

now the Act, was first referred to a select committee. When the first Bill came down to the House, members of all shades of opinion and thought, and representing all sections of the community, saw the danger with which it was surrounded. As a result of the deliberations of the select committee, the Bill was amended and the outcome has been one of the most useful pieces of legislation ever passed through this Chamber. The usefulness of the legislation has been increased tenfold by the capable manner in which it has been administered. I think there have been between 300 and 400 farmers brought under the Act. As a result of the methods which have been adopted, these men have been able to carry on their affairs at the least possible cost and with the least possible inconvenience. There have, of course, been cases of hardship, as indeed there must be. Some unfortunate men have become so involved that it is impossible for them to get any credit. So far as has been humanly possible this Act, which is only a skeleton, has provided means to enable men to get round their troubles by discussing matters at the table in a commonsense way, and by enabling the parties interested to put their heads together. In this way the interests of all, which are identical, have been considered, and it has been possible to carry the farmers along. But apart from those three or four hundred whom we know to be under the Act, the principle which was established, the method by which these men were brought together, is such that I am prepared to say—I believe, without exaggeration—that at least another 1,000 farmers were able to adjust their affairs with their creditors and bankers without having recourse to the Act at all. In that respect the parent measure has filled an undoubted want. Here we have a definite reason why Bills of this nature, which are capable of upsetting the ordinary lines of trade, commerce and security, should be subject to the most careful scrutiny by the House before they become law. I have listened with interest to the remarks of Mr. Yelland, but I cannot agree with him, because if we attempt to legislate so as to meet the peculiar psychology of every class with whom we are dealing, we shall soon be in deep waters. In legislating, as we must do, we should take into consideration what is fair and equitable to the one and to the

other. Mr. Yelland was afraid that some prejudice might result if creditors were permitted to bring debtors under the provisions of the Act. He thought that matter should be left entirely to the discretion of the debtor. On the other hand, is not the hon. member afraid that that would of itself upset the psychology of the creditor, and tend to make him less amenable to common sense than he is under the Act as it stands? Apart from that, it is provided that the Director may in his discretion reject an application made by any creditor in that respect. So that, as a matter of fact, the full responsibility is on the Director. The creditor might want to bring the debtor under the Act, but the Director might refuse to allow it. In any case, I have merely made this an excuse or an opportunity for rising to say how much I personally, having watched the operation of the Act quite closely, appreciate the efforts of the Director in control. I feel sure that the amending legislation now proposed will only help to make the Act a much more workable measure, and will be of definite value to debtor and creditor alike.

On motion by Hon. E. H. H. Hall, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 9.18 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly,

*Tuesday, 23rd June, 1931.*

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

### QUESTION—FREMANTLE HARBOUR TRUST.

Mr. SLEEMAN asked the Chief Secretary: 1, What amount has been paid into Consolidated Revenue for each year from 1918 inclusive by the Fremantle Harbour Trust? 2, What is the total amount that has been paid into Consolidated Revenue since the Fremantle Harbour Trust was established? 3, In view of his declaration that the high harbour dues prevailing are detrimental to the welfare of the State, will he take steps to abolish the anomaly of the present surcharge which was put on as a wartime measure?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, The amounts paid into Consolidated Revenue by the Fremantle Harbour Trust from 1918 onwards are as follows:—1917/18, nil; 1918/19, nil; 1919/20, £49,705; 1920/21, £71,409; 1921/22, £56,491; 1922/23, £47,272; 1923/24, £96,611; 1924/25, £142,963; 1925/26, £112,026; 1926/27, £142,245; 1927/28, £162,521; 1928/29, £190,715; 1929/30, £193,568; less £99,144 returned from Consolidated Revenue and spent on the reconditioning of quays and sheds. 2, £1,314,688. 3, It is correct to say I view the high cost of harbour services as detrimental to the welfare of the State, and representation has been made accordingly, with a view to revision of the charges on export of primary products. Without the concurrence, however, of the Treasury the surtax cannot be abolished, and in view of the necessity for the expenditure at an early date of a large sum in reconstruction of wharves, such concurrence is not obtainable.

### QUESTION—COSSACK LICENSING AUTHORITY.

Mr. TEESDALE asked the Chief Secretary: 1, Is he aware that it is the practice on the North-West coast to appoint such unqualified persons as doctors, wharfingers, and police to act as the licensing authority for sea-going vessels used on the coast? 2, Should those persons be appointed when qualified master mariners are on the spot or easily available? 3, In view of the fact that the coast at the port of Cossack is subject to very severe weather at certain seasons of the year, and that the survey of boats by unqualified persons may lead to serious loss of passengers and cargo, will

he see that a properly qualified licensing authority is provided at that port?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, Unqualified persons such as doctors, wharfingers, and police are appointed as members of boat licensing boards at various ports, but these boards are not permitted to license sea-going vessels used on the coast, the survey of such vessels being carried out under the provisions of the Navigation Act by master mariners. 2, It is very difficult to obtain master mariners willing to serve on boat licensing boards who are disinterested parties. 3, The declared boundaries of the port of Cossack include Balla Balla, consequently boats licensed by the Cossack Boat Licensing Board may ply between those two places.

### BILL—FIREARMS AND GUNS.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

### BILL—STATE MANUFACTURES DESCRIPTION.

Report of Committee adopted.

### MOTION—LAND AND HOMES, LIMITED.

*To Inquire by Royal Commission.*

Debate resumed from the 27th May, on the following motion by Mr. Wells:—

That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be appointed to inquire into the transactions of a firm of land agents carrying on business in this city under the name of Land and Homes, Ltd.

MR. WELLS (Canning—in reply) [4.39]: I thought that probably the Minister for Lands would have had a few words to say on the motion.

Mr. Corboy: Why didn't you let the question go?

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Government have no sense of responsibility about Royal Commissions or anything else.

Mr. WELLS: If it be the wish of the House that a Royal Commission be appointed, I have nothing further to say.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The Government have no point of view about anything.

Mr. WELLS: I just want to clear up one or two points. On the day after I moved the motion an advertisement appeared in the "West Australian." I just wish to show the calibre of the firm the purchasers of land had to deal with. In moving the motion, I read a letter on the lines of "If you are genuine, we will be prepared to deal with you further, but if you are Land and Homes, you are the greatest sharks unhung." On the day following the appearance of the advertisement, a letter was published, and Land and Homes declared it was written by an officer of the company in an endeavour to catch the person who had declared that Land and Homes were sharks. I looked up that letter and discovered that it had been written by a woman whose address was in Aberdeen-street. I sent one of my clerks to see if she really did reside at that address. He learnt that she did, but that actually she was working elsewhere. On the following morning I went to her place of employment and spoke to the manager, who consented to my seeing her. Thereupon in his presence she signed the following affidavit:—

I, the undersigned, do sincerely and solemnly declare that the letter in the possession of H. E. Wells, M.L.A., was written by me in response to an advertisement in the "West Australian" asking for people who had dealings with Land and Homes Ltd., and not by any agent of the company in question, as stated by Land and Homes Ltd., in which I stated that if the advertisement was genuine I would be glad to communicate with them, but if they were Land and Homes Ltd. they were the greatest sharks unhung.

So it will be seen that those people are prepared to swear to anything in order to get away with the practices in which they are indulging. Then there is another matter which shows the utter unreliability of those people, and that they are prepared to make positive statements even in the law courts. A little time ago they took action against one Mrs. Farr, in which it was declared that the defendant had given a guarantee to make payment on a block of land supposed to have been purchased by her son. In that case one John David King declared that the company always obtained guarantees from the relatives of minors. That declaration was made in the court in which the case was being heard. When moving the motion I read a letter regarding a lad who had bought a block of land in the Mt. Lawley estate. He had drawn his

father's attention to it by asking him what a Royal Commission was. It seems the son had been reading the report of the proceedings in this Chamber. The father called to see me and I told him that if his son was under age I did not think he was entitled to pay any more money, and that I wondered why he did not get the whole of the payment refunded. He went to see Land and Homes and told them it was not a fair thing to sell a block of land to a junior. This is the letter he got from them in reply—

Your undated letter to hand, received by us on the 5th inst. Your impertinence astonishes us. You adopt in this letter a stand-and-deliver attitude, no doubt actuated by the fact that Mr. Wells has already read a statement referring to this account in the House of Assembly. We defy anybody to say, on looking at your son, that he is under 21 years of age, and we will not believe he is under 21 until we have seen his birth certificate. It appears from inquiries we have been able to make that your son has endeavoured for many years to earn his own living and is ambitious to get on in this world, although you, from the tone of your letter, seem to be doing what you can to prevent him from succeeding. We trust that your aim is not to get any of the money that has been paid in by your son and spend it yourself. We had no idea that your son was under 21, and if we had known it we would have most certainly obtained not only your consent but a guarantee from you that the payments would be met, as entering into contracts with minors is unbusinesslike at all times. Your son has paid every instalment and his account is paid up to the end of May, 1931, and it appears to us that it is only your influence that is preventing him from carrying on. We presume you will show this letter to Mr. Wells to be read in Parliament.

Mr. Corboy: He did.

Mr. WELLS: The father produced the birth certificate in the office of the company, and I have it here attached to the letter. The lad has just turned 18.

Mr. Corboy: On their own letter, they would have to refund everything.

Mr. WELLS: If they cannot discriminate between a lad of 17 and a man of 21, it does not say much for their judgment and commonsense.

Mr. Richardson: Why did they not make inquiries?

Mr. WELLS: They made no inquiry whatever. Following upon that, a lady came to my office and brought me a book containing a few receipts for payments she had made. This is a case of a girl to whom the company sold a block of land. Her birth certificate shows that she was then

only 16½ years of age. Her mother is a widow, and her father was killed while in the employment of the railways. This girl and her mother went with some friends to view a particular estate. Contrary to the wishes of the mother, officers of the company got hold of the girl, who was earning her own money, and persuaded her to believe it would be a good thing for her to buy some land at so much a month. The mother told the agent she would not guarantee anything, and that she did not want her daughter to buy the land at the price put upon it. They insisted, however, on taking the signature of the girl to a document while she was sitting in the car. I mention this to prove that the statement they make that they always approach the parents or guardians before doing any business with a minor is absolutely unreliable and untrue. Here are two striking instances showing that they sold land to minors, and have had the consent neither of the parents nor the guardians. Notwithstanding these things, they make statements of this kind in court. I can quote another instance, that of a widow who lives in Subiaco. She told me that her daughter had signed a document in lead pencil while sitting in the back seat of a motor car. She had no idea she was signing any contract, but later on discovered that she had done so and that the company were insisting on her making the necessary payments. I know of another lady living in Subiaco with her son and daughter. The company's agents called at her house on several occasions and endeavoured to sell her a block of land. She told the agent she had only a small sum of money and did not intend to speculate in land. Her house was her own and she was satisfied to carry on as she was doing. She happened to mention that her son was thinking of getting married, and this gave the agent a renewed interest in the matter. He finally persuaded the mother to run out in the car to see the blocks. It was arranged that she should sign a paper which was said to be an option of purchase over the weekend. The statement was made that if the son declined to purchase the blocks, the transaction would be cancelled and that would be the end of it. She paid no deposit, and on Monday morning repudiated the whole thing on the ground that her son did not wish to buy any land. Three weeks ago the company obtained

judgment against the woman for the amount of the deposit and instalments equalling £21. She defended the case, and it therefore cost her a great deal more in legal expenses. The son is now out of work, and the widow and her daughter have this judgment recorded against them. The mother has already sold a dining-room suite to meet this newly risen obligation, and last week she put her piano in the hands of an auctioneer so that she might be able to keep up the payments. If she is unable to keep on paying £2 a month, the company have told her they will put in the bailiff to see what her property consists of. In addition to these cases, I have piles of correspondence that would astonish members. Letters have come from all parts of the State, all telling much the same story. I am not shielding any man or woman who deliberately signs a contract, and then perhaps through adversity tries to get out of his or her obligations. The man who signs a contract knowing it to be one must stand up to it and take the consequences.

Mr. Raphael: Although the company may tell deliberate lies about the property.

Mr. WELLS: None of these unfortunate people had any intention of signing a contract. They merely signed papers which they were informed gave them an option of purchase over certain blocks until such time as they had been able to consult their friends or relations. There is another case of a woman who was about to visit her daughter in hospital when the agent called. It was a bright sunny morning and the agent at once offered to drive her to the hospital. On the way he began talking about blocks of land but she declared she did not want to buy any. The agent then said, "What about your daughter?" The girl was earning good wages in a warehouse. The agent then went on, "Come out and have a look at the property. If you think it is right, you can advise your daughter accordingly." The salesmen are masters at their business and most skilful. This particular man induced the woman to go out and impressed upon her the good features of the land. She again repeated that she did not want any land and the agent said he would hold the particular block until the daughter came out of hospital and could decide for herself whether she would buy it or not. Of course she signed the usual form, and two or three weeks later was presented with a contract about which she knew nothing. This is what

has happened with all these people; they find out that the document they have signed is a contract. Here is another letter I received from Kalgoorlie two or three days ago, written, I presume, by a working man—

While in Perth in January, 1929, I happened to look in the window of Land and Homes. While doing so, Mr. Lilburne came out and started to talk to me about St. James' Park. I said I was not interested in land. He said, "It doesn't matter; we will drive you out to have a look; you will be under no obligation to buy." As I had nothing else to do I went out and was shown a block, which Mr. Lilburne said was the pick of them all, as it was only two streets away from the main street, and would be very valuable. I said I did not intend purchasing any land at present.

These statements are all uniform in character. I fail to see how it is possible that hundreds of people could conspire together on the same lines and put up such convincing cases against the company.

Mr. Richardson: They are not all lies.

Mr. WELLS: I know of no subdivision of land that has taken place here, about which there has been such an uproar as has arisen over the transactions of this company. The letter continues—

On the way back to Perth they were praising it up, said that big business men of Perth and Kalgoorlie had bought blocks and were going to build on them; also that by May or June the tramway would be extended out there. When we got back to their office I was told to come in and sit down. Mr. Lilburne sat at the desk and another salesman stood at the door. Mr. Lilburne said "What about buying a block?" I said I would have to talk it over with the wife when I got back to Kalgoorlie. He said, "What about putting down £5 as a deposit?" I said, "No, not until I talk with the wife." He said, "Then out down £1 as an option," and I wouldn't do that either. "Well, put down 10s." he said, "surely you can spare that." I refused to put any money down until after I had talked it over. Mr. Lilburne said, "Then sign this paper as option, and if your wife is not in favour we can cancel it." The wife was not in favour, and when I told him so I learned that I had signed a contract for the purchase of a block of land valued at £110. They have entered judgment against me and I have offered them £1 a month, but after I sent the letter I saw in the "Mirror" that you had moved for a Royal Commission. They have accepted my offer, but I have not sent the pound yet. I would like your advice as to whether I should send it or wait until after the Royal Commission.

Here is a letter from the solicitors—

The magistrate in Chambers yesterday granted our client leave to enter judgment against you for £30 and £3 13s. 8d. costs. Judgment has accordingly been entered and unless we receive an offer of payment of that amount within seven days we shall proceed.

These are only a few instances of hundreds that are on record of what has been going on. It is essential that something should be done to prevent this company from penalising citizens in the way they are doing. Apart from the fabulous price they are putting on the land, people should have some protection during these trying times. By far the majority of those concerned did not see any contract. I admit they were foolish to sign the papers they did sign. If an agent takes an unsophisticated woman out to see a block of land, and asks her to sign a paper to prove to the manager that the agent has duly taken her out, the woman will usually sign the document. Some time later she wakes up and finds that she has signed a contract of purchase. I am convinced that the company are getting money from the public and selling blocks of land by misrepresentation. In their advertisements one would think they were posing as philanthropists. If the clients of the company go on paying their instalments for two or three years I am beginning to be doubtful whether they will ever get their title deeds. An estate which was subdivided in Mt. Lawley some time ago by a syndicate has reached a stage when several blocks have been sold and the instalments have been paid but the vendors are unable to carry on and the estate will be sold at auction. I do not know what will happen to those who have paid their deposits or whether they will lose all they have put up. These people say they have spent £30,000 odd in Western Australia. Having an hour or two to spare last week, I went to the Titles Office and searched the records there. As a result I find that the company have not spent a great deal of money on the estate. A deposit has been paid, but the bulk of the purchase money remains on mortgage. True, the company have the title to the block on which they have erected a house. The calibre of the company is disclosed by the fact that when they applied for a license under the House and Land Agents Act, their application was opposed by the police. This must make one stop

to consider whether the company are straight-goers or otherwise. The police would not object to the granting of a license if there was not something radically wrong with the applicants; at least, I think not. It is rarely that opposition is offered to the licensing of a man of standing. In this case the police did oppose. The people in question got out of the difficulty on the ground that a license is not necessary for any person selling land of his own. Some may be inclined to say that at present it is unwise to spend money on Royal Commissions, but considering the amount involved to hundreds of our citizens, against whom judgments are being obtained daily, I consider the carrying of the motion justified. The company, I may add, are careful as to what cases they bring into court. I have instanced here three distinct sales to a girl aged 16, a boy aged 17, and a youth under the age of 21, all without reference to the parents. Yet the officials of the company have stated on oath that in such cases they always obtain guarantees from the parents. The question is whether their other statements are equally unreliable. A woman, for example, has no chance if she goes to court in face of the statements of two or three salesmen. The case is decided on points of law, and justice does not always result. Before a Royal Commission the writers of these letters will be able to state the circumstances calmly, without being hustled as they would be in a court of law. They will prove conclusively that misrepresentations were made to them, and that they put their names to documents which purported not to be contracts for the purchase of land. In some instances two years were allowed to elapse before a claim was made. Then judgment is obtained within a few days, and payment is claimed, as in the case of the working man at Kalgoorlie, and the woman at Subiaco who has already sold her dining-room suite, is about to sell her piano, and soon will have nothing left. I appeal to hon. members to give the motion their serious consideration. Parliament protects tenants against unscrupulous landlords. This is a case in which a searching inquiry is warranted. I commend the motion to the House.

Question put and passed.

## MOTION—MIGRANTS, REPATRIATION.

Debate resumed from the 18th June, on the following motion by Mr. Sleeman—

That the Government be requested to make arrangements immediately to repatriate all migrants who are unable to obtain work here, hundreds of whom are going hungry and practically naked, and that they use all their influence to get the Federal Parliament to issue the necessary passports, and the Imperial Government to agree to these people being returned Home.

**THE PREMIER** (Hon. Sir James Mitchell—Northam) [5.7]: I have read the speech of the mover of the motion. I wonder does the hon. member realise just what the position is. All of us know that a great number of people have been brought to this country during the last few years. I think a third of the population of Western Australia were born in the Old Land, and another third came from the Eastern States. There are many people out of work, among them a large number of British migrants. Many of the migrants came to Western Australia between the years 1926 and 1929, when we were glad to have them, as the country was certainly lacking in population. About 15,000 came in the four years, brought out under agreement with the British Government. At that time it was expected that money would be available from the Old Country by way of loan from year to year for a few years, until the migrants were established here. The trouble is that the supply of loan money has been cut off since early in 1929, with the result that public works, or other works which would absorb the migrants, could not be entered upon. It was always clear to the various Governments of this State that increase of population was necessary, but over all those years loan moneys were available. The cutting-off of supplies has resulted in a serious position, many persons being thrown out of work. The British people, in my opinion, must be told of the situation. In fact, our Agent General has mentioned the matter to the Secretary of State for the Dominions, who is interesting himself in British people who, having come here recently, are now out of work. I do not know that anything will result from those representations. The mover of the motion thinks we should send these people back. It would be impossible to do that. Only the other

day the hon. member spoke to me about obtaining a passage to England for a wife and a couple of children, the husband having already returned Home. In that instance the fares, increased by the exchange of 30 per cent., would have amounted to £111. If we could find money to repatriate these people—

Hon. A. McCallum: You said you would wire to the Agent General on the matter.

The PREMIER: There is the fact that loan money has been cut off.

Hon. A. McCallum: You rather suggested that the fares should be paid at the other end.

The PREMIER: No.

Hon. A. McCallum: What did you expect the Agent General to do?

The PREMIER: To point out to the Secretary of State for the Dominions that supplies of money had been cut off from the Old Land. Representations have also been made to the High Commissioner recently appointed by the British Government in Australia. No one knows the position better than the Agent General, and I have no doubt that he will make representations to the Secretary of State for the Dominions. Many of the migrants in question owe money to the Federal Government. I do not know whether all these people were assisted to come to Western Australia, whether some of them did not pay their own fares. I should imagine that it would be well for the British Government to send money to Australia for the purpose of finding employment for these people, instead of returning them to the Old Country to be put on the dole again. The mover has suggested that these migrants were misled. I am sure the present Agent General, who has been in England now for four years, has not misled anyone by overstatements of the position here.

Mr. Sleeman: I did not mention the Agent General or anybody.

The PREMIER: Doubtless in a great number of cases the people at Home who asked to be sent to Australia saw officials, and one cannot say just what inducement was offered them to migrate. That work is done at Australia House, under the control of the Federal Government. It may be that some people have been misled. I hope the House will not carry the motion. If it is carried, we shall not be able to find the money required to send these people Home again. After all, under the Migration Agree-

ment money was furnished at a very low rate of interest in order that migrants might be absorbed in Australia. The Old Land is over-populated with 45 millions in one small island, as against 400,000 people in Western Australia. The mover has ventilated his opinion on this subject, and I will see that a copy of his speech is sent to the Agent General. I shall take care to point out to the High Commissioner that unless money is forthcoming from the Old Land it will be impossible to carry out the work of establishing these people in Australia, as was intended when they were encouraged to come. The member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) will know that since December, 1929, not one migrant has been brought into the State. The migration policy was stopped then and that was just a few months after the closing of the British loan market to Australia. I will take the steps I have indicated to place the hon. member's speech before those in authority. We do not know what the future has in store for us with regard to loan funds from London, but I hope that the re-establishment of confidence that will follow the adoption of the plan now before the Federal Parliament, will result in our being able to approach the money market for some funds at any rate to enable us to provide migrants with work. In the meantime, I will inform the Imperial Government of the position.

Mr. Marshall: They are as much responsible as we are.

**MR. SLEEMAN** (Fremantle—in reply) [5.16] I hope the House will agree to the motion, because I believe it will do much good. The Premier stated it would be impossible to do what I suggest and said that the cost of repatriating a mother and her three children, concerning whose position I made representations to him a day or two ago, would be £111. Very likely the cost would amount to that sum if the unfortunate people I refer to were repatriated under the conditions that obtain at present, with interest charges taken into consideration. Irrespective of whether the motion is carried, I hope something will be done regarding this woman and her children. They stowed away on a boat and reached Colombo some months ago. They were discovered and were sent back to Fremantle. Afterwards, the woman's husband made an attempt to stow away and he was more successful. He was able to reach the Old

Country and now we have the woman and her three children left in Western Australia while the husband is on the other side of the world. The unfortunate woman has been twice before the Commissioner who is dealing with tenants' relief matters and she was again before Mr. Moseley on Thursday last. I was called to give evidence on her behalf and the only thing I could tell the Commissioner was that I had the woman's case in hand and was awaiting the return of the Premier to ascertain whether or not the Government would repatriate the family. If some steps in that direction are not taken, I am afraid the woman and her children will be thrown out into the street in a fortnight's time, because Mr. Moseley adjourned the application for that period in order to ascertain what the Government intended to do. It is a heartrending case and I certainly hope that something will be done to help the woman and her children. The Premier said that the Agent-General would not mislead anyone. I do not believe he would do so, nor do I believe that any man we sent to England as Agent General would deliberately misrepresent the position. I know, however, that the Agent General is as well aware as I am that misrepresentations have been made to people who have come to Western Australia. I was in Mr. Angwin's company when discussing the position with a number of migrants. He knew it was not always a matter of misrepresentation by officials, but misrepresentation on the part of other people interested. I accompanied the present Agent General, when Minister for Lands, through the group settlements and we discussed the position with one of the people with whom we came in contact. He was a man who had been badly knocked about by a big gun explosion. He had to wear corsets to keep himself together, and he could not do anything unless he had them on. The Agent General said to him, "You should never have been sent to this country." The man replied, "Yes, I realise that now. I was told that all I would have to do would be to feed a few chickens and drive a horse." I understand Mr. Angwin found a position for him in town where he had only light duties to carry out. I do not know what has happened to that man now. Instances such as I have related indicate clearly that misrepresentation has taken place, and I know of many such instances. When I moved the motion, I mentioned the experi-

ence of a man and his wife who went up for inspection and passed into a room through one door, the doctor being at the other end of the room. Merely glancing at them, he told them that they would do admirably for Australia, and they paid their money and came out. Now the husband is found to be unfitted for life here and is likely to become a permanent charge on the State. The Premier said he would send a copy of my speech to England to the Agent General and the High Commissioner for the Commonwealth. That is all very well, but that will be of little use to people who are starving and practically naked. We are up against this position every day at Fremantle. I meet the single people and the Hon. E. H. Gray, M.L.C., meets the married ones. Some of the men we encounter have ragged shirts and no singlets, or ragged singlets and no shirts, while some have neither, and cover themselves as best they can with an old rag of a coat. The Fremantle Relief Committee have done very well, but I do not know that there are many more sets of old clothing to be found at the port. Every Thursday we distribute the clothing that is on hand, and there is a limit to what we can do. Each Thursday morning we deal with from 30 to 35 individuals and we have a waiting list of over 150 to deal with yet. Each week their numbers are added to. The fact that the Premier will send a copy of my speech to England will not be of much help to those people who are starving and have not clothes to their backs. Then the member for Murray-Wellington (Mr. McLarty) said that he agreed with much of the motion, but regarded it as too sweeping. For my part I do not believe anything can be too sweeping where starving men and women are concerned. If we cannot provide them with food or work, the least we can do is to send them back where they say they will be better off. It has been urged that the migrants will not be better off if they are returned to the Motherland, and I have discussed that phase with dozens of migrants who have assured me that they will be better off if they can return to Britain. In my motion I do not suggest that provision should be made for sending people to the Old Country who do not desire to return there; the motion applies only to those who are dissatisfied, down on their luck, and see no chance of greater success in the future. Still, the member for Murray-Wellington



regards the motion as too sweeping! I cannot agree with him. If that hon. member will throw in his lot with those who favour the motion, we may be able to do something for the poor wretches who have come out from the Old Country, but have not enough to eat, sufficient clothes to wear, or any prospect ahead of them. I think the hon. member also suggested that if I proposed sending the physically and mentally unfit back to the Old Country, he would agree with me. It has to be conceded that there have been mentally and physically unfit individuals sent out to Australia. Is that not all the more reason why they should be returned? But when the member for Murray-Wellington suggests that we should repatriate them and leave others, I cannot agree with him. I believe that the big majority of the migrants who are out here are honest, hard-working citizens who would work if they were given the opportunity to do so. We should not retain them in Western Australia unless we can see to it that they live in reasonable comfort while they are waiting for work to be provided for them. The Minister for Lands discussed the motion and said that the migration agreement could not be broken because it was an agreement between the Imperial, Federal and State Governments, and therefore could not be broken by one party alone. I maintain that the agreement has already been broken by the State Government. We brought the migrants out under promise to do many things for them, and now those promises are unfulfilled and many of the migrants are in a stage of semi-starvation and without clothes. If that is not breaking the agreement, I do not understand what it means. The Minister for Lands also said that the migrants could not be sent Home and went on to point out that over 1,000 of them had already returned to the Old Country and had paid their own fares.

The Minister for Lands: There is a vast difference between sending the migrants back and allowing them to return voluntarily.

Mr. SLEEMAN: If a man is fortunate enough to have a friend or relative in a position to advance him the money for his fare, or, being fortunate while here, has been able to save up the necessary money, apparently it is no breach of the agreement to allow him to return to England. Other unfortunates who cannot get enough to eat here or enough to clothe themselves are to

be debarred from having an opportunity to return to the Motherland. I cannot see that in one case the breach is any more than in the other. I have already read to the House an extract from the Press indicating that Canada repatriated 3,000 migrants last year. If Canada can return 3,000 migrants to Britain, surely we should be able to adopt the same course. The Minister for Lands questioned whether I would do the migrants a kindness if I secured the passing of the motion and action were taken accordingly. I have already informed the House that I have spoken to dozens of migrants and that they have assured me that they would be much better off if they could return to the Old Country than they would be if they remained in this State. I take it that the migrants themselves are better judges of that position than we can be, and they are unanimous that if they were to return to England their relatives would be able to see that they secured work. The Fremantle Relief Committee have received letters from single men who have succeeded in returning to the Motherland, and they have been able to intimate that they were successful in securing work practically straight away. I would remind hon. members of the risks that the migrants have taken in order to get away from the State. They have stowed away under cargoes and have risked suffocation, all in order to return to their native land. The member for Swan (Mr. Sampson) questioned the wisdom of my proposal, but I have already replied to that point. He suggested that if we pursued the course I propose, we would injure the reputation of Australia, but I assert that we will injure the reputation of the Commonwealth and of Western Australia far more if we allow it to go abroad that we are prepared to encourage people to come to the State and keep them in a condition of semi-starvation, rather than take steps to send them back to their homeland. The member for Swan talked about the effect of high tariffs, but I do not think that is a point worth replying to.

Mr. Sampson: It strikes at the very root of the trouble.

Mr. SLEEMAN: I do not want to bring the Government into the argument, but this afternoon we heard the reply of the Government to a question. In connection with the Fremantle Harbour Trust, a similarly high tariff has been imposed, but I

do not think the Government are in favour of removing that super charge. The member for Swan sits behind the Government and if he thinks there is so much in his point, he should help to remove high tariffs of all descriptions. Then again, the member for Swan said that physically and mentally unfit persons had been allowed to come to Western Australia. He admits that they are here and therefore we will be responsible for keeping that type of individual in the State if we are not prepared to send them back to England. I claim it is a duty we owe to Australia to see that such people are not allowed to remain here and become a permanent charge on the State Government. When moving the motion I quoted figures of migrants who desired to be returned to the Old Country. Since then I have received a list of 102 additional applications. I am not alone in my desire to see that the right thing is done by the migrants. I communicated with the Government of South Australia to ascertain what they are doing, and I learnt that they are of the same opinion, except that they want to apply the remedy in a different way. The letter from the South Australian Government reads—

I am instructed by the Hon. the Minister to acknowledge receipt of your wire concerning the repatriation of migrants, and in reply to inform you that the South Australian Government have regarded this as largely a matter for the Commonwealth Government, in view of the fact that the Commonwealth and British Governments are parties to the migration agreement under which many of these men were assisted to come to Australia. For this reason, therefore, the Government have no intention of introducing legislation on the subject, but have asked the Commonwealth Government to take the matter up with the British Government with a view to some action being taken to assist those desiring to return to Great Britain.

Therefore, outside of Western Australia, the view is held that the unfortunate migrants should not be kept here in misery and poverty.

Mr. Sampson: The South Australian Government are going about it in a different way.

Mr. SLEEMAN: That is where we disagree. They evidently think it the duty of the other fellow, while I consider it the duty of the State Government to stand up to this responsibility. The State Government are undoubtedly responsible for Bri-

tish migrants. As regards migrants from foreign countries the Commonwealth Government have sole control. For the sake of the starving hundreds of migrants in our midst, I hope the House will agree to the motion and that something will be done.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	..	..	17

Majority for	..	..	1
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#### AYES.

Mr. Brown	Mr. Panton
Mr. Coverley	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Ouanlogham	Mr. J. M. Smith
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Hegney	Mr. Willcock
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Wilson
Mr. Marshall	Mr. Withers
Mr. McCallum	Mr. Corboy
Mr. Millington	(Teller.)
Mr. Munslie	

#### NOES.

Mr. Angelo	Sir James Mitchell
Mr. Barnard	Mr. Parker
Mr. Doney	Mr. Patrick
Mr. Ferguson	Mr. Sampson
Mr. Keenan	Mr. Teesdale
Mr. Latham	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Lindsay	Mr. Wells
Mr. J. I. Mann	Mr. North
Mr. McLarty	(Teller.)

Question thus passed.

### MOTION—SHIPPING AND PILOTAGE CONSOLIDATION ORDINANCE.

#### *To disallow Regulation.*

Debate resumed from the 17th June on the following motion by Hon. J. C. Willcock (Geraldton):—

That the regulation made under the Shipping and Pilotage Consolidation Ordinance, 1855, re pilotage in Geraldton harbour, laid on the Table of the House on 19th May, 1931, and published in the "Government Gazette" on 17th April, 1931, be and is hereby disallowed.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. N. Keenan—Nedlands) [5.38]: I have no complaint to make regarding the manner in which the member for Geraldton put the case. As he himself is aware, there is very little difference of opinion between us in the matter, but I should like to make it clear to the House why pilotage was insisted on as regards the inner harbour at Geraldton. That harbour is not fully constructed; it has been only partially constructed and the position to-day is that the work is sus-

pended owing to lack of funds. Unfortunately, some time must elapse before the Government can complete the work. Meanwhile it is undoubtedly of considerable importance that there should be no stranding of any vessel, or disaster to any vessel, even of a partial nature, when using the inner harbour. A harbour readily acquires a bad name, just as it also, not so readily, may acquire a good name. If anything happened in the nature of a vessel being damaged when using the harbour, it would get a name that would be wholly unfair and might possibly compromise its future. For this reason the Harbour and Lights Department, who are in charge of the harbour, thought it necessary to insist on pilotage so that there might be no risk of any vessel striking any of the chains used to moor the dredges or running into shoal water where the harbour as yet has not been properly dredged. It must be admitted that the first proposal to charge full pilotage fees was one that could not be supported. The next suggestion made was not to insist on the pilotage fees, but to insist upon a pilot, the only charge to be what is known as a removal fee, a fee of very much smaller amount charged for moving a vessel from one part of the harbour to another part. That fee would amount to approximately a quarter of the original charge. I can see there is still a possibility that even the limited charge, which will amount to £6 per ship, might make a considerable difference to vessels that carry only a small quantity of cargo, which is the case with vessels trading on the coast and carrying cargo from Fremantle to Geraldton. What I propose to do, and I hope the House will say it is the right course to take, is to consult with the member for Geraldton, and so long as we can devise a regulation that will ensure the safety of the harbour's reputation and not risk any loss of ships using it, I shall have no objection to altering the present regulation and substituting another. Therefore I propose to ask the hon. member to withdraw the motion and meet me, so that we may together arrive at some solution of the question which will not impose an undue burden or restraint on trade, but at the same time will secure the harbour from any possibility of its acquiring an undeservedly bad name by inexperienced mariners making use of it. I hope the hon. member will be content with that assurance and that he will withdraw the motion.

**HON. J. C. WILLCOCK** (Geraldton)—in reply) [5.42]: I thank the Minister for his statement. It will be necessary eventually to table some other regulation and, if not approved, it can then be dealt with. In the circumstances, I ask leave to withdraw the motion.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

### **MOTION—BUNBURY HARBOUR BOARD.**

*To inquire by Select Committee.*

Debate resumed from the 17th June on the following motion by Mr. Withers (Bunbury):—

That a select committee be appointed to thoroughly investigate the operations of the Bunbury Harbour Board with a view to ascertaining—(1) the general condition of the wharf; (2) if certain statements in connection with abuses of harbour board property by employees are correct; (3) to make inquiries of a general character with a view to recommending economies to, and other action by the Government. Such committee to have the powers of a Royal Commission for the purpose of taking evidence on oath.

**THE CHIEF SECRETARY** (Hon. N. Keenan—Nedlands) [5.44]: I was not in the House when the member for Bunbury spoke to this motion, but I have had an opportunity of reading in "Hansard" what he said. I regret that I am not in a position to agree to the motion, and I propose to give the reasons for disagreeing. In the first place, this matter is not one that I consider should be the subject of inquiry by a select committee. In the first instance it came forward in the form of a letter written by the member for Bunbury to me as Chief Secretary protesting against five men who, up to that date, had been employed by the harbour board at Bunbury, being dismissed and the staff reduced by that number, and suggesting that instead of the men being dismissed, rationing should have been adopted. The reply that I make is one which I hope the House will endorse unanimously. It is not the province of a Minister to interfere with a statutory body in the conduct of the business entrusted to that body by Parliament, unless, of course, he is satisfied the members of that body are not acting bona fide. These bodies—the Fremantle Harbour Trust and the Bunbury Harbour Board—were created by Parliament, and Parlia-

ment has given them certain powers. So long as those bodies exercise the powers and authorities they have in a bona fide manner, any interference on the part of the Minister would deserve the condemnation of this House. Of course, if the Minister is satisfied on the evidence brought before him that the members of the board are abusing the powers they possess, he is there in the capacity of a watchdog only, and must interfere. In my opinion, the Bunbury Harbour Board are pursuing the right course in connection with the reduction of the staff. Parliament has given the board the authority to manage the affairs of the harbour, and it is no part of my duty or function to interfere with that management. The hon. member claimed that those who had been put off had not been put off under the rule that is sometimes followed, the last on the first off, and that seniority was not taken into account. With reference to that assertion, the statement of the board is that they had regard to efficiency. It is impossible for me to say that that is wrong and that the board should have put seniority first. So I reiterate that it is not part of my function as a Minister to interfere with a statutory body where there are no proper grounds for revising the actions of that body. That is a matter in which I would refuse to interfere. The third phase of the hon. member's speech related to preference to returned soldiers. It is alleged that some of those who were retained were men who had not served in the Great War, that those who were put off were returned soldiers, and were entitled to be retained. It is not part of my power or authority to tell the board that they should observe, with regard to the conduct of their business, this particular rule. To this statement the board have replied that they acted solely to obtain the greatest efficiency in the work to be carried out. The hon. member asked for some information by way of questions. Some of the questions were trivial, and some were a little better than trivial. There was the question of the disposal of certain obsolete plant. I do not suppose for a moment that the hon. member suggests that the proceeds of that plant were stolen by any member?

Mr. Withers: Possibly it was stolen, and that is what I want inquired into.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: Does the hon. member imagine that he can come here and say "possibly."

Mr. Withers: The result of the sale was not shown in the revenue.

The CHIEF SECRETARY: If there is a matter that disgusts one it is that a member of Parliament should say that something "possibly" is true that reflects on the character of a person in a manner that that person will not stand. It imputes dishonesty. "Possibly" it is true, and "possibly" because it is true we are asked to appoint a committee to inquire whether this is an absolute lie or whether it is not a lie. I am certainly not prepared to ask the House to say that this is the place where we are to wash all the dirty linen whenever a person chooses to bring that dirty linen here. Then there was another trivial suggestion about the use of electric current. It is supposed that a battery belonging to someone was charged with current owned by the board. Nothing could be more trivial than that because the charging of a battery is a matter of a few shillings. Can we imagine that a public board are to be found guilty of conduct that warrants the appointment of a select committee by trivial acts of that kind, the charging of a battery, and not sending in a bill for it! To what depths are we going to sink in this House if we are to appoint committees to inquire into matters of that kind, matters without substance, all "possibilities," the whisperings of the gutter and nothing more! Are we to appoint a select committee to investigate things of that kind? While I repeat that it is not part of my authority to interfere with a statutory board in the administration of the affairs of the harbour so long as they carry out their duties under the Act, I might inform the House that I invited the board to consent to the appointment of a committee to investigate these wretched charges, which we have not the smallest reason to believe are well founded. I pointed out to the board that it would be well if an inquiry were conducted by a committee consisting of the Acting Under Secretary of my Department, Mr. Huelin, and in the absence of Captain Harris who is ill, Mr. Ward of the Harbour and Lights Department, together with a third person who, so far, has not been selected. The matter will be put in hand as soon as

possible, and if the member for Bunbury has any evidence beyond the "possibilities" to bring forward, he can submit it to the committee.

Mr. Withers: Will the committee take evidence on oath?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: A select committee does not take evidence on oath.

Mr. Withers: Will this committee take evidence on oath?

The CHIEF SECRETARY: I presume some people will tell the truth without being sworn, though they must be rare. I desire to repeat briefly that the view I take of a matter of this kind is that it is below the dignity of Parliament to permit questions of this kind to be brought forward by members asking solemnly for the appointment of select committees to conduct such investigations. I repeat that we are not a laundry in which to wash out every piece of dirty linen that can be found anywhere; our time should be given entirely to attending to the important business of the State. For that reason I hope that the House will not permit its proceedings to be delayed by a motion of this kind. Any of the matters referred to by the hon. member that require to be investigated will be fully investigated by the committee it is my intention to appoint. If the hon. member has any matter to bring forward, he can submit it to that committee.

On motion by the Premier, debate adjourned.

### RETURN—GOLDFIELDS WATER SUPPLY SCHEME.

HON. J. CUNNINGHAM (Kalgoorlie)  
[6.0]: I move—

That a return be laid upon the Table of the House showing—(a) Capital cost of the whole Goldfields Water Supply Scheme to 31st December, 1930, divided as follows:—Helena weir, other reservoirs, main pipe line to Kalgoorlie goldfields, pumping machinery on Kalgoorlie goldfields line, cost of services to towns on main pipe line other than Kalgoorlie and Boulder, cost of branch lines, cost of pipe line and all services and extensions from Helena Vale to the metropolitan areas (cost of raising loan to be included pro rata). (b) Amount of contributions to the sinking fund from the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme account to 31st December, 1930, together with compound interest on the investments of such contributions. (c) Balance on capital account

at 31st December, 1930, of the Goldfields Water Supply Scheme after deducting (b). (d) Quantity of water drawn from the Helena Vale reservoir for twelve months ended 31st December, 1930, segregated as follows:—

—	No. Gallons.	Average price received per 1,000 gallons
Kalgoorlie and Boulder Mines		
Railways		
Metropolitan Areas (West of Weir)		
Farming Towns		
Kalgoorlie and Boulder District		
Water lost en route to Goldfields		
Water unaccounted for		
Total quantity drawn from Reservoir		

(c) Operating cost, sinking fund and interest charges for year ended 31st December, 1930. (Operating expenses):—

—	Cost.	Cost per 1,000 galls. drawn from Reservoir.	Cost per 1,000 galls. sold.
Goldfields Scheme—			
Pumping			
Maintenance Pipe Line			
Distribution and other Expenses			
Metropolitan Scheme (West of Weir)—			
Pumping			
Maintenance Pipe Line			
Distribution and other Expenses			
Total operating expenses			
Interest on Balance Capital Loan			
Sinking Fund on Balance Capital Loan			
Total Cost			

(f) Income Goldfields Water Supply Scheme for 12 months ended 31st December, 1930:—

—	£	Average price received per 1,000 gallons.
Kalgoorlie and Boulder Mines		
Railways		
Metropolitan Areas		
Farming Towns		
Kalgoorlie and Boulder District		
Sundry Receipts		

I understand the Minister representing the Minister for Water Supplies will offer no objection to the tabling of this return. Therefore I will content myself with formally moving the motion.

Question—put and passed.

House adjourned at 6.2 p.m.