

The HONORARY MINISTER: I move an amendment—

That the following paragraph be inserted after paragraph (a):—

(b) includes the word "saving" or "savings" or the words "savings bank" or "savings institution" or "savings department" or "savings section" as part of the designation or title, or as a description of the business, or of any department, section, or other part of the business of such firm or person;

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That the following subsection be inserted:—

(5) Nothing in this section contained shall apply to any person whose Christian or surname may include any word or words prohibited from use as aforesaid, nor shall such person be prohibited from continuing to use such name or names provided such name or names are not used in combination with any other word or words, unless the consent of the Governor by Order-in-Council be first obtained.

Hon. G. Fraser: That would appear to be very dangerous.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: No, it is necessary to meet the case mentioned by Mr. Bolton who spoke of a man having the surname of "State." There are people with the Christian or surname of "England," and such people would be debarred from using their own names. Adequate safeguard is provided.

The HONORARY MINISTER: The Solicitor-General advises that the proposed new section will not operate to prevent a person from carrying on business under his own name such as "Frederick King" or "James Royal."

Hon. H. S. W. Parker: Suppose it was "George Royal?"

Hon. W. J. MANN: There are persons in this State whose names end with "vich." The amendment goes a long way, but it will not provide sufficient safeguard against a man intent on doing the wrong thing. Such a man might change his name to "State."

Hon. J. Nicholson: He would not be allowed to do that.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I move an amendment—

That after the word "section" in line 4 of the proposed new Subsection (6) the words and parentheses "(the use of which has not been consented to as aforesaid)" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 3, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments.

House adjourned at 6.14 p.m.

Legislative Assembly.

Thursday, 7th November, 1940.

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

MOTION—WANT OF CONFIDENCE.

Farmers' Debts Relief.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [4.33]: I move—

That in consequence of the refusal of the Government to introduce legislation giving an established authority power to postpone the debts of primary producers who are unable to pay the same by reason of adverse seasonal or price conditions, or to provide in the alternative other relief from such debts, the Government no longer retains the confidence of this House.

I do not propose to recite all the disabilities and disadvantages from which primary producers of this State are suffering. These are well enough known to members. Rather do I want to put up a substantial case to justify the motion I have moved, and so far as I can, I intend to recite the whole story. I will start with a period in September when a deputation representing the Country Party waited upon the Minister for Lands, and pointed out to him what the financial position of the farmers was over a large part of the State in consequence of the prevailing drought conditions. The Minister was informed of the difficulties that a number of farmers would face because they had no returns from their operations, or only scant returns, and it was contended that it

would be better, in instances where there were any returns, that those returns should be retained for the purpose of carrying on, and at the same time avoid the necessity for obtaining further credit. If there was any surplus, that surplus could be used to pay current debts, or could be used in partial payment of the season's outstanding debts, suspension being granted in respect to the balance of the debts. It was never intended that a moratorium or postponement of debts should be granted in a general way. We realised that a proportion of the farmers were in a position to attend to their own affairs, and it was unnecessary to grant them any relief. It was presumed, therefore, that any measure of relief granted should be dealt with by a tribunal, and each case tried on its merits. It was not intended to have a general moratorium, but to appoint a commissioner so that the cases could be tried before him. When we interviewed the Minister we handed to him a copy of a Bill then before the Victorian Parliament, as an example of the type of legislation that might be useful to him when framing a Bill suitable for this State. He agreed to give consideration to the matter, and suggested that some amendment might be made to the stay order provisions of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. This might have served the purpose provided it did not necessitate the carrying on of operations under the supervision of a receiver, such as the Act at present requires. In all probability the Minister will tell us that we already have two pieces of legislation on the statute books of the State, namely, the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act and the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. The Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act served its purpose, but has no application to any mortgage entered into after August, 1931. That is nine years ago, and the Act would therefore have no application to recent mortgages. The Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act also served its purpose at the time it was introduced. I admit that probably not a great deal of use has been made of that legislation, and to a certain extent it has been more of a deterrent than a use. Many farmers are in difficulties not because of bad farming methods, but because of circumstances over which they have no control. It will be remembered that the Federal Government acquired all wheat and wool, meat, and everything else that was

available for export. In consequence, it is not making cash payments for anything except for wool, while the payments for all the other commodities are spread over a long period. Members will know that a substantial amount is outstanding on last season's wheat. It is very difficult to say what the amount will be or when it will be paid. It was felt that an opportunity should be given to the people concerned to have a suspension of their debts until they were in a position to liquidate them by their own efforts. The management of the farms should also be left to them. The Minister put up the usual plea, and expressed fear as to the effect that type of legislation would have.

The Premier: That was not a plea, but a statement of fact.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Not necessarily.

Mr. Cross: You wait and see.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is no use saying that it would affect credit. I know of no period in my life when credit was so difficult to obtain for almost anything as it is to-day. Money that would be available for investment is being absorbed in Commonwealth and State requirements. Very little money is available. The Premier knows that already regulations have been put through providing that a person may not float a company without authority from either the Federal Treasurer or the State Treasurer. There is no credit. It is no use saying this proposal will affect credit, for it will not do so. The Minister advanced the plea that the credit of the farmer would be taken away, and that his position would be worse than it is to-day. It would have been practicable to provide—in an Act passed for the purpose—that any credit granted for next season's operations could have been given priority treatment so as to remove any fear in that direction. Any suspension of debts for this year could have been a prior claim on the next harvest, and that would have removed the objection raised by the Minister. In the opinion of those associated with me on this side of the House, the necessity for creating a feeling of security, as far as possible, amongst the farmers is very evident. We are constantly being told it is essential for production to be maintained and continued, not only for the benefit of the State, but of the Empire. That is perfectly true. We have been continually asking farmers not only to continue

producing but to be sure to carry on all their farming operations. We have told the House repeatedly—it is no idle statement by any means—that men who have been farming for 30 or 35 years have simply walked off their properties and abandoned them completely. There must be some most definite reason for such actions.

Looking back over the years, I believe the cause has been not only the low prices obtained for wheat, but the culminating factor in the drought conditions of the present year. I believe that represents the cause of the trouble. If the farmers were given an opportunity to get out of their difficulties this year so that there would be some possibility of their facing the future with a ray of hope, there would be ample justification for asking them to continue to carry on. Everyone knows that the farmers have been conducting their operations at a loss for years past. I shall not quote the figures that have been so frequently mentioned in this House when extracts from the report of the Royal Commission on the Wheat Industry have been discussed. I could do so, but I fear it would merely serve to weary the House. We know very well that wheat cannot be produced at a profit in face of the returns obtained in recent years when the average price has been as low as 2s. 7d. or 2s. 8d. a bushel. Taking the State's average production at 12 bushels per acre, I assert confidently that no wheat farmer can possibly carry on successfully with wheat at its present low price. Then again, the return for wool has been reduced to a very low figure. But for the acquiring of the clip by the Imperial Government wool production would be practically unprofitable. For years past it has been claimed that wool cannot be produced at less than 1s. a lb. Each year we add to the costs imposed upon the industry because the farming community is the one section that can not pass on the added imposition. Annually we have loaded the industry with extra taxation, costs and other charges. We have asked the farmers to carry on their operations because they are engaged in national work and, in such circumstances, it is but fair that we should afford them some encouragement. Would any member like to place himself in the position in which the farmer finds himself? We must realise that the activities of a man who is constantly worried about his unpaid lia-

bilities will surely be hampered by a dominating feeling of insecurity. Would any member like to displace the average farmer—with his overhead indebtedness, with no ray of hope before him?

The Minister for Justice: I am one.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Fortunately the Minister has other means of securing a living. If he were merely a farmer and had no other interests from which he was able to draw remuneration, I fancy he would be sitting on the Opposition side of the House and we would have his support on this occasion. His affiliation with the Labour Party means that, when it comes to the final issue, the Minister will vote against the motion. Instances are continually being brought under our notice of banks and other lending institutions bringing pressure to bear on farmers and making the lives of those people even more intolerable. Much of this pressure is indirect. I shall give the House some indication of what I mean. For instance, a farmer may be informed that £450 is estimated as his return for the year's operations. Of that amount—these particulars were embodied in a letter which came into my possession—£169 will be required for interest and another £70 or £80 will be required for superphosphate. I do not think I am extravagant in placing the superphosphate requirements at that figure. In such an instance members will see that very little indeed is left for the farmer with which to provide for his living expenses quite apart from the payment of outstanding debts. He will have little left for the purchase of duplicate parts for his machinery or for his other requirements. What earthly hope has the farmer in that position of meeting his liabilities? This year there will be absolutely no income at all available. In another instance brought under my notice, the farmer was advised that the whole of his proceeds would be retained for the reduction of his indebtedness and that nothing would be made available to enable him to carry on his property. There was only one alternative for that man; he walked off his holding. As a result we have still another abandoned farm, the effect of which is to depreciate the value of other propositions in the district. There are numerous such instances and I will leave other hon. members to state the experiences of farmers in their electorates. As an example of the feeling in the country dis-

tricts, I cannot do better than quote a letter written by the representative of a local authority operating in the wheat belt. The letter was written in September last, and I regard it as soundly worded, a document of which members may well take notice. The letter is as follows:—

At a meeting of my board held recently the position of the primary producer was discussed at great length, it being pointed out that under the present system of financing the farmer it becomes almost impossible for him to carry on successfully. Consequently the following motion was carried:—

That until the Government can formulate some policy of stability for the primary industries it is considered that a moratorium should be placed on farmers' debts.

Secondary industries are now protected, but not so with primary industries. The board believes that until some such protection is afforded a moratorium will give the farmer a chance to make a future recovery and at the same time protect him from his creditors. From time to time commissions have been appointed to study various aspects of farming, and it is supposed that now a fairly accurate figure could be given as to what the cost of production is. Having this figure, the next step would be its application and then the adjustment of secondary industries, thereby affecting the whole community and not one section as at present. The board is indeed mindful of the position the war has placed the Commonwealth in, especially in regard to the curtailment of usual markets. But as this industry is responsible for building up the country's prosperity, it is imperative it should be placed on a footing which for the present, at any rate, will give those engaged in it a chance of lifting their heads as honourable citizens.

Consideration of that letter will disclose that it was not written on behalf of a board of a revolutionary type, but one that seeks simply to ensure that time and opportunity shall be given to farmers who are in financial difficulties to straighten out their affairs. Unfortunately, these difficulties are not confined to farmers in what are known as the marginal areas. Their position is probably worse than the majority of the farmers elsewhere, but I can leave to members representing those parts the right to explain to the House the prevailing conditions as they know them. There are areas where in normal years the conditions are extremely favourable, whereas this year they are extremely bad. For example, a large section of the Gnowangerup district has produced normally an average of upwards of 20 bushels to the acre, whereas this year the average is only seven bushels.

The Minister for Justice: There should be no poverty there.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: What does the Minister mean?

The Minister for Justice: There should be no poverty in a district with an average of 20 bushels.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Would the Minister like to produce wheat at the rate of 20 bushels to the acre and sell it at a shilling a bushel? The Minister forgets that last year the farmers there secured no return because their crops were affected with rust.

The Minister for Justice: That may be so, but there should be no poverty in such a district. I am farming, and I have not put a shilling into my property since 1930, and it has paid its way. I am farming in a much less favourable district.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know that I dare question the Minister's statement.

The Minister for Justice: You cannot question it because I have given facts.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I dare say the Minister obtained his returns from other sources. The Minister may not have any debt on his farm, and may not have to pay interest.

The Minister for Justice: I have.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Well, as I said before, the hon. member has other sources of income and he does not feel the pinch. Probably a substantial amount has gone into the farm though perhaps not directly. Gnowangerup is one of those centres which are regarded as good, yet it will have only a 7-bushel average this year.

Mr. Watts: And might not get that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have said that it expects a 7-bushel average, but we must remember that the eastern portion of the district had rain in the earlier part of the season and the western portion did not. The yield for the eastern portion may therefore be nine or ten bushels, and hon. members can imagine how much below the 7-bushel average will be the yield from the western portion.

Mr. Cross: Some of that country will never grow a crop.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: We have two members on the other side of the House disagreeing about one district. Therefore how can I expect support for my motion from that quarter? Hon. members will be aware that just recently heavy rains fell in the Gnowangerup district and I want to point

out the plight in which the farmers are placed. Feed has been very scarce, the greater portion of it having been burnt off and what is left will be unlikely to survive the torrential downpours. Added to that is the risk of rust infection by rain falling at such unseasonable times.

The Premier: Do any creditors want to take the farms from them?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: That is not the point. Of course the creditors do not want the farms. All some of them want to do is to extract every shilling from men who are trying to drag a living from their farms, and I desire some protection for such men. To return to the deputation we had to the Minister for Lands. On the 3rd October the following letter was received from the Minister:—

I have given consideration to the submissions made by a deputation from your party and also the request that this Government consider the introduction of a Bill in connection with farmers' debts on similar lines to that introduced in Victoria.

I desire to advise you that the Government does not intend to introduce legislation on these lines.

It becomes apparent from that letter that the attitude of the Government is either unsympathetic, or else that it insufficiently understands the situation. In any event, it became necessary to consider what further action could be taken to ease the position. I and those associated with me then gave consideration to the introduction of a private member's Bill. It was proposed in the Victorian measure to give authority to deal with all debts, including Crown debts, and I regard that as essential, but it was considered that a private member's Bill would probably be dealt with by you, Mr. Speaker, in the same way as the Agricultural Bank Act Amendment Bill of 1936 was dealt with by the then Speaker.

The Premier: Why bind the Crown? Surely the Crown does not get much out of it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I say it does. Victoria found it necessary to bind the Crown and I can give instances in which some of our Government departments have been very harsh indeed.

The Minister for Lands: What has been the response to the Victorian Act?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I shall show later on that the Victorian legislation has acted

as a deterrent. I do not expect a rush from the passing of legislation such as I have suggested, any more than there was in 1914, when similar legislation was enacted by this Parliament, at a time when there was not the same justification for the measure as exists to-day. Not only the Agricultural Bank but the Water Supply Department and some other departments pressing for the payment of debts and harassing the farmers should be included.

The Premier: To ask for the payment of a debt is not to harass the farmer.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I would like to show the Premier some letters and ask him whether if he were not in a position to meet his debts he would like to receive such communications.

The Premier: I would not mind if I knew that I was receiving reasonable sympathy from the other end.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Unfortunately one cannot live on sympathy.

The Premier: Or on debts either.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Admittedly; but if his debts were suspended a man might secure sufficient credit to carry on by giving an undertaking to pay his debts from his current income.

The Premier: From whom would credit be obtained if every debt that was owing was suspended?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I have never suggested that such a course should be adopted. The Premier and some of his Ministers willfully try to misunderstand me. I have pointed out that it was not intended that this measure should provide for a general moratorium at all, but that a tribunal should be set up before which a debtor could state his case, the tribunal giving a decision on the matter. I have always argued, and will continue to argue—quite soundly I believe—that the Crown has no right to do what it asks other people not to do. When I was on the other side of the House I advanced the same argument. I remember that when an amendment to the Agricultural Bank Act was submitted and the party I represent was in office, I said that we should not impose on people conditions that we ourselves were not prepared to observe. The Minister will say that if these people make any payments under Section 51 of the Agricultural Bank Act, money will be re-advanced. But surely the simplest method of providing protection

for these people is to establish a tribunal before which they can state their case, and then instead of the money being handed over to the Agricultural Department and dozens of applications subsequently being made for refunds, allow them to use it themselves. Every member on this side of the House will support my contention that members of Parliament have been approached by farmers to intervene in this matter on their behalf. Very much better would it be for us to say, "As we know your income will barely be sufficient, operate it yourselves." I am sick and tired of the present procedure, particularly in view of the fact that the circumstances in which the farmers are placed are due to no fault of theirs. Is it reasonable to expect a man who is doing national work to go cap in hand to his creditors and say, "Please may I carry on my farming operations?"—operations that he has carried out in the past not for his own benefit but for that of the people who have provided him with funds.

Mr. Needham: This Government goes cap in hand to the Loan Council.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This Government is a sixth part of the Loan Council and is a part of the Loan Council at its own wish, because the Labour Government introduced the legislation agreeing to the establishment of the Loan Council. What would members on the Government side of the House think if the worker was placed in the same position as the farmer finds himself in, and had to go cap-in-hand for help? Would not the Government introduce legislation immediately to prevent that? Every scrap of industrial legislation introduced by the party opposite has been designed to strengthen the position of the workers. When I say we are asking for something reasonable for a section of the community that is worth while helping, we should not forget the legislation introduced into this House time after time designed to make the position of the worker more secure. There is a piece of legislation known as the Truck Act.

The Minister for Mines: There was when I was a boy.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: And doubtless the Minister made very good use of it.

The Minister for Mines: Did I?

Mr. J. Hegney: You are not going to attack that, are you?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am not going to give the Minister's party credit for that Act.

The Minister for Lands: You do not give us credit for anything.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: As a matter of fact, I give the Minister credit for many things. I have said many nice things about him, but he is not infallible and he should not think that he is. It would be dreadful if we had to take off our hats to him. Perhaps I am speaking a little more feelingly than usual, but time after time we on this side of the House have asked members to approve of an amendment of the Rural Relief Fund Act in order that the farmer might be given some relief from his secured creditors. That was a very reasonable proposition. I have yet to understand the moral difference between a written contract and an unwritten contract, but members on the Government side seem to regard a written contract as sacrosanct while an unwritten one may be set aside at will. Repeatedly we have asked for relief in that direction and repeatedly we have been refused.

The Premier: Who would be better off if you got it?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: All those people. The debts of farmers have increased to such an extent through the accumulation of interest arrears and the capitalisation of interest—

The Premier: A moratorium will not stop that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No, but if we could get an amendment of the Rural Relief Fund Act to enable the trustees to write down secured debts, just as they wrote down unsecured debts, the primary producers would not be carrying the load they are bearing to-day and there would be some outlook for them. Recently we entertained the hope that something would be done. A Bill to amend the Rural Relief Fund Act was introduced in another place, and an inquiry was requested into the financial difficulties and problems of the rural people. I was hopeful that the Chief Secretary, as spokesman of the Government in that House and on behalf of the Government, might have displayed a little sympathy in his attitude; on the contrary he opposed the motion for an inquiry by a joint committee. I am informed that in opposing the motion he said—

The immensity and diversity of the problems are such that no committee could hope to deal with them adequately in less than six months.

The Premier: That is so.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In the meantime, I am asking that some temporary relief be extended to these people.

The Premier: Who are the people from whom they need relief?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The creditors.

The Premier: No.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then the Premier does not know anything about it.

The Premier: I have not heard of any of them being slung off their holdings.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Premier has not heard of any of them being slung off their holdings!

The Premier: Well, you said something about them not starving.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Does the Premier contend that I said something wrong because I happened to mention that there was no farmer starving? I do not believe the farmers are starving; at the same time, they do not know which way to turn for a shilling or two to buy a suit of clothes or a pair of boots. There is a vast difference between actual starvation and inability to obtain the necessaries of life. The Chief Secretary, after referring to the immensity and diversity of the farmers' financial problems—

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the hon. member quoting something that was said in another place this session?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is what the Chief Secretary said.

Mr. SPEAKER: This session?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am not reading from "Hansard."

Mr. SPEAKER: Under the Standing Orders, no member may allude to any debate or the report of any speech on any matter impending in either House during the same session.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: This matter is not impending; it has been disposed of.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member may not refer to a debate that has taken place this session.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: From what occurred in another place, one would have expected some sympathy, but unfortunately sympathy was lacking.

Mr. Needham: The members of another place are very sympathetic gentlemen.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: While I am quite willing to obey your ruling, Mr. Speaker, I should like to direct your attention to the fact that members often comment upon and criticise the proceedings in another place. On some occasion I should like to have an opportunity to mention instances to you.

Mr. SPEAKER: Is the Leader of the Opposition disputing my ruling?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I am not. I admit that if the Government introduced legislation of the nature desired—such legislation as I am protesting against the Government's failure to introduce—other people might be affected, for instance, the country storekeepers. If it lay within my power to introduce such legislation, I would give the country storekeepers consideration. Ever since the Commonwealth Rural Relief Act was passed and the board has exercised the power to write down debts, it has written down the debts of farmers incurred with the storekeepers, but has not made provision to give the storekeepers any relief. The consequence has been that the storekeeper has received 2s. 6d. in the pound for the money owing to him, while the amount he has owed to other people has had to be paid to the full extent of 20s. in the pound. For this reason I say the country storekeeper is entitled to some relief, and this could easily have been provided for in the Bill submitted to Parliament. I appreciate what the country storekeeper has done; he has always been ready to assist in the establishment and maintenance of the securities of the secured creditors.

Mr. Hughes: And would you give the storekeeper's creditors relief also?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: If necessary, I would, by following along where writing down was justified.

The Premier: To the people who produce the goods?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes, if necessary, but it would not be so necessary in their case. The difference between a person who disposes of goods of secondary production or articles that the public usually purchases, and a primary producer, is that the seller in the first instance fixes a price in which he makes allowance for bad debts, while the

farmer is unable to fix a price for his commodities but has to take what the world offers him.

The Premier: Plus the flour tax.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: How much is that at present? A very small amount indeed. This year it would probably represent 1d. a bushel on his wheat.

The Premier: On this year's crop, it will mean a good deal.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It might. Probably half the wheat produced in Australia this year will be required for consumption in Australia.

The Premier: More than that.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: About half, and the other half will be available for export.

The Premier: Fifty-five million bushels out of 90 million bushels.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I admit there has been some delay since we discussed this matter with the Minister for Lands, but the Minister went East to attend a conference. For that reason, it could not be expected that the question would be brought before the House. I would have thought that the Minister would take the opportunity to explain the financial position of our farmers to the Commonwealth representatives and to the Premiers and Ministers for Agriculture in the other States. Whether he did so or not, we have not been informed. On the 28th October, the Commonwealth Government, under the National Security Act, gazetted the Debtors' Relief Regulations. Had those regulations afforded any relief to farmers suffering from drought conditions, I would not have been asking the House to agree to this motion to-day. But there is nothing in the regulations to that effect.

The Minister for Lands: You are not blaming us for that, are you?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No.

The Minister for Lands: You said you would not have moved the motion.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I said I would not have moved the motion had power been given under the Debtors' Relief Regulations. This is a precedent. The Commonwealth Government found it necessary to gazette Debtors' Relief Regulations under the National Security Act, and the member for East Perth was speaking of the ad infinitum process. If any applications are made under

those regulations, they will not affect the Crown. The word "debts" is defined in the regulations as not including—

(c) a liability to the Crown (whether in right of the Commonwealth or of a State) or to the administration of any Territory of the Commonwealth, on recognizance or bond;

(e) a liability in respect of advances granted by the Commonwealth or a State or the administration of any Territory of the Commonwealth to the debtor from funds provided directly or indirectly by the Commonwealth, State or administration;

(f) a sum due to the Commonwealth or a State or the administration of any Territory of the Commonwealth under any law of the Commonwealth, State or Territory with respect to taxation;

(h) a liability in respect of which the debtor is receiving relief or protection under any other law of the Commonwealth or under any law of a State or Territory of the Commonwealth, or a sum due under any such law in respect of the adjustment of debts;

(i) a sum due under a contract or agreement made, or a mortgage entered into, after the commencement of these regulations.

Clause 3 of the regulations reads—

(1) Any debtor who is unable to pay any debt by reason of circumstances attributable to the war may apply, in accordance with these regulations, to a tribunal for relief in respect of that debt.

No matter how much we may stretch our imagination, I do not think we can directly link up the position of the farmer with circumstances attributable to the war. It is true, of course, that he has been affected by the war. He has not a free market in which to sell his commodities, which have been acquired, though he has been paid a price probably far better than what would have been obtained had the free market been available. But he has to wait for payment. He is suffering from something at the moment that is even worse than the war; he is suffering from drought conditions. Consequently the Commonwealth regulations are not of the slightest value except as an indication that there are circumstances in which the Government is justified in taking steps for the postponement of debts where inability to pay has been caused by some national calamity. This was recognised in Western Australia in 1914 when we placed on the statute book a measure for the postponement of debts. This Act was continued throughout the war; its duration was extended by a continuance Bill each year. Therefore members need have no fear of establishing a precedent. The very fact

of the Commonwealth Government having seen fit to introduce the Debtors' Relief Regulations under the National Security Act shows clearly that there is no justification for the bogey that has been put up to induce members not to support my contention. Further, in Victoria the State Government found it necessary to introduce this class of legislation; and I should say that Victoria is as conservative a State as Western Australia and probably much more financial. Certainly Victoria has a far greater variety of income-earning industries than Western Australia possesses. Thus there is in Victoria a greater field over which to spread economies. Yet Victoria has legislation of the kind I suggest. So I find this State Parliament in the years gone by, and the Victorian Parliament more recently, introducing the legislation which I assert is highly necessary. It is because the present Government has proved itself unable to realise a national calamity when one has occurred, because it has proved itself incapable of giving sympathetic consideration to the major debt question involved, because it appears to think—having little, if any, experience—that it is possible for the farmer to maintain his morale and consider and continue efficient production with a sword of bankruptcy hanging over his head, that I claim the Government is no longer worthy of the confidence of this House. I claim that the House is justified in passing the motion, if not as a vote of censure, at least as an instruction to the Government to bring down immediately legislation affording the farmer protection on the lines upon which the Federal Government has found it necessary to give protection to debtors engaged in other forms of industry, and on the lines of the legislation Victoria has found it necessary to pass in order to protect its farmers. Victorian farmers are not more justified in asking for protection than our farmers are. As a matter of fact, in Victoria there is a considerable amount of reserve capital held by the farming community, whereas no such reserve is available in Western Australia. So I ask the House to carry the motion—not, I repeat, as a vote of censure, but as an instruction to the Government to proceed immediately with the introduction of the measures that are needed.

The Premier: Stick to your guns! Let it be a censure motion.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Very well, we will have the motion as a motion of censure; and that will be very much better.

The Premier: Only one member of the Opposition has spoken as yet.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I hope my fellow-members will make a better case than I have made, for I feel that I have not been able to influence hon. members opposite at all. I wish to emphasise that the farmers will realise there is justification for asking Parliament to afford them an opportunity to see some light for the future and to enable them to pay the current year's debts out of the ensuing year's proceeds.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. F. J. S. Wise—Gascoyne) [5.20]: Although the Leader of the Opposition in his concluding sentences stressed the fact that he would prefer that this motion be not regarded as a motion of censure—

Hon. C. G. Latham: Not if you introduce the Bill.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We have refused to introduce the Bill. I submit that this is the most serious type of motion that can be launched in the House against the Government. It threatens the Government's right to govern. It suggests that the Government is to be questioned on its actions and motives.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is the right of the Opposition, you know.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No matter how feeble the case, no matter how false or weak may be the premises on which the case is built, no matter how irresponsible may be the motives behind such action, this certainly is the most serious type of motion that can be launched. Since that is so, the motion is a direct challenge to the Government; and the Government accepts it as such. By no stretch of the imagination could this be regarded as a friendly motion. By no stretch of the imagination could we believe that we were being commended for anything, or that we were being congratulated upon any act or deed, whether in furtherance of the interests of the farmers or of any other section of the community. It is the most hostile motion that any Opposition can launch. It has been framed with the object of embarrassing and harassing the Government, and its ultimate objective

is to bring about the Government's defeat. But it cannot succeed; and as an objective, the very purpose of it is wrong if it is based on the feeble case submitted by the Leader of the Opposition. I wonder in what contrast are the words of the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon to his offers of co-operation and assistance made to the Government in other days. I wonder whether he remembers a speech he made in this Chamber a little over a year ago, in which he not only suggested to the Premier that he was ready to co-operate with him and that his Party would do the same, but also that he would not take any step whatever to embarrass the Government in such difficult days. The days since then have been more difficult, and still are more difficult. The ways of the Government have been hard indeed during recent months. There has been no let-up, no getting out from under, by any member of the Government, from the load Ministers have been called upon to carry. But no matter what action they have taken, no matter what sympathetic attitude they have adopted and what practical assistance they have rendered, this is the motion conveying the facts. It is a most interesting position, because it makes one think that no matter what hours of tireless labour may be put in for the interests of all sections of the State, no matter how carefully may be scrutinised the fears and worries of the farmer or of any rural section, no matter how pleadingly the members of the Country Party may state their case—and we hope that when they state it, they state it sincerely—they can see no merit but only a means to submitting a motion of no-confidence, in the desire to bring about the downfall of the Government. What is the word of the Leader of the Opposition worth when he brings forward such a motion as this, following his statement of last year? It is a most interesting statement. He said in this House—his words are reported on page 490 of last session's "Hansard"—

I am, therefore, pleased to have the assurance of the Premier that in this House we shall be setting an example that might well be followed by the citizens of the State, namely, that we will let party differences sink into oblivion and turn our attention unitedly to giving to the Empire the best that we can as the need arises. . . . I assure the Premier that anything we on this side of the House can do to assist either the Federal or the State Government will very readily be done. . . . Petty differences in politics are as nothing compared with the

unity that all parts of the British Empire are displaying in the maintenance of the freedom we have so long enjoyed.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But surely you do not think that you never should be criticised!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I welcome criticism.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Do not put yourself on a pedestal.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I welcome criticism, because only by criticism can we see all our mistakes, many of them serious and important contributing factors to much that does not represent mistakes of ours. However, in those words we have the pledge, the assurance of the Leader of the Opposition that pettiness will not enter into the debates in this House so far as he is concerned. I have, moreover, highly interesting letters from members of the Country Party, letters of appreciation and of thanks for certain actions of this Government in assistance rendered to primary producers in many spheres. What are those letters worth? They are not worth the paper they are written on. They must spring from sheer hypocrisy, or from political humbug, since members opposite can coldly and callously, after all that has been done, justify or pretend to justify a vote of no-confidence in the Government. Words are worthless when such expressions can fall from the mouths of the Leader of the Opposition and his supporters; and at the most serious time in the nation's, the Commonwealth's, and the State's history, such a motion as this is launched for miserable political purposes. A motion is launched to condemn and defame the Government because it has refused to introduce a piece of legislation which, if there is any merit in it, has very questionable merit. That is the purpose of the motion, to discredit the Government because of that one act of omission, in the light of the mind of the Leader of the Opposition. For the time being, the Leader of the Opposition must have overlooked the fact that the nation is at war, that we are suffering still from the difficulties which were obvious at the time he made the remarks I have quoted, and many others similar. I am sure, too, that he must have forgotten that the Government has taken action far in excess of the legislation he desired it to introduce when he asked for the bringing-down of a measure on the lines of the Victorian Act. No matter how he

may qualify his remarks to-day, he definitely asked for the introduction of that measure with its limitations and with its narrow scope.

Mr. Doney: Did we not say it was an acceptable basis on which to build a Bill, not necessarily the same Bill?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That was the foundation upon which to build a measure. But let me contrast, for example, with the attitude of the Country Party the attitude of the National Party opposite. I say, very definitely, that perhaps there is no stronger partisan in this Chamber than the member for Nedlands (Hon. N. Keenan). There is no man of stronger political beliefs than the member for Nedlands, or the Leader of the National Party (Mr. McDonald). They gave at that time their word; and I have noticed how, when matters which normally would have brought them to their feet in strongest criticism came forward, their word has been kept. They have not worried about miserable political advantages which might be gained by an endeavour to condemn the Government while it is undergoing a severe trial. I make that comparison fairly and freely, in case it might assist in the reflection which will be given to the country of the attitude of the Country Party to a measure such as this.

Mr. Hughes: It is a case of divide and conquer.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I wonder whether the Leader of the Opposition has paused to contemplate the ultimate reaction and effect of the motion upon his party. It certainly will not gain the party the political advantage he seeks; it will not give the party a desirable advertisement in the spheres where the party wants it; rather will it suggest to the general public of the State that the party desires to embarrass the Government while it is up against difficulties and working hard to do the right thing by the country. Does the Leader of the Opposition think that that will get his party anywhere? Will it bring the party approbation for the future? Is it a bid for public popularity that will succeed or is it something which might be adjudged as the action of people not responsible and not prepared in any way to applaud those who have made some effort—

Hon. C. G. Latham: I do not care what it does, as long as it brings mental relief to the farmers.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I intend at a later stage to trace what mental relief and practical relief this Government has offered to the people whom the Leader of the Opposition is supposed to represent. Before doing so, however, I desire to draw attention to other motions of a like character that have been moved in this House during recent years, the kind of motion by which the Leader of the Opposition has tried to bring about the downfall of the Government, or to discredit it. His first attempt was made, to my recollection, in 1936. He moved a no-confidence motion which was very wide in its ambit, his object being to enlist the support of members on this side and on that side. It included such matters as trolley buses.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You are not cross about that?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not a bit.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I thought you were.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As I say, it included such matters as trolley buses, the reclamation of the river foreshore, unemployment and so on; but every point raised was fully justified, at least by popular opinion then and since. That therefore was a feeble effort, raised on a weak foundation. Then the House was subjected to an adjournment motion during the time of the grasshopper plague. It was stated that Government measures to cope with the pest were insufficient. Not merely was an adequate defence made at the time, not merely was there almost an apology offered for having moved the motion, but it was admitted then, and it has been admitted since, although grudgingly, by hon. members opposite that the Government had taken practical measures to cope with the pest. So we can go through the last few years; when it was difficult for the Country Party Opposition to find some chinks in the Government's armour—

Hon. C. G. Latham: I will give you a few chinks, if you want them. Don't make any mistake about that. My word, yes. What about the Heathcote Hospital?

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition must keep order.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Leader of the Opposition has been aroused to a spirit of annoyance; but he has, calmly and cold-bloodedly, decided to launch this motion, couched in the worst possible form in which such a motion could be drawn, in an endeavour to defeat the Government in any case.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We have been very generous to you.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Very well. In this motion is involved a certain Act introduced and passed by the Victorian Parliament. The Country Party approached me as a deputation, as the Leader of the Opposition said, pressing the seriousness of the situation, stressing the plight of the farmer, and asking that consideration be given to the introduction of similar legislation. The Government did not desire to rely upon its own reactions to the measure. We conferred with very many persons in different walks of life. We submitted it even to successful and practical farmers for their view. The net result was that there was a general objection to such legislation.

Mr. Doney: Did you submit it to any unsuccessful farmer?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think I did.

Mr. Doney: They are the farmers most concerned.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Surely the hon. member does not desire to include in the term "unsuccessful farmer" those farmers who would not be successful in any circumstances? Even so, I might have submitted it to one of them, although I do not think I did.

Mr. Doney: Those who would not be successful in any circumstances have already fallen by the wayside.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not all.

Mr. Doney: Nearly all.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If I may proceed, the Victorian Act provides for the issue of a protection order and the continuance of such order to enable the farmer to carry on. The Leader of the Opposition suggested it included Crown debts and that a protection order could be issued in respect of one creditor. But the vital point is that the Act contains no provision for credits. There is no provision for carrying on by furnishing sums of money to meet current accounts owing to storekeepers or

for payment of suspended debts. There is no hope for payment of current or future debts. What guarantee is there under such legislation that the debts incurred this year will not be suspended next year? What protection is there for the country storekeeper who has provided the farmer with necessities? Debts are certainly suspended by the Act; but what use is it to a farmer to be eased of his immediate debt by having it suspended when he can see no possible hope of carrying on afterwards? Creditors are placed in a most difficult position, not knowing whether the Act will be reintroduced next year.

Hon. C. G. Latham interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The Leader of the Opposition has the right of reply. I must request him to keep order.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: There is no provision at all to ease the creditors. No provision is made for those who have provided the farmer with food; and there is nothing to suggest that, even if again the farmer is provided with food and necessities, this Act will not be re-introduced next year. There is no protection for the Crown; but, most of all, there is no provision whatever for the furnishing of money. The measure holds out in front of the farmer some imaginary form of relief, but does not provide him with the wherewithal for his immediate future, and there is nothing to suggest that his credit will not be impaired. I quite agree with the Leader of the Opposition that the farmer's position is very disturbing, alarming and worrying, but the farmer's greatest concern to-day is not his first mortgage, it is whether he is to receive any credit. I suggest, Mr. Speaker, that what the Government is striving to do in order to afford the farmer relief is much more practical than is the suggestion for an imaginary easement for the time being of his established debt. We should try to make certain that the farmer is able to carry on and this may be done by not impairing his credit in any way. Surely it is not the function of the Government to introduce meaningless legislation. If we analyse the effect of a moratorium, we shall find that it unsettles and disturbs business. Members opposite know that that is so; such action is invariably detrimental to the farmer's credit. Yet there is always a persistent demand for this class of legislation. I repeat that the farmer's greatest concern at the moment is

his immediate future, a guarantee that he will receive food and necessities, and that he will be able to pay wages, buy parts, super and seed to enable him to carry on his farming operations for next year's crop. That is what the Government has been striving not merely to secure, but has in fact secured for the farmer. The activities of the Government on behalf of the farmer have not been confined merely to the provision of money to adjust marginal areas and for drought relief.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You did not provide any of it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The Government has been very active and successful in making sure that the farmer is secured, no matter whether his difficulties are merely seasonal or have been brought about by a run of bad seasons. The Leader of the Opposition also knows that, owing to the activities of the Industries Assistance Board, the farmer will be in a much better position because of the Government having sponsored his case than he would be under an Act of the kind I have referred to. With regard to drought relief, notwithstanding that the Government has been forced to assume greater responsibility for the repayment of these moneys—the Government has accepted that responsibility in the interests of the rural industry—the State is involved in further indebtedness to meet the seasonal situation. In recent days we have been bargaining and have met with considerable success, and to such an extent that I hope, long before the middle of next week, we shall be able to invite applications from all those on the land who are needy, whether their circumstances are drought-caused or whether it be necessary for them to apply for seasonal relief to carry them through until next harvest. Surely that is what they are seeking. On top of that practical help we have to-day, and even within the last hour-and-a-half, been in consultation by telephone with the Leaders of the National Government in connection with their proposals as affecting the wheat situation in Australia. Only half an hour before this House met this afternoon the Leaders of the National Government were seeking our viewpoint in connection with certain matters they were desirous of finalising, with

a view to the stabilisation of wheat. They contacted and conferred with us, and we hope that we fairly represented the position of this State in a manner, too, that the Country Party opposite would desire us to do to the best of our ability. We presented Western Australia's case in the hope of reaching a solution of the problem, not merely of drought relief or temporary assistance, but the stabilisation of the industry, and including the adjustment of the debt structure and guaranteed price. So we hope to offer to those who are in a desperate condition some prospect for the future. We have heard very much about the persistency of those who are creditors of the farmers. I made inquiries from the Agricultural Bank to ascertain whether the officers of that institution had heard in recent months of the threatening of farmers by creditors. The only instance within the last five months, I was informed, was in connection with a gas producer on which £20 was owing to a manufacturer of gas producer units. That was the only case of which the Bank had evidence. Are we to be blamed and censured because we did not introduce a Bill which might even have postponed a debt of that character?

Mr. North: There would be more cases.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I made inquiries at the Bank only this morning. That was the answer I received.

Mr. Boyle: How would the Bank know?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Do not let this be misrepresented. I asked whether the Bank was aware of any such cases, whether any had come under the Bank's notice. I did not ask whether the Bank had a knowledge of all the cases. It is no use members endeavouring to misrepresent the position. Under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act the Director in this State has the power to suspend debts up to three years. In the Victorian Act power is given to suspend debts up to five years. That is the essential difference. As members are aware, we have various types of legislation operating in this State designed to assist the farmer. Under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act it is very debatable whether the objective of that legislation is all that we desire. We know well that the Commonwealth Government considers it very unsafe and unsound, and that it has not brought about the relief that was expected,

and the Commonwealth is very chary about continuing the legislation. The Commonwealth wants it considered in the light of existing circumstances, and that is what our Government is endeavouring to do, namely, to assist in giving Australia-wide relief. It is anxious to do all that can be done to stabilise the industry, including existing and past debts, and place the farmers on a basis that will give them some hope for the future. There is in the Act a provision enabling the writing down of capital indebtedness, but there is really nothing new in that when it is applied to Government debts. Those debts have been written down very considerably and there has also been a writing down of principal. Generally speaking, such legislation has a detrimental effect on credit and certainly brings in its train added responsibilities to Governments. Immediately there are thrown on to Government resources people who cannot obtain credit elsewhere, and that is the effect that type of legislation has. So that instead of making any apologies for not introducing new legislation, we have, in a practical sense, done much more than the introduction of any such measure could do. We have not done anything that would injure the credit of the farmer. We have endeavoured to assist him and to keep him on the land. Now we are endeavouring to preserve his position. All this has been undertaken after giving much thought to every aspect. We have actually provided the alternative mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition in his motion, but because he claims that we have not, he has launched a censure motion against us.

On the question of drought relief, the provision of hay and other matters, we earnestly endeavoured to anticipate the difficult position that was about to arise. I will not quote what happened in this House during the present session, but I can say that at one stage the Leader of the Opposition expressed his pleasure that the Government had made an earnest endeavour to meet the hay situation. Apparently, however, it is necessary for the hon. gentleman to move a motion of no-confidence once a year, for the purpose of harassing and embarrassing the Government. I have no doubt that he will make an equally excellent speech next year, when again he will launch a motion on similar lines, and perhaps with the same

amount of enthusiasm with which he presented the one we are now debating.

The Minister for Labour: That would be done.

Mr. Doney: He moved it with regret.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am just giving an idea to the hon. member. This season is tailing off much better than we in our wildest dreams of two months ago anticipated. To-day the position is infinitely better than it was a month ago, and it is better than it was two weeks ago. In our honest endeavour to face up to what might have proved a tragedy with regard to the hay position, we tried to secure sufficient not merely for the Government's requirements but to prevent the farmer being exploited and to make his position secure. We bought a lot of hay and, in doing so, we might have made a mistake. I hope we did. I hope we are censured because we do not want all that we bought.

Mr. Patrick: You will want it all.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Anyway, it may prove a fitting subject for another motion of no-confidence next year, namely, that because the Government over-purchased hay when the seasonal prospects looked bad, the Government no longer possesses the confidence of the House. That would be a very fitting subject to discuss and equally with this one would be on a safe and sound foundation. I hope we have made a mistake; I hope we make many mistakes. Surely, however, the Opposition will give us credit for having made mistakes in all earnestness and in the belief that we were certainly endeavouring to meet a critical position. We are not sparing ourselves, neither in the arduousness of the work we are undertaking nor in the hours we are putting in. So I do not consider that we can be charged with idly sitting by.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You are making a lot of apologies for nothing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am trying to give the Leader of the Opposition an inspiration. We make no apology for refusing to introduce legislation of the type sought and I repeat that the Opposition is hard put to it in its endeavour to embarrass the Government at this stage by launching a motion of no confidence. In their wildest dreams members opposite cannot expect to defeat the Government, neither can they expect public support. I hope that

the Leader of the Opposition will allow the kite that he is flying to continue to fly, and that he will not pull it down, but that he will test the feeling of the House so that we may be able to show to the people the columns of names of those who are responsible and those who have no responsibility. That is our attitude. We admit our frailties and also that we are sure to make mistakes, but we feel that the many mistakes we make are contributions towards success. Without those mistakes we will not make very much headway. We refuse to introduce legislation which offers no cure for the present position, and I think that not anyone on this side of the House would be prepared to apologise for not introducing it.

MR. BOYLE (Avon) [6.0]: The defence put forward by the Minister for Lands—

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It was rather an attack.

Mr. BOYLE:—was rather one of supplication, indicating a sense of injury that this House had launched what the Government has taken, and rightly so, as a motion of want of confidence.

The Premier: Definitely, that is what it is.

Mr. Cross: The country has not much confidence in the Country Party.

Mr. BOYLE: The Opposition agreed at the outbreak of war—I think we were all at one in that regard—not to attempt to embarrass the Government at such a time as this. That was the common understanding. We on this side of the House have, however, seen a constant deterioration in the rural position in Western Australia. We have been forced to the conclusion that the main cause of that deterioration has been the lack of action by the Government in an effort to stop the rot. That drought conditions have prevailed this year is a factor that has enabled us to sympathise with the Government, and on many occasions we have offered to assist Cabinet to the best of our ability. On the 23rd August, a deputation waited upon the Premier and the Minister for Lands from the Wheatgrowers' Union of Western Australia, the members of which organisation pointed out the serious position that obtained in this State. From the 23rd August to the 7th November is a far cry. To-day the Minister for Lands stated that it will be the middle of next week before anything like an ordered plan can go forth. He said we

had to be thankful for the improved conditions as they exist to-day. I agree with him on that point. He stated that we should be thankful for the favourable turn taken by the season. Had the season not turned so favourably, and had conditions not improved to the extent they have done, would the Government be less culpable? But for the change, conditions would have been unthinkable in the country districts, and still the Government would have been waiting until mid-November before rendering aid. That is the situation which forced these benches to take action.

The Premier: Who has wanted aid at this moment and not received it?

Mr. BOYLE: Yesterday I received a telegram.

The Premier: I have received hundreds of telegrams. It appears that some people connected with the agricultural industry must be prosperous if they have all that money to spend on telegrams.

Mr. BOYLE: When a man is in extremis and sees that his stock is perishing, he will not hesitate to spend his last penny in seeking aid.

The Premier: Where has that happened?

Mr. BOYLE: The telegram I received yesterday was from the secretary of the Wheatgrowers' Union at Baandee. The telegram asked me to ascertain when the Government was going to put forward its proposals for starving stock, and requested me to reply immediately. The reply I sent was that which I saw in the "West Australian," namely, that the relief proposals would be made known at the end of the week. Does the Premier censure the secretary of the Baandee branch of the union for spending a shilling on a telegram so that he might ascertain the present position? He was probably representing 30 or 40 farmers in that district. Members on this side of the House, at any rate, were not in a position to give detailed information to the farmers. The value of help at any time lies in its immediate application. I have waited patiently, as have other members on this side of the House, for the best part of two months for the Government to frame and bring down some concrete plan to relieve the situation.

The Premier: How much stock has died in the interim?

Mr. Cross: The ordinary farmer would be able to carry on with his credit until the middle of December.

Mr. BOYLE: It is not a question of credit. By no means can it be said that the season is a bountiful one. The wheat forecast for the Merredin district this year indicates a yield of 1.5 bushels to the acre, and that for the Westonia and Nungarin districts is a little over one bushel to the acre. There are three important districts that will not average more than 1½ bushels to the acre. As a result of the rains, many farmers will get their seed wheat, but the position is just as desperate, seeing that from the stock point of view they have been relieved only to a limited extent. The Minister need not worry about his proposed motion of no confidence that is to be brought forward next year. I am afraid we would be in the position of having to frame a motion with which to censure ourselves. Such a motion would naturally lack sting. I could certainly do better than the proposals of the Minister, and do so in a shorter time. To the credit of the Federal Government, it has passed a National Security Act to deal with the various phases and difficulties of the position that have been brought about by the war. It has also passed numerous regulations to prevent any undue individual or sectional sacrifices being made on account of the war. Such provisions are not adequate, in my view. The regulations with regard to wheat certainly provide a framework, but we have not yet received the cost of producing wheat. We know, however, that the wheat will be taken and sold, and that the expenses will be deducted from the proceeds. I hope the expenses will be small. Notwithstanding the action taken in the Federal sphere, the Government of this State already had an implied obligation to come in where the Federal powers ceased, or where they did not operate. Constitutional difficulties have constantly occurred in many cases where the Federal Government had legislated under the National Security Regulations, and there alone is a field wherein State legislation could operate. The field to which I refer is that of the prevention of undue hardship to the debtor by his creditor. All the legislation passed in Western Australia by the present Government has not afforded that mode of protection that should have been

given. To say that a moratorium is out of place is only to beg the question.

The member for Katanning (Mr. Watts) has in front of him a copy of an Act passed in 1914 at the instance of the Scaddan Labour Government, and he intends to use that later in the debate. It is useless for the Minister for Lands to drag out this fetish of loss of credit. In this Chamber I have repeatedly referred to the stock argument of people who do not wish to do anything. The stock argument of those who do not want to relieve a debtor is to refer to the problematical loss of credit. In this matter the State Government has been remiss. I admit that Acts have been passed at the instance of the Government, such as the Rents Restriction Act, which is a war time measure. I do not know that rents in this time of war tend to rise abnormally, but we voted for that measure and I for one gave it my approval. It is now on the statute book, although it is more or less a latent piece of legislation. The Profiteering Act was another measure that is of certain value. No consistent attempt has, however, been made by the Government to legislate along the lines indicated in the motion. In fact, it has shown active opposition and desire to obstruct the passage of legislation that will stay the hand of the secured creditor, and will interfere in any way with him. True, the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act was passed in 1931. That affects secured debts incurred prior to that date. No attempt has been made in any way to ease the position as it stands to-day.

The Premier: What about the stay orders under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act?

Mr. BOYLE: That merely limits the protection, and does not in any way interfere with the secured creditor's position. A stay order is one to prevent legal processes being carried out on, say, a judgment obtained, or carried out execution, and in effect applies only to the unsecured creditor. In nine out of ten of these cases the secured creditor is the creditor. There is nothing in the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act that would in any way control the secured creditor. The result of that legislation has been a ruthless dealing with country storekeepers and unsecured creditors. It has resulted in the unfortunate country storekeeper receiving 1s. 6d. or 2s. in the pound. The trustees in their report mentioned that unsecured debts had been compounded at an average

of 5s. in the pound, whereas in the districts concerned the road boards had received an average of 15s., and the machinery people had sometimes received 20s. in the pound. The rural businessman deemed himself lucky if he received 2s. in the pound on his unsecured debts. The secured debtor has not been dealt with. Had he been taken care of, there would have been very little need for a motion of censure.

The Premier: How many foreclosures have there been on the part of secured creditors?

Mr. BOYLE: I have been told by one of the leading bankers that a secured creditor would be a fool to take possession. Actually, he does not take possession, for if he did he would stand in loco to the farmer. He would not have anything to do with that. The result is that the farmers are in the position of being unpaid managers of their properties. That is the value of the debt adjustment legislation to-day. I do not think banks are any more ready to foreclose on properties than are other financial concerns. They are only one type of mortgagee. That is not so in the case of the Agricultural Bank. I have seen notices to the effect that if the Bank's clients do not pay up the capital sums due and the accrued interest within 14 days, they will be dispossessed of their properties. As has been said, the easiest way out for the farmer is to walk off his holding, and many of them have done so. In the wheat areas, 2,000 farmers have walked off their properties, and in the group settlement areas there are 400 vacant blocks to-day. The latest report of the Agricultural Bank shows that 2,400 blocks have been abandoned, and that the debt upon them is approximately £7,000,000. On this side of the House we have repeatedly asked the Government to amend the legislation to which I have referred. I should like to take as part of the debt structure the Agricultural Bank Act of 1934. It was assented to on the 5th January, 1935. That Act, according to the Government, is one piece of perfect legislation on the statute book in this State.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. BOYLE: I was referring to the present Agricultural Bank Act as apparently being in the opinion of the Government a perfect measure, because of the fact that

from its passing in 1934 to 1940, a period of about six years, it has not been amended in any shape or form. They point to it as one of the few Acts passed by this Legislature of which not a line or a comma has been altered. But it is a most oppressive Act. It strikes at the root of all human liberties as we know them. Relatively to the debt structure which I am attacking, the Act makes provisions that do not exist, so far as I know, in any other legislation of this type to be found in the world. Section 47 lays down that compounding of interest shall be charged upon the Commissioners as part of their duties. That is interest upon interest. In other words, the Commissioners have no discretion whatever to suspend any interest that a borrower must pay. That interest must be brought forward, and Section 47 enjoins upon the Commissioners to charge interest upon that interest. That is one of the foul blots of civilisation—permitting the compounding of interest in any circumstances. Yet we on this side have appealed times out of number to the present Government to permit the necessary amendment of the Act. The Government has remained absolutely adamant. Any Act of Parliament, by process of trial and error, will be found unworkable in some respects. Then any ordinary Government would proceed either to amend the Act itself or to accept amendments proposed. However, we have not succeeded in inducing the present Government to accept our suggested amendments; and apparently the Ministry, as at present constituted, will not allow any amendments.

Then there is Section 51. That section needs no elaboration from me. It is the section that has completely destroyed the liberty of action of any Agricultural Bank client who is indebted to the institution. We have also tried repeatedly to amend that section. In Section 55, referring to the calling-up of securities, we have a section which would be farcical if it were not so tragic. It provides for the payment of interest twice a year, on the 30th June and the 31st December. To anyone with a knowledge of farming it is obvious that, for instance, the wheatgrower and the woolgrower do not receive their proceeds until, say, October and the following December or January. The result is that if the Commissioners desired to operate the Act, they

could dispossess every farmer who went over the 21 days after the due period. We have tried to amend that provision. To-day, if the Commissioners were stupid enough to enforce Section 55, it would mean that any farmer who did not pay his interest within 21 days after the 30th June, for instance, was liable to dispossession and forfeiture of the whole of his assets as represented in the farm. Section 61 provides a means of assisting in the ejection of the farmer which is not found in any other statute or law existing in Australia. It introduces the principle of bringing the State police force into a private matter—a matter between the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank and the client. Any other mortgagee, provided the mortgage was dated prior to 1931, would have to secure an order to dispossess from a judge, and would have to engage the services of a bailiff to enforce the order. But the Act calls upon and enjoins the Commissioner of Police to provide and misuse the police force of Western Australia in the forcible ejection of any Agricultural Bank client who is in default. We have repeatedly tried to amend the Act in that respect, and have just as earnestly been opposed by the Government—for what reason it is hard to say, except that no good can come out of any other bench of this Chamber than the Treasury bench.

All these matters are wrapped up with the motion which has been moved to-day. It all has reference to the debt structure that we have introduced into our motion of no confidence. The same remarks apply to the Rural Relief Fund Act, to which I referred previously. That Act really represents protection for secured debts. We have tried to amend that Act also, but unsuccessfully. We have asked only for a limited moratorium. We have not asked for a blanket moratorium, or a general moratorium including all classes of debtors. We merely wish the Government to bring down a measure—not necessarily a Bill similar to the relevant Victorian Act, but a measure that might be thrashed out in this Chamber and which, when placed upon the statute-book, would operate as a bar to any arbitrary dealings on the part of the primary producer's past creditors. That is not asking too much. I repeat, we

desire only a limited type of moratorium. The Minister for Lands would imply that we propose to interfere with the credit of the farmer. We do not desire to do anything of the sort. An application for the protection of the moratorium would have to go before a competent authority, which would decide whether the case merited intervention. The effect of the present position is that our farmers are leaving their lands in numbers. The exodus has been accelerated. What with the present bad season and the lack of protection, we are increasing the 2,400 farms vacant to-day. I desire to compliment the Minister for Justice on his farming prowess. By way of interjection he mentioned that he had not received any assistance as a farmer and that his farm in the Esperance district had been worked at a profit.

The Minister for Justice: No. I have not put any money into it myself. I inferred that any farmer who has had 20 bushels per acre should be on a sound footing.

Mr. BOYLE: If the Minister has not put any money into the farm himself, I can only come to the conclusion that it is a profitable farm. Let me draw the attention of the House to the excellent position in which the Minister finds himself. A perusal of the figures for the last five years concerning the Esperance-Dundas district shows that the average yield was 7.3 bushels per acre with an average price of 3s. 2d. per bushel. That would represent a return of about 22s. per acre. I do not desire for one instant to discuss the private affairs of the Minister, for those are his own concern. When he obtrudes his opinion in the present debate, I may be pardoned for combating his view because obviously he advanced, by way of interjection, particulars designed to weaken the case we are presenting.

The Minister for Justice: I interjected because the case was so ridiculous.

Mr. BOYLE: When the Minister hears what the Royal Commissioners had to say about the Esperance district, he must consider himself in a most enviable position. If he is farming in a district where the return for the last five years averaged only 7.3 bushels to the acre with a return of 3s. 2d. per bushel, and finds himself out of financial difficulties, he must have secured returns far above the average for the district.

The Minister for Justice: We are producing not only wheat there.

Mr. BOYLE: I have been referring to that phase of farming. The Minister's property must be a good pastoral area.

Mr. Patrick: The Minister is a financial wizard!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BOYLE: On page 71 of the report on the Federal Royal Commission on the Wheat, Flour and Bread Industries, the following appears:—

The figure for Western Australia is somewhat lower than for the other States. This result may be partially explained by the absence of individual returns from the Esperance districts where costs are high and where it is now recognised that wheat-growing is generally unprofitable.

The Minister for Justice: I will give you permission to go to the Agricultural Bank and verify what I have told you.

Mr. BOYLE: I do not doubt the Minister's word. I do not need to go to the Agricultural Bank, but why should the Minister go out of his way to direct attention to his successful operations for the purpose of countering any arguments we advance, notwithstanding the fact that the Royal Commission regarded the Esperance district as highly unprofitable for wheat growing?

The Minister for Justice: I am not disputing that.

Mr. BOYLE: The area under wheat in that district has fallen in five years from 40,000 acres to 14,000 acres. I mention that to draw attention to the fact that the argument advanced by the Minister, by way of interjection, does not harm the case we submit. One of the phases brought home to members of the Opposition and one of the most impelling motives for the motion under discussion, is the utter despondency prevailing in the farming areas, which is leading to that apathy which ordinarily precedes departure from the land. The Minister for Lands spoke about keeping men on their holdings and mentioned a scheme that the Government would introduce shortly to stabilise the industry and put it on a sound footing. In such an endeavour, no one will help the Minister more than Country Party members—but we have heard such an announcement before. Ten years have elapsed since the depression was first felt in Western Australia, and the depression as we knew it at its worst was no worse than the conditions prevailing in the rural districts to-day.

The Minister for Justice: What did the Country Party do for the farmers then?

Mr. BOYLE: In 1930-33?

Hon. C. G. Latham: You know what we did in the Esperance district.

The Minister for Justice: I do not know.

Hon. C. G. Latham: We will tell you.

The Minister for Labour: You should be careful!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. BOYLE: I do not know that I should be required to answer a question such as that put by the Minister for Justice. I am viewing the ten-year position on the face and not in respect of any particular section of that period.

Mr. SPEAKER: And now will the hon. member address the Chair?

Mr. BOYLE: I regret, Mr. Speaker, that I was led off the track.

Mr. Watts: You are not really!

Mr. BOYLE: We shall probably be told by Ministers that there has been a big fall from normality and there will be a reference to the amount of money the farmers have cost the State. I remember the Premier referring in his policy speech to the farmers as having cost Western Australia £6,000,000. I have heard the Minister for Lands—I quite agree with him in his argument—refer to the growth of the dairying industry and the future of the dairying districts. I tell the House that the dairying industry to-day returns to Western Australia a small amount compared with that derived from wheat and wool. Statistics relating to dairying throughout the Commonwealth show that for the year 1939-40, Victoria produced 34 per cent. of the total butter production, Queensland 31 per cent., New South Wales 25 per cent., South Australia five per cent., Western Australia three per cent. and Tasmania, two per cent. In common with every other member, I join with the Minister in expressing the hope that the butter production of this State will expand. But we are dealing with present-day conditions. I trust that in due course the dairying industry will attain the dimensions we all desire, but in the meantime why not retain the industries that are already returning vast sums to the State? Why, then, do we not do everything possible to preserve the wheat and wool-growing industries? They will not be preserved unless the Government is prepared to protect them. Throughout this present time of stress, no effort has been made by the Government to

protect those industries. The total value of butter produced in Australia, taken on the free-on-board basis, was £26,000,000 of which Western Australia's share was valued at £780,000. The value of wheat produced in Western Australia for the 1939-40 season was £8,000,000 f.o.b., while the value of our wool for that period was £4,500,000. Thus we have those allied industries returning £12,500,000 during the last financial year as against £780,000 worth of butter. Surely we require to preserve our balance and our sense of proportion. Let us keep the birds in our hands rather than those in the bush. If industries that are languishing to-day can yet provide a return of upwards of £13,000,000 in a year,—that represents very big production in a State such as Western Australia—let us do everything possible to preserve them, and that is the object of the motion. From my observations I should say that the Government seems inclined to follow fresh lines. It would seem as though, in the opinion of the Government, the wheat and wool industries are in a decline and possibly are not worthy of preservation.

It seems to me that the Minister in referring to the lack of moratorium protection, to the lack of credit facilities and so on, has suggested a policy of the survival of the fittest—or fattest. It means that the farmers are to be thrown on their own resources, yet this is a section of the people—those engaged in the primary industries—that is to-day overburdened with indebtedness. The greatest single factor, as the Royal Commission said—overshadowing everything else in the wheat industry of Australia—is the shadow of secured debts. We propose that that factor shall be put in its proper place. The Minister referred to the marginal areas. I hope success will attend his efforts there, but he will require greater optimism than has the Minister for Justice. The farmers themselves—at all events those in my district—are expecting something to be done. They expected a move such as we have launched to-day. They expect us to protest against the dilatoriness in attending to this matter. The livelihood of 1,000 men in those areas is affected. They do not know to-day whether they shall be able to remain on their farms, whether they will be assisted in any way, or whether their debts will be written down to such an amount as

will enable them to earn a living. The Government is sheltering behind a veil of secrecy, and there is no necessity for that. I hope one effect of the motion will be to bring forcibly under the notice of the Government the urgency for dealing promptly with marginal areas. The Auditor General, in his report, at page 88, mentions that the Agricultural Bank has lost £6,231,772, which amount has been written off borrowers' accounts to the 30th June, 1940. That sum could only have been written off since the Agricultural Bank Act became law, because before that time the Bank had not power to write off debts. I have referred to the statement made by the Premier and members of the Government that a tremendous amount of money has been written off in respect of debts owing on farms. I wish to tell the House, however, that of that amount about £4,000,000 has been written off abandoned farms. The human element has disappeared and so the Agricultural Bank was forced to write off that amount. Again, of the amount mentioned by the Auditor General the sum of £1,699,031 was written off group settlement accounts, the sum of £1,436,647 off I.A.B. accounts and the sum of £3,096,093 off Agricultural Bank accounts. Presumably the amount written off I.A.B. accounts is irrecoverable, while the amount written off Agricultural Bank accounts I presume relates to wheat belt accounts. But we never hear another side of the question. The Auditor General also refers to the fact that the sum of £2,212,683 has been written off State trading concerns accounts from the inception of their operations. The sum of £1,400,000 was written off the Wyndham Meat Works.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the House will not enter into a discussion of State trading concerns.

Mr. BOYLE: I give the House this information as a set-off to the argument advanced by the Government that £3,000,000 had been written off accounts connected with the wool and wheat section of the wheat belt. I draw attention to the fact that the writing off of debts of this type is not peculiar to the farming industry. State Trading Concerns, as the Auditor General has pointed out, are also concerned.

The Minister for Justice: Would you say if the Country Party had been in power, it would have written off a larger sum?

Hon. C. G. Latham: Had the Country Party been in power, there would have been no necessity to write off anything.

Mr. BOYLE: I will be able to answer the Minister after the Country Party has had a term of office.

The Minister for Labour: That means you will never be in office.

Mr. BOYLE: I do not know about that; a prophet is not without honour save in his own country. A little while ago the Minister for Labour was good enough to say that if there were an election in the Avon district, I would be sure to be defeated. The Minister tried to unseat me, but I had a majority four times as large as my previous one. So his prophecy may be as valuable in this instance.

Mr. Sampson: If the Minister keeps his job, you are safe.

Mr. BOYLE: I shall always welcome the Minister for Labour in my district. I would like to refer to remarks of the Minister for Lands with respect to letters that he received from members. There is not a Minister sitting on the Treasury bench to whom other members and I are not indebted for some act of consideration and courtesy. I would certainly acknowledge any such treatment. In my opinion, there is no political humbug about that. I am sure that when the time comes—which will be shortly, notwithstanding the prophecy of the Minister for Labour—when members on this side are sitting on the Treasury bench, the same courtesy will be extended to the members of His Majesty's ex-Government. The Minister's statement about political humbug is quite wrong and I do not think he put it forward seriously. In fact, those letters might be termed love-letters. I think I have written about three letters to the Minister since he has been in office—all strictly business letters. I have been treated courteously by the Minister.

The Minister for Lands: I cannot imagine the hon. member meaning business and writing love letters.

Mr. BOYLE: I wish to correct the impression sought to be conveyed that members on this side of the House are seeking to take political advantage on this motion of letters written by them to the Minister. I tell the House that what the Minister said in his

letters to me could not be used on a motion such as this, because I think in two instances he has not answered my letters.

Mr. Sampson: There is safety in silence.

Mr. BOYLE: He is the most guarded Minister I have ever come across. I do not think any charge of discourtesy would lie against us. I support the motion, because it is a gesture, or rather a protest. We in Opposition have few opportunities to make protests in the House. We are tied down by the standing orders, and it is only when we become—shall we say—fed up with the whole position as we see it that we feel we must protest. We realise that there are 20,000 to 25,000 men who depend for their livelihood upon farming. These men are on the verge of revolt. Many of them are at present taking things a great deal more pleasantly than they otherwise would, because of their patriotism. They do not wish to be misunderstood, but that is not to say that they are peaceful and quiet. I have attended meetings of constituents in my own and other farming districts and know that seething discontent exists. That discontent is likely to be translated into action, but not of a violent nature. The men will simply leave the land.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Their attitude is one of despair.

Mr. BOYLE: Yes, and that despair has induced the apathy they now feel. The Government even at this stage could and should alter the Act to which I have referred. It should move urgently in this matter. I have referred to the Minister's statement that the season has changed for the better, but I draw attention to the fact that that is a fortuitous circumstance which perhaps may not occur again. I agree with the Minister that rain which has come to my district and districts to the west will give the farmers a fighting chance. But we do not thank the Government for that. We cannot thank the Government for 128 points of rain that fell in the Merredin district last month.

The Premier: You blame us if it does not rain.

Mr. BOYLE: I do not think so. I do not think I would frame a motion of want of confidence on such a ground; but we do know that the rainfall has been a turn-up for the Government. It is a case of

Micawber all over again waiting for a turn-up, and this time I think Micawber got one. But it is only of a temporary nature and has not altered the position. We make no apology for the motion, which is overdue. I would be optimistic to think that the House will carry it even on the basis of numbers, but though it may not be carried I hope it will have the effect of showing the various electorates that we are trying to do our duty, that we are seeking to safeguard and help them and by so doing we are attempting to usurp the function of the Government.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.1]: In the course of his observations in reply to the Leader of the Opposition, the Minister for Lands said a number of things which, in ordinary circumstances, he would not have said. They were statements that he evidently intended to be regarded as of a "hard" nature, and I trust that he will not mind if in the course of the debate he receives a quid pro quo for some of them. I submit that the Leader of the Opposition put forward a substantial case in support of the motion, but before I deal with it, I have a word or two to say about the Minister's observations concerning the offer of co-operation made from this side of the House. I contend that the promise of co-operation has been reasonably kept. I have noticed that throughout both this session and last session every reasonable effort has been made by members on this side of the House, amongst whom I include most definitely myself and the Leader of the Opposition, to avoid that friction to which the Minister has referred. At the same time, I decline to concede to him the right to say that I have to sit here as a member of these benches and rubber-stamp everything the Government may do or may not do. The impression he sought to convey was that an undertaking was given that there would be nothing but co-operation throughout the period of the war. I do not hesitate for one moment to say that I am just as fully convinced of the necessity for national co-operation as is any hon. gentleman sitting on the opposite benches.

Mr. Marshall: No, you are not.

Mr. WATTS: Yes I am. The hon. member need not interject in that way, because he ought to know better. I am not

going to sit here and be told that I and those associated with me have merely to rubber-stamp everything the Government may choose to do or not to do. When, as in this instance, an occasion arises on which it is possible to take strong exception to the lack of action by the Government, I contend—and I feel that the Minister should agree—that we have every right to express our opinion of the most definite way and in accordance with the opportunities afforded to us by the standing orders and rules of this House. I admit that the motion is a serious one. So far as I am concerned, it is intended to be so, and I no hesitation in supporting it. I believe there has been an evident necessity for some action to be taken by the Government in the direction indicated, and I hope before I sit down to be able to establish to the satisfaction of a great number of members of this House, that that necessity still exists.

Mr. Cross: That is, in your warped opinion.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. WATTS: The Minister observed that in the course of the work he has done—and there is no one here, least of all myself, who seeks to decry that work because it is obvious that he is fully employed on the task before him—he has made a careful scrutiny of the farmers' affairs. I submit that the scrutiny he could make of farmers' affairs cannot be as intimate as that which can be made by those of us who represent the farmers and who are constantly amongst them when we are not in this House. I decline for one moment to agree that the knowledge he has of the affairs of farmers as individuals—and it is as individuals that the motion seeks to deal with them—is not less than and is probably more than that possessed by us. I have here a letter, a portion of which I propose to read. It was written to me by a farmer in the Borden district. In the early part of last year he was in a sound financial position. It is admitted that his property was unencumbered by a mortgage. He is a good practical farmer, and a man for whom over the last 20 years I have had the highest regard and whose hospitality I have always been delighted to accept when opportunity

offered. Last year the whole of his crop was taken by rust. The 280 acres I saw would probably have produced not less than 1,000 bags of wheat, but the whole of it disappeared and nothing was obtained from it. This year, unfortunately, he has no crop because of the insufficient rainfall in that district. Some change may have occurred in the last few days on account of the heavy rains that have fallen, though I am not aware whether he has benefited from them, but so far as I know, he has insufficient water and the position of his livestock is extremely precarious. In consequence of being unable to obtain income last year to pay expenses incurred in putting in the crop and in the maintenance of his family and his property, and in consequence of his having no crop this year to return him those expenses, he wrote, *inter alia*, under date the 17th October, as follows:—

Owing to the rust last year and the drought this season I have strained my finances to their limit and find it impossible to carry on.

That man is not one of the inefficient. He is not one of those who does not know how to conduct a farm; he is not a man who two years ago was insolvent or in financial difficulties; but he is a man who has struggled through two years of drought and dismal conditions and finds himself to-day unable to carry on. That is not an isolated instance. Had I the time and opportunity to go through correspondence that I have at home, I could find half-a-dozen similar communications from men who are equally satisfactory as farmers and those communications could be multiplied many times over if people thought it worth their while to write. I believe most firmly that there are many people of that type who will not, if I can stop it, be pressed by their creditors when the conditions from which they are suffering are due to no fault of theirs. For that reason I support the motion.

The Leader of the Opposition said that indirect pressure was being brought to bear on farmers who were unable satisfactorily to meet their obligations. I have a communication written by a bank at Katanning to a farmer of the district in the early part of this year. It reads—

I have to advise that the bank has approved of an overdraft limit for your account of £3,100, without commitment as to time or rate as is usual—to reduce to £2,950 on receipt of

wool proceeds, say 28/2/41—to cover debt of £3,100 at 11/7/40 and the items of expenditure from 9/7/40 to 7/7/41—listed hereunder:—

	£
Land rents	9
Bank interest, say	165
Rates, taxes and insurance ..	15
Repairs, parts, shearing packs and dip	40
Sundries	20
Superphosphate for 1941 ..	190
	<hr/>
	£439

Pending receipt of next wool proceeds, say, 28/2/41, the bank has approved of your obtaining an advance of £80 from your wool brokers to cover the following expenditure only:—

	£
Portion of bank interest at 31/8/40	15
Land rents 1/9/40	5
Repairs, parts, shearing, etc. ..	40
Rates, taxes and sundries ..	20
	<hr/>
	£80

Please note that the above expenditure is portion of and not in addition to the approved items of expenditure from 9/7/40 to 7/7/41.

In this connection I enclose letter for your signature and return to this branch as soon as possible, together with advice as to name of brokers to whom your wool will be forwarded for sale, so that the advance can be obtained well in advance of the 31st inst.—on which date interest for six months will be debited.

I hope members have noticed that there is no mention of any of those items of anything to eat or drink. Land rents, interest, insurance, spare parts, rates, etc., have been duly provided for, but apart from those items there is nothing. Therefore I leave members to consider what the position might be as compared with what the Leader of the Opposition said, and I believe they will conclude that he was more or less truthful in his observations.

The Premier: Oh! oh!

Mr. WATTS: I wish to refer to the Rural Relief Fund Act, to which the hon. gentleman made some reference. The power of suspension is provided in the Act, but I have a question and answer from Mr. W. A. White who, I venture to suggest, knows as much about the Act as does any member present. This will show what activity there has been under that power of suspension in respect of the 2,330 applications which, to the end of 1937 when the select committee sat, had been dealt with by the trustees. According to Question 72, Mr. Angwin,

chairman of the trustees, stated that 2,330 applications had been dealt with. In reply to Question 82, Mr. White, the director under the scheme, observed that at the end of the previous June, Victoria had made 440 adjustments. He was comparing the Victorian conditions with ours. Later on he said that the only suspensions that had been dealt with by the trustees under the powers conferred upon them numbered six. Therefore the powers of the trustees for suspension had been operated in six cases out of 2,330. I quote those as the figures given before the select committee by the witnesses in question. I understand that the reason why the powers were not exercised to any greater extent was that the officers of the department were in some doubt as to whether the power of suspension in the Act was sufficient to suspend all remedies for the recovery of debts of creditors, and because of that I understood from Mr. White—although at the moment I cannot find it in the evidence—that that was the reason the power of suspension had not been exercised to a greater extent.

This being so, it is quite obvious that the power of suspension contained in our Rural Relief Fund Act is hardly sufficient to deal with the question before us to-night. But I go further. The Leader of the Opposition referred to the fact that there would have to be the appointment of a receiver if proceedings were taken under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, which is now consolidated with the Rural Relief Fund Act. The Minister, at the deputation referred to, made some suggestion that it might be possible to give consideration to the requests of the deputation under the provisions of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, and the observation was immediately made in reply that so far as we knew it was necessary under that Act in circumstances such as these for a receiver to be appointed, and we did not consider that farmers in the position of those we have been discussing were justified in being placed under a receiver. Although under Section 11, Subsection 9, of the Farmer's Debts Adjustment Act the director is empowered to do away with the necessity for appointing a receiver in certain circumstances therein set out, a proviso stipulates that a receiver shall be appointed by the director immediately upon the sanction of any scheme which provides for the furnishing of seasonal

credit by the creditors. In those circumstances the observations by the Minister this evening, when he dealt so long with the question of seasonal credit, make obvious the fact that, unless we are going to have receivers appointed with all the paraphernalia of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, it is impossible to utilise that particular legislation.

Now I turn to the suggestion of the Minister that the Victorian Act was given to him entirely for the purpose of having it adopted by him as a measure to bring before this Assembly. I was present at the deputation. So far as I am aware no record was kept in writing of the conversations and discussions that took place, and therefore I submit that my recollection of the transactions is just as good as that of any other person. I am satisfied that the measure was handed over to the Minister more to support the contention that another Government had given consideration to this matter, more as a document of interest, and one that he might peruse, and certainly not as the only thing he was asked to adopt for the purpose of legislation. At that time we had sufficient reliance in the hon. gentleman to believe that he would be prepared to give all these matters consideration, and I do not doubt that he did, but the net result was that he declined to take any action in regard to our requests, as evidenced by the letter read to the House. I definitely say that he was not asked at any time in my presence to restrict himself to the terms of the Victorian legislation and not proceed with any other proposal. In fact, reference was also made to the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act of this State.

I should like to enlarge on the observations the Leader of the Opposition made in regard to other legislation or regulations of various kinds that have been introduced in respect of moratoria or partial moratoria. It is true, as stated by him, that in 1914 a Bill was brought down by the then Premier, the late Mr. John Scaddan, which appears on page 72 of the Bills introduced in that year. That Bill empowered the Government by proclamation to declare that payment of all debts then due or accruing within the period mentioned in the proclamation or a specified portion of any such debts could, subject to the conditions set forth in the

proclamation, be postponed to a date or for a period therein specified. That was closer to a general moratorium for all debts then existing than is any proposal put before the Minister for Lands by members on this side of the House. That Bill became an Act, and was renewed year after year until the 31st December, 1919, or one year and approximately two months after the signing of the Armistice, which brought the 1914-18 war to a close.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Mr. Scaddan was then Premier of a Labour Government.

Mr. WATTS: As the Leader of the Opposition has interjected, the gentleman who introduced that measure was then in charge of, I think, the second Labour Government to hold office in Western Australia. The Federal regulations referred to by the Leader of the Opposition are as far as I know, useless for the purpose we have in mind. He told the House that applications for relief under those regulations must be founded on circumstances that are attributable to the war. There are no circumstances in the cases I have in mind that could be held to be attributable to the war. Whilst droughts and wars apparently have come together fairly well in this country, in 1914 and again in 1940, the fact remains that I can see no legal connection between them, and I do not think any tribunal would hold that the drought had been caused by the war. The Federal regulations do, however, indicate a precedent for things of this nature, if any precedent is wanted. I do not look for precedents. My view is that if a thing wants doing, it wants doing whether it has been done before in one of the other States or not. We should be capable of making our own decisions on matters of importance, and act accordingly. Some people seem to require precedents, and if a precedent is wanted in this case, there is another which is available for consideration. If the Federal Government has considered that these regulations are not going to ruin the credit of the trading community, who will be the persons most concerned by them, and it considers that its moratorium provisions which give the tribunal power to declare the partial or complete suspension of a man's debts will not ruin the credit of that individual, it is reasonable to assume that similar provisions made under equally, if not more, desperate circumstances for the

primary producers of this State, are not likely to have a more serious effect.

The Minister for Labour: Could not the Federal regulations be expanded to take in those cases?

Hon. C. G. Latham: No.

Mr. WATTS: They might be expanded if they were altered, but I do not know whether there is any authority that could alter them to apply to drought conditions. At any rate they have not yet been altered. I am not one to pass the buck, as somebody has said, to the Federal authorities. The Government of this State, just as is the case with the Governments of other States, has certain sovereign powers. Obviously the Premier of 1914—and we were then under Federation—also felt that this Parliament had power to pass the necessary legislation. Whether the Federal Government did so or not, or the Victorian Government did so or not, does not affect what we ought to do. The only question is whether it is right and reasonable that we should do it. What is the alternative? If the farming community is in a position where the returns this year are not sufficient to pay its current liabilities, apparently the intention of the Minister would be to apply the provisions of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. Suppose that Act is applied and a stay order is issued, because a workable credit is required a receiver will be appointed and a meeting of creditors held. That course would be taken because a man, by reason of the fact that he has no returns, is not able to pay his debts. He is worried about the position, and because he is worried, he probably damages his own efficiency. If we damage his efficiency, we damage the efficiency of Western Australia. Every time the returns from the crops are lower, there is less money for the Treasury and for meeting the State's obligations. That is a most important thing. We get up in this House and say that the primary producing industries are essential for our solvency and for the national war effort. When it comes to doing something to save them from being less efficient, we are reluctant to do it because of the fact that it will affect some nebulous system of credit. It is a wonder we do not do more than move a motion of no confidence, and do not join some of those who have been classed in this House by a previous Minister for Lands as robbers and re-

puddlers. It is a wonder we do not do worse than we are doing this evening. When we find that consideration of a matter, which is reasonable enough in all circumstances, is turned down flat on the ground that it will affect some nebulous system of credit, it is a wonder that we do not do more than was suggested of us by a previous Minister for Lands.

The Minister for Mines: Why do you not use some of the credit that was spoken of last night?

Mr. WATTS: The Minister told us it would take a long time to reach the period when that credit would be available.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You pay your industrialists with it, and give us some real money.

Mr. WATTS: I do not want to see the morale of the farming community damaged during the lengthy period forecast by the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall), for disaster is likely to occur long before that type of credit is made available.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member is not in order in referring to a debate that took place yesterday.

Mr. WATTS: I have no desire to do so. If there were some alternative proposal available within a reasonable period, other than that which we are discussing now, I would be prepared to accept it, but it is not there. We have to deal with things as we find them now, and not as we find them at some time in the future. I look at the prospective returns from the wheat areas. With the exception of the northern areas and the two cases of the Beverley and York districts, there is scarcely a place in the State that will produce an average of more than five or six bushels to the acre. Let members realise the amount that, for wheat only, farmers will handle at an average price of 3s. a bushel, and the difference between the amount available to them this year compared with that which was available last year. For wheat only they will be approximately £3,500,000 or 21,551,000 bushels behind last year's figures. That means the farmers will not get £3,500,000, that they had last year, with which to meet their obligations. We are told we must not have a moratorium, we must not do anything to prevent these people from falling into a still worse financial position. They must stand by and wait for something to turn

up, but when that something will be and what it will be, no one knows.

The Minister for Lands told us of the things that the Government had done in regard to hay, chaff and other things of that nature for essential supplies. I do not for one moment question his actions in those matters. I am prepared at all times, whenever an opportunity offers, to give full credit where credit is due; and I think the Minister is fully aware of that. At the same time, I am not going to be prevented from criticising when I think something ought to be done that has not been done. I also wish the Minister fully to appreciate and understand that. Our situation in this matter is based on the production of the farmers. I mentioned only wheat just now, but wool returns also are going to be substantially reduced on account of the unfavourable season and the smaller clip of wool on the average sheep. Again, stock returns will be reduced owing to the fact that many sheep have to be sold at very low prices. All we want is that out of the funds the farmer has, if he has any, he shall be entitled to retain for carrying on his property all that is required for that purpose, if he has enough; and that he shall not be asked to use any of that money for the payment of debts contracted last year; nor shall he be asked to make application under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act for a measure of protection. If any creditor oppresses him, we want to simplify his position in obtaining relief. Then we are faced with the declaration that there are no creditors pressing him. I dare say there are not. From my experience of country business the pressing does not start until January, when there is something to press for. That time is not now, but it will soon be. Meanwhile our duty is to ensure that no action shall be taken that will have any worse effect on the primary producers' position than there is already present. I had five cases referred to me recently at Nyabing, the men being unable to pay at the present time for debts contracted in connection with putting in last year's crops. They have not obtained any returns worth speaking of, and in consequence they will find themselves in very serious difficulties. Such returns as they have will be quite insufficient to enable them to carry on. I admit, of course, that those people must receive some financial assist-

ance; but there are others, and they are the people who I think would have made application, if legislation such as we suggest had been brought down by the Government, for time and opportunity to carry on their business, in their own way. I believe that in the great majority of cases that demand is perfectly justifiable. And so, because the goods deeds of the hon. gentleman representing the Government must go to the credit of the Government and his ill deeds, if any, go to its debit, the Ministry must take the responsibility. The Government has refused to take any action in this matter. In my opinion, its viewpoint in the matter is wrong. I hold that there could have been no possible harm, but much good, resulting from a decision on the lines that Ministers have been asked to adopt; that from such a decision there would have come a considerable alleviation of the feeling that I know exists in various districts.

In conclusion I shall have a few words to say regarding the interjections of the Minister for Justice when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking concerning Gnowangerup. I know perfectly well that Gnowangerup is a particularly good district. Although its production of wheat is limited, it has had extremely satisfactory returns until last year. Last year and this year have been disastrous in that district. As I indicated earlier in my remarks, numbers of men there are in adverse circumstances. The average for the whole district this year is set down at 7 bushels. It was pointed out that the eastern portion of the district will probably have a greater return than that, showing that the position in the western portion is extremely bad. The member for Canning (Mr. Cross) said something about the moort country being no good—I will not stop to argue with him whether it is good or bad or indifferent—it is still there. The question is not one of moort country, but of drought and rust which have reduced the returns of the district. All that the member for Canning can say by way of interjection or otherwise will not convince me to the contrary. So, having dealt with most of the matters that I wished to speak on, I am going to say frankly that I have no hesitation in supporting the motion. Not by any scintilla of means does it touch the arrangement for co-operative effort that was suggested by the Minister for Lands. As I

did in the beginning, so now finally do I submit to him that there is no suggestion in that arrangement of our sitting here and listening to all the Government has to say and yielding assent to it. If we adopted that attitude, we should not be doing our duty either as members of this House, or to the country. It is our duty to criticise whenever the right time for doing so arrives.

MR. SEWARD (Pingelly) [8.36]: I shall not take up much of the time of the House, because I think the previous three speakers on this side have amply justified the action of my leader in launching this motion. Before proceeding to say anything on it, I wish to take the opportunity to reply to the unworthy aspersions cast upon the Leader of the Opposition this evening. Ever since I have been in the House I have found the Minister for Lands a very fair critic and debater; but it is apparently the weakness of his case to-night which led him to utter the taunt that the Leader of the Opposition had agreed with the Premier that he would take no opportunity to embarrass the Government during the present troublous times, and that petty differences in politics were as nothing compared with the unity that all parties should display throughout the Empire. We thoroughly agree with that statement of our leader, but I say without hesitation that nobody in this State can throw any taunt at the hon. gentleman in regard to the attitude he has taken towards the Empire. I consider that he more than any other public man in Western Australia has travelled from one end of the State to the other doing his utmost towards the furtherance of the war effort.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I did not promise to sign a blank cheque in respect of anything the Government put up.

MR. SEWARD: If there is a charge—I do not say there is—which could be levelled against my leader—I should be the last to level it—it is that he neglected his Parliamentary duties in his anxiety to further this State's policy in connection with the war.

The Minister for Mines: He had a swollen head.

MR. SEWARD: I do not consider that the Leader of the Opposition has neglected his Parliamentary duties in any way. However, I say without hesitation that he would have been neglecting those duties had he

failed to move the motion now before the House. Everyone on this side of the Chamber will assist the Government to the utmost of his powers during the present parlous time; but no member on these benches would neglect any section of the community, and particularly not that section which we represent more closely than any other. It is well known, and has been pointed out by previous speakers on this side, that the position of the primary industries, and particularly the farming industry, to-day is absolutely tragic.

Mr. Cross: What about the tragic position of people in the motor trade?

Mr. SEWARD: The hon. member interjecting will have ample opportunity to deal with that aspect. The Minister for Lands stated that the Government has been doing things that are more important than the introduction of legislation of what he called an illusory character. He went on further to state that possibly next week—I think he said next Wednesday, but at all events next week—there would be a statement made as to future arrangements for the carrying on of the primary industries. If the present motion has not done anything else, it has elicited that statement—a statement very gratifying to those engaged in the primary industries. I think that upon the return of the Minister last week I read a statement that he had been requested by the conference which he had just been attending to draw up a plan, which would be considered at some future conference of Premiers, either at the end of this year or at the beginning of the next. But that was a most uncomfortable position to leave the producers in. If the plan is not to be merely considered next week but to be finalised next week, a statement to that effect would again produce a comfortable feeling among the producers.

If we are to judge future conferences, such as the one that the Minister recently attended, by the outcome of past conferences, it will be a considerable time before we will get any results. Three or four such conferences have been held during the past 18 months, and the sole results have been announcements to the effect that a scheme was to be drawn up for consideration at some future conference. Meanwhile those engaged in the industry are expected to struggle on as best they can. The result

is that in all too many instances the farmers have been forced to walk off their holdings. The Premier, by way of interjection, asked how many mortgagees had foreclosed on properties. I did not think there was anyone in this State who was in the slightest degree conversant with the primary industry, who did not know that mortgagees do not foreclose on properties. They do not foreclose, but they do not make funds available to the farmers. Members know that farmers have to pay the proceeds of the year's work into the bank during the year, and the trouble is that those proceeds are not subsequently released to enable the farmers to carry on. Unless they are able to raise funds from some outside source that will permit them to carry on, the ultimate result is that the men are forced off their holdings, irrespective of whether there is foreclosure or not. Such a course is inevitable if they are not provided with funds with which to carry on their operations and meet the demands of their family obligations. During the course of his speech the member for Kaitangata (Mr. Watts) read a letter which disclosed that unfortunate farmers have been told to go to the stock merchants to secure advances against their wool with which to pay their bank interest. How could anyone with any sense of self-reliance be expected to carry on under such conditions? Outside the properties of such farmers, men employed by the Main Roads Board are working. Those men are in receipt of the basic wage of about £4 2s. a week. They knock off on Friday night and do not resume work until the following Monday, and they work for eight hours daily. Such conditions are infinitely superior to those enjoyed by men on the land. The producers are providing an asset which enables the Government to pay the interest on the State's indebtedness; the others are merely engaged on essential work. The value of the latter from the State point of view cannot be compared with that of the former.

To a certain extent I compliment the Minister for Lands on the chaff agreement that has been arranged. Many farmers were able to dispose of their chaff to the Agricultural Bank at reasonable prices. Many of them have taken advantage of the opportunity, but there remain very many who are not in that fortunate position. Those farmers read the announcement in the Press and proceeded to

cut the hay. To date they have not been able to sell their stocks. That is likely to prove serious. The bank has secured its requirements, and the other hay remains to be sold. Under the agreement a maximum price has been fixed but no minimum, and naturally merchants are awaiting a drop in the current price. Only to-day I received telegrams and some telephone messages from farmers asking about the position and wanting to know how they could dispose of their chaff. The only way is to send the chaff to the metropolitan market and take whatever price can be obtained. As no minimum price has been fixed it is merely a matter of competition, with merchants endeavouring to secure supplies at the cheapest possible price. That constitutes a serious flaw in the agreement. Unfortunately the farmers have to put up with the position.

A few weeks ago application was made to the Minister for Railways for special rates for farmers who had to send their sheep from one district to another for agistment purposes. No concession is to be made. The unfortunate farmers do not know what the outcome will be, but many have had to dispose of portions of their flocks in order to save the balance. Had some arrangement been made regarding the removal of stock for agistment purposes, the position would be quite different. During the last day or two excellent rainfalls have been recorded in some of the country districts where the greatest difficulty has been associated with the water shortage. No farmer can afford to secure water for his stock by railing it to his siding. If he is lacking in water supplies, then his sheep must be disposed of. Falls recorded, such as that of 2½ inches yesterday, will serve to fill dams, and possibly key dams in the localities concerned. If farmers have the necessary water supplies, then arrangements can be made regarding feed. They can easily deal with the feed position but not so easily with water supplies. Then there is the point raised by the deputation from the Wheatgrowers' Union which waited on the Premier at the instigation of the member for Irwin-Moore (Mr. Berry), assisted by members of the Country Party. The object of the deputation was to request that an arrangement should be arrived at regarding the stored wheat problem. To the best of my knowledge, no such arrangement has

been made other than the Wheat Board has stated that the wheat is available. The fact remains that the trustees are holding that wheat and under their deed of trust they are bound to get the best possible price they can for the growers. Unless some agreement is arrived at by some governmental authority or through the agency of the Government, with the object of effecting a settlement enabling the farmers to purchase their requirements, the wheat will have to remain in the bins to be disposed of later on.

I offer no apology for supporting the motion. The members of the Country Party would have failed in their duty to their constituents, particularly to the farmers, had they not submitted the motion. Despite all the promises we have received, there remains at the present time much to be done to enable the farmers to continue their operations and sow a crop during the coming year.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [8.47]: I cannot say I was surprised when the Minister expressed regret at the moving of the motion. It would have been a matter for relief to members opposite had that course not been pursued. Regret may be felt at the necessity to submit a defence of the non-recognition by the Government of the difficulties with which the farming community is faced by reason of adverse seasonal and price conditions, the difficulties in marketing their produce, and the supreme disabilities arising out of a long extended drought. I was sorry that the Minister, who usually finds no difficulty in expressing himself in polite terms, should have sought to ridicule the motion, and adopt the attitude of one who had been gravely injured because the needs of those on the land were not receiving consideration.

Mr. Cross: Do not you agree that this is a stupid motion?

Mr. SAMPSON: The motion is not the only stupid thing in this House, but I do not want to deal with that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. SAMPSON: I am sorry we are apparently not to hear from any member on the Government side of the House, apart from the Minister. There are members who should stand by the Minister in his effort to justify the non-action of the Government. I am not so unfriendly to the Minister for Lands as to suggest that the member for Canning

should assist him; the Minister has enough trouble on his hands at present. A suggestion was made that this motion would mean a weakening of our war effort. Surely that is a most illogical view. How could any action which has for its object the assistance of our primary producers lessen the power of the Commonwealth to continue the war effort? The war is fought not only in the air, on and under the sea and on the land, but on our farms. If our farmers are so burdened as to be unable to remain on their holdings, then upon whom can we depend? There is no alternative, and therefore the suggestion that the motion will weaken our war effort will not admit of consideration for a moment.

A serious difficulty faces not only the Government but every person in the State. It is that large numbers of people are leaving our country districts and drifting into Perth. On going into our country towns to-day, one finds many empty premises. That remark applies also to goldfields districts. Residential and business premises are becoming vacant; and the explanation is that the people who formerly occupied them are gradually moving into Perth. If building operations are a criterion, there certainly is no war in progress; because, compared with the days of the financial depression, we have no empty houses and few empty business premises, and this despite the fact that we have been at war for over a year.

The Minister for Labour: What percentage of our population is situated within a radius of 10 miles of the Perth Town Hall?

Mr. SAMPSON: That is an interesting question. Well over 50 per cent.

The Minister for Labour: Fifty-four per cent. That is the solution of that problem.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member had better confine himself to the motion.

Mr. SAMPSON: I felt it would be an act of discourtesy not to reply to the Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: Interjections are disorderly. Address the Chair!

Mr. SAMPSON: The Government should seriously consider the motion. As a matter of fact, it is an obligation on members—irrespective of party—to vote for it. I say without hesitation that unless we extend consideration to the man on the land and make it possible for him to continue his work, irreparable damage will be done to

the State. I hope the motion will be carried. Failing that, I trust that at all events the Minister concerned and his colleagues will give urgent consideration to the relief of the man on the land.

MR. WARNER (Mt. Marshall) [8.54]: I feel it necessary to say a few words on the motion. I have followed the debate very closely. Many farmers whom I represent are suffering keenly under present conditions. I am divided in opinion as to whether I should castigate our Government, or lay the blame where I consider it ought to be laid, and that is on the Federal Government. I shall not detain the House long, but wish to point out that I am doing all in my power to assist my constituents. I hope I shall not be accused of kite flying or of sparring for political gain. My desire is to be of service and I do not want to flog this subject, which is all too well understood by members. I fully explained the position of the farmers in my district in a debate in this Chamber some few weeks ago. I spoke for some considerable time and thank members for the courtesy which they extended to me on that occasion. I do not want to paint again the picture which I painted then. I am fully seized of the seriousness of the motion. For that reason I intend to be serious also. I have, as I said, no intention of making political capital out of this debate. I entered Parliament with the honest intention of doing my best for the people who returned me and for the farmers throughout the State. I have done my part at every available opportunity and I intend to follow my line of action until such time as I retire from politics. I shall then carry with me the same reputation for honesty as I enjoyed when I entered Parliament. As I also said before, I do not know whether I should say more nasty things about the Federal Government than about the State Government. We could under this motion charge the present Government for every calamity that has befallen the farmer, but I do not intend to take advantage of that opportunity. I think I should direct my attack to the Cameron clan, or rather the man Cameron. The member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) recently spoke about "Casabianca" and "The Charge of the Light Brigade," but I will take Mr. Cameron to task. Minister Cameron should be blamed much

more than he has been blamed this evening for the position in which the primary producers find themselves. He had the ball at his feet and he failed to kick it on behalf of the primary producers. Had he done what he should have done, more would have been accomplished by the Federal Government for the primary producers than has been accomplished. I have carefully watched statements on the subject appearing in the Press. I have sought to ascertain what the Minister for Lands attempted to do while he was in the Eastern States and what he accomplished, and I have come to the conclusion that more blame is attachable to the Federal Government than to the State Government. The Commonwealth has seized our products and we have to accept any price it likes to stipulate. In addition, it has imposed a gold tax upon us amounting to about a million pounds a year. That would be sufficient to put the whole of the primary producers of Western Australia on a reasonable footing. Nevertheless, the State Government is not without blame. It has failed to introduce protective legislation asked for by this side of the House and better reasons are required for its failure to do so than those given by the Minister for Lands. If I thought the passing of the motion would relieve the farmers whose present plight is my daily concern, I would go to any length constitutionally—and possibly otherwise—to force the issue and compel the Government to face up to the crisis through which the farmers are passing. I feel, however, that the obligation to alleviate the distress of primary producers is one that should be shouldered by the Commonwealth, which should assist the State Government to give reasonable consideration to the requirements of the farming community.

I believe that the Minister for Lands did all he possibly could for the farming community when he attended the meetings that were held in the Eastern States, but because he has failed to provide some immediate security for the assets of the farmers until something on a wider scale can be attempted, I must support the motion. There is little more I can say, because I do not want to repeat the sad stories I told the House on a previous oc-

casion concerning the people I represent. I hope that the debate will at least have the result of persuading the Government to introduce legislation which will enable the farmers to remain on their holdings without fear of having the whole of their equity taken away.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [9.5]: On two occasions in the last two or three years, Bills have been introduced in this House by members of the Country Party for the purpose of freezing or postponing the payment of debts and providing relief for the farmers by means of a reduction of debts. On those occasions I urged that caution should be exercised regarding that kind of legislation. Last session I said that, after some considerable study of the question as set out in the report of the Royal Commission on the wheat industry, it appeared to me that the matter of debt reconstruction was one for the Federal authorities; and it should be accompanied by safeguards in the way of a fund for seasonal credits, which the Royal Commission considered to be an essential feature of any plan for debt reconstruction of the wheat industry. I also said last year that I would support any scheme for debt reduction or a postponement of debts on the lines of the Victorian Government's Act passed some years ago. I pointed out that Victoria had found it essential—although the wheat industry was much more stable in that State than it is here—to establish a considerable fund for the purpose of seasonal credits and in addition had utilised part of the rural debt relief advances from the Commonwealth to provide some compensation to first mortgagees whose debts were written down. If those features accompanied a measure of debt reduction or debt postponement introduced in this Chamber, such a Bill would meet with my support; but here there is no fund to meet what I believe is a very essential safeguard to the farming industry if legislation of this kind is introduced.

I wish the motion had urged further inquiry as to the need for this class of legislation. If it were established to my satisfaction and the satisfaction of other members of the House that there was oppression of farmers by creditors that could not be met by the provisions of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act, I am sure that I and every other

member would be willing to have legislative action taken to provide reasonable protection for the farmers.

Mr. Doney interjected.

Mr. McDONALD: The Act does afford substantial protection for the farmers. Under its provisions they can obtain a stay order protecting them from any action by secured creditors, first mortgagees or others.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It is very cumbersome, though.

Mr. McDONALD: That is true. It is also true, as the member for Katanning (Mr. Watts) pointed out, that if a farmer desires to obtain advances for seasonal requirements, he has to submit to the procedure of a receiver being appointed to control his affairs. If a farmer reaches the stage when he is being pressed by his creditors, and has to take steps to secure seasonal advances to carry on, it can be argued that his affairs should be under the control of a receiver.

Possibly his affairs would be in such a state that control by a man skilled in accountancy would be in the interests of the farmer and his restoration to a more solvent condition. In view of the fact that I have repeatedly urged the Government with regard to this type of legislation to act with caution, I feel that I cannot possibly condemn it for the caution that has been exercised on this occasion. Had the motion been one for inquiry, I should have supported it, but as it is one of condemnation for a certain caution that has been exercised, rightly or wrongly, but a caution that I think is well justified, then it is not for me to take part in any such motion of condemnation for doing what I myself have advised.

This matter obviously is not merely one for the State. We have witnessed a very considerable advance in the last two or three weeks in that the Commonwealth Government has accepted a responsibility it had never previously undertaken. Whether the amount of money is a fair one or not, the Commonwealth has agreed to a guaranteed minimum price to primary producers during the war period, subject only to the precaution against an undue expansion of wheat production.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That has not been accepted yet.

Mr. McDONALD: It has not been accepted, but it has been offered.

Mr. Boyle: Only for 12 months.

Mr. McDONALD: As I read the statement, it appeared to be clear that the measures were intended to operate for the protection of the industry over the period of dislocation of shipments and prices occasioned by the war. That represents a very great advance. If I have read the papers rightly, there has been an offer of £2,500,000 for debt relief, £500,000 of it for Western Australia, and although that amount is to be advanced to the farmers and is not a free gift but is a charge for repayment, I do not think any member is optimistic enough to believe that the Commonwealth will get very much of that half million back. It will be a charge ultimately on the finances of the Commonwealth or the State.

The Premier: Or partly on both.

Mr. McDONALD: Perhaps so. Some of the farmers might be anxious, willing and able to repay portion of the advances made. Looking at the question fairly, candidly and frankly, this is a responsibility that originally rested on the States, but the Federal Government has now recognised it as a responsibility resting partly on the Commonwealth. That being so, I hope that the measures which have been considered and concerted in the last few weeks between the States and the Commonwealth will be advanced and will result in still more relief and still better safeguards for the wheat industry.

Nobody recognises more completely than I do the importance of the wheat and wool industries, as pointed out by the member for Avon. I suppose those two industries form the very foundation of our economic structure. I would not except gold, which might be of very great benefit to-day, but, as we all know, rests upon foundations that are not so secure as are those of some of the primary industries. Any measure we can take within reason through the State or through the Commonwealth to maintain the farming industry on a sound basis in areas where it should be carried on and by farmers who are reasonably competent to carry it on will receive the support of the House on every occasion. I hope a great deal more can be done and will be done to assist the industry to recover from the desperate state in which it is to-day. I think

we can hope and expect that the State Government will continue to press, in conjunction with the Commonwealth Government, for measures that will meet the emergency that exists and, I hope, measures that will give a long-term assurance of more stable conditions for the wheat industry.

I have made inquiries—not specific inquiries as has the Minister for Lands—but I have been on the lookout for any evidence of unfair treatment of wheatgrowers by mortgagees, and so far I have not come across any such cases; in fact, I know of cases where institutions and private people are going to particular lengths to ensure that the mortgagors—the farmers—are able to continue on the land and help them to the utmost extent to recover a greater degree of stability than they possess to-day. If there were cases of unfair treatment and oppression not covered by existing legislation, I for one would be prepared to consider any proposal put forward to give greater security to the farmers who deserve that security.

I have listened to the debate with interest and, I hope, profit. It has given me something to think about. If I hear of any cases showing that such legislation is desirable, or if evidence reaches me indicating that this class of legislation in general is undesirable for the State and for the farmers themselves, because it creates an uncertainty which is the cause of stagnation in trade and of unemployment, or if I hear of circumstances that would make legislation in the shape of a moratorium preferable, even though it might have some disadvantages, I will be prepared to consider the whole matter. Whatever the issue of this motion, I feel sure the Minister and the Government will accept the debate as an indication that the whole problem might well be re-examined. Possibly on re-examination we might take a different view, for no situation is so certain that it does not justify re-examination constantly. Therefore I cannot support the motion in its present form, although I would have been prepared to support a proposal for further inquiry into the necessity for additional legislation for the protection of farmers against any oppression by their creditors.

MR. BERRY (Irwin-Moore) [9.20]: I will not detain the House long on this question, because the matter has been so well ventilated. Perhaps it would have been better if the shot had been fired at that place at which it should be possible to get more done than we can get done locally. I refer to the Federal Government. Had this motion of censure been directed against the Federal Government, in respect to its actions towards wheatgrowers, it would have done more than we can hope to gain in this House. Some years ago a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into the wheat industry in this State. As members know, certain recommendations were made, and a voluminous report was prepared and issued at great cost. In no instance do we find that the Federal Government made any effort to implement the findings of that Commission. The Federal Country Party has been associated for a long time with the Federal Government, and a motion of censure of this kind might even have been directed at the Federal Country Party rather than at the Labour Party of this State. The whole question is one of need and necessity. If we are going to keep our farming industry, particularly the wheat-growing industry, we must make up our minds to do so. Again my reference is to the Federal Government. If the industry is not worth preserving, and it is the intention of the Federal Government to let it go, it should go. I cannot, however, believe it is the desire of the Federal Government that the industry should go. The moment the war broke out that Government acquired all the wheat and wool in Australia and many other farming commodities at a price that was practically fixed by it. The wool and wheat industries of Australia are of such vital national importance to the Commonwealth and, patriotically, to the Empire, that the Federal Government found it necessary to commandeer all those commodities.

In the Press this afternoon we saw references to an approaching famine in Europe. That points to the necessity for everything within the power of every Government in Australia being done to preserve the wheat and wool-growing industries of Australia. The member for Avon said that conditions in the farming indus-

try of this State were colossally difficult and bad. He indicated that people were leaving their farms and coming to the city. I am afraid that that is only too true. To illustrate that statement I wish to read a paragraph that appeared in a New Zealand paper, headed "Farmers' Plight in Australia." It is as follows:—

A rather bleak picture of the farm situation in Australia appeared in the columns of an Australian contemporary recently. For the year ended June 30 last the aggregate returns from Australian primary products approached record figures. Since the outbreak of war the entire export surplus of the principal products—except wheat and various fruits—was acquired by the British Government, and the proceeds from exports of these products for the year amounted to £100,000,000 or more. Yet today the land industries of Australia are in grave difficulty. Drought conditions have forced wool growers to buy feed for flocks; wheat growers have long been embarrassed by unpayable prices, and because of unpromising conditions both as to the seasonal and market outlook many are leaving their holdings in despair. The majority of producers of lamb and other meats for the export trade are facing a period of exceptional difficulty through drought. Many fruit-growers have already given up the struggle against adversity. There is, in consequence, a most menacing drift from the country to the cities, and the problems of the producers are added to by a rapidly growing scarcity of labour. The situation is anomalous, to put it mildly!

The extract I have read substantiates the remarks of the member for Avon (Mr. Boyle). It is time we came to a decision as to whether we are going to maintain our primary industries or let them go. If we in Australia are going to let go the wheat and wool industries, I am sorry for the Commonwealth. We might as well put up a to-let notice at the gateway of Australia, Fremantle, to the effect that we are finished. We have heard of cases of serious distress and persecution. I, too, have had quite a number of those instances brought before me. It is because of the distress to come and fear ahead that I was induced, with others, to bring to the House a little while ago members of the Wheatgrowers' Union. We approached the Premier and the Minister for Lands, who were good enough to see us in an ante chamber. We asked the Leader of the Government and the Minister to do what they could, and they promised to do that. I am safe in saying that the Minister for Lands has done all that he possibly can to help our wheatgrowers, so far as the finan-

cial system will permit. The crux of the whole business is the financial system. I am sorry the motion has come forward to-night. Instead of being a motion of censure it is, from my point of view, more an expression of a desire on the part of those of us who represent the farmers, to drive home to the State Government the necessity for doing those things it has the power to do. So far as I can gather from the discourse all that the Country Party asked for at the meeting with the Minister for Lands was that he should select a tribunal to adjudicate on the merits or demerits of individual cases, on the question whether the debts should be suspended during a period of drought and depression. After listening to the speakers this evening, I do not think the Minister was asked for anything he could not have done. There is no reason why he should not have appointed such a tribunal. In his wisdom, however, he has decided otherwise, and by so deciding he has brought about the controversy to-night.

Mr. Needham: Do you call it a controversy?

Mr. BERRY: Another word could have been used, but that is the word I have chosen. It is all very well to say that the farmers could be brought under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act and that stay orders could be issued. There is difficulty in obtaining stay orders, and I do not know that that system would be at all effective. I am sorry this motion has been directed at the Minister for Lands. From the knowledge I have of him and the association I have had with him recently, I am firmly convinced he is endeavouring to do the best he can for those on the land. The answer to the riddle is definitely in the hands of the Federal Government, which is held in office by the Federal Country Party. If the Federal Country Party would insist upon the right thing being done there would be no need for us to stand on our feet to-night, facing the Government benches, and making the accusations we have made. It is the duty of the Government to get behind the Country Party and the rest of us and endeavour to force the Federal Government to do its duty to the farmers of Australia generally. We want more than an offer of 2s. 9d. a bushel for our wheat farmers, for that is merely offering us a figure that is just sufficient for us to pay their bank interest. Many of our farmers work

on their properties for 12 hours a day. We ask for them the same right that is enjoyed by the worker, the moral recognition of their labours. The reward of labour is something honourable and deserving. The Labour Party has fought for years for the worker and has built up for the people a certain reward. To-night we are fighting equally to induce the Labour Government which must have sympathy with us, to bring to the farming industry exactly the same reward for labour that has been given to the people in the city. I am an Independent, and proud of the fact. If the Labour Party puts up anything good, I am behind it; and if it puts up anything rotten, I am not behind it.

Mr. Marshall: You must always be with us.

Mr. BERRY: I am not so sure of that. Anyhow, I do hope it will shortly be recognised that it is not the Minister for Lands of Western Australia who is holding the farmers in a vice, but the Federal Government, the United Australia Party and the Federal Country Party.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York—in reply) [9.31]: We have already had a reply from the Minister for Lands, who spoke on behalf of the Government. Following the customary tactics of a soldier in retreat, the Minister thought the best means available to him was to go back to 1936 for justification of his case. I raise no objection to that kind of tactics. All we ask the Minister to do is to recognise the farmer's present position and to give him safe relief. Speaking as apologist for the Government, the member who has just sat down stated that the Government has not the necessary funds. I do not know whether the Government has or has not. I am not in a position to say. But I want to point out that we did not ask the Government to find any money. We merely asked the Government to preserve for the farmer the money that would be available to him from his yearly proceeds so that he might be enabled to carry on. Let me assure the House that the position of the farmers is desperate. There are two kinds of debtors. I understand from the Minister's reply that it is proposed to assist the man who finds himself definitely hard up against it. But then there is the man who has some income, though probably not suffi-

cient to pay his way and continue farming operations. That is the man we are so worried about. It is no use for the Premier to ask, "Who has been put off the land?" Last year we had an average for the State of 13 bushels of wheat per acre—a very high record.

Mr. Raphael: Where is all the wheat now?

Hon. G. G. LATHAM: In fact, the average was 13.9, practically 14 bushels. A reference to the report of the Commissioners of the Agricultural Bank answers the question definitely. It says—

The number of properties vacated during the year ended on the 30th June, 1940, was no fewer than 237.

That was when the State had a record yield and there was a much improved price as compared with previous years. Yet 237 farms were vacated in that one year. Now, there is also the individual who has had no financial assistance from anyone, who has farmed only on his own resources. Plenty of such farms have been abandoned. I regret to have to stand here and say that men who have toiled on West Australian farms for 30 years and upwards have during the last 12 months been compelled to leave their properties, leave their farms penniless. So there is something definitely wrong. I have not blamed the Minister. I have commended what he has done. I have assisted him whenever possible. The Government does not often take us into its confidence. The public generally gets its news from the "West Australian" when Parliament is not sitting. That is the usual course. I made an offer to the Government, on behalf of this party, to render any assistance we could. That offer was not accepted. I will not say that the Minister for Lands abused me, but he paraded to the House a statement I made here some 12 months ago, just after the declaration of war. I still adhere to that statement, but I never gave an undertaking to the Premier or any Minister that I was not going to criticise their actions if I thought I was justified in doing so. Otherwise an Opposition would be useless. There would be no need for an Opposition if its members were not to be permitted to criticise the Government in any way they thought right. Surely that is the proper thing to do. In fact, it is our privilege and our right. Further, if the necessity arises, it is our privilege and our right to move a want of confidence motion.

The Premier: But the necessity did not arise in this instance.

Hon. G. G. LATHAM: I think it did, but there is plenty of room for disagreement. Generally speaking, I can assert that the Government has received from this side of the House a good deal of consideration; and the Government can say the same about the Opposition. I do not like harrassing tactics. I believe the Minister for Lands is over-worked. The Premier might give consideration to some little redistribution of the work. A great deal has been said from this side of the Chamber to justify the motion. I desire to point out exactly what I believe the position to be. I do want to correct a statement frequently made not only inside this House but also outside it, that the Commonwealth Government has done nothing for the wheat industry of Western Australia. I felt disgusted that any public man should stand here and make that statement when he ought to know better. I shall give a few figures that I have culled from the Auditor General's report at short notice. No less than £1,171,433 has been made a gift by the Commonwealth to the Western Australian Government for the purpose of reducing the debts of the farmers. That money has been loaned to the farmer—not given to him. According to the Auditor General, £1,171,433 is the amount that has actually been paid in relief of the debts of our farms. It is true that besides that direct payment the creditor has made a fairly substantial reduction. The State Government has made a substantial contribution by writing down mortgage debts and accounts for water and so forth. Further, no less a sum than £3,100,000 has been paid by the Commonwealth Government to Western Australian farmers by way of bonus for wheat production. I am again quoting the Auditor General's report. That is a substantial sum. Yet a representative man in this State has said that there has been nothing done by the Federal Government. Again, there is the fixed price for home consumption of wheat. A price of 5s. 2d. per bushel at Port Williamstown was fixed. No wonder the public gets to dislike criticism by members of Parliament when those members do not give accurate information. I take this opportunity to correct misstatements that have been made.

A great deal more could have been done for the farmers not only of Western Aus-

tralia but of the entire Commonwealth if many supporters of the farmers had acted rightly when the carrying of a referendum in regard to wheat was recommended by the Federal and State Governments. However, the proposal was rejected. Even the Premier of this State assisted opponents of the scheme by briefing a member of the House of Commons, Sir Stafford Cripps, to defeat the case in the Privy Council. Sir Stafford Cripps was paid to bar what we consider to be the best and easiest method of handling the question. Notwithstanding all that assistance, we have to plead the cause of a most important industry. If to-night's discussion has done nothing except arouse public interest, it has done something worth while. After all, while members are desirous of doing the right thing, they cannot accomplish that unless they have public backing; and the people of this State have never yet given the Government of the State any backing in efforts to improve the position of the man on the land.

Gradually we have improved the dairy-ing position. When the Government first took charge of the Treasury bench in 1934, Ministers became aware of the situation of that industry. Gradually it has been improved by means of agreements arrived at between the States and the Commonwealth—by no other means. I do not know whether we could extend that system by applying it to the wheatgrowing industry. I do not blame the Government for all the ills from which the farmers are suffering. It was not within its province fully to cure them, but I do suggest that when we request Ministers to render assistance by the introduction of legislation that will give much relief to the men on the land, they should meet our desires. I do not believe for one moment that such legislation would adversely affect the credit of the farming industry. I believe the results would be exactly similar to those that followed upon the passing of the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. Protection would be afforded the men on the land against importunate creditors. I am sick and tired of boards of references, inquiries and investigations. We have had so many inquiries and so many reports that we shall be absolutely fogged in our attempts to determine what course will be most successful. We do not want any more inquiries or additional reports. What we require is a complete understanding between all sec-

tions that are anxious to assist those engaged in our primary industries. I give the Minister for Lands every credit for what he has done. I believe he is aware of the position of the wheatgrower and the difficulties of the pastoralists. He has just had an exhaustive inquiry regarding the disabilities of those associated with the pastoral industry. I wonder what the recommendations of the Royal Commissioner will be.

The Premier: You will see them next week.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I presume the Minister already knows what they are. The probability is that one recommendation will be along the lines we have been urging, namely, the freezing of debts so as to give the holders of pastoral leases an opportunity to recover their financial position. That is all we want in the interests of the farmer—nothing more and nothing less. We want an opportunity to be given every man who has an interest in his farm, to secure relief from his present financial disabilities so that his liabilities will be carried forward until he is in a position to liquidate them. I do not believe prices will remain as at present. With the termination of the awful war in which we are now engaged, the commodities that we produce will be required. I hope we shall be able to get on with the work at once and assist the farmers to recover their position. Under existing conditions they are not only losing their farms, their plant, their financial position; they are losing what is more important—they are losing heart. We should do everything possible to build up the morale of the men on the land. If we do that, we shall have gained something as a result of the motion now before the House. Though the majority decision may be against us, I believe the motion will have served its purpose by bringing directly under the notice of members of the Government not aware of the facts, the position of the farmers to-day. It will be the means of disclosing to the people the stressful circumstances confronting a section of the community that deserves all the help and sympathy we can extend. I leave the fate of the motion in the hands of the House.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	15
Noes	..	..	..	..	25
Majority against					10

Mr. Berry
Mr. Boyle
Mrs. Cardell-Oliver
Mr. Hill
Mr. Latham
Mr. McLarty
Mr. Patrick
Mr. Sampson

AYES.

Mr. Seward
Mr. J. H. Smith
Mr. Thorne
Mr. Warner
Mr. Watts
Mr. Willmott
Mr. Doney

(Teller.)

NOES.

Mr. Abbott
Mr. Coverley
Mr. Cross
Mr. Fox
Mr. Hawke
Mr. J. Hegney
Mr. W. Hegney
Mr. Holman
Mr. Johnson
Mr. Lambert
Mr. Leahy
Mr. Marshall
Mr. McDonald

Mr. Millington
Mr. Needham
Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Panton
Mr. Raphael
Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. Shearn
Mr. F. C. L. Smith
Mr. Willcock
Mr. Wise
Mr. Withers
Mr. Wilson

(Teller.)

AYES.

Mr. Keenan
Mr. Stubbs
Mr. North

PAIRS.

NOES.

Mr. Collier
Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Styants

Question thus negatived.

BILL—MARGARINE.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 5th November.

MR. WILLMOTT (Sussex) [9.47]: I support the Bill, although I am sorry we are not asked to follow the lines adopted in Canada and prohibit the manufacture and sale of margarine in Western Australia. As the Minister pointed out, margarine has been manufactured in this State for many years and advantage is now being taken of the opportunity to rectify the position. As the other States have passed legislation permitting the manufacture of margarine, Western Australia seemingly must fall into line. Members generally know that upwards of £15,000,000 has been invested in the dairy industry. In view of that fact, we should be very careful indeed in dealing with this question and not allow more than seven tons per week to be manufactured locally. Personally I think too much is manufactured now. Our quota of the 70 tons of margarine to be manufactured in Australia is greater in proportion than that of the other States. Western Australia's quota is seven tons, or one-tenth, whereas our population, in proportion to the other States, is consider-

ably under one-tenth. Our quota should have been based upon the quantity of our dairy products; in that case it would be about five tons, which I consider ample. I point out, however, that the quantity of seven tons per week is for table margarine. No reference is made to the quantity of cooking margarine, which seems to be unlimited, and that point needs close watching. The Minister stated that probably we would be manufacturing margarine for export. England, however, has reduced the allowance of butter to 4 ozs. per week per person, so our exports to England are likely to be considerably reduced, and consequently it will be necessary to look to other countries to take our surplus butter. This point also needs to be carefully watched. We should not export margarine to countries willing to take our butter. I would like to know whether a limit is to be placed on the quantity of cooking margarine that may be manufactured in this State. Of course, I know an old argument will probably be advanced, that some people cannot afford to buy butter at its present price; but I assure members—and I am a dairy-farmer—that the dairy-farmer needs every penny of the present price he is getting for his product. I trust the price of butter will not be reduced. Table margarine, I understand, is sold at about 1s. 1d. a pound.

Mr. Thorn: I have seen it priced at 1s. 2d.

Mr. WILLMOTT: That is better still. It is 5d. or 6d. below the price of first-class butter. Choice butter is 1s. 8d. per lb., but the producer receives only 1s. 3½d. and 1s. 4d. for it. Members may rest assured that the dairy-farmer is not making a fortune out of his business. As the Minister pointed out, an enormous sum of money has been invested in the industry and we should do all in our power to conserve its interests.

I am not clear about one or two provisions of the Bill. Clause 28 provides—

No person shall manufacture or sell or have in his possession for sale any margarine which contains any butter-fat.

The proviso to Subclause 1 of Clause 28 reads—

Provided that it shall be permissible to manufacture, sell, or have in possession for sale, margarine containing butter-fat derived from skim milk. . . .

I ask the Minister, when he replies, to explain exactly what these provisions mean. Apparently a certain amount of butter-fat may be put into margarine; to that I am definitely opposed. If butter-fat is mixed with margarine, it will be impossible to distinguish margarine from butter.

Mr. Thorn: It is dangerous.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I am pleased to note the following provision in the Bill, Subclause 2 of Clause 32:—

The occupier of every hotel, cafe, restaurant, tearooms, or other places where margarine is supplied for consumption by customers on the premises shall conspicuously display the word "margarine" on every vessel containing any such margarine, and also, shall place and keep placed in a conspicuous position . . . a sign displaying the words "Margarine is served here."

That provision is certainly plain. What I am concerned about, however, is the provision that mentions skim milk.

Mr. McLarty: Does not that mean that the butter-fat may be in the skim milk?

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Mr. WILLMOTT: The provision definitely states, "Butter-fat derived from skim milk."

The Minister for Lands: There is 1 per cent. or 2 per cent. of butter-fat in all skim milk.

Mr. WILLMOTT: That may be so, but I am afraid of the provision. I would again urge the necessity for making every effort to conserve the dairying industry. It is really the mainstay of the South-West. Of course, we have mixed farming, but dairying is the principal industry. If that becomes adversely affected, then the State will have the same trouble in the South-West as it has in the wheatbelt, about which we have heard so much. We do not want that, do we?

Members: No.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I do not intend to delay the House, because several members desire to speak on the Bill. I hope the Minister has made a note of the questions I have raised, and that he will answer them when replying. I support the measure because I consider it will save our dairying industry from total collapse.

Mr. McLARTY: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. McLARTY (Murray-Wellington) [10.1]: I am glad the Bill has been introduced because all the other States have passed similar legislation. I hope there will be no opposition to the measure, but if there is I am sure we will be able to meet it. The Minister pointed out that the dairying industry of this State, an industry in which at least £15,000,000 has been spent, is likely to be seriously injured if the measure is not agreed to. The rejection of the measure will affect the industry not only in this State but throughout the Commonwealth. Hundreds of millions of pounds have been invested in that industry in Australia. Consequently, if hon. members do not pass the Bill they will carry a heavy responsibility. The Commonwealth Government will not allow margarine to be imported into Australia unless it is coloured pink. Moreover, imported margarine carries a duty of 6d. a lb. if it comes from British countries, and 7d. lb. if it is imported from foreign lands. That might convey the impression that the Commonwealth Government is doing something to help the dairying industry. As a matter of fact, it is merely doing something to help the manufacturers of margarine. The dairying industry and the wool industry are worth millions of pounds to Australia. Unfortunately both industries are threatened by substitutes. We know what effect rayon has had on the sale of wool. In addition, Italy has been manufacturing from the by-products of milk a substance which is taking the place of wool. It is called lanatol. Fortunately, owing to the war and the shortage of milk in Italy, not much progress has been made in its manufacture.

There is no doubt that substitutes for butter have increased at an alarming rate. I read that the quantity of margarine manufactured in Australia would equal the production of over 100,000 and probably over 150,000 dairy cows. The Minister told us of the staggering increase in the sale of margarine in Great Britain and in Europe generally. Unfortunately, the Bill will not assist us as far as the overseas position is concerned, but it will help us to save our home market which, after all, is our best market. The Commonwealth exports about 50 per cent. of the total quantity of butter manufactured in Australia, and the other 50 per cent. is consumed locally. If we have to meet competition from margarine,

more butter will have to be exported to other countries, and every pound of butter we export means a loss not only to the producers but to the people of Australia as a whole. The member for Sussex (Mr. Willmott) has pointed out that the restrictions on margarine are not confined to Australia. In Canada table margarine is completely prohibited, as it is in Switzerland, which is, or was, one of the greatest dairying countries in the world.

Mr. Doney: Are there restrictions in countries to which it is exported?

Mr. McLARTY: I could not say. Italy also prohibits the manufacture of margarine, and New Zealand insists upon the product being coloured, though I am not sure what colour.

The Minister for Mines: Probably red.

Mr. McLARTY: It will be generally agreed that the competition of margarine with butter is not fair competition. If any honourable member can justify such competition I will be glad to hear what he has to say. The cost of producing margarine is trifling compared with the cost of producing butter, and the profit is higher. I read recently that the raw material from which margarine is manufactured can be purchased in Sydney at 1½d. per lb., which indicates that dairymen have not much hope of competing against the manufacturers of margarine. The Minister told us that table margarine consisted of vegetable oils derived almost entirely from products imported from countries employing black labour. How can dairymen compete against the manufacturers of margarine? If we continue to allow substitutes to take the place of our primary products, the whole of the economy of this country is bound to be seriously affected very soon.

In Victoria the manufacture of table margarine increased from 520 tons to 1,520 tons in four years, and I think there has been a corresponding increase in all the States. We do not know what will be the position of our export markets as a result of war conditions. We do know that the consumption of margarine has increased enormously in England and is still increasing. Surely in view of those facts it is absolutely vital that we should protect the market we can protect, namely, our home market. Surely hon. members who can do something to assist dairymen in this respect will not allow this opportunity to pass. Some

time ago we agreed in this House that margarine should be coloured so that it would not resemble butter. The Minister told us that hundreds or thousands of people are unable to tell margarine from butter.

Mr. Thorn: Experts.

Mr. McLARTY: Yes. That surely is unfair competition. Unfortunately all the States would not agree to having margarine coloured. I understand that New South Wales and Queensland were the States that objected. It was useless for us to insist on colouring if other States refused because, under the Commonwealth Constitution, they would have had the right to send their uncoloured margarine into this State and other States where colouring was not insisted upon. Some people complain that the price of butter is too high. My reply is that the price of butter would be much higher if the dairy farmer had not the help of his family. Members know that dairy farmers work long hours and work seven days a week. Probably more child labour is engaged in the dairying industry than in any other industry in Australia. But for the fact that the dairy farmer is helped by his family, butter in Australia would be much higher in price than it is to-day. I assure members that the average dairy farmer in this State is not making a fortune.

Member: We realise that.

Mr. McLARTY: I am glad of that. Remarks have been made quite recently that would lead members to believe that dairying was a most lucrative business. That is not so. When the Royal Commission inquired into group settlement, it was laid down that butter fat was not payable to the average dairy farmer if the price fell below 1s. a lb. The price of butter fat is more than 1s. a lb. and has been for a considerable time, but costs of production have increased greatly. Take superphosphate: the price to-day is 36s. a ton more than it was a little time back, that is, including the bounty the Commonwealth paid but is not now paying. The increase in the price of super meant much to the dairy farmer because, without its aid, he would be unable to make a profit.

Mr. Marshall: Without interest and taxation he could do better.

Mr. McLARTY: Those items of expenditure also have increased. The dairy farmer is faced with the difficulty of securing an adequate supply of labour. The employ-

ment provided by the margarine industry is slight compared with that of the dairying industry. As the Minister pointed out, the dairying industry is one of the greatest employers of labour in the Commonwealth.

We have been told that the Australian quota of margarine is to be 73 tons a week. I said by way of interjection the other night that that was a large quota, but as it has been agreed to, I should not like to suggest any amendment that might have the effect of altering the Bill to such a degree as to make it unacceptable to the other States and allow the production of margarine to grow. I agree with the member for Sussex that seven tons of table margarine appears to be a high quota for Western Australia. I understand that the quotas of the other States are—New South Wales, 24 tons, Victoria, 23; Queensland, 9; South Australia 6; and Tasmania, 4, making the total 73 tons. A fairer quota for Western Australia would be five tons. I was wondering whether an arrangement could not be made whereby, as time goes on—I am not prepared to specify what time—the manufacture of table margarine would be prohibited.

Mr. Thorn: Why should South Australia have a lower quota than Western Australia?

Mr. McLARTY: I understand that at the time less margarine was being consumed in South Australia than in this State.

The Minister for Mines: As we started to eat it, we have to continue.

Mr. McLARTY: I wish the Minister for Lands could have succeeded in establishing a margarine quota proportionate to the dairying production of each State. I regret that we have no control over margarine exports. The Minister told us that some countries fairly near to Australia could not buy our butter. I understand that some of those countries, particularly those with coloured people working for a mere pittance, would find it exceedingly difficult to buy butter, but so long as we are prepared to export margarine, there does not appear to be much hope of building up our butter export trade with those countries. Therefore I hope further consideration will be given to that aspect. I should like the Minister to inform us how he proposes to police the measure regarding cooking margarine and how he proposes to prevent its being used for table purposes.

Mr. Marshall: Cooking margarine is not edible.

Mr. McLARTY: Some of it is. I appreciate that we are legislating merely to prevent any increase in the manufacture of table margarine, and that there is no intention of interfering with the manufacture of cooking margarine. Cooking margarine is manufactured from animal fats which are obtained in Australia, and for that reason the butter industry is not asking for something to be done that would injure another primary industry.

Mr. Marshall: You are getting into a network of difficulties.

Mr. McLARTY: The hon. member will help to get us into a further network of difficulties if he does anything to defeat this Bill. Consumers may still continue to obtain cooking margarine to the extent they require. Someone said the housewife would not, as a result of this measure, be able to secure a pound of cooking margarine. Provided the margarine contains a certain amount of animal fat, a housewife will have no difficulty in obtaining such quantities as she needs. I am glad that restaurants and public eating places will by this measure be compelled to let their customers know when they are being served with margarine, whereas at present they may be led to believe they are eating butter. I hope such misdemeanours will be found out quickly, and punished. The penalties may seem severe, but they are fully justified.

Mr. F. C. L. Smith: They are only the maximum penalties.

Mr. McLARTY: I hope the Bill will be passed without delay. Once again I appeal to members who are opposing it on the ground that it will have a detrimental effect upon the poorer people, to disabuse their minds of that thought. There would be a much more detrimental effect upon the people if the dairying industry suffered injury as the result of this competition. If anything happened to the major industry, much unemployment would be created. The South-West must depend at the start upon the dairying industry for its development. We hear a great deal about closer settlement and meeting the situation that will arise when the war ends. Closer settlement in this country cannot be success-

ful unless the land is utilised for dairying. We know that that industry cannot expand and absorb large numbers of people unless it receives the necessary protection. I have pleasure in supporting the Bill.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [10.23]: I also have pleasure in supporting the second reading. My only regret is that this is not a Bill to prohibit the manufacture of margarine which is competing with a product of the land. The butter industry is most important to this State, and the Commonwealth in general. As the member for Sussex (Mr. Willmott) stated, it is far too important to Western Australia for us to run any risk whatever of jeopardising its future. One is amazed to think that with the vast areas of land available in this State we are supplying only three per cent. of the total quantity of butter manufactured in the Commonwealth. That must prove to members that there is room for the development of the industry in Western Australia, seeing that we have the territory in which it can be expanded. As has been stated, we shall realise the importance of dairying and other primary industries more when the world conflict is over. The only way for us to settle the men who return from the war, and to find employment for them, is to put them on the land in some capacity. Whatever we may think, we have to look to the land in future to provide increasing employment in Western Australia.

Mr. Marshall: I hope they will be more successful than were some of the men who were repatriated after the last war.

Mr. THORN: I expected that interjection. It is our duty to assist in stabilising these industries, and putting them on a footing so that those who engage in them may make a living. The hon. member has seen to it that the unionist draws a living wage, and we are endeavouring to see that those who are engaged in primary industries receive a similar award. If a proper economic system of land settlement were evolved, I feel sure a great deal more employment could be found in the dairying industry. I regret that the Bill does not altogether prohibit the manufacture of margarine. I have frequently looked over the price lists that are advertised in the daily Press, and since the Minister brought down this Bill I have

paid still more attention to the matter. I find that, generally speaking, margarine is sold at 1s. 2d. per lb.

Mr. Marshall: The price is 1s. 1d.

Mr. THORN: When it is possible to get good quality butter at 1s. 8d. a lb., it does not seem to me there is much difference in the price of the two commodities. The opinion has been expressed that butter is too high in price for poor people, but that at present prices margarine is within their reach. In my view the relative prices of the two commodities do not constitute a great difference. I also maintain there are not many people in Western Australia who cannot afford to buy butter. The importance of the industry should cause members to make sure that it is carried on successfully, and that nothing is brought forward to interfere with its development. I am aware that the price of butter is fixed at 1s. 8d. How often are poor people fleeced through indirect taxation, such as sales tax and other taxes that are placed upon the commodities they buy? Members will agree that indirectly people are paying a far higher price for margarine than they should when we take into consideration the food value that is obtainable in real butter at 1s. 8d. a lb. I hope there will not be much difference of opinion concerning this very necessary legislation, but I am sorry it is so liberal in character. Margarine is definitely a danger to a most important industry. I should like to see done in this State what is done in other countries.

Mr. Wilson: Would you use Collie coal instead of imported coal?

Mr. THORN: That is what I stand for.

Mr. Wilson: Other people are not doing so.

Mr. THORN: I am.

Mr. Patrick: The hon. member is not burning coal at the moment.

Mr. THORN: I agree with the member for Collie, but unfortunately there is no reference to coal in this Bill. I am of opinion that the Bill could go further and prohibit the use of the substitute altogether. However, seeing that I cannot get my way in the matter, I do hope that the measure will have a successful passage through this Assembly.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [10.31]: I have not as intimate a knowledge of the margarine industry as other members have

of the dairying industry. When the member for Toodyay (Mr. Thorn) discusses the butter industry, we have to listen. In the metropolitan area the question of margarine represents only a small part of our duties; and therefore I speak with some diffidence. But the allotting of quotas of margarine in order to protect the butter industry is a most complicated matter, and can be looked at from numerous angles. The first point is, why should an article which is cheaper, and said to be so good that it cannot be distinguished from the superior article except by experts, be restricted? There may be national motives, such as keeping on the land people who will produce a fine race of yeomen, which otherwise we should not have. Take the matter of value and price. Why should a housewife in, say Subiaco be forced to pay from 1s. 8d. to 2s. per pound for butter when she prefers the taste of margarine? There is that side. Then there is the question, if there were no legislation like this and no quota fixed, what would be the alternative? That is the practical side of the question. As I understand the position, if the Bill does not become law, then the fact that the other States have such legislation would mean that we would run the risk of being flooded with surplus margarine from eastern Australia. How is that eventuality to be dealt with?

Mr. Patrick: How many men would the margarine industry employ in this State?

Mr. NORTH: Very few, I think. That is why I raise that side of the question. What is the real motive of all this argument? Is it really better to have thousands of men working long hours in a difficult industry when a few men, working in another industry under easy conditions, can produce enormous quantities of an article which is just as attractive and purchasable at a cheaper price? That question will arise after the war. Perhaps for some years yet we cannot face such a question, and therefore we must make a reasonable compromise and accept some measure of restriction in the form of quotas. I understand the quotas have been chosen by the margarine manufacturers themselves. Therefore it cannot be said that there is any penalisation in that respect. Surely the manufacturers cannot feel that they are being penalised! As regards the local quota, a highly important point concerning my own district happens to

be that the local manufacturer claims he is not going to have as much right to sell as the other manufacturer, who came from the Eastern States. I understand that this other manufacturer is absolutely the manufacturer for the whole of Australia, and will obtain the quotas in all the other States.

Mr. Marshall: That is right.

Mr. NORTH: It is a matter of one firm getting a quota of 60 odd tons per week while the Western Australian firm, which pioneered the business here, is to be limited to a quota of 2½ tons. The Kasely firm has recently started a factory here, and states that its quota is to be four tons in place of the previous 2½ tons. There should be a fair distribution between the Western Australian company and the other firm which has just come in. One naturally welcomes the introduction of factories here. We have all been asking for that. However, I would at least urge that the original local firm should have not less than half the business. The other side of the question is the consumer. We have to ask ourselves whether this measure will really limit sales to such an extent that people will not be able to buy margarine as previously. But surely quotas have been fixed on existing consumption; and if that is so, there cannot be any shortage for a year or two. On the other hand, it cannot be easy for the Minister to visualise two years ahead. Are we to say that for all time seven tons weekly is to be the quota? I would rather have seen a sliding scale for margarine and butter. As the population grows, the quota might be raised.

Mr. Patrick: We are over our proportion now.

Mr. NORTH: That is true; and it is because of this other firm coming in. The Kasely firm was manufacturing here, and a new firm has come in recently. Both firms are after business. I will not weary the House with an account of the struggle. As we are urging the establishment of new industries, I hope Kasely's will have a fair deal and a fair ratio. As to the consumption side, if it can be shown that margarine, because of its quality, is liable to oust the native commodity, those who fight for the consumer will have a case. But from that aspect we have to bear in mind that butter is the guardian. If monkeying with prices begins, people who can afford to do so will

turn to butter, and other people will not buy either butter or margarine. Butter is there as a kind of policeman. It will be hard to prevent the sale of margarine for long. I believe it is considered to be highly palatable, and it is said to be popular in certain quarters.

My only other point refers to the economic side. Like the two previous speakers, who are actuated by the laudable motive of protecting the butter industry, I do not join with those who wish to crush margarine altogether. The crushing of the margarine industry is what the Bill really amounts to. I will give an analogy. When the legitimate theatre was flourishing and pictures started, nobody said, "There shall be a limit to pictures, a certain quota, so that theatres may continue to stage drama." What happened was that the competition of the pictures carried on, and that what we thought was the cheaper article began to gain ground until to-day it has driven the legitimate theatre practically out of the cities and the entire market belongs to the pictures. In this instance it is like saying that the cheaper article has made its advent, and so we will limit the picture show to one theatre in the city and allow the legitimate theatres to carry on. That is the analogy. If it can be shown that the dairying industry is providing a fine healthy type of settler, one better than the city-bred worker, there might be something to be said in favour of keeping the industry going, not only from the economic standpoint but from the larger one of national interests. I could continue for a long time in dealing with various phases associated with the proposal to place a restriction upon the manufacture of margarine. At this stage, however, appreciating the enormous economic problems that will confront us when the war ceases, the substitute products that will have to be availed of and many other such considerations, I do not regard it as altogether safe to exclude such prospects from our consideration and view the quota system as a good compromise for the next few years. Of course, that might be far better than allowing the Eastern States to flood the market with their products, as they can under the terms of the Federal Constitution, without any quota being fixed. With no great enthusiasm, I support the Bill.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [10.42]: Definitely I shall not support the Bill because I regard its introduction as contrary to the interests of the consumers, especially the poor people. I do not consider there should be any agreement between the Government and any industry dealing with the people's food supplies and the production of such goods. When any form of primary production is in a bad way financially, it seems to me a defeatist attitude to endeavour to control or restrict production. In this instance neither section appears to be in a bad way financially. In the circumstances, I cannot understand a Bill of such a nature being submitted to Parliament by a political party supposed to represent the poorer people of the State. Margarine is the butter of the poor people, and that emphasises how wrong it is to introduce such legislation.

Mr. Holman: Why not increase the basic wage?

Mr. Abbott: Who would pay it?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: Margarine is cheaper than butter. Only those who frequently come in contact with the poor know the difference it makes. Margarine is procurable at 1s. 1d. to 1s. 2d. a lb., whereas butter costs 1s. 8d. a lb. That means that many people cannot afford to purchase the latter commodity. The production of margarine is restricted by means of the quota system. It appears to me that the reason Western Australia has a larger quota, proportionate to population, than the Eastern States, is that in the past we have been forced to buy margarine because our people are poorer than those residing in other parts of Australia. Then again, I believe margarine is purer than butter, which may be produced from the milk of tubercular cows. On the other hand, margarine is a very pure article of diet.

Mr. Marshall: It is more often recommended by doctors for patients than butter.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I do not know about that.

Mr. McLarty: It is the first time I have heard that.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: One member suggested that if more margarine is sold, men will lose their employment in the dairying industry because less butter will be produced. I cannot agree that that

would be the position. Then again the same hon. member said that the dairying industry was carried on to a great extent by children, so that argument does not appear to be quite sound. The Minister stated that £15,000,000 had been spent in building up the dairying industry. That is quite all right, but the fact remains that butter is very expensive and the poor people cannot buy it. It seems to me that the better course would be still further to subsidise the industry and bring down the price of butter. That would be preferable to the manufacture of margarine on a quota basis.

The Minister for Mines: The industry was subsidised, but the price went up.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The Government could fix the price at a lower figure. I have a letter from Kaselys, Ltd., the firm mentioned by the member for Claremont (Mr. North), which I shall read—

All table margarine sold in Western Australia prior to the 13th September, 1938, was manufactured in Sydney, New South Wales, by the Meadow-Lea Margarine Co. and distributed in Western Australia by agents only. The principals of the Meadow-Lea Co. are Messrs. O. Triggs and J. Armstrong.

In September, 1938, we, Kaselys, Ltd., of 23 Stirling-highway, Claremont, were granted permission and issued with a permit by the Western Australian Dairy Products Marketing Board to manufacture and sell 2½ tons per week of table margarine, the Meadow-Lea Margarine Co. having had previous permission to sell five tons per week of their product. In October, 1938, we were refused supplies of raw materials (vegetable fat) with which to make our margarine. This fat could only be purchased in Australia from Edible Oils Industries, Ltd., and Marriekville Co., both of Sydney, New South Wales. We were then compelled to purchase raw fats from England and pay 2¼d. per lb. duty on same, while the Meadow-Lea Co. were able to obtain their supply from Edible Oils, Ltd., in Australia.

When these firms found that they could not prevent us from manufacturing our margarine, they undersold us on the local market for about six weeks, which cost us approximately £800. After these measures failed, they made available to us Australian fats providing we did not manufacture more than 2½ tons per week at the time. They also tried to buy us out. Our trade gradually increased to 3½ tons per week.

Meadow-Lea Co. invited us over to Sydney to talk over the quota system, and told us if we would not agree to accept 2½ tons per week and let them have 4½ tons per week of the West Australian quota under the new Bill, they would again start undercutting us.

Three months ago they established a small factory in Perth, knowing that if they did not do so we would be able to claim the whole of the quota, being the only manufacturers of table margarine in this State.

The Meadow-Lea Co. are the largest manufacturers of table margarine in Australia and hold the largest quotas in every State. This we regard as very unfair and have made application to the board to have our quota raised to 3½ tons per week. This would equally divide the seven tons per week between the Sydney company and ourselves.

I saw another man on this question; I think his name is Mr. Evans. He was manufacturing and selling margarine and applied for a permit, but was denied one, although he has been in business for some time.

Mr. Marshall: What do you mean by some time?

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I think a couple of years. He left his address. Clause 6 of the Bill provides that cooking margarine must contain 90 per cent. beef or mutton fat, or both. I am informed by margarine manufacturers that margarine cannot be profitably made with 90 per cent. of these animal fats, as it would be cheaper for people to buy dripping. Clause 6 prohibits the mixing or blending of any fats, except dripping or lard, for sale. The comment on this provision is that blending is necessary for good cooking purposes. Clause 24 provides that the Minister may cancel, re-license or increase any license in existence. It seems to me this provision gives the Minister absolute power over licenses. In my opinion, that is wrong. I do not believe in boards, but it would be fairer, rather than vest full authority in one person, to leave this matter to a board. Although I have the greatest faith in the Minister, he may not always occupy the position; some other Minister may occupy it whom I would not care to trust. Clause 26 forbids the sale of cooking margarine in lumps under 14 lbs. in weight. This point was discussed and it was considered that the provision would altogether debar the domestic use of cooking margarine, for few domestics would buy 14 lbs. in one lot.

The Minister for Lands: That is not quite the position.

Mr. Marshall: I read the provision in that way.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: The margarine manufacturers also read it in that way. In conclusion, I desire to say that I could

not possibly support the Bill, apart from all the questions I have raised, and notwithstanding that fully 50 per cent. of the people in my electorate buy margarine. I know that they cannot afford to buy butter.

Mr. Holman: That is a rotten state of affairs.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: It is, I quite agree. The Bill will also create a monopoly by permitting licensed firms to become the only manufacturers of margarine. Once they obtain a monopoly, they can make the prices soar and margarine will be only a penny or twopence cheaper than butter. That might suit some of the dairy farmers, but it will not suit those whom I represent. I therefore oppose the Bill.

On motion by Mr. Withers, debate adjourned.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Message.

Message from the Lieut.-Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

BILL—BILLS OF SALE ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council with amendments.

House adjourned at 10.56 p.m.