

and in 1922 the decrease was still more marked, the respective percentages for that year being 57.95 and 59.36, or very little more than those for 1901. Compulsory voting was introduced prior to the election in 1925, and an exceedingly heavy vote (over 91 per cent.) was cast in that year. This high percentage has been exceeded appreciably at subsequent elections, increasing in 1943 to 96.3 per cent. for both Houses. In the 1946 election it dropped to 94.0 per cent.

For the first time two women were elected to the Commonwealth Parliament in 1943, one to the Senate and the other to the House of Representatives. A further woman was elected to the Senate in 1946.

Under the Commonwealth Electoral (War-time) Act 1940 the franchise was extended to adult members of the forces who were or had been on active service outside Australia. Persons thus benefited comprised those then serving outside Australia, and those who had returned but were not enrolled. An amending Act of 1943 removed the limitation "outside Australia" from the general active service requirement, but extended the franchise to members of the forces under 21 who were serving or had served outside Australia, and to discharged persons not enrolled including those under 21 with service outside Australia. A 1944 amendment permitted certain accredited non-combatant persons to vote as members of the forces, but limited the application of the Act to British subjects.

Provision for voting in State elections also by service personnel was made in the several States.

4. **Commonwealth Referenda.**—(i) *General.* According to Section 128 of the Constitution, any proposed law for the alteration of the Constitution must, in addition to being passed by an absolute majority of each House of Parliament, be submitted to a referendum of the electors in each State, and must further be approved by a majority of the States and of the electors who voted, before it can be presented for Royal assent. So far twenty-two proposals have been submitted to referenda and the consent of the electors has been received in four cases only, the first in relation to the election of Senators in 1906, the second and third in respect of State Debts—one in 1910 and the other in 1928—and the fourth in respect of Social Services in 1946. Details of the various referenda and the voting thereon were given in previous issues of the Official Year Book (*see* No. 18, p. 87, No. 31, p. 67, No. 35, pp. 60 and 961 and No. 36, p. 61).

(ii) *Post-war Reconstruction and Democratic Rights Referendum, 1944.* A Convention of representatives of Commonwealth and States Parliaments to consider the reference of powers by the States to the Commonwealth met at Canberra from 24th November to 2nd December, 1942 and adopted a resolution that adequate powers to make laws in relation to post-war reconstruction should be referred by the States to the Commonwealth for a period ending at the expiration of five years after the war, and finally approved of a draft bill (*see* page 62 of the Official Year Book No. 35 for full text) which was passed in the agreed form in only two States, viz. :—New South Wales and Queensland.

Following this failure to obtain the approval of all State Parliaments to the draft Bill agreed to at the Canberra Convention, the Commonwealth Government decided to submit the question of transfer of powers to a Referendum in accordance with section 128 of the Commonwealth Constitution (*see supra*, p. 25) and the bill for this purpose—the full text of which may be found on pages 64 to 66 of Official Year Book No. 35—was passed by an absolute majority of the members of both Houses of Parliament and submitted to the people at a Referendum on 19th August, 1944. Only two States—South Australia and Western Australia—were in favour of the proposed alteration.

(iii) *Social Services, Organized Marketing of Primary Products and Industrial Employment Referendum, 1946.* On 19th November, 1945, the High Court of Australia, in deciding an action brought by the Attorney-General of Victoria against the Commonwealth, declared that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Act 1944–1945 was *ultra vires* and void. This Act was designed to make available to all residents of the Commonwealth pharmaceutical benefits, without payment of price, after obtaining prescriptions from doctors. Following the decision of the High Court, the Commonwealth Cabinet sought the opinion of eminent constitutional lawyers regarding the validity, which now appeared

doubtful, of a number of Commonwealth acts relating to social services. Consideration of the opinions obtained convinced the Government of the necessity for an amendment to the Constitution, in order to authorize the continuance of acts providing existing benefits in the nature of social services and to authorize the obtaining of similar benefits in the future. Accordingly, a bill was introduced on 26th March, 1946, to alter the Constitution by empowering the Parliament to make laws for the provision of maternity allowances, widows' pensions, child endowment, unemployment, sickness and hospital benefits, medical and dental services, benefits to students and family allowances. At the same time bills were introduced to empower Parliament to legislate for the organized marketing of primary products, unrestricted by section ninety-two (freedom of interstate trade) of the Constitution, and to legislate with respect to terms and conditions of employment in industry. During the war the organization of the marketing of primary produce had been handled, under Defence powers, by the Commonwealth Government, and it was desired to extend this practice to peace-time. The intention of the industrial employment bill was to enable the Parliament to regulate, either directly or indirectly, the terms and conditions of employment in industry on a nation-wide basis. Such powers were already possessed by the respective State Governments. After the three bills had passed the two Houses of Parliament in the required manner, they were submitted to the electors of the Commonwealth at a referendum conducted concurrently with the general election on 28th September, 1946. The majority of voters in the Commonwealth were in favour of the proposed amendments, but for one only—social services—was the other necessary condition, a majority in most States, fulfilled. Detailed results of the voting on each proposal are shown in the table below :—

SOCIAL SERVICES, ORGANIZED MARKETING OF PRIMARY PRODUCTS AND INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT REFERENDUM, 28th SEPTEMBER, 1946.

State.	Social Services.			Organized Marketing of Primary Products.			Industrial Employment.			Total.
	Yes.	No.	In-formal.	Yes.	No.	In-formal.	Yes.	No.	In-formal.	
N.S. Wales ..	897,887	764,723	94,540	855,23	794,852	107,065	833,822	778,280	145,048	1,777,150
Victoria ..	671,967	528,452	60,955	624,34	567,860	69,171	609,355	560,773	91,246	1,261,374
Queensland ..	299,205	284,465	28,500	251,67	323,678	36,820	243,242	316,970	51,958	612,170
S. Australia ..	197,395	184,172	17,731	183,67	193,201	22,426	179,153	192,516	27,632	399,301
W. Australia ..	164,017	99,412	15,037	145,781	113,562	19,723	142,181	112,881	23,999	279,066
Tasmania ..	67,463	65,924	11,493	55,561	75,018	14,301	52,517	74,440	17,923	144,880
Total ..	2,297,934	1,927,148	228,859	2,116,264	2,068,171	269,506	2,060,271	1,935,860	357,806	4,453,941
Percentage (a)	54.39	45.61	..	50.56	49.44	..	50.31	49.70	..	100.0

(a) Excludes informal votes.

Consequent on obtaining the approval of the electors, the Constitution Alteration (Social Services) Act 1946 was assented to on 19th December, 1946. Section fifty-one (powers of the Parliament) of the Constitution is thereby altered by the insertion, after paragraph (xxiii), invalid and old-age pensions, of the following paragraph :—

“(xxiiia) The provision of maternity allowances, widows' pensions, child endowment, unemployment, pharmaceutical, sickness and hospital benefits, medical and dental services (but not so as to authorize any form of civil conscription), benefits to students and family allowances.”

5. **Parliamentary Proceedings Broadcasting Act 1946.**—On 5th July, 1946, an Act to provide for the broadcasting, by the Australian Broadcasting Commission, of the proceedings of the Senate or of the House of Representatives was assented to. The Act provides also for the appointment of a Joint Committee on the Broadcasting of Parliamentary Proceedings, to determine the days and periods of broadcasting in accordance with general principles previously arrived at, and to determine the conditions governing the re-broadcasting of proceedings. The first broadcast of proceedings took place on 10th July, 1946, the subject of debate being the second reading of the Overseas Telecommunications Bill.