

Hon. A. Thomson: I do not think such an individual can be produced.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: Evidence could be taken on that matter. I am sure there were not very many people who voted two or three times at the last election.

Hon. E. M. Heenan: There were quite a lot.

Hon. G. B. WOOD: The Select Committee could investigate the position and ascertain whether plural voting is really worth while. I think the elector who has the right to vote in more than one province should be given the choice of where he would vote. A pastoralist with a station in the North may be residing in Perth. He should be given the choice of voting either for the North Province or for the Metropolitan Province.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Should he not be entitled to vote in the province where he has large interests, even if he does live in Perth?

Hon. G. B. WOOD: He should be given the choice of where he would vote, either here or for the North Province. Personally, I would always prefer to cast my vote where my main business operations were centred. That is a matter that could be gone into by the Select Committee. I certainly hope the House will agree to the appointment of the Select Committee.

On motion by Hon. W. J. Mann, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 17th October.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 5.28 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Wednesday, 11th October, 1944.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS (2).

VERMIN.

At to Destroying Emu Beaks.

Mr. KELLY asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is it a fact that road boards have to forward the beaks or beak of emus destroyed to the Vermin Department before a rebate is made?

(2) Would it not be more practicable and reduce costs if road boards were authorised to destroy emu beaks after inspection and in the presence of the chairman and secretary or police officer?

(3) Is he aware that beaks kept for several days create considerable stench and become very unpleasant to handle?

(4) Have specific instructions as to the method of handling emu beaks been issued to road boards and, if so, what conditions have been imposed?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Experience in handling vermin for bonus payment, both in Western Australia and the Eastern States, has proved this to be unsatisfactory.

(3) No.

(4) Instructions have been prepared for issue immediately following gazettal of the proclamation amending the Third Schedule to the Vermin Act.

WOOL.

As to Individual Yields and Market Requirements.

Mr. TELFER asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is it a fact that under the National Security Regulations, farmers are not permitted to receive details of their yield, etc., from their wool?

(2) If so, would the department make representations to the required authority to have these details made available?

(3) Does he not consider that some still further effort should be made for the scientific investigation of the potentialities of wool, and that greater advice should be given to the farmer on the type of wool required by the manufacturer, so that our farmers and graziers may be kept well advised of market requirements?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Yes.

(3) Investigations into the potentialities of wool are taking place in many parts of the world, including Australia. Our wool-growers are kept fully informed of market requirements by press articles, by brokers, and by the State Sheep and Wool Adviser.

BILLS (3)—FIRST READING.

1, Builders' Registration Act Amendment. Introduced by the Minister for Works.

2, Transfer of Land Act Amendment. Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

3, Church of England Diocesan Trustees (Special Fund).

Introduced by Mr. Needham.

BILL—NATIVES (CITIZENSHIP RIGHTS).

Report of Committee adopted.

MOTION—OLD AGE AND INVALID PENSIONERS.

As to Earnings and Basic Wage Equivalent.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [4.37]: I move—

That as this House approves of a living wage for all citizens and realises that, in many

cases, the income of pensioners does not allow for a decent standard of living, it urges the Commonwealth Government to take steps to raise the rate of pensions to those who are aged and infirm, and to allow those pensioners able to work to earn an income, including the pension, equivalent to the basic wage.

I hardly think there is any necessity for me to spend more than a couple of minutes in informing members as to what the motion is about. When I first indicated in the House my intention to move it, the member for South Fremantle said it was 20 years behind the times.

Mr. Fox: Of course it is! Your Party was in power in the Commonwealth Parliament for 27 years and never thought of it. This is only window-dressing on your part!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: That is not so.

Mr. Needham: In any case, it is merely a pious resolution.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I agree that our party was in power for some years and might have introduced the legislation years ago. That applies also to the hon. member's party. I agree that the legislation is behind the times. On the other hand, the member for South Fremantle might himself have introduced the legislation long ago—had he been so very much concerned about the subject.

Mr. Fox: I am a long way more concerned than you are.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The member for South Fremantle is, as the Minister for Mines said the other night, being just silly.

The Minister for Mines: I did not say he was silly!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I feel that the time is coming when all the people of Western Australia should have the right to a living wage, and I am sure the member for South Fremantle agrees with that.

Mr. Fox: I am more sincere about it than you are.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Goodness me, the member for South Fremantle seems to know more about me than I know myself!

The Minister for Mines: I always suspected that!

Mr. Fox: I think I should ask for a withdrawal of that statement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I must ask members to keep order.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: In all sincerity I believe there is not a member of this

Chamber who does not believe that every person in the State should enjoy a decent living. We find that many pensioners have not got that living. It is useless for the member for South Fremantle, and others who know exactly what I mean, to interrupt. I am going to use my voice until it gives out. The member for South Fremantle has to realise, and we all have to realise, that in this State today there are people who have not got a decent living at all. I want to give some concrete examples of that, this being the only way to illustrate the necessity for what the motion proposes. Let me give the example of a woman who has perhaps a widow's pension and also has three children. She is allowed 25s. a week, and I admit that she has the cost of living percentage added, for herself, and 5s. for the first child. If she has three children, she is allowed child endowment of 5s. per week for the second and the third child. That means that she has an income of £2 per week for herself and three children. Assuming that the children are all young, then she is allowed to earn 12s. 6d. per week. That means a total weekly income of £2 12s. 6d. I do not know about the districts of other members, but in my district it is difficult to get a house under 15s. or perhaps £1 per week rent. The woman I have in mind has to pay a weekly rent of 17s. 6d.; so, if her income is only £2 a week it is impossible for her to provide food and shelter for that number.

Mr. Cross: You are shedding crocodile's tears!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I give that as a concrete example of the impossibility of a woman who has a pension, three children and child endowment to live, and for her children to live. Now I will take invalid pensioners. Perhaps the invalid pensioner receives the full amount of pension, 25s. per week plus cost-of-living allowance. Very often an invalid pensioner can do something that will increase his income, although he cannot work fully. It is impossible for any invalid pensioner to live on the pension he receives. Take the case of a man or a woman who has to remain seated all day, being unable to walk although he or she may be able to do something. Immediately such a pensioner can do anything at all, the amount of the resulting money is deducted from the amount of the pension. The consequence is that these people cannot live.

That is the second example. Older people, to give a third example, cannot possibly live on their pensions. Today we have not houses or rooms for them, and they cannot possibly pay 17s. 6d. or £1 a week out of their small pensions to obtain accommodation.

I think that everything the motion proposes ought to have been introduced long ago. I feel that in proposing those things I am doing no wrong. I consider that I am doing right, and I believe that the member for South Fremantle will agree that I am doing right. I feel quite sure that members will support the motion. Can any of us realise how difficult it is to live on £1 5s. per week? Yet these old-age pensioners have to do it. There can be no question about support for this motion. I promised one or two members who have other questions to bring forward that I would occupy only two or three minutes of the time of the House. I presume that I shall have the right of reply, and I would like to know what other members feel about the proposal. Then, when replying, I can perhaps put up considerations that they have not thought of.

The Minister for Works: This is the time to put up your case.

Mr. North: Put up your case now.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The case is there, on the notice paper, if members can read English. I can do no more than put it in plain English, and that is what I have done. I have stated my case. If any members of this Chamber have not the brains or education or intelligence to know what is in the motion, I can only say, "God help them; they should not be here."

MR. NORTH (Claremont): I support the motion. I am sorry to say that this discussion is not likely to attract the attention of many readers of the newspapers. On that point I have tested my electors, and have found that they do not read the news of which we think so much as a means of publicity. The members of the Commonwealth Ministry and the supporters of that Ministry will have their hands strengthened by the carrying of the motion if they intend to propose improved social legislation. The best way of inducing them to take that course is for the State Parliaments on all these big questions to come forward and show where they stand on them. If the Commonwealth Government today expressed any intention

to introduce improved social legislation, its members would lay themselves open to the usual cheap sneers that come from a section of the community. On the other hand, if the various State Parliaments show themselves willing to take some steps like those proposed by the present appeal, or like the steps the Parliament of this State has already taken in regard to credit and financial questions, with which we are not concerned today, there would be a chance of the Commonwealth Government moving in the direction desired by this motion.

A lot has been said on the hustings during the last few years as to whether pensions should be contributory or obtainable through taxation. I feel that the importance of that question is very much exaggerated. There is exactly the varied outlook among local authorities that obtains in my district, where there are two local authorities, one of which charges for electricity by direct methods, while the other covers the cost of electricity in order to obtain other benefits. So we have two concrete policies. In the same way, as regards the subject now under discussion, it is possible to obtain the cost of pensions from general taxation, and in particular from indirect taxation. In New Zealand and Great Britain one finds the contributory system at work.

It seems to me that if the Commonwealth Government feels some difficulty about extending the pensions under the present financial arrangements, because we know that the terrific burdens of the war and many other burdens are on them, it might be possible for that Government to combine the two ideas; that is to say, leave the present system as it is running, since full provision has been made for it, the requisite funds being set aside every year. If it feels it cannot extend the pensions policy under the present financial drain, it could introduce a contributory system over and above the pensions existing today. That would enable larger pensions to be paid to the people and satisfy those who will oppose an increase under existing conditions, and it would be the means of making a composite system and of showing that very wise discretion which we can obtain under our democratic system where we are governed not by rule or decree but largely by discussion. We do not, in this country, work entirely through Cabinets but largely through public opinion.

This Chamber is the right place for members to air their opinions on this question and if it is true that the public wish to see older people in a reasonable position—though not in an impossibly extravagant position—this is the time for us to express those views. There are certain members of Parliament—if not today, at any rate during the last 20 years—who have been very hard hit through the fact that pensions have not been adequate for the people. I do not feel that the Commonwealth Government should be expected to do something in the way of giving a lead in generosity and humanitarian principles unless it has the support of the various State Parliaments. Recently we had a Referendum which showed distinctly that the people as a whole—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member may not discuss the Referendum.

Mr. NORTH: So it seems! From recent history we have learned that the people are very much in favour of local Parliaments being able to carry on and exercise an influence upon public policy. I think that is a very good idea, too. I remember hearing in this Chamber not long ago remarks by the former member for East Perth advocating that members of this House should provide material and experienced representatives for the Commonwealth Government. However, that is not in the motion so I will leave the subject. In general terms, I conus to suggest ways and means of giving sider the motion a good one. It is not for effect to it. The wizards of the Federal Treasury have shown, over the last five years, what they can do in regard to sound financial practice. They have indeed conjured rabbits out of hats and I am inclined to leave technical methods to them. But I am sure they would be grateful to us if we were prepared to show them what the people think about their elders.

MR. FOX (South Fremantle): I rise to point out to the member for Subiaco that she has not made her motion as good as she might have. She says that all citizens should have a decent living wage but there are many pensioners unable to earn anything who would not get the basic wage. The motion reads—

That as this House approves of a living wage for all citizens and realises that, in many cases, the income of pensioners does not allow for a decent standard of living, it urges the Commonwealth Government to take steps to

raise the rate of pensions to those who are aged and infirm, and to allow those pensioners able to work to earn an income, including the pension, equivalent to the basic wage.

That means that those who are aged and infirm will have to exist on the pension as they are doing at the present time. Evidently that is something the hon. member missed out when moving the motion. Her idea is to allow those with a pension to earn up to the basic wage, but the aged and infirm would have to subsist on what they were getting. My principal reason for rising was that the hon. member referred to me and insinuated that I did not believe that all pensioners and everybody should have a decent standard of living.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Not for one moment!

Mr. FOX: As a matter of fact that was what the Labour Party was established for, and its members have been at war, ever since the first union was established, with the Party to which the hon. member belongs, in order to bring the general standard of living of workers up to a decent level. We have been fighting all along the line. It is true that the Labour Party did not introduce pensions in the first instance but it was responsible for them. At that time there were three Parties in the Commonwealth Parliament and the Labour Party held the balance of power. It was strong enough to induce the then Liberal Party to bring down a pensions scheme which the Labour Party supported. I did not intend to have anything to say about the motion but I cannot help recalling that the Party to which the member for Subiaco belongs was in power in 1929 when the workers—not merely those on pensions but all workers in the community—were reduced to poverty. Her Party was returned to power when its leader, Sir James Mitchell, promised—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That is not in the motion.

Mr. McLarty: You are getting on dangerous ground.

Mr. FOX: No, I am not. But that has something to do—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! It has nothing to do with the motion. I must ask the hon. member to confine himself to the motion.

Mr. FOX: There is quite a lot I would like to say. I would like to tell the hon. member a few home truths. At any rate,

the Labour Party is quite able, when it has power in the Commonwealth Parliament, to look after the interests of the workers. We are doing that now. We have not had much opportunity over 27½ years, and now that the war is being fought we still have not the opportunity we would like to have to enable us to do a lot more for the workers. It makes me smile to see the hon. member, struck benevolent all of a sudden, rising up in this House and making statements with a view to getting a lot of cheap publicity, and having her name mentioned as the champion of the pensioners. The pensioners, however, should know that it is her Party which has been responsible down the ages for the poverty and the plight in which they find themselves at present.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore): I think this is quite in order.

The Minister for Mines: The Speaker has not ruled it out!

Mr. BERRY: I was thinking of what the member for South Fremantle said. I do not think the motion is aimed at casting aspersions on anybody but merely points out something we all know, namely, that there has been an increase in the cost of living but that, while a lot of people have enjoyed a standard that provides for more or less a living wage, apparently pensioners are not so happily situated.

Mr. Fox: That is not enough.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Irwin-Moore will proceed.

Mr. BERRY: I move an amendment—

That after the word "pensions" in line 6 the words "to those who are aged and infirm, and to allow all those pensioners able to work to earn an income, including the pension" be struck out.

Then the motion would read—

That, as this House approves of a living wage for all citizens, and realises that, in many cases, the income of pensioners does not allow for a decent standard of living, it urges the Commonwealth Government to take steps to raise the rate of pensions equivalent to the basic wage.

I do not think there will be the slightest demur on the part of any member on this side of the House or the other side. I would like to see compulsory pensions for everybody.

The Minister for Justice: Would the basic wage apply to both husband and wife in the one house?

Mr. Smith: What do you think of a living wage for all citizens?

Mr. BERRY: It is quite clear. It says, "A living wage for all citizens equivalent to the basic wage."

Mr. Smith: You know what a wage is.

Mr. BERRY: I do not get the hon. member's drift. He will have to snow again! I am going to support the motion. I would like to see these pensions made applicable to everyone in the community, because a time does come in the lives of many human beings when they have to accept a pension although regarding it as something retrogressive. I know of a man in poor circumstances, and he deplores the fact that he has to accept a pension. If we were all on a pensions basis—and I am told that is the case in New Zealand—the stigma attaching to the old age pension would disappear. If, for instance, a man were in receipt of a good income and, in addition, got the pension, that money would be recouped from him in the form of taxation.

Amendment put and negatived.

On motion by Mr. Needham, debate adjourned.

MOTION—RURAL MORTGAGES.

As to Limiting Personal Covenant Liability.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [5.6]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should take action to legislate—

(a) in respect of existing mortgages of rural land and where the security has been handed over to the mortgagee—

(i) to prevent mortgagees from proceeding on the personal covenant without a court order; and

(ii) to enable mortgagors to obtain relief by a court order from liability on the personal covenant,

so that the factors determining the court in making such orders shall be whether the default has or has not been caused by fraud or mismanagement of the mortgagor; and

(b) in respect of all future mortgages to prohibit actions on the personal covenant taking into consideration the methods adopted in the Civil Rights Limitation Act, Chapter 88 of 1939, of the Province of Saskatchewan in the Dominion of Canada.

This motion has to be moved, as far as I am concerned, as a consequence of a ruling given in connection with a matter recently before the House which had reference to similar, if not exactly the same, subject-

matter. In the previous speech I made on the subject of this motion, I traversed the position—

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of the Opposition is not in order in quoting what he said on that occasion.

Mr. WATTS: I am not quoting what I said. I traversed the position of the liability of the mortgagor on the personal covenant of a mortgage. I do not think it is necessary for me to repeat at any great length the position in regard to that. My aim at that time was to enable the mortgagor to obtain relief from the personal covenant to the extent that the mortgagee could not proceed on that covenant after the property, the subject of the security, had gone into the possession of the mortgagee without an order of the court. That is the proposal that is contained in paragraph (a) (i) of this motion. But since that time it has been brought to my notice that it might be desirable for the mortgagor also to be in a position to approach the court, and the motion asks the Government to bring before the House for discussion and consideration legislation giving both the mortgagee and the mortgagor the right to approach the court. If there has been fraud or mismanagement on the part of his debtor the mortgagee should have the right to proceed against him for the outstanding debt on the personal covenant, and the mortgagor should have the right to approach the court in order that he might receive absolution from any future liability in respect of that covenant.

I have here a letter which I have recently received, and it sets out the position that can arise, and shows how desirable it is that debtors should also have the right to approach the court in order to obtain the absolution that I referred to. This letter is dated the 4th October, 1944. It comes from a place called Nalkain, and is written by a farmer. He refers to the case of X., a returned soldier. I shall read the following extracts from the letter:—

X., a returned soldier, took up virgin land, C.P., in 1920, and at various dates between 1920 and 1929 secured advances under mortgage from the Agricultural Bank, S.S.S., and I.A.B. After a number of years, with crops averaging about seven or eight bushels, a soil survey was made, revealing considerable salinity. The Agricultural Bank, however, refused to condemn or revalue the property and, following notice from X. of his intention to aban-

don the property, the Bank foreclosed in May, 1932. Tenders for sale were called in August, 1932, but the property was not sold and is believed to be still unsold. Leases were cancelled by the Lands Department in 1934.

Subsequently X. acquired another farm (not through the Agricultural Bank), and, starting from scratch once more, after 12 years of labour lost in the previous venture, is meeting his liabilities and building up assets. X. is, however, in need of finance for development. He can offer good security for the moderate loan money he requires, and has approached a commercial bank and a Commonwealth Mortgage Bank for advances under mortgage over the present property, which is unencumbered. In each case, loans have been refused because of the personal covenant in the undischarged mortgages to the Agricultural Bank.

Although X. is not perturbed by the remote possibility of proceedings by the Agricultural Bank under the personal covenant after 12 years, the personal liability exists as a potential threat and also as a bar to the negotiation of loans on the property now held, despite the fact that the Agricultural Bank re-possessed the mortgaged assets 12 years ago.

In answer to an inquiry, made through a Cabinet Minister (a few years ago), it was stated that the Agricultural Bank had no power to release a mortgagor from his obligations.

He then refers to the Bill that was before the House. I shall continue to read the letter—

If the above Bill becomes law, the likelihood of proceedings against X. under the personal covenant will be even more remote, as X. can show good cause for disallowance. But until a claim is made by the Bank and disallowed by the court it would appear that X. is still personally liable and therefore the attitude of other banks will remain as at present and X. will be unable to raise money on his present or future assets.

It appears to me that some provision should be made by which a mortgagor could approach the court to secure an order of release from personal liability after re-possession of mortgaged property.

So it will be seen that in this particular case—and I am satisfied that it is by no means an isolated one—not only does the potential liability still exist but, although there is no apparent intention on the part of the mortgagee to take any action, the existence of the potential liability is sufficient to prevent development by the settler of a property which he has since taken up from scratch and which, as is stated in this letter, is unencumbered. So in cases such as this, unless some solution is found whereby this personal covenant liability can be removed the situation of people placed in the position of this person

X. must remain very difficult. It is therefore clear to me that legislation must be introduced to remedy the position, not only in respect of the right of the mortgagee who asks leave to proceed which, because of the circumstances set out in this letter, should be limited to cases where there is fraud or mismanagement on the part of the borrower, but also in respect of the mortgagor-borrower. He should have the right to approach the court for relief from this liability; from the potential threat and from the possibility of being unable to obtain finance elsewhere even though otherwise deserving of it.

I had the Minister the other day lay upon the Table of the House the file in the case of C. H. Whitwell, of Hines Hill. I have examined that file, which has considerable bearing on the subject-matter of this motion. There may be a misapprehension abroad that this particular farmer is one who abandoned his property after a series of, shall I say, misdemeanours with regard to his mortgage transactions. But there is nothing upon the file which discloses that that is so. I shall read to the House certain extracts that I have taken from the file in order to evidence the situation that arose in connection with that man's work on the property and the condition in which he left it when, owing to the failure of crops, the difficulties of finance and, probably, loss of incentive to carry on he had to abandon his farm. According to the file he took up the property under the soldier settlement scheme of the Agricultural Bank approximately 24 years ago. He abandoned it at the beginning of January, 1941, so he was there for something over 20 years. On the 24th September, 1930, the district inspector reported of him in these words—

Whitwell is one of our best clients and his holding offers excellent security for our advances. Whitwell is the type of man who would not ask for special treatment unless it was urgently necessary.

On the 7th May, 1931, the same district inspector reported in these terms—

The applicant is an exceptionally fine type of settler who has a magnificent holding and deserves every consideration.

In 1933 it is reported that he marketed 4,890 bushels of wheat from 266 acres which is a yield of some 18 bushels to the

acre. In that year the field inspector of the district reported as follows:—

Improvements in first-class order and stock in good condition. A splendid worker, a good manager and thrifty.

The branch manager at Merredin on the 9th March, 1937, reported—

The personal equation is satisfactory. The position at present is secure.

In June of the same year the same gentleman reported—

Whitwell is an exceptionally good worker, but his holding has given most disappointing returns during the past four years. Some of his land has developed salinity.

In 1938 the inspector's report was again satisfactory. In that year farmers saw the writing-down of secured debts under the provisions of the Rural Relief Fund Act and under Section 65 of the Agricultural Bank Act, 1934. There was a second mortgage by Whitwell to the Bank of New South Wales. It still exists. I do not know what actual effect that mortgage had on the application. The unsecured debts were adjusted by an advance, but the secured debt was never adjusted, and there is a reference on the file to the inability of the Bank to take any action in regard to its debt because of the second mortgage. So we find that Whitwell was not able at this stage to take advantage of the law which might otherwise have assisted him. In 1938 the inspector's report was still satisfactory. In 1940 the branch manager reported that the bank's claim over the produce for the season had been fully paid and went on to say that the settler was progressive, used good methods and was economical.

Thus for ten years, from 1930 to 1940, which latter year was only a few weeks before his abandonment of the property, successive inspectors and branch managers of the Agricultural Bank have reported in those terms, the words having been extracted from the file. Yet although the property, when Whitwell left it, was obviously a good security for the money owing upon it, so far as the Agricultural Bank was concerned, disregarding for the moment perhaps the second mortgage, we find that it has not been sold. It has been leased at £50 a year, which is rather less than half the annual accrual of interest, and I anticipate that this is because its value as a letting property is not greater than £1 a week. But the interest is accru-

ing above the £50 per annum and is being added to the debt which, as far as the law is concerned, may at any time be recovered from him should he reach a position where he can afford to pay.

Whitwell is on another property at the present time which, I believe, is not showing signs of salinity and where he has some prospects of success, but his position will be somewhat extraordinary if the same fate follows him as befell a constituent of mine at Pingrup some seven or eight years ago who happened to make a small rise in the mining industry after some three or four years of prospecting under the Government assistance scheme. Most of the money he gained from that was taken from him under the personal covenant, although when he abandoned his property, it was—and this also applies to the Whitwell property—considered to be of a value equivalent to the amount owing on it, though at that time it could not be sold.

So we see how necessary it is that the position of the mortgagor, of being able to go to the court, should be clearly set out in any Act which is put upon the statute-book for this purpose. Let him ask for a release or for protection, just as the mortgagee is allowed the right to proceed and if it can be found that the failure or default in payment has been occasioned by fraud or mismanagement, there is no one in this House who will want to stand up and protect him. But if the circumstances are such as those in the two cases I have shown by the correspondence and the extracts from the file I have read, then I am perfectly satisfied members will agree that some action should be taken and taken quickly.

I have also incorporated in the motion a proposal that, in respect of all future mortgages, actions on the personal covenant should be entirely prohibited. That which I have been saying in the last ten minutes has had reference to mortgages which have been signed in the past or before the coming into operation of any Act to deal with the question. I did not feel disposed to ask the House to agree to a motion that actions on the personal covenant in regard to those mortgages should be completely prohibited, because it was part of the contract that there should be such a right in the mortgage, and the only way it can be dealt with is by some judi-

cial authority. In future, however, after the passing of an Act or after a certain time expiring from that date, actions on the personal covenant should be prohibited. Then mortgagees and borrowers would both have to adjust themselves to a set of new conditions. They would have to place their reliance solely upon the security for the advance. There would be no question of anything else being available as security; nor would there be any prospect of happenings such as there were in the case of "X" in the letter I have read.

The situation would be quite clear. The land or property of any kind offered as security would be the only thing upon which the mortgagee could rely for the recovery of his debt. This should have the effect of minimising the desire of persons to lend. I do not know that this would be altogether undesirable, for I believe that in this country, and probably in most other countries as well, there has been a great deal too much credit and borrowing, with the result that we have many unfortunate cases, and with a little more control or restraint applied, not only by the law, but also by events, we might not have had a great number of those unpleasant circumstances. So it seems to me that when demanding any particular line of action to be taken in this matter, the House and the Government should consider this aspect also.

At times it is customary for us to inquire whether there are any precedents for a course proposed to be taken. I am not one who is very enthusiastic about the necessity for following precedents. Had there been no readiness to establish precedents, there would have been little or no progress in the last 2,000 years, because members will agree with me when I say that the only way of establishing a precedent is by doing something new, and that we must do something new if we are going to make any progress at all in our efforts to attain to higher and better things. So I am not greatly concerned whether there is or is not any precedent for the action I propose, but as it happens there is at least one precedent to which I made reference some weeks ago very shortly, and to which I now propose to make some longer reference because I consider it is well worth while. I refer to the legislation which has been passed in the Province of Saskatchewan in the Dominion of Canada.

Hon. H. Millington: Does that legislation apply to all mortgages?

Mr. WATTS: I will read the section of the Act, and the hon. member will be able to judge for himself as to what it applies to. The Act is cited as The Limitation of Civil Rights Act, and it was passed in 1939. Under the heading "Mortgages and agreements for sale and leases of land" in Section 2 we find the following:—

(1) Where land is hereafter sold under an agreement for sale in writing, or mortgaged whether by legal or equitable mortgage for the purpose of securing the purchase price or part of the purchase price of the land affected, or where a mortgage is hereafter given as collateral security for the purchase price or part of the purchase price of land, the vendor's or mortgagee's right to recover the unpaid balance due shall be restricted to the land sold or mortgaged and to cancellation of the agreement for sale or foreclosure of the mortgage or sale of the property, and no action shall lie on the covenant for payment contained in the agreement for sale or mortgage.

(2) The benefit of the provisions contained in Subsection (1) shall extend to and include:

(a) the personal covenant of the purchaser contained in any assignment by the vendor of such an agreement for sale;

(b) the personal covenant of the assignee contained in any assignment by the purchaser of such an agreement for sale;

(c) the personal covenant of the mortgagor contained in an agreement extending any such mortgage;

(d) the personal covenant of a purchaser of lands subject to any such mortgage to assume and pay the mortgage;

and no action shall lie on any such personal covenant.

Consequently while there might be one or two items that are not covered, I think the member for Mt. Hawthorn can be answered by the statement that the Saskatchewan Act covers practically all types of mortgage securities coming into operation after the passing of the Act.

Hon. H. Millington: You limit the first part of your motion to rural land.

Mr. WATTS: That is so. I am confining my reference to past mortgages to rural lands, but if the hon. member will look at the part that has reference to future mortgages, he will find that I say it should apply in respect of all future mortgages. That is the point I wish to make clear. I believe that the House, on mature consideration of this proposal, will agree that there is justification for action similar to if not identical with that which I suggest in the motion. I am only asking the House to ex-

press an opinion on the desirability or otherwise of legislation of this character being brought forward at an early date.

Personally I will never be satisfied with a statement that there is no justification for any such legislation. It might be possible to satisfy me that there is justification for legislation slightly different from the lines I propose, but that is a matter which can be revealed in debate when other members who have a viewpoint slightly different from my own express their views. I assure the House that I have brought forward the motion in an effort to solve a problem which I believe needs solution and if, when the motion is submitted to the House, any suggestion can be made to improve the methods whereby this difficulty may be solved, I shall have no hesitation in agreeing to it. But I do ask the House as firmly as I can to carry this motion or one very much like it, because I do not think that action of this kind can be much longer delayed if we are to do justice to a section of the people who have been treated not harshly because it has been the law in the past, but to whom the treatment that has been meted out in consequence of the law has worked harshly.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore): I support the motion. It is a pity that I am not supporting a Government Bill to effect what the motion suggests, because I feel that, as the Leader of the Opposition has expressed it, the need is very urgent for dealing, in far too many cases, with the problem of the personal covenant as it exists today in the rural areas. I mention the rural areas because I am not very concerned about, knowing very little about, any other mortgages where the personal covenant has come in and caused distress such as has resulted in the country districts. Not being of a legal turn of mind, I can only speak to the motion purely from a humanitarian standpoint. It was that standpoint which urged me some months ago to take up the matter of the personal covenant in an endeavour, so far a vain endeavour, to bring the subject clearly before the people, so that there would be a desire on everyone's part to play fair.

The motion merely asks for a fair deal for all parties concerned; it does not suggest that holus-bolus the personal covenant should be destroyed. It says in effect that when a man is distressed because of

the personal covenant he shall be enabled to make application to a court, and on the judgment of the court he will stand so far as his responsibility goes. And the mortgagee may do the same. Parenthetically I say that I must be very careful in using the terms "mortgagor" and "mortgagee," which are most confusing. The personal covenant seems to be found in all mortgages. It is a sort of hidden dagger in the sense that the people signing the mortgage do not at the time realise what they are doing, and that the dagger does not start to prick until something goes wrong. It appears that when one borrows money on a farm, one stakes everything one possesses on the repayment of that money. Doubtless that is quite correct, provided that conditions give one the opportunity to carry out one's obligations. As we know, since 1930 many people have found that impossible. I knew it before that year, in the slump of 1920, which however did not affect Australia so much as it affected other parts of the world.

It must be realised that there are circumstances over which the most honourable man has absolutely no control; and in saying this I am thinking of the price factor in particular. Since a man has no control over that, it is hard to hold him strictly to a bargain which will drive him from his life's work, which will send him to the city penniless, with nothing more than the clothes he stands up in, which more or less precludes that man from ever picking up again. Cases are known in this State of men who have had to leave their farms because of economic circumstances, who have come to the city broken in health and broken in spirit, men afraid. They could, of course, have recourse to the Bankruptcy Court; but they did not wish to do that, they were afraid to do it. That is a pity, because it is the best thing they could have done. Agriculturists would have acted wisely in 1932 had they come to Perth and deposited 10,000 bankruptcy petitions. If such an event had occurred then, we would have a very different story to tell today, and a very different outlook. The people who live in the city growing fat on the proceeds of usury, for instance, would have gone to the country in their motorcars with cases of champagne entreating the farmers to withdraw their petitions. However, I refer to that only because I think

it would have afforded the agriculturists a way out.

One cannot induce the farmer, or any other decent citizen, to appeal to the Bankruptcy Court if he can possibly avoid doing so. And the consequence is that we have people wandering around the city, unable to do business in their own name because the price of what their farms produce was less than the cost of production. The personal covenant, so far as I understand it, remains with a mortgagor for 12 years, always provided that he makes no application to the Court, or has in some way acknowledged the debt. If he acknowledges it by a payment, or even by expressing willingness to pay, the personal covenant goes on forever. It seems most improbable that a period of 12 years should go by without the lender making some effort. Under the existing legislation there seems very little possibility indeed of escaping from the octopus of the personal covenant.

I may quote the case of a neighbour of mine. He got into difficulties because his production was low and his costs, consequently, were high, and his wheat bringing only in the vicinity of 1s. 8d. to 2s. per bushel at the siding; indeed, I remember the time when the siding price was as low as 11d. per bushel. That man had perforce to leave his property; or I might say "by force," because there are many other ways of killing a goose than wringing its neck. That saying applies in the case of the primary producer. These men are not ejected from their holdings, nor seized and bodily thrown out; but their sustenance is denied them, and perforce they must go. The moment they go, the personal covenant commences to act upon the property on the basis of the security. Nobody wants to take over such a property. There are blocks of country—I have one next door to me—lying idle for years; and during that period of idleness the blocks suffer from ordinary depreciation through weather ravages, and the additional depreciation of neighbours taking a little fencing wire until there is no wire left, and taking the sides of the house and the galvanised iron before removing the frame.

The only commodity the man has left is a piece of Western Australia that has been denuded of its power to satisfy the debt demanded by the mortgagee; namely that the mortgagor shall hand over everything ex-

cept the suit of clothes he stands up in. I believe that if it were not indecent, some creditors would take a debtor's trousers. There have been many assertions made in connection with the sort of legislation proposed. One bogey constantly dragged before us is the effect it would have upon credit. The suggestion is made that legislation along the lines set forth in the motion of the Leader of the Opposition would freeze credit. My view is that it would be a very fine thing for Australia and for the world if private credit did freeze. If the Governments of the world, including the Governments of Australia, accepted their responsibility they would control the issue of the credit necessary to develop the resources of the country upon which people in the city live.

The Minister for Justice: Nationalisation of banking!

Mr. BERRY: The Minister can have it his own way!

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think we will get on to nationalisation of banking.

Mr. BERRY: Pardon me, Mr. Speaker, I did not do so.

Mr. Holman: We are getting very close to it.

Mr. BERRY: This question of freezing credit is a red-herring which appears to be drawn across the trail on every possible occasion.

The Minister for Mines: Not as far as I am concerned.

Mr. BERRY: If the Government would put into effect the suggestion I have just made it would deal effectively with those people who live on usury. The motion suggests a first step, which is that the Government do the right thing in regard to the limitation of the personal covenant. The motion may be challenged by the Government because of the fact that the Agricultural Bank has not used the power vested in it by virtue of the personal covenant, which I presume means Section 51 of the Agricultural Bank Act. The Government might ask us to point to a case. I frankly admit that I could not do so. However, the fact remains that so long as the personal covenant continues in force the bank can exercise its rights under it. It occurs to me to consider what the bank's attitude would be towards some mortgagor who owed money to the bank under a personal covenant, and who won the first prize in a State

lottery. Would not that be a different kettle of fish? Would not the bank rightly say, "This man has some money and we have a right to it"? Therefore, should anyone say that we cannot point to a case in which the Agricultural Bank has exercised its power, the answer must be, "No; but as long as the power is there it can be used." That is why I support the motion.

In times past a man who owed money was thrown into prison. He was told that he would have to stay there until he paid his debt. But as civilisation progressed and men became more enlightened, that wicked practice was discontinued. However, with smug complacency, the creditor now says, "We will not lock that man up any more, but we will pursue him till he dies; we will not allow him to trade under his own name; he may own nothing but his suit of clothes." As I have said, we have cases of farmers who have come to the city and have had to start business in the names of their wives with a view to avoiding this unnecessary and stupid persecution. The man I mentioned earlier—my near neighbour—presents an interesting case. While the value of his property depreciated owing to his absence, his interest increased; and so today, even though the farm is let for a paltry rental of £50 a year, his debt is snow-balling and he has absolutely no hope of paying it. Were it not that his wife had money, I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, that he would be in sore straits indeed. He probably would have contemplated suicide or ended up in Heathcote or Claremont, as several farmers have done up to date.

This is the aspect of this motion that I said I was going to emphasise, the humanitarian side, the side which says, "Give this man a fair go; let him make an appeal to a court of equity; let someone decide what is the value of the property upon which he borrowed money and worked most of his life." That is all the motion says. The first part of the motion deals with that aspect; the latter part suggests that in respect of all future mortgages action on the personal covenant shall be prohibited. This has my full concurrence. Reference was made to the case of Whitwell. His is an interesting case, as it has a bearing on this motion. This man was persecuted and driven from his farm. It is well known that the farm has been declared black by the

Wheatgrowers' Union, but it was not until tonight, when I heard what the Leader of the Opposition had to say, that I realised how justified those men were. I have not myself perused the files, but the revelations made tonight are amazing.

All of that has happened because of the ejection of Whitwell from his property and because of the way in which he was persecuted. That led to the people in the vicinity declaring the farm black and persecuting the tenants to whom it was let. Whitwell's eviction is a type of folly which I cannot understand. It is similar to the folly which drove people off the group settlements. It is the type of folly which demands, first and foremost, every penny irrespective of the fact that the most important thing to Australia is the utilisation of its natural resources. The group settlers have been similarly persecuted and so we lost people who were potentially capable of providing us today with sufficient butter; there would have been no need to ration butter. There is every reason for adopting a fair and equitable attitude towards these people under their personal covenants. To do so would be in the interests of the community; we would have more to sell, more to buy and more to eat. We scream that we want population in Australia, but we will not get it as long as this type of persecution continues. The Leader of the Opposition has assured us that the problem has been dealt with in other countries. He drew our attention to the province of Saskatchewan. He has referred to that province so frequently that I think he rather likes the name Saskatchewan. That province saw reason—and very good reason—to legislate on this subject.

I sincerely trust that our Government, in its wisdom, will likewise legislate on this subject and bring about some limitation of the personal covenant, as by doing so the Government will remove the cause of the persecution of the man on the land who is living under distressing conditions over which he has absolutely no control. I am not countenancing for one moment the encouragement of fraud, cheating or cunning. I am asking the Government to bring down legislation to give effect to this motion and thus, in a humanitarian way, help the man who is down and out and treat him in the sporting manner of the English nation.

MR. NORTH (Claremont): I desire to move an amendment which I trust will meet with the approval of the Country Party. It is an attempt to do something that will provide for the personal covenant being dispensed with without the mortgagee losing. If the amendment is agreed to the first part of the motion will read as follows:—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should take action to legislate—

(a) In respect of existing mortgages of rural land and where the security has been handed over to the mortgagee—

(i) to prevent mortgagees from losing by not enforcing the personal covenant.

In practice there are not very many of these cases. What gives concern is the hounding down that is over the heads of these people. I have heard from bankers that there are only one or two cases in history. However, there are people who have lent money on farms and no-one wants to see them punished any more than it is desired to see the mortgagors punished. As amended, the motion would be designed to provide that in future people would lend money knowing that they could not enforce the personal covenant. My idea is that where a mortgagee has used his powers, sold up the property and got back most of his money, whatever is still owing should be a charge upon the Government rather than that the man should be hounded by the mortgagee for the rest of his life. That might cost the Government a paltry £1,000 or £2,000 altogether. This amendment would, I feel, not only meet the wishes of the Country Party and the Leader of the Opposition, but would also remove the objection of those who lend money that a form of repudiation is proposed. I move an amendment—

That after the word "from" in line 7 of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (a), the words "proceeding on" be struck out with a view to inserting other words.

MR. WATTS (Katanning—on amendment): I must confess I do not understand the intention of the amendment. Nor do I appreciate what would be the result if it were taken as an indication of the opinion of this House. I have had no opportunity—though I understand that is not the fault of the member for Claremont—to consider the matter. But it seems to me that he is asking us to pass an amendment which would prevent a mortgagee from losing. While I am not anxious that a mortgagee

should lose unnecessarily, I am not anxious, either, to help pass legislation to prevent him from losing. I am ready to leave to a judicial tribunal the question whether he should lose or not. Consequently, unless I have some far different appreciation of the position as the debate proceeds, I shall oppose the amendment.

On motion by Mr. Marshall, debate adjourned.

BILL—PAWNBROKERS ORDINANCE AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 27th September.

MR. NEEDHAM (Perth) [5.55]: The Bill introduced by the member for Subiaco, which has as its object the amendment of the Pawnbrokers Ordinance, is worthy of support. The object of the Ordinance is to prevent children under the age of 14 from being accommodated in a pawnbroker's shop. I support the second reading but regret that the hon. member did not go further. She desires to substitute the word "eighteen" for the word "fourteen." I am of the opinion that we should protect our young people from the dangers associated with pawnbroking. It is true that people are frequently compelled to avail themselves of the pawnbroking institution in order to tide themselves temporarily over some economic or financial difficulty. But it is a reflection on our so-called civilised society that we should allow children of tender years to avail themselves of that particular means of obtaining money for their requirements. Our liquor laws protect young people. Those who supply young people below the age of 21 with liquor commit a breach of the law and the young person who takes liquor in a public place is also liable.

It is time that the pawnbroking legislation was amended to prevent a child of tender years from going to pawnshops. The member for Canning has given notice of an amendment to make the age 21. I will support that amendment. The hon. member indicated his objection to the business of pawnbroking in its entirety. I have no great regard for it; it is a reflection on our society that people should have to be compelled to resort to that method of seeking financial assistance. Through a financial institution, the Government should come to

the assistance of people in financial distress. Such a Government institution could charge a rate of interest that would be far removed from the realms of usury. We have amended our laws to prevent usury in the pawnbroking business, but even now interest is very high in the various States of the Commonwealth. Whether we like it or not, the pawnbroking business is here; it is part of the system under which we live. I do not think we would be much better off if we abolished it, because the system would still remain. In order to get anywhere we shall have to uproot the tree. It is no use merely cutting branches. I do think that the hon. member who introduced the Bill might see the necessity for accepting the amendment to make the age 21.

Mr. North: Would you accept 18 rather than nothing if it were turned down by another place?

Mr. NEEDHAM: Yes, but I would prefer to see the amendment carried. I believe there is a danger here. We have recently read of a number of children being brought before the Children's Court for delinquency by having disposed of stolen goods, and for selling goods that were probably obtained unlawfully. Such goods find their way to the pawnbrokers' shops. I think the hon. member who introduced the Bill would be well advised to indicate in her reply to the debate whether she is willing to accept the amendment to raise the age to 21. I support the second reading with the reservation that I intend also to support the amendment indicated by the member for Canning.

MR. MARSHALL (Murehison): We are often told that this is the age of the young people. We are not permitted to forget that youth prevails from now on. I am beginning to believe that the age of youth is rapidly going into oblivion, because some one years ago decided that children of 14 years of age could go into a pawnbroker's shop. Today, years afterwards, we say that 14 is too young.

The Minister for Mines: They can go into industry at 14.

Mr. MARSHALL: In addition we have the spectacle of youths of 18 being called up for military service. Now it is suggested that they are too young to go into a pawnbroker's shop. Still, they are old enough to fight for their country.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: Not at 14!

Mr. MARSHALL: I am speaking of 18 years, to which the Bill proposes to increase the age. We are somewhat perplexed in regard to the matter of age. I respectfully suggest that there should never have been a Bill passed by any Parliament permitting a child of the age or the apparent age of 14 years to go into a pawnbroker's shop. For that reason I am subscribing to this measure. As I am also convinced that this is the age of the young people, and if they can fight in defence of their country I think we should trust them, if they so desire, to go into a pawnbroker's shop. I can subscribe to the idea that the abolition of these sorts of businesses would be no loss to society. I think they are snares and traps. They are useful, and have been to me. I have no hesitation in saying that, but in the case I have in mind I knew exactly what I was doing, but many members of society do not know what they are doing. They live in a state of hope and expectation that they will be able to do something later in conformity with the pledge they make when they go into a pawnbroker's shop. But adversity attends them all the time and they fail, and, as a consequence, they lose their valuable belongings for an infinitesimal price.

Then there are individuals who when under the influence of intoxicating liquors take advantage of these places only to regret it a few days later. There are other aspects of these businesses. I am of the opinion that they are particularly good outlets for illicitly obtained goods. I think that many of the young people who have performed misdemeanours, by way of theft, have found these businesses most opportune for the disposal of the goods. I can find no recommendation for their presence in society. I agree with the member for Perth's contention that it is a disgraceful blot on our social system to think that any such businesses are necessary in this enlightened age. But they are with us, so I think the member for Subiaco is very wise in introducing the Bill. I propose to support the second reading, and subscribe to the Bill as it is, because when we say to these young people that they are old enough to shoulder the responsibilities of defending this country, then they are old enough surely to use discretion as to whether they

should or should not visit the places under discussion.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Marshall in the Chair; Mrs. Cardell-Oliver in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Amendment of Section 26:

Mr. CROSS: I move an amendment—

That in line 4 the word "eighteen" be struck out and the words "twenty-one" inserted in lieu.

Despite the fact that youths of 18 are called on for the defence of the country I know that that age is one of indiscretion. The young people should be protected against commencing the bad practice of attempting to pawn their goods. I know the views of the member for Subiaco, and I think she caused a letter to be sent to me from the Womens' Service Guilds of Western Australia Inc.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: I did not.

Mr. CROSS: I think that letter was sent to indicate the puerile arguments put up by those people who apparently do not understand the position, or who take a different attitude. This letter was addressed in the first place to the Premier and a copy was sent to me by the guild. The letter has this to say towards the end—

We are pleased to see that Mrs. Cardell-Oliver, M.L.A., has brought this matter before Parliament. We ask that the age should be amended to 18 years—not 21—for this reason, that our boys are enlisted at 18 years of age and many of our women marry at that age and, in the case of soldiers, there may be times of financial stress when they may wish to dispose of some of their property.

I do not know the pawnshop that would give them even one-quarter of the value of the article they wish to dispose of. Any women or girls who wish to do such a stupid thing should be protected against themselves, particularly at present when the full value for any kind of second-hand goods can easily be obtained. The letter concludes—

Therefore we think the age of 21 years, as suggested by Mr. Cross, M.L.A., is too high, and we recommend the adoption of the Bill as it has been proposed by Mrs. Cardell-Oliver, M.L.A.

I was pleased to note in going round the city that one of the pawnshops has disappeared. It has gone out of business be-

cause people are not so badly affected now. Times are better, in spite of the war, and the people have more money and so do not have to go to the pawnshops. Even the man, referred to by the member for Murchison, who goes to a pawnshop on the morning following a night out should be prevented because, as the hon. member said, such a man is frequently sorry afterwards. I have a recollection of attending a pawnbroker's sale some years ago at which 10,000 articles—all unclaimed pledged goods—were offered by auction. I have once or twice, just for fun, gone into pawnbrokers and asked what they would offer for a fairly valuable article. What they suggested would not pay for the gold in the article. I went with an emerald ring into one pawnbroker's shop. The emeralds were worth £25 and all he offered me was 15s. for the gold. I hope the amendment will be carried.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I hope the amendment will not be carried. I have made the age 18 because I feel that 18 is a very responsible age.

Mr. Cross: You would not give a vote to a person of that age.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I agreed to that. Many members of the Services of that age have had the vote. I ask the member for Canning, quite seriously: Would he agree that the age of consent should be raised to 21? I am quite sure that the member for Canning is not serious about his amendment.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I do not think the member for Canning quite believes that the age should be raised to 21. I cannot imagine how he can be sincere about it when boys are fighting at the age of 18 and girls are married at that age. Eighteen is a very sensible age to provide in the Bill. I did not propose 21 because I wanted members to feel that I was being just. Twenty-one is much too high. Many youths will return from the war before they reach 21, and the hon. member would prevent their pawning any of their property although they might be in dire need of money. I feel that we would be doing an injustice to young people if we made the age 21.

Mr. PERKINS: I support the attitude of the member for Subiaco. I was not impressed with the reasons given by the mem-

ber for Canning for raising the age to 21. The greater part of his speech was directed to the general undesirability of pawnshops being allowed to function at all. Not many people would consider them a desirable feature of our business life, but they are regarded as a necessary evil. If they were not permitted to function, probably the need they fill would be so great as to force the business underground and they would function behind the law rather than with the law controlling their activities to some degree. If the age were fixed at 21, youths below it might take advantage of facilities outside the law. We have to fix some age, and 18 appeals to me as being a fair one.

Mr. CROSS: I still think the member for Subiaco should support the amendment. A great percentage of the cases of petty larceny involve young people of 16 to 20 and would not happen if they were debarred from pawning goods until they reached the age of 21. The Credit Foncier in France is compelled to advance up to 50 per cent. of the value of goods and charge lower rates of interest, and no one may enter until he is 21.

Mr. GRAHAM: The ethics of pawnbroking are not involved in the amendment. The Bill seeks to protect a section of the community which is considered not to have a full and proper sense of responsibility. There is a general belief that when young people reach the age of 18 they might properly assume responsibility by reason of their accepting the duty of defending their country. Quite a number have been entitled to exercise the franchise, and it is a plank of the Labour Party platform that the voting age should be reduced to 18. This, of course, pre-supposes that when a person has reached 18, he has a proper sense of responsibility. Therefore I see no necessity for us to make special provision for the protection of those whose ages are between 18 and 21. I oppose the amendment.

Mr. WATTS: I also oppose the amendment. Several measures of reform have been introduced during the last few years by the member for Canning. The object of one measure was to reduce the rate of interest payable to money-lenders; the object of the other, to abolish distress for rent. Both measures received strong support from both sides of the Chamber. The hon. member has not seen fit, however, to take any interest in the

movement for increasing the age of 14 years to 18 years in the present case. Apparently he regards the age of 18 years as peculiarly undesirable. His newborn enthusiasm for the age of 21 does not influence me in the slightest.

Amendment put and negatived.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

RESOLUTION—COMMISSIONER OF RAILWAYS.

Council's Message.

Message from the Council received and read notifying that it had concurred in the Assembly's resolution.

BILL—LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL (POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTION).

Received from the Council and read a first time.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT ACT (No. 3).

Second Reading—Defeated.

Debate resumed from the 27th September.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE [7.47]:

I have given consideration to this Bill, and have also devoted to it some research; and I do not oppose it. Apparently this is the only Australian State which debars clergymen and ministers of religion from entering Parliament. Thus there exists sufficient precedent at least for falling into line with our sister States. I have also found that in England there was no statute debarring clergymen and ministers of religion from entering Parliament, until the year 1801. Up to 1801, therefore, England exercised no discrimination against persons belonging to the church.

Mr. Watts: The clergymen eligible, though, had to belong to a certain church.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: After 1801, however, clergymen and ministers of religion were debarred from sitting in the House of Commons. If, notwithstanding, they did take seats there, they were subject to severe penalties—penalties of up to £500. At the present time all clergymen and ministers of religion excepting those belonging to the Roman Catholic Church may sit in the House of Commons. Thus a discrimination exists in England. Australia, on the

other hand, has no such discrimination; and this Bill makes none. Seeing that no friction has occurred in other Australian States, I do not think any will be met with here if the Bill passes. Clergymen are highly respected citizens, and highly educated men. Here I may remark that in my opinion it is not always the most highly educated man who makes the best legislator.

Some highly educated men take the traditionally accepted views, and are not progressive as compared with members who, as the result of practical experience, come into Parliament from the lower rungs. Still, we are experiencing a new trend of thought which should be helpful to members of our Parliament. I have read quite a deal on the subject of the Bill, even carrying my researches back to the Bill of Rights and other ancient statutes; and it appears to me that there should be no objection to the proposal of this measure, though I did recently read in the Press that clergymen and ministers of religion have sufficient to do in looking after their own affairs, and that if they look after the spiritual side of the State they will be performing a fine task, while abstaining from entering into political affairs. That is a view with which I do not agree. Generally speaking, public opinion certainly offers no objection to the Bill; and I give it my blessing.

MR. OWEN (Swan): I support the Bill. It is of peculiar interest to me because in the recent Swan by-election a would-be opponent of mine was not allowed to contest the election, owing to the fact that some 25 years previously he had been a clergyman of the Church of England, and, in the eyes of that church, was still a clergyman although he had not taken an active part in preaching for over a quarter of a century. This gentleman, who is a friend of mine, is well known and highly respected and I was sorry to see him debarred from seeking election, and in that way put in the same category as bankrupts, thieves, criminals and men of that ilk. Had he been allowed to stand, it is hard to say how the election would have resulted; possibly I would not be in this Chamber today. I feel that by debarring a person from standing for Parliament we are denying the electors their right to vote for the person of their choice. It appears to me that the section of the principal Act which this Bill seeks to

amend is a relic of older days when there was considerable strife between the church and the State.

In these days, however, we need not worry about the church usurping the rights of the State, or the State the rights of the church. Each has its separate part to play. The statement has been made that clergymen would be able to exert undue influence over the church folk in their electorate. I agree that clergymen do exercise considerable influence over their church folk; but as there are many different religious sects in Western Australia and they are very much divided we need not fear that aspect at all. The member for Subiaco and the Minister for Justice have informed us that all the other Australian mainland States allow clergymen to be elected and take their seats in Parliament, and I am sure that no trouble has occurred in those States through the adoption of that procedure. The fact that clergymen should be allowed to stand for election does not necessarily mean that they will be elected. They must still face the electors, and I still have sufficient faith in the people to abide by their decision as recorded in the ballot box. I see no reason why we should still fear that the church might usurp the functions of the State. Many clergymen are well educated and broadminded and their experience and understanding would be an asset to any Parliament. As we claim to be a democratic State, we should not debar them from seeking election to Parliament on the vote of the people.

THE MINISTER FOR MINES: I have no great objection to the Bill. I think it would be well if we could get one or two clergymen and ministers of religion in Parliament, but what worries me is that the Bill does not contain a definition of a clergyman or a minister of religion. The members who have spoken to the measure so far have said that the fact that clergymen and ministers of religion are debarred by our Constitution from sitting in Parliament is a relic of the old days. But if we go back to the old days, we find there were not then so many fancy religions, as they are termed in the Army, as there are today. Most old soldiers will recollect that when there was a compulsory parade the Roman Catholics were put on one side, the Church of England in another, and the adherents

to other religions on another side. The latter were said to belong to some fancy religions and they had to go on one side or on the other.

Judging by what one has read in the newspapers for the past five years, some very queer persons call themselves ministers of religion and clergymen, and so I suggest to the member for Subiaco that, when she replies, she give us some definition of those terms. As a matter of fact, the excuses put up in the police court in these latter days by persons calling themselves ministers of religion tend to show that, were they elected to Parliament, Parliament would deteriorate.

Mr. W. Hegney: It is the fault of the public.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: No. Some of those men are keen enough and intellectual enough to get past serving their country, their contention being that they are ministers of religion. I do not think we should amend our Constitution in any haphazard manner. There are too many fancy religions in this State, to my liking. We have too many religions. If we could secure some unity, the churches would be a greater spiritual uplift than we find them to be today. However, that matter is not included in the Bill and I am glad that you, Mr. Speaker, did not notice it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Until I get some clear definition of the terms "clergymen" and "ministers of religion" I do not feel like amending our Constitution, because every person who wears a differently cut coat, or wears his collar back to front or buttoned on top, is not a minister of religion. Too many people are at present pretending to be clergymen or ministers of religion and thereby covering a multitude of sins. The fact that a person called himself a clergyman or minister of religion would probably influence the electors more than if he merely described himself as William Smith or John Jones. I want to protect myself. I do not wish to make the competition for membership of Parliament too wide.

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne): I think the Minister for Mines has a wrong conception of the Bill.

The Minister for Mines: No.

Mr. RODOREDA: We do not require any definition of the terms "clergymen" and "ministers of religion," because this Bill is proposing to strike out from the Constitution the words relating to clergymen and ministers of religion.

Mr. North: If they are queer, they can stand now.

Mr. RODOREDA: Exactly! I do not know whether the term "minister of religion" is defined in the Constitution. There may be some argument about that.

The Minister for Mines: That is the trouble.

Mr. RODOREDA: If we pass this Bill, then there will be no reference whatever in the Constitution to ministers of religion, so why define a phrase which does not appear in the Constitution? That is beyond me.

The Minister for Mines: Put one in!

Mr. RODOREDA: We simply propose by this Bill to strike out references to ministers of religion in the Constitution. It does not matter whether they are Jehovah Witnesses or Plymouth Brethren. That should be sufficient, in my opinion.

MR. WATTS (Katanning): I support the second reading of the Bill, but I suggest to the member for Subiaco that she be good enough to agree, provided the House also agrees, to the postponement of the Committee stage. I make the request because there are two matters which concern me in regard to the Bill as it stands. The first is that I am not sure that there is not need for an interpretation on the lines mentioned by the Minister for Mines. Members have referred to ministers of religion being mixed up with thieves and bankrupts. They are mixed up in the same paragraph of the Constitution with judges of the Supreme Court, who are not to be classed—and no one has suggested they are likely to be classed—as thieves and bankrupts. These ministers of religion are included in the Constitution for much the same reason as judges of the Supreme Court, namely, because they have in our community a special duty to perform, a duty which I submit, while they are in active practice—if I can use those words of ministers of religion—they cannot easily perform in conjunction with political duties as we have occasion to know them, and particularly those of us who come from the

further-out areas of the State. It seems to me that the House needs to give consideration to the question of defining what type of ministers we are going to allow to stand for Parliament.

The Minister for Justice: This is the only State that has not made provision for them.

Mr. WATTS: Then in all probability this is the only State that is right. It does not mean that, because all the other States have something that we have not, we are necessarily wrong.

The Minister for Justice: Ours is the only Dominion in that position.

Mr. WATTS: Then probably ours is the only Dominion that is right. Ministers of religion have a special duty to perform to the community. It is a duty that does not go too well with politics. That duty is directed towards the cure of souls. To whatever denomination ministers of religion belong, I am prepared always to respect them so long as they carry out that duty to the best of their ability and in accordance with the doctrines they have been taught are right.

I have no hesitation in saying that the bulk of those—in fact all—that we know as properly registered or ordained priests or ministers of religion do that duty in that way, but I doubt whether ministers of religion in active practice—that is, carrying out spiritual duties on a full-time basis—are the right persons to invite to come into the political life of this or of any other country. At the same time, like the member for Swan, I feel considerably concerned about men such as the man he mentioned, whom I know, and who has had nothing whatever to do with the cares of his church for at least 20 years and who has in fact been engaged in business as an orchardist. That man, because of his ordination in his younger days and owing to the fact that the rules of his church could not be altered, could not nominate. When a man like that has laid down his spiritual duties and is prepared to take up political duties he should be entitled to stand for Parliament. The question is a difficult one.

The Minister for Works: Why was he not allowed to stand for Parliament?

Mr. WATTS: Because he was an ordained minister of the Church of England and once he was ordained could not be

disordained—if that is the word to use—unless he was defrocked for some offence against ecclesiastical law, which law of course, he has not offended. The House will realise how difficult the question is. I am seeking to have an amendment drawn up which will clear the ground. There are two denominations which work on the lines I have described and there are other churches that work on different systems and whose ministers can resign and cease to have any rights in their churches at all. I hope that I shall be able to present the House with an amendment to deal with the matter on the lines I have mentioned, and I shall later ask the House to agree to postpone the consideration of the Committee stage of the measure in order that that amendment may be prepared.

MR. SMITH (Brown Hill-Ivanhoe): I desire to oppose this measure. It may be that the provision objected to was introduced into the English Constitution away back in 1801, but there was a very good reason for it then and there was also a very good reason for its being introduced into our Constitution. Because provisions are ancient they are not, therefore, to be condemned. Probably one of the best reasons against the measure is that most people seem to think there are no reasons against it. I can imagine an election in which a clergyman was a candidate. Do members think that sectarian issues would not arise in such circumstances? Do members think it desirable we should introduce anything into or take anything out of the Constitution that would give rise to that almost inevitable possibility? I do not think there is any demand at all on the part of clergymen for removing this particular provision from the Constitution.

A man who is a clergyman is supposed to have a vocation for that particular calling. He is supposed to have a call from God, to have some divine inspiration in his composition. I was always taught that. I was instructed—to the extent that I have some religious instruction—that a man had to have a vocation to be a clergyman. It did not matter whether he would like to be a clergyman or not; he still had to have that vocation. If a man has a vocation and aspires to that position and is ordained, I cannot imagine his asking for such an alteration of the Constitution as is proposed

by this Bill, or stepping down from his high office into the sphere of politics. I do not think ministers of religion are fitted for politics. It seems to me that the whole of their training is to propound doctrines, not to examine them.

Only the other day I was reading an essay by a famous anthropologist, Sir Francis Galton, a man who was knighted by Edward the Seventh for his work in anthropology and heredity. Sir Francis said that a religious instructor, no matter of what creed, is one who is in a profession in which he has to saturate his pupils with prejudice. Bearing that in mind, I think it is quite sufficient for us to have his pupils in this House without having religious instructors here as well. I have known a minister of religion in this State to interfere with the composition of our Cabinet. He approached a member of this Parliament and pointed out that Cabinet in its then existing condition did not contain any members of their particular persuasion. The attention being drawn by this minister of religion to that fact led to a discussion with regard to the religion of another member of the Cabinet. Nothing was known of his antecedents, but between them they came to the conclusion, as a result of the discussion, that he was an unreliable support for the preservation and extension of certain preferences and privileges, and at the next Cabinet selection he was dropped in consequence. So, if ministers of religion can do that outside the House what, I ask members, can they do inside? I oppose the measure.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco—in reply): I have been asked by the Minister for Mines to define what is a clergyman or a minister. A clergyman, to my way of thinking, is a man in Holy Orders who is registered as such; a minister is one who serves a certain recognised church.

The Minister for Mines: Recognised by whom?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: By the authority of that particular church. If the minister started a church and became a minister, he could not sit in this Parliament.

The Minister for Mines: I suppose there is more money in a new religion than in politics.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The Leader of the Opposition said that a clergyman can be defrocked, and led us to believe that such

a man might take his seat here. Defrocking is not heard of in the church. It is some sort of lay talk. A clergyman can be delicensed, but not defrocked. Clergymen are licensed or not licensed in this State. If they are not licensed, they have not a parish. If they are licensed, they may have a parish. They have to be licensed to carry out the ceremonies of burial, marriage and baptism. People, of course, can be married outside a church. If ministers are not licensed, they do not do these things. I said, when I introduced the Bill, that we had in this State a number of unlicensed clergymen, although they are clergymen, because once a man is a clergyman he is always a clergyman. But he can be an unlicensed or a licensed clergyman. I spoke of one who is in the South-West. I could mention others, but I have in mind one in particular who has an orchard. He is an unlicensed clergyman.

Mr. Cross: He is not a clergyman, then.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: If members would only go to church and learn church law and find out something about it, they would not be so terribly dense. I cannot explain the position any more than by saying that once a man is a clergyman he is always a clergyman. You cannot take away from him the fact that he is always a clergyman. The member for Swan told us that a friend of his could not nominate for Parliament because he is a clergyman. Although he has not been practising as a clergyman for 23 to 25 years, but has been an orchardist, he is still a clergyman, and that is why he could not stand. That is the position I want to overcome by this Bill. A man who is a clergyman or a minister should be allowed to nominate for Parliament. The Leader of the Opposition said it was like allowing judges and magistrates to nominate. It is not. A judge is paid by the State, and administers law. A magistrate is paid by the State but a clergyman is not. A criminal is kept by the State, so that we can understand a criminal not being allowed to nominate, but I cannot understand why a clergyman or a minister of religion should not be permitted to do so. The member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe said that by so doing greater sectarian issues might be created. I do not think that would happen. Nevertheless, that has already occurred. Whether clergymen are elected to this House

or not, there will always be, as there always has been, a certain amount of sectarianism.

Mr. Needham: There should not be.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I agree with what the member for Perth says, but I do not think that if this Bill were passed it would make one bit of difference. In fact, I think if we had a few such members we would have much less sectarianism and there would be a better attitude towards the House. We must remember that in the early days all our laws were made by ecclesiastics.

The Minister for Mines: We have abolished most of those laws.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: So many have remained on the statute-book that I seem to have been quoting them all night. This is the only State of the Commonwealth, and the only place I know of in the world, that has such a law on its statute-book. I think it is a disgrace to Western Australia not to get in line with the rest of Australia on this question. We are asking the people to become Australia-minded.

The Minister for Mines: Some weeks ago many of you were not saying that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I might reply to the Minister for Mines, although he does not deserve it, by saying that he does not know how I voted a few weeks ago. He is, of course, referring to the Referendum, but that has nothing to do with the Bill. We are all the time trying to make this a united nation and to make the people Australia-minded. By this Bill I am trying to bring our laws into line with those of the other States. I am amazed that there should be any opposition to a measure such as this when I know, as the Minister has said, that the majority of clergymen and ministers are men of education.

I agree with the member for Brown Hill-Ivanhoe that many would not step down from their heights, but, on the other hand, I cannot see why they should not have the opportunity to do so, if they so desire, especially as we have cases in point. I refer to Mr. Haynes, who wished to nominate for Swan, but could not do so. In addition, as I said when introducing the Bill, a brilliant man like Kenneth Henderson is debarred from coming into this House simply because 25 years ago he was a clergyman, and still is today. He was then

a practising clergyman, if that term can be used. A man of that type, with brains and education, would raise the tone of the House, but he is debarred from coming here. I do hope that the Bill will be passed and that members will be open-minded in dealing with it.

The Minister for Mines: We are convinced on this side of the House.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: It has been said that ministers of religion have a full-time job in their endeavours to save souls. I think that if more could be done to save souls in this House the position would be better all round. It is the fact that we do not attempt to save souls that explains why the world is so rotten today.

The Minister for Mines: You speak for yourself!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Although it may be true that ministers of religion have a full-time job in many instances, it is equally true that there are many who engage in other activities during the week. There are quite a dozen that I know of in Western Australia who are not officiating ministers but follow other occupations, although they occasionally take the pulpit on Sundays. There is, for instance, the Church of Christ—

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I think the hon. member is now traversing new ground, and members will not have an opportunity to reply to her statements.

Mr. Cross: And anyhow the men referred to are not clergymen.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I feel that no man should be debarred from the right to enter this House if he so desires, if that man has an obligation to live under the laws of the land and wishes to have the privilege of assisting in formulating those laws.

Question put.

Mr. SPEAKER: It will be necessary to divide the House on the second reading of this Bill.

Division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	21
Noes	..	..	..	13
				—
Majority for	..	..	..	8
				—

AYES.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Doney
Mr. Graham
Mr. Hawke
Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Hill
Mr. Hoar
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Kelly
Mr. McLarty
Mr. North

Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Owen
Mr. Panton
Mr. Seward
Mr. Shearn
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Watts
Mr. Willmott
Mr. Withers
Mr. Perkins

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Berry
Mr. Coverley
Mr. Fox
Mr. Lenby
Mr. Marshall
Mr. Millington
Mr. Needham

Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Smith
Mr. Telfer
Mr. Triant
Mr. Wilson
Mr. Cross

(Teller.)

Mr. SPEAKER: As the Bill has not received the necessary constitutional majority, the question is resolved in the negative.

Question thus negatived; Bill defeated.

MOTION—COMMONWEALTH CURRENCY.

As to Retention of Control.

Debate resumed from the 27th September on the following motion by Mr. Marshall:—

That this House is of opinion that any international agreement that involves the surrender of the Commonwealth's sovereignty over its currency, either partly or wholly, would be disastrous, involving, as it would, the complete domination of the social and economic standards and freedom of the Australian people, by a foreign body. This House, therefore, enters a protest against any such agreement being signed without the consent of the people of Australia being first obtained, and that other State Premiers be invited to co-operate with the Premier of Western Australia in expressing this view to the Commonwealth Government.

MR. PERKINS (York) [8.27]: There are one or two points I wish to raise so that the member for Murchison, in the course of his reply to the debate, may clear up the doubts in my mind. I feel that other members entertain some uncertainty as to what the scope of the motion really is. I do not know that I find anything obnoxious in the actual wording of the motion, but during the course of his speech in placing the matter before the House, the member for Murchison made certain remarks that raised some doubt in my mind as to the real effect of the motion. I am afraid that most members are somewhat in a difficulty with regard to the proposed international monetary agreement in that they do not know precisely what the agreement contains. There have been references in the Press to it, but

they have dealt only with portions of the agreement. Obviously there is much more in the document than has been referred to in the Press. The member for Murchison did not enlighten us very much regarding what the additional points in the agreement may be. Further, as the motion sets out, it is not within the power of this Parliament to take any concrete action regarding the currency problem.

We can only recommend certain action to the Commonwealth Parliament. This being so, it means that we are recommending action for which we do not undertake the actual responsibility. That responsibility must lie with the members of the Commonwealth Parliament. Therefore we are perhaps going somewhat outside the bounds of our jurisdiction in making any recommendation on the matter. The whole question of international and even national monetary affairs is a very technical one. It is a subject which requires a great deal of study and which State members of Parliament are not called upon to study in the same intensive way as are Commonwealth members, because Commonwealth members have to take the responsibility for whatever financial policy is adopted in the Federal sphere. Consequently I doubt whether it is strictly proper for this Parliament to recommend action for which we do not have to accept the final responsibility, although the results of that action could materially affect each and every one of us.

In considering the motion and after reading the speech of the member for Murchison, I find that he makes reference in the motion to the impingement of the international agreement on the national currency of Australia, but in his speech he referred to the wider question of international trade. It is on the question of international trade that I feel some misgivings. The primary producers, particularly in the period from 1930 onwards, have given special consideration to the question of free international trade. The low prices for the major export primary products have impressed all primary producers with the absolute necessity for getting back to a freer system of international trade if we are going to improve international affairs generally and improve the living standards of all nations of the world.

This position has been endorsed by the Atlantic Charter. The first principle of the

Atlantic Charter is free international trade, but when it comes to implementing the Atlantic Charter, the trouble really begins, and I am afraid this is something that our high protectionist friends in Australia will have to face up to, namely, what the Atlantic Charter really means. If it means anything, I believe it means doing away with many of the artificial restrictions of international trade. Over and above whatever artificial restrictions there have been to international trade, there are the further natural restrictions in the shape of the difficulty of obtaining the requisite exchange in the various countries to pay for the different classes of exports and imports.

I have taken from an issue of the "Year Book" before the war a few figures referring to Australia's export and import trade. Our total exports in that year amounted to £122,000,000 sterling made up of wool £38,000,000, wheat £16,500,000, meat £11,000,000, butter and cheese £9,000,000 and other exports of varying amounts. Those are all commodities which Australia is particularly fitted to produce by reason of its natural conditions, and they are commodities which at the present time particularly—and we hope this will prevail also in the post-war years—are needed by people in other parts of the world. In return for the total exports of £122,000,000 in that year, we received imports of a value of £114,000,000. I take it that the gap between the £114,000,000 and the £122,000,000 was made up of interest commitments on loans owing outside Australia. I was not able to clear up that point, but I think it fairly certain that the difference of £8,000,000 may be accounted for in that way.

Mr. North: Is not that a rather small gap?

Mr. PERKINS: In late years the amount of borrowing outside Australia has been on a very much lower scale than before and of course very much lower than the borrowings in Australia. In return for those exports we receive various imports as follows:—Tea £2,333,000, cotton and linen piece goods £6,000,000, silk and artificial silk £3,333,000, bags and sacks £1,500,000, petroleum £6,000,000, oils and kerosene £2,000,000, motorears, etc., £8,500,000, rubber £2,000,000, and drugs, chemicals and fertilisers £5,000,000, and other varying items. Members will realise that those are

lines which Australia vitally needs and which up to date we have not been able successfully to produce in Australia. In fact, I doubt whether some of them will ever be produced in any great quantity in Australia, and by way of instance I might mention tea and rubber as outstanding items. Possibly bags and sacks, petroleum, oils and kerosene also come within that category.

The point I wish to make particularly is that some disservice will be done to everyone in Australia if any additional obstacles are placed in the way of the free exchange of those exports which we in Australia are particularly fitted to produce and the exports which we require from overseas. Australia, of course, is only one of a great many countries throughout the world, and the problem for some countries is undoubtedly infinitely more acute than for Australia because we do produce the basic necessities of life, whereas some of the other countries are actually forced to rely for the basic necessities of life on imports from other countries. Consequently we must be impressed with the need for ensuring that no further artificial barriers are placed in the way of that freedom of exchange between one country and another.

One of the difficulties that has hampered this free exchange has been the form of currency to make up the difference between a surplus of exports over imports in one country in relation to some other country in another part of the world. The same problem would arise within our own national borders were it not for the currency we have, which smoothes out those difficulties and does away with the need for actual barter of goods. In barbarian times the only means of exchange of goods was by a system of barter; but we have so far developed within our own national borders that we employ currency to grease the way, as it may be termed, for the exchange of commodities between one person and another. The problem in the international sphere is to provide in that sphere a form of currency which will achieve that same end on an international basis. In times gone by, gold was largely relied upon to do that work. I think the member for Murchison will agree that gold has not by any means proved entirely satisfactory for the purpose.

There are, of course, many other mediums. I suppose our friends in the commercial

world would tell us that the ordinary instruments of exchange, for instance bills of exchange, performed the major part in bringing about free exchange of goods between one country and another; but as I have understood the proposals put forward in particular by Lord Keynes and in the American international plan, the design of this currency is to bring about the free exchange of goods on an international basis and so implement the main term of the Atlantic Charter in a similar way to that which we have adopted with the same objective within our own national borders—namely, by our own national currency designed for that purpose. I do not know exactly what the ideas of the member for Murchison in that regard are, but some of his remarks seemed to indicate that he entertained hostility to any form of international currency. I hope that is not the case, because I believe that some form of international currency could be devised that would avoid the pitfall to which the member for Murchison has referred, and yet would achieve the major end of bringing about the exchange of commodities between one nation and another.

I also feel that unless we do bring about the free exchange of commodities between nations, it is only a matter of time before the same unsatisfactory conditions will arise which were largely instrumental in bringing about the present war. In my opinion it behoves every national Government, our own Australian Government included, to explore every possible channel in order to bring about the desired end. There are at present many brilliant men working on the problem. From what I have read I have every reason to believe that Lord Keynes is an entirely disinterested party; and I cannot associate him with the schemes that the member for Murchison would have us believe are being prepared. I sincerely hope that the hon. member's fear is unfounded. But although the actual wording of his motion is largely unobjectionable, I have the fear at the back of my mind that the hon. member is hostile to any form whatever of international currency. If this motion means that we are opposing the establishment of some form of international currency, I shall not be able to vote for it; but I hope the hon. member will be able to reassure me. Then, on my

present interpretation, I would not have the same serious objection.

MR. NORTH (Claremont): I support the motion, not because I am against international currency, but because I feel that the wording of the motion suggests that the member for Murchison wishes to protect our internal powers in these matters. The danger is that by means of international currency local nations have been controlled internally, and in some cases to their great disadvantage. I have here an article in one of the monthly publications headed, "The Lost Dominion—Britain's Oldest Possession." The reference is to Newfoundland, which passed into the hands of its creditors in 1931. It had a population of 300,000 persons and a debt of £20,000,000, which compares favourably with this State's population of 450,000 and its debt of 90-odd millions. From those figures it will be recognised that the people of Newfoundland were far better placed than we are as regards loan position. However, the Parliament of Newfoundland was dissolved, and the country run by a Commission of Six, and has been ever since. Everybody who has read about Newfoundland knows the terrible poverty which has been prevalent since then, until the war, in the oldest of British Dominions. We have survived those times and still retain our Parliaments, but we must do something to enable the world system of finance to operate again.

I am glad, therefore, that this motion has received support from both sides of the House. The issues involved are so numerous, and have been debated and studied so long, that there is no time to consider them all in one sitting. However, one aspect is that none of the authorities knows quite how to deal with the situation. If Lord Keynes himself is able to have his ideas carried into effect—which he is not, being opposed by America—they will be found quite different from others put forward during the past 20 years. His suggestion was that trade balances between the nations should be so adjusted that one nation would not be able to bring another one into debt. Further, he advocated full employment, which also may be called a policy of full consumption, with lesser hours of work and more machines. The old international financial policy should not be considered, because local cur-

rencies were raised and lowered to suit the exigencies of the times; and this caused unemployment on many occasions.

It seems to me therefore that the motion is quite compatible with international agreements of satisfactory dimensions and plenty of international trade, but at the same time it is urged that those conditions should not be maintained merely by ceaseless prejudicing of local consumption and local conditions. The real issue, of course, has never been faced and told to the world in black and white. That real issue is, how far shall local industry survive and how far shall international industry capture the market. That problem has never been solved. I am not one of those who wish to laugh at difficulties. In this House many years ago a proposal was mooted that an amount of £100,000 should be set aside to form a sum for purchasing the best brains in the world for the solution of the problem. That problem is, for instance, as to how much aluminium Tasmania should produce and as to whether the Tasmanian works should be closed down.

To show that that proposal was not altogether out of place, the Bank of England did the people of Claremont the great compliment a few weeks ago of adopting that very suggestion, which was to place £100,000 apart for the purpose of finding out what was wrong with the economic and financial systems. That fund was made available some six or eight weeks ago and men are now working on the very problem which today is exercising the mind of the member for Murchison. That is the approach to this matter. We should stand firm with him in maintaining that we should retain complete control of our Australian currency. We should give humble thanks that the Bank of England and others are searching for a solution of the problem now being considered by this House.

I have read various works on this subject and in only one did I find what, in my opinion, is the real problem. I have never seen that problem publicised in the Press. It is this: The world is now so efficient and production so terrific that the only way in which it is possible to mask the true power of industry is by means of tariffs and obstacles which will prevent trade. The theoretical alternative is that if there were complete free trade throughout the world and all trade barriers were broken down, it would be necessary for the workers to work

for less than four hours a day, or less than 20 hours a week; otherwise there would be such an enormous production of commodities that the world would be flooded with them. The Church of England put up this idea and advocated it. Those questions, however, are seldom mentioned.

We are told about adjusting finance and adjusting exchange, but are never told about the real menace to existing practices, which is the enormous power of the machine. Members will be aware that recently a member of the House of Commons said that if Britain were to work her aircraft industry for three days, she could supply all the civil aircraft demands for the next 15 years. That is an instance of the terrific power of industry. We are able by means of tariffs and other trade difficulties to prevent industries exerting their terrific power. As I say, this has not been realised by the community. I suppose it never will be until the day comes when the world is one State. The motion is on a very high plane, and I have much pleasure in supporting it. I trust that whatever international agreement is reached, it will not be one interfering with the fullest consumption of all the individual nations.

MR. TELFER (Avon): I wish to add my quota in support of the motion, if only as a gesture to the Prime Minister to get on with the good work. We must be allowed to organise our international currency and be permitted to deal with the Commonwealth Bank. I consider it a disgrace to Australia that some 10 or 15 years ago we had Sir Otto Niemeyer here dictating to us what somebody from overseas thought we should do. I am not opposed to co-operating with overseas markets.

Mr. Marshall: Nobody is!

Mr. TELFER: But it must be done on an honest basis. Why should the primary producer of Australia be exploited? In my opinion, our finance should be put under two heads, external and internal. As to internal finance, we should be allowed to manage that as we see fit. We must help the unemployed and, if necessary, assist farmers if the market prices of their products fall below par. It is the job of those in control of the internal currency to raise prices if wheat, wool, or any other of our major primary products which have to be sold overseas are at less than par value. We should have the privilege of extending credit to

ourselves for public works. For instance, I notice that, in reply to a question asked in another place, it was stated that to convert the railway line from Kalgoorlie to Perth to a gauge of 4ft. 8½in. would cost £5,500,000. If we had a large number of unemployed, why should we not be privileged to have that amount made available from our internal currency to carry out that work?

The Minister for Justice: If it is physically possible, it should be financially possible.

Mr. TELFER: That is something we must keep in mind. Money is also required to improve our educational system. We should be getting twice the value out of that system than we are getting today. I do not think that at present our children are receiving as good an education as they did, and that is because of the lack of educational facilities. We should also be able to put more public works in hand. It could be done by better management, but it all comes back to the bottle-neck of finance. As I said, I regard the motion as a gesture to our friends in the Commonwealth Parliament, who should be encouraged to go forward in this matter of currency management.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison—in reply): There is not much I have to reply to. I am grateful for the way in which the House has accepted the motion. Apart from what the member for York said, there is nothing to reply to. His utterances give me no ground for adopting a hostile attitude in making some brief observations to convince him. May I state clearly, distinctly and frankly, that I have no objection whatever to any international agreement?

Mr. Perkins: All right!

Mr. MARSHALL: But if such agreement involved the supreme power over our currency, I would object to it.

Mr. Perkins: So would I. That is all there is to it.

Mr. MARSHALL: Then there is no difference of opinion on that point. I differ from the member for York in that he seeks to get back to the old order, international competition for international markets. That is something which has cost his electors years of labour and much of their profit. Yet the member for York wants to retain that system. He wants what the Press is always careful to refer to as free international

trade. We never have had it and are never likely to get it.

Mr. Perkins: Why did Australia sign the Atlantic Charter?

Mr. MARSHALL: I am not answering for anything that another person has done or said, but only what I personally have said and done. Nor do I, like most members of Parliament, subscribe to what my leader says on all occasions. I do not always subscribe to actions performed by others, irrespective of what their political beliefs may be and of the political banner under which they travel. In looking around me, have I not seen, over all the years I have been able to understand politics, very little difference in any of the parties? One disaster after another has befallen the nation and poverty amidst plenty has been our experience under all forms of Government. Those are the things that cause me great concern, because it seems impossible to solve these problems. No matter who the leader may be or what his political views may be before he becomes leader, when he attains that position he seems to perpetuate the same anomalies and the people experience the same sufferings. Let me tell the member for York that if he wants free international trade the first thing he must do is to break down a most important barrier and that is the chronic shortage of money in all nations, created deliberately by international bankers, who control all money.

On many occasions I have mentioned not only my opinion on this subject but also the opinions of those who should know something about the subject. Josiah Stamp, Lord Keynes, Reginald McKenna, Gustav Cassel, McLeod and Douglas, have all pointed out that in the hands of a few bankers is retained the destiny of all nations, because they control the money and by controlling the money they control the price level. And when the price level is controlled farmers and others are impoverished. So the first need is to control our own money along lines frequently advocated by the present Prime Minister of Australia. Let us equate the price of goods produced in Australia and paid for in Australia with Australian currency created without any debt attached to it, and pay the primary producers for all they can produce when and where it is required here in Australia. Then any surplus can be disposed of overseas and it is immaterial what it brings. That is the solu-

tion of the problem. While we allow international bankers to control the nation's money and there is rivalry and the nations compete against one another and cut one another's throats for limited markets, there will never be anything else but war.

It was Woodrow Wilson who, a few days before he died—a despondent and disheartened man as an outcome of the last Peace Conference—asked who did not know the cause of war. Even a child of 14 years of age, a school boy, should know that modern wars are the outcome of commercial rivalry. It is of little use attempting to make out that some other factor causes war. If the member for York wants free trade, he must remove that restriction. This nation must attend to that immediately. It must fix a just price for the goods of primary producers in Australia, and whatever they may have over and sell in the world's markets will make little difference to them personally because they will have already been paid. As a matter of fact, it would be actual profit. Let us not have cries of "export or perish," this theory that all are so mad about! All nations adopt the same policy, and the outcome is that international rivalry reaches a point so hot that military conflicts ensue.

Mr. Perkins: Only exports pay for imports.

Mr. MARSHALL: Who is arguing about exports paying for imports? The goods produced in Australia that are ultimately exported will bring a value of some sort on the world's markets and that, of course, will do what it is doing today—pay for imports. But there will be no competition or rivalry about it; it will be free under the system I am advocating. The goods will have already been paid for here, and the producers' standard will not be governed by what he obtains abroad, as it is today. When the price fell in America in 1929, the fall reached Australia in 1930. It started in Wall-street and finished here. There was poverty everywhere and producers, who had so nobly performed their duty and produced goods in abundance, could not sell those goods because there was no money to pay for them in Australia or out of it. The reason for that was that the international bankers had decided on a reduction in the standard of living everywhere, and that was what they achieved.

What I have suggested is the only solution. The hon. member should agree with me. Then, some day, we may be able to do something to introduce a system of credit issues, debt free, which will be available to those who co-operate to supply the demand of society and will ensure a decent living standard. What goods we have over and above those necessary to meet our own needs can then be freely exported to other people who want them, and it will not be necessary for us to erect barriers around our country to prevent others from exporting goods to us. That is what causes all the trouble. There is a chronic shortage of money everywhere. There is not enough in Australia to purchase a fraction of the goods that are produced, so we build up a big tariff wall and prevent the importation of goods, and then say to people abroad, "You must take our goods." And other nations say the same and it all finishes up in war. It is only necessary to observe what has happened in the last two wars. Germany and Japan were highly industrialised nations that found themselves in conflict with other highly industrialised nations—England and America—on the world's markets. We did not go to war with France or China, because those are not highly industrialised nations.

Mr. Perkins: What about the United States of America?

Mr. MARSHALL: Likewise!

Mr. Perkins: We have not been at war with the United States.

Mr. MARSHALL: That reminds me of what the hon. member had to say concerning international agreements. I would advise him to look in some direction for reliable information in regard to international agreements other than in the capitalist Press. I have no objection whatever to any international agreement that will be for the betterment of Australia, or any other nation endeavouring to live a decent and honourable life. But if in order to get that we have to surrender our right and sovereignty over currency we shall get a lot more than we got in 1930.

Mr. Perkins: I would not suggest that.

Mr. MARSHALL: The member for York could not have read the motion, or he would not raise the point he did.

Mr. Perkins: It was not so much the motion as your speech.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. MARSHALL: I quote the first few lines—

This House is of opinion that any international agreement that involves the surrender of the Commonwealth's sovereignty over its currency, either partly or wholly, would be disastrous.

That is what the motion really means, namely, that under no circumstances will we agree that the Commonwealth shall surrender its present legal authority and power over currency issues as embodied in the Constitution, by the signing of some international agreement. If the Commonwealth subscribes to an international agreement that does not involve the points covered by the remarks I have just made, then the motion is not concerned with it. The member for York is very young in this House, and he took exception to recommending something to the Commonwealth Government. If he sits back idly and makes no effort to enlighten the Federal members as to what Western Australia wants then we shall have a different member for York very shortly!

Mr. Perkins: I have more faith than that in our Federal members.

Mr. MARSHALL: The motion also states this—

This House, therefore, enters a protest against any such agreement being signed without the consent of the people of Australia being first obtained.

It is simply asking that any agreement involving the control of our currency by some foreign body shall not be signed until the people of Australia have said yea or nay to it. I could go on to explain again exactly the principles in the agreement to which I am taking exception, namely, that according to the statements made in the Press we will be handing over, as a result of these agreements if they are signed, the Commonwealth Government's authority in connection with the issue of its own currency. There is not one nation or prospective participating nation that I know of, excluding Russia, that can deal with this agreement on all fours with America, because America has 95 per cent. of the world's gold in vaults. So how can international agreements, based on gold, be completed when no other country has the gold to use? The idea is that we should borrow the gold from America.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Murchison is getting away from the subject now.

Mr. MARSHALL: The member for York raised the point as to whether there was any danger in the international agreements as proposed.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for York did not quote what the member for Murchison has been quoting for the last few minutes.

Mr. MARSHALL: I shall resume my seat. Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

MOTION—PUBLIC UTILITIES.

As to Facilitating Efficiency.

Debate resumed from the 28th September on the following motion by Mr. North:—

Since public utilities are here to stay everything possible should be done to facilitate their efficiency, in particular the public should be able to put their money into such concerns as the Railways, Electricity and Tramway and Trolley systems,

to which an amendment had been moved by Mr. McDonald as follows:—

That after the word "particular" the words "the question should be examined as to whether and to what extent" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed.

MR. NORTH (Claremont—in reply) [9.14]: The Minister for Works, who is not present tonight, was diffident about this motion. A few words from me might make his mind easier. If I might put the case shortly it would be in this way: Imagine a house with a £1,000 mortgage on it!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Are these remarks in reply?

Mr. NORTH: Yes. The mortgage on the house carries interest at five per cent. The parents and children in the home have savings totalling £1,000. They suddenly realise that they get only two per cent. on their savings, so that if they pay off the mortgage they will increase their joint income by about £20 per annum which will help to maintain and improve the home. That is what is entailed in this motion. The people of Australia have saved between £500,000,000 and £600,000,000 which is lying in the savings banks. On the other hand we have an overseas debt of roughly the same amount of money. Not only does our overseas debt carry about four per cent. interest which means about £20,000,000 a year, but because of this we are unable to run our big public utilities, like the railways, on an efficient

basis, because they have to pay four per cent. The other railways in the world are run by private enterprise and it is considered a very bad show if they do not pay 3½ per cent. net profit.

The people of Australia have accumulated these savings as a result of a full time employment policy. If that continues after the war surely the public can be induced to subscribe to the public utilities. The proposal is purely voluntary. Just as today the people invest their money in 2½ per cent. war loans they could invest it in peacetime in the improvement of these utilities to bring them up to date in various ways. The Commonwealth Bank could hold the funds of its savings bank depositors. If that were done we could get a system whereby as the loans fell due overseas we would pay them off.

Mr. Rodoreda: Can you pay off overseas debts with savings bank deposits?

Mr. NORTH: With Commonwealth Bank currency——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Is the member for Claremont replying to the debate?

Mr. NORTH: I can show you, Mr. Speaker, in "Hansard" where I am.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member replying to the remarks of the Minister for Railways?

Mr. NORTH: No, to those of the Minister for Works. His point was that ownership by the people is the present position and that therefore the people could not be asked to buy what they already own. I am saying that although we are nominally the owners, these public utilities are run on a four per cent. interest basis and yet the people of Australia generally, and this State in particular, have similar sums in the bank on which they are drawing two per cent. interest or less. If the authorities concerned happen to hear of this motion, or if they see it in the Press, it is possible that one bright official in the Commonwealth Bank might realise the point and commence advocating the use of the depositors' money in the savings bank. That would start a valuable policy for Australia, because it would link up with the motion just carried. The member for York said that we showed a big difference between the amount of our exports and that of our imports.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for York said that on a different motion altogether. The member for Claremont can-

not discuss what the member for York said on a previous motion.

Mr. NORTH: Then I will leave the hon. member out of the argument. I stress the point, however, that the effect of this proposal will be to secure a balance between the goods we export and those we import. If that is accomplished we will have sound trading and that will help to put Australia on a proper economic basis. Certainly no harm could follow upon the acceptance of the motion seeing that it will afford officials an opportunity to take notice of the issues and act accordingly.

Question put and passed; the motion, as amended, agreed to.

MOTION—HARBOURS.

As to Formation of State Board.

Debate resumed from the 28th September on the following motion by Mr. Hill:—

That in the opinion of this House a State harbours board should be formed for the purpose of providing the State with a co-ordinated and efficient policy of harbour and port development, administration and control.

MR. PERKINS (York) [9.21]: I wish briefly to support the motion. The member for Albany, in placing it before members, did so in a comprehensive manner and I cannot imagine that much opposition will be raised to his proposal. He can speak from the point of view of a representative of one of our important ports and I desire to address myself to the motion from the angle of the producers who make use of our ports. My concern is to see that producers generally are able to secure the best service possible from the natural advantages that the State possesses. I am certainly not concerned about the merits of any particular port nor am I concerned with the port of Albany, for instance, as distinct from the port of Banbury. I am desirous of securing proper and efficient services for the producers generally.

In my opinion, with the creation of a board such as that suggested in the motion, we could expect a better co-ordinated harbour policy than we possess at present. Many considerations affect the development of the different ports. There are varying types of control and we can easily appreciate that, with divided forms of administration such as exist now, there is a grave danger that a particular port will be developed to suit the controlling authority

rather than with the object of rendering full service to the producers. In addition, the developmental policy pursued so far has been largely short-termed. I doubt if sufficient regard has been paid to the general development of the State such as we may expect in the next 40 or 50 years. One could hardly imagine that the natural advantages a harbour such as Albany possesses would have been neglected to the extent that they have been if the development we can expect in the southern portions of the State within the next four decades or so had been taken into account.

Mr. Withers: That phase has been neglected for the past 40 years.

Mr. PERKINS: Perhaps it has. The fact remains that the facilities of our ports must be developed. So far that has not been done, and I am convinced that it requires the creation of some proper statutory body to determine a general policy that will govern the development of our ports in future.

Mr. Withers: The question is whether the harbour authority would develop the hinterland.

Mr. PERKINS: I have no doubt that the producers in the hinterland will cover that end of the problem. They are doing admirably at present. No-one would suggest that the producers in the South-West and the Great Southern are not doing a good job.

Mr. Withers: It is useless building a warehouse if you have nothing to put in it.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not regard that remark as relevant to the existing position. There is plenty of produce available for shipment through ports such as Albany and Bunbury without the necessity to despatch any to another harbour merely because suitable facilities are not available at the port which is the natural outlet for such produce. However, I do not wish to be led into an argument about particular ports. I admit frankly that I have no specific knowledge of the respective problems applying to the several ports. In my opinion if a statutory board were set up, that body would be able to arrive at a reasoned judgment as to how the several ports should be developed. There are other phases that I shall refer to.

When the member for South Fremantle spoke on the motion, he supported it to a limited extent, apparently with the object

of improving the general conditions of the stevedores on the wharf. His references to the conditions under which the men on the wharf are compelled to work at present came as something of a revelation to me. So far as I can judge, the rectifying of the unsatisfactory conditions of work could be effected without the expenditure of any great amount of money or the provision of much plant. I do not think it necessary to create a State harbour board merely to accomplish that end. I agree that such a step would simplify the matter, but I think the men concerned might do something to help themselves. The member for South Fremantle referred to the difficulties and the small amount of work provided by the stevedoring company. To my mind there appears to be an admirable field in which the men themselves could operate by establishing a co-operative organisation to take over the work that the stevedoring companies do at present. I imagine that the work could be done much better under co-operative control by the men themselves.

Mr. Fox: The shipping companies would not stand for that.

Mr. PERKINS: I do not know the individual problems that exist at Fremantle but I cannot see why the shipping companies should raise any objections.

Mr. Fox: They will.

Mr. PERKINS: At any rate I suggest that some such effort should be made. There will be plenty of support for such a move from members on the Opposition side of the House. Obviously if the work can be undertaken by the men themselves under a co-operative system, it will be much more desirable than a system that is controlled by individuals who do not render any particular service that is vitally necessary. Possibly the same applies to other services at the port such as amenities of one kind and another. It amazes me that the harbour administration has not, provided the authorities have been asked to do so, made available the facilities the member for South Fremantle mentioned in the way of showers and whatever else may be required.

Mr. Fox: There are several authorities, and what is everybody's business is nobody's business.

Mr. PERKINS: I agree that it is an undesirable state of affairs, and if the formation of a State harbours board will bring about an improvement in that direction, so much

the better. If one wants to get good service from employees in a particular concern, one must do the best possible for them in the circumstances. I am surprised that a body like the Fremantle Harbour Trust has not taken action before this to ensure that reasonable facilities are available to the employees and thus make the men contented. The hon. member also made some remarks about shipping lines. I do not know that that has much to do with the motion except that he had visions that a State harbours board might enter the shipping business. I would not support a proposal of that sort, and I do not think the hon. member made out a case, because his figures included some obvious errors. He spoke of the Commonwealth line charging £7 10s. per ton freight, British lines £13 and foreign lines £15. That would make the Commonwealth line 4s. on wheat, the British lines 7s., and the foreign lines 8s.

Mr. Fox: That was for general cargo.

Mr. PERKINS: I have not the actual figures for general cargo, but the correct figure for wheat was 9d. a bushel approximately for the United Kingdom. In any event, I am doubtful whether the Commonwealth shipping line has been the success in any direction that the member for South Fremantle suggested. If we take the line operated by the co-operative organisation before the war, the Commonwealth line could not compare with it for service or freight. So I think the member for South Fremantle was on weak ground when he suggested that a State harbours board might enter the shipping business. However, that is more or less beside the point and certainly not vital to the motion. I rose to speak more in support of the idea of having a State body to secure an adequate service for the producers of the State rather than of any particular locality.

MR. HILL (Albany—in reply): I wish to thank the Minister and members for the manner in which they have received this motion. It is an entirely non-party matter and my object in moving the motion was to try to bring about some change that would benefit the State as a whole. Reference has been made to the fact that I have made a very careful study of our ports, and perhaps an explanation might not be out of place. I have been in a rather unique posi-

tion as for many years I had my own coastal port adjacent to my fruit-shed.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That has nothing to do with the hon. member's reply to the debate.

Mr. HILL: I am giving the reason why I have made a study of our ports.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is permitted to reply to only what has been said in the course of the debate.

Mr. HILL: I have had the privilege of meeting port authorities all over Australia. The Minister said that the question of forming a State harbours board is being considered by the Government. I was very glad to hear that statement and I assure him that if I can be of any assistance, I shall be only too glad to give it. The Minister has truly said that every State has an entirely different problem, but I maintain that we can learn something from every State and every country. In South Africa the transport problem is handled better than anywhere else in the world. All the ports there are under the control of the general manager of the South African Railways and Harbours. After the last general election in South Africa, a Ministry of Transport was appointed, but I have not learnt particulars of what re-organisation has taken place. I do not think that the South African system would be the most suitable for this State. In South Africa there is unified control, whereas for this State I favour co-ordinated control.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is breaking new ground and raising new matter.

Mr. HILL: I think I am replying to the Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister made no reference to South Africa.

Mr. HILL: But other members have spoken about matters having no relation to the motion. Even in this State we have two distinct problems, one affecting the South-West and the other the northern parts of the State. The member for South Fremantle stressed the need for giving greater consideration to employees. I heartily endorse his remarks. Members on this side of the House realise that in harbours administration there must be a representative of the employees, because there must be close co-operation between the administration and the workers in order to get satisfactory results. That co-operation can be obtained

only by having a representative on the administration. As for his reference to a State shipping service in connection with a harbours board, I cannot agree with that. While we need to have shipping men on a harbours board, the management of a shipping company is an entirely different proposition from the management of ports. The member for Bunbury seemed to be rather afraid of the proposal.

The Minister for Mines: He always is.

Mr. Withers: What is the proposal?

Mr. HILL: To have a State harbours board to bring about a co-ordinated port policy for the whole of the State. The hon. member made the remarkable suggestion that this should be a trading concern. It would not be a trading concern at all. We on this side of the House want proper State administration for our transport and other utilities. Some experts recommend that instead of a State harbours board we should have local harbour boards, and go so far as to say that each local harbour board should stand on its own feet. If that were applied to Bunbury, what would the position be? Suppose the Minister went to the chairman of the Bunbury Harbour Board and said, "Your port is now £400,000 behind—"

The Minister for Mines: That is about what it would be, too.

Mr. HILL: — "and is making a loss of nearly £30,000 every year. You people who use that port—"

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Bunbury will not have an opportunity to speak to that. The hon. member should have raised the point when moving the motion.

Mr. HILL: Under my proposal I suggested that the ports favourably situated should be used to help to finance those ports not so favourably situated. I regret that the Minister for Works and the Minister for Railways replied to me only by interjections. Am I allowed to reply to those interjections?

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may go on until I stop him.

Mr. HILL: Very good, Sir. The Minister for Works said I was prejudiced against Bunbury. There is a good argument for a State harbours board because we want members who know their job. The Minister for Railways said the ships were cutting out the ports. I contend that the ships are not

responsible for the existing state of affairs. The Minister for Railways administers our tramways. A year or two ago our trams were accustomed to stop every hundred yards or so; but the tramway authorities decided to cut out a number of stopping places in order to provide a more efficient service. Today we want a similar policy adopted with regard to ports. It will be for a State authority on ports to co-ordinate all the ports and to decide what ports shall be developed and what ports shall be used for local purposes. The final speaker, the member for York, truly said that his consideration was for the producer. We must not, however, consider every little parochial interest throughout the State, but should aim at a policy of providing ports so that we can export our products at the lowest possible cost. It is for that reason I have moved the motion.

Question put and passed; the motion agreed to.

House adjourned at 9.43 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 12th October, 1944.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

MR. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of his report on the Treasurer's statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year ended the 30th June, 1944. It will be laid on the Table of the House.