

The Hon. J. H. DISNEY.—My opinion is that both State Houses should be abolished, and that there should be an amalgamation of some of the municipalities. The burden on the taxpayers is becoming too great. No one can deny that the Labour party has been consistent on the question of abolition of the Legislative Council. During the last Council election the Labour party advocated reform of this House, with the eventual objective of abolition. I hope the Bill is passed.

The Hon. J. A. KENNEDY (*Higinbotham Province*).—It is somewhat of an ordeal for me to speak on a subject which, we are informed, is the most important one which has come before the House in the last 30 years. I am fortunate, perhaps, in that no aspersion can be cast against my past conduct in this House, and therefore I can speak on this subject almost as the man in the street. We have heard a lot about the result of the recent triennial election being a victory for reform of the Legislative Council. I do not know whether it was a victory for reform in my province; people seemed to vote for me for many different reasons. If my election were to be taken as a criterion for a general election, I am afraid that it would be difficult to obtain a decision from the electors on a major issue, such as reform of this House. Perhaps many people voted for me because my name was Kennedy, and many people voted against me because Kennedy was my name. Some voted for me because I used to play football, and others because I played cricket. I am certain that reform of the Council was not a vital issue to my supporters. Many may have considered that I was the lesser of two evils, but they did not support me because I advocated any reform of this House. I stated emphatically in my speeches that I was a strong supporter of the bicameral system, and was opposed to any attempt to abolish the Legislative Council or interfere with it as an efficient House of review.

I take great pride in the achievement of our parliamentary system in the State of Victoria, which, although a small State, occupies a high position in Australia. Its primary industries have been well developed,

its secondary industries are expanding, and have been expanding for many years, and it is the financial centre of Australia. Queensland has been cited as an example of the success of the unicameral system. It seems to me that Queensland is in a peculiarly happy position. The people of Victoria and New South Wales, who comprise about two-thirds of the population of the Commonwealth, are heavily taxed to maintain the Queensland sugar industry. A large amount of capital from other States has been invested in Queensland, and a considerable amount of the taxation revenue of Queensland is received from people in the other States. That is a happy position for the people of Queensland. Victoria is the lowest-taxed State in the Commonwealth, the company standard rate being 1s. 9d., compared with a maximum rate of 5s. 3d. in Queensland. I think the maximum rate of probate duty in Victoria is 10 per cent., but in Queensland the rate rises to 30 per cent. Victoria, because of freedom from harassing restrictions and interference with trade, has shown enormous development. I believe that the Legislative Council has contributed materially to the prosperous condition of Victoria.

I cannot say whether the Legislative Council has been an obstructive House. It has probably asked the other House to pause a little on occasions, and I believe that is a wise policy. I claim that the franchise for elections of this House is a good one. I call it, not the householder's franchise, but the head of the household's franchise. The head of the household is faced with all sorts of worrying problems. He has not much income, and he has to rear and educate a family, and meet all sorts of expenses. Most of these householders are paying off a home, and the annual value of their homes is not much more than £10 or £20. How, then, can the franchise be called a property franchise? Most of the householders have no vested interests. They are cautious people, who, in their own homes, find it necessary to curb the expensive fancies of the younger generation. The head of the household is the type of elector who elects the members of this House, and he wants a House which will protect him against fancy legislation.

There are 30,000 electors in my province, and I take considerable pride in it. I would say the value of the rent paid by householders throughout the whole province would not exceed on an average £50 per annum, or £1 per week. Surely, in those circumstances, this House cannot be claimed to represent vested interests. I am not greatly afraid of a democratic expression of opinion. I have rather mixed feelings with respect to the Bill. I desire to retain this Chamber as an effective House of review, and I am not afraid of the voice of the people. In this world of change, where dictatorships and other forms of government are being established, we should have faith in our democracy. We owe our liberty of speech and thought, our free education system, and our freedom of worship to democracy, and I do not like to hear of the terrible things that it is said will happen if we refer questions to the people. I feel that some means should be evolved whereby the constitution of the two Houses would not be subject to any chance vote of the people. The representation of electors in another place at present is very uneven, 26 members being returned by about 650,000 electors, and 36 by about 390,000 electors. Obviously any election fought on that basis would not mean that we should thereby get the effective voice of the people. For that reason, I think the referendum is the more democratic method, because it allows for one vote one value. The Constitution is a vital factor in the government of the country, and we should give the matter very careful consideration before altering it. I feel therefore that an amendment should be submitted to provide that constitutional questions should not be subject to the same provisions as ordinary Bills which come before the House from time to time.

I propose to support the second reading of the Bill. I have no past history to quote as to combats that have taken place between the Houses or as to statements made by various honorable members from time to time. As a new member of the House, I have no objection to the proposed reduction in the financial qualification required of a candidate for election to this House. I see no reason why the deposit should not also be reduced. I

shall not be dogmatic on the question of plural voting, but I believe that if we stick to the principle of a vote for the head of the household we shall make this a very important House. I see no reason why a man who owns a block of land worth £10 per annum in each of ten metropolitan constituencies should have ten votes at Legislative Council elections, while another man who has one property worth £100,000 in the country should have only one vote. As regards the age qualification for candidates, I would say that if a man is qualified to vote he should also be qualified to stand for election. It is not likely that men of 21 years of age will seek election. I believe the size of the electorate will be the biggest deterrent against people submitting themselves for election to this House. During the recent election campaign, I found the size of the electorate represented a big enough problem for any man to tackle, and I am convinced that young people will not offer themselves, but we should eliminate those provisions that are the result of views held in bygone ages. For instance, a clergyman is not eligible to stand for election to the Legislative Council. I do not know that any clergyman would care to do so, but I see no reason for the retention of such a provision in the Constitution. I listened with a considerable amount of interest and pleasure to Mr. Eager's speech, and learned a great deal from the remarks of all the honorable members who spoke to-night. We are considering a most important question, and I hope that whatever is achieved it will make for the existence of happy relations between the two Houses. Both Chambers are working for the betterment of the community and the building up of the State, and it should be our aim to do whatever we can to further those ends.

On the motion of the Hon. H. H. OLNEY (*Melbourne North Province*) the debate was adjourned until next day.

CONSOLIDATED REVENUE BILL (No. 2).

Sir JOHN HARRIS (Minister of Public Instruction).—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The Supplementary Estimates on account of the financial year 1936-37 are submitted for the approval of honorable