

like a summons. Solicitors and professional men, of course, are not taken in.

Mr. LANDA: Because they do not use that sort of document!

Mr. MAIR: They never need it. A solicitor is generally very much surprised when he is paid the correct fee. If women are upset by pieces of paper purporting to be legal documents such papers should be made illegal. If this bill represents the honest endeavour of the Minister to safeguard debtors I commend him for it, but I trust that, while his purpose may be served, this legislation will not be so restrictive as to prevent some people from realising that they must pay their debts and that if they do not it will cause hardship, not to them, but to their neighbours.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill presented and read a first time.

House adjourned at 10.2 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 7 August, 1941.

Questions without Notice—Public Accounts Committee—Local Government (Electoral Provisions) Bill (second reading)—Personal Explanation (Governor's Opening Speech)—Presentation of Address in Reply—Western Lands (Amendment) Bill—South-west Tablelands Water Supply Administration Bill.

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

The opening Prayer was read.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

ALLEGED PERJURY.

Mr. SANDERS: Has the Premier's attention been drawn to a recent report in the *Daily Telegraph* of a statement by an eminent cleric at St. Mary's Cathedral, as follows:

Fifty per cent. of all oaths taken in Sydney courts are perjuries, and this is not to be wondered at with no moral code taught in the State schools.

I ask the Premier to investigate that statement, particularly with a view to removing what may be a slur on our State education system.

Mr. McKELL: The statement has not been brought to my attention, but if the hon. member will let me see the report I will consider it and have inquiries made.

WATER RESTRICTIONS.

Mr. LANDA: Has the Premier's attention been drawn to the statement in this morning's *Daily Telegraph*, that while gardeners are now prohibited from using water, bowling greens and golf clubs are still allowed to use it? As, from the point of view of the public at large the growing of vegetables and flowers is of more importance than the upkeep of golf links and bowling greens, will the Premier represent to the Water Board that the restrictions, if necessary, should be applied to sporting resorts before being enforced in the people's homes?

Mr. MAIR: On the same question, when the Premier is making inquiry will he ascertain whether bowling greens and golf clubs do not frequently supply their own water by means of their own bores?

Mr. McKELL: My attention has not been drawn to the matter referred to by the hon. member for Bondi, but it would seem that it is hardly equitable to apply restrictions to the growing of vegetables and at the same time not apply them to bowling greens. I understand that a number of bowling clubs and other sporting bodies have their own water supplies. I understand also that the hon. member for Bondi refers to restrictions by the Water Board on water supplied by the Board. I will take up the matter with the president of the Board and ascertain from him whether the newspaper report is correct. If it is, I will see whether it is not possible to induce the Board to apply the restrictions in a more equitable manner:

RAILWAY STATION AT PORT KEMBLA.

Mr. W. DAVIES: I ask the Minister for Public Works whether it is a fact that, as a result of the dual control of railways at Port Kembla by the Public

Works Department and the Commissioner for Railways, the development of the township of Port Kembla is being considerably handicapped? Is it further a fact that no improvement can be made in respect of the railway station there until the control is handed over to the Commissioner for Railways? Will the Minister inform the House when he proposes to adjust this matter so that the work on the new railway station at Port Kembla can be commenced?

Mr. J. J. CAHILL: I will have inquiries made into the statement of the hon. member, although I do not think that what he has said is the fact. However, with regard to the railway system, it is true that there is dual control at Port Kembla. At the present time a committee is examining the proposals to which the hon. member has referred, and when its investigations are complete I shall be able to inform the House what steps are to be taken to overcome whatever difficulties are now being experienced.

BURRINJUCK DAM.

Mr. SHEAHAN: In the absence of the Minister for Agriculture, I ask the Premier whether it is a fact that the consulting engineers in respect of the Burrinjuck Dam advised that a steel plate should be placed across the face of the dam? Is it also a fact that after that proposal had been decided upon and a quantity of materials and machinery purchased, it was abandoned on the advice of Mr. Brewster, the engineer to the Water Conservation and Irrigation Commission? In view of these blunders, will the Premier consider the advisability of giving the requisite three months' notice to the consultants with a view to terminating their agreement which was entered into with the last Government?

Mr. McKELL: I understand that originally there was some proposal for the placing of a steel plate across the face of the dam. I do not profess to know the details of the proposal or of the actual cause of its abandonment. The whole question of the remedial measures to be taken at the dam is at

present under the consideration of the Government, and when a decision is arrived at an announcement will be made.

Mr. SHEAHAN: Following upon a supplementary question regarding Burrinjuck Dam asked by the leader of the Opposition yesterday, and the statement that he was supplied with certain particulars, will the Minister for Agriculture take into consideration the fact that those particulars were requested by me in the *Questions and Answers* paper on 24th July last? When the Minister obtains this information, will he inform the officer who supplies it that when a member of this House asks a straight question in future he should be given a straight answer?

Captain DUNN: I will have a look at the question that was asked by the hon. member, and supply whatever information is available. Officers of the department are working on the question which is a very involved one, and I cannot give a reply to it until I have received a report from the accountant concerned. In reference to the question yesterday, I would say that no commissions are paid in connection with supervision at Burrinjuck. I laid the agreements on the table following a question asked by the hon. member some time ago, and they show exactly how the money is allocated and paid.

MINT WEED MENACE.

Mr. HEFEREN: I ask the Minister for Agriculture whether it is a fact that in northern New South Wales a plant commonly known as mint weed is becoming a grave menace? Is it further a fact that this plant is causing great difficulty and hardship to the land owners in southern Queensland? If these are facts, will the Minister have inquiries made with a view to controlling this pest?

Captain DUNN: The hon. member brought this matter under my notice some days ago, and I took advantage of my visit to Grafton to inquire from the Minister for Agriculture in Queensland as to the position there with respect to

mint weed. He informed me that it was a serious menace to both agricultural and grazing interests, and that cultivating the land really increased rather than decreased its growth. The only effective method was the use of a poison somewhat similar to what was formerly used for the killing of prickly pear, and to shut up the area so poisoned for a period of six weeks. My department is making further inquiries, and I shall be glad later to inform the hon. member of the results.

ADDRESS IN REPLY: CONVEYANCE
OF MEMBERS.

Mr. MACDONALD: I desire to ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether it is a fact that you, with hon. members and officers of the House, will wait upon his Excellency the Governor in due course to present the Address in Reply to his Excellency's Speech? Is it also a fact that cars will be provided for the use of hon. members and officers of the House? In view of the petrol shortage would it not be better for hon. members to walk to Government House to wait upon his Excellency?

Mr. SPEAKER: Arrangements have been made for the Address in Reply to the Governor's Speech to be presented to his Excellency this afternoon. I do not think we have yet reached such a stage of economy that members and officers of the House should be deprived of vehicular accommodation.

PETROL: STORAGE DEPOTS.

Mrs. QUIRK: Will the Premier say whether it is a fact that now the petrol cartel has been broken the independent oil companies can get petrol but have not sufficient capital to build storage depots? If that is so, will the Premier consider the building of storage depots and show that the New South Wales Labour Government can give a lead to the Commonwealth Government?

Mr. MCKELL: I am unable to say just what is the position of the independent oil companies with regard to storage of petrol. I do not know what are the possibilities of those companies

getting additional petrol. It seems to me that if the facts are as suggested by the hon. member and if there is petrol available to these companies, it would be a tragic state of affairs not to take advantage of those supplies because there is no storage available. That would, I think, show a grave lack of foresight on the part of the Federal authorities. As far as this State is concerned, if there is any direction at all in which the Government can help, provided there is oil available, I shall be only too happy to take the necessary steps to provide storage.

GOVERNOR'S SPEECH.

Mr. SHANNON: I ask you, Mr. Speaker, whether your attention has been drawn to a statement made by the hon. member for Burwood, which reflects upon his Excellency the Governor to the extent of suggesting that his Excellency turned over two pages of his Speech at once because he did not approve of what those two pages contained? Will you, Mr. Speaker, give the hon. member an opportunity of withdrawing that statement and of apologising to his Excellency for the reflection?

Mr. SPEAKER: I will have a look at what appears in *Hansard* and let the hon. member know.

MONIER PIPE STATE INDUSTRIAL
UNDERTAKING.

Mr. J. J. CAHILL: The hon. member for Annandale asked me a question without notice on 30th July with regard to the valuation placed on the Monier Pipe State Industrial Undertaking by Mr. Gibson, of Messrs. Julius, Poole and Gibson, and what was the valuation given in evidence before the Royal Commission after the sale of this undertaking by the Government of the day. The hon. member also asked if I would ascertain the value of certain patent rights held by this undertaking which had been sold in various parts of the world. The

valuation of the State Monier Pipe and Reinforced Concrete Works as at 18th January, 1934, was as follows:—

		Valued by	Value
LOT 1.			
Land	...	Richardson & Wrench	£ 9,600
Buildings and Structures	...	Julius Poole & Gibson	26,173
Factory Plant	...	Fraser Uther Ltd.	7,723
Motor Vehicles	...	do do	1,060
Sundry Tools and Materials	...	do do	750
Stock	...	do do	22,623
			67,929
LOT 2.			
General Contract—Plant	...	do do	11,743
Total			£ 79,672

The purchase price of the undertaking by Monier Industries Limited was £35,696 13s. 0d. on the basis of actual stocks at date of sale—9th March, 1936. So far as I have been able to ascertain, no evidence of complete valuation was given other than that Mr. Gibson explained that his valuation was on a replacement basis. Evidence was given, however, to support the contention that the sale price was a satisfactory one. In regard to the Hume patent rights held by the old State Monier Pipe Works, these were originally valued in the books at £11,663 3s. 2d., but in 1928 they were written out completely by depreciation. Their book value at the date of sale was nil.

INSURANCE POLICIES.

Mr. LANDA: Is the Attorney-General aware that owing to the extremely technical wording of insurance policies issued by certain companies, many members of the public are denied their rights—in some cases their entire rights? As the Minister is no doubt aware, it is most difficult for the average citizen to understand the highly technical language contained in the numerous small printed clauses of these policies. Will he, therefore, take steps to bring in a bill to compel all insurance companies to issue a uniform and more simplified form, as is done for workers' compensation policies, so that every member of the public may understand his rights?

Mr. WEAVER: Will the Attorney-General insert a clause in that bill prohibiting the persons responsible for introducing the technicalities, namely, the lawyers?

Mr. C. E. MARTIN: In reply to the semi-humorous question of the ex-Speaker, the technicalities are, for the main part, introduced by Parliament and not by lawyers, and he should know enough of parliamentary procedure to be aware of that. With regard to the question asked by the hon. member for Bondi, I think it is a fact that many of the policies are so detailed and complex as to prevent the ordinary person from understanding them, and although the theory is that every ordinary person knows the law, the fact is that very few persons do know it.

Mr. WEAVER: Nor do the lawyers!

Mr. C. E. MARTIN: That may also be true in certain cases. The suggestion made by the hon. member for Bondi will be very carefully considered by the Government. Already consideration has been given to the desirability of bringing in a bill to deal with assurance and insurance.

CHILD ENDOWMENT: FOOD RECIPIENTS.

Mr. WILSON: Can the Minister for Social Services say whether it is a fact that persons in receipt of food relief, and who are extended the benefit of Federal child endowment, are being penalised by having child endowment payments taken into account? As these payments are for the benefit of the child, will the Minister take steps to see that in future such payments are not taken into account?

Mr. KNIGHT: The system of food relief in regard to family endowment is exactly the same now as it has been for the past nine years, during the term of office of the previous Government. This Government did alter the system so far as it affected widows and those in receipt of Child Welfare payments; but the position of food recipients has not been altered in any way as a result of the introduction of Federal family endowment.

RELIEF WORKERS: PREFERENCE
IN EMPLOYMENT.

Mr. CUREY: Can the Minister for Public Works say whether it is a fact that in the suburbs, red-ink references are made on the filed cards of the registered unemployed, in connection with their suitability or unsuitability; that such remarks are mainly the result of gangers' reports and the guide to officers concerned when sending men out to regular jobs, which have been found by the department; and that owing to such references some men are never given the chance of regular employment through the exchanges, and so become known as the "Old Contemptibles"? If such is the case, will the Minister consider the advisability of discontinuing the practice, and instruct officers concerned that in future the first man registered must be the first man to be sent out to fill a job found by the department?

Mr. J. J. CAHILL: I am not acquainted with the practice, but I will have investigation made, and reply to the hon. member as soon as the result is reported to me.

FIRE BRIGADE EMPLOYEES:
HOURS.

Mr. SANDERS: I ask the Colonial Secretary whether the Government has considered the recommendation of a select committee of this House that certain concessions should be given to employees of the Board of Fire Commissioners? If so, what is the intention of the Government regarding that recommendation? Is it proposed to alter the hours of firemen as recommended by the committee?

Mr. BADDELEY: I will give consideration to the question.

RURAL BANK.

Mr. GREIG: Having regard to the great community value of the Rural Bank's activities, and finance given by it for home building, will the Premier and Colonial Treasurer consult the Commissioners with a view to an extension of the bank's liberal policy?

Mr. McKELL: Yes; as a matter of fact, I have already taken up the matter with the Rural Bank. I have also conferred with the Commissioner respecting amendments to the Rural Bank Act to extend the powers and functions of the bank.

WHEAT STOCKS REPORT.

Captain DUNN: On 30th July the hon. member for Burwood asked me if I would lay on the table the report prepared by Mr. Ratcliffe, Economic Entomologist of the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research, Canberra, upon the condition of the whole of the wheat stocks held in Australia. I took steps to endeavour to get that report, and later in the day dictated a letter to the appropriate Minister in the Federal Cabinet, whose reply to me is as follows:—

With reference to your letter of the 1st inst. concerning the question asked by Mr. Jackett in the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Ratcliffe has prepared no report covering the condition of the whole of the wheat stocks held in Australia. In a recent memorandum to the Secretary of the Australian Wheat Board, however, he made certain recommendations regarding the general policy of emergency wheat storage, with special reference to the eastern States, *i.e.*, New South Wales and Victoria. While there was nothing confidential about the information given in this memorandum, it refers to a discussion that took place at a Wheat Board meeting at which Mr. Ratcliffe was present as an invited guest, and, therefore, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research is obviously not at liberty to make it public.

The hon. member accused me of not laying on the table certain information that was entirely a Federal matter, and should be asked for in the Federal Parliament, and cannot be laid on the table of this House. Because I wanted to be courteous to the hon. member, I put the matter under way immediately, within an hour or two of his question. I resent the suggestion that I would not lay something on the table.

Mr. JACKETT: I did not suggest that!

Captain DUNN: The insinuation made by the hon. member was that this was a report upon weevil infestation, and that we had weevily wheat and were keeping the fact quiet. The only bagged wheat in this State is at Spring Hill, and it is owned by the Federal Government and not by us. The stocks are frequently examined and there is no sign of weevil whatever. It is anticipated that country silo wheat will be disposed of in two weeks and that there will then be no wheat in the silos in the country. In any event, it would not be owned by the State Government or the State Department of Agriculture. The 1939-40 and 1940-41 wheat at the terminal silos owned by the Federal Government and sold to Great Britain, is reported to be in perfect condition. The suggestions of the hon. member for Burwood are unworthy of a member of this House, and a reflection upon the wheat in this country, which is in perfect condition.

METROPOLITAN WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. MAIR: In view of the possible serious consequences of the water shortage in the metropolis, will the Premier consider bringing forward legislation immediately to place under direct governmental authority the activities of the Water Board?

Mr. LANG: Why did the hon. member for Albury take it out of governmental control?

Mr. MAIR: I did not.

Mr. LANG: I thought the hon. member had a good memory, but it seems he has not!

Mr. MAIR: I have a good memory. Failing that, would the Premier appoint a committee of this House to investigate the position immediately to ascertain whether the rationing is on an equitable basis, and whether there is any immediate alternative that could be adopted to secure this metropolis against the dire consequences of water shortage?

Mr. TONGE: Is it a fact that in Western Australia, water supply, both metropolitan and country, is under the direct control of a Minister of the Crown?

Mr. McKELL: In answer to the hon. member for Canterbury, I have no knowledge as to the administration of water supply services in Western Australia. In answer to the leader of the Opposition, he can rest assured that so far as lies in the power of the Government we will do everything that is humanly possible to maintain the water services in the metropolitan area. The lack of water supply is in no sense a responsibility of the Government. Immediately we came into office we took the matter up with the Metropolitan Water, Sewerage and Drainage Board, to see if there was any way in which the Government could help, and as far as the Government is concerned everything possible will be done, whether it involves the passing of legislation or not.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

The following hon. members were elected members of the Public Accounts Committee: Mr. D. H. Drummond, Mr. F. J. Finnan, Mr. W. H. Lamb, Mr. A. Mair, and Mr. A. J. L. Williams.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ELECTORAL PROVISIONS) BILL.

SECOND READING.

Mr. JAMES MCGIRR (Bankstown), Minister for Local Government [11.35]: I move:

That this bill be now read a second time. I was surprised indeed to notice that some hon. members criticised the proposed amendments of the franchise provisions of the Local Government Act and the Sydney Corporation Act. They are minor in character and it is a fact that, both directly and through the medium of hon. members, my department has been inundated with requests that amendments should be made to bring about uniformity in the method of enrolment. Under the provisions of the Local Government Act a person who has been in residence in an area for a period of twelve months prior to 1st June in the year in which a municipal election is held has the necessary residential qualification to vote at or contest an election. Trouble resulted from the

method of compiling rolls. The matter was left entirely to town clerks who, in some cases, did the work diligently and well. They sent officers throughout the municipality and obtained a list of the names of residents, from which they carefully compiled the rolls. However, that procedure was not mandatory upon shire or town clerks and in some cases it was the practice to leave it to persons to call at the shire or town office and personally make application for enrolment. If they failed to do this their names did not appear on the roll, and the department received many complaints that, though persons had resided in an area for a number of years and had fulfilled all the qualifying requirements, they found on voting day that they were not enrolled. Again, residents accustomed to the practice by which town clerks carefully compile the roll, have moved to another area in which they are expected to make personal application for enrolment, and, being unaware of the procedure, have found on polling day that their names were omitted from the roll. Some of them have aspired to office and have been denied, not only the chance to fulfil their aspirations, but also to vote. The amending bill is designed to obviate such omissions and to simplify the procedure, and I am sure that it will have the approval of hon. members. Shire and town clerks will have a list of ratepayers from which they can compile their rolls of owners and ratepaying lessees without difficulty. In addition, without being put to the expense of sending out canvassers to collect the names of persons occupying properties, they will be able, without difficulty, to compile the occupiers' roll from the State roll.

Any person enrolled on the State roll on the 18th April last and whose place of living is within a ward or riding will be deemed to be enrolled on the local government roll, and such person will be entitled to vote at the elections in December next if he retains the qualification in respect of which he was enrolled on the State roll. It is proposed to reduce the period of the

residential qualification for persons permitted to vote under the Local Government Act from eighteen months to about seven months. The elections will be held this year because the Mair-Bruxner Government did not permit them to be held last year. They will be held automatically on the first Saturday in December next. Under the local government law the position is that an occupier who wished to vote next December would have to be twelve months in residence prior to the 1st June. We will use the State rolls in addition to the ratepayers' roll, which will be compiled by the Town Clerk. The last roll was compiled on the 18th April, 1941. The new residential qualification will save considerable expense. In the older districts there has been very little increase in the number of voters, and in amending the franchise provisions of the Local Government Act, 1919, and the Sydney Corporation Act, 1932-1940, a great deal of trouble experienced in the past will be obviated. In the past the Government of the day had to pay as much as £2,500 for the preparation of rolls, which were never used at the City Council elections. The City of Sydney rolls were formerly collected by the police and the City Council bore the cost of the work done and reimbursed the Government. But because of the fact that on two successive occasions when the police were used to compile the rolls, which, incidentally, were never used, not because of the fault of the council, but because of the postponement of the elections, the Government was naturally called upon to reimburse the amount expended by the police. I understand that the cost was £1,250 for each compilation of the roll. It is now proposed to bring the City Council electoral franchise into line with the Local Government Act. It is not proposed, as might have been construed from the remarks of an hon. member last night, to deny people who may have interests and investments in the city, the right to participate in the conduct of the elections, and in the ballot for the elections. We do know that past Governments did

make provision that where persons were paying rent to the extent of 10s. or 12s. a week for a furnished building, flat or room, they were entitled to claim enrolment, provided that they were direct tenants from the owner and not sub-tenants. Most of the trouble in the compilation of the roll by the police probably arose in the investigation into the qualifications of the people. We contend that the procedure would be materially simplified by having a roll which is properly checked and in respect of which people when claiming enrolment must comply with the law of this country. A penalty will be inflicted upon any persons who claim enrolment wrongfully, and sub-tenants are also to be brought into line. The question of residential qualification will therefore not arise.

We propose that the law so far as the City Council franchise is concerned will be the same as it is to-day under the Local Government Act. It was stated last night that under this bill certain people would have a vote which might materially outweigh the number of voters who were property-owners, and exception was taken to the measure on that account. After all, this is a democratic country. The people of this State have adult franchise not only for local government elections, but also for State and Federal elections. The hon. member to whom I have already referred suggested that this legislation would penalise a number of people who had worked and saved in order to make investments in this city, and who to-day, while the country is at war were being heavily taxed for Commonwealth and State purposes. But the hon. member forgot to say that we propose to give a vote to people who are particularly interested in the welfare of this city and the country, irrespective of whether they own property or not, and who are actively engaged in assisting the nation in this time of war and also offering their lives in defence of their country. Surely there is no reason why the citizens of the city, who have resided in this area for very many years, should not be allowed to vote as to who should

govern the city. No very serious consequences have occurred in this respect so far as the local governing bodies are concerned. They, with the exception of the City Council, have had this franchise for quite a number of years. If the local governing bodies are in difficulties to-day it is due to the fact that they accepted wrong advice from a previous Minister to borrow in excess of their borrowing capacity.

I feel that there is hardly an hon. member in the House who would say that the people of the State are not entitled to record a vote to decide who shall be their representatives in the municipal and shire councils. It is not intended to go outside the body of people who have the right to elect this Parliament and the Commonwealth Parliament. I say to the hon. member who made this objection, that all who reside in the city are interested in its welfare. Even if they are only occupiers they are just as much interested as are the owners of property. Proof of that is seen in what happened at Hyde Park. I can recall when the park was hedged in with iron railings, and the flower-beds had fences around them. It was said that if those railings and fences were taken down the people would destroy the public property there. No such thing has taken place. The people look upon Hyde Park as their own park, and are determined to preserve it. Every citizen who is interested will wish to see the right thing done.

Mr. TREATT: It is almost a residential qualification!

Mr. JAMES MCGIRR: In what way?

Mr. TREATT: In what the Minister is now explaining!

Mr. JAMES MCGIRR: So far as the Sydney Corporation Act is concerned, there will be a residential as against an occupier qualification—a person who pays a rental of £26 a year or £32 a year when he or she has a furnished room. The qualification will be exactly the

same as it is for the shires and municipal council elections. A very careful check will be made of the rolls.

Mr. TREAT: What is the residential qualification?

Mr. JAMES MCGIRR: Whatever names are on that roll as at June 1 in the year of the election will be the names of the persons who will be entitled to vote.

Mr. TREAT: About a seven-months' qualification!

Mr. JAMES MCGIRR: Wards and ridings are very often separated by the division of a street. For instance, in some wards of the city and in some in the suburbs, one side of a street may be in one municipality or in one ward, or half of a street may be in one ward and half in another. The responsibility will be on the person who is to be enrolled rather than on the shoulders of the returning officer. It is proposed that for this election and this election only, each person who claims a vote will be asked to make a statement that he is the person who is shown to be living at a particular address, and that he claims enrolment for that address. For any breach a penalty will be provided. A similar provision exists in the Sydney Corporation Act with regard to those now entitled to the franchise.

We propose to rescind ordinance No. 10 of the Local Government Act, which provides that a shire council shall conduct an election by postal ballot. No polling-booth is required. Many complaints of irregularities have been made in regard to this. It has been left entirely to the shire clerk to see that ballot papers are sent. The voter returns his ballot-paper through the post, and it lies at the post office until the counting takes place. Counting is conducted by the shire clerk. Gulgong and Mittagong are two shire towns with fair-sized populations. People living in these districts have had to make application in writing to vote by post. Ordinance No. 10 gives them that right. The Government could have repealed the ordinance administratively, but it decided that the correct

method was to repeal it by this bill. This puts shire councils on exactly the same footing as municipal councils, or the City Council, and it fills a long-felt want. Attention has been called to the number of irregularities that have occurred. It has been alleged that the number of informal postal votes at shire elections has been five times greater than the number at municipal elections. The hon. member for Parramatta argued last night that this measure would very seriously inconvenience members of the public living in remote areas, and prevent them from recording their vote. The postal system of voting under the Local Government Act is more liberal than it is under the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act. Under the last-mentioned Act, a voter may cast a postal vote if he is not less than ten miles from a polling booth; under the Local Government Act he may cast a postal vote if he is not less than five miles from the polling booth.

Mr. G. C. GOLLAN: In view of petrol rationing, does not the Minister think that would be serious?

Mr. JAMES MCGIRR: If the voter lives more than five miles from the polling booth he would only have to pay 1d. for postage on his ballot paper. It is extraordinary that a municipal voter living in Mittagong or Gulgong, both fairly large towns, by virtue of the fact that he is living in a shire, is unable to record his vote because a polling booth is not open. Therefore, it is incumbent upon people living in those towns to vote by post. By the repeal of this ordinance the shire will now have to do the same as the municipal council and open a polling booth from 8 a.m. until 8 p.m., and these people will be able to vote personally, if they so desire. If they are sick or are distant more than five miles from the polling booth on the day of the election, which will be the first Saturday in December between the hours of 8 a.m. and 8 p.m., they will still be

entitled to a postal vote. This provision will bring the voting at shire elections into conformity with the system for municipal elections.

In future, it is proposed that the Town Clerk of Sydney shall compile the rolls for the city of Sydney, as is the case with municipalities. With regard to the proposed amendments of the Sydney Corporation Act, there is provision for making the days of polling and hours of voting uniform for Sydney City Council and local government elections. Ordinary elections of aldermen of the city of Sydney are at present held on the first Monday in December and between the hours of 8 a.m. and 7.30 p.m. It is proposed to bring the City Council election into conformity with the Local Government Act. The election will take place on a Saturday, and the hours of polling will be between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

A further proposed machinery amendment is one enabling persons entitled to vote whose names have been marked off on a citizens' roll as having voted but who have not in fact voted, to vote upon making a declaration to that effect. This is already provided for in the Local Government Act and the Parliamentary Electorates and Elections Act, but not in the Sydney Corporation Act.

In the past, public servants were disqualified from being elected to the City Council. This difficulty does not exist in the case of election to a municipal or shire council, under the Local Government Act, and it is proposed to remove the disability. In future, public servants will be eligible to hold office as aldermen of the City Council. The measure is a very simple one. It will effect improvements and alterations to the Local Government Act, and I am sure that hon. members will agree that they are urgently necessary in order to render very great assistance to the rate-payers and to effect economies in the municipalities, as well as in the City Corporation. With reference to the matter raised by the hon. member for Nepean, that more than one polling booth should be permitted for wards at

City Council elections, I have clarified the position. In future, the returning officer may provide two or more polling places in each of several wards. The returning officer of the City Corporation at the present time is the Town Clerk of Sydney, or the Deputy Town Clerk, or a citizen who may be appointed. It is proposed to amend the Sydney Corporation Act to permit of a person nominated by the Governor acting as returning officer. I am sure that the simplicity of the measure will appeal to hon. members and that it will have no opposition at all.

Mr. JACKSON (Nepean) [12.5]: I have listened with interest to the second reading speech, which clears up some points that were not made explicit last night. The bill comes somewhat hurriedly before us, having been introduced late last evening, and this morning is the first opportunity I have had of seeing it. I am sure that every hon. member subscribes to the view that if our democratic manner of government is to be preserved every citizen must have the right to exercise his suffrage. If we approach the question in this way temperately and try to protect the ballot we cannot get ourselves into any great difficulty. For many years we have had two extreme views advocated on this subject, and while that is so there can be no settlement. I think that the Minister for Local Government is taking a much better point of view than previous occupants of that office.

I have never favoured the City of Sydney municipal franchise, feeling that residents and citizens who are playing their part worthily in the affairs of the city are deprived of a voice in the election of their local governing body. The present state of affairs in that regard has very little merit, and if the Government feels that there should be a break from it I will not oppose the break. The Minister has described the roll collection by shires and municipalities. I do not protest against that because a reduction in the residential qualifications will not limit the fitness of the men who manage our municipal business. A man who has

resided for eight months in a shire or municipal area ought to be fairly qualified to express an opinion as to who should represent that area. There is an added advantage, too, in having the roll collected beforehand and available, from which to abstract the names of occupiers so that the roll becomes collected automatically. There is a reasonable check on the collection of Parliamentary rolls to-day and if, in addition, there is the supplementary check on those occupying residences in the area, it will not do any injustice. I believe that the widest possible suffrage should apply and that residents of shires should be educated to appreciate the value of the suffrage. No matter what a man's opinion may be on questions politic or municipal, it is better that it be recorded because it assists in establishing a more substantial community and helps in the progress and development of the great country that it is our privilege to occupy.

The Minister also intends to amend the suffrage in the city area, but that is not in quite the same position. I frankly confess that it is better for the community generally to have a system of voting and legislation with as little confusion as possible. As candidates for Parliament, or other public office, we repeatedly find that electors do not know whether we are candidates for the Federal Parliament or the municipal council. That confusion is largely attributable to the various systems of enrolment and recording votes. There are the methods of striking names from the roll, numbers and groupings, preferential and proportional voting, all of which tend to confuse people busily occupied in other directions. In the city, to a greater extent than in the country, the mass of the population are not acquainted with Government activities, and it seems that they are not inclined to ascertain how the system works. I think that there is only one way to amend the franchise and that is to make it as wide as possible, with the provision of adequate checks to ensure that it is not manipulated in any way against the general interests of the community.

Men sitting at a council table constitute a board of directors of a great enterprise, the management of the people's business, and there is no more important undertaking. Provided that the period will not be shorter than eight months, I can take no exception to the proposed amendment. If a person has resided in a city for eight months, one can be reasonably assured that he is prepared to play his part as a member of the community and has no desire to destroy the municipal structure in which he lives. He may be an eminently desirable citizen, possessing an analytical mind that he will apply judiciously when making his choice of candidates.

The proposal to use the State roll for the purpose of compiling municipal rolls should prevent misunderstanding and confusion, subject always to the qualification that, to be eligible to exercise the franchise, a person must have eight months' residence in an area. That amendment should bring about a substantial improvement on the present position. Last night, with an imperfect understanding of the Minister's reference to a residence of one month in the city, which was shared by other hon. members and the press, I was tempted to oppose the proposal. While I should like to see the period of eight months extended, it is, after all, a reasonable term of residence and the provision should not act detrimentally to the proper conduct of the city.

I should like to know what will be the position when the State roll is either very old or very new. Sometimes a roll may be almost two years old, and, when used for municipal purposes on such occasions it might bring about the disfranchisement of a number of persons entitled to vote. Again, the use of an electoral roll issued in June may make the period of eligibility unduly short and deny to many the opportunity to vote. Perhaps the Minister will clear up the uncertainty that now exists in my mind in respect of those points. The bill provides that citizens shall not be under an obligation to seek enrolment. A list of occupiers having been prepared, it will be the duty of the shire

or town clerk to compile the roll of voters. That is a fair thing, as many busy persons have not the time to attend to such details, and the fact that a man has qualified residentially should automatically make him eligible to vote in that municipal area. The Minister seems to have made an advance, and the only apparent injustice is the proposal to conduct the City Council elections on a Saturday.

Mr. SHANNON: What is wrong with that?

Mr. JACKSON: I will tell the hon. member. I know the type of person who records his vote, and I also know the owners and lessees of property in the city. It seems to me that the holding of the elections on a Saturday will prevent a large number of persons from exercising their suffrage. My experience is that it is most difficult to get the vote of an owner or lessee recorded. The city of Sydney has been built up through investment in real estate by men who have acquired wealth but who do not dwell within the city boundaries. Most of them do not live in the city, and probably do not visit it in the day time. Many of them have calls at the week-end, and it seems that a goodly number will be denied the opportunity of recording their votes unless they make a sacrifice that they do not to-day. Nevertheless, any person who owns a substantial asset in the city should once in three years arrange to record his vote.

Mr. SHANNON: Under ordinance No. 9 a person who on polling day is not within a distance of five miles from the polling-booth may vote!

Mr. JACKSON: Yes, but the circumstances often prevent it. If I owned property in the city, I should make it my No. 1 business to record my vote on polling day. That is the right and proper thing to do. But, of course, I cannot understand the working of other people's minds, and I am not prepared to do anything that would make it more difficult for them to record their votes. Frankly, I do not know why, in an area like the city of Sydney, it will convenience the greatest number to record their votes

on a Saturday. The people of this great city largely leave it on a Saturday to attend sporting functions, and possibly they find themselves in a position where it would not be convenient to return to the polling booth. Moreover, a large proportion of the residential section of city people go away for the week-end. The Government's proposal will not be so convenient to them. I have heard members of the Labour party in the City Council urge that the votes should be recorded on a Saturday, believing that it would provide greater opportunity for many persons to vote, but, as an active campaigner over many years, I have formed no such opinion.

When all is said and done, the property owners of this city are very numerous, but the large buildings in it are owned by the few while most of the smaller buildings are owned by people of ordinary means. Moreover, they are heavily mortgaged, and the owners have only a small financial interest in them at the finish. My public duty has brought me into contact with many of them. I know that many people who appear to own property own only the equity, and a weak equity at that. Most of them do not reside in the buildings, but let them. I trust that the Minister will consider my suggestions. I should like to see the votes taken in every part of the State at one time. But the city of Sydney area is entirely different from other areas. Anyone who walks the streets and lanes of this city and sees where the people live, must realise how different the conditions are from those in the smaller towns. The conditions here are different from those at Newcastle, because the type of building in that city cannot be compared with the type of building in Sydney. The development of cities, while derided to some extent, is necessary and has been so down through the ages. Cities have always played the greatest part in the development of the people, and there is no evidence that that will ever be any different. In the interests of the people we should watch all those things that go to make or mar the city. The pace at which we move is difficult to keep

up, and after my long experience in the commercial world, I find that the pressure is heavier. I do not mean that, personally, I feel less fit, for younger persons find the pressure equally stern and difficult. We have to depend on modern commercial life. We may sneer quietly at the obtaining of wealth from this much-despised commerce, but it is the force which drives the world, and which gives us our pains and pleasures in the course of our national development. If we keep on building up added difficulties for each and every one of us, I say frankly that there will not be enough captains of finance within our land to carry the burden. I know that the Minister will do the right thing, and that the Government wishes to meet the aspirations of the people who returned it with such a large majority, but I counsel a little caution in a matter of this description. Altogether I regard this legislation generally as an advance. I have never subscribed to the view that we should not endeavour to overcome difficulties that prevent our citizens from recording their votes, and I think that, with some amendments in Committee, the bill might well be said to represent an advance on existing legislation.

Mr. WEAVER (Neutral Bay) [12.32]: I am given to understand that at municipal elections it frequently happens that only about thirty per cent. of property owners record their votes, and that the others refrain from voting because, since the election is held on a Saturday, they prefer to engage in their usual avenue of sport, such as bowls, golf, tennis, etc. I am entirely in accord with the Minister in that regard, and any property owner who refuses to attend the polling booth merely because it would interfere with his Saturday afternoon's sport does not deserve a vote. Hon. members on this side of the House are not here to oppose legislation just because it has been introduced by a Labour Government, and I consider that the Minister, in introducing this legislation, has made a forward movement. I agree with the proposed

amendment to allow public servants to be elected to the City Council in the same way as they are elected to municipal councils. There should be no embargo placed upon them merely because they live within the city of Sydney. I also agree that the franchise should be extended to give persons who are on the State electoral roll the right to vote at municipal elections.

Mr. G. C. GOLLAN (Parramatta) [12.36]: I object to this rush legislation. The supporters of the Government when in Opposition frequently took the then Government to task for trying to rush legislation through the House, but now it is continuing a practice that it previously condemned in no uncertain terms. The bill contains a number of amendments that are worthy of commendation. So far as the shires are concerned, there are one or two matters about which we should be very careful. I am not greatly concerned about Sydney proper, but I certainly think that every facility should be given to people who live in our outflung shires to record their votes, and any proposal to take away their rights and privileges will meet with my strongest opposition. The hon. member for Nepean touched on the question of the basing of the roll on a period of, say, eighteen months or two years. I have it on good authority that in one eastern suburb during a recent election, from the time of compiling the roll to the actual time of election, it was found that 2,000 names had been erased from the roll. Since the ordinary parliamentary electorate has about 20,000 voters, it is, therefore, evident that over the course of a few months, about 10 per cent. of the electors changed their place of residence.

Mr. SHANNON: That was due to the movement of people from the seaside during the winter!

Mr. G. C. GOLLAN: Our municipal and electoral rolls should be as pure, faithful and permanent as it is possible

to make them. I should like the Minister to consider in Committee whether it is not possible to frame some amendment to overcome that difficulty.

Mr. SHANNON: I invite the hon. member to read Schedule 1 of the bill!

Mr. CARLTON: Every returning officer has an up-to-date key roll, copies of which could, if required, be obtained for the purposes of a municipal election!

Mr. G. C. GOLLAN: If the Minister would make some provision of that kind I should offer no objection. There is a difference between the City of Sydney and the municipalities and shires throughout the State. So far as the city of Sydney is concerned, there are very few citizens on the streets on a Saturday afternoon. It seems to me that instead of there being an increase in the number of voters there will be a decrease. I agree that it is the sincere intention of the Minister that a true reflection of the wishes of the people should be obtained. I know what happens in the municipalities. Many people participate in sport on Saturday and will not bother to vote at the municipal elections. I disagree with the hon. member for Neutral Bay, and I consider that the maximum opportunity should be given to these people to record their vote. I am sorry to say that in these matters politics intrude. Less than 30 per cent. of those on the roll record their votes. I agree with the hon. member for Neutral Bay that it does not stand to the credit of those people who do not exercise their vote. So far as the city is concerned, there should be an extension of the present hour. Sufficient time should be given to everyone entitled to vote to exercise that vote whether he be a working man or one in more affluent circumstances. Hon. members should have had more time to peruse the bill.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill read a second time.

IN COMMITTEE.

Clause 3 (Day of election).

Mr. SHANNON (Phillip) [12.45]: The hon. member for Parramatta has referred to the small number of people who vote at local government elections. That is a serious problem so far as the city of Sydney is concerned. Polling takes place in the city of Sydney on a Monday. In my opinion, Saturday is the better day. The Federal, State, municipal and shire elections are held on Saturday. Many men do not have to work on Saturday and, perhaps, they participate in or witness some sport, but they could easily make arrangements to exercise their vote on the way to the sport or from it. I cannot see why there should be any difference in the city of Sydney. The hon. member for Nepean referred to owners of property who live outside the city and said that every provision should be made for them to vote. Very few owners of city property are residing within five miles of the city. They do not live in industrial suburbs such as Redfern or Newtown. I know from experience that the association to which the hon. member for Nepean belonged when he was an alderman of the City Council takes particular care to see that these people make application for a postal vote. Take the case of Grace Bros. One of their buildings is in the city area, and one just outside it. Although there was a polling booth at St. Benedict's, which is three minutes walk from the store, the Act, as amended by the last Government, permitted an application for a postal vote. Those people who live outside the five-mile radius cannot blame the Labour party for that. It was the last Government that introduced an amendment which gave a postal vote only to owners of property who lived outside the five-mile radius. Very few of them live within a radius of five miles of the city of Sydney and no great hardship would be entailed in travelling by tram to record a vote. For the sake of uniformity,

Saturday should be polling day in Sydney, and I commend the Minister for inserting such a provision in the bill.

Clause agreed to.

Schedule I.

Mr. SHANNON (Phillip) [12.50]: I think this schedule will meet the objection of the hon. member for Parramatta. There are two schedules, one relating to the Sydney Corporation Act and the other to the Local Government Act. Paragraph (2) of the first schedule reads:

(2) My place of living as stated in such electoral roll is within _____ ward of the city;

Paragraph (3) reads:

(3) I continue to reside at the said place of living;

Postal voters must sign that declaration. The hon. member for Parramatta pointed out that in a seaside suburb the names of 2,000 people had been removed from the roll by the electoral registrar. He was trying to make out that their names were on the roll at a certain date. If a person signs that declaration after he has changed his place of residence, he will be making a false statement.

Schedule agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment; report adopted.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will now leave the chair until five minutes past three, when the House will resume, and then proceed to Government House, there to present the Address in Reply to the Opening Speech of his Excellency the Governor.

[Mr. Speaker left the chair at 12.54 p.m. The House resumed at 3.5 p.m.]

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

GOVERNOR'S OPENING SPEECH.

Mr. JACKETT: I wish to make a personal explanation. This morning the hon. member for Phillip asked a question respecting some recent remarks made by me on the subject of the Governor's Opening Speech. Those remarks appear on page 20 of *Hansard* and I have read them carefully. It was not

my intention to be offensive, but if my reference is offensive to the Governor or to the Government I withdraw it.

PRESENTATION OF ADDRESS IN REPLY.

The House proceeded to State Government House, there to present to his Excellency the Address in Reply to the Governor's Opening Speech.

The House having returned,

Mr. SPEAKER reported that the Address in Reply to the Governor's Opening Speech had been presented, and that his Excellency had been pleased to make thereto the following answer:—

Government House,
Sydney.

The Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of New South Wales,—

I thank you most sincerely for the Address which you have just presented and for your expressions of loyalty and attachment to the Throne and Person of His Most Gracious Majesty King George the Sixth.

I am glad to receive your assurance that earnest consideration will be given to the measures to be submitted to you, and that the necessary provision for the Public Service will be made in due course.

I have every confidence that, under the guidance of Divine Providence, your patriotic and zealous labours will conduce to the general welfare and happiness of all sections of the community.

WAKEHURST,
Governor.

7th August, 1941.

WESTERN LANDS (AMENDMENT) BILL.

Mr. TULLY (Goulburn), Minister for Lands [4.39]: I move:

That leave be given to bring in a bill to make further provision for the withdrawal of lands held under lease and for the resumption of certain lands in the Western Division; to impose certain restrictions on dealings with and transactions affecting leases in perpetuity; to validate certain matters; for these and other purposes to amend the Western Lands Act of 1901, as amended by subsequent Acts; and for purposes connected therewith.

In introducing this bill I should like to remind hon. members of the text of the Premier's rural policy speech, delivered at West Wyalong on the 21st

April last, in so far as it relates to the settlement of Crown land in the Western Division. The Premier on that occasion said:

(1) . . . A vigorous and drastic policy is urgently necessary. Small portions of most of the large holdings are noted for withdrawal (under the Buttenshaw Act, 1934) between 1943 and 1948. About 5,000,000 acres are in question in this regard.

Labour proposes to introduce legislation to withdraw all these areas at once.

Such action will be in accordance with the intentions we expressed in 1934, when opposing the Buttenshaw Act, which granted further long extensions to big landholders.

(2) We also intend to resume the best of the large holdings the leases of which have only a short period to run.

The object of the bill I am now introducing is to give effect to the Government's policy as expressed by the Premier. Provision is made for the immediate withdrawal by the Minister of those areas at present noted for withdrawal from large holdings in 1943 and 1948 under the Western Lands Amendment Act, 1934. The Western Lands Act contains adequate provision at present for the resumption of any large holding in the Western Division. That provision was introduced by a Labour Government in 1927. Consequently there is no occasion to introduce new resumption provisions into the Act, although I have taken this opportunity of including in the bill certain machinery amendments to the present resumption section so as to facilitate resumption operations when the Government is ready to commence that work. The land to be resumed under this bill will be placed in the hands of the Crown, will be disposed of in a manner calculated to serve the public interest in the best possible way; and I have been mindful of the necessity to ensure that new allotments of this land shall never again be aggregated into large holdings. I have ample power under the existing law to regulate this position. Leases granted years ago and which have been extended to leases in perpetuity are in a different category. Many of them are not subject to Ministerial control as regards transfer. I have included an amendment in

the bill designed to place under the control of the Minister the transfer of all leases extended as leases in perpetuity. There are some other amendments of a more or less machinery character. When moving the second reading I will give the House a full statement on its bill and on Western Division matters generally.

Mr. MAIR (Albury) [4.44]: I am at a loss to make any comment, because I am not aware of the proposals of the Minister. My Whip was informed that the House would adjourn on its return from Government House, and many country members vitally interested in this matter have already left the Chamber. I regret that the Premier has found it necessary to continue the debate.

Mr. McKELL: I shall be very happy to give the leader of the Opposition the adjournment of the debate!

Mr. MAIR: I am grateful to the Premier. Although I am not vitally interested from a United Australia party point of view, I am sure that country members who have not had the opportunity of hearing the Minister would like to read his first-reading speech before making any comment.

Debate adjourned.

SOUTH-WEST TABLELANDS WATER SUPPLY ADMINISTRATION BILL.

Mr. J. J. CAHILL (Arncliffe), Minister for Public Works [4.45]: I move:

That leave be given to bring in a bill to provide for the control and administration of certain works of water supply for the South-west Tablelands District; to validate certain contracts; to amend the Local Government Act, 1919, and certain other Acts; and for purposes connected therewith.

Under the authority of the South-west Tablelands Water Supply Act, 1924, a comprehensive scheme of works was carried out by the Minister for Public Works for the benefit of towns in the South-west Tablelands district, including Cootamundra, Temora, Murrumburrah, Young, Wyalong, West Wyalong and Barmedman. Works have

recently been completed for Stocking-bingal also, and the railways are supplied in addition. Arrangements were concluded with the municipal and shire councils concerned, covering the supply of water and other relevant matters, and were embodied in agreements with the Minister.

The main objects of the bill are to define the powers of the Administrator, who is to be the permanent head of the Public Works Department, and of the various councils, to declare the capital debt of the undertaking, and to make provision for the allocation of revenue, to validate the agreements already entered into by the Minister with councils and private consumers, and to extinguish the capital debts of the Cootamundra and Temora Municipal Councils in respect of water supply works that were constructed prior to the 1924 Act abovementioned, and which have been taken over as part of the scheme. The measure is principally of a machinery character, and I think that it will meet with the agreement of hon. members on both sides of the House.

Mr. MAIR (Albury) [4.48]: I presume that this legislation is merely carrying on something that was prepared, and approximately agreed to, when the previous Government was in power, and is, therefore, providing the necessary machinery for the required purpose. There is one point on which I shall comment at the second reading stage. The Minister mentioned something about extinguishing the accumulated debt of certain local bodies. That matter will need to be closely watched, because the Minister, in common with hon. members who were in the Chamber during the term of the previous Parliament, will realise that I personally took strong exception to re-financing. I had good reason for doing so, not only because it encourages local government bodies to borrow something that they have little chance of repaying, and also unduly burdens ratepayers, but also because it is doubtful whether such methods are constitutional.

Mr. J. J. CAHILL: It was a principle that was encouraged by certain members of the previous Government.

Mr. MAIR: But not by me personally, as I have a vivid recollection of what took place in connection with other transactions. Sometimes it pays to forget what other people believe. I remind the Minister that the constitutionality of re-financing and cancellation of prior debts is in question. Apart from such comment and a warning as to the position that might arise, I welcome the introduction of the measure.

Question resolved in the affirmative.

Bill presented and read a first time.

House adjourned at 4.50 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Tuesday, 12 August, 1941.

Questions without Notice—Special Adjournment—
Local Government (Electoral Provisions) Bill—
Western Lands (Amendment) Bill—Factories
and Shops (Amendment) Bill (second reading)
—Coal Mines Regulation (Further Amendment)
Bill (second reading).

Mr. SPEAKER took the chair.

The opening Prayer was read.

QUESTIONS WITHOUT NOTICE.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION: TAXATION.

Mr. DAVIDSON: Will the Premier and Colonial Treasurer say whether it is a fact that persons in receipt of compensation under the Workmen's Compensation (Broken Hill) Act, and other Acts, pay income tax on the amounts received? If this is a fact, will the Premier amend the Income Tax Act for the purpose of exempting these men from payment of taxation?

Mr. McKELL: I am not aware of the matter referred to by the hon. member, but I will have inquiry made and see what can be done about it.