thus the efforts of the Opposition ended in failure. It is all very fine for the Leader of the Opposition to come forward and make the speech that he has made; but he gets nowhere with it. In his facetious, smiling way he is making a protest on behalf of his colleagues. He is endeavouring to tell the people of Queensland that he is prepared to go smiling to the political guillotine. But I know the Leader of the Opposition and his colleagues well enough to understand that they are not prepared to do it. They will counter, fight, shriek, and bring into play all the devices they hope will enable them to regain the administration of the State. Sitting as they have been sitting for the past three years in the cold blasts of opposition, they consider that Providence should have deposited them on the Government benches so that they would have the opportunity to redistribute the electorates fairly and justly as they say. Providence, in its wisdom—and members of the Opposition will agree that Providence is wise—will ordain that they will have to suffer the cold blasts for at least another three years. It is recognised that, almost inevitably, the Opposition will sink into oblivion for a very long term. The scheme of redistribution will be fair. It will be just. (Opposition dissent.)

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

Mr. W. J. COPLEY (*Bulimba*) [12.53 p.m.]: In view of the speech made this morning by the Leader of the Opposition, suggesting that there is going to be a redistribution before the forthcoming elections, and dealing with certain other matters, I think the time is opportune to make a few remarks with regard to the Electoral Registration section of the Department of Justice. I just wish to say that so far as the Leader of the Opposition is concerned, I earnestly hope that the Government will keep a very

close watch at the next elections for plural voting.

OPPOSITION MEMBERS: Hear, hear!

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: And that the Chief Electoral Officer and the police will keep a very close check on this matter. I want to link the Leader of the Opposition up with this matter in a very definite way. On 15th September last, the day of the Federal elections, the hon. member for Aubigny cast his vote at the Bulimba school. That was the booth at which he voted, yet we find in the mid-day issue of the "Telegraph" a photograph of the Leader of the Opposition casting a vote at the City Hall in Brisbane.

Mr. BRAND: Do you say he voted twice?

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: That is the position, and it ill becomes hon. members opposite to suggest things of that nature in view of this fact. I want to make it perfectly clear to the hon. member for Isis that two photographs were published that day.

Mr. BRAND: Not showing his vote?

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: Yes. One was published in a late edition showing him leading a donkey round the grounds of his house, but that is not the one to which I refer. The one to which I refer was published in the mid-day edition, and it showed the Leader of the Opposition casting his vote, and underneath it was stated that the vote was being cast at the Brisbane City Hall.

I was not here this morning, when the Leader of the Opposition spoke, but I have been informed that he said that certain hon. members were downstairs arranging a redistribution. The statement is deliberately untrue, and it ill-becomes any leader of a big political party. It is no wonder that the Nationalist Party propose to retire him at the next election or prior thereto. I want to say definitely and bluntly here to-day that the last redistribution was the most cowardly and most callous affair that was ever put over—that it was the greatest confidence trick ever put over the people of Queensland. A survey of the majorities of hon. members opposite will show just how clever it was. One member of the Opposition, who was then a Minister, boasted to me that it was a good enough distribution to keep us out of office for fifteen years. He said further than that, "We have amended the electoral law so that we will not have to introduce a Bill. We can do it by Order in Council, and if it becomes shaky we will fix it up." That was the attitude of the Government of the day. We find that the Government majority to-day, with 514,000 votes cast for the Labour Party in Queensland, would have been about ten or twelve seats. It was a clever distribution, and I believe that those people who were unscrupulous enough to do it deserve every congratulation. The commission met up on the top of the Treasury Buildings in an office formerly called the Unemployment Investigation Committee, a designation that was afterwards altered by the Secretary for Labour and Industry, now the hon. member for Sandgate, to Employment Investigation Committee. There the commission sat, and there it had its maps. Members of the public service who worked on that floor, members of the Department of Public Instruction who were there, were able to see a constant trek of advisers to

the commission from amongst hon. members opposite. In addition to that, Mr. Macgroarty, the then Attorney-General, took Mr. Gall out with him in a motor car one Saturday afternoon, and they inspected the South Brisbane electorate to see how they could fix it up. What utter hypocrisy and nonsense it is for hon. members opposite to come into this Chamber and suggest that this Government would do anything that was not in accordance with the high ideals for which Labour has stood in this State and the Commonwealth! The best judges of the position are the people of Queensland, and be it remembered that the people of Queensland have for twenty-one years returned a Labour Government to office, and on one occasion, despite the rigging of the electoral boundaries by the Opposition when in government.

I desire to bring up one or two other matters in connection with the administration of the electoral laws of this State. One is the question of postal votes. The present method of dealing with postal votes is a rather loose one. We find that hon. members opposite, I suppose rightly so from their point of view, have certain people who for a number of years have concentrated on the question of postal votes. The postal votes recorded in Queensland to-day do not reflect the opinions of the people of the State. In those districts where Labour is able to get a majority of as many as 2,000 out of 10,000 votes the postal votes for Labour amount to only 80, 100, or 150. That shows that there is something wrong. I know of one supporter of the Opposition who admitted to Mr. Baker, M.H.R., and me that she had thieved 500 Labour votes—that she and Mrs. Kidney, Mrs. Black, and one or two more had thieved 500 votes that were Labour's by right. I now desire to draw attention to a paragraph which appears in the "Courier-Mail" this morning. It is headed—

#### "ALLEGED FORGED POSTAL VOTES.

##### "Disclosure at Perth.

"Evidence that of the 332 sets of postal votes . . . submitted to the court of disputed returns, 324 were forgeries was given to-day by George Villiers, investment broker and handwriting expert, in the case in which James Thomas Franklin seeks a declaration upsetting the election of James George to the Legislative Council for metropolitan province on 12th May."

It goes on to say—

"Eighty-eight witnesses have already given evidence, most of them being electors, who said that the postal vote signatures were not theirs."

The point I want to make is that the Nationalist candidate for the metropolitan province in Western Australia was elected by 315 votes, and of 332 votes submitted to the Court of Disputed Returns 324 were found to be forgeries. I suggest that the methods adopted there are similar to the methods being adopted in the other States. Surely, Mr. Gledson, no greater proof of the desirableness of checking up postal votes is required than the report that we find in the Nationalist newspaper, "Courier-Mail"! Any candidate who is elected to this Parliament, or any other Parliament, for that matter, should be elected by the

Mr. W. J. Copley.]



direct votes of the people whom he is supposed to represent. If a man is elected by 315 votes, and 324 of the votes favouring him are forgeries, then I suggest that he is not representing the people of his electorate.

I suggest to the Attorney-General—and I hope he will give it some investigation for he has been in charge of this particular sub-department for some time and his knowledge of electoral matters is recognised generally by both sides of Parliament—that in view of this scandal in Western Australia, and in view of the other statement I made to-day that a Federal member was defeated by 100 votes, and a woman canvasser for the Nationalist Party admitted that far more than that number of votes were thieves from the Labour candidate, some inquiry should be made. Possibly, the whole trouble could be overcome if postal votes were collected by the police in the division in which they were issued. That would not be unfair to any party or candidate. I suggest further that before that police officer collected the votes he should notify each candidate that he proposed to do so, together with what votes he proposed to collect and when he proposed to leave to collect them. Then all he should do and would have to do would be to interview the individual, say to him, "Do you require to vote?" as is said to electors at polling-booths who have to be assisted to vote, and that the vote should then be cast in the usual way. That would be fair to every candidate who stands for election. I raise this matter not only in the interests of this party, who win seats by a majority of between 1,000 and 2,000 and who lose on postal votes by reason of the tactics that are being used and have been so skilfully used in the past, but also in the interests of the voters of the State.

I also want to draw attention to the position so far as misrepresentation at election time is concerned. We have something to learn from the Western Australian law in this matter, for section 181 (5) and section 197 of the Western Australian electoral law, 1907-21, forbids any undue influence and provides that no candidate shall issue or allow to be issued on his behalf, any written or printed document containing untrue statements defamatory to any candidate for election. I suggest that the Attorney-General might give consideration to the Western Australian law on this matter with a view to its introduction in Queensland, and I would also suggest that it is desirable that the Commonwealth Government should introduce similar legislation. In Western Australia a candidate named Gray recently issued a statement to this effect—

"T. J. Hughes wants to govern the country."

Realising that that was an untruth, a malicious statement, and a statement designed to mislead the people, the courts of the land found Gray guilty. Now Mr. Hughes is proceeding against an individual by the name of Mann. I suggest it is desirable that some similar legislation be introduced in this State. In South Australia I believe a law prevents newspapers from commenting on elections for a couple of days prior to the taking of the poll, the reason being that they might exercise undue influence on the election. It is highly desirable that some such provision be made in Queensland, because of the scare cries and

[Mr. W. J. Copley.

scaremongering introduced by the political agents of hon. members opposite. Let us take the case of the Federal election of 1931, when the political bosses of hon. members opposite issued counterfeit notes on behalf of their party, notes with the photographs of Mr. Scullin and Mr. Theodore on them branded for £1,000,000, which would definitely interfere with the credit of this State and with the Commonwealth—counterfeit notes issued by counterfeit politicians. The Western Australia law provides that any person who issues or allows to be issued on his behalf documents of that kind is liable to exclusion from Parliament for two years, as from the date of his conviction, and, in addition to that, is liable to a penalty of £200 or twelve months' imprisonment.

Mr. SPARKES interjected.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: A provision of that nature would protect the people of Queensland. I can quite understand hon. members opposite interrupting whilst I am dealing with this matter, because the stock in trade with which they fight an election campaign consists of half truths and lies. They do not dare to fight the Labour Party on the policy of the movement and on what has been accomplished. They are not even prepared to worry much about the personal character of any man, whilst the credit of the nation counts as nothing to them. Every form of misrepresentation which can be indulged in to interfere with the chances of members on this side is used by our political opponents; they possess the machinery—the Nationalist press and unlimited funds—to make use of such methods.

Mr. KEOGH (*Merthyr*) [2.12 p.m.]: I have some comments to make in regard to the statements of the Leader of the Opposition. When speaking of what occurred at the last State election, he made a statement in regard to the number of voters on the roll in Merthyr. Many of those names represented Nationalist Party ghosts. I know that the tenants of about 200 shops in that electorate were living in Nundah, Sandgate, and other places. It is true, as the Leader of the Opposition said, that the number of voters on the roll was reduced by 1,000 within twelve months after. That is proof that the Labour Party were intent on having the rolls cleaned up. Hon. members opposite who charge the Labour Party with gerrymandering in regard to rolls are adepts at it themselves.

Mr. SPARKES: What about the poll at East Toowoomba?

Mr. KEOGH: I do not want to have anything to do with the hon. member, who would be more at home in company with bulls. He should be looking for those heifers of his. The Leader of the Opposition stated that his party did not in any way influence the members of the Redistribution Commission. I was working at McWhirters Limited about that time, and on two or three occasions. I saw Mr. Gall in company with Dr. Kerwin, the Nationalist member for that area, and the pair of them went round the boundary of Dr. Kerwin's electorate. So anxious were they that they altered the Merthyr electorate to such an extent that it had two dead ends; they put the Waterloo Hotel Labour portion in the Fortitude Valley electorate, and then went across the electorate and put into Merthyr Bowen Hills, which was a Nationalist centre.

The Nationalist Party paid the expenses of McDonald, the other candidate who stood against me. Dr. Kerwin's campaign director told me on the day nominations closed that McDonald would be a candidate. They had a fight between themselves over the spoils supplied by the Nationalist Party. That is how hon. members opposite deal with redistributions and elections when they wish to make themselves secure. They were not satisfied to abolish ten Labour seats; they desired also to alter the electoral boundaries so as to make their position sure. They did not realise that their own administrative actions had antagonised the people and they had thus helped Labour to gain office. When one considers the small majorities by which Opposition members won their seats, it is obvious how unpopular the Moore Government were. The hon. member for Logan, representing what is ordinarily a strong Nationalist electorate, only succeeded in winning by twenty-three votes, and I am quite sure that majority will be lost next time. The hon. member for Cook—and I know his electorate from one end to another—was very lucky to win last time. He has the temerity to come into this Chamber and protest in regard to what somebody else said outside about gerrymandering. Probably the hon. member is familiar with it himself. The hon. member for Murilla was so confident, having regard to the way the electorates had been altered, that when making a speech in the Central district he said they had Labour fixed for the next twenty years. That statement appeared in the press.

Mr. BRAND: Where was that statement made?

Mr. KEOGH: In Rockhampton, when addressing the railwaymen—according to a report in the papers.

I agree with the hon. member for Bulimba that the police should collect postal votes. I can produce two postal votes that were taken to a house in my electorate by a Nationalist woman canvasser, and the voters represented on those postal votes had already voted. She was seized by the children of the old people, and the votes were taken from her. Those votes are still in my possession, and can be produced at any time. It will be seen, therefore, that I am not talking on supposition, but on fact. The votes were votes for Dr. Kerwin before they were handed to the old people. Of course, we have not all the angels on our side, but I do say that somebody in authority—the police for preference—should collect postal votes. If that cannot be arranged, then it would be advisable to have the system of postal voting abolished. At the present time there is nothing fair or clean in the manner in which the system is carried out. When hon. members opposite were in power they stopped the policemen even checking up the roll. It would not have done for them to check up on the rolls in view of the gerrymandering that was going on! The police force would not lend themselves to such a thing as that. Hon. members opposite, including the Leader of the Opposition, with his airy speech made to fill in time, were doing a bit of fishing. They did not catch any fish, however. When he and his party were in power they endeavoured to impress upon the people that the reduction in the number of members of Parliament was in the interests

of economy. On the other hand, however, he was prepared to re-establish the Legislative Council. That would have been a burden on the people of £30,000 a year.

Mr. MOORE: Thirty thousand pounds?

Mr. KEOGH: That would have been the figure when the system was firmly established. Of course, the estimate was down to as low as £18,000. If the Leader of the Opposition was conscientious in his desire to reduce expenditure, why did he not do his job properly and reduce the number of electorates to twenty-five? He could then have taken such steps as would have made the seats safe for members of his party. Unfortunately for him, however, the country was disgusted with the legislation of the Nationalist Party, and it will never be forgotten.

Mr. BRASSINGTON (*Fortitude Valley*) [2.22 p.m.]: The Leader of the Opposition is to be congratulated on his modesty. The hon. member had much to say in connection with the last redistribution, and imagines that there will be another distribution. It is no use his telling the hon. members of this Committee that he did not know of the last reallocation, or its ultimate effect. I think that is too much of a fairy tale for him to attempt to put across the hard-headed men comprising this Committee. It was well known round the city and in this building weeks before the commission was appointed what the result of the investigation was to be, and what hon. members would lose their seats as a result of that investigation. If the hon. member for Aubigny persists in his statement that he knew nothing of it, then the general public must come to the conclusion that his position in his party is so unimportant that the party withheld the facts from the leader. If the leader of the party and his colleagues knew nothing of the redistribution and what was taking place, we can only endorse the opinion expressed in this Assembly from time to time that hon. members opposite are not the real sponsors of their policy nor the framers thereof. That policy, therefore, must be framed for them by others. We can only come to the conclusion that it was the Nationalist Federation behind them which framed the redistribution and put it into effect. They cannot have it both ways.

Hon. members opposite during different debates in this Assembly have claimed that they stand definitely on behalf of country interests. Time and time again that argument is advanced and time and time again this party is accused of dealing unfairly with the country interests. Hon. members opposite claim to be the only genuine representatives of people living outside the city. Let us remember their contention and let us remind them of one or two things so that in the future when a redistribution is needed the party opposite will not be allowed to forget the country interests in their blind desire to achieve a party political advantage. They cannot deny the fact that when a party political advantage is to be gained the people in the country are entirely forgotten. I repeat to-day what I have asserted on former occasions, that a good case can be made out for equitable representation for country people in the far western portions of the State.

Mr. RUSSELL: They have it now.

*Mr. Brassington.]*

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I am not going to argue that point just now, but I am going to remind the hon. member for Hamilton that out of a total of seventy-two members in the last Parliament the two in the far west were represented by only nine. If hon. members opposite were anxious to conserve the interests of the people in those localities why did they reduce the number of electoral seats in those areas by three? They will have to admit that they were either unmindful of the interests of the people in the West or else their redistribution was intended to injure this party by abolishing safe Labour seats. In view of the redistribution carried out by his own Government, it ill becomes the Leader of the Opposition to get up in this Chamber and talk about a fair redistribution and about justice being done to all. Hon. members opposite should be ashamed to continue on those lines and to suggest that no redistribution carried out by a Labour Government could be fair. The men who represented Western seats in the last Parliament, men who had given efficient service, men who were representing people who deserved efficient representation, were sacrificed by the so-called friends of the people of the West in order that hon. members opposite should hold power in this State against the best interests of the community. After listening to the assertion by the Leader of the Opposition that the last redistribution was carefully considered and carefully designed I am bound to add that the right men were picked to do the job against democracy in this State and that they carried out their job faithfully and well. Despite the belief of the Leader of the Opposition that that redistribution was almost foolproof the intelligence of the majority of the people prevailed and they told the then Government just what they thought of their redistribution scheme. This party was returned to power so that the unfair and inequitable redistribution could be readjusted. Snecring at hon. members on this side, the Leader of the Opposition talks about a redistribution in the future. As a member of this party and as one who takes part in the deliberations of this party, I know nothing of a redistribution in the future, nor do I know anything of an alleged meeting of hon. members of Parliament in this building for the purpose of laying down plans for the supposed redistribution. I express the opinion that if the Government were wise they would accept the advice of the Leader of the Opposition to appoint three Government members to carry out the redistribution. If the Government are prepared to accept that advice, then I ask to be one of the members to be appointed. If I am appointed then I will do two things. First of all, I will look after the interests of all the people in this State, and, secondly, I will see that those hon. members of Parliament sitting in Opposition who do not do their job properly in the interests of the welfare of this State receive their just dues under that redistribution. The hon. gentleman is merely kite-flying in suggesting that there is to be a redistribution in the future. It is little use the hon. member or his party using that sort of argument. The record of the party is well known and its achievements are well known, and despite the unfair and rigged system of redistribution that was put into effect prior to the last elections the people in their wisdom voted the Labour

[Mr. Brassington.

Party back to power. The people did that because they believed in a fairer and more equitable redistribution than the one that operates in this State to-day. We stand for the principle of "One man, one vote." We stand for the proper representation of the people. So long as we are in charge of the affairs of this State, we will see that those principles are put into effect.

Previous speakers have referred to the question of postal votes. I intend to offer one or two opinions on this question. I recognise the many difficulties surrounding postal voting. The system is open to grave abuse, and that it has been abused in the past by agents of hon. members opposite there can be no doubt. I will give one concrete example. A task entrusted to me in the recent municipal elections was the collection of a number of postal votes.

Mr. MOORE: Tell us about the taxi cabs that were used to take people to the plebiscites.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The Leader of the Opposition should not talk to me about plebiscites after the disgraceful things he has been mixed up in in connection with plebiscites. There sat in the last Parliament of this State a man who, although differing from me politically, gave efficient and decent service to the people of this State. He loyally supported the party led by the Leader of the Opposition; what did he do with him when he stood for re-election in the electoral district of Marree?

Mr. MOORE: Who did that?

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The hon. gentleman and his party. That man, in the person of George Tedman, was turned out after three years' loyal service.

Mr. MOORE: Let us get on to the Maranoa and Fortitude Valley plebiscites.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Like the hon. gentleman in politics I can look after myself.

Mr. KEOGH: What did you do with Sizer in Sandgate?

Mr. BRASSINGTON: Let us take the position of the hon. member for Sandgate. So disgusted was he with the unfair treatment he received in connection with the plebiscite for the Lilley seat in the Federal Parliament that he has retired from the hon. gentleman's party. (Opposition laughter.) That is an absolute fact. The hon. member for Sandgate made no secret of his opinions regarding the treatment he had received in connection with the Lilley plebiscite. There is no doubt that he retired as a result of the unfair treatment he received at that pre-selection ballot. Hon. members talk about their honesty and straightforwardness. All they can do is to make suggestions, but we can nail them on facts that cannot be disputed. I could refer at greater length to what happened to Mr. Tedman, but let me get on. I have definite proof of two cases where applications for postal ballot-papers were made to the returning officer by inmates of the Mater Misericordiae Hospital. Instructions were issued to certain persons to collect those votes on behalf of the people concerned. The day before the election they called to collect those votes and it was found that they were never delivered. It was subsequently ascertained that those votes were used and recorded. If hon. members opposite want examples of the unfair use of postal votes,

this is one. Some reform can be effected in that direction.

Mr. TOZER: Cut them out altogether.

Mr. BRASSINGTON: The hon. member for Gympie still adheres to the policy he stood for twenty-five or thirty years ago, which was to debar as many people as possible from recording their votes. So long as a citizen is entitled to vote, he ought to be enabled to exercise that right. Whilst we complain of the abuse of the postal vote in certain directions, it would be idle for us to say that the system should be abolished. The system can be improved on. I support the suggestion of the hon. member for Bulimba that the police should handle postal votes.

Mr. BRAND: How can they do that?

Mr. BRASSINGTON: I have had as much experience of electioneering as the hon. member, and I say definitely that if this matter were handled by the police, much more satisfaction would be given.

Mr. MOORE: To whom?

Mr. BRASSINGTON: In the interests of democracy, to the people at large. Hon. members opposite always look for the nigger in the woodpile, but the aim of Labour is to give every eligible man or woman a vote and to remove any misrepresentation and malpractice that may take place. I am glad to know that the policy of this party will be continued in that direction, and that, despite what the Opposition may say, Queensland will be able to point to the fact that we have the best electoral system operating anywhere. It is up to the Government and the people to maintain it.

Mr. SWAYNE (*Mirani*) [2.37 p.m.]: The old saying, "If you repeat an untruth often enough you will believe it," applies with strong emphasis to hon. members opposite. I have direct proof to the contrary that the last redistribution of electoral districts was aimed at hon. members opposite. Let me give my own case. The Committee will remember that the number of parliamentary constituencies was reduced by ten. In the course of the redistribution 160 electors, who the previous election had voted almost to a man against our candidate were transferred from an adjoining electoral district to be included in *Mirani*. I recognised that that was inevitable, in order that the proper voting strength might be secured. It was thought that in all probability I would, in consequence, lose the seat, especially as a third candidate was in the field. But I won. If I had lost I would have accepted defeat smilingly. I think if inquiry were made into the whole matter it would be found that the last redistribution of electoral districts was a case of give and take all round. No influence was used upon the commissioners.

We have heard a lot about malpractices under the election system, and I maintain that those guilty of malpractices should be punished. At the last State election it came to my notice that seventeen non-residents were included in the *Mirani* electoral roll. I quite believe there were a large number more for we know what had happened as regards farming electorates in the past when rolls have been packed prior to an election; but at any rate I had distinct knowledge that included on the *Mirani* roll were the names of seventeen electors who belonged to Mackay. I reported the matter to the electoral office before the election,

and on the day before the election I telephoned the Under Secretary of the department telling him of the position and inquiring if anything could be done. I was told there was nothing to prevent those people voting, and five of them did vote. The names were supplied to the department.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: What year did this occur?

Mr. SWAYNE: At the last election.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Then that was a matter for the Moore Government.

Mr. SWAYNE: I am talking about the general administration of the department. The Under Secretary was apparently quite right when he said that nothing could be done, for apparently the law requires alteration. At any rate, irrespective of the political affiliations of the persons concerned, something should be done in such cases. At any rate, so far as the chief bone of contention by the Labour Party is concerned—that the Moore Government had the electoral boundaries altered to suit their members—I am able to say that it is not correct, because the alteration in my own electorate was adverse to me; and no doubt many other hon. members on this side of the Chamber were also adversely affected, owing to the fact that the boundaries had to be extended.

Mr. RUSSELL (*Hamilton*) [2.43 p.m.]: I was surprised at the vitriolic attack launched by the hon. member for Bulimba on the commission appointed by the Moore Government to rectify the very serious anomalies that existed in regard to the sizes of electorates. The Labour Party held office for a great number of years with a large majority in this Chamber but with only a small majority of aggregate votes in the country. Our party called attention to the state of affairs on many occasions without avail. When the opportunity arose we decided to rectify the position, and we appointed as a redistribution commission three gentlemen who were beyond reproach. I resent the attack which was made on these men, who are not in a position to defend themselves. Mr. Gall, who will retire shortly, is deserving of the highest thanks for the splendid service he has rendered to this State. I refuse to accept the statement that he was actuated by any motive other than the desire to do the right thing by the electors of Queensland. I know there have been many heart-burnings as a result of that redistribution, not only amongst Labour members, but also amongst Country-Nationalist members. Many of our own men were disgruntled by that redistribution. Mr. Boyd was very disappointed when the Burnett seat was eliminated. The Burnett seat was included in the Dalby seat, and the Dalby people had sufficient influence to elect their own candidate. It is impossible under any scheme of redistribution to please everybody. I dare say there are members on the Government side who would like to see some radical alterations made to the boundaries of their electorates. The redistribution carried out by the commission appointed by the Moore Government was the fairest that has ever occurred in Queensland. It was fair to both sides. I refuse to accept the statement that Mr. Gall was influenced by Mr. Macgroarty or Dr. Kerwin, or anybody else. I know that Mr. Gall did not listen to representations from any member of our party, and

*Mr. Russell.]*

the Leader of the Opposition had nothing whatever to do with the redistribution, and refused to be interviewed by members of his party in regard to these boundaries. (Government interjections.) My statement is as good as anybody else's, and I defy hon. members opposite to disprove it.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Did you say Mr. Gall refused to meet representatives of your members?

Mr. RUSSELL: The Leader of the Opposition refused. He would not interfere.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Do you not think it was wrong for your members to ask your leader to interfere?

Mr. RUSSELL: Of course, it was. He refused to interfere. I suppose the hon. gentleman's members are worrying him about their boundaries. We have heard about what is supposed to be going on, and I dare say there is a good deal of truth in the statement that maps were found all over Parliament House. The hon. member for Bulimba complained about the unfair tactics adopted by hon. members on this side of the Chamber. I have analysed the tactics adopted by both sides, and I do not think our tactics are any more unfair than the tactics adopted by the Labour Party. Just before the Federal election Senator Sir George Pearce called attention to the unfair tactics adopted by Labour in its endeavour to stampee the electors. I say the people who were responsible for the advertisement I am about to read were guilty of stating deliberate untruths. The statement that appeared in the press is as follows:—

“ WARNING.

All Wages Affected!!!

Federal Basic Wage

Under Anti-Labour (Profiteering Banks Party)

£3 2s. per week.

Queensland Basic Wage

Under Labour (People's Party)

£3 14s.

Fight against your wages being reduced

12s. per week.

VOTE LABOUR

and

BEWARE!

The

Lyons Nationalist Government

Threatens to take your savings from the Commonwealth Savings Bank (Australia's own and strongest financial institution)

to hand them over to their wealthy friends

(the privately-owned banks)

Don't let them get away with this!

Your savings (if you have any) are safe where they are!

VOTE LABOUR

and keep them safe!!”

These tactics are most despicable, inasmuch as they are deliberate insults to the people and are deliberate untruths. The less said about unfair tactics the better!

I certainly believe that we should prevent defamatory matter being published. As a matter of fact, newspapers will not take the risk of publishing defamatory matter! The publisher of defamatory matter by way of

[Mr. Russell.

pamphlet or circular is liable to prosecution. I will tell the Committee, however, that most of the defamatory matter is uttered by word of mouth at meetings when representatives of the press are not present. I do not say all members on the other side are guilty of the offence—I should not like to say that at all. Elections should be fought on political issues. Personalities should be dropped. After all, a member of Parliament represents the electors. We are the representatives of the whole of the people of Queensland, and if a member be insulted, then the insult is against the people. I am certainly not given to personalities. There is too much of that in politics to-day. I should like to see legislation passed imposing heavy penalties for the publication of defamatory matter, and the uttering of defamatory matter at meetings, particularly when the object of it is not present. I sent out a flying gang in an endeavour to trap some of these fellows and, believe me, if I detect them I will send them up.

Mr. KEOGH: What about Percy Hart?

Mr. RUSSELL: Percy Hart is a fair fighter, anyhow.

Mr. P. K. COPLEY: What about that letter?

Mr. RUSSELL: Did you write it? I have a very strong suspicion you did. The less you say about it the better. You seem to know about it. I am just as privileged to say that you wrote this letter as well as anybody else you know. You have no right to throw that up. It was a very unsavory incident, and I will say no more.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: You did write it.

Mr. RUSSELL: You are a liar if you say that.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member must withdraw that statement.

A GOVERNMENT MEMBER: What about apologising?

Mr. RUSSELL: I cannot allow a thing like that to talk to me.

Mr. WATERS: Mr. Gledson—

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: The hon. member just said he would not allow himself to be addressed by a thing like me. I desire that the hon. member withdraw that statement, not because of the statement, but because these things go out in “Hansard” and the people of the State do not know the calibre of the hon. member.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I ask the hon. member for Hamilton to withdraw those offensive words.

Mr. RUSSELL: I did not utter them against the hon. member for Bulimba.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: I am sorry.

Mr. RUSSELL: It was the other member.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! The hon. member for Hamilton used an offensive phrase and I ask him to withdraw.

Mr. RUSSELL: I will withdraw it, but I must protect myself against these insinuations made by people who are in fact not fit to tie my shoestrings.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: You are black and blue from the hips up.

Mr. RUSSELL: I will get out the fire brigade to give you a wash.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order: I must ask the hon. members for Bulimba and Hamilton to deal with the vote and refrain from taking notice of interruptions.

Mr. RUSSELL: I am quite prepared to go on, but I will not allow these people to come at me without making some reprisal. I claim your protection, Mr. Gledson, against the offensive words these members are uttering.

Mr. KEOGH interjected.

Mr. RUSSELL: The hon. member for Merthyr had better hold his tongue. Let us get on with the debate. The hon. member for Fortitude Valley complained that the late Government were such that the commission that had charge of the last redistribution set about wiping out certain Labour seats in the West. He wanted to know why men who had been representing western electorates for so many years had been put out of Parliament. His party stands for the principle of one man one vote, and the natural corollary of that is "one vote, one value," that the vote of each elector should have the same value at the polls. However, all Governments have made a concession to the country electorates by giving them a lower numerical strength than operates in the more thickly-populated areas. We agree with that, but having agreed with that I think we should see that the rule is strictly carried out. What occurred when Labour was in power? We had nine representatives representing the western areas and the average voting strength worked out at under 5,000. The following electorates had under 5,000 electors:—

Burke	...	...	...	4,884
Flinders	...	...	...	3,116
Gregory	...	...	...	3,819

Then we go a little higher up the scale with these electorates—

Barcoo	...	...	...	5,522
Warrego	...	...	...	5,376
Mitchell	...	...	...	5,341
Maranoa	...	...	...	5,874
Balonne	...	...	...	5,999

There is no doubt, and it must be admitted, that the West was over-represented after allowing for a concession of 20 per cent. below the quota. The new strength for the Western electorates established by dividing the State by sixty-two worked out at between 6,425 and 7,000, in accordance with the Act. Therefore, to preserve the principle underlying the Act regarding the division of these Western areas, it meant that there had to be a reduction from nine seats to six seats which worked out as follows:—

Barcoo	...	...	...	6,137
Carpentaria	...	...	...	6,970
Gregory	...	...	...	6,116
Warrego	...	...	...	6,764
Maranoa	...	...	...	7,472

Maranoa is higher than the rest on account of the townships in the area. The Western people had a fair "spin" from this redistribution and there is no justification for increasing their representation in Parliament.

Do the Government intend to have a reallocation of boundaries? If they do then they will have a hard job to justify their action, because we have demonstrated that under the present distribution the quotas have worked out fairly well, but if the Government only wish to derive some political

advantage by changing the boundaries then they are doing a wrong thing. They will find it very hard to justify their action to the public. The Government boast that the Opposition party will get a nasty knock at the next elections, that the country is so prosperous and the Government have done so much for the people that they are bound to come back with increased majorities. If that is so, then why can they not fight the elections on that issue? We are prepared to go to the elections on the present boundaries, and if we are beaten we will take our gruel. We have never squealed about it. We were called upon to do very unpleasant work during our term of office, but the electors showed no gratitude for that. They listened to the promises of the party opposite, who won the elections on the new boundaries created by the Commission that the Moore Government appointed. We accepted defeat, and say that we were beaten fairly and squarely, and if we are beaten again we are not going to squeal. If the Government are so satisfied with the results of their reign, then let them go to the elections on the present boundaries!

Mr. MAXWELL (*Toowong*) [2.57 p.m.]: First of all, I desire to enter my protest against the usual attack that is levelled against a women's organisation that is a credit to this State and has done much for the advancement of Queensland. I refer particularly to the Queensland Women's Electoral League. As usual, the hon. member for Bulimba descended to a form of argument below the general standard of argument in this Chamber. He made an attack upon a lady who was collecting postal votes. He made that attack on a former occasion. If I understood him aright, he said that this woman had boasted that she had collected 500 Labour votes and had handed them over to the Nationalist Party. I want to show the ridiculousness of such a statement as that. I have yet to be convinced that the lady made that statement, but if she did make it then it was a most ridiculous statement to make. I know this lady and I know that she would not be guilty of that sort of conduct. Neither she nor any other woman associated with the Queensland Women's Electoral League would be guilty of such conduct. If she had done it, it is not likely that she would be foolish enough to admit it to the supporters of the hon. member for Bulimba. He said that she had taken 500 postal votes. Under the electoral laws punishment can be inflicted upon individuals who do that kind of thing, and I suggest to the hon. member for Bulimba that instead of wasting his time and the time of other hon. members of this Committee he should have brought the matter under the notice of the department. I venture to say that the department would have dealt with anybody who had been guilty of those tactics.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: I have brought six cases of misrepresentation under the notice of the Federal officer.

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. member now comes down to six cases, but a few moments ago he had 500.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: I am talking of the last Federal election. The other cases were in connection with the last State election. I have submitted six definite cases.

Mr. MAXWELL: The Queensland Women's Electoral League and any other

*Mr. Maxwell.*

women's organisation are perfectly justified in being active participants in the public life of this State. They are compelled to submit to the laws of the State. They have a right to say who shall represent them. They are an estimable body of ladies who do their work well, and it ill-becomes certain hon. members opposite to adopt a policy of vilifying them. As you, Mr. Gledson, and other hon. members know, they are not only a political organisation. As a matter of fact they work for charity, and some of our greatest workers in the Social Service League to-day are to be found also in that organisation. They are prominent in all charitable work. We ought to welcome a body of intelligent ladies taking an active part in the welfare of the community, and it ill becomes the hon. member for Bulimba to make the statement he did in connection with very decent women who have done such noble work for the advancement of this State.

We have heard a lot to-day from hon. members opposite about the purity of their conduct at elections. I have a very vivid recollection of Mr. McCormack, the ex-Labour Premier of this State, standing up in this Committee when the Dawson Valley scheme was being considered, and saying, "That is the end of Peterson." The hon. member for Fitzroy is present to-day and can corroborate that statement. It was also suggested in the Labour press by Labour politicians that now they were proceeding with the Dawson Valley scheme the hon. member for Fitzroy would make his exit from politics. But why do they make those statements? Simply because the rolls had been gerrymandered in such a way that they believed the hon. member for Normanby would have to get out. The hon. member for Fitzroy is still in Parliament and will occupy a seat in this Chamber when the individuals who made those statements are no longer to be seen here. Speaking of gerrymandering, reminds me that recently some person who was very much interested in the proposal of the Government to redistribute the electoral boundaries wrote to the "Courier-Mail" asking for a definition of gerrymander. This was the definition given—

"To 'gerrymander' is to divide a country or State into representative districts so as to give one political party undue advantage over others. The word is derived from Elbridge Gerry, who adopted the scheme in Massachusetts when he was Governor. Gilbert Stuart, the artist, looking at the map of the new distribution, with a little invention converted it into salamander. 'No, no!' said Russell, when shown it, 'not a salamander, Stuart, call it a Gerry-mander.'

"Hence to hocus-pocus statistics, election results, etc., so as to make them appear to give other than their true result, or so as to affect the balance."

What was the reason for the redistribution of seats by the Moore Government?

Mr. WATERS: Because you wanted to keep Labour out.

At 5.5 p.m.,

Mr. W. T. KING (*Maree*), one of the panel of Temporary Chairmen, relieved Mr. Gledson in the chair.

Mr. MAXWELL: The reason supplied by Government members is a libel against three reputable public servants. The hon. member

[*Mr. Maxwell.*]

for Bulimba is an hon. member who when it suits him upholds the members of the public service, and never fails to refer to what a fine body of public servants we have, but when the opportunity comes to knife one of them uses the knife with greater severity than anybody else. Who were the members of the commission appointed to redistribute the electoral boundaries? One was Mr. Gall, the Under Secretary of the Home Secretary's Department, an estimable gentleman who has done good work for this State. He will shortly be retiring from the service, and he will, at any rate, be able to say, "I have done what I could." That is more than some hon. members on the Government side will be able to say when they retire from political life. The other two gentlemen were Mr. Cole, who is in charge of the electoral office, and Mr. Harris. Do hon. members opposite still say that these gentlemen were tools of the Moore Government?

Mr. WATERS: Yes.

Mr. W. J. COPLEY: Definitely "yes."

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. members will say anything at all. There are hon. members who say things in this Committee who are not game to repeat them outside. They are cowardly. We know the men who were appointed to the commission, and what they have done. It has been said that the Moore Government appointed that commission for the purpose of retaining the reins of government. What has been the result? They are now in opposition. Does that look as though the Moore Government squared the Redistribution Commission to secure seats in such a way that the Moore Government would be returned? What is the reason why that redistribution was made? Let me take the electorate of my good friend, the Attorney-General, Flinders: Number of voters on roll, 2,652. We know what the minimum number should have been. There are other instances, as, for example, the late electorate of the Secretary for Mines, Mount Morgan, 3,387. Yet we have other electorates where the voters numbered over 11,000. Take Toowong, where the number on the electoral roll qualified to vote was 9,586. Is that fair dealing, is that in accordance with the Elections Acts, is it in accordance with the proper redistribution of seats, or is it in accordance with the democratic form of government—one man one vote, and one vote one value? No! That is why the Moore Government appointed a commission to redistribute the electoral districts, and I challenge any hon. member opposite to say that the Leader of the Opposition interviewed the commission on behalf of any of his members for the purpose of rigging the seats or trying to rig them in any way. We know that on the December, 1923, electoral roll there were ten electorates held by the then Opposition above the statutory maximum of 3,172, and only three Government seats, whilst there were seventeen Government seats below the minimum—5,448—and only one Opposition seat. Take Barcoo, take Brisbane; but I do not want to weary the Committee by going through the figures, but hon. members opposite ought to wipe their mouths before they talk about clean politics.

Mr. BEDFORD: The electors recognised your virtuous redistribution by kicking you out.

Mr. MAXWELL: We were kicked out honestly. I would rather be out on those

conditions than in on the conditions of hon. members opposite. Hon. members opposite have clearly shown that the Moore Government were not responsible, that the commissioners did their job faithfully. Yet the Moore Government have been blamed with rigging the seats so that Labour could not get a show.

We were told a bedtime story by the hon. member for Fortitude Valley about what another hon. member said in Rockhampton. I do not know whether the reference was to the hon. member for Cook or to the ex-Minister for Transport, but both these hon. members deny having made the statement, so that if the other remarks of hon. members opposite are as true as that one we know what their remarks are worth.

The hon. member spoke of the treatment alleged to have been meted out to the hon. member for Sandgate and stated that he retired disgusted. The facts in relation to that matter go to prove, irrespective of the position a man may hold, that the game was played decently and the hon. member for Sandgate was defeated. For the edification of hon. members opposite who do not know, let me tell them that that hon. member has not retired; he is still a member of this Parliament and will be back, I suppose, and will be able to answer any criticism that is made of him.

Mr. P. K. COPLEY: You know very well he is not coming back.

Mr. MAXWELL: I know he is. I am the Whip of this party and he told me he is coming back. The Railway "Advocate" ought to be a pretty good authority on the conduct of Labour plebiscites.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES interjected.

Mr. MAXWELL: The hon. gentleman's name is not here. Amongst other things the "Advocate" says:—

"It was one of the dirtiest affairs associated with the history of the Labour movement."

Mr. G. C. TAYLOR: Put a coat of white over it.

Mr. MAXWELL: Coal tar would be necessary to obliterate it.

I wish to express my regret at the passing out of the service of men of the calibre of Mr. Archdall and Mr. Ferguson, two of our police magistrates. I commend to the consideration of hon. members an excellent essay by Robert Blatchford. It is called "Sacked," and points out that when an individual reaches a certain age he is thrown out on the scrap-heap irrespective of his experience, and experience is very essential, especially to a State such as Queensland. I have never stood for the system that causes a man to be thrown out of employment at sixty-five or seventy. If a man is still fitted to perform his work he should be allowed to continue. Many men at the age of sixty-five are worthy of their positions and are carrying out their work capably and efficiently. I do not stand for a policy which says that, irrespective of their ability or experience, they must go. The country is in need of men of experience, instead of individuals who have served their apprenticeship in politics. I am sorry these men are leaving the service because I consider it will be a direct loss to the State. Mr. Archdall and Mr. Ferguson are thoroughly competent to carry out their duties and their services

should not be dispensed with. The reason for this policy is that some of the younger men consider that the only way they can get promotion is by the removal of the older men. I would point out to those people that the day will come—and only too soon for a number of them—when it will be their turn to fall out. Of course, it has been said by many people, and to a certain extent it may be right, that if these men were holding positions in the commercial community—

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

Mr. FUNNELL (*Brisbane*) [3.17 p.m.]: I desire to take this opportunity of congratulating Mr. Cole, the Principal Electoral Officer, and his staff, upon their work in the Brisbane electorate at the last State elections. Mr. Cole and his officers carried out their duties efficiently and expeditiously, and I had no complaint whatever to make.

I desire to refer to the statements made by the hon. member for Hamilton and the hon. member for Murilla during the course of this debate. The hon. member for Hamilton disagrees very definitely with the views expressed by the hon. member for Murilla inasmuch as he states that there is justification for the redistribution and the reduction in the number of country representatives, particularly in Western Queensland. The hon. member for Murilla, on the other hand, said that the country electorates were too large and too costly to their representatives, that country electors do not have the same opportunities as city electors. Personally, I agree with the latter view. If there is to be any reduction at all from the present number of seats it should be at the expense of the city. I believe that the country elector is more severely handicapped in every respect. The city elector has the opportunity of personally calling at the various departments and having matters attended to by the officers of those departments. That opportunity is not afforded to the man in the country. In addition, it is recognised that the country representative incurs greater expense than the city representative. The city electorates, if altered at all, should be enlarged and a greater number of electors should appear on the city and metropolitan rolls, the benefit to be extended to the country electorates by a reduction of their size if necessary. This would enable persons resident in the country to have their grievances better attended to by their representatives than has been the case in the past. It must be pointed out that in the redistribution of seats by the Moore Government in 1931 consideration was not extended to the country elector or the country representative. Of the ten seats that were cut out by the reduction in the number of members from seventy-two to sixty-two, nine were country seats. Six of those members were Labour representatives. I claim that the redistribution was not fair either to the country electors or to the Labour Party. It is therefore hard to understand the view of members of the Opposition. Personally, I agree that the country electorates should receive consideration if any alteration takes place prior to the next election. The remarks made by hon. members opposite cannot be taken seriously.

I should now like to refer to a matter concerning the Supreme Court. I understand

Mr. Funnell.]



it is the practice for the Supreme Court to clean up all work and arrange to commence the vacation as nearly as possible on the 16th December of each year. The first sitting of the Full Court sets the machinery in motion in the following year on the first Tuesday in February. The length of the vacation naturally causes a great deal of inconvenience, not only to litigants but also to the legal profession. Let us take the case of a person committed for trial during the vacation. This may happen during the first week that the courts are closed. He cannot be tried until well on in February the following year. He may be found not guilty. He may not have been able to secure bail, and from the time of his committal to his acquittal is kept in gaol. He is thereby put to great inconvenience, which could have been avoided had there been a method whereby he could have come up for trial earlier. During the vacation it is the practice to have one judge handy to attend to chamber work only. The cost of the upkeep of the office and the salaries of the staff continues during the vacation. If consideration is given to a policy which is generally recognised throughout the State service, I believe it will be much better for all concerned, it will reduce costs considerably, particularly in the Supreme Court, and that it will obviate the inconvenience to which I have referred.

I also desire to make reference to the position of Mr. Justice Lukin, who was appointed a judge of the Supreme Court at Rockhampton on 12th July, 1910. He resigned his position as a judge of the Supreme Court at Brisbane to accept an appointment as a judge of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration at a salary of £2,500 on 1st July, 1926. It was laid down by law in this State that after giving service for a period exceeding fifteen years a judge was entitled to resign and to go out on pension fixed at half the amount of his salary. At the present time Mr. Justice Lukin is receiving a pension of £1,000 from this State in addition to a salary of £2,500 as a Federal judge and I understand that when the Premiers' Plan was introduced he refused to agree to any reduction in his salary as a Federal officer. The matter was mentioned in the Commonwealth Senate on one occasion by Senator MacDonald, and following his utterance a newspaper reporter called upon the Premier to see if he had any comment to make. The Premier told the newspaper man that in accordance with the law of this State Mr. Justice Lukin received a pension from the Queensland Government of £1,000 per annum, less a cut of 18 per cent. prescribed by the Financial Emergency Act. He also informed him that Mr. Justice Lukin had left the Supreme Court of Queensland to become a judge of the Commonwealth, and that at the time of the interview he was sixty-five years of age. I can recall the occasion when Mr. Urquhart, an ex-Commissioner of Police in this State, received an appointment from the Federal Government in the Northern Territory. He enjoyed a pension from this State upon his retirement, but he later agreed to a reduction being made in that pension. I see no reason why attention should not be given to the case of Mr. Justice Lukin. I should like to know from the Attorney-General whether it is not possible in his case and in the case of other highly-paid public servants

[Mr. Funnell.

to reduce the pensions paid to them when they resign or retire and accept another position. It is just as well to mention that an example should be set by the highly-paid ex-State officers to the lower-paid workers, especially when one can recall that the wages of the lower-paid workers have been frequently fixed by the person that I have already mentioned. If there is to be any justice at all, then let it apply at the top as well as to the men at the bottom. I sincerely hope that the Attorney-General will give serious consideration to this matter with a view to rectifying the position.

Mr. WATERS (*Kelvin Grove*) [3.28 p.m.]: The smug-face hypocrisy of hon. members opposite with regard to a redistribution is merely intended to convey the impression that on the other side of the Chamber hon. members are a lot of political angels. Their suggestion that the last redistribution was fair and aboveboard is almost laughable when the whole of the circumstances are taken into consideration. There is no doubt in the world that the last redistribution, from the point of view of the Nationalist Party, was an almost perfect job. The work was delegated to a commission under the chieftainship of Mr. Gall, the Under Secretary of the Home Department. He carried out his duties in a manner that was very satisfactory and very efficient from the point of view of the Nationalist Party. I have no criticism to make against Mr. Gall personally. It is well known that he has always been an ardent supporter of the Nationalist Party. He probably welcomed the opportunity to render some little service to them on that occasion. As a matter of fact, he even went so far as to do his best to cut the then Home Secretary, the hon. member for Fitzroy, out of his seat, possibly on account of some disagreement that he had had with him. The hon. member for Fitzroy made some very indignant accusations regarding the redistribution as soon as the report was published, and suggested that the manner in which the boundaries of his old electorate had been dealt with was inspired by personal animosity. I believed that when the Moore Government introduced "The Electoral Districts Act of 1931," they had the idea they would be able to bring about a redistribution that would be able to guarantee them security of tenure of the Treasury benches.

Mr. KENNY: You suggested it was an accident.

Mr. WATERS: It was an accident as far as they are concerned that the Labour Party were ever returned as a Government. They had deliberately and definitely designed the electorates with the object of preventing Labour from assuming office again for thirty years. In furtherance of that object the Bill was framed in such a manner that the Governor in Council was empowered to bring about a redistribution as and when the different quotas required it. That suggests that the Nationalist Government of the day considered that the redistribution was so water-tight from their point of view that they did not desire to go to the trouble again of putting through another Bill at some future time to effect a redistribution. It is a well-known fact that hon. members opposite almost wore out the doormat of the room where the commissioners were located.

Mr. KENNY: You know that is untrue.

Mr. WATERS: It is a statement of fact.

Mr. MAXWELL: You know it is not a fact; that it is untrue.

Mr. WATERS: It is a fact; and every-one who follows political history knows that what happened then was similar to what happened on previous similar occasions.

Mr. KENNY: I never went there.

Mr. WATERS: It is well known that the hon. member who interjects is very much concerned about his political existence, and, no doubt, he and other members of his party paid a courtesy call on the commissioners.

Mr. KENNY: I can tell you that I never went near them.

Mr. WATERS: The hon. member had very satisfactory results if he did not.

The need of some amendment of the law relating to defamation as it affects political contests has been stressed. The recent case in Western Australia was contrasted with the legislation of this State. I have no doubt that there should be some investigation with a view to an amendment of our law. The law of defamation, particularly as to the mendacious statements which emanate from the Opposition at election times, certainly is in need of a great deal of amendment. In view of the criticism of this party by newspapers in this State, particularly the "Courier-Mail," there should be some amendment of the law regarding the criticism of members of Parliament generally. At the present time we have a column appearing daily in the "Courier-Mail" which, I understand, is subsidised by the Nationalist Party. I understand that the writer of that column is on a definite retainer from the Nationalist Party, and colour is given to that statement by the fact that when one glances at it one observes that almost every Labour member who rises in this Chamber to speak is criticised, and political giants like the hon. members for Mirani and Cook are hailed as veritable geniuses.

Mr. SPARKES: What about the "Standard"?

Mr. WATERS: I know it is difficult for the Opposition to get the amount of boost for their principles that they want. When one looks at the types opposite, the hopeless intellectual types, one realises how highly necessary it is for the Nationalist Party to retain a journalist in the employ of the "Courier-Mail" and pay him a weekly wage in addition to his salary to give them an amount of kindly criticism and help along the political road. There should be some amendment of the law of criticism. There is no particular reason why the political agent of the Nationalist Party, as the "Courier-Mail" writer is, should be in a position to caricature Labour members daily and paint in glowing terms the qualities of statesmanship that he finds in, say, the hon. member for Gympie, or the hon. member for Oxley, especially as it is difficult for those who know those gentlemen to get enthusiastic over their public utterances.

Mr. NIMMO: You would like to have some of his ability.

Mr. WATERS: That is a matter of taste. Possibly the hon. member for Oxley might have some aspirations along those lines, but I feel it my duty to call public attention to

the fact. I hope that in conjunction with any proposed amendment of the law of defamation, consideration will be given to this matter.

Mr. KENNY (*Cook*) [3.38 p.m.]: I had no intention of taking part in this debate, but, after listening to the speech delivered by the self-styled intellectual giant from Kelvin Grove, I think a few remarks from me would not be out of place. That speech reminded me that we are to-day living in a democratic age, and when the hon. member talks about the necessity of amending the existing legislation I am reminded of the need so to legislate that we will overcome some of the difficulties created by our system of democracy. If it is all that is desirable, we should not to-day have listened to such a speech, for if democracy were not on its trial the hon. member would not be here. I certainly agree with the hon. member when he says that we could amend the legislation of the State so that we would give Parliament something that was worth while. While listening to this debate the thought struck me that the party governing Queensland to-day will go down in history as the party that put the "moc" into democracy, for to-day Parliament and all that democracy holds out to us is being made a mockery.

We have heard much in this Chamber about the need for clean politics, and I think the time has arrived when the State should consider very seriously the necessity for ensuring that we shall have clean tactics and clean politics. One has only to cast one's mind back to the misrepresentation that took place during the 1932 election campaign, to the intimidation that has taken place during the present Government's term, and to the wastage of public funds for political purposes, so that the votes of the people are put up to auction, not on merit but to the highest bidder, to realise that this is not an unjustifiable demand. Sections of the people are asked to sell their votes to those who are prepared to give them the greatest promises, whether those promises are fulfilled or not. We have reached a stage where the whole system of government is being dragged through the mire and will eventually break down if that action is persisted in. When we hear talk about misrepresentation, let us refer to the speeches of the present Premier during the last State election campaign. The hon. gentleman condemned the Opposition, who were then the Government, and told the people that this was a man-made depression and that if we were only big enough and game enough we could win our way through. Let us cast our minds back to the picture drawn of the unfortunate unemployed, the pictures of those people half-clothed, half-fed and poorly housed, the picture drawn of darkness and despair facing those people, and the picture of the sunshine and happiness that would enter the lives of these people if they would only vote for the Labour Party. That representation went on from every platform in this State. The promises were swallowed and the people put hon. members opposite into power to carry out those promises. What do we find has happened? We find, after two and a-half years of complete control in this State—no Upper House to curb them—they have done so little that they must lay the blame on the Federal Government. The Premier went to the Loan Council meeting last week.

*Mr. Kenny.]*

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I would remind the hon. member the vote under discussion is the Chief Office of the Department of Justice. The hon. member is wandering away from that subject.

Mr. KENNY: I am reminded that the vote under discussion is for "Justice." The Department of Justice controls justice in the interests of every section of the community. What we need is legislation that is going to mete out justice to every section of the community, nothing more and nothing less. When a party gets into power on misrepresentation—

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN: Order! I again remind the hon. member for the last time that the item under discussion is for the Chief Office of the Department of Justice—and I ask him to confine his remarks to the subject.

Mr. KENNY: I have listened to the contributions to this debate by members on both sides of the Chamber. I heard members advocate the alteration of our statutes so as a man could be punished for defamation and for misrepresentation. The hon. member for Kelvin Grove dealt with the same question I am dealing with. He dealt with the desirableness of introducing legislation to protect the people. I support that. I ask the Government of this State to see that justice is meted out to every section of the community.

Much has been said about the redistribution that was carried out by the Moore Government. Figures have been quoted by members on this side of the Chamber showing that some Labour electorates had 2,000 voters and anti-Labour electorates 14,000. Immediately the Moore Government took office they appointed a redistribution commission in order to mete out justice to every section of the community. That redistribution was the fairest one that has taken place in Queensland.

GOVERNMENT MEMBERS: What rot!

Mr. KENNY: Hon. members opposite say, "What rot!" The fact remains the Labour Party got into power after that redistribution. The hon. member for Kelvin Grove stated that it was only an accident. I will admit it is only an accident as far as the people of this State are concerned that the Labour Party got into power, but there is not going to be any accident about their staying in power. It was stated in this Chamber to-day—I was going to say by the hon. member for Maree, but he is in the chair—that the redistribution will be a fair one on this occasion. When is it going to take place? The hon. member for Kelvin Grove said it was an accident they got in on the last occasion, but as a result of this redistribution—which is going to be fair—there will be no accident about the Government's remaining in power. That is a matter hon. members are entitled to know something about. In my opinion there is no justification for a redistribution. The present Government should not desire a redistribution, for they have had £7,500,000 more to distribute than the Moore Government had. Despite that fact we have a proposal for a redistribution—or shall I say—a reallocation of boundaries. That reallocation of boundaries is to be brought about because that extra £7,500,000 was not sufficient to buy the votes of the people that

the Government desire to buy. Can any person who claims to have any appreciation of fairness find any justification for a reallocation of boundaries?

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: Who said there would be?

Mr. KENNY: For the edification of the Attorney-General, and the Secretary for Mines, I say the hon. member for Maree said that on this occasion it was going to be a fair redistribution.

The ATTORNEY-GENERAL: He said nothing of the kind.

Mr. KENNY: "Hansard" will tell us. I realise the hot water the hon. member for Maree will get into in the caucus room, but I congratulate him on his fairness and justice on this occasion by telling us what is going to take place. When this question was discussed first in the caucus room some time ago a statement appeared in the press the following morning that a redistribution was going to take place. We know it was previously discussed from the point of view of creating three extra seats, and the Department of Justice was asked to advise whether this could be legally done without bringing a Bill before Parliament. The department advised the Government in the negative. They, therefore, decided that they would have to look at the Act. It was found that a reallocation of boundaries could take place without the consent of Parliament, under the Act passed by the Moore Government. We know that the Government would like to be their own bosses. I have seen that the Queensland Central Executive has taken them to task because it did not receive advance copies of legislation. The "Standard" newspaper had received advance copies prior to them but, following upon an attack by the other newspapers and the Opposition in this Chamber, they were not game to go ahead. On this occasion they said, "No. We cannot agree to your request." There is to be a Labour Convention in February of next year at Maryborough, and the Government do not wish to be hauled over the coals by the Queensland Central Executive at that conference. Nothing definite will therefore be told to the public about this redistribution of seats until the proposed action has the approval of the convention. I can tell the Committee, however, that it is common talk that Mr. Ferry has already gone through North Queensland and has returned with the proposals submitted by the branches of the Australian Labour Party in North Queensland. I can tell the Committee the proposals for the allocation of three of the Northern seats, Cairns, Cook, and The Tableland. I can tell the Committee exactly where those boundaries are to go or where it is suggested they should go. Under the redistribution the Government are quite satisfied to take Chillagoe and Mungana and other places out of The Tableland, because it is their intention to close the Chillagoe smelters after the next election; that is, if the Government get back to power. The Government say that, if by accident an anti-Labour man should get in for the electorate which included Chillagoe, the people could not then blame the Government. The hon. member for Ipswich has raised the question of the loss on the Chillagoe works for a number of years.

At 3.53 p.m.,

Mr. GLEDSON resumed the chair.

[Mr. Kenny.]

Mr. KENNY: During last session he desired information as to how long these losses were to be allowed to continue. There must have been a discussion in the Caucus room and the people of Chillagoe are to get justice, but justice to this extent: they are to be placed in the electorate where it cannot matter whether the Government loses or not. You would know whether I am correct or not, Mr. Gledson. I know criticisms have taken place. I have seen that "big waddy" wielded on more than one occasion, and for your information in the debate dealing with the subject, I would advise the Committee that circulars have already gone forth to different persons, miners in the Chillagoe electorate, asking for information for the Government as to the number of men directly and indirectly employed by the works in Chillagoe. Mr. Fred. Reid, a gentleman well known to the Labour Government, was asked to give some information as to the number of men directly and indirectly employed in the Chillagoe mining industry. I have been told quite definitely that the Government are considering whether the smelters shall be kept open or otherwise. It is common talk that Chillagoe is to be included in the Cook electorate. If I am representing Chillagoe the people there will be represented well, and if the Government then desire to close the Chillagoe smelters there will be some argument as to why it should not be done. I would certainly advise the Government to be more discreet about their inquiries and not to give the show away before the action is taken. I think it is a calamity that the Government should have the power to do these things. They are pledged to the whole of the people. I admit that they have lost the confidence of a large number of the industrial workers of Queensland, and so must appeal to other sections of the community. We have heard from them a considerable amount of talk about the farmer. With the reallocation of boundaries, as is suggested, the farmer will not have much of a say.

The SECRETARY FOR MINES (Hon. J. Stopford, *Murryborough*) [3.54 p.m.]: I have no intention of occupying the time of the Committee at any great length, but I cannot allow to pass the inaccurate statements made by the hon. member who has just resumed his seat. If all his statements are based upon such false premises as the statement that the Government intends to close the Chillagoe smelters they are hardly worth while considering. I have certainly asked for information to put forward a scheme in favour of keeping them open. On several occasions in this Chamber I have argued that, while from the pounds, shillings, and pence point of view it may be claimed that the Chillagoe smelters should be closed, the direct and indirect benefits to be obtained from its continuance justify the Government in carrying on operations. I have had inquiries made to ascertain how many ore suppliers there are in the district, and generally how many men benefit by the continuance of this enterprise. I have been informed that a certain number of men benefit directly and indirectly by the continuance of the Chillagoe smelters, and, naturally, I am anxious to substantiate those figures. My inquiries are being made, not with the idea of closing Chillagoe down, but with the idea of keeping it going.

Mr. P. K. COPLEY (*Kurilpa*) [3.55 p.m.]: Quite a lot can be said concerning electioneering and other matters during a discussion of the Estimates for the Department of Justice. These matters are probably of more interest to hon. members in this Chamber than to the people outside, because they are of great personal concern to each and every one of us.

In the first place, I should like to repeat the suggestion that I made in this Chamber during the early part of the session, when I pointed out to the Attorney-General that he should make careful inquiry into the methods that are now being adopted to evade the Money Lenders Act Amendment Act. Of course, we all understand that there are occasions when people are compelled to seek financial accommodation from money-lenders, even though extortionate rates of interest are charged. In order to protect these people from the financial depredations of the money-lenders, particularly in view of the scandalous cases that were submitted, the Government decided to introduce legislation. The regulations under that legislation provides that the maximum rate of interest to be charged shall be 20 per cent., calculated on monthly rests. In the past these money-lenders were prone to charge an interest rate up to 100 per cent., and even a greater rate—unconscionable amounts were charged. To-day it is their practice to float small companies having offices next door to their offices or place of business where operations are ostensibly carried on by a girl. When a person applies to the money-lender for a loan he is now told that financial accommodation cannot be found for him unless he can find someone to recommend him as a reliable client. Naturally, he is directed to the company next door, and is there told that if he returns in a few days or a few hours, according to the urgency of the matter, he may be accommodated. On his return he is quite readily informed that Mr. so-and-so was prepared to make the necessary recommendations on his behalf, but he would have to pay a procuration fee of perhaps £20, even when the total amount of the loan may not exceed £20 or £30. This state of affairs cannot be allowed to continue.

I should also like to remind the Attorney-General that steps are being taken to-day by the people concerned to evade the provisions of the Hire-purchase Agreement Act, which provides that the hirer is entitled to an equity when his payments represent 50 per cent. of the purchase price. The method adopted to-day to evade the provisions of the Act is this: a perpetual lease is drawn up in such terms that even after the full amount of the purchase price has been paid the ownership shall not pass to the hirer until a nominal amount changes hands, which is only to be paid on demand.

Mr. GODFREY MORGAN: Perpetual lease is the policy of the present Government.

Mr. P. K. COPLEY: A perpetual lease is quite all right in its application to the use of Crown land, but I am dealing with movable chattels such as furniture. If the hon. member knew the first thing about these matters he would know the difference between real and personal property; but, of course, he does not.

I desire to join with the hon. member for Toowoong in wishing well to two police

*Mr. P. K. Copley.]*

magistrates who are about to retire—the Chief Police Magistrate, Mr. Archdall, and Mr. Ferguson. They are both estimable gentlemen who, I believe, have done their duty to the best of their ability and as fearlessly as one would wish.

I should like to make a suggestion to the Attorney-General regarding the work of the Magistrates Court. I realise that the magistrates are not entirely to blame for the delay that takes place in listing cases for hearing. I know that at times solicitors find it necessary to ask for an adjournment because counsel are engaged in other cases in other courts. One day a week is set aside specially for the hearing of industrial cases; but the work is a long way behind. The magistrates themselves agree that a definite arrangement could be made under which the industrial cases could be dealt with much more promptly than they are to-day. I suggest that the Attorney-General should look into this matter, with a view to seeing that industrial cases are brought up to date. I know of my own knowledge that some cases not yet dealt with are twelve months old. Those hearings have been delayed because of the limited time set apart for industrial cases.

I heard the hon. member for Cook say that it is common talk in North Queensland that Mr. Ferry has been round and received the suggestions of the different branches of the Australian Labour Party respecting the redistribution of seats. It is very easy to make a statement of that nature. It is not a definite charge. When one takes into consideration the facts following on the redistribution of seats made by the late Government one realises what a clever scheme it was. As the hon. member for Cook knows, as well as the hon. member for Logan, small majorities only were obtained by them. It is true that there are cases where hon. members on this side of the Committee were also elected by a small majority. Probably a difference of 5,000 votes would have meant a difference of five more seats to this party or the Opposition. That is not a conservative estimate.

It was common talk after the 1931 Federal elections which preceded the State elections—I am now adopting similar tactics to those used by the hon. member for Cook—that a very prominent member of the then Government sent for a member of the commission and said, "On these Federal figures the vote for Labour is good. How does this redistribution stand?" The official then replied, "About 10,000 more votes need to be cast for Labour to give them a chance. As a matter of fact, I think 15,000 or 17,000 more will work it." Therefore, the members of the Electoral Boundaries Commission knew what they were doing, and did their work very scientifically.

Statements have also been made in this Committee regarding postal votes. The hon. member for Merthyr drew attention to a case which he has personally brought under my notice. A member of the Queensland Women's Electoral League took a vote to an invalid person. When the vote was taken in to her the only thing she was asked to do, although the ballot-paper was there, was to sign the envelope. The vote had actually been recorded by the person outside. Needless to say, I advised him to report the matter to the proper authorities, and that was done.

[Mr. P. K. Copley.]

The hon. member for Hamilton raised the question of unfair political advertising. He mentioned a case of an advertisement headed, "warning the people." One has only to view the hoardings in the different electorates to see big posters with the words, "It is your money they are going to take," and stuff like that. Probably those advertisements were an endeavour to mislead or gull the people. I strongly believe with the hon. member for Hamilton that some method should be devised to deal with unfair advertising, but I would remind him that it is not only the Labour Party that make statements similar to those he mentioned. Might I remind him of the biggest political trick that the world has ever known—that advertisement containing the photograph of the ex-Premier and the statement, "It can be done; it will be done. I promise to find £2,000,000 for 10,000 jobs." Some independent committee should be appointed to deal with any person who has a hand in that sort of advertising, especially when he knows that he has no intention of carrying it out. I realise the difficulty in dealing with such matters. I would wait for a period until I saw whether the promise was being carried out, or whether any pretence was being made of carrying it out. No doubt, with £5,000,000 left in the Treasury, the late Premier had the ability to carry out the promise he made.

The hon. member for Cook spoke of Labour conventions, but he does not know the first thing about such bodies. He alleged that the Queensland Central Executive had taken the Parliamentary Labour Party to task in regard to certain matters. The difference between the Labour in Politics Convention and the Queensland Central Executive has no significance to him.

A great deal was said by the hon. member for Toowong about plebiscites. The time has come when we should let the people of Queensland know that it is not only individuals associated with the Labour Party who do things that are not fair. I am going to mention a case now, and desire to preface my remarks by saying that I do not believe the individual member of the Opposition in whose interests this matter occurred had anything to do with it. It was probably done by an over-zealous supporter. That individual got a letter written with a specific address and forwarded it to almost every member or organisation affiliated with the party containing an accusation against a very estimable citizen in this community—a man whose life was above reproach, and at whom no one could point the finger of scorn. When you find that a letter, purporting to come from a barmaid, making an allegation that a certain man is the father of an illegitimate child, is sent to all the women of a branch of the Queensland Women's Electoral League or some such organisation, you can realise that the dirt associated with some plebiscites is not all on this side. No one can ever say that such a thing was done by Labour. So that people living in glass houses should not throw stones. If hon. members opposite want other evidence—

Mr. KENNY: That is only a bald statement.

Mr. P. K. COPLEY: The bald statement is there, but if the hon. member knew the full facts he would be aware that there were

only four houses in the specified street and that, as a matter of actual fact, the woman never existed.

Mr. BRASSINGTON (*Fortitude Valley*) [4.8 p.m.]: The mention made by the hon. member for Kurilpa regarding the Money Lenders Act Amendment Act recalls to my mind the assistance and advice rendered to me by officers of this Department, by Mr. Carter (Under Secretary), Mr. O'Hagan (Assistant Under Secretary), and others, and I desire to take this opportunity of expressing my appreciation. I desire to pay a tribute to Mr. McGregor who has handled numerous cases for me in connection with this business. Thanks to the introduction and the application of that legislation, many an unfortunate person who to-day would be in dire difficulties, is now protected, and receives justice in accordance with the law of the land. I am glad the Government introduced that Act, that it is working well, and that it is in the hands of such a capable officer as Mr. McGregor. I merely rose to make a brief reference to that legislation which was so desirable in the interests of the people of this State.

Mr. J. G. BAYLEY (*Wynnum*) [4.10 p.m.]: I was hoping that something would have been said during the course of this debate in regard to the proposal that some definite scheme should be laid down for making a redistribution. Evidently no such scheme exists in this State. In the Federal sphere the conditions are laid down partly under the Constitution and as to the remainder under the Electoral Acts, and it has been the practice, federally, to make a redistribution not less than once in ten years. That gives a certainment of stability.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: The Electoral Acts make it one of the conditions that the number of electors above or below the margin are in excess of one-fourth.

Mr. J. G. BAYLEY: The quota is discovered at the time of taking the census. Should more than one-fourth of the divisions in any State be either one-fifth above or one-fifth below the quota, then the Governor-General in Council may call for a redistribution. It is further laid down that the redistribution may take place at any time the Governor-General in Council sees fit. There is nothing to prevent a redistribution taking place every three years in the Federal sphere—as in all probability will be the case in the State—but that is never done, because the matter is based on a solid foundation, namely, the statistics provided by the taking of the census every ten years. I think we should be wise if in this State we adopted a similar system.

No one thinks that the matter of redistribution should be made a political plaything. I regret very much that during the course of the debate to-day innuendoes were thrown around this Chamber in connection with those men who have acted as members of redistribution commissions from time to time. It is impossible for these men to defend themselves. The position is not of their own seeking. They are public servants and the Government call upon them to fill these positions. Although I was not a member of this Parliament at the time the last redistribution took place, from my knowledge of the Leader of the Opposition I know everything was square and above board. Even if I did not know the hon. gentleman, I should

say—knowing the members of the commission—that everything was square and above board. It is a great pity such charges and counter-charges should have been thrown across the Chamber.

I was very glad that the hon. member for Logan raised the question of divorce. Unfortunately, we in this State can do very little to bring about uniformity in that law; but it is a question that should be faced by all the States in unison. Pressure should be brought to bear upon the Federal Government to bring about a uniform divorce law. The figures relating to the number of divorces are alarming. The following table will illustrate the growth of divorce in Australia during the last thirty years:—

Period.	Divorces per 10,000 existing marriages.
1901-10	6.15
1911-20	8.13
1921-30	15.45

Those figures represent an increase of about 250 per cent. within thirty years. That is accounted for by the fact that in New South Wales and Victoria for many years the law has made it increasingly easy for people to obtain a judicial separation or a divorce. That is not in the best interests of the people in this country. It is not in the best interests of the morals of this country. I have no desire to compel people to live together who have nothing in common—in fact, I think it is far better for them to live apart—but these people should be brought to a realisation before they enter into the marriage bond that it is more or less binding, that it is not something that can be thrown lightly aside. We have been very free from this sort of thing in Australia in the past. Unfortunately, in some other parts in the world, notably in some of the States of America, much revenue has been made in this regard. I refer to the city of Reno, which has been the laughing stock and byword of the people of the world for many years for the ease with which divorces may be obtained in it. No such thing obtains in Australia.

The hon. member for Logan this morning referred to the question of domicile and other important features in which the law differs in many of our States. I hope the Attorney-General—although he can do very little to bring about uniformity—will place the matter before the Premier; and on the next occasion the Premier visits the South to participate in a Premiers' Conference, he will make it a point to bring up this question and see if anything can be done to bring about uniform divorce laws throughout Australia.

THE ATTORNEY-GENERAL: I mentioned earlier in the day that in February last the Premier and myself urged on Mr. Latham, the ex-Federal Attorney-General, the necessity of providing for an Australian domicile for women, and I believe a Bill to that end is in the course of preparation.

Mr. J. G. BAYLEY: That is very satisfactory.

The House resumed.

The TEMPORARY CHAIRMAN reported progress and asked leave to sit again.

Resumption of Committee made an Order of the Day for Tuesday next.

The House adjourned at 4.19 p.m.

*Mr. Bayley.]*