That is provided for at first-class rates and would represent £5 3s. 11d. It will be seen, therefore, that if he were to come down himself, he would save £7 3s. 2d. on his wool and on the fuel for his tractor, £10 7s. 10d., or a total of £18 11s. If we deduct £8 4s. from that, he would still show a substantial saving on his three days' work, amounting to £10 7s. I have given members that illustration to indicate the distinct hardship that is imposed upon the farmer who has a motor truck and desires to transport his own wool. I have been as brief as possible in dealing with the Bill, which I submit to members for their favourable consideration, feeling that this House will see that justice is done. People in the country districts have to bear the burden of isolation and increased freights. The farmers have to pay freight coming and going. If they sell goods, freight has to be deducted on all that they despatch by rail, and if they buy goods, they have to pay the freight on those requirements. On the other hand, the people in the city have their goods delivered to them free of cost. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Chief Secretary, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. W. H. Kitson—West) [8.47]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until 4.30 p.m. on Tuesday next.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 8.48 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday 14th October, 1936.

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

QUESTION—WATER SUPPLIES, HYDEN AREA.

Mr. SEWARD asked the Minister for Water Supplies,—1, Has the boring party which was carrying out operations in the Hyden area completed its work? 2, If so, in which localities were operations carried out? 3, What is the result of the work done, and does it justify further operations?

The MINISTER FOR WATER SUPPLIES replied:—(1) Yes. (2) Over an area of approximately 600 square miles extending 18 miles eastward and westward of Hyden Rock and 10 miles northward and southward. (3) (a) 27 bores were sunk, none of which was fully efficient. (b) No.

QUESTION—LOTTERIES COMMISSION, AUDIT OF ACCOUNTS.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM asked the Minister for Police,—1, Has the Auditor General at any time caused an audit to be made of the accounts of the Lotteries Commission? 2, If so, will he lay the report upon the Table of the House?

The MINISTER FOR POLICE replied: The Lotteries (Control) Act does not require or authorise the Auditor General to audit the accounts of the Lotteries Commission. Section 15 (b) of the Act provides that the permit holder (*i.e.*, the Commission) shall appoint some qualified person to be approved by the Minister to audit the accounts and the conduct of each lottery. The same section provides, further, that the

Minister may appoint an independent auditor to make an audit of the affairs of the lottery for his information. This latter provision has been exercised by the Minister in respect of Lotteries 2, 9, and 36, when an officer of the Audit Department was appointed.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Judges' Retirement.

Introduced by the Minister for Justice.

2, Betting Control.

Introduced by Mr. Marshall.

BILL—PETROLEUM.

Report of Committee adopted.

MOTION — EAST-WEST RAILWAY, PERTH-KALGOORLIE SECTION.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [4.37]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the Government should take up the question of the completion of the East-West railway through to Fremantle by the most useful route and ascertain whether the Federal authorities are prepared to co-operate on a suitable basis financially.

The motion is somewhat similar to that which was moved in this House ten years ago. If it comes up again in ten years' time I suppose it can then be referred to as a hardy decennial. Many things have happened since that motion was carried in this House and in another place to justify action being now taken. The late Lord Kitchener was the first to give warning to Australia that a standard line must be constructed for defence purposes. Following upon that we have Blake & White's report, which definitely advocated a uniform gauge for Australia. This report set out the cost of the work and the urgency of it, and stated that Australia could never develop nor could she be safe until such a line was constructed. The portion concerned in my motion is that between Kalgoorlie and Fremantle. Since the motion of ten years ago was carried in both Houses, two attempts have been made by the Federal Government, in conjunction with two of the States, to give effect to the principle in other parts of Australia. I refer to the Kyogle railway in Queensland which has now been constructed through to Brisbane, and to the fact that in South Australia work is being undertaken to enable the East-West line to run through on a broad gauge of 5 feet 3 inches via Red Hill to Adelaide. The next link in the chain is the line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle. That, of course, is not the only important project. Even if we were to achieve that end there would still remain the tactical scheme of converting the railways of Australia to one gauge, and the connecting link between Broken Hill and Red Hill, the East-West line terminal. When that line is constructed we shall have a through run on the one gauge from Fremantle to Brisbane. Then will be the time to bring economic and every other kind of pressure to bear upon the various Governments concerned to complete the job in Victoria and in all the 3ft. 6in. gauge States. Whether the motion is carried or not, I should like members to realise that I am not merely urging the Government to interest themselves in the running through of a 4ft. 8½in. gauge line from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie, but I wish them to look upon it as a definite link in an attempt to unify the gauges of Australia. We are in certain respects on this question the laughing stock of the civilised world, although we do not realise it. We are living in a number of self-contained States, and we are aware that the economic structure of Australia was designed almost from the outset upon a scheme for the settlement of the country along the cheapest possible lines. The idea was to feed our ports for export purposes and to promote the settlement of the land with a view to increasing our exports. A big change has come upon the continent in the last ten years. We have had an economic depression. We have also had a considerable contraction in our markets abroad. Those who follow the statements of the leading citizens of Australia must see from their speeches that we are face to face with an entirely new economy. We Australians are almost bound to absorb more of our own products because we cannot sell them abroad. One of the effects of that new objective must be that the railway systems are no longer designed merely to feed our ports for export purposes, but they must connect with each other so that the secondary industries of Australia may expand and spread in order that, as an illustration, a truck of tomatoes from Geraldton may run through to Bris-

bane on the one line. This new outlook for Australia has already been achieved in effect in America. Almost the very year in which this question was first raised in Australia, I think in 1886, America converted seven gauges into one. In the course of about 18 months, 13,000 miles of railway line in the United States were converted to the one gauge. There is this striking difference between our situation and theirs. The difference is that the American railway lines were and are owned by private companies, whereas our railways in Australia are run by the State Governments. If there was one spur above all others which might perhaps induce Governments in Australia to believe to a lesser extent in State-owned enterprises, it should be the spur that although in other parts of the world these gauge problems have been overcome, they have been overcome by private enterprise. In Great Britain there was a line with a 7ft. gauge, and a number of smaller gauges. We all remember the story of how overnight the Great Western Railway was smoothly converted from a 7ft. gauge to the ordinary gauge. This question has been shelved, humbugged and postponed in Australia for 50 years. It was first mentioned in 1888, when the leading engineer in New South Wales, Mr. Eddy, urged his Government to carry out this work, as did also Sir Henry Parkes, another disciple of the unification of gauges. This was two years after the United States had converted their seven different railways. H. G. Wells, who was only third in a contest for a seat in Parliament, but who in his literature and by his brain work is generally thought to be one of the leading intellects of the western world, has traced America's prosperity to the network of uniform railways which meant the running of the American continent on one gauge, one uniform route and one uniform system of rolling stock for the whole country. If we regard this question from a standpoint of a battle of gauges—it can be viewed from that aspect—even then the battle for a standard gauge is worth while. When the South Australian section is completed, we will then be ready for our own connecting link from Fremantle to Kalgoorlie. The object of my motion, members will realise, is to urge the House to take further action to prompt the Government to proceed with the work. The figures disclosed in the existing Blake-White report, following upon the investigation of the Commission in 1920, indicate that it will mean an expenditure of approximately £5,000,000 on railway construction in Western Australia, at a cost to this State of £1,000,000. Included in the latter amount is provision for the new Fremantle bridge. It may be thought that there is a catch in it. I remember hearing of the man who stood in the Strand in London offering sovereigns for 5s. each, but he could not sell one all day. People thought there was a catch in it. Similarly, we note the attitude towards this railway proposition. It was adopted by the States originally but what has been done? If the expenditure that the State will be responsible for were spread over five or six years, it could be easily undertaken, and it must be remembered that it represents wholly Australian work. Nothing will have to be imported. If that work were undertaken, it would surely be of economic assistance to the Minister for Employment, and would prove of advantage to Western Australia quite apart from the question of defence, which has always been stressed in regard to this proposal. In addition, in these days it would mean increasing the tourist traffic and bringing us into closer touch with the civilised world. What with the provision of aeroplanes and faster steamship services, Australia is being placed on the map. It is a terrible advertisement for Western Australia when tourists have to travel by our lumbering State train in order to connect up with a first-class railway system in the heart of the State at Kalgoorlie.

Mr. Lambert: That line is not half-finished yet.

Mr. NORTH: I presume the hon. member refers to the ballasting.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is more than half-finished now.

Mr. NORTH: It may be finished before we depart from this life. The real advantages to be derived from the change-over are not sufficiently stressed. People have been frightened off because of the question of cost. They have never really considered the proposition in its true economic aspects, as did the private railway companies in Britain and the United States of America. The companies there tackled their jobs and have never looked back since. We all know the

advantages America enjoys with her chain of inland lakes, huge rivers and, lastly, the Panama Canal. What we do not appreciate is that the real progress of America and Britain itself commenced when they established first-class railway services. As the years go by, the losses to the Commonwealth consequent upon the maintenance of three different sets of rolling stock will become phenomenal, and will increase as time proceeds and will continue to increase until the end of civilisation. The cost of conversion, on the other hand, is a first, fixed and last cost. Instead of tackling the problem, the Australian people have been content to allow matters to slide. It is not altogether the fault of any one section. Queensland has taken action and has her uniform standard line constructed. Now South Australia has a line and we need not consider the position of Victoria for one moment. When the rest of Australia has installed the standard gauge, Victoria, through having the broader gauge, can fall into line promptly at a very low cost. The problem there is simple, seeing that she has the tunnels, bridges and so forth already provided. For my own part, I do not hide my objective. If it was good enough for Canada, New Zealand and South Africa to adopt one uniform railway gauge, it should be good enough for Australia too. We are foolish to continue as at present, for we stultify ourselves and prevent the development of the continent. I do not absolve the Commonwealth from all blame, for the Federal Government are running two separate railway gauges now. The only object I have in view is standardisation, and we represent the only Dominion that tolerates the present economic stumbling block of varied gauges. The question of the cost entailed has been referred to. The original cost for the complete unification of Australian railway gauges, was £21,000,000. Some of the work covered in that cost has since been completed, particularly in Queensland, and, as I have already pointed out, the work to be done in Western Australia represents an expenditure of £5,000,000 with a cost to the State Government of £1,000,000. Will not members agree that it is worth while taking this matter further? When South Australia was confronted with the proposal to change the gauge of the Terowie line, the Government held up the proposition and fought the Federal Government. By holding out and fighting against the Federal authorities, South Australia secured from the Commonwealth far superior terms than were originally suggested. In pursuance of the final terms, South Australian losses on the line, if any, are to be covered for a long period of years. In consequence of the improved conditions, that particular line has been constructed in South Australia. Unless we carry out a further investigation, how do we know that the Federal Government will not be more partial now than they were previously to the construction of the line in Western Australia? At this very juncture, the Government have laid on the Table in another place, papers dealing with the new proposed route that the line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle is to take. I believe that it follows the present line to Northam, and then proceeds through the farming territory on what I would term a new economic route from the goldfields. Under that proposal the new line will serve the purposes of the State as well. In my opinion, the time is opportune for our Government further to investigate this problem. In the first place the expenditure of £5,000,000, on Australian material for use on the Western Australian section, will mean the absorption of many of the unemployed and the expenditure of much money that will be helpful at this juncture. Secondly, the effect of the work will be to complete one link in a project that applies to the whole of Australia and is of value accordingly. Thirdly, there is the defence aspect. Not many months ago I read a report indicating that a military authority had said that troops had to stretch their legs after being conveyed for 1,000 miles, and in those circumstances he suggested breaks of gauge did not matter. It is extraordinary that that argument has never been advanced in any other part of the world. If that is merely a military individual's argument, let us leave it as a military matter, for it certainly does not sound convincing to me. On the other hand, the several breaks of gauge suggest to me the same effect as bombing by an enemy at those several points. The breaks are just as effective as if the line had been bombed at those points. Then again from the financial aspect, I would remind members that long before the last Federal election—I believe it was in September, 1934—headlines appeared in the "Daily News" stretching right across the page, setting out that the Federal Govern-

ment had millions of pounds for railway construction and for the uniform gauge.

Mr. Sleeman: Who promised that?

Mr. NORTH: One of the Federal parties. The fact remains that that money was available in Australia before the Federal elections. I do not believe that money, like flies, disappears in winter. At any rate, no one has ever yet been able to tell me where flies go to in winter, and I certainly do not know where all those millions that were referred to in the "Daily News" headlines can have gone to. I have an idea that the money could be found again if persuasive efforts were made by the Government.

Mr. Fox: Are you not confusing the uniform gauge question with the Country Party proposal to "write your own cheques for £20,000,000?"

Mr. NORTH: That sounds all right, too. I am under the impression that at least one member of this Chamber has a distinct recollection of those headlines in the "Daily News."

The Minister for Mines: Even so, have not costs gone up since those headlines appeared?

Mr. NORTH: That may be so. At any rate, the cost of the work was set out at £21,000,000 in order to provide the standard railway gauge.

Mr. Patrick: Perhaps the new form of transport has dissipated some of the original estimated cost.

Mr. NORTH: I thank the hon. member for his interjection. It is all the more galling when we hear the point raised that new troubles warrant our losing sight of the old trouble respecting the railway gauge. That has happened because motor lorries have conveyed merchandise over our roads. I remind the House again that to-day the United States of America dates her prosperity almost entirely from 1886 when the unification of railway gauges in that country was completed. Curiously enough when the Secession fight was at its height in Western Australia, a leading article appeared in the "Sunday Times" setting out that the moment Secession was attained, one of the first jobs would be to construct the standard line from Kalgoorlie to Fremantle. That was an admirable suggestion because it indicated how distinct this railway gauge question is from politics. Some people are apt to question the advantage of the proposal. They point out that we have railway facilities that will do. From that standpoint, it is obvious that the rolling stock of Australia is costing the Commonwealth and the State Governments three times the amount that should be necessary. No other country would be satisfied with such conditions. We sometimes hear comment about Soviet Russia, which we are apt to regard as a struggling country 50 years behind in her economic ideas. It is interesting to note, however, that Soviet Russia has not only completed her first East-West line to the eastern seaboard, but is duplicating it. Yet we say we cannot do it; that we cannot meet the cost, although we have available railway engineers, lines, bridges, and thousands of unemployed whose existing work will soon be completed. The unemployed will soon have finished their work, for we cannot go on sewering Perth and Fremantle for ever. Members know the need for this development, although, in the pressure of finding money, they are tempted, like the member for Greenough (Mr. Patrick) to fall back on modern forms of transport. I am prepared to prophesy that within 100 years the engineering objective of shifting heavy weights off the ground by aeroplane will not have been achieved. So long as heavy weights have to be shifted on the ground, a standard railway will be required right through the States of Australia, as in other countries. A country which has spent £300,000,000 on railways is not going to scrap those railways and build roads to take their place. It is far cheaper to complete the existing services, cut the losses, and make a fight for the money. When I deal with my next motion, I shall be able to show that, from information received from orthodox quarters in London, we have a better chance now than we had years ago of financing these works. When group settlement started, and we have spent £10,000,000 on that, —double the cost of this job——

Mr. Raphael: Did you say spent, or wasted?

Mr. NORTH: I was not in the Government of the day so I do not want to go into that matter. The sum of £10,000,000 was spent. An attempt was made to spend it well, but the result was not quite a success. The money for this project was secured for quite a long time at 1 per cent. Since those days we have gone off overseas borrowing, but now we have to put the hard word on the Loan Council and the Commonwealth Government. Surely the Loan Council can give us this 1 per cent. money for this job of

national importance. Let us ask for it. To undertake this work would be to relieve the Minister for Employment of a good deal of worry. I have told members that the Queensland portion of the scheme has been completed, and that the Federal Government, a little while ago, were inclined to provide many more thousands of pounds towards the completion of the South Australian scheme. I have pointed out that we have changed our whole economic outlook to a secondary-industry outlook. We no longer live to send exports to other parts of the world. Although we shall continue to do so, we shall not concentrate on that. We are going to live rather to sell all we can within our own borders. That means a completely new outlook for the railways of the Commonwealth, an outlook approaching more to that of the United States. The question of the Fremantle bridge I will refer to shortly, because, after all, if it is a matter of getting a decent job in that connection out of this big scheme at a cost of 4s. in the pound, is that not worth considering, particularly if we can get that 1 per cent. money? We received money from Great Britain for the group settlement scheme. That scheme went wrong. Here is a decent proposition that cannot go wrong. Two leading engineering experts—Messrs. Blake and White—have told us that we must start this scheme immediately and that our future cannot be secure until it is completed.

Mr. Sleeman: We were told it was to be started a few years ago.

Mr. NORTH: Is not this the time to give the thing our backing?

Mr. Lambert: We are losing £9,000,000 on our railways in Australia now.

Mr. NORTH: That sort of remark reminds me of a domestic episode which occurred in my electorate recently. A certain lady, being very much impressed with a certain bath heater, decided to secure one. The next day mechanics and plumbers arrived and, after having inspected the place, decided upon the installation. Huge coils of wire were produced. The lady asked what they were for, pointing out that what she wanted was a bath heater. She was told that four wires had to be installed throughout the house before the bath heater could be installed. The lady replied, "Unless you can put it on the light socket, I won't have it." So the order was cancelled. That is exactly the sort of viewpoint we have here: the picket-fence mind, which can see only as far as the front gate. Why are our railways losing? Are the railways of the United States, Africa, or England, losing? Our railways are losing because of inefficiency, because they are bottle-necked in every direction. We need to follow the example of other countries who have converted their various lines to one gauge. Surely our State Government will not fail in statesmanship! Surely they can come together and show a little initiative in this matter, refusing to be cowed down by the necessity for the expenditure of a few million pounds! The position is that we have sunk £300,000,000 in the railways of the Commonwealth. Are we to continue losing millions of money till the end of time, and prevent the expansion of produce and the growth of big cities, because we say we cannot find the £30,000,000 or £40,000,000 needed to complete this project? If ever the day comes when this country is invaded and poison gases are being rained into the Commonwealth, those who had it in their power to bring this scheme into completion will regret that they did not carry this motion so that in the end one gauge might have obtained throughout Australia and the defence of the country thus ensured. Members are aware of the situation and there is not much need for me to say more. The Commonwealth Government is more amenable now to make——

Mr. Lambert: You do not refer to the Commonwealth Government in your motion.

Mr. NORTH: Yes I do. The motion reads:—

> In the opinion of this House the Government should take up the question of the completion of the East-West railway through to Fremantle by the most useful route, and ascertain whether the Federal authorities are prepared to co-operate on a suitable basis financially.

What does that mean?

Mr. Raphael: It means that the line does not get built.

Mr. NORTH: The hon. member would spoil the whole motion. In the past we stood for a subsidy of £1 for every 4s. We are likely now to get even better conditions. I have pleasure in moving the motion.

On motion by Mr. Raphael, debate adjourned.

MOTION—ECONOMIC SURVEY.

MR. NORTH (Claremont) [5.13]: I move—

That in the opinion of this House the time is opportune for a survey (1) of our unused resources of labour, plant, and material; (2) of the unsatisfied needs of the people; and (3) how best to bring (1) and (2) together.

I must apologise for speaking twice on the same afternoon, but I think that this opportunity for private members to bring forward their business on Wednesday afternoon is one of which advantage should be taken. On this occasion I am going to try to clear myself with regard to monetary reform. I am entirely finished with the question from that aspect. I have not dropped my bundle, as one member said last week, but I am demobilised. We have reached the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month and I refuse to go to Berlin. The question of monetary reform is completed, and this motion attempts to deal, so far as the State is concerned, with the crumbs which may drop from the rich Federal financial man's table.

Mr. Fox: Are you prepared to take a loaf of bread as well as the crumbs?

Mr. NORTH: The British "Economist," in its issue of the 15th August last, made some striking comments. All fair-minded members, I believe, will agree that any work I have done in this House or in the country is now completed. As a layman, I essayed a very unpleasant task, about which I knew nothing. I took it up first of all at the request of the then Premier, Sir James Mitchell, and secondly at the request of two of my electors, the president and the secretary of the Douglas Credit movement. I have done that work as well as I could. I have been engaged upon it for six years, and now I am going to quote a few lines to show that my work and that of the gallant band who toiled with me was not wasted. When I have read the extract from the "Economist" members will recognise the justification for the motion—

Seen in the retrospect of five years, perhaps the most significant feature of the British recovery is that it followed an expansionist banking policy entirely unaccompanied by deficit financing.

There is a full-point at that stage, and I wish to give full pause, because the next few lines show the opposite phase—

In Germany, Japan, and the United States, on the other hand, deficit financing was almost certainly the major factor.

Having read those two assertions, which we all know to be true, I wish to stress the attitude of this central orthodox financial journal. The extract continues—

Such financing, however, if it is to increase effective demand, must be accomplished by the creation of credit and not by the borrowing of existing savings.

The significance of that remark is immense. It means that if the Government get into debt when doing their job properly, they should not seek to get out of debt by borrowing someone else's savings, but should create new money to meet that debt. I knew that the ideas I embraced were unorthodox. I was aware that my reputation in my district was suffering in consequence. Because of holding those views, I have been hounded by my opponents and stigmatised as a crank. Here we have a crank speaking—the British "Economist." Perhaps if we allow the authorities here nine months or so in which to think it over, Australia then will be talking in the same way. The statement I have read relates, of course, to the national sphere. When we get into public debt, according to the "Economist," we ought to create more money in order to get out of debt. Is not that something new? Does not that justify me in closing down and leaving the member for Murchison to carry on? This is a striking change of front. I admire the spirit of British honesty that prompted the admission, which certainly has been made quite openly and frankly. This is another portion of the extract—

Something will have been learnt from the great depression if the hopelessness of merely trying to reduce costs is recognised——

That must appeal to the serried souls of some of us. We have been advised for years that the essential thing to do was to reduce costs. What was the Premiers' Plan but a plan to reduce costs?

Mr. Sleeman: It reduced costs all right.

Mr. NORTH: Now we have this dictum from the "Economist," from the holy of holies of orthodox financing—"Something will have been learnt from the great depression if the hopelessness of merely trying to reduce costs is recognised." Now I come to the cream of the extract—

——and if those responsible take as their primary objective the stimulation of the effective stream of money demand.

That is good enough for me. Nothing remains to be said. When those ideas percolate through the various channels and

eventually reach that Federal holy of holies, the Commonwealth Bank, its precincts and purlieus, we shall at long last have a lot of those ideas broadcast. When we connect that change of viewpoint—that is, getting money out of the blue, as it is termed—with the devaluation of the remaining currencies in Europe, the whole puzzle is solved. The natural effect of devaluing all those currencies is to increase the volume of money to the extent of the amount of the devaluation. When we consider also the idea of getting into debt as well in order to increase prosperity, and to create the difference rather than to borrow it from existing savings, what more time need we waste on the problem. I confess that I am demobilised. We have succeeded in what we set out to achieve, and I am pleased to think that when these new ideas spread, the term "sound finance" will mean to me the same as it will mean to those who occupy high positions and are qualified to speak. The motion precludes consideration of any of those ideas. Even supposing the Commonwealth Government, the Loan Council, and the financial authorities intend to move in the direction indicated by the British "Economist," a duty still devolves upon this Parliament to do everything possible to bring together the unsatisfied needs of the people and the unused resources of the State. It might be said that there is no need for the motion, that financial changes are being made all over the world—currency juggling which was at first ridiculed is now being practised everywhere—that if we have our finances on a good footing, every person in Victoria Park, East Perth and the other suburbs will be able to live well. But surely it is our duty to do what we can on the real credit side, not the money side.

Mr. Lambert: The party you support stampeded the people on monetary reform at the last election.

Mr. NORTH: At that time all parties favoured the appointment of the Royal Commission which has since functioned. I would not go so far as the hon. member suggests. The people merely stood by existing institutions and refused to support socialisation of institutions. I consider it very important that nothing should be left undone by the State to ascertain whether, in an economic and real sense, not a financial sense, we can bring the needs of the people into line with the unused resources. In order to show what I mean, let me quote a surprising statement which appeared in the London "Daily Express" in April last:—

> The method of producing goods in this country (England) has hitherto been to produce them according to the capacity of consumers to buy them, whereas the sensible thing would be to produce goods according to the capacity of the consumers to consume them.

There is all the difference in the world between effective demand and the actual needs of the people. The time will come when the two will be adjusted until they are recognised as one and the same thing. Why are they not so recognised today? Because we produce to the money demand. That might be quite sound as applied to radios, pianos and motor cars, but we cannot manage a country satisfactorily in which the demand for necessaries such as food, clothing and shelter is not met. That is the situation today. My idea is that the Minister for Employment should appoint a committee consisting of, say, the State Statistician, the Commissioner of Public Health and the Engineer-in-Chief, who should, if they could, co-opt one of the leading bankers.

Mr. Lambert: I am afraid the banker would not attend the party.

Mr. NORTH: The committee should investigate, first of all, the number of people whose actual needs are not being met. The matter is an important one, especially to the people of suburbs that are not altogether wealthy. Let us consider by way of example the fruit market in West Perth. We know that the market is conducted in such a way that the agents will sell sufficient fruit to meet the money demand of the shops. Everyone is aware that the market is not a reflex of the actual needs of the people for such a commodity. We have realised that for years. The present Government, if they had their way, would probably socialise the whole of industry, and thus reach their objective. But there are obstacles in the way. I am not going to support them in their method to reach the objective, because, for political reasons, it is impossible. That, however, need not deter us from tackling the question. The Minister could ask the Commissioner of Public Health, "What is the position regarding commodities sold in the West Perth market? What are the real demands which you would say would be made by the poorer people in order to ensure them a proper standard of living?" The Commissioner would have to admit that there are a lot of demands which he would make, and which are not met today. Let us concede

that the Commissioner placed his representative in the market and that he bid as a new customer, thus creating a demand that does not exist at present. Then we could increase the demands in the markets for the various commodities. Now, if the Commissioner of Public Health could go into the West Perth markets, say, per medium of his agent and bid for those things which he knows the people need but at present cannot get, there would be a big increase in the demand in those markets. No hon. member will deny that as regards the commodities in which the markets deal there is a great deal of destruction. For example, there is a great deal of burying of fruit going on. At Geraldton tomatoes are buried. There is destruction of all commodities, including fish, to meet the market. Thus supplies are reduced, so that only those persons who come as agents to buy the goods with money in their pockets can be supplied. We here are not in a position to increase the wages of the people largely. The other day the Minister for Employment increased the wages of certain workers by 5s. per week, and got a good dressing down in the "West Australian." It means that from the "West Australian" viewpoint what is desired cannot be done from the money aspect. But still we can ascertain through a responsible officer what the demand is, and can perhaps improve it from another source, as I have shown in the remarks I have quoted from the "British Economist." But the first thing is to get the facts, and that is what is behind the motion. The aim is that the demand should be on the needs of the people instead of the money demand. The next thing is to get the Engineer-in-Chief, who is also a member of the committee, to go round and find out what the producers are doing; whether there is any shortage; whether there are any plants to be extended; whether existing plants in Western Australia are working full time; whether the building industry is working at full capacity; and so on. The Engineer-in-Chief would present a report which would eventually prove to the Minister that these activities were not doing anything of the kind. It would show that the State is working about half time. The State Statistician, likewise a member of the committee, knows how to get quick and easy access to figures. In the first instance the inquiry would be confined to necessities. It would soon be seen that the existing system of marketing is not really meeting more than about half the true demand of the people. I cannot leave that matter there, because it would at once be said that this is merely a demand by people who can give nothing in return, and that therefore the proposition is unsound economically and leads nowhere. That is the real essence of the economic argument, which one is entitled to discuss apart from the money aspect. It was well put in France just before the Revolution and before the Socialist Government took office. There was a clever slogan going around France which illustrates the entirely different viewpoint of the new economics: "When there is plenty, one does not exchange; one distributes." Just that little slogan expresses exactly the essence of the situation. Now to take another viewpoint. Although I do not in an expert sense know the first thing about farming, I think hon. members representing the wheat belt and the agricultural areas will confirm me in saying that if a man is growing wheat he is probably short of fruit and poultry and eggs, and that if he is producing eggs he grumbles at the price of wheat, and that if he is growing fruit he would like more poultry and more wheat. He gets enough of his own product, but he is short of the products of other men. The same thing applies here. Nobody who has really analysed the question will maintain that any particular producer is aiming at anything except to get money prices for his articles. If one can conceive of a high official who would not make unreasonable demands upon the market going into the field and making purchases, we would reach a situation where we might get a change in our outlook which would be all to the good. From that aspect I am not unmindful of the fact that the League of Nations at Geneva has been discussing the question, as have the Lyons Government and the Government of Great Britain, and that they have now come to the conclusion that they must improve the money demand, and that they have got to increase the standard of the people of all countries to enable them to buy better foodstuffs and more food. If action is taken in a big way by the Central Governments, then it will not be necessary for effect to be given to this motion. However, I am reminded of an observation made by the present Min-

ister for Employment in an earlier session, when he was not a member of Cabinet, that unless the State Government could justify itself in some such direction as this, it should go out of existence. By that the hon. gentleman meant that he was not then content—and I am sure he is not now content—merely to sit down under the fact that in a large sense these matters are Federal matters and financial matters. I shall not weary hon members further with the motion. I have given a skeleton of the ideas underlying it. If I have convinced them that a difference exists between the money effective demand and the markets to-day and the real needs and essentials of the people, and, further, that we have officers who can do the things I have suggested, they will agree that we could prepare valuable data as to unused materials and the needs of the people, and submit that information to the Federal Government. The result might be to bring about some system whereby the markets in the State could be largely increased for the benefit of the people.

On motion by Mr. Boyle, debate adjourned.

BILL—JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th September.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. F. C. L. Smith—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [5.42]: The Bill proposes to amend Section 56 of the principal Act, and to bring procedure with regard to service of summonses under the Justices Act into line with the procedure under the Local Courts Act. Not having a legal training, or much experience of courts, I faced the subject-matter of the Bill with some diffidence, because I feared that it might be full of legal technicalities and so forth. However, after some study and investigation of the measure, I have come to the conclusion that experience on the advocacy side of court procedure does not give a very great advantage to a participant in a discussion of the practical work of the courts. Through this Bill the mover seeks to remedy a practice which he says leads to differentiation in penalties imposed upon persons charged and convicted. I must admit there is some force in that contention. It is a fact that owing to the cost of service of summonses as the result of mileage, in some cases there is differentiation in the total of the penalties imposed for certain offences. Generally speaking, however, those instances are infrequent. While it is right for us to try to remedy those cases, even though infrequent, nevertheless the question arises whether this is the method by which they should be remedied. I understand and have always understood that magistrates, whilst they may not make practice of it altogether and cannot be directed in that connection, do invariably ascertain the costs of a case before imposing a penalty, and that if the costs are heavy as the result of mileage entailed in connection with the service of the summons, they measure the penalty accordingly. I know that that could hardly occur with respect to the minimum penalties referred to by the hon. member when introducing the Bill. There are many offences for which minimum penalties are prescribed; and where a minimum penalty must be imposed and the cost of serving the summons has to be added, there would be a differentiation. However, the minimum penalty is not always the maximum penalty, and where more than the minimum penalty is imposed, due allowance should be made for the cost of the summons. I am not trying to assert that allowance is made in all cases, or that magistrates are directed to make such allowances; but I do suggest that it is the invariable practice. I agree with the hon. member that there may be some isolated cases of hardship under the existing method of serving summonses. On the other hand, if we agree to the proposed amendment, I think we shall bring about a position that for quite a number of people may impose even greater hardships, greater penalties and greater disadvantages than are now possible under the existing order. The hon. member in his Bill makes an exception in regard to indictable cases, based on indictable offences. But a summons would not be served if the offence was an indictable one; the offender would be arrested: so the exception made in the Bill in respect of indictable offences seems to be a superfluous one. There is very little comparison between local court cases and police court cases. In the local court civil cases are dealt with, and the procedure which it is proposed in the Bill shall apply to police court cases, does apply at the present time to summonses served under

local court procedure. But on summonses served by the local court there is no return date fixed, and so the summons itself has no bearing really upon the date on which the case shall be heard. Generally speaking, in local court cases when a person receives a summons he enters a defence, and subsequently as the result of his entering a defence a date convenient to the court is fixed for the hearing of the case. These local court cases are not likely to be prejudiced by the effluxion of time. In that respect they differ from police court cases, inasmuch as in police court cases it is essential to have the case heard as speedily as possible. In the hearing of a police court case the defendant must be present. It may be said the defendant is not always present in police court cases, but strictly speaking the defendant should be present as the result of a summons served upon him to appear in the court. If he does not appear, it may be on a minor charge, and the magistrate may be satisfied with his non-appearance if he sends a solicitor to represent him or a notification that he will plead guilty. But if the magistrate believes that the circumstances justify it, he can issue a bench warrant in order to make the defendant appear. These cases differ, too, inasmuch as a man's liberty might be at stake, a situation that could not possibly happen in a local court case. On the police court summons—with which this proposed legislation specifically deals—a definite return date is set down, the date when the case is listed for hearing, and it is very necessary that the person summoned should be in attendance in order that the case may proceed on the day that has been arranged for. In the event of the House approving of the proposals in this amending legislation, we might find that the machinery which makes for the present smooth working in police court procedure would be seriously disturbed, which might possibly result in chaotic conditions. At present practically all the summonses are served by the police. The police have a very efficient organisation for the purpose of serving the summonses, and of making the service effective.

Hon. C. G. Latham: But they charge a mileage fee.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is so, but the point is to make the service effective. They have a State-wide organisation to that end. For instance, if a summons is issued and the person to be summoned moves to another district, the summons can be sent forward to that other district. If as a result of delay in the service of a summons the date originally set down for hearing the case has been found inconvenient, the date can be altered to make it more convenient, both for the court and for the person upon whom the summons is served. The effect of the summonses being served as they are now—practically the whole of them by the police—means that they are served through machinery that is co-ordinated in every respect, which makes it of such a character that when the summons is served the case can proceed with certainty on the return date, a very desirable thing in police court procedure. This could not be assured under local court procedure, if applied to police court cases as required by the hon. member in his proposed legislation. He referred to certain summonses served under local court procedure by registered post. Under the postal regulations the post office will not deliver registered letters where they cannot be signed for by the addressee. That would lead to many difficulties in the serving of summonses. In many country districts addressees have their mail boxes at some distance from their houses, and the postal official will not leave a registered letter in a mail box.

Hon. C. G. Latham: No, but he will leave a notice.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, a notice that a registered letter for the addressee is lying in the post office in the town, where he can go and get it. But the addressee, if he be expecting a summons, might not go into the town.

Hon. C. G. Latham: I have known mail men follow an addressee and get his signature for a registered letter.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The addressee, even if he went into the town, might not call at the post office for a registered letter if he were expecting a summons. So the service would not be effective. It might be suggested that the registered letter containing the summons could be marked, as many letters are marked, "If not delivered within seven days please return." If such a letter were returned the police court officials would know that the summons had not been effectively served.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Some summonses are served by post now.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, under local court procedure. I shall have something to say about that later. Let me point out that whilst an official post office would observe that instruction, its observance could not be demanded from unofficial post offices. The result of depending on the service of a summons by post would possibly be that the returned letter would be received a few days, or a day, or even a few hours before the time set down for the hearing of the case. Only then would the police authorities know that the summons had not been effectively served. We can understand the difficulty in which a police court would be if the other parties to the case, and the witnesses, were all ready to go on when the letter containing the summons for the defendant is returned.

Hon. C. G. Latham: It would be no worse than many adjournments of cases before magistrates.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: It might be very much worse in regard to the witnesses.

Hon. C. G. Latham: As are all adjournments asked for by the police.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: In this instance the adjournment would have to be granted, whether or not it was warranted by the circumstances. And if the defendant turned up as a result of receiving the summons, and if the police court authorities were not aware that he had received the summons, and so were not prepared to go on with the case, the defendant would be able to claim that the case should be proceeded with. So in those circumstances the proposed new system would impose a more serious hardship than is possible under the existing method. And it is quite possible that service by these means in these cases might lead to an action in which the Government and parties might be involved in heavy contingent liabilities. Personally, I can visualise a case in which the prosecuting party might be put to heavy expenditure. Witnesses must be paid for, or must be detained or re-summoned when the case does come on. So I say, this proposed amendment will lead to far greater difficulties, and far greater possible hardships on defendants than can occur to-day. The hon. member has admitted that, generally speaking, the police are most helpful in respect to the service of summonses in an endeavour to see that costs are cut out as far as possible. The telephone is largely used to notify defendants that a summons awaits them in a country district, and it gives them every opportunity of going to the town to pick up that summons, and thus evading mileage costs.

Hon. C. G. Latham: You know very well they have to pay for delivery, even if they take up the summons.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: The hon. member, and some other members, seem to be indicating their support of the Bill by the fact that the method of service proposed in the Bill for police court cases now applies in connection with local court cases: so it would be interesting to hear what is our experience with regard to the service of summonses by post in connection with local court cases. In the Perth Local Court approximately 8,000 summonses are issued every six months, and of these approximately 7,000 are for personal service, and approximately 1,000 for postal service. For the six months, January to June of this year, of the 7,000 personal service summonses, all were served, or proper reasons were given for non-service. Of the 1,100 for postal service, 679 were served and 331 were unserved; that is to say, one in three of those served by post, or tried to be served by post, were unserved, and no reasons were given for their non-service. One can imagine the position that can be set up. I am satisfied that my hon. legal friends sitting on the opposite front bench will appreciate the fact that a most difficult situation will arise in connection with police court procedure if we are to institute a system under which we endeavour to serve police court summonses by post. I appreciate the desire of the member for Katanning to remedy what I consider to be a genuine complaint. I feel that, under existing conditions, or would-be conditions, that led to the introduction of the Bill, there must have been a metropolitan outlook. We know that, in connection with the service of summonses in the metropolitan area, there must be paid 1s. for the summons and 1s. for the service, and that in country districts a person who lives, say, 23 miles from the court has to pay not only 1s. for the summons and 1s. for the service, but an additional 23s. by way of mileage costs: and so I feel that the hon. member has a source of genuine complaint. I believe there is no justification

for this differentiation in the different parts of the State. We cannot all live in the metropolitan area, but I suggest that the remedy for the position is not the remedy the hon. member is putting forward, which will have a serious and disturbing effect upon police court procedure. I suggest that the remedy should be so to regulate the charges for both summons and service, irrespective of whether it be in the metropolitan area or a country district, that the amount will be such as will return that which is necessary to give the result desired. I feel that if, in connection with the large number of summonses issued in the metropolitan area, the present fees were raised to 1s. 6d. for the summons and 1s. 6d. for the service, and if these were the amounts to be charged right throughout the State, it would be a reasonable proposition, much better, in fact, than trying to interfere with the court procedure, because having a fixed sum for summonses, irrespective of where they were served, there would then be no differentiation between defendants in country districts and defendants in the metropolitan area. I oppose the Bill.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [6.7]: I do not feel that the situation justifies the alarm expressed by the Minister for Justice with regard to the little amendment involved by the Bill. I remember on one occasion going to a country district to prosecute a number of defendants charged under the Vermin Act by the local authority, and there were about 20 people concerned. When they came up and had their cases dealt with, the heavy cost involved by the mileage covered by the police officer, who had to travel in all directions of the compass, and in many cases a considerable distance, seemed to me to have imposed on the defendants a sufficient penalty.

Hon. C. G. Latham: And if the police deliver three summonses in the one direction, a charge is made for three deliveries.

Mr. McDONALD: I rather thought the contrary, that when a police officer made a round trip to serve summonses, the cost was distributed amongst the people being served. As far as the local court is concerned, the existing provision has worked well. The Minister said that one summons in three sent out by post remained unserved, but we have to remember that service by post is very cheap, as compared with service by a bailiff or a police officer. Many people send out summonses by post, knowing that those summonses may not be delivered, and they are quite prepared to treat service by post as not safe. If the summonses are returned unserved, further inquiries are made, and then possibly they are served by a bailiff or police officer. It is really not a valid argument against service by post that a summons may be returned unserved. In the local court the matter is not without considerable importance. A summons may be sent out in connection with a claim for £100. It is sent out by post in the usual way and the risk is taken of its going astray. But so far as my experience goes, no difficulties have arisen. There are good safeguards in this Bill. The Bill says that the police or resident magistrate or clerk of petty sessions may, if satisfied that to effect service in the manner prescribed—that is, personal or police service—will involve undue expense, recourse shall not be had to service by post, unless the magistrate or the clerk of petty sessions considers that the expense of police service will be out of all proportion. Then it goes on to say that if the offence is not indictable, and its nature is such that personal service might reasonably be dispensed with, and that the hearing will not be unduly delayed, service by post may be allowed. If, therefore, the charge were grave, the magistrate or the clerk would say, "I must have personal service." But if the cost of service is out of all proportion? In the circumstances, service by post can be allowed, provided again, as a further condition, that the magistrate is satisfied that the hearing will not be unduly delayed. So that no summons will be sent out by post unless the expense of service by a police officer or bailiff will be unduly high, and unless, of course, the case is not a serious one. Then the Bill goes on to say that proof of service is only accepted by the court if the clerk has received through the post an acknowledgment of the delivery of the letter purporting to be signed by the person to whom the summons was addressed. The action does not proceed until the clerk has received this written acknowledgment from the defendant that the summons has reached him. Obviously, the clerk would know that in the ordinary course of events he would receive the acknowledgment, say, within one week, and therefore he would make the summons returnable in 14 days.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. McDONALD: I do not propose to deal seriatim with the doubts the Minister has very properly brought before the House for consideration. I feel there is no real danger in passing the Bill. One matter must be borne in mind, namely that the prosecutor is not the person who decides that a summons has to go by post. Under the Local Courts Act, the plaintiff is at liberty to send the summons by post without seeking permission to do so. Under this Bill, the police magistrate or the clerk of petty sessions is the authority who decides when a summons is to go by post. The Act directs that they shall not allow any summons to go by post unless they have satisfied themselves that it is a proper case for service by post. I feel that if the Bill is passed, we shall be making a worth-while amendment to the procedure of our courts.

MR. WATTS (Katanning—in reply) [7.32]: I brought down the Bill to assist those who through no fault of their own are resident a considerable distance from centres where police officers are available. There are many areas in this State where those conditions apply. Not only do they apply in the agricultural districts, but to a greater extent, so far as distances are concerned, to areas in the outer goldfields and the North-West. If I believed that the sad effects pictured by the Minister for Justice were likely to come about through the Bill becoming law, I would never have introduced it. So far as I can see, under the provisions of the Bill and through the safeguards provided therein, there is not the slightest risk that any of those things suggested by the Minister are likely to occur. When the member for West Perth (Mr. McDonald) was dealing with the question of safeguards imposed by the Bill, the Minister suggested, by interjection, that in consequence nothing would be served by post. I have no hesitation in saying that there are many cases in every country court every year where any reasonable-minded clerk of courts or police magistrate would be prepared to authorise service by post. I propose to bring before members one special instance that came under my notice last week at my office in Katanning. The road board, whose office is approximately 38 miles from the nearest police station, prosecuted a man for allowing his cow to stray upon the street. The minimum penalty provided by the regulations is 10s., and in all probability the magistrate hearing the case would see fit to impose the minimum penalty. We were under an obligation to have the summons served by police bailiff at a mileage cost of 38s., so that the minimum penalty for that small offence became £2 8s. I submit there was no hurry for a charge of that kind to be heard, and there was no reason why, if this legislation had been on the statute-book, the magistrate or clerk of courts should not have ordered that the summons be served by post. With regard to the suggestion of the Minister that unofficial post offices would be unlikely satisfactorily to deal with registered letters containing summonses, I would point out that unofficial post offices—so far as I know them—are just as likely to deal satisfactorily with correspondence entrusted to their care as are post offices in larger centres. They are bound by their contract and arrangements with the Postmaster General to do so. There is absolutely no justification for the suggestion that a registered letter which was being dealt with by an unofficial post office would be dealt with in an improper manner. I noticed from the remarks of the Minister that he left out all reference to the provisions I had inserted in the Bill requiring the resident magistrate or the clerk to give leave for service by post. As the member for West Perth pointed out, under the Local Courts Act in connection with civil actions, the plaintiff decides whether the summons shall be served by post or not. In these circumstances I am not surprised that 300 out of 1,000 summonses, referred to by the Minister as having been sent out by post, should not have been served. I think I have had as much experience of dealing with the issue of summonses in the country, both under the Local Courts Act and the Justices Act, as any member of the House. Under the local court procedure, at all events in Katanning, service by post has been extremely successful. In the majority of cases at Katanning service of summons is by post, and a very large percentage is effectively served in that way. There are instances of the whereabouts of the defendant not being known at the time. The summons is then issued by post, very often with the idea of ascertaining the last-known address of the defendant, and it is hoped that the summons will be served in that manner. Many cases have come under my notice in regard to proceedings taken under the Justices Act, where service by post would have been equally satisfactory, and

saved a great deal of expense to those people whose only offence greater than anyone else's is that they live far away from the centres of population. That alone should justify us in giving them special consideration. It seems to me that we want to forget that we have regulations and conditions which have been in force for many years, and set out to consider the Bill from the point of view of whether it will give more justice to that section of the community which deserves such justice. In my opinion the Bill will definitely mete out that justice. The Minister also referred to the fact that indictable offences are not commenced by summons. I have exempted indictable offences from the provisions of the Bill, for the reason that as a general rule they are serious enough to warrant arrest. There are also cases where indictable offences are the subject of prosecution, and where the commencement of the prosecution is by summons. I would point out that there are special provisions in the Criminal Code to deal with such cases as assault. Because the average or usual indictable offence is of a serious nature, when, if a warrant is not justified, at least personal service, and quick service, may be absolutely essential, I have exempted from the provisions of the Bill all indictable offences. In consequence, the measure applies only to minor offences that are likely to take place. I have already quoted one case to show how inequitable is the existing position. One could imagine minor traffic offences, offences under the Vermin Act, and a hundred and one other offences, which do not deserve any greater penalty to be inflicted, if it could be removed by any reasonable legislation, than that which is inflicted upon those who live nearer the larger centres of population. The magistrate or clerk, in dealing with the matter, would be capable, by reason of his local knowledge, of deciding whether or not it would be reasonable to serve the summons by post. To my mind, the objections raised by the Minister have been raised merely in support of a time-honoured custom, an amendment of which is long overdue. After listening carefully to him, I have come to the conclusion that an old saying might well be applied to the reasons he advances against the Bill, after damning it with faint praise, those reasons being like two grains of wheat hidden in a bushel of chaff, you shall seek all day ere you find them, and when you find them, they are not worth the search. There can be none of the dangers suggested by the Minister as following the passage of this Bill, whereas on the other hand a great deal of good may result from it. I commend the measure to the House.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 16th September.

THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE (Hon. F. C. L. Smith—Brown Hill-Ivanhoe) [7.45]: There is not likely to be much opposition to the Bill, which deals with matters regarding which all members are more or less *au fait*. The provisions are identical with those regarding the particular matters dealt with that were included in the consolidating measure that was before Parliament last session. These particular provisions were agreed to by this Chamber without any discussion whatever. I do not propose to speak at length regarding the Bill. The member for Greenough (Mr. Patrick), who moved the second reading, quoted figures to indicate the improvement that has taken place in the polls recorded in Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales as the result of the introduction in those States of compulsory voting. There does not seem to me any necessity to quote those figures again or to supplement them in any way. As the member for Greenough pointed out, South Australia and Western Australia are the two remaining States in the Commonwealth where compulsory voting is not operative. Some time ago we had experience in connection with a State election that was conducted concurrently with the referendum on secession. Voting at the referendum was compulsory, and consequently it imposed upon those who were enrolled the necessity to record their votes in connection with the referendum. Naturally, as they had to do that, they also recorded their votes for the State elections that were held on the same day. The result, as the member for Greenough pointed out, was that we had a much

higher percentage poll than was customary without the advantage of compulsory voting. For some time compulsory enrolment has been in force in this State, and it has always seemed to me that compulsory voting is the natural corollary of compulsory enrolment. In fact, compulsory enrolment hardly seemed justified unless accompanied by compulsory voting. I believe that compulsory voting, together with compulsory enrolment, will make for cleaner and more up-to-date rolls. One effect will be to impose upon the Electoral Department the necessity to see that the rolls are kept more up to date, because unless that is done, both compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting will become ineffective in many instances. As a result of the inquiries that will be made in order that compulsory enrolment may be effective, it will follow that the Electoral Department will receive information in connection therewith that will be of considerable advantage in rectifying errors that occur in the rolls. As the member for Greenough pointed out, the experience in the various States where compulsory voting is enforced has been that higher percentage polls have been recorded not only because of the adoption of the principle of compulsory voting, but because of the more up-to-date and more complete rolls. Compulsion has been referred to by a writer as a blessed word. It is blessed in connection with many matters The fact that we provided for compulsory voting would bring home to electors a greater sense of their responsibilties. I always feel that the fact of voting being compulsory adds to the prestige of the performance, as it is obligatory rather than a matter of choice. Though there are a number of electors who refrain from voting because they do not consider it to be worth while, another section abstain from doing so because of a certain element of indifference that would be rapidly banished if voting were made compulsory and electors were aware of that fact. As to extending the hours of polling from 7 p.m. to 8 p.m., I think that a desirable innovation. My experience has been that frequently electors arrive at the polling booths after 7 p.m., being under the impression that they were kept open till 8 o'clock. The reason for that is that the booths are kept open in connection with Federal elections until the later hour, and people get into the habit of exercising the franchise until that hour because voting is compulsory under the Federal electoral law. The electors have been under the impression that the same arrangements applied in connection with the State elections. On one occasion at Kalgoorlie I was defeated by a very narrow majority and a large number of my supporters attended the poll to record their votes after 7 o'clock. Business considerations prevented them from voting during the day and they were under the impression that the booths were open until 8 o'clock. It is desirable to achieve uniformity.

The Minister for Employment: In fact, those electors saved you from being elected to the Legislative Council.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, that was the occasion. Generally speaking, the Bill will commend itself to members and I have pleasure in supporting it.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Hegney in the Chair; Mr. Patrick in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—New division and section inserted:

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Reference is made to the "returning officer" throughout the proposed new Section 154A. Particularly in the metropolitan area, returning officers are engaged for the election only and it is possible that their employment covers two or three days only. If we limit the functions referred to in the proposed new provision to returning officers some difficulty may be experienced, and I think it would be better if we substituted "electoral registrar" for "returning officer" as set out in the Bill. I move an amendment—

That in line 1 of Subclause 2 of proposed new section 154A "returning officer" be struck out and the word "registrar" inserted in lieu.

If the amendment be agreed to, there will be a number of consequential amendments in the proposed new section.

Hon. N. KEENAN: I have not looked into this matter carefully, but I question whether the reference to "returning officer" should be deleted in each instance. I think it is obvious that the returning officer must be the person who makes out the returns referred to in some parts.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The registrar could delegate his duties.

Hon. N. KEENAN: Who would be responsible, for instance, for sending out the notices referred to?

Hon. C. G. Latham: The registrar could be responsible.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I oppose the amendment. The returning officer is the man who is in charge of the election and should do all the necessary work in connection with it. He should be required to complete the work arising out of the election. The registrar may not have anything to do with the election at all when it is actually held. Electoral registrars are not all full-time officers.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They are all Government officers.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: Yes, but they have other work to perform and they are not the persons who conduct the elections.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They are usually clerks of courts and sometimes the returning officers are not even officials.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: But the returning officers are the paid officials for the time being, and it is their duty to carry out and complete the work in connection with the election.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I shall not mind if the amendment is not agreed to, but I think expense could be saved if my suggestion were adopted. The work arising out of elections may occupy two months or more.

The Minister for Employment: Could not the Chief Electoral Officer do what you suggest?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I think the Minister is making a mistake if he adheres to his contention. I am afraid he will have to secure an alteration later on, and I think it would be better to make it now.

Mr. PATRICK: I do not think that the registrar will be any better than the returning officer because in most cases neither is an officer of the Electoral Department. The Bill is drafted in exactly the same manner as was the Bill for a Consolidated Electoral Act brought before Parliament last year. It was the opinion of the present Electoral Officer that there should be an amendment in the direction suggested by the Leader of the Opposition. At present the returning officer has to send in a marked roll after the election, showing the electors who voted, and presumably from that marked roll the Chief Electoral Officer will send out the notices. I assume that the Chief Electoral Officer and not the returning officer will actually send out the notices.

Amendment put and negatived.

Mr. COVERLEY: I move an amendment—

That in line 3 of Subclause (5) of proposed new Section 154A, "twenty-one" be struck out with a view to inserting in lieu the words "forty-two"

There are many electorates in which 21 days would not be sufficient.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Three months could be allowed.

Mr. COVERLEY: I can understand that most returning officers are quite sensible people and know the districts with which they are dealing, but there is the probability that there might be appointed to act as a returning officer in a certain district a new clerk of courts who might not fully understand the mail service with which the electors in the back country have to contend. In such instances many electors who had failed to vote would be penalised. In my own district there are many electors who do not even know when there has been an election. I want to protect those people. While the wording may give power to a returning officer to extend the time, I want to guard against mischance or misunderstanding of any description.

Mr. PATRICK: Prosecutions can be instituted only by the Chief Electoral Officer and not by a returning officer, and he would have enough commonsense to see that sufficient notice was given. This is a similar provision to that in the Commonwealth Act.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: I do not think the member for Kimberley has anything to fear with this particular provision.

Hon. C. G. Latham: The time could be extended to six months.

The MINISTER FOR JUSTICE: That is so. Provision is made for such districts as the member for Kimberley has in mind. There is ample scope for the returning officer to take cognisance of the circumstances of the elector with whom he is dealing, and the subclause is purposely worded to enable him to extend consideration where he deems it desirable.

Mr. RODOREDA: We should make provision to see that officials have not any control over the period. I can imagine an electoral officer with a grudge against an

individual restricting the time to 22 days, knowing the man could not submit the return by then.

Hon. C. G. Latham: He could not take proceedings against the man.

Mr. RODOREDA: We are told this is a similar provision to that in the Commonwealth Act. If a return does not get back in time, the individual is liable to be fined.

Mr. Patrick: Oh no!

Mr. RODOREDA: Oh yes! That has been my experience in the North. I do not see that there is any violent hurry to get down on these people who have committed the offence of not voting. It is not reasonable to phrase a clause to enable the registrar or returning officer to send out a notice returnable within 21 days. The clause allows the returning officer to use his discretion. I know the Leader of the Opposition declaims against this provision in every Bill that comes before the House. He is not satisfied to leave these things to departmental officers. Nor am I.

Mr. MARSHALL: Twenty-one days is a fairly long period. But the Leader of the Opposition is well aware that where a specified minimum period is laid down in an Act it immediately becomes the maximum. It is safe to assume that if the Bill is passed and the period of 21 days is left standing, every notice sent out will have 21 days specified therein. The returning officer would not look at the period in the light of a minimum but would regard it as the period he was allowed to specify and would put it on the notice. I do not want the committee to be copyists and follow the Federal Government in detail.

Mr. Patrick: It was in your own Bill last year.

Mr. MARSHALL: We omitted to notice it. The point is that we are handing to departmental officers authority to take certain action which will result in electors in some of our electorates being not merely prosecuted but persecuted. In my electorate, which would not present such difficulties as those which have been mentioned, prospectors, drovers and kangaroo hunters might not reach a post office for two or three months, and before that time had elapsed they would have been fined, and probably a summons would have been forwarded for the collection of the money. People should not be interfered with in the peaceful prosecution of their occupations. Those I have instanced live very hard lives and sacrifice many comforts and pleasures that other people enjoy. In order that they might be considered, I support the amendment.

Mr. WATTS: I support the amendment. I cannot see that the least harm would be done by extending the time to 42 days. The intentions of the returning officer might be excellent, but he might not understand the conditions indicated by members opposite. In my district there are places whence it is impossible to get a reply to a letter in 21 days.

Hon. C. G. Latham: That is not necessary.

Mr. WATTS: However good the intention, the minimum often becomes the maximum, and the fact that 21 days was mentioned might lead to its being adopted. If I thought any damage would be done by extending the time, I would take the risk of a shorter period, but extra time might, in some instances, obviate injustice.

Hon. N. KEENAN: The provisions of the Bill are identical with those of a measure we passed last session, and also with those of the Commonwealth Act passed in 1924. Still, I am in accord with the amendment because in this State, with its great distances and scattered population, there is a risk that, notwithstanding the best of intentions, sufficient notice might not be given. What difference would 42 days make? It is not suggested that, by reason of granting an extension, any offender would escape the penalty.

Mr. Sleeman: He certainly would not.

Hon. N. KEENAN: For the benefit of many electors in remote parts of the State, the period might well be extended.

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

Clause 4, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with an amendment.

BILL—AGRICULTURAL BANK ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

MR. PATRICK (Greenough) [8.22] in moving the second reading said: I intend to deal with the Bill as briefly and concisely as possible, firstly because I am suffering from a bad throat and, secondly, because there are members on this side of the House who will amplify any state-

ment I make. This is a Bill to make certain very vital amendments to the Agricultural Bank Act. It has been apparent for some time to people interested that some alteration will have to be made if the present depopulation of the rural areas is not to continue. It must be a matter of very great concern to most people to observe how the population of the rural areas is dwindling. This is indicated by the abandoned properties, and much of the depopulation, in my opinion, is due to the operations of the Agricultural Bank Commissioners.

Mr. Cross: But a similar drift is occurring in all countries.

Mr. PATRICK: What some people do not realise is that the collapse of the Agricultural Bank was due mainly to the collapse of commodity prices. When the prices of agricultural products were high, everyone assumed that they would continue. If those prices had been maintained, there would have been no clamour for a new Agricultural Bank Act. In fact, not only the Agricultural Bank but keen business men and financial institutions worked on the assumption that the high prices would continue. People bought and sold farms on the basis of those prices, and they were caught equally with the Agricultural Bank by the fall in prices. When prices were high—and this must be admitted—the administration of the Agricultural Bank was very loosely applied, but that is no reason why we should go to the opposite extreme and employ unnecessarily harsh methods in time of stress. Nearly four years ago the then Leader of the Opposition, the member for Boulder, moved the adjournment of the House to call attention to the farmers' plight, and, amid applause, he urged security of tenure and a living allowance for all people engaged on the land. He congratulated the farmers on the new spirit that had arisen as demonstrated by their refusing to cart their wheat unless they could secure a profitable price for it. He urged, as members may remember, that a grant of £100,000 should be made, and said that he would write a cheque and defy the Loan Council, not because that would be of any material benefit, but because of the psychological effect it would have on the farmers. The conditions at that time were caused by low prices. In the period since then, especially in certain portions of the State, bad seasons have made the position considerably worse. Certainly a high price is ruling for wheat to-day, but to most farmers that is merely a mirage; it is something they cannot secure. In some districts, especially the northern districts, this is the third year in succession that farmers have experienced a crop failure. Two years ago the crops failed through rust; last year they failed on account of shortage of rain, and this year again some of them have been a complete failure for the same reason. Conditions in those areas are even worse than they were in 1914. In addition to the failure of their crops, those farmers are unable to utilise the crops even for pasture because of the failure of water supplies. I do not believe that most city people realise the major disaster that has overtaken those farmers this season. Of course there are a few people who realise its seriousness. I was travelling in a tram the other day and overheard the conductor telling a passenger of a relation who had gone on the land, had worked throughout the last 12 months, and experienced a complete crop failure. That man realised the position because he had gained a knowledge of the conditions prevailing through a relation. Still, I do not think the majority of the city people realise the appalling conditions that exist in some parts of the State this year. The point I wish to make is that the remarks made by the member for Boulder nearly four years ago apply with tenfold force to-day. Those men and women have passed through practically seven years of either disastrous prices or crop failures, and so to-day they are deserving of special consideration. Instead of receiving such consideration, they have been brought under a form of bureaucratic control—a control that is sapping the independence of the settlers and destroying their morale. Officials not competent to handle farming operations are interfering with their initiative and, as I have said, sapping their independence. Further, heavy losses have been occasioned by unnecessary delays. On this point I should like to quote a letter received from a business man who is now engaged in farming.

> In all my business experience I have never come across such a jackaboo method as that which enables a mortgagee to control absolutely the entire affairs of his mortgagor. Farmers

can neither buy nor sell anything whatever without the Agricultural Bank's consent. Nor is that consent, or dissent, prompt. Decisions that a commercial house will make in 24 hours, the Agricultural Bank may and does require months to make, even in supremely urgent cases.

I desire by this amendment to give the farmer the freest possible hand in running his own business, because I consider that Government interference in any form is disastrous to the running of a farm. The member for Boulder (Hon. P. Collier) has referred to psychological effects. The psychological effect of the working of the Act has been merely to drive people to despair. I desire especially to seek freedom of action in dealing with stock. In this connection I wish to quote a sample of the Commissioners' delays. Last year Mr. A. sold all his sheep, say 300, in order to liquidate his stock debt to Messrs B. About December, 1925, he applied to Messrs. B. for a loan to purchase young sheep at from 5s. to 6s. per head. Messrs. B. agreed to purchase the sheep subject to the leave of the Agricultural Bank. This leave was applied for. Permission was given after two months' delay, during which time the price of sheep had risen considerably, and none were available at the former price. Further application was made, and after another month's delay permission was given to buy at 8s. or 9s. Meanwhile prices had again risen, and suitable sheep could not be had at this figure. Three hundred sheep were actually bought without the formal sanction of the Bank at 12s. 5d., and a further 200 at 12s. 9d. The Bank refused either to confirm, or to release their lien over the original 300 sheep. So far the matter is not settled. The complaint is that owing to delay Mr. A. could not stock his farm and eventually had to pay more than double for his sheep. He lost about £200, which alone would have greatly reduced his liability to the Agricultural Bank. The current interest had not been paid, but was guaranteed out of the sale of the sheep. The Agricultural Bank Commissioners should not require three months to make up their minds. In such circumstances business becomes impossible. I could quote similar instances of delay in the supply of superphosphate for topdressing. Actually the effect of this is to prevent a farmer from making a living. The present policy has resulted in an ever-increasing number of abandoned farms, which become breeding grounds for vermin. Abandoned properties after three years lose their value altogether, as they revert to Nature. Travelling through the farming districts today one sees numerous abandoned farms, with the wire all out of the fences, and the clearing all over-grown. To-day we want to reverse the policy of despair, and try to restore the farmer's confidence in his ability to run his own business; and such is the main object of the Bill. I now desire to deal briefly with some of the main provisions of the measure. Section 44 is to be clarified. It states that if money is not used for the purposes of the advance, or is not properly expended, the Commissioners may refuse to pay any further instalment, and call in the whole amount already advanced and take the remedies provided in the Act for default. The amendment is to make this apply only to the particular loan instalment due. Under the section it is not exactly clear whether the Commissioners can go back for years and call in the whole amount outstanding. Provision is also made for interest to be paid yearly instead of half-yearly. This is highly necessary owing to the manner in which the farmer receives his income. A proviso is to be added to Section 46 so that the rate of interest charged to the farmer shall not exceed by more than 1 per cent. the average rate paid by the Commissioners. Now I come to Section 51, for the repeal of which there has been considerable agitation. Unquestionably, strong arguments could be advanced for its repeal, so as to allow the Commissioners to rest, as most mortgagees have to rest, on their powers as mortgagees. I do not, however, propose to do this. I suggest certain modifications which, with other amendments of the Act, will largely nullify the harsh effects of the section. It is proposed that Section 51 shall apply only to one year's interest. The section as it stands applies to only one year's interest, but by making references to refunds and so forth under Section 53 it is possible to demand several years' interest in one year. The proposal of the Bill is to delete the reference to Section 53, so that Section 51 will apply to only one year's interest. The charge, moreover, is not to apply to butter fat where this is a minor activity in the farming operations. These proposals merely carry into effect the intentions and assurances expressed by the Minister when introducing the Act. After payment of the year's interest the farmer is to be free to deal with stock and progeny of the same without re-

ference to the Commissioners. The present system causes endless delays, and permission has often to be obtained from men who are not competent to know the farmer's business. Thus in many instances the farmer is robbed of the opportunity of making a living. Further, after the amount due under the Act has been paid, the farmer is entitled to the balance of proceeds held by the Bank. The Commissioners do not appear to have the power to withhold this money under the present Act, but there are instances where they have exercised such a power. In one case they withheld an amount of several hundred pounds and began to dole it out to the farmer at the rate of so many pounds per month. There was a surplus amount left over after his commitments had been paid. The Bill proposes to make the matter absolutely clear by ensuring that the farmer shall be entitled to the balance of the proceeds held by the Bank after he has paid the amount due under the Act. Reasonable expenses are to be allowed before interest. This is a principle adopted in the New South Wales Farmers' Relief Act. It is recommended also by the Federal Royal Commission that reasonable maintenance be granted to the farmer and his family, including clothing and other personal essentials, and medical and dental expenses. This was also advocated by the previous Premier of this State, to applause on the Government benches. Here I would like to quote an extract from a letter I have received. The case was one in which a stock firm offered to advance for the purpose of carrying on the farmer's affairs, not lavishly but efficiently, and providing sustenance, fuel and oil. The matter was referred to the Agricultural Bank, which, after months of delay, replied agreeing to less than half the fuel allowance and less than a third of the sustenance. The total allowed by the Bank for sustenance was £98, which included £48 of drought relief payment. The amount had to provide for a man and his wife, a married son with two children, a single son, and a single daughter, or a total of eight persons. Last year the man had neither seed nor feed owing to drought conditions. He applied last January to the Bank, repeating the application in March——

The Minister for Lands: What was the man's name?

Mr. PATRICK: Never mind the man's name.

The Minister for Lands: There are two sides to every story.

Mr. PATRICK: I know the man personally, and while I was in the district he always had the reputation of being capable of doing two men's work. I assure the Minister that the man is reliable.

The Minister for Lands: Why do you not give his name?

Mr. PATRICK: He applied to the Bank last January, and repeated his application in March. On the 5th June the Bank wrote cutting down the stock firm's figure as before mentioned, and authorising the firm to supply a quantity of chaff and seed wheat, which the firm then declined to do. That was on the 5th June, and on the 9th June the farmer saw the district manager. On the 3rd August he received a reply from Perth offering to supply a truck of chaff if necessary; that is, a truck of chaff from Perth. Had he not managed to secure some chaff locally, his horses would have died so far as the Agricultural Bank were concerned. He never even received an expression of regret for all the delay. As he says, it is no wonder some poor devils run amok. I do not mind telling the Minister that I am prepared to give him the name of this man privately. The man told me he had no objection to my making whatever use I liked of his letter. Here we have a case where a private firm was prepared to provide a farmer under the Agricultural Bank with sustenance, and the Bank proceeded to cut the amount down. On previous occasions I have said that I was not surprised at farmers' sons leaving the farms. The Minister took me to task on one occasion. As regards an instance I gave he said he thought it was an awful thing that a farmer's son should clear out and leave the farm. In the case of which I have been given particulars, however, there is a married man and his wife, a married son with three children, and a single son and a single daughter, and the Bank offer them £98, including £48 of Federal money, as sufficient sustenance to carry on. Personally I am not surprised that in such a case the farmer's son should leave the land. If that condition of things is to go on, shortly they will all be leaving the land and many more farms will become abandoned. The Bill provides reasonable expenses. The amount is to be £100, or 50 per cent. of the proceeds, whichever is the less. The amount is considerably less, I may say, than the amount advocated by the Labour Conference

as Labour's policy and is, I take it, somewhat in the nature of a compromise. The present system seems to assume that all farmers are dishonest, and it forces them to be dishonest in order to live. The Bill proposes also that settlers under the Soldier Settlement Scheme, the Industries Assistance Board and the Group Settlement Scheme shall be brought under the provisions of this measure. This is for the sake of uniformity, as all those settlers are under the same administration; and it would obviously be unfair to give relief to one class of settlers and *not to another*. *Most hon.* members have received a circular from the R.S.L. dealing with this matter. The secretary said—

> Particular attention is invited to Section 16 of the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act, 1918, which section was amended in 1919 to the extent that full powers were given to the bank over all a soldier settler's assets, including chattels, stock, and the progeny of such stock. Up till the appointment of commissioners to the Agricultural Bank the provisions of Section 16 were used in defence of a settler against a hostile creditor Now, however, the commissioners are disposed to take full advantage of the section, and thereby great discontent and unrest has been caused. Under existing conditions a soldier settler cannot make any purchase unless with the approval of his district office, and of course the district office must refer even minor applications to head office. This is necessary even though the full statutory lien has been met, and irrespective of whether the bank ever placed one hoof on the settler's holding.

They suggested that Section 16 of the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act should be repealed. I do not propose to tinker with those Acts at all, because it is much simpler to bring them into line with the present Agricultural Bank Act. It may not seem a good principle to amend another Act by this, but we have a precedent for it in the Rural Relief Act, and I think the amendment proposed in the Bill will serve the purpose of repealing Section 16 of the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act. Under a new provision no covenant can be put into a mortgage to give back to the Commissioners the power taken away under the Act. The bank is now putting all sorts of provisions into mortgages, which mostly assume the dishonesty of clients and tend to make them so. It is obvious that by this means it is easy to defeat the purpose of the Act. So in the Bill we provide that no covenant can be put into a mortgage to give back to the Commissioners the power taken away under the Act. The Commissioners are not to be allowed to exercise powers under the Act without obtaining leave to proceed from a resident magistrate. They will be placed under similar conditions to mortgagees under the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act. The hearing is to be held in open court and the resident magistrate is to take certain things into consideration, as for instance,

> (a) Whether the default giving rise to the application has been caused or contributed to by any reprehensible conduct, or by gross inefficiency or mismanagement on the part of the borrower, rendering him undeserving of the benefit of this section. (b) The general conduct of the borrower and his past relationship with the Bank or any of the transferred activities. (c) Whether the default has been brought about by circumstances beyond the control of the borrower. (d) Whether the security is likely to be seriously prejudiced if the borrower remains in possession of the lands and property comprised therein. (e) Whether there is a reasonable likelihood of the borrower satisfactorily farming or utilising the mortgaged lands so as in future to meet his liabilities to the Bank as they accrue. (f) Whether the granting of the order would inflict undue hardship on the borrower.

Those matters the magistrate must take into consideration in hearing the case. There is to be no appeal, and no costs awarded to either party. This is a very necessary provision, as members opposite must know that victimisation is always possible when a man adopts an independent attitude. Only the other night I listened to an impassioned speech by the member for Canning (Mr. Cross) on this question of appeal when dealing with another Bill. It is even more necessary in the case of this institution. Another important provision is in regard to the method of writing down the value of securities. Under the present Act there is no basis laid down, and the Commissioners refuse to state the methods they use. There are all sorts of methods adopted in valuing land. In this connection I should like to quote some remarks made at the annual conference of surveyors recently held in Adelaide. Dealing with land valuations, Mr. H. G. Foxhall, of New South Wales, said that land of itself was of no value, that it was the use to which it was put that created the value. He was surprised, he said, to hear land valuers giving expert evidence in a court to fix the value of land at what one ignorant person paid another ignorant person for a similar piece of land. There is a great deal in that. We know that the Taxation Department adopted those methods

when they made a re-valuation of all agricultural land on the basis of sales in the district. I know that in my own district, where there had been only two or three sales, which were made at very high values, all the valuations of land by the Taxation Department were based on those sales. One of those men has never had the ghost of a chance to pay the price for which he bought the land. What I propose to adopt in the Bill is the productive capacity, as recommended by the Federal Royal Commission. The Commission said—

> The Commission has adopted the economic value of the farm judged from the point of view of its productive capacity as the basis of estimating the margin in the farm.

The basis of values that they set down may not be exact, but is at least a basis. Wheat at 3s. a bushel may look low to-day, but it would be obviously unfair to base values on a temporary rise in wheat, because that rise has been caused by temporary shortages in certain countries, and in my opinion it is not a price that will hold in future years. Under the South Australian Primary Producers Act, 1935, wheat lands are valued on the basis of wheat at 3s. a bushel.

The Minister for Lands: That has been amended.

Mr. PATRICK: Yes, the figure has been increased to 3s. 6d. I do not think even that can be justified because of a temporary rise in wheat. There are in the Bill numerous other amendments, but they are mostly consequential and I do not think it is necessary to state them. I am not entirely satisfied that I am doing all I want to do in the Bill, because it is an exceedingly difficult matter to deal with. In that connection I gratefully acknowledge the assistance I got from my legal friend, the member for Katanning (Mr. Watts). I want members to realise, as the Federal Royal Commission have done—"that under present conditions of costs and prices a large number of wheat farmers are becoming more and more involved financially and more and more desperate as to the future, and that the minimum necessity is such action by the industry and by the nation as will provide efficient farmers with a reasonable security of tenure within the industry which gives them work in which they are skilled." The Bill will go a long way to achieve this, not only by alleviating the present discontent, but by restoring to the farmer his initiative and increasing his efficiency. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

BILL—ABORIGINES ACT AMENDMENT.

Received from the Council and, on motion by the Minister for Works, read a first time.

MOTION—HOUSING PROBLEM.

To inquire by Royal Commission.

Debate resumed from the 23rd September on the following motion by Mr. Shearn (Maylands):—

That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed for the following purposes, that is to say:—Generally to inquire into and report upon—

(a) The housing position in Western Australia with special reference to—
  (i) the metropolitan-suburban area;
  (ii) the goldfields;
  (iii) the agricultural and other districts;
(b) residential financing; and the provision of facilities for home-ownership;
(c) the special problem of citizens in the lower income groups and the necessity of there being available for their occupation, at a rental within their means, a sufficient number of houses which conform with reasonable standards of health, decency, and general amenity;
(d) the adequacy and effectiveness of existing provisions for—
  (i) the prevention and/or clearance and improvement of unhealthy areas;
  (ii) the repair or demolition of insanitary houses; and
  (iii) overcrowding;
(e) co-operation between the State and Federal Governments, local governing bodies, social and welfare organisations, and all interested branches of private enterprise in the solution of housing problems and in the planning, finance, and development of housing projects;

and to make recommendations calculated to promote the welfare of the community, and to effect any improvement or development which may be considered necessary or desirable, in respect of the foregoing matters or any of them.

MR. WATTS (Katanning) [8.59]: I propose to support the motion because I believe the matters therein contained are well worth inquiry. I noticed that con-

siderable opposition from one member and more or less half hearted opposition from two others, came from the Government cross benches. In the course of references made by those members they appeared to think that all that was required was to give further finance into the hands of the Workers' Homes Board and leave the board to deal with the whole question. While I am prepared to recognise the excellent work of the Workers' Homes Board, and to agree that further funds in the hands of that board would be of inestimable value, I venture to say that the motion goes considerably further than the Workers' Homes Board as at present constituted could hope to do. For example, what can the Workers' Homes Board do towards removing the slums that are to be found in parts of the metropolitan area and elsewhere in the State? I suppose that if we got to work on any great proposition of slum removal we should find ourselves obliged to consider the question of how much compensation should be paid to the owners of the houses to be demolished, and that is not a question which could be decided by the Workers' Homes Board. Very valuable recommendations in this connection might, however, be made by the suggested Royal Commission. I notice that it is asked in the motion that the housing position in the metropolitan-suburban areas, and the goldfields, agricultural, and other districts, should be considered. In parts of the agricultural districts the housing question requires very careful consideration. There are to be found on certain farms, residences —I will call them residences, for the moment, for lack of a better word—which, in the metropolitan area, would not command a rental of 2s. 6d. a week. In fact, I doubt whether anyone would be found to inhabit them. It is not going too far to appoint a Royal Commission to inquire whether some action cannot be taken to improve conditions in places such as these. There is the question of the country towns and whether any action should be taken there to improve the housing facilities. There are persons, too, who are not able to pay even the amount of 12s. 6d. suggested for a worker's home. I remember that certain dwellings were erected under the McNess trust and were rented at a nominal sum—5s. a week, I believe. Those houses performed a very useful service. Unfortunately, owing to a limitation of funds, there was a decided limitation of the houses available. Some steps might be taken to consider whether further buildings, under the legislation which allowed the McNess houses to be built, could be erected. There are a number of other questions which the mover of this motion suggested should be considered. These include the repair or demolition of insanitary houses, the prevention and/or clearance and improvement of unhealthy areas, and overcrowding. I dare say it could be said that these questions come under the heading of slum conditions, but there are areas which could not be classed as slums but where, nevertheless, conditions of overcrowding would be found to exist. The legislation which exists giving power to local authorities is hopelessly inadequate to deal with these questions, and an inquiry should be held concerning the extent to which that legislation should be amended. Finally, there is the question whether local governing bodies should not be empowered, as in other countries, to enter into financial arrangements for the erection of residences for their own ratepayers; to improve their own conditions without reference to the State or Commonwealth Governments. I realise that in bringing up that question one also brings up the question of finance, and I presume the mover of this motion has suggested an inquiry *into the possibility of co-operation* between the State and Federal Governments with a view to ascertaining what could be done on the financial side. On all these accounts, and on a number of others, the motion is well justified and should be put into effect, in the interests of all the poorer sections of the community, particularly those referred to in paragraph (c) of the motion, and those in the agricultural districts I have mentioned. I was astounded to hear the opposition—half-hearted and otherwise —which came from the cross-benches on the other side of the House. When I saw the motion on the Notice Paper I assumed it would receive the hearty support of the gentlemen referred to, because it appeared to me to be on the lines upon which they would seek to work. I see no reason why they should have damned it with faint praise. When I thought back I remembered another motion moved last session by the member for Avon suggesting co-operation with the Federal Government in an inquiry into the question of monetary reform. The suggestion met not only with

opposition but rejection, and it seemed to me that the opposition to the present motion was on the same lines as the opposition to the other motion: something I could not understand. Lack of co-operation by the State Government in the matter of the Federal inquiry made the Federal Royal Commission more futile than it would otherwise have been. I hope the error will not be repeated in this case but that we will get sufficient support for the motion to ensure its being carried.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [9.8]: I fully appreciate the very noble spirit which prompted the mover of this motion and am in sympathy with him in regard to the deplorable state of affairs which exists in connection with the housing of a great section of our community, but whether a Royal Commission could furnish any further information than is already available to practically every individual within the State, I am doubtful. In submitting the motion, the hon. member stated that the problem was one upon which there should be a properly defined public opinion. I have no recollection of the problem ever having received fuller consideration or publicity than has been given to it recently. The newspapers found it convenient to fill columns daily on the subject of slums within the city. What member of the community who, if asked whether everyone was properly housed, would answer, "Yes"? The general community are well aware that a large percentage of the people are ill-housed, and living in homes not fit for habitation. What could a Royal Commission tell us? They could say that a section of the people had no income and consequently were badly housed, but we already know that. They could report that a section of the people were on casual work, and that owing to the shortage of purchasing power they lived under congested conditions. We already know that. What could a Commission tell us that we do not already know? Any individual who is improperly housed is not so circumstanced through choice. Would anyone except a hermit voluntarily live under conditions abhorrent to a majority of the people? Certainly not. If every individual had sufficient purchasing power and therefore security of tenure, he would live under congenial conditions, and the greater the purchasing power, the better would be the housing. Hence we can only come to the conclusion that if people have not proper homes, it is due to their being unemployed owing to the system under which we live. A Royal Commission could tell us no more. No doubt suggestions could be made that the Government should come to the aid of such people. That is probably the only chance they would have of getting decent housing conditions. The member for Maylands said the essential requirement of home-purchase by the average citizen was a long-term mortgage repayable by convenient instalments over a period of years. A Commission could tell us—a fact we already know—that people who have bought homes under those conditions realise that they will never own their homes. The term of the mortgage will extend so long and the interest payments will make it impossible ever to possess their homes. What could the Commission tell us of people who are unemployable, or of people who are employable but for whom no work is possible? Even under the suggestion of the hon. member that a long-term mortgage would overcome the difficulty, could any person without prospects of employment take advantage of it? I am not particularly concerned about those people whose income is sufficient to enable them, by mortgage or renting, to provide homes for themselves, but I am concerned about others. What could a Royal Commission tell us about people not likely to be employed again in full-time work? As most of them are relegated to the basic rate and as prospects of obtaining work are remote, what could a Royal Commission tell us about providing them with homes, save by the expenditure of Government money? Even if the Government offered them homes on long-term mortgages at a low rate of interest, they could not take advantage of the offer. They must still remain without a home. Those are the people I am concerned about, but a Royal Commission could not solve the problem. To-day, in any suburb, there are a few homes to let, but to people who have no income, that means nothing. We are living in an age when a large section of the community will never have constant work again.

Mr. Doust: That is no reason why they should not have a home.

Mr. MARSHALL: What could a Royal Commission suggest that we do not already know?

Mr. Doust: Quite a lot.

Mr. MARSHALL: If a Royal Commission be appointed, it will be interesting to see what they can recommend. I am not altogether opposed to the motion, but it is like the one moved by the member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie. An investigation might be made, but the result would be "as you were." With one or two exceptions, few institutions invest money in the building of homes. True they provide for building offices and business premises, because there is a better chance to secure a return from such an investment. Landlords know that they have no real control over the amount of interest they will receive on money invested in houses to let. They also know that houses standing vacant deteriorate rapidly. Thus it is not encouraging for people to invest money in the construction of houses to let. On the goldfields, when the industry has been in a state of decline, the supply of houses has exceeded the demand, but generally speaking investors take care that the demand is not over supplied. They make a speculation of this sort of investment, and naturally try to get the most they can out of it. We are not likely to have a supply fully coping with the demand unless it is through Government activity. Will the Government provide homes free of interest? Even if they supplied them on a debt-free money basis, there are thousands of people in the State who could not afford to take them over. I do not see very much hope of a solution until we arrive at the stage in our development when we can say to these people, "First we will provide you with employment, either through private activities or through Government work, and having given you permanent employment, will assist you in obtaining a home which we will give to you debt-free." We know the deplorable position of many of our people who, immediately after the war when money was plentiful and there was employment in abundance, set about purchasing their own homes. At that time the wages paid were fairly good, and people thought it a wise thing to invest in a home of their own. Their fortunes are now shattered, and many of them have to walk out of their homes and leave behind whatever equity they have in them. Such a deplorable state no Royal Commission could overcome. All we could get from an inquiry of this sort is something along the lines suggested by the member for North-East Fremantle (Mr. Tonkin) namely, that the Government might supply cheap land and cheap money. That, however, will never get homes for the people who cannot find work. It will not get homes for those who have just about outlived their usefulness in industry, a section of the community to which we must give immediate attention. Those who have incomes of their own can provide themselves with homes. The only solution I can see, one that no Royal Commission would recommend, is that the Government do what is now done by the private banks. It is remarkable that a sovereign State has no authority to do those things which private banks are doing every day under our very eyes. If I want a home, and want an advance of £1,000, I go to one of the chartered banks and arrange for an overdraft on my account for £1,000. I then commence to build my home. At the completion of the home, a third party comes along, gives me £1,000 for the house, and hands me a cheque. I take that cheque, the debit of £1,000 is wiped off my account, and the transaction is finished.

Mr. Seward: It is not as easy as that. Where does your cheque go? The cheque has to be met.

Mr. MARSHALL: The third party provides the £1,000 for the repayment of the advance from the bank. No money is put into my hands.

Mr. Seward: Of course it is.

Mr. MARSHALL: The home is built on credit.

Mr. Seward: Who pays the bills?

Mr. MARSHALL: The bank creates a credit and issues it to me, and it is subsequently cancelled by repayment of the money. Not one shilling of legal tender passes. Until we can adopt some such method, we shall never get out of our troubles, nor shall we be able to assist these unfortunate people. It is a well-known fact that the bank-created credit is the greatest source of profit to those institutions. It costs nothing more to create that credit than it costs to enter the figures in the ledger and rub them out again. The member for Pingelly (Mr. Seward) must have seen the writings of the bank experts on this form of credit. It represents nine-tenths of the total amount of credit in circulation throughout the world. Upon that money interest is always accruing and must be paid. Not a shilling of legal tender or sterling is ever used. In Australia the amount stands at between £54,000,000 and £55,000,000, and if the people depended upon the circulation of

that money to supply their daily needs, they would be pretty badly off. It is remarkable that what private institutions can do, the State cannot do. The Treasurer may take Treasury bills and debentures to the bank and have a certain amount of credit issued to him. This is called a gilt-edged security, but all it represents is the capacity of the country to pay. There is a peculiar idea abroad, which comes from the orthodox writings upon the subject, that where purchasing power appears in the distribution of wealth, that money is legal tender only, and that bank deposits upon which cheques are drawn are also legal tender. To argue along such lines would imply that the banks only re-lend money which has previously been deposited with them. Nothing could be further from the facts, and no country could exist upon such a system. There is insufficient legal tender or sterling in circulation in any country to supply that demand. It is bank-created credit, and the greatest source of profit a bank can have. Therefore, unless the Government can find a solution of the difficulty, I am prepared to suggest that the motion, if carried, will get us very little along the road to success in providing suitable homes for the people of Western Australia. I am not greatly concerned as to whether the motion is carried or not: but if it is, then I hope that when the Royal Commission's report is presented I shall be able to shake hands with the mover as having fairly well foreshadowed the result of the investigation. There will be no more homes unless the State does the job; and the State can only do the job with borrowed money by charging interest. This bearing of interest is causing the State and the Commonwealth and the world the troubles confronting humanity to-day. I am sure that unless we revolutionise the existing monetary system, there is little hope of providing houses at reasonable prices for those sections of the community who are on the basic wage or under it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the hon. member move his amendment?

Mr. MARSHALL: No, Sir.

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [9.32]: I support the motion submitted by the member for Maylands (Mr. Shearn). Recently I mentioned on the Estimates that something ought to be done to provide cheap homes for workers. The motion has sufficient scope for inquiry into the possibility of my proposal to establish a model suburb for workers, where, for a start, a hundred cottages might be built at a cost of something less than £400 each. I have had an opportunity of perusing the report of the Workers' Homes Board for the past year. The illustrations at the back show the design of a cottage erected for £340. The last two paragraphs on page 6 of the report state—

> It should be emphasised that if a house is required for the basic wage worker, for which the repayments would amount to approximately a day's pay, the board is able and has designed a house which meets this requirement.
>
> A wooden house of four rooms, with bathroom and wash-house, can be erected for about £350. The repayments on such a house, including ground rent, would be 10s. 3d. per week. The purchaser would have to pay, in addition, rates and insurance, and in many instances these liabilities total a fairly substantial sum for a man on a low wage, amounting approximately to £8 per annum.

My suggestion was that a fairly large area of land should be set aside expressly for a model suburb for workers, and that the land should be obtained in a locality where a tram service could be provided at rates low enough to induce workers to live there. In this model suburb I do not want to see just a straight row of cottages. As I pointed out to the Chamber previously, the cottages should be after the designs of those constructed in model towns or garden cities in the Old Country. I am hoping that something can be done. It will not be possible for us to make progress in this respect unless we obtain information as to the feasibility of the scheme and as to whether the land can be secured cheaply enough. I suggest building 100 of these cottages at a cost of roughly £300 each, or a total of about £30,000. That would give us an opportunity of testing out the proposal. Undoubtedly every member of this House will agree with me that to ask the worker on the basic wage to pay more than one day's wage for his weekly rent is to ask too much of him. If he does it, he does it at the expense of his wife and children. We cannot, of course, provide straight away for every person who wants a home; but we might make a start with the man on the basic wage. The scheme would provide a fair amount of employment and all the timber required would be obtained locally. Asbestos roofing might be used. We have listened to two financial speeches to-day. One was delivered by the member for Claremont (Mr. North), who

pointed out that he has dropped once and for all the social credit theory. However, he has secured a convert in the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall). The member for Claremont has handed the subject over to the member for Murchison. Let us not live in such dreams. We have before us sufficient information as to the present financial system to justify us in expending the money. I hope the House will agree to the request for a Royal Commission. Recently the Perth City Council were asked to have a so-called slum area demolished. I do not know that Perth has many slum areas. If we condemn areas as slum areas, we must provide for accommodation at reasonable rates elsewhere. Many of the structures termed slum cottages are merely a cheap type of cottage inhabited by people whose means will not permit them to incur heavier expenditure for rent. The member for Maylands has a thorough knowledge of the subject of the motion. The Royal Commission could inquire into the best means of providing cheap cottages—such, for instance, as would supply the requirements of the miners on the goldfields, where the expenditure of a large sum of money is needed. I am afraid the homes hitherto provided on the goldfields are too expensive for the men for whom they are intended. The houses are not too good, but they are too expensive.

Mr. Marshall: Homes down here are too expensive also.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: What have I been arguing? Evidently building is much cheaper in the Old Country, because comfortable four-roomed houses with all necessary appurtenances are being erected there to be leased at 7s. per week. Undoubtedly land is much more expensive at Home than it is here. Those cottages are built of brick. We ought to be able to get somewhere near that figure. I commend the motion to the House, because the investigation will not be costly. We might obtain the services of a member of the Workers' Homes Board for the purpose.

The Minister for Works: Cement is 50 per cent. cheaper in the Old Country.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not think cement could be manufactured more cheaply at Home than on the Swan River. The cost of the shell from which local cement is made is about £250 a year for all the shell the company take out.

The Minister for Works: Three shillings a ton.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Nothing of the sort. I should like the Minister to get hold of the file, which I believe is in the Lands Department. There he will find that a definite arrangement was made by a Ministry of which he was a member with the company for shell at £250, or £350 a year at the outside.

The Minister for Works: Sixpence a ton.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: No. The charge was 3s. a ton for cement. The agreement is for a fixed period. At one time the Government received 3s. per ton in respect of all cement manufactured. Then that company went into liquidation and when it was subsequently reconstructed an arrangement was made with the Government, of which the Minister for Works was a member, under which the company paid £300 a year.

The Minister for Works: I tell you that they are paying 3s. a ton.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Then I will ask the Minister a question and get the information.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Perhaps the hon. member may do that, but in the meantime I hope he will get back to the question.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Quite so, but this is all connected with the provision of cheap cottages. The Minister has intimated, by interjection, that to provide cheap cottages it will be necessary to get cheap material.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister has told the hon. member what the Government are receiving, and the hon. member is arguing the point with him. In the circumstances, he is distinctly out of order.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: At any rate, we should investigate this problem, and I think an arrangement could be entered into with the company to secure cement for the purpose at a cheaper rate.

The Minister for Works: We take half the company's output, and we ought to know what we are paying.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I shall be glad to have a look at the file.

The Minister for Works: You can have a look at it to-morrow.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Perhaps I will then be convinced.

The Minister for Works: As a matter of fact, we are both right. What you say

was the arrangement, but we have altered it.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: In my opinion, the construction of brick cottages is too expensive, and wooden cottages should be provided.

Mr. Fox: And they also are too expensive.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: It is time we investigated this question. We were putting up four-room cottages at from £250 to £260, and I think 100 cottages could be constructed for housing purposes. I am a layman and do not wish to make concrete suggestions to the House, but I commend the proposal of the member for Maylands (Mr. Shearn) to have the problem investigated. I am tired of talking and listening; we should do something. I believe we can secure the necessary land in close proximity to the city and we could probably extends the trams to provide the workers with cheap fares.

The Minister for Works: Has it struck you that in the Old Country the authorities have the benefit of cheaper money?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: I do not know that it is much cheaper than the money we can procure.

The Minister for Works: Did you inquire about that?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: Yes. In the Old Country they are paying from 3 per cent. to 4 per cent. and we are paying 3¾ per cent. To-day we are paying less than 4 per cent. on new loans, and our average interest charge is a little more than 4 per cent. The Minister will remember that in 1931 we reduced interest rates from 6 per cent. to 4 per cent., and the interest on loans that are outstanding is at the rate of about 4 per cent.

The Minister for Works: What was the price of the recent conversion loan?

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: About 3 per cent.

Hon. N. Keenan: It was 3½ per cent.

The Minister for Works: No, it was less.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: The Minister is referring, of course, to money at short call, but that is very cheap money. The interest on long-period loans is not as cheap as the Minister thinks. When I was in England the City of Glasgow decided to raise money, and the municipal authorities approached the Bank of England for a loan of £4,000,000. The interest rate they were asked to pay was 4 per cent. They floated the loan through a co-operative society at 3½ per cent., so money is not much cheaper there. Our association with the London money market rather convinces me that we probably have to pay more interest on loans raised in England than we would have to pay on funds raised in Australia.

The Minister for Works: Yes, taking exchange into consideration.

Hon. C. G. LATHAM: As an offset to what is possible in England, we have cheaper land available here, and probably our roads could be made at a smaller cost than in England because the material has to be carted over long distances there. At any rate, I commend the motion to the House in order that we may ascertain if something cannot be done. I am willing to give the Government every assistance in connection with any scheme that may be advanced to provide the workers with cheaper homes.

MRS. CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [9.45]: I support the motion. It has been pointed out that we have many unemployed who have not the money necessary to enable them to live in houses, but it seems to me that, whether employed or not, those people must have shelter. I would draw members' attention to the fact that records have been compiled in Britain which show that the death rate has increased among those who have occupied the modern homes that have replaced the buildings in slum areas. The explanation for that increase is that many of the people who moved into much finer houses than they formerly occupied, had not the wherewithal to pay the rent and feed themselves. The result was that they paid the rent and had not sufficient funds at their disposal to provide themselves with adequate nourishment, in consequence of which the death rate increased.

Mr. Hegney: They would not occupy the houses referred to by the Leader of the Opposition, who said that a rental of 7s. a week was charged.

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I do not think they occupied that type of house.

Mr. Marshall: You would not believe how large a sum 7s. is unless you had no money yourself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mrs. CARDELL-OLIVER: I suggest that consideration be given to the advisability of amending the Municipal Corpora-

tions Act so as to enable municipalities to construct houses. In England many of the municipal authorities construct what are known as "council houses." The Leader of the Opposition referred to the payments for houses in the Old Country. I had some money invested in housing bonds for which I received a return of 6 per cent. shortly after the war. I understand that nowadays similar bonds provide a return of 4 per cent. The houses in the areas I have in mind cost from £550 upwards to construct and the rentals charged varied from 7s. to 13s. 6d. a week, the latter rental including rates. One difficulty about the housing scheme in England is that many of the homes, especially in the better areas, have been occupied by well-to-do people. In Cambridge, for instance, some of the men at the University occupy such buildings, although they could well afford to pay higher rentals. In my opinion, houses provided for the workers here should be constructed of brick and not of wood, as has been suggested. In the Subiaco electorate there are many wooden houses. Some of them are not really old but they rapidly become "slummy" in appearance, although they may not be so bad inside as they appear externally. On the other side of the railway line in the Subiaco electorate, there is a large area of unoccupied land that could be utilised for a housing scheme. Had the trolley buses been extended in that direction, that area would have been opened up for residential purposes before now. I have pleasure in supporting the motion, but I do hope that the House will not pay too much attention to the pessimistic utterances of the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall). I feel sure that some good will come of the inquiry. As to the suggestions made by the Leader of the Opposition, anyone of experience will know how valuable garden cities are, and what it is worth to any locality to have numbers of nice looking houses. I hope those who make the inquiry will give some attention to the pensioner. I feel sure the man on a pension cannot possibly pay more than 5s. a week rent for his home. If the municipality were to build the houses, they would perhaps be able to rent them to tenants according to the incomes of those tenants. I will support the motion.

Mr. LAMBERT: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. LAMBERT (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [9.52]: I do not know that I desire to say much in connection with this matter. The member who moved it, I think, is prompted by good intentions in desiring to have a Royal Commission appointed.

Mr. Shearn: You only think so?

Mr. LAMBERT: Without evidence to the contrary I would call the hon. member's intentions at least good. I have not always been convinced by young members who come here that their intentions are all just as are indicated by the motions they put on the Notice Paper. I point out to the hon. member that the question of housing the people of this State is not new to us.

Mr. Shearn: Who said it was?

Mr. LAMBERT: As was indicated by the member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall), at least we know the problem. There have been people here with knowledge and capacity of mind for a quarter of a century back, familiar with the operations of the Workers' Homes Board and understanding to what extent the ordinary working man can pay in order to house himself and family. If the hon. member does not know those things now he never will, despite all inquiries. However, no doubt the hon. member is prompted by the best intentions, and possibly believes that if we have an inquiry into this vexed question of housing our people, particularly those on the lower standard of wage, some good will come out of it. It will be necessary to inquire into the materials of which low-priced houses are to be constructed. This and the amount to be expended on a dwelling for a worker, are all linked up with the great problem of housing.

Mr. Thorn: Do not you think that a wooden house lined with plaster boards would be better than a brick house?

Mr. LAMBERT: There is some material that would be more fire resistant than plaster boards would ever be. If the member for Maylands desires to provide a useful service for the community—assuming that the Government will not enact legislation along lines that will give effect to the desire indicated in the motion and lead to a proper housing scheme—there is nothing to prevent the member himself from bringing down such legislation. It should provide for the creation of a housing commission instead of the existing Workers' Homes Board. The commission would have to be given genera'

powers, powers not only to build houses, but to inquire scientifically into suitable material, land available, the finance that could be provided, and all the other ramifications of this question. I am afraid the hon. member may be slightly unsophisticated if he is led to the conclusion from his brief period here that the result of a Royal Commission inquiring into this question will have any useful effect.

Mr. Thorn: Surely to goodness the hon. member does not need to come here to get a knowledge of housing!

Mr. LAMBERT: No.

Mr. Thorn: But that is what you are saying. He is at least a house agent.

Mr. LAMBERT: No doubt he has a thorough knowledge of the subject. But even I have more than a skirmishing knowledge of the building trade. I am dealing with problems of building every day, and I have done that for the last 20 years. So I know what I am speaking about. I do not know the attitude of the Government towards this question, but I do know that I am inclined to the conclusion arrived at by the Leader of the Opposition. It is all very well to move attractive motions on youth employment, and the good intention that was sweetly put up by the member for Claremont (Mr. North) to-night in regard to a couple of motions on the Notice Paper standing in his name. But where do these motions get us to? If we were to carry this motion now before the House, would it build a single home? As I have said, what the hon. member should do, if the Government will not accept the responsibility for doing it, is to introduce legislation to set up a housing trust with comprehensive powers, almost like the powers possessed by the Agricultural Bank Commissioners. We would then get somewhere and know the intentions of members on both sides of the House.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: And there would be a chance of losing what we have got.

Mr. LAMBERT: What is that?

Hon. W. D. Johnson: The Agricultural Bank Commissioners.

Mr. LAMBERT: They have particularly comprehensive powers which if properly administered may give lasting benefit to the people who come under their jurisdiction. So it would be if we were to enlarge on lines more in keeping with the modern trend of thought. If we have legislation of that description, we may possibly get somewhere. If a housing commission were created, the first thing we would be required to do in the metropolitan area, and even in the goldfields area, would be to acquire land on which to build. Land within reasonable distance of the metropolitan area has been acquired by speculators, who cut it up, and this House is aware of the sorry task we had of inquiring into their transactions. We will never get anywhere until we create some body with statutory authority first to acquire the land within a reasonable distance of the city, and then to inquire into what form the houses to be erected should take; whether, for instance, they should be constructed of wood or brick. For my part I would have the worker own his own home, even though it be of wood. This fanciful idea of building homes at a cost of £700 or £800 under the workers' homes scheme is absurd!

Mr. Thorn: Do not you think this inquiry would bring about what you desire?

Mr. LAMBERT: While I welcome an inquiry of this description, it is time something was done on the lines suggested by the Leader of the Opposition. I regret that I must sharply disagree with the statement of the member for Subiaco (Mrs. Cardell-Oliver) that wooden homes are not suitable.

Mrs. Cardell-Oliver: I did not say they were not suitable. I said that the others were better.

Mr. LAMBERT: The beautiful jarrah and karri which could be used for homes would be looked upon with pride in the Eastern States, but are despised here. There is enough waste jarrah going over the fire-tip in our sawmills to provide probably a hundred houses a week. I understand that a third of the amount of sawn timber goes over the fire-tip in our timber areas. How far this timber could be utilised for building purposes is another aspect of the matter which might well be explored. I support the motion.

On motion by Mr. McDonald, debate adjourned.

MOTION—LICENSING BOARD'S ACTIVITIES.

To inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 23rd September on the following motion by Mr. Marshall (Murchison)—

That a select committee be appointed to inquire into the activities of the Licensing Board

in the granting and refusal of the different forms of licenses granted under the Licensing Act, 1911, and also the qualifications of the person or persons making application for any form of license or transfer of license before the Board.

and on the following amendment by Mr. Hughes (East Perth):—

That the following words be added to the motion:—"and to inquire further—

1. Whether, and if so, to what extent—
   (a) applicants for licenses during the past 12 years have been 'dummies'; if there have been such 'dummies,' who were the real applicants;
   (b) there has been trafficking in licenses;
   (c) lands upon which licensed premises have been built have been sold for excess values in consequence of the prospective licenses; if so, what persons have derived such excess values;
   (d) premises to which licenses have attached have provided rentals over and above the true economic and site rental value of the premises concerned; if so, what persons have derived such excess rentals.
2. Whether the present system of gathering signatures for new licenses provides adequate means for ascertaining the true will of the residents concerned.
3. Whether in gathering such signatures a full disclosure as to the real applicant, the number of licenses already held by such applicant, and all other relevant information is supplied to the prospective signatories.
4. What have been the methods of remunerating the persons so employed as signature gatherers.
5. Are the methods of obtaining such signatures conducive to obtaining a true expression of the will of the electors in the areas concerned.
6. Does the operation of the licensing laws tend to create a monopoly or a situation in the nature of a monopoly.
7. Have proceedings for breaches of the Licensing Act been instituted against licensees and subsequently discontinued; if so, upon what grounds have such discontinuances been made.
8. What are the methods employed of financing the building and furnishing of hotel premises?
9. Is, as a consequence of—
   (a) Trafficking in licenses;
   (b) Excessive land prices;
   (c) Monopolistic tendencies;
   (d) Methods of financing applications for new licenses and petitions in support thereof and the building and furnishing of hotel premises;
   (e) Any other causes;

the price of alcoholic liquor too high?

10. Are any existing licenses merely 'dummies' employed by others; if so, by whom are such 'dummies' employed."

Amendment put and negatived.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison—in reply) [10.9]: In view of the proposed investigation of the charges laid against the Government by the member for East Perth, in which some of the activities of this board are involved, I think it would be unwise to press for another investigation. I want members thoroughly to understand that I am far from satisfied with the activities of this board in a general sense. In no circumstances would I permit those activities to continue very much longer without investigation. On account of the inquiry to be made into the allegations of the member for East Perth, however, I propose, with the permission of the House, to withdraw my motion until after that inquiry is completed. When the investigation has ended, I will again submit the motion to the House.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

[*The Deputy Speaker took the Chair.*]

MOTION—TRAFFIC ACT.

To Disallow Mid-block Crosswalks Regulation.

Debate resumed from the 23rd September on the following motion moved by Mr. Rodoreda (Roebourne):—

That the new Regulation 312 of the Traffic Regulations, 1931, as published in the "Government Gazette" of the 26th August, 1936, and laid on the Table of the House on the 8th September, 1936, be and is hereby disallowed.

MR. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [10.10]: I oppose the motion. The officials of the Traffic Department are doing their best to regulate the traffic in Perth. Crosswalks indicated by white lines have been provided to give pedestrians some measure of safety when crossing the roads. The member for Roebourne contended that the lines did not have the effect intended, but speaking as a motorist, I cannot see that the regulation is harsh. Motor vehicles should be kept under control at all times and drivers should have regard to the interests of pedestrians. The time is approaching when many of the motor cars will have to be kept out of the main streets of the city. If the population of the metropolitan area doubled more stringent regulations would be needed. The mover said that if pedestrians were confined to the crosswalks when crossing streets there might be some justification for

them. Are the streets to be cleared to make way absolutely for motorists? Why should motorists have absolute right to the use of the roads? The regulation has been introduced as an experiment and should be given a fair trial.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Do not you think there should be a policeman on duty at the crosswalks?

Mr. HEGNEY: There might be something in that suggestion, but the regulation should not be disallowed because of the absence of a policeman there. When aged people, people suffering from defective eyesight and women with prams wish to cross the street they have some assurance of safety if they use the crosswalks, though I myself would not take much risk with any motor car. The motorist is certainly in the key position, but no matter how careful a driver might be, there is always a risk of accident occurring. The argument has been advanced that a "nark" could stand on the crosswalk and hinder vehicular traffic.

Mr. Marshall: A man who did that would be not a nark but a regular hero.

Mr. HEGNEY: Any pedestrian who acted in that manner would be a fit subject for an institution. The argument is not a strong one to support a motion for disallowance of the regulation. In moving about the city I find that I can cross the streets with a fair amount of facility, though at times one must hasten in order to avoid vehicular traffic. The crosswalks do afford some protection to pedestrians and do cause vehicular traffic to slow down at those points, and I consider them a wise measure for the safety of pedestrians. On Friday afternoons and Saturday mornings traffic in the streets is becoming more and more congested, and as the streets are narrow, it may be necessary, when the population increases, to enforce even more stringent regulations.

MR. WARNER (Mt. Marshall) [10.16]: I support the motion. I consider that there is no need to have crosswalks in the centre of city blocks. Pedestrians have the right to cross the roads at any point, and why mark out one particular place for the holding up of traffic? I quite agree with the statement of the Minister that since pointsmen have been placed at the intersections, there has been a great improvement in the regulation of traffic. There is no city block of sufficient length to warrant the provision of intermediate crosswalks. At those points where people alight from trams or trains police are placed on point duty.

MR. THORN (Toodyay) [10.17]: I support the disallowance of the regulation because it is most confusing. Pedestrians approaching the crosswalks hesitate and the motorists hesitate.

Mr. Patrick: I have not yet seen a motorist who hesitated.

Mr. THORN: Such indecision is confusing and is liable to lead to serious accidents. Bearing in mind the manner in which traffic is regulated in other cities, I was amused at the remarks of the member for Middle Swan. The crosswalks have not been adopted in larger cities.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: They have wider streets.

Mr. THORN: I admit they have safety zones for tram passengers. The confusion caused by the white lines increases the risk of accident. The traffic should be handled at the intersections, where already it is being directed very capably, and pedestrians should cross the streets at intersections. The population of Perth does not warrant the adoption of a confusing regulation of this kind and I hope the Minister will agree to the motion. I have no desire to oppose the traffic authorities, who are doing good work and showing great patience in the handling of traffic. On this occasion, however, they have gone a step ahead of themselves in bringing down such a regulation.

MR. LAMBERT (Yilgarn-Coolgardie) [10.20]: I feel inclined to give this regulation a chance, although I agree that some confusion is likely to arise therefrom.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: There would be more confusion without it.

Mr. LAMBERT: The Perth City Council ought to take into consideration the provision of pedestrian subways in the main thoroughfares of the city. It would be a simple and inexpensive matter to establish subways both in Hay-street and in William-street.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: You cannot discuss that on this motion.

Mr. LAMBERT: It has a bearing on the subject. I hope the Perth City Council will look upon this as a valuable suggestion to help them in controlling the pedestrian traffic of the city.

MR. MARSHALL (Murchison) [10.22]: If I were inclined to support the motion, I would use different arguments from those used by the member for Roebourne (Mr. Rodoreda). Self-preservation is the first law of nature. Everyone will do what he can to protect his own life. Have the infirm, the blind, the aged, the timid, no right to feel safe when crossing the congested roads of our city? True, a large section of the community crosses at places other than the crosswalks. But for that, at certain times of the day, the vehicular traffic would scarcely be able to make use of the streets. On the other hand, there are people who are very timid in traffic. Their eyesight may not be good and they may be nervous or old. Without crosswalks there would be no safety for such people. It is not too much to ask that one or two crosswalks should be made to ensure the safety of these persons. In Hay-street, between Barrack-street and William-street, there are two crosswalks 28 feet in length. Only at those points is the motorist asked to be careful. His vehicle may be capable of travelling at 60 miles an hour, but he should be compelled to slow down when he comes to the white lines.

Mr. Sampson: They always do.

Mr. MARSHALL: I do not know of any motorist who would deliberately run over a person.

Hon. C. G. Latham: Pedestrians are sometimes frightened by motorists.

Mr. MARSHALL: Within the white lines the pedestrians are entitled to the right-of-way, and the motorist must stop his vehicle there if necessary. That is not too much to ask. The danger I see is not in the cross-walks but at the intersections where the pointsmen are stationed. We cannot compare what happens in the larger cities with what happens here. We have one-way traffic in Hay-street. The pointsman at the intersection of William and Hay-streets gives the right-of-way after holding up the traffic running north and south, so that the traffic wishing to travel east or west may be released.

Mr. McDonald: We have all seen that.

Mr. MARSHALL: When he does so, a motor car is allowed to turn through the congested line of pedestrians and travel south. Some day the person in charge of the vehicle will lose control of it and one or more persons will be killed. That is my chief objection to the regulation.

Mr. Sampson: You are unnecessarily nervous.

Mr. MARSHALL: I would rather be nervous and preserve my life, than be foolhardy and lose it. It is better to be late for a few minutes than to be a few years earlier in the next world.

Mr. Thorn: That depends on your prospects.

Mr. MARSHALL: If I had the prospects of the hon. member, I would like to live a long time. We cannot compare Perth with London and New York. Here the responsibility is placed on the motorist. Whatever time a driver may lose through having to pull up, he can soon overtake because of the speed of his vehicle, but the pedestrian cannot make up lost time as walking constitutes his maximum speed. I suggest that one motorist out of every ten travels along Hay-street at peak periods rather to show off his or her vehicle than for any other purpose. Particularly does this apply to motor bicycles. It applies also to ladies behind the wheel. Those ladies like to show their ability to drive, and also their nice streamlined cars. If those people do not want to be put to inconvenience, they can adopt other routes, on which they will not be pulled up at all. Having regard to the nervous section of our community, particularly the old and the infirm, the regulations are worth a further trial. Therefore I disagree with the member for Roebourne, and must vote against his motion.

MR. STYANTS (Kalgoorlie) [10.31]: I shall not support the motion for disallowance, as I think the regulations have something to commend them. In my opinion they could be made much more effective if the police went a little further and discouraged pedestrians from crossing the streets at all points, excluding intersections. As one who has driven a car around Perth for a number of years, I say it does not appear to make a great deal of difference to motor drivers to have the crosswalks, because the driver has to maintain a constant vigilance the whole length of the street. He has to give way to pedestrians not only at crosswalks, but also at any other part of the street. Ninety-nine drivers in a hundred are quite willing to do that. I admit there are

some reckless drivers, but the average motor driver maintains a constant vigilance and in most instances stops to allow pedestrians to cross the road. But if a motorist is coming along at, say, 20 miles an hour and a person steps out on to the roadway in front of him without giving any indication of his intention to do so and without glancing right or left or east or west for oncoming traffic, the pedestrian is likely to be knocked down by the motorist, to whom he does not give an opportunity to stop. The police should discourage pedestrians from loitering on the streets. The average pedestrian is anxious to get out of the road of an oncoming vehicle; but I have had the experience of pedestrians deliberately getting in the way of the car because they know the driver will pull up. This often causes serious accidents, because in endeavouring to dodge the pedestrian the driver of the car is liable to place himself in the position of either being run into by another vehicle or running into some object which damages his car. Not long ago I saw in Adelaide-terrace, Fremantle, a case where a lady driver, in endeavouring to dodge a school girl who had walked straight out in front of the car, as children will often do, took an extra turning, ran on to a footpath, knocked three people down, and ran into a stone wall. That accident would not have occurred had the child been properly schooled to watch both ways and not cross in the face of oncoming traffic. And that happens not only with school children, but also with adults. I was coming up South-street, in Fremantle, to the intersection of Market-street and High-street, and while travelling up High-street I saw a lady backing out, with her back to me, on to the roadway to see the time by the Town Hall clock. I was moving at about ten miles an hour, and I stopped; and then the lady actually backed into the mudguard of the car while endeavouring to ascertain the time by the Town Hall clock. Had I been travelling at any speed, I would have had either to run on to the footpath to avoid her, or else knock her down. In that case I would have been held responsible for not giving way to the pedestrian on the road. Only the constant vigilance of motor drivers in Perth prevents the occurrence of hundreds of accidents every day. The member for Murchison (Mr. Marshall) said that the motorist is only required to steady up at the crosswalks, 28 feet in between the intersections; but that is not the case. The onus is on the motorist to be prepared to steady up all the time around city blocks, for the simple reason that the pedestrian has the right to the road. The innovation is worth a trial, and for that reason I shall not vote for the disallowance of the regulations. Still, I think the police could make it much better for the motorist. If he knew that there were likely to be pedestrians crossing at particular sections of the street, he would have to keep a close watch only on those sections. On the other hand, that system would provide a reasonably safe means for pedestrians to get over the street, a means which they do not possess at present.

MR. SAMPSON (Swan) [10.38:] I commend the traffic authorities for their efforts to make motoring safe and pedestrian traffic safe. Motor drivers in Western Australia move far more slowly than drivers do in other States, and possibly that is because of the lackadaisical method hitherto adopted by our pedestrians in crossing the street. The establishment of crosswalks is, in my opinion, a splendid idea. It must mean the protection of the public while also enabling traffic to be expedited. In every country I have visited, traffic moves faster than it does in Perth. In fact, we are a backward people from the standpoint of speed in transport. I shall not refer to our trains, but dilatoriness is a disease that has attacked every form of transport in Western Australia. I shall not support the motion to disallow the regulations, as I consider them a step in the right direction.

MR. RODOREDA (Roebourne—in reply) [10.39]: Most members who have spoken on the motion, including the Minister for Works, have entirely missed the point of my argument. I cannot have made myself too clear when moving the motion. My main point is that I do not object to crosswalks as crosswalks, but that I object to the regulations governing them. Those regulations throw the whole responsibility on the motorist irrespective of what the pedestrian may do. There is no question about that. The motorist is held responsible for the actions of someone else—someone over whom he has no control whatever. That was the attitude I took up when moving the motion. I consider it grossly unfair to hold one person solely responsible for an accident that may result from the action of someone over whom

he has no control. I admit it would be rather difficult to frame regulations to meet the position but when we consider the regulation that gives the pedestrians the right to cross streets at other than the specified cross-walks, we see that a person can cross at his own risk, but motorists are required to exercise every care. When it comes to a matter affecting cross-walks, there is no such warning, and the pedestrians have the right-of-way untrammelled by any reservation whatever.

Mr. Sampson: They are not allowed to jay-walk.

Members: But they do.

Mr. RODOREDA: The pedestrian is allowed the right-of-way at cross walks, and if he is hit by a motorist, the latter is distinctly and definitely in the wrong.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: It would not be any good otherwise.

Mr. RODOREDA: I do not know that it is of any advantage to give the pedestrian the right-of-way because, should he be hit by a motorist, it avails him little that he had the right-of-way. The fact remains that the pedestrian has merely to be hit there, and the motorist is in the wrong. For 90 per cent. of my time I am a pedestrian, so I do not view the position from the point of view of the motorist only. These regulations attempt to give the pedestrian an immunity from accident that we cannot guarantee to him. Reports from every city where cross-walks are provided indicate definitely that they tend to slow down traffic. That may be a good thing, but we might as well get back to the arrangement whereby a man carried a red flag in front of a motor car.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: That is getting down to the ridiculous.

Mr. RODOREDA: It is not. We must get away from that attitude which, apparently, is in the mind of the officials of the Traffic Department. Roads are definitely for motorists, and will continue to be more so in the future. The only way by which we can afford pedestrians protection will be the provision of overhead crossings or gangways. The number of cars on the road is growing every month. The Minister mentioned the number of cross-walks that were indicated in the report of the Commissioner of Police, but the number he stated was quite incorrect. I fail to see the need for crosswalks in Barrack and William streets where the intersections are only about 200 yards apart. It is little enough to ask a pedestrian to walk 200 yards in order that he may cross the street in safety. In his report the Commissioner of Police stated that pedestrians had to be educated, and that the people would not queue-up in Perth, as people did elsewhere. As to queue-ing up, I have been in the Traffic Office in James-street in order to renew my license.

Hon. C. G. Latham: They queue-up there all right.

Mr. RODOREDA: If people will stand the queue-ing up there and the delays they have to put up with in order to secure their licenses, they will stand anything.

Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Hegney: It is deplorable.

Mr. RODOREDA: It is easy to say that people will not queue-up. If we are to educate them, why not give them the right of way at all intersections? Why pick out a few spots and tell them they have not the right-of-way elsewhere? To my mind, the real danger to pedestrians is at suburban intersections where the motorists race across without regard to anyone else. I do not consider there is much danger in the city block, and the figures supplied by the police regarding accidents prove that many more have taken place at intersections controlled by the police than elsewhere in the city block. There is little need for the cross-walks. If we must have them, let us have them in a proper manner, and compel motorists to pull up at those cross-walks should anyone happen to be on them. Otherwise the present arrangement is merely a farce. As the member for Toodyay (Mr. Thorn) indicated, everyone is now undecided, motorists and pedestrians alike. I am not much concerned whether the regulation is disallowed. I have achieved my object in having this matter ventilated.

Question put and negatived.

House adjourned at 10.47 p.m.