

# Legislative Assembly, Wednesday, 22nd September, 1915.

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

## PAPERS PRESENTED.

By Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Instructions by Commissioner of Police *re* Police force and drinking in hotels. (Ordered on motion by Mr. O'Loghlen).

## BILLS (3)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Licensing Act Amendment Continuance.
  - 2, Grain and Foodstuffs.
  - 3, Cottesloe Beach Rates Validation.
- Transmitted to the Council.

## BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

## SELECT COMMITTEE, WYNDHAM FREEZING WORKS.

*Extension of Time.*

Mr. GEORGE: I propose to move that the time for bringing up the report be extended by one fortnight.

The Minister for Lands: I think the hon. member should make it a week. It

is doubtful if we will be here in a fortnight's time.

Mr. GEORGE: Then I move—

*That the time for bringing up the report be extended by one week.*

Question passed.

## JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, MONEY BILLS PROCEDURE.

*Extension of Time.*

On motion by Mr. McDOWALL (for Mr. Robinson) time for bringing up the report was extended by one week.

## GOVERNMENT BUSINESS, PRECEDENCE.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder) [4.40]: I move—

*That, in addition to Tuesdays and Thursdays, Government business take precedence of all motions and Orders of the Day on Wednesday, 29th September, and each alternate Wednesday thereafter.*

This motion is following the usual practice that, as we approach the end of each session, Government business takes precedence of private members' business on Wednesdays in each alternate week. A glance at the Notice Papers of the past few days will satisfy anyone that private members have pretty well exhausted their desire for the discussion of subjects in which they are particularly interested, and seeing that we are nearing the end of the session, it is desirable that Government business should take precedence at least once a fortnight.

Mr. CARPENTER (Fremantle) [4.41]: I am sorry the Minister has apparently taken it for granted that there is no private members' business on the Notice Paper worthy of consideration. I hold the contrary opinion. Anyone looking at the Notice Paper to-day will see that there is not a very great deal of Government business which appears to be of importance. But there are some matters under the heading of private members' business which ought to be discussed, and which are really Government business.

In view of the statement made by the Minister for Lands just now, that possibly we may not be here this day fortnight, the motion, if carried, will mean that we have to-day, and to-day only, for the discussion of private business. I agree with the practice of cutting private members' business down towards the end of an ordinary session; but this is not an ordinary session. We have recognised all through that the ordinary business has been suspended, and we have dealt mostly with non-controversial matters. Under these circumstances, considering that the Government have purposely neglected to introduce many things which they otherwise would have introduced, I think it would be well if they gave private members the balance of Wednesday sittings until the end of the session. It does not mean much to the Government to give up one Wednesday, but it means a good deal to private members that one Wednesday should be taken from them, and as we may not be here more than two or three Wednesdays, the Government will be well advised not to press the motion.

Mr. MALE (Kimberley) [4.43]: It is my intention to make a similar protest. There are many important matters yet to be considered, and, as pointed out by Mr. Carpenter, if the remark made by the Minister for Lands be correct, this is the last opportunity private members will have of discussing private business in the House this year. The Acting Premier declared that there is not much work on the Notice Paper; but we have no guarantee that there will not be much work on the Paper. I find notices are to be given to-day for four new Bills. They will take a certain amount of time. One of them—the amendment to the Land Act—will take considerable time, and I think, in fairness to members, it is only right that we should have a little more notice than practically none at all that private members' day is to cease for this session, for that is what the motion practically amounts to. The Minister comes here this afternoon and tells us that private members' day ceases until the end of the session, which the Minister for Lands

says will finish in a fortnight. It is unreasonable and I shall vote against the motion.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Perth) [4.45]: I think the protest entered by the hon. member who has just spoken is quite a reasonable one. After all it is no excuse for the Minister for Mines to say that there are not many private members' motions on the Notice Paper. If that is so he can have no objection to private members' day going on, because Government business will then continue in just the same way as if there was no private members' day. Private members are to be afforded no other opportunity after to-day of bringing any matter forward in which they are interested. According to the Minister for Lands the session will close in a fortnight and this is the last day that will be given to private members.

The Minister for Lands: I said we might not be here.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: Private members are entitled to have an opportunity of bringing forward any matters which seem to them of vital importance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford) [4.46]: This motion, which is brought in every session at about this stage of the session, is brought in as a rule immediately after the Estimates are presented. A motion of this description is moved with the idea of finishing the session in order to meet the convenience of members. So far as the notices on the Paper to-day are concerned, they become orders of the day. If they are sufficiently important it is always possible to make arrangements by which any special notice of motion will receive the attention of the House. If the hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Carpenter) thinks that there is any motion on the Notice Paper for which he desires special attention this can be arranged for. If anything happens, between now and the close of the session, of some public importance arrangements can always be made for it to be discussed. It is the usual practice when arriving at this stage in the session to bring forward

a motion of this description, and for the Government to take control of the Notice Paper and so arrange it that Government business will be continued on each day unless something important crops up. Even if an order of the day is of a private nature it can be discussed if its importance deserves it. Failing this, Government business will take precedence.

Mr. THOMSON (Katanning) [4.48]: I must also oppose the motion. There may be several notices which are of vital importance to the particular member interested. I take it we shall have to get special permission from the House in future to bring anything forward, or we shall have to move the adjournment of the House to enable us to do so.

The Minister for Lands: The Government never refuse to afford an opportunity for discussing any matter of importance.

Mr. THOMSON: I think at the present stage we should not pass this motion and I am going to vote for private members' day to be retained.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [4.49]. It is quite true it is the usual practice for the Government, when they come within a short distance of finishing the session, to so arrange the Notice Paper that Government business shall take precedence over the business of private members. I feel somewhat reluctant to oppose a motion of this sort knowing that it is for the Government to control the business of the House, especially at this stage.

The Minister for Lands: Practically the only legislation to be introduced is now on the Notice Paper.

Mr. Male: Four new Bills are to be introduced to-day.

The Minister for Lands: It is practically all on the Notice Paper now.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The Government yet have to bring down the Appropriation Bill.

The Minister for Lands: That always comes at the end of the session.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It seems to me to be full early to bring a motion of this sort forward.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: The Government have only just introduced the Estimates.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: It is true we have only just begun to consider our Estimates for the ensuing year. These will want some consideration before they are passed. I think the Minister might well let the matter stand over until next week.

Mr. Carpenter: Make it the first week in October.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: We shall then see how we get on, and if it is necessary in order to get through the business to give up private members' day. If we wait till then I do not think anyone will object.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: (Hon. P. Collier—Boulder—in reply) [4.51]: I am rather surprised at the position which hon. members have thought fit to take up.

Mr. Male: Not more than we are.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I was under the impression that I was meeting the wishes of hon. members by bringing forward this motion.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I can well understand that.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There has never been a day when the House has been sitting but that one has been asked by practically every member of the House why the Government do not push on with the business and bring the session to a close. They have asked us why we keep them hanging about discussing various matters when the House should be closed up. This is the sort of thing we have heard constantly of late, and yet now when we bring forward this motion, which is designed to enable the Government to comply with the wishes of hon. members, we have opposition from them and strange to say from some private members who have not worried the House with any private business during the past two or three months that we have been open. This motion was not brought forward at any earlier stage of this session than it is usually brought forward in other sessions. We are just as near to the close of the session this

year as we have been in former years when a similar motion has been submitted. I say it is quite reasonable to ask that at least once a fortnight should be sufficient for private members during the remainder of the session. The hon. member for Fremantle (Mr. Carpenter) is quite wrong in assuming that I think that there is no private member's business of sufficient importance to call for the attention of the House. I did not say so. I take it that private members' business now on the Notice Paper will be cleared off to-day. I think I can safely say that the House will not be closed down by this day fortnight, when the next private members' day will come round. Thus there will be ample opportunity, judging by private members' business which has been brought forward in the past, to discuss it all, even to enable the reports of the select committees and other bodies, which the House will be called upon to discuss, to be brought before members. In view of the expressed desire on the part of all members that the session should not be needlessly prolonged it is only reasonable that the Government should ask them to be content with one day a fortnight for private business for the remainder of the session.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Then you do not agree with your colleague?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I am afraid my colleague is somewhat optimistic in thinking that we shall close down on this day fortnight.

The Minister for Lands: It is quite possible.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I scarcely think that we shall do so. That being the case members will have another day on which to discuss matters which they desire to bring forward. I, therefore, hope the House will agree to the motion.

The Attorney General: Possibly they will have two more days.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, it is quite likely they will have two more days on which to discuss private business.

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

Ayes	..	..	..	18
Noes	..	..	..	11

Majority for .. 7

#### AYES.

Mr. Chesson	Mr. Munsie
Mr. Collier	Mr. Nairn
Mr. Foley	Mr. Smith
Mr. Jas. Gardiner	Mr. B. J. Stubbs
Mr. Griffiths	Mr. Thomas
Mr. Heilmann	Mr. Underwood
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Walker
Mr. McDowall	Mr. Wansbrough
Mr. Mullany	Mr. O'Loughlin

(Teller).

#### NOES.

Mr. Carpenter	Mr. Lefroy
Mr. Connolly	Mr. Plesse
Mr. Cunningham	Mr. Thomson
Mr. George	Mr. Veryard
Mr. Gilchrist	Mr. Male
Mr. Hickmott	

(Teller).

Motion thus passed.

#### BILLS (4)—FIRST READING.

1. Land Act Amendment.
2. Control of Trade in War Time Continuance.
3. Roads Closure.
4. Postponement of Debts Continuance.

#### MOTION—SINKING FUNDS AND CURRENT LOANS.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [5.1]: I move—

*That it is undesirable that any alteration or interference with the system of dealing with the sinking funds attached to current loans should be made.*

The reason for bringing this motion before the House is in consequence of remarks made by the Premier the other evening in which he put forward what is a novel scheme for dealing with the sinking funds of the State. When loans have been put on the market by this

State, the advantages in connection with those loans have been placed before investors and one of the advantages that the Government of this State put forward is that it is advisable to make arrangements for the redemption of the different loans and that they should set by each year a certain sinking fund. This fund is placed in the hands of trustees whose duty is to carefully watch the market and when favourable opportunities present themselves to purchase stocks of the Government at below the prices at which that stock was issued. Our stocks have been issued at various figures at from £95 to £97. There have been fluctuations in the market when the stocks have been quoted lower. I am not able to say what the price quoted to-day is but no doubt it is considerably lower than when the loan was issued, consequently if the trustees of the sinking fund had funds in hand they would be able to purchase at a much lower price than at which the bonds could be redeemed. I notice that the amount given in the Public Accounts, on page 116, shows that the total investments amount to over four millions of money. So far I have not been able to discover in the investment of those four millions how much is represented by our stock; but I do not think I should be exaggerating if I stated that the purchases of our own stock would probably represent something like three and a half millions of money. Anything that would tend to cause unquietness or uneasiness in the investment of our stock is to be deprecated and this matter should be jealously guarded by the House. Although we may not be able just now to float loans, we certainly require more money, but we cannot float loans on the London market; still the people who fix up our loans, the underwriters and their clients keep a close watch on the financial position of each State and I am satisfied that anything which comes forward from the Treasurer of the State indicating that he has even thought of an onslaught on the sinking funds which have been set aside for the purpose of doing the best possible

thing in purchasing our stocks, would be regarded as an item of weakness and on which great suspicion would fall. The words of the Premier are not likely to reassure anyone who heard them or who will have the report of this debate put before them. For example the Premier stated—

This money, I think, could be used to greater advantage, by being returned to the State for urgent financial works, and by giving the sinking fund trustees Treasury bills or inscribed stock maturing before the date that the sinking fund will be required to redeem the stock for which it was created.

I very much question if there is any warrant or precedent for the Treasurer of the State endeavouring to get hold of the savings of the people—for that is what they are, and they are set apart with a particular object—and to use them for urgent works at the present time. It seems very much like an ill-matured idea on the part of the Premier and not calculated to enhance the financial status of Western Australia on the London market. Again the Premier stated—

I intend approaching the sinking fund trustees and requesting them to make available this sum for State requirements in the manner mentioned.

He does not make any bones about it. He states straight out that the trustees have money and if he got it he would use it for the financial requirements of the State, ignoring the fact that he is taking the money from the taxpayers of the State which has been set apart for a specific object and that advantage should be taken of any circumstances that come along to enable one hundred pound bonds of the State to be purchased for less money, rendering it possible at the time the loans mature for a considerably less capital to be found by the people of the State. Again the Premier stated, and there is no mistake as to his meaning—

As I say, I intend approaching the sinking fund trustees with a request that they make available this sum for

State requirements in the manner mentioned, namely, by issuing Treasury bills or inscribed stock for the amounts stated.

In other words he proposes to take from these gentlemen the funds that are to be used for the reduction of the debt and he intends to increase the debt by issuing inscribed stock or Treasury bills. That seems to me to be financially immoral, I can use no other words. The hon. member for Irwin interjected, "For the sinking fund you are going to give them fresh bonds" and the Premier replied "Yes, and that will make that amount available as a new loan rate." In other words, instead of bringing in an ordinary loan Bill and making loan appropriation, the Premier will be in the position of obtaining loans from the trustees to meet the urgent requirements of the State. Again the Premier said that instead of these gentlemen using the money for purchasing existing stock he would ask them to use the money for taking up new bonds, that is that the trustees are to use the money to take new bonds, thus creating a fresh liability. At the time I interjected that that would be a deliberate breach of faith with the bond holders and I hold that view now.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! I am afraid I shall have to call the hon. member to order as the whole subject is directly contrary to Standing Order 123. I have been endeavouring to allow the hon. member to proceed without this restriction, but I am afraid I must apply the Standing Order. It says—

No member shall allude to any debate of the same Session, upon a Question or Bill not being then under discussion, except by the indulgence of the House for personal explanation.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The hon. member can argue the question without referring to the previous debate.

Mr. GEORGE: But it is necessary to refer to the reasons.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am afraid I cannot allow the hon. member to do that, but there is no reason why the hon. member cannot argue the principle.

Mr. GEORGE: I have no more quotations to make, but following on what I have already said it is undesirable that any alteration should be made in our present system. I have endeavoured to show to the House that in the issues of these loans a sinking fund is provided and that is held out as one of the inducements to investors, giving them as it were an additional security that the money they have loaned will be redeemed probably before the expiration of the period for which the money was loaned. Whatever may be the view of the Treasurer as to future loans that may be brought before the House and probably adopted, any interference with what has gone before and which bears the sign manual of the State is undesirable. I bring this matter forward so that members can express an opinion in regard to it. I may state I believe that the hon. member for Irwin will agree with me that it is a very unsafe thing indeed to attempt in the slightest degree to depreciate the security which has been given to anyone from whom we have borrowed money. If a man is dealing with a bank, he must be open and frank, and if it comes to the ears of the manager of the bank that the client is not acting up to his agreements then difficulties arise. If our securities are depreciated and there is any alteration in the statements which are placed before the investing public, naturally reaction will take place. With the bond holders the only reaction which can take place is that they may take fright. They may state, "Here is the Government proposing to alter the conditions on which we have lent the money; we do not know how far they intend to go." Therefore the bond holders may take fright in regard to the matter and even if they do not throw their bonds on the market, one thing is very certain, that when the next loan is placed on the market any proposal from the Government of Western Australia will be viewed with very grave concern, not only by the clients themselves, but by those who do the investing for them. It is well known these bonds are taken up by underwriters and they have for years

looked upon the Western Australian securities, and the sinking fund attached, as something like gilt-edged securities. Western Australian securities have been taken up on absolutely better terms than stocks issued by neighbouring States. I feel very jealous that any attempt should be even hinted at to interfere with arrangements which have been made. I therefore place this motion before the House hoping that hon. members will see it in the same light as I do. Probably other hon. members who know more about the subject than I do will further enlighten us and assist me in intimating to the Treasurer that it is unwise to monkey with the security of this State's investments. One of the trustees of the Sinking Fund, I understand, is the Agent General, and the other I believe is a banker in London. If that is the case, whatever the Government may be able to do so far as the Agent General is concerned, it will be difficult for them to persuade a London banker that action such as has been indicated should be taken.

The Minister for Lands: Are you insinuating that the Agent General may be influenced?

Mr. GEORGE: I am not insinuating anything.

The Minister for Lands: Why do you discriminate between the two?

Mr. GEORGE: I only said that I was quite certain so far as the London banker was concerned that he would have to be satisfied of the gravity of the question before he would consent to a proposal of the kind indicated. I have not made any insinuation in regard to the Agent General.

The Minister for Lands: You are discriminating.

Mr. GEORGE: The Minister himself is very good at making insinuations but he need not interrupt me; he will have an opportunity of replying. The Agent General is in a position in which he can be communicated with by the Government of the State.

Hon. Frank Wilson: He is more amenable.

Mr. GEORGE: Exactly; he is more amenable in this way, that the Govern-

ment would probably put arguments before him which they would shrink from putting before a London banker. The Agent General would receive the views of the Government in a wider sense than would probably be the case in connection with the other trustee of the Sinking Fund, and the Agent General would look at the position from the knowledge that he possesses of Western Australia rather than from the banker's point of view, which would be that of pounds, shillings and pence.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. W. D. Johnson—Guildford): I move—  
*That the debate be adjourned.*

May I be permitted to state that when I am replying to the Budget debate I propose to deal with this matter in the absence of the Treasurer, and if it is then considered that the motion should be further discussed, the Government will give the House an opportunity of doing so. We want to avoid a double debate.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex): I do not want to object to the adjournment provided the Minister will give the undertaking that an opportunity will be afforded the House to discuss this motion later on.

The Minister for Lands: After the Budget debate, if it is considered necessary.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Who will consider it necessary? We consider it is necessary that there should be a debate. I give my assurance to the Minister now that I consider that we should conclude the debate.

The Minister for Lands: I am quite prepared to have it discussed.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: That is a promise.

The Minister for Lands: Yes.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The only promise he has ever made.

Motion put and passed.

## PAPERS—POLICE FORCE AND DRINKING IN HOTELS.

Mr. O'LOUGHLIN (Forrest) [5.20]: The motion standing in my name reads—

*"That all papers dealing with General Order re drunkenness in the Police*

*Force, and issued in August, 1912, be laid upon the Table of the House."*

At the suggestion of the Honorary Minister, I desire to amend the motion so that it will read—

*"That all papers dealing with instructions by the Commissioner of Police respecting the members of the police force in the metropolitan area in connection with drinking in hotels while in uniform, be laid on the table of the House."*

Motion by leave of the House amended.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Will you not make some explanation as to why you want these papers?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: Is it necessary?

Hon. Frank Wilson: I should think so.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I had occasion a few days ago to raise the question in this House regarding a certain member of the police force. On that occasion I was defeated by a vote of the House and the object I had in view, namely, the appointment of a Select Committee, was not carried into effect. During the discussion I pointed out that the particular individual for whom I was pleading had been penalised on many occasions. I do not want the papers with the object of finding out whether the action he took on that particular occasion in connection with 54 other constables in the metropolitan area was one of the reasons why the Commissioner penalised him.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Was that the only reason why he was dismissed or retired?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: He was not retired. This was one reason why the Commissioner was penalising this particular officer.

Mr. Heitmann: The Commissioner was unfavourably inclined towards him.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I take it if an hon. member desires to move for papers, with the object of gaining further information in regard to any matter he is quite justified in doing so. I did not intend to debate this motion because I did not think it was necessary to do so.

Hon. Frank Wilson: What was the instruction of the Commissioner of Police?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: The instruction was that certain police in the metropolitan district were drinking in hotels in uniform and their action became a positive scandal.

Hon. Frank Wilson: That was a statement.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: An instruction was issued by the Commissioner to the police in the metropolitan area—

Hon. Frank Wilson: Do you object to that?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN: I object to it because the Commissioner should have dealt with the guilty ones rather than cast a reflection on all. My object is simply to get the file so that I may have occasion to follow it up at a later stage if a reflection has been made against the sober members of the force. The instruction was resented to the extent that 54 members of the police force signed a protest against it and I want to find out whether the instruction was justified or not. Personally I do not think it was, but I want to get full particulars before I place the blame on the Commissioner.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON (Williams-Narogin) [5-25]: I second the motion.

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister) [5-26]: Following the usual course adopted by this Government I shall be only too pleased to give all the information I can to the hon. member. I desired the hon. member to amend his motion because as it was it would have created a false impression. If it had gone out that the order was in regard to drunkenness in the police force that would have been wrong. There is no general drunkenness in the police force, but the instruction issued was to prevent the police while in uniform going into hotels.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Was not that regulation already in existence?

Hon. R. H. UNDERWOOD (Honorary Minister): The administration of it became somewhat lax. The papers will explain the position from the Commissioner's point of view, and I think those who are interested in the case should have the information which is on the



file, and I have much pleasure in agreeing to the motion.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [5-28]: I am amazed at the complacency of the Government in regard to this motion. I have bitter recollections of asking for papers and information on many occasions in this House and being refused, and refused, too, rather brusquely. Here we have a motion put forward without any justification so far as I can gather from the hon. member's remarks, if he will forgive me for saying so, and the Minister gets up and says, "We will follow the usual practice of giving all papers and all information hon. members require." The conversion of the Government even at the eleventh hour is very refreshing. I suspect there is some motive in connection with this matter when the Honorary Minister rises and agrees to give the Commissioner's confidential file to the public. I would like to know what he is up to. We gather from the remarks of the member for Forrest that he is dissatisfied with the action of this House on a previous occasion when his motion for a Select Committee was defeated.

Mr. O'Loughlen: I do not want to repeat it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Therefore he takes this means of getting round it. He will obtain the papers and then frame some other motion.

Mr. Munsie: Have you always let a subject drop after you have been defeated?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Not always. The hon. member is taking this action for the one special purpose of vindicating an officer's troubles and the Minister is conniving at it. I have a strong objection to these papers being placed on the Table of the House. I think it will establish a bad precedent which I shall be sorry to follow when I once more assume the administration of the affairs of the State. The Commissioner has issued a general instruction because he has had complaints that members of the police force in uniform have been in the habit of entering public houses

to indulge in drinking and the instruction is, that it is not to occur again in the future. Is not that a right thing to do?

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Absolutely.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Will anyone take exception to that? Why should the papers be placed on the Table?

Mr. O'Loughlen: Why object to it if it is the right thing?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Why should the Minister agree to have these instructions, which, I take it, are being issued from time to time, placed on the Table on the flimsy pretext that the hon. member has put forth, that he did not receive a just decision by the House on a previous occasion?

The Attorney General: If we refused, you would say there were more secrets.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No, I would not.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): A policy of hush.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I think the hon. member should give some better justification than that this House declined to grant him a select committee.

Mr. O'Loughlen: You will recognise my limitations, I hope.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I would suggest that he go to the Minister and peruse the file if he wishes to see what the instruction was. Probably he could get it from one of the officers to whom it was sent.

Mr. Heitmann: It is very graceful of you to suggest that much.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If I had been in charge of the department, the hon. member could have come to me and seen the instruction. Perhaps the doors are closed to him as they have been to me.

The Attorney General: That is unjust and not right. They have not been closed to you.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: They have. I am afraid to walk up the Treasury steps because it is immediately reported to the Premier that I have been seen in the office.

Mr. Bolton : But you are a suspicious character.

Hon. FRANK WILSON : That is what I take exception to. If I wish to go to the Lands Office, I have to go around to Cathedral-avenue so as not to be seen approaching by the front entrance. I am sorry the hon. member has evidently been treated in the same way. No case has been made out for the production of these papers. I do not think the hon. member ought to find fault with the decision of this House. If his object is to get behind that decision, members ought to refuse to agree to this motion. Again, I would point out that, when motions have been moved on dozens of occasions by members on this side of the House, seeking papers on much better grounds than have been adduced to-day, they have been refused.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister) : When were you refused ?

Mr. George : What about the powellising papers ?

Hon. FRANK WILSON : We were refused last session on several occasions.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN (Forrest—In reply) [5-34] : I regret if there was any ambiguity about my remarks or if I failed in my effort to justify the adoption of this motion. When I discussed the matter the other evening, perhaps rather too lengthily, I spoke of the individual whose case I was fighting. I referred to various incidents in his career and this general order to which I took exception I knew was in existence. It was issued by the Commissioner of Police and approved by the Minister.

Hon. Frank Wilson : A very proper order.]

Mr. O'LOGHLEN : It might be a very proper order in my opinion after I have perused the papers, but I have not yet seen the papers, and I am not able, therefore, to judge of the order or its effect.

Hon. Frank Wilson : You have the entree to the office.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN : I do not want to go to the office of the Commissioner of Police if on a formal motion like this

to which the Minister does not object I can secure the information desired. I do not see why the leader of the Opposition should object to the motion.

Hon. Frank Wilson : I have a perfect right to.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN : The leader of the Opposition thinks he has been badly treated. I challenge him to mention an instance this session when he called for papers and was refused.

Members : What about last session ?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN : I challenge him to mention two instances last session when he was refused.

Hon. Frank Wilson : I could mention more.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN : It is not right that the leader of the Opposition should be refused information if he asks for papers.

Hon. Frank Wilson : You never backed me up. You voted against me.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN : I have no recollection of it.

The Attorney General : Neither has anyone else.

Mr. O'LOGHLEN : If any hon. member asks for information or papers on a motion which is treated as formal and it is to lead to a discussion of two or three hours, I do not blame Ministers for objecting, but when any member tables a motion for papers and it is treated as formal, it ill becomes the leader of the Opposition to protest. However, I am indifferent about it.

Hon. Frank Wilson : Then why did you move it ?

Mr. O'LOGHLEN : I thought the papers would give me the information I am seeking. If it is thought that my proposition is an improper one, I will bow to the will of the House. I am prepared to let it go to a vote of the House and if the hon. member is game to divide, we shall then see the result. I have not been treated differently from other members. If any member seeks information on a matter of this kind by moving for the production of papers, he will receive my support.

Question put and passed.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister) laid the papers on the Table.

## MOTION—DISSENT FROM CHAIRMAN'S RULING.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [5·36]: I move—

*That the decision of the Chairman of Committees (Mr. McDowall) on Tuesday, the 14th September, in reference to the point of order raised by the member for Murray-Wellington, was contrary to the Standing Orders, and not likely to conduce to the proper conduct of the business of this Chamber.*

It is with some amount of regret that I have to ask the House to consider this question, because I think I have invariably bowed to the ruling of the Chair, not only when occupied by yourself, Mr. Speaker, but when occupied by the Chairman of Committees. But the circumstances in which this motion has arisen are of a nature which the House should take into consideration, not so far as personalities are concerned, but from the point of view of the privileges of the House. The Standing Orders provide that, if a member rises to a point of order, the member who has been addressing the House shall immediately resume his seat pending the discussion of the point of order. In the present case, a point of order was raised and, instead of the member who was addressing the House resuming his seat, he became somewhat objectionable to the member who rose to the point of order. The point of order involved was whether a member addressing the House was entitled to use objectionable or offensive language to any other member of the House. It was then raised by the member to whom the objectionable words had been used on a point of order to the Chairman, and the Chairman decided that there was nothing in the point of order. In fact, the Chairman ordered the hon. member to resume his seat and afterwards stated that there was no point of order. A good deal of interjecting was going on at the time, and it is possible the Chairman might have been a little flurried in dealing with the matter. I think the hon. member had not uttered more than another twenty words when the member rose

to make an appeal to the Speaker, and he was then told that the objection should have been raised at the time and that he had no redress. I think the House will say that, when a point of order is raised, it should not be dealt with so summarily as that. There can be no question that the point of order was raised, because attention was directed to the abusive and offensive language, and the rules of the House provide that no member shall use such language towards another member, and they provide also for the words to be taken down, and, if necessary, reported to yourself and the member dealt with if he declines to withdraw. This is the case I place before the House. It is with considerable regret that I find it necessary to move this motion, but, unless such matters are carefully guarded, the privileges of the House will be trenched upon in a way which might hardly be conducive to the proper conduct of the business of the House. It is quite possible that the interjections at the time flurried the Chairman, and that, for the moment perhaps he was not fully seized of the far-reaching effect of his action. I have brought the motion forward so that the matter may be clearly understood, and so that we shall have a guide for the future.

Mr. McDOWALL (Coolgardie) [5·41]: I must certainly compliment the hon. member on the very temperate manner in which he moved his motion, but I think it would have been very much better if he had never brought it forward. The hon. member has told us that the Standing Orders must be upheld. He read a portion of Standing Order 140, and then pointed out that the Premier, who was the member speaking at the time, should have resumed his seat while the point of order was decided. We are all perfectly well aware of that. There can be no argument on that question, and members usually take their seats when a point of order is raised. But, supposing the member addressing the House does not actually do so at the moment, it is customary for the member raising the point of order to mention the matter to the

Speaker or the Chairman, and ask his intervention for that member to take his seat. I am sorry to say that the member for Murray-Wellington, who is a stickler for the Standing Orders, and who says this thing, that thing and the other which do not conduce to the orderly conduct of the business of the Chamber, should be the very first to forget the Standing Orders. Let him look at Standing Order 140, which begins :

Upon a question of order being raised, the member called to order shall resume his seat.

I have searched this Standing Order in vain to find that, if the member addressing the House had uttered only 18 or 19 words, it was competent for another member to take charge of the Chamber and exclaim—"Sit down, sir! When I rise to a point of order, you should take your seat." "I"! Not, "When any person rises"; but, "When I rise." The hon. member has to a certain extent disarmed me by his meekness. I certainly did not expect that quality from him. I feel very much inclined to debate the matter seriously, notwithstanding what the hon. member has said. He does me the credit of saying that it is possible I was flustered. It was certainly an occasion on which one might be flustered. After carefully and calmly reviewing the whole of the circumstances, however, I must confess that under the same conditions I should have to do again exactly as I did on that occasion. I was not flustered to any material extent, and fortunately the possession of a little common sense enabled me to grasp, I hope, a thing fairly quickly. I consider that in the circumstances there was no alternative to my action. I wish to state that I did not order the member for Murray-Wellington to sit down because he rose to a point of order. I ordered the member for Murray-Wellington to be seated because he was disorderly in raising that point of order. The hon. member assumed the functions of the Chair. He attempted to take the command of the Chamber out of my hands—certainly not a proper thing to do. It meant that the Chamber had

to be commanded either by myself, or by the member for Murray-Wellington; and in my opinion the latter was unthinkable. The hon. member is credited with having said—

Our Standing Orders fully uphold my view, and his Honour the Speaker is of the same opinion.

Considering that you, Sir, were not present, I think you will admit that it would be very awkward for you to express such an opinion. I do not know whether you did express that opinion or not; but, if you did express it in private, I certainly think the member for Murray-Wellington is very ill-advised to make use of your confidence. It seems to me an entirely improper proceeding. I would not on any consideration betray to the public Press anything that you might have said to me in connection with this matter. In my opinion, hon. members should in the corridors and elsewhere be able to speak to each other without feeling that there will be the slightest risk of breach of confidence in any way whatsoever. The member for Murray-Wellington is further credited with having said—

I have no desire to make a fuss over this matter, but the Standing Orders must be respected.

I am in thorough accord with the hon. member there. I certainly believe that the Standing Orders must be respected. But why did not the hon. member respect the Standing Orders? Then this trouble would not have occurred. Nearly the whole of the trouble in Parliament is caused by interjections, and when the interjections are against the Standing Orders the effect must be doubly bad. Now, according to the Standing Orders of which the member for Murray-Wellington has such perfect knowledge—and he must therefore be aware of this—one of the very worst forms of interjections is misrepresentation, the imputation of improper motives, and matters of that nature. What led to the present trouble was the imputation of motives against the Premier. The member for Murray-Wellington imputed that the Premier was doing a certain thing. I noted the interjection at the

time ; but I wish to point out, further, that it is customary to listen to the Budget speech almost in silence.

Hon. Frank Wilson : You were not accustomed to listen to mine in silence.

Mr. McDOWALL : Let the leader of the Opposition search *Hansard* for a few years back, and he will find that he had a really good time so far as interjections were concerned.

Hon. Frank Wilson : I had a good time ?

Mr. McDOWALL : When delivering the Budget speech. I am referring only to the delivery of the Budget speech. The leader of the Opposition did have a few interjections last night—

Hon. Frank Wilson : A few ?

Mr. McDOWALL : But it was not during the delivery of a Budget speech. It was during the discussion on the Estimates—an entirely different thing. During the Budget speech of 1913 there were only two interjections by the member for Hannans (Mr. Munsie) and two by the then member for Canning, Mr. Lewis. In 1914, there was only one interjection, by the leader of the Opposition. It will be seen that the custom is to refrain from interjecting during the Budget speech.

Hon. Frank Wilson : But what interjections were there in 1911, 1910, and 1909 ? You have not gone back far enough.

Mr. McDOWALL : I have gone back only to 1913, though I have in my pocket a few notes which would take me back slightly further. However, let us refer to the last Budget speech. There had been twenty interjections up to the time of the disturbance. Of those interjections seven were made by the member for Murray-Wellington, five by the member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell), five by the member for Irwin (Mr. Jas. Gardiner), one by the member for Williams-Narrogin (Mr. E. B. Johnston), and one by the leader of the Country party (Mr. Willmott), and one by the Minister for Works.

Mr. George : They were all relevant to the subject.

Mr. McDOWALL : Exactly. I just desire to call the attention of the member

for Murray-Wellington to the few interjections which he made, principally in regard to the sinking fund. If the hon. member can show me that those interjections were helpful to the debate, that they were made for the purpose of eliciting information, then I shall say that he had some reason for interjecting.

Mr. SPEAKER : Order ! What the hon. member may have said during the debate has no application to the question under discussion, except such portion as gave cause for the present motion. I hope the member for Coolgardie (Mr. McDowall) will not discuss any other part of the debate.

Mr. McDOWALL : I maintain, Sir, that practically every interjection has to do with this particular question. All the interjections led up to this question, and there were two or three nasty interjections, the last of which compelled the Premier to retort. I shall not take up many seconds in referring to this phase of the matter.

Mr. George : That opens up the debate to me when replying.

Mr. McDOWALL : The motion is one of censure on me, to all intents and purposes. Surely I should have some latitude.

Mr. SPEAKER : Order ! I do not think that any interjection made prior to the raising of the point of order by the member for Murray-Wellington has any bearing on the subject matter of this discussion, because the Chairman did not take exception to any interjection. The trouble did not arise out of a number of interjections, but out of one interjection by the member for Murray-Wellington, and that interjection was not taken exception to by the Chairman. The matter passed off, and nothing further happened until the member for Murray-Wellington rose to a point of order. His rising to the point of order has occasioned the present discussion. In my opinion this discussion should be confined to three points—firstly, the Premier's remark, which the member for Murray-Wellington deemed disorderly ; secondly, the rising of the member for Murray-Wellington to a point of order ; thirdly, the Chairman's refusal to con-

sider the point of order. All the circumstances in those three connections can be discussed. It would not be wise for me to allow reference to any interjections during the course of the debate referred to, because those interjections have no relevancy to this matter.

Mr. McDOWALL: You surely do not decide, Mr. Speaker, that the interjection immediately preceding the point of order has nothing to do with this question: If so, I may just as well sit down.

Mr. SPEAKER: Can the member for Coolgardie (Mr. McDowall) indicate to me the interjections to which he desires to refer?

Mr. McDOWALL: An interjection made by the member for Murray-Wellington caused the retort of the Premier, and consequently caused the member for Murray-Wellington to rise to a point of order. If I may not mention that interjection, my speech will be like the play of Hamlet without the melancholy Dane. That interjection, it must be understood, was the whole cause of the disturbance. Had that interjection not been made, there would have been no disturbance whatever.

Mr. SPEAKER: I admit that that interjection would have some relation to the circumstances of the matter which subsequently arose. The member for Murray-Wellington interjected—

It would be a deliberate breach of faith with the bond-holders. Thereupon the Premier said—

That is absolutely incorrect, and the hon. member ought to be ashamed of himself.

The interjection would have much to do with the circumstances which gave rise to a point of order taken by the member for Murray-Wellington. I do not, however, wish members to discuss other interjections in that debate.

Mr. McDOWALL: There is another interjection on the same subject, but I do not wish to transgress in any way whatever. At the same time, I certainly think I have a right to put the case fairly and squarely before the House. In point of fact, as I have already stated, the tone of the member for

Murray-Wellington this afternoon has caused me to change the tone of my speech entirely. Had his speech been different, my speech would have been entirely different also, if you, Sir, had allowed me to proceed. Let us consider this matter calmly and dispassionately, and come to the cause of the disturbance, the interjection of the member for Murray-Wellington—

It would be a deliberate breach of faith with the bond-holders.

That is certainly an unparliamentary expression. It is certainly a statement that we would ask to be withdrawn—a statement made while the Premier is delivering the Budget speech to the members of this House, and through this House to the country, and to the bond-holders in England. A statement that a deliberate breach of faith with the bond holders is contemplated by the Premier is certainly a highly disorderly statement. It is extremely offensive to accuse the Premier of contemplating a breach of faith with the bondholders.

Mr. GEORGE: On a point of order. Standing Order 131 provides that no member shall use offensive or unbecoming words to any other member of the House. I contend that my interjection does not come within the meaning of that Standing Order.

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member cannot raise that point at this stage, because the interjection has not been made just now.

Mr. McDOWALL: That was the interjection used by the hon. member. The Premier very modestly replied "That is absolutely incorrect, and the hon. member ought to be ashamed of himself for making such a statement publicly." I want particularly to draw attention to the fact that the Premier's reply was qualified. Were I to jump up and, without anything going before or coming after, say to an hon. member savagely, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself," it might be deemed to be offensive. But, considering the interjection by the hon. member immediately preceding the Premier's retort, and that the Premier's retort was qualified to the extent that

he only said the hon. member ought to be ashamed of himself for making such a statement publicly, namely, that the Premier contemplated a breach of faith with the bondholders—

Mr. George: I never made such a statement.

Mr. McDOWALL: Read *Hansard*. There it is absolutely to the word. "It would be a deliberate breach of faith with the bondholders."

Mr. George: That is quite correct.

Mr. McDOWALL: And in reply the Premier told the hon. member that for making such a statement publicly he ought to be ashamed of himself. That is really my point, namely, that the nature of the interjection and the qualification of the retort rendered the point of order absolutely frivolous. There was nothing in it, and I decided that way. I directed the hon. member to resume his seat before I came to the point of order, because he was disorderly, under Standing Order 136, in interrupting a member while speaking, and again in ordering the Premier to be seated. That sort of thing could not possibly be tolerated. If it were to be tolerated there would be nothing to prevent any hon. member from rising to his feet, exclaiming "On a point of order!" and bidding the member who was speaking to "Sit down, Sir." Why, the place would be like Bedlam! Therefore, I claim that under the provocation I was perfectly right, that indeed I had no other course than to tell the hon. member to resume his seat, for having told another hon. member to sit down. He had no right to take that function on himself.

Mr. George: Do you assert you did it for that reason?

Mr. McDOWALL: Absolutely. The point of order was decided afterwards. I said there was nothing in the point of order, anyhow. When the point of order came up there was a certain amount of heat displayed, but at the same time I could see instantly that with the interjection and the retort, with its qualification, the hon. member could scarcely claim that his was a legitimate point of order. It seemed to me entirely frivolous, and when we read *Hansard* and

see the interjection of the hon. member and the qualified retort of the Premier we feel that if it is not all perfectly clear we ought to get someone to frame a new dictionary of baby words. From *Hansard* of a year or two ago I could read some splendid things the hon. member uttered in connection with the Kalgoorlie seat, lovely expressions, well calculated to preserve order. But as you, Sir, have ruled that I must keep to the point, and as the hon. member has agreed not to make any undue fuss about it, I do not desire to make any fuss either. But I must say that, if placed in the same position again, and the same circumstances arose, I would do exactly as I did then. I make this statement because I do not desire to get out of this on a side issue by saying that I made a mistake, because I do not think I did. Therefore, I had much rather that the House went against me and passed a vote of censure than that I should say what I would know to be untrue. I believe I did the right and proper thing under the circumstances. I therefore trust that the House will not carry the motion.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington—in reply) [6-6]: There is one point about which I think possibly some explanation should be given. The newspaper item was not supplied as it appeared in the Press, namely, as the result of an interview. I had no interview with any pressman on the subject. What happened was this: There came down from the Press gallery a memo. asking me if I could give them any information as to what had led up to the motion. I do not remember stating that I had referred the matter to you, Sir, and that you agreed with me. If I did so I am sorry, for it was injudicious. When the note came down from the Press gallery, I had no idea that my reply was intended for publication, and there was no one more surprised than myself at reading it in the paper next morning. As for the member for Coolgardie (Mr. McDowall) I hope he will not interpret my action as one of unfriendliness to him. I cannot traverse what the hon. member has said, but I have not the slightest doubt that

if I were to take *Hansard* of years back, I would be able to find a number of forceful interjections by the hon. member. However, that does not touch the point of order, and I am not taking up the attitude of one pot calling another kettle black. The point of order was that I rose to draw the attention of the Chairman to a statement made by the Premier, which was personally offensive, very undignified on his part, and absolutely uncalled for. The Standing Order says that no member shall use offensive words to another. That is what I rose upon. The Standing Orders deal very clearly with questions of this sort, and when I rose to a point of order the Premier did not sit down. I admit at once, and if necessary, will apologise to the Chairman on this score, that I directed the Premier to sit down. What I ought to have said was that it was customary for him to sit down in such circumstances. But I maintain that it was the duty of the Chairman to request the member speaking to resume his seat on another member rising to a point of order. Of course, things were a little heated, and that is how the incident came about.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: These recriminations are a waste of money.

Mr. GEORGE: I am not indulging in recrimination at all. If I were put on my trial I would stand for my life before any jury of impartial men on the interjection I made being relevant to the debate. It was one that any hon. member, thinking deeply on the subject of the debate, would be entitled to make. As for it being a warrant for the Premier to forget the respect due to the Chair and to members, it was no warrant at all, and no amount of specious argument could make it so.

Mr. McDowall: Read Standing Order 132.

Mr. GEORGE: The question is, has a member the right to appeal for the protection of the Chair? The Standing Order says he has. I appealed to the Chair on the score of offensive language that had been used. Even supposing that in doing so, and in the heat I naturally felt at being told I ought to be

ashamed of myself—a thing I take from no man—I did transgress the rules of the House, it did not rob me of the protection the Standing Orders give, namely, that the Chairman should take that notice which you, yourself, Sir, are bound to take under the Standing Order. When a member is reported for having used offensive language, it is provided that the House shall deal with him, and if the hon. member declines to withdraw, it is for the Speaker or the Chairman to see that the privileges of the House are maintained. However, I have no particular feeling on the matter now, although I admit I had at the time. I am not now angry about it, and with the permission of the House, I will withdraw the motion. I have now no personal feeling except one of regret that the incident should have occurred. I trust that in future no incident of the sort will occur. If it does, probably it will not have the same termination as this. I hope the hon. member has had the matter impressed on his mind. I have no reason to question his fairness in the Chair. I am sorry the incident has occurred, and for the relief of the House I will withdraw the motion.

Motion by leave withdrawn.

*Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.*

Resolved: That motions be continued.

## JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE, HORSE-RACING CONTROL.

*Interim Report, to adopt.*

Mr. HUDSON (Yilgarn) [7.30]: I move—

*That in the opinion of this House, effect should be given to the recommendations contained in the interim report of the Joint Select Committee on Horse-racing.*

Some time ago, this House appointed a committee for the purpose of inquiring into the control of horse-racing, and it is necessary perhaps for me at this stage to draw the attention of the House to the scope that was allowed that committee in their operations. The committee was ap-



pointed to consider the question of horse-racing within the State, and matters connected therewith, with a view to the subsequent introduction of legislation providing for the control of such matters. It will be seen that the object of the appointment of the committee was not necessarily confined to dealing with horse-racing only. It was to deal with other matters connected therewith. In moving the motion for the appointment of the committee, the Honorary Minister (Mr. R. H. Underwood) told the House that there was a gambling evil in this State which was attendant on horse-racing, and the committee took from the terms of their appointment and the observations of the Honorary Minister who moved for their appointment that they were to inquire into the subject of gambling as it obtained in the way of an evil in our community. There seems to have been a misconception in the minds of some hon. members of this House, and particularly in the mind of the Honorary Minister, that the committee was appointed to inquire into the conduct of horse-racing only. The committee has gone outside that, however, and I contend that we were perfectly justified in doing so in the terms of our appointment. The misconception has arisen probably owing to the interim report which was presented to this House.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Has it been printed?

Mr. HUDSON: It is not usual to have an interim report printed unless there is a special order, and, in view of the fact that there was to come a report of a comprehensive nature, it was proposed that the printing should be delayed until the whole matter was printed in one document. A misconception has arisen apparently in the minds of some hon. members that that was the only report, and that it was the sole result of the efforts of the select committee. That, however, is not so. The committee has gone to a great deal of trouble to obtain information from various sources in the examination of witnesses, and generally in the inspection of racecourses, so as to put itself in a position to give a report which might be of value to this House. There is an-

other misconception which has arisen in the minds of members, and this is owing to a report of Parliament which appeared in one of the papers published in Perth last Sunday, wherein it was stated that the interim report which was presented by the select committee had recommended something to be done which had already been done, and that the committee had recommended the introduction of legislation for the suppression of street betting, and the newspaper went on to say, after reviewing the report, that that law had already obtained in the State and that it had been in existence for 15 years, but that the committee had not yet discovered it. In the last sentence the newspaper report is correct, but in the other two I say it is incorrect. It is true that the committee has not yet discovered the legislation which effectively suppresses street betting in Western Australia. The committee has, as I have said, gone to a great deal of trouble in obtaining information for the purpose of the general report, but deemed it advisable to present this interim report first. Hon. members will remember that it contained the following:—

In view of the proposed early closing of the present session of Parliament, the committee desires to present an interim report with the suggestion that a Bill should be introduced at once, dealing with one phase of the gambling evil attendant on horse-racing. Your committee considered that an Act should be passed immediately for the suppression of street betting. The committee suggests legislation in this connection on similar lines to the "Gaming and Betting Act of 1912," Part 2, of New South Wales, with power to arrest. The committee recommends that the law relating to shop betting be rigidly enforced.

Even the newspaper I have mentioned imagined there was a law in this State which prevented street betting. The committee, however, has been unable to discover it. In fact, we find, on closer examination, that no such law exists.

Mr. Bolton: Hear, hear!

Mr. HUDSON: It is understood that there is such a law. Indeed, the police force have been to some extent condemned for not enforcing a law which was assumed to have existed, in that they have not done their duty in the direction which was indicated by that supposed law. I would like to inform the House that, so far as the committee was able to ascertain, the only law existing in Western Australia for the suppression or repression of street betting is a by-law of the Perth City Council, No. 4. It is in these terms—

Any person who shall frequent or use any street or other public place within the municipality of Perth for or on behalf of himself or any other person for the purposes of bookmaking or betting or wagering with any other person, or paying or receiving or settling bets, shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £20.

It will be seen, therefore, that the law only deals with the offence of frequenting a street for the purpose of betting. During the course of the work which has been performed by the committee and the evidence which has been submitted to it, we have ascertained that the police force are anxious to perform the general duty which devolves upon them, that is of suppressing the gambling evil and removing that nuisance from the streets of Perth. They have appealed to the Government from time to time for power to do this. It rests with them to put into operation the action of this by-law, and it will be readily understood that, when a prosecution takes place against a man and he is charged with frequenting a street for the purpose of betting, the difficulties of proof are obvious. It is not an offence, so far as the committee are aware, for one man to make a wager with another man in the street, but it is, under this by-law, an offence for a person to frequent a street for the purpose of betting. It is clear from the evidence submitted to the committee, that there was not sufficient power for the police authorities to operate for the suppression of what is obviously a nuisance. I do not think it needs any elaboration of mine to impress

upon the House the fact that there is a nuisance created in the streets of Perth by the operations of men who are betting in the streets. The committee at all events was unanimously of the opinion that street betting should be stopped. When I say that the committee was unanimously of this opinion I limit it to this extent, that there were two members of the committee absent, one, the hon. Mr. Colbatch, who was away through illness, and the other the Honorary Minister, who was absent, I presume, in connection with affairs of State. I would like to point out to the House, having illustrated what the law is in this State, what the law in other States of Australia is, and, I think I am right in saying that in all the States of Australia and New Zealand, and I think in all British communities, with regard to which we could obtain information. There are strict laws in operation in these places for the suppression of street betting, and they are put into operation. In the report of the committee it was suggested that legislation should be introduced into this State to apply a law on lines similar to the Act now in operation in New South Wales. In New South Wales there was an Act passed in 1912 which was referred to in the report, and in which provisions are made for the suppression of street betting, and it is interesting to note the difference in the penalty for the offence. Not only is it an offence in this State to frequent the streets for the purpose of betting, but it is also an offence for certain persons betting in the streets, and the offence is punishable for the first offence by a penalty of not less than £20 or more than £100, and for the second offence by imprisonment for six months. I specially draw the attention of the House to the distinction between these two penalties. In Western Australia under a by-law of the City Council the penalty does not exceed in any case for the first, second or third offence, the sum of £20, and it has been found that in this State whilst men have been punished for frequenting streets for the purpose of betting, they have willingly paid the nominal fines of £10, £15 or £20, because those fines

have merely amounted to a license fee and have equalled only what they would have been called upon to pay for the privilege of betting on a racecourse at perhaps two meetings in the year. In Victoria the law is equally rigid and stringent and I would like to draw the attention of the House to one section of the Lotteries Gaming and Betting Act of Victoria which deals with the subject of arrest. The House will observe that the committee recommend the introduction of legislation on the lines of the New South Wales Act and added the words "With the power of arrest," the idea being the inclusion of a section similar to this—

Any member of the police force may at any time, without warrant, arrest any person found playing or betting by way of wagering or gaming in any street, road, or highway or public place or open place in contravention of the provisions of Sec. 47 of the Police Offences Act 1890.

We want it specifically laid down that the police might have the opportunity of effecting the arrest of men whom they know to be violating the law. The committee presented this interim report on account of the urgency of the situation. There was such a consensus of opinion amongst witnesses, and such unanimous opinion amongst members of the committee that street betting should be suppressed, that we thought it wise to come to the House early with a recommendation in this direction. We recognised that it would take some time before the select committee would be able to submit a comprehensive report as they were ordered to do by the House, but having the opportunity under the Standing Orders of submitting an interim report, and having regard to the urgency of the situation, we have come forth with the proposition to which I have referred. We did that too because we knew that the more comprehensive report could not possibly be dealt with during the present session of Parliament and we did think that with the sympathetic consideration of the Government, a measure might be introduced and passed having for its ob-

ject the removal of the evil. We therefore presented the interim report and we followed it up with a request to the Government through the Honorary Minister who moved for the appointment of the select committee by writing to that gentleman in these terms—

I desire to be informed whether or not it is the intention of the Government to bring in a Bill this session to give effect to the recommendations contained in the interim report of this committee. If so, the subject can come up for discussion on the Bill; if not, I propose to give notice of my intention to move that in the opinion of the House such effect should be given. It is the desire of the committee that a Bill should be introduced before the close of the session, and as the time is short, it is thought that a debate on the motion suggested might delay the introduction of the Bill and jeopardise the chances of its becoming law.

I signed that letter as Chairman of the Joint Select Committee. Possibly the Honorary Minister is treating the matter with flippancy. I can assure the hon. gentleman that I am not treating it with flippancy.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I am.

Mr. HUDSON: I protest against that on behalf of the select committee. I am not doing so on my own account because whilst I am not treating the matter with any degree of flippancy the hon. member says that he is. I say that the committee, having been appointed on a motion moved by him, they are entitled to courteous consideration from him.

Hon. members: Hear, hear.

Mr. HUDSON: To the letter I wrote to the Honorary Minister I received the following reply—

Cabinet cannot see its way clear to introduce the Bill suggested this session.

I take no exception to the brevity or the abruptness of that reply. It might appear that that was rather a rebuff, but in the circumstances it was nothing of the kind. It was rather due to my impor-

tunity, inasmuch as I endeavoured to elicit a reply from the Government as speedily as possible, and the Honorary Minister was courteous enough to bring it under the notice of Cabinet promptly, and he favoured me with the reply that I have read. I do not take exception to that reply, and I do not think the committee will, either, because we were quite prepared to accept a brief answer rather than wait for a formal acknowledgment and a reply at a later stage. I desire to submit that the House should agree to the motion which I have moved. Let it be a direction to the Government to support the committee in the efforts that they are making for the suppression of an evil which exists in our midst. I assure the House that the select committee are acting with great sincerity in this matter. I hope the House will support us and that we will be able to remove from our city and other populous places of Western Australia the nuisance and the disgrace which now obtains.

Mr. WILLMOTT (Nelson) [7.53]: I do not wish to take up the time of the House in elaborating the remarks of the member for Yilgarn but I wish to endorse what he has said. Legislation such as has been suggested and recommended by the hon. member is in my opinion very necessary. The evidence which has been taken by the select committee has been absolutely conclusive. The fines which have been inflicted hitherto for street betting have been paid with alacrity over and over again, and the men have simply gone back and continued to bet in the street. The fines do not act as a deterrent because we see the men immediately afterwards continuing the evil in the thoroughfares. The Chairman of the Select Committee has pointed out how this betting can, in the opinion of the committee, be effectually stopped and the suggestions are well worthy of consideration, and I trust the House will give them the consideration which they deserve. The manner in which street betting is carried on in Perth amounts to a positive scandal and it is a reflection upon this House. Surely, now that we

come here and point out how this scandal can be prevented, it is the duty of the House to bring in legislation to stop it.

The Minister for Mines: Street betting is a very insignificant part of the scandal.

Mr. Thomas: I think it is very objectionable.

Mr. WILLMOTT: I am sorry to think that the acting Premier is of that opinion. I entirely disagree with him, and I only hope that the House will also do so.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Is the report a unanimous one?

Mr. Hudson: Yes, except for the absent members.

Mr. WILLMOTT: Surely after the manner in which the select committee has collected the evidence, that evidence should carry some weight here. I have much pleasure in seconding the motion.

Mr. FOLEY (Mt. Leonora) [7.57]: In opposing the motion I want to say that in my opinion this House will be ill advised, on an interim report, to bring in legislation dealing with street betting. Although the report of the committee may be unanimous on the question, I doubt whether the committee have gone thoroughly enough into the subject in the time that they have had at their disposal to enable them to submit to the House evidence which would give the House the opportunity of dealing with the matter in a comprehensive way.

Mr. Hudson: I have already explained that that is not possible this session.

Mr. FOLEY. So far as street betting is concerned the House is agreed that it is to a certain extent a menace, but I am positive that there are worse phases of gambling than betting which takes place in the street.

Mr. Thomas: That is no argument against stopping street betting.

Mr. FOLEY: I say it is a great argument in favour of the House being given the opportunity of getting something tangible to deal with. The worst phase of betting should have been dealt with instead of stonewalling the matter as the committee have done until it is too late

to bring in a comprehensive measure. Anyone who has studied the question of gambling at all must have an idea that when this measure comes before the House it is not going to be one which will be settled in five minutes. There will be interests of certain people and certain clubs put very decisively before members.

Mr. Heitmann : In regard to street betting?

Mr. FOLEY : In regard to betting generally. If this committee had considered the question of the worst class of betting at all, that is the betting by women and children in the State, I believe we could have done something even on an interim report.

Mr. Bolton : Even that would have opposed.

Mr. FOLEY : I am opposed to considering this motion because it is not the question which should be first considered, but if the committee will bring in a report on the subject of the worst form of betting in this State—

Mr. Bolton : We have.

Mr. FOLEY : The committee have done nothing by way of bringing in such a report. If they will bring in a suggestion to deal with the worst form of betting, that is betting on racecourses by women and children, this House should then take some action.

Member : Add that to the motion.

Mr. FOLEY : It is all very well to say that. Why did not the committee think of it before?

Mr. Bolton : It would not have suited you. You would have opposed it just the same.

Mr. FOLEY : The hon. member of course is a thought-reader and knows exactly how anyone will vote. I perhaps have had as good an opportunity as any member to study the question of betting, gambling, and horse-racing. Until the committee bring in a report to deal with the worst form of betting, I will oppose anything in the direction of legislating to smooth the matter over temporarily, while still permitting the greatest and worst form of betting to continue, and this House will be ill-advised to consider

any such interim report. I wish to express my surprise and regret that the committee, after the time they have had at their disposal and the opportunities they have had to examine witnesses and visit the various places where racing is carried on, have not, in the dying hours of the session, brought in something tangible so that it could receive the consideration which the question undoubtedly deserves. When the committee do this they will receive my assistance.

Mr. Willmott : Half a loaf is better than no bread.

Mr. Male : Do your little bit now.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister) : If it were half a loaf of bread I would not mind.

The Minister for Mines : This is only a crumb.

Mr. FOLEY : The committee have had time to grow the wheat and grist it, and make a full weight loaf. I trust the motion will not be carried, but that the committee will continue their investigations and then, if they cannot bring in this session a report sufficiently comprehensive to enable the House to discuss the question thoroughly, that the work will be continued so that the matter can be fully dealt with next session. My honest belief is that there are men in this State who do not wish this matter to come before the House, and I believe these influences are being brought to bear on the committee.

Mr. SPEAKER : Order!

Mr. Bolton : You are one yourself by blocking this motion.

Mr. SPEAKER : The hon. member for Leonora is not in order in reflecting on a committee appointed by this House, and must withdraw that remark.

Mr. FOLEY : I withdraw the remark. I wish in conclusion to add that I will oppose the motion, and I trust the House will vote against it, but that the committee will continue their investigations, and if the work cannot be completed this session, that the question will be taken up early next session, so that legislation may be introduced to deal effectively with the worst form of gambling.



to hon. members to also appreciate a joke when they see one. If they are in doubt about the allusion, the manner in which the Honorary Minister has dealt with this suggestion of the select committee will, I believe, focus their attention upon the Honorary Minister. The Honorary Minister claims that the committee have misunderstood the position, and have reported on a matter they were not asked to inquire into, and having devoted five minutes to the discussion, that was as much as the subject was worth. Perhaps the Honorary Minister who moved the motion in this House, should be more in touch with the position than he is. Had he attended any meeting of the select committee, excepting the initial meeting which appointed the chairman and secretary, he would perhaps have been in a position to tell the House that we have examined 42 witnesses.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): I daresay you will examine 400.

Mr. BOLTON: And that we have been dealing with every phase of the question and especially that phase referred to by the member for Leonora. That hon. gentleman said he could not support the interim recommendation presented by the chairman of the committee that legislation be introduced because it did not deal with the most serious phase of the question, namely, betting by women and children. As a matter of fact, betting on racecourses is practically legalised in this State, and it is because of the fact that perhaps the member for Leonora does not want to see anything done that he does not support this interim report. We cannot deal with the matter comprehensively in this session, and because the committee realised that fact they suggested an interim report which would give the Government an opportunity to stop the congregating on street corners of those who bet there.

Mr. Foley: On a point of order, the hon. member for South Fremantle said it was because I wish nothing to be done

that I oppose the motion. I take exception to those remarks.

Mr. SPEAKER: There is no point of order involved. It is only the hon. member's opinion.

Mr. Foley: My point of order is that when I spoke regarding the opinion of some persons being forced on the committee I was called to order because I was imputing motives. I was of the opinion that the member for South Fremantle was imputing motives when he said I wished to see nothing done, and that was why I was opposing the motion.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the member for Leonora is of opinion that the member for South Fremantle is imputing wrongful motives, I am sure the member for South Fremantle will withdraw anything offensive.

Mr. BOLTON: Most certainly, Sir, but I imputed no motives. If the member for Leonora had listened, I think he would have learned that I did not do so. I merely said by way of supposition that, if there were such a motive on the part of the hon. member, then there would be some reason for his opinion. If the motive does not exist, then of course the supposition falls to the ground.

Mr. Foley: On a point of order I asked "Is the hon. member in order in saying that I wish nothing done?" I do wish something done. A statement has been made that I wish to see nothing done. I take exception to that statement of the member for South Fremantle.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have already ruled that I cannot see the point of order which the hon. member is raising. The member for South Fremantle merely assumed something. He expressed no desire to impute motives. I think the hon. member feels a little more than necessary about it.

Mr. BOLTON: I am sorry I cannot satisfy the member for Leonora. I think perhaps he is a little bit mixed, as he was when he made the statement that he

would grow flour and after growing the flour grist the wheat.

Mr. Foley: Mr. Speaker——

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The member for Leonora will be guilty of disorderly conduct if he persists in rising. I have already stated that there is no point of order involved. The hon. member will be guilty of disorderly conduct if he continues to interrupt. The member for South Fremantle will continue his speech and discuss, not the member for Leonora, but the question before the House.

Mr. Foley: With all deference to your remarks, Mr. Speaker, I was not rising for the purpose of raising the same point as before. I rose because of a subsequent remark, made after I had in fact accepted the word of the member for South Fremantle. He said that the member for Leonora was mixed. I take exception to the word "mixed." I do not know what it means. I want the remark withdrawn.

Mr. SPEAKER! Order! I have no intention of asking the member for South Fremantle to withdraw. I shall object to the attempt of the member for Leonora to make the conduct of affairs in this House ridiculous. I feel that I am expressing myself——

Mr. Foley: Mr. Speaker——

Mr. SPEAKER: The hon. member must not continually rise and dispute my ruling in this matter. I have already said that I do not think the remark objected to should be withdrawn. I do not see any point of order involved. I cannot allow the hon. member to rise to a point of order in connection with every expression that is used. If I did, the conduct of affairs in this House would become ridiculous. The member for South Fremantle will resume his speech.

Mr. BOLTON: I wish to assure the member for Leonora that in my 12 years membership of this House I have never failed to withdraw anything that was thought objectionable. I am surprised that the member for Leonora should feel so incensed at any remarks I made. I merely dealt with the subject by way of

replying to objections which the hon. member raised to the adoption of the joint select committee's interim report. The member for Leonora said that if the committee did report, it was only a matter which this House could not deal with in five minutes. I entirely agree with the hon. member that if the joint select committee had time to go into the question fully and present a comprehensive report a very lengthy discussion from all standpoints would result. I am satisfied that this session would not be long enough for the House to come to a decision if the joint select committee had given a general direction to the Government to introduce legislation to regulate this big subject. I believe nearly every member of this Chamber will agree that the select committee tackled a big question and have done their best. In spite of what the member for Leonora says—and that hon. member has had some experience of select committees—the committee in this instance have done good work. They have met on numerous occasions, they have called witnesses on every standpoint, including that of the bookmaker, that of the trainer, that of the bookmaker's clerk, the horse owner, the horse breeder, and the officials of every racing club, registered and unregistered, and of every trotting club in the metropolitan and goldfields areas. They have done really good work, and have put in a good deal of time. They realised that it would not be possible for the Government to introduce legislation dealing with the whole question this session. Therefore the committee thought it would be a good move to submit an interim report. I am rather surprised that there should be any opposition to the adoption of that interim report. I really believe—though this is only my personal opinion—that the select committee will not be able to submit a full report in time even to allow of its discussion by this House. Because I realise that, I desire that the labours of the committee, so far as they have progressed, should not be lost. I desire that all the time which has been devoted to this particular question should not be



thrown away. Therefore I wish to see the interim report adopted. Hon. members know that when Parliament prorogues all select committees go out of existence. After the prorogation, select committees cannot continue to investigate unless they are appointed a Royal Commission. There is no member of the select committee on horse-racing who wishes to be appointed a Royal Commissioner. The select committee have collected most of the evidence they desire. While on this point, I may mention that the select committee have applications from a great number of witnesses who still wish to give evidence. If the committee continue to take evidence now, before beginning to draft a report, the work cannot be done with any satisfaction either to the committee or to Parliament. Because of that fact, I desire to see the interim report adopted. I am surprised at any genuine opposition coming from members of this House. The Honorary Minister I do not count, because, to use his own words, he is a joke. The member for Leonora seems to treat the subject very seriously; and I am surprised that he, with some experience of racing, should treat it so seriously. The better course for that hon. member would be to assist the select committee to take the first step towards eradicating the evil, and then the next step—which in his opinion is the most important—the prevention of betting by women and children. I hope the motion will be carried.

Mr. GRIFFITHS (York) [8.24]: I feel that undoubtedly this interim report represents a step in the right direction. The evil exists, and should be legislated against. I therefore welcome the interim report, and I hope the House will carry the motion of the member for Yilgarn. Something should be done, and done speedily. If I had my way, I would run a drag-net along St. George's-terrace on a settling morning, and send the catch to the front.

Mr. MUNSIE (Hannans) [8.25]: I intend to oppose the motion, for practically one reason. I believe every hon. member sincerely desires that something

should be done to limit the evil of over-racing in the metropolitan area especially. The interim report deals with street betting. As the Honorary Minister has pointed out, for one wager made in the street there are 20 made in connection with local racing on the race-course. Assuming that the motion is carried and that the Government give effect to it, the only result will be the introduction during this session of legislation for the purpose of preventing street betting. Then, next session, when the select committee's final report is presented and a comprehensive measure is brought in, there will be much less chance of passing legislation to deal with horse-racing as it should be dealt with, than there would be if the whole object were treated in one Bill. Anything can be tinkered with to its detriment. I am not criticising the select committee for submitting the interim report. I believe that they submitted it in all good faith. My only reason for opposing the adoption of the report is that I believe that course will result in harm when the main measure comes before the House in a later session, for the purpose of suppressing a considerable proportion of the horse-racing that now takes place. If the interim report omitted a reference to street betting, and proposed merely to limit the number of race meetings, I would support its adoption. The evil of street betting is infinitesimal in comparison with the betting done at trotting and galloping meetings. There is more betting on a racecourse in one day than is represented by all the betting on the streets in the course of a year. I do not wish the House to imagine that I am in favour of street betting. If I thought for one moment that the introduction of legislation during this session would not result in hampering legislation dealing with the main question when such legislation is brought forward, I would have no objection to the motion. Personally, however, I am convinced that, if we tinker with this subject in any shape or form during the present session and then endeavour next session to carry a comprehensive

measure, the result of our previous action will be detrimental and will prejudice the real issue. Therefore I oppose the motion.

Mr. THOMAS (Banbury) [S.28]: I am very much surprised at the heat that has been engendered over this little matter. Personally, I am an out-and-out supporter of the motion. I could quite understand some hon. members opposing it if they gave us a reason for doing so; but the mere assertion that because Parliament deals with one phase of an evil it will destroy the possibility of dealing with the remaining phases of that evil seems to me a most peculiar kind of reasoning. Possibly there may be some blame attachable to the committee for not having laboured a little more strenuously. That tired feeling may, perhaps, have been upon them; or conceivably the seductions of the racecourse may have led members of the select committee astray. I do not assert this is so; I merely say it may be so. The select committee might have brought in a more comprehensive report after such a lapse of time, knowing, as they must have known, that Parliament is shortly to prorogue. But I certainly do hold the opinion that the interim report covers a very important part of the evils connected with horse-racing and betting. For that reason, I see no objection to the introduction of a Bill during this session; and I am rather surprised to learn that the Government have intimated their intention of not introducing a Bill. The member for Leonora (Mr. Foley) has advanced as his objection to the adoption of the report the fact that it does not deal with what he considers to be the worst evil connected with horse-racing and betting, and that is betting by women and children. I believe the hon. member is an advocate of equal rights for both sexes, and, so far as I can see, if the law allows a man to bet, there should not be any objection to a woman's doing so.

The Attorney General: She is the "better" half.

Mr. THOMAS: For the life of me I cannot see that the Legislature would be doing anything but an injustice if they

made a law applicable to one sex and not applicable to the other. Of course, if the member for Leonora assures me that children are allowed to bet, I certainly agree that it is a most serious evil. If that evil exists, however, it does not constitute such a tremendous question that it could not be dealt with this session. If the hon. member feels so profoundly on this particular point, what on earth is there to prevent him from moving, at the proper time, an amendment which would effectually deal, once and for all, with the evil of children's betting? That would ease his mind and remove his objection to the proposal for a Bill. Every member of the House would certainly agree with any restrictions being applied to children betting. I do not think it required two or three weeks to obtain sufficient evidence to justify the assertion that street betting is an evil. One would scarcely need to call many witnesses to arrive at a decision on that point, because we need only walk down St. George's-terrace any day in the week, and particularly on a Saturday afternoon, to gather sufficient evidence in five minutes to satisfy any impartial observer that the evil ought to be suppressed, that it is an objectionable, a most obnoxious and pernicious practice. There can hardly be two opinions about that. I frequently have occasion to walk down that street, and it is a most objectionable sight to see a number of fellows standing round there, loafing, drinking, smoking, expectorating all over the foot-path, and obstructing ladies walking along the street, fellows who might be better employed at the front. There never has been any question about the existence of this evil; yet hon. members get up and oppose the motion because it does not give everything they wish for. I cannot understand why we should allow this evil practice to go on indefinitely, nor how hon. members can offer opposition based on such slender grounds. The necessary little Bill would meet with such unanimous approval that there would be little or no opposition in this Chamber or in another place, and the measure would pass in less time than it has taken to discuss this

motion. Some have tried to minimise the importance of this matter. The Honorary Minister said he regarded it as a joke, that it was so small and so insignificant as to be unworthy of the attention of the House. I think very differently. I think it is really an important matter. After all I am as anxious to get back to my home and constituency as is any other member; possibly more anxious than 19 out of 20; yet if sitting here a little longer will enable us to deal with an evil of this kind, if a little extra work will succeed in carrying a measure dealing with some fraction of the evil, I am prepared to stay, even if it takes a week—I do not believe it will take two hours. I trust the commonsense of the House will come to the surface, and that members will give an emphatic vote in favour of the motion. I trust also that if such a vote is given, Ministers will take heed of it, and that before we close this session the measure will be brought forward. If it is I am certain it will find a place on the statute-book.

Mr. ALLEN (West Perth) [8.35]: I desire to congratulate the joint select committee on this recommendation. It is dealing with only one phase of betting, but that is a most important phase. As one who has an office on St. George's terrace, I probably see as much if not more than most members, of this street betting. We are frequently treated to a pugilistic encounter on settling morning. Some of the gentlemen who ply this particular calling get into hot argument which develops into a street fight reflecting little credit on the city of Perth.

Mr. Nairn: What are the police doing?

Mr. ALLEN: The police generally come on the scene after the fight is over. On one or two occasions they have been there in time to arrest the offenders, who have then been dealt with in a proper manner. Not only do those gentlemen who make a living of this business congregate there, but they bring along others with them, and when a big race meeting is on it is no uncommon sight to see from 50 to 250 of them blocking

the footpath and indeed the whole of the street. When one goes to a race-course one expects to see betting in its various forms, but we should not expect to find it on our public thoroughfares.

Mr. Foley: Should you expect to see it on the racecourse?

Mr. ALLEN: We do see it there, and when we go we expect to see it, because bookmakers are there carrying it on as their business. But that is no reason why it should be carried on in the streets. I am going to support the motion. Those who oppose it do so on the ground that it is not tackling the worst phase of the question. To my mind this street betting is the most objectionable phase of the whole question, and I trust the House will pay heed to the motion and carry it by such a majority that the Government will feel in duty bound to give serious consideration to it.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS (Subiaco) [8.37]: I support the motion. I am rather surprised to hear any opposition to it, especially on the ground that it does not go far enough.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Government are defeated now.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: It is agreed even by those opposed to the motion that it is absolutely necessary to curtail this evil. I want to know why any hon. member should oppose it, seeing that the impossibility of bringing down a comprehensive measure this session has been explained. Probably we will have an opportunity of dealing with a comprehensive measure next session, after the final report of the joint select committee has been brought in. I also take exception to the suggestion that street betting takes place only on racing distant from Perth. I am convinced that there is an enormous amount of street betting on racing meetings held in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Munsie: There is not a £10 note changes hands in the street on Perth meetings.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I am convinced that a large amount of money thus changes hands. Considerably more than

£10 is offered in street betting on other sports than horse-racing.

Mr. Munsie: When Subiaco is playing football.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: There is a considerable amount of street betting on race meetings and other sports held in the metropolitan area. We are all ready to condemn street betting as an evil. Why should we postpone legislation upon it? It is one of the worst phases of the gambling question. I agree with the Honorary Minister that it is necessary to curtail horse-racing in the mass so far as we can, but if it is impossible to deal fully with the matter just now, why put off doing what we can? Some hon. members have complained of the work of the select committee. It is only five weeks since that committee started their labours. They have examined over 40 witnesses and have travelled to Kalgoorlie. In view of this I think they have done very well, and I am convinced that anybody who has had experience of select committees will recognise that they have put in an enormous amount of work.

Mr. Foley: One can work hard and do nothing.

Mr. Bolton: That applies to yourself.

Mr. B. J. STUBBS: I cannot understand why the member for Leonora showed such heat on the question. One would imagine that we were going to take his livelihood from him. I trust the motion will be carried and that the Government will not treat it as the Honorary Minister proposes to do, namely, as a joke. Street betting is regarded as a very serious evil in every part of the civilised world and is legislated against in every other part of Australia. As pointed out by the chairman of the select committee, all we have in this State is merely a municipal by-law. It is a reflection on Parliament that such a condition of affairs should be allowed to continue. I trust the motion will be carried and that the Government will take the matter seriously and introduce the necessary Bill. If there is unanimity as to the evil of street betting, as is suggested by the debate to-night, there should be very little discussion and the

Bill should be passed into law with a minimum of trouble.

Mr. GEORGE (Murray-Wellington) [8.43]: I hope the sense of the House will give a unanimous vote in favour of the motion. As to the labours of the committee, I have nothing to say, that point having been dealt with by other members; but as to the prevalence of evil in this State in consequence of the avenues provided for people to squander their money in this disreputable way, there can be no question. It has been dealt with in the Press, spoken of at public meetings and, indeed, the very fact of the appointment of this select committee is proof of the widespread nature of the evil. Some reference has been made to St. George's terrace. I know that to pass along the Terrace on certain days is a matter of difficulty, especially in the vicinity of the United Service Hotel, owing to the presence of large numbers of persons engaged in street betting and gambling, taking out of the pockets of people money which could be much better devoted to the maintenance of wives and children.

Mr. Foley: Do you not think something ought to be done to prevent women and children betting at race meetings?

Mr. GEORGE: If it is impossible for us to tackle the whole of the evil right away, what is wrong with our making a start on this one phase?

Mr. Foley: You are starting at the wrong end.

Mr. GEORGE: No, we are not. I disagree with that. We are starting at the right end. A man is supposed to be the head of the house. Whether he is or not is a matter of individual experience. However, he is the one to get at. Moreover, we do not find street corners crowded with women and children betting, but we do find them obstructed by men engaged in betting. There must be some misunderstanding on the part of hon. members. There should be no attempt to try and sprag the wheel which has been set in motion by the hon. member, and which is going to strike at the root of the evil which we are dealing with.

Mr. Foley: You are allowing race meeting then to go on?

Mr. GEORGE: I only wish the matter was in my hands. I would satisfy the hon. gentleman as to what drastic measures I would take. We cannot place it in any one man's power, however.

Mr. Foley: We are doing it now.

Mr. GEORGE: I am trying to deal with the products of race meetings, which are sapping away a lot of the honesty of the people of the State. There are numbers of instances in which young fellows have been ruined through this particular business. Many instances we can see in our police courts to-day, and there are many instances which are not heard of in the police courts at all. We cannot reform a thing all at once. Are we going to allow this sort of thing to go on, when we can put a check in operation at once? When we have an opportunity of dealing with some of the evils we ought to deal with them, especially now when economy has to be practised by us all. Why should we wink our eyes at the whole concern, at a business which is sapping away the funds which may yet be required for the defence of the State? I hope the House will regain its senses in connection with the matter.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [8.47]: I could not help feeling, on listening to the remarks of the Honorary Minister, that it would appear at times that the Government have appointed this select committee to inquire into this most important subject with a wish that their labours should not be completed before the end of this session.

The Attorney General: That is an absolute imputation of motives. It is not fair and it is not right.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The hon. member has the right to appeal to His Honour the Speaker if he does not like the remark. I simply said that it would appear to be so. That at all events is the appearance it has. We appointed a select committee and gave them a most important work to perform.

Mr. Foley: And they took care they did not bring in their report too quickly.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: They were appointed for the purpose of going into matters connected with horse-racing, with a view to the subsequent introduction of legislation providing for the control of such matters. The task which this committee has been called upon to perform is almost unending. I hope, if they cannot get a comprehensive report ready by the time Parliament is prorogued, that they will be constituted into a Royal Commission to complete their labours. I can conceive of nothing that is of more importance to the general community than this question of betting, which has assumed such gigantic proportions in our midst of recent years. Hon. members must be aware that there are certain powers which the Government could exercise now if they wished to do so in the direction indicated in the interim report. They could prohibit betting on the racecourses if they wished. They have power to instruct the police. They could certainly remove the crowds which congregate in St. George's-terrace and which are a disgrace to the capital City of our State. I believe they have difficulty in securing convictions as to the actual betting transactions.

Mr. Bolton: That is so.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: There is no earthly reason why the police should stand aside and allow these huge crowds to congregate and practically take possession of our most important thoroughfare. Why is not action being taken now?

The Attorney General: Will you say the same thing with regard to share-brokers?

Hon. FRANK WILSON: If they were a nuisance to the public I would.

The Attorney General: Are they not gamblers?

Mr. Bolton: They are not necessarily that.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I should take the same action against them if they were an inconvenience to the public. I should certainly move them on if they were so.

Mr. Bolton: They may not be a menace to the public. It is not that they are

menacing a place like St. George's-terrace.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I would certainly move them on if they were a nuisance.

Mr. Bolton: I do not think they are.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I would move on any section of the community which became a nuisance to the general community, and a menace to the peace and well-being of the public, and they should be suppressed by the police. This was a very burning question before we left office. Hon. members will know that the leading public people in Kalgoorlie waited on me when I was Premier and requested me to suppress whippet-racing. The evidence was so overwhelming that it had assumed very large proportions and was a very great evil in the community that I closed down the racecourses. How did I do it? I had no power to interfere with the sport itself. The way we did it was to instruct the police that no betting should take place on the courses, and as a result of that they were closed down. When the present Ministry came into office I suppose the instructions were cancelled, and the courses were reopened and are now going in full swing.

The Minister for Mines: They kept going even after betting was stopped.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: No, I say they were closed down. A deputation waited on me to show that they had been closed down, and pleaded that they should be re-opened, promising that the racing would be conducted on very modified lines.

Mr. Foley: You surely do not believe all you hear on deputations.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The point is this: we have a motion moved by the Honorary Minister himself to appoint a select committee of this House to deal with this important question in all its phases. There is no limit to their inquiries, and yet when these gentlemen bring in what I understand is an interim report, we are, on the authority of the Honorary Minister, to treat it as a joke. Surely the dignity of Parliament ought to prevent us from following the Honorary Minis-

ter's advice in this respect. These men who have given their time and so much work to the task which has been set them to do, and who have examined over 40 witnesses within the last three weeks, are entitled to some better consideration than that. I should be sorry indeed to serve on any committee of this House if my report, no matter whether the Government agreed with it or otherwise, was to be treated in the same contemptuous manner as the Honorary Minister would treat the interim report presented by this select committee. At any rate, we should endeavour to give their recommendations due consideration.

Mr. Hudson: We were appointed by the House.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I will go further and say we are entitled to meet their wishes if that can conveniently be done, and if we can agree with their recommendations. It is not good enough to say that we have not got all we required from that committee, and that, therefore, we will not act at all, and that we shall treat their interim report with contempt. We are entitled, if we believe in their recommendations, to go as far in adopting them as we possibly can, more especially when it is a question of this description which really is growing to such proportions as to become a menace to the general public of the State. I am bound to say that during the past few years our racecourses have multiplied, and that race meetings have also multiplied. This is a pernicious state of things.

Mr. Heitmann: Undesirables, too, have multiplied.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: The result is that many young members of the families of the State are permitted to indulge in betting, and betting has increased enormously as a consequence. In regard to undesirables, I do not know whether there is an increase of these or not. I suppose there is.

Mr. Heitmann: Take the back streets; take Wellington-street, and you will see.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I should like to put a drag-net over the whole lot

of them and send them to Blackboy Hill so that they would not waste their time in endeavouring to extract money from the pockets of the people who ought to be using it for paying their legitimate debts. Why is it suggested that we must wait until we can deal with the whole question, and with the various phases of betting? Is this not one of the worst phases of betting, this street betting? The committee recommend that it shall be dealt with now. Is it not right that we should cleanse our streets and public places first, and then if we deem it necessary afterwards, we can go further and cleanse the racecourse of the evil? The Government can do that now if they like, as I think we have pointed out. I think that the matter of shop betting, which was referred to in the report, is one which certainly might be dealt with immediately. That question is the foundation of so much of the betting by women and children, even more so than the bookmaker. These small shops, where betting is carried on in small sums, has, I say, a deleterious effect upon women and children. It is a most pernicious evil which ought to be stamped out from our midst. I cannot quite understand or get to the bottom of the underlying motive of the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley), who was very wrathful in connection with the matter.

Mr. Foley: I was not.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: He was wrathful, and perhaps he had some cause to be, as a result of the interjections of the Whip of his party. At the same time he usually endeavours to be fair on these matters, and it seems to me that he might have treated the recommendations of the select committee in this interim report with more favourable consideration than he did. The speakers who have opposed this motion have commenced by saying that they wanted it to be clearly understood that they were opposed to street betting, and then they went on to argue that it did not affect local races, at least the Honorary Minister did, and said that it was something that was an evil beyond our borders. At

all events that is what I gathered from him.

Mr. Munsie: One per cent. of the betting carried on in the metropolitan area to-day is all that would be saved by abolishing street betting.

The Attorney General: It will only drive them into the public houses.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I am not going into intricate calculations as to the percentage of betting which this will prevent, but I think that if we are to do any good at all, we ought to take the best means in our power of doing that little good.

Mr. Foley: I do not believe you will curtail racing one iota by stopping it.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: Then why not stop betting altogether, and put a stop to the whole thing? If we cannot minimise the evil, then I say stop it altogether.

Mr. Munsie: Cut out 50 per cent. of the number of race meetings.

Hon. FRANK WILSON: This is a very important question. I cannot be side-tracked by members simply treating it in a jocular fashion. If it is necessary, we ought to give additional legislation in the direction pointed out already. Then let us give it and be done with it. Let us not wait until we have a perfect cure. I think that we might still adopt the motion which has been moved, and request the Government by doing so to bring down some short Bill which will give immediate relief, as the committee evidently think it will. Then I hope the Government will continue the committee in its work by way of making it into a Royal Commission if they cannot get their work done before the House rises, so that we may next year have prepared for us the full recommendations as to the best course that should be followed by legislation of this description. I have much pleasure in supporting the motion.

The MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. P. Collier--Boulder) [9.0]: I take exception to the leader of the Opposition's imputation of motives.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Motives?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: His statement was that the Government's attitude towards this motion was actuated by a desire to avoid dealing with the question in a comprehensive way.

Hon. Frank Wilson: I said it would appear so from the remarks of the Honorary Minister.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: There is not a shadow of foundation for that statement. I think I will be able to show the hon. member that the facts are quite the contrary. If the Government were anxious to avoid dealing with the matter in a thorough fashion we could not do better than to accept the recommendation of the committee, and introduce legislation as directed, thereby shelving the whole question until some future time. The fact that we do not wish to introduce legislation on the lines suggested is because we desire, even at this late stage, to be able to deal with the matter in a whole-hearted and thorough fashion.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: This session?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Yes, this session. I see no reason why the select committee should not have time to present its report and for Parliament to deal with the matter before the session closes.

Hon. Frank Wilson: But Cabinet has decided otherwise.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Only on this particular recommendation. I will promise that if the committee present their report in reasonable time it will be dealt with this session. We need not quarrel with the work of the committee. I admit they have worked hard. The very fact that they have held 11 meetings and examined 40 witnesses, is evidence that they have been applying themselves diligently to the work the House appointed them to do.

Hon. Frank Wilson: The Honorary Minister did not think so.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is another question. I regret that the committee have not been able to make greater headway. I should imagine, speaking as an outsider, that the committee would have been able to obtain

all the evidence that they required from 40 witnesses, at least, enough evidence to enable them to present a complete report. How many witnesses do they propose to call altogether? Is it intended to call 400? If representatives of the horse-owners and trainers and the betting public, and witnesses from all the interests concerned are called the committee should be able to get all the information that is necessary.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Who is to be the judge as to who shall give evidence from each of these sections?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That should be left to the committee's discretion and good judgment. The committee have been sitting for several weeks and have examined 40 witnesses and they are apparently only half-way through.

Mr. Hudson: No one has suggested that the committee are only half-way through.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: The hon. member need not get cross. I am only drawing an inference from the terms of the select committee's report. The committee have been sitting for several weeks and they have informed the House that they hope to be able to present a comprehensive report before the close of the session, and having regard to the fact that the session is likely to close in three or four weeks' time, I can only assume that they are a long way from the end of their labours when they find it possible to only present an interim report. The Government are genuinely desirous of dealing with the matter this session, and it is because we believe that to introduce legislation on the lines recommended will have little effect, that we do not think the time of Parliament should be taken up with it. A Bill to stop street betting or shop betting must be regarded in the light of its relative importance to other legislation which has been set aside during the session because there has been insufficient time to deal with it. Many Bills have been laid aside and they have been Bills of infinitely more importance and of more far-reaching consequence to the general community than the measure suggested by



the select committee. Those Bills have been laid aside because it has been considered that there would not be sufficient time to deal with them, and now we are asked to take up a Bill at this late stage which will accomplish nothing. After all, many members exaggerate the effect that street betting has upon the general community. Who are the gentlemen to be found in front of the United Service hotel in St. George's-terrace congregated for the purpose of betting?

Member: They ought to be at the front.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: They are men who will not go to the front and they will bet in spite of the laws that are in existence. They are hardened sinners; they are confirmed gamblers, and if we suppress them in St. George's-terrace or prevent them from betting there, they will find other means of betting. It is of far more importance to the country that we should prevent people from going to the trots on Saturday evening, and reduce the number of meetings so that we might lessen betting amongst the general community. From time to time action has been taken against street betting.

Hon. Frank Wilson: Still the crowd is swelling.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: It is illegal but it is difficult to get a conviction.

Mr. Taylor: The convictions are only spasmodic.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: That is so. The same thing applies to shop betting. There is very little shop betting in Perth and Fremantle. Certainly it is not of sufficient importance to justify the House taking up the matter at this stage and dealing specially with that phase of horse-racing in view of the fact that there has been a general desire to set aside legislation of greater importance. I hope that the select committee will even at this late hour pursue its labours with a desire to present a report before the session closes, and I think we will be justified in assuming that the House will not require very much time to deal with any Bill that might be framed on the recommendations of the committee.

The committee is representative of both Houses and we have it from the members themselves that they have spared no efforts to get to the bottom of the matter. That being the case, if a recommendation is submitted, I think that recommendation will be of such a character as will enable the House to pass it without any serious delay. It is not the amount of betting that takes place in the streets which is of serious consequence, but it is the number of race meetings that are held from week to week and from month to month.

Mr. Hudson: Do you suggest there is an evil in horse-racing apart from the gambling aspect?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Perhaps not, but what is proposed by the committee is only a drop in the ocean as regards the general betting that takes place on horse-racing, and the only effective way to lessen the amount of betting is to reduce the number of race meetings held on the various racecourses in the State.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: The best way to bring about that reduction is to do away with the bookmakers.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: Perhaps that would be the best way. We know of course that it is illegal for the bookmaker to ply his calling, but by the general consent of the powers that be for many years he has been allowed to pursue that calling, and I do not think it would be advisable to step in and interfere until such time as Parliament has fully dealt with the whole question. I can assure the select committee if they will continue their labours and present a report in anything like reasonable time—

Mr. Hudson: Will you fix a time?

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I cannot, for the reason that it is impossible to say how long the session will last, but even in the last few days of the session if a report is presented and a Bill can be framed on the lines of the recommendations contained in the report, I am sure it will have the general approval of members.

Mr. Hudson: You are putting up big barbed wire entanglements.

The MINISTER FOR MINES: I can give the hon. member an assurance that the Government will go on with the matter. On the recommendations submitted at this stage, whilst they are very good in their way, the Government are not justified in bringing in a Bill.

Mr. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) [9.13]: I desire to support the motion moved in favour of giving effect to the select committee's report. We have heard a good deal about this motion not going far enough, and that it is merely a recommendation which it was not quite within the functions of the committee to deal with. Let that be as it may, the committee investigating the evils of racing were sufficiently seized with the fact that gambling was pretty rife in the form of street betting, and they decided that a start should be made with the suppression of that street betting. I have no knowledge of the evidence which has been presented to the select committee, but I have some knowledge of the way horse-racing is conducted in three or four of the States of the Commonwealth, and I venture to submit that if we take the street betting in Perth, we will find that it takes place largely on race meetings over which this Parliament has no control, that is to say, races which are taking place in the Eastern States. If that be so a measure to minimise racing or to shorten the number of race meetings will not affect street betting. If my statement be correct, that the street betting done in Perth is largely on racing taking place in the Eastern States—

Hon. J. D. Connolly: It amounts to the same thing.

Mr. TAYLOR: We have heard the Acting Premier contend that a Bill on these lines would not be sufficiently comprehensive, because it does not interfere with horse-racing. Gambling, in the opinion of the select committee, is highly objectionable and they think that any Bill which will curtail that phase of horse-racing is necessary, and they ask

this House to take such steps as will curtail street betting. I do not know whether there is much street betting in Perth. I have seen large congregations of men in St. George's-terrace on a Saturday. I do not know whether they are betting or what they are doing. I have never made a bet on a horse-race in my life.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: You have seen them betting on the streets, though.

Mr. TAYLOR: I have seen as much gambling as most people. I think if this amount of gambling is going on, it can only be reached by a measure of this kind, and I think the argument is not sound which says that we should deal with the whole question of horse-racing before we deal with that evil. I believe the committee which has investigated this question has done good work. They have held many sittings and examined many witnesses. If they have examined as many as they say, they have not lost much time. We know that the ramifications of horse-racing in Western Australia are of such a character that the committee would not be doing justice to the Parliament which appointed them unless they investigated and examined a large number of people. The idea suggested by the Minister for Mines, that one or two representative men—horse owners, trainers, and bookmakers—might frame a report upon which the committee could suggest legislation is absurd. Who is going to be the judge as to who are representative people? What organisation is going to collect the information? Or, is it suggested the chairman of the select committee should decide which of these different sections examined by the committee are to be accepted as representative?

Hon. J. D. Connolly: The committee would not be justified in turning down one of them.

Mr. TAYLOR: That is so. The Parliament of the State has delegated certain powers to the committee with instructions to bring forward a tangible scheme upon which legislation might be

drafted and passed. The committee is carrying out that duty in a manner creditable to themselves. They have gone exhaustively into the question in the time at their disposal; they have done particularly well. They have suggested to this Chamber that certain things are necessary, that it is necessary to initiate steps in certain directions; and the House is not prepared to accept the recommendation made on investigation by a committee appointed by itself. If this be an evil attendant on horse-racing in Western Australia, let us deal with something the committee has recommended, and recommended not without much consideration. Let us stop street betting and shop betting, if it be illegal, and let the committee bring down their reasons for recommending to the House that legislation of this character be introduced. If the committee fail to justify their Bill I shall oppose it. I am not going on blindly. The committee will have to support their recommendation by evidence, and I believe they will be able to do that. The House would be unwise, and at least unfair to the committee, if they do not accept the recommendation which the committee has seen fit to make in this interim report. The report deals with the question of street betting, covering only a small area in Perth and a small area in Kalgoorlie; and if the committee are not capable of making a satisfactory recommendation to this House when they suggest the bringing down of this legislation, they are, in my opinion, totally incapable of recommending legislation on the wider question of the curtailment of horse-racing throughout the length and breadth of Western Australia. I hope the resolution moved by the chairman of the select committee will be carried by the House and will be given effect to by the Government.

Mr. GILCHRIST (Gascoyne) [9.20]: I do not wish to deal with this matter at any length, but rise to protest against the flippant manner in which the Honorary Minister—and I presume he was voicing the general attitude of the Ministry—dealt with this matter. I also protest

against the charges that have been made by several members. It has been a revelation to me, as a member of the committee to note the thoroughness with which members of the committee have given up their private business and many other duties in order to prosecute this very important inquiry. The labours of the committee are not confined to the 11 meetings which are stated in the interim report to have been held. The members of the committee have gone to a great deal of trouble in other directions to get first-hand information on the question. I was surprised at the attitude adopted by the member for Leonora (Mr. Foley), as in several private conversations I have had with him, and from the information that he was able to give me on the race-courses, I am quite convinced that he is as sincere as any member of this House on the question of racing reform. He makes the statement that the committee is guilty of stonewalling in introducing this interim report. If we had any desire to stonewall, is it not more likely that we would not have presented any report at all, but would have continued the hearing of evidence until the House rose and so avoided the necessity for bringing any report to this House? The reason why the interim report was introduced is that the members of the committee were absolutely unanimous with regard to those two items of very needed reform. If we had stayed at this stage to discuss all the intricate problems which are involved in our inquiry, I venture to say that we would still be discussing them and no report at all would be before the House. Members will understand from the little experience we have had in the discussion in this House on the interim report on a matter which, if we probed it to the bottom, members are practically unanimous upon, that there is no chance of unanimity amongst the members on some of those pressing problems connected with racing reform. We therefore thought it better to take the two items upon which we were agreed and ask that these be dealt with by legislation before the present session closed.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): They are not the most important points.

Mr. GILCHRIST: They are not recognised by any member of the committee as the most important points, but we recognise that the points are important and should be immediately dealt with. I would like to point out another thing, that we are merely affirming something that has already been affirmed. In the comprehensive report which will be brought before the House, there will be a number of recommendations for absolutely new moves in the direction of racing reform; but here we merely ask the House to affirm two principles that have already been affirmed by the country—one that shop betting should be stopped, for which there is already legislation and on which the police are asking for a definite instruction from the Administration; and in the other case for the stoppage of street betting, on which there is a by-law of the Perth municipality, which has proved ineffective. Therefore, rather than that the session should close without any practical result from our arduous work, we thought it would be well to present an interim report so that action could be taken immediately. The Acting Premier gave us an undertaking that if this motion were defeated a Bill would be introduced by the Ministry to give effect to the full report of the committee, if there was anything like unanimity amongst the members with regard to it. The Acting Premier was quite safe in making that promise, because it is utterly impossible for any body of men to be absolutely unanimous on a question so bristling with difficulties. I ask that the House will adopt this resolution and that the Ministry will immediately give effect to the will of the House.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY (Perth) [9.27]: I can scarcely appreciate the opposition shown by the Honorary Minister to the motion moved by the chairman of the select committee, as this select committee was appointed for the purpose of recommending some way by which racing could be reduced. I think

it is within the knowledge of every member of this House that the most effective way to reduce racing is to prohibit as far as possible the gambling element attached to racing. Undoubtedly, if you prohibit bookmaking, you would regulate racing in a way better and surer than any other which could be devised.

Member: It stopped foot racing in Kalgoorlie.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: The position is, as we have been told by several members, that the committee has gone thoroughly into this matter. On this question of racing, whether it be in the committee or in the House, it is not likely that members will be unanimous. The committee, having come to that conclusion, it was felt that if a comprehensive Bill was to be introduced, there would be little chance of having it passed through Parliament this session. The committee were so impressed with the necessity for doing something that they made this recommendation. Undoubtedly this is a time when we should enforce economy on the people. The House has already recognised that principle by passing a Liquor Reform Bill. The same thing applies in the case of street betting. If this motion be carried it will prohibit street betting. The law to-day is not sufficient to suppress street or shop betting. We have a law which is sufficient to prevent betting on the racecourses. If the House agrees to the motion, it will be *prima facie* evidence that the House wishes the Government to enforce the Police Act and the Criminal Code to prevent bookmaking on racecourses. If those Acts had been enforced it would not now be necessary to regulate racing. Racing in itself is not objectionable, apart from the gambling element. It is a well-known fact that these unregistered racecourses could not exist if the bookmaker was prohibited from plying his calling there. The registered courses would certainly continue and progress with the assistance of the totalisator, which is not an objectionable form of gambling or even gambling at all as compared with the bookmaker.

Mr. Foley: It is worse in a great many instances.

Hon. J. D. CONNOLLY: It is a legitimate investment as compared with betting with the bookmaker, which is a mere chance. Racing would undoubtedly improve if bookmaking were done away with altogether. We would have men taking up racing in a sheer spirit of sport. Fifty per cent of those who indulge in racing to-day are not sportsmen at all but simply gamblers, knowing nothing about a horse. They bet in a very objectionable way for the sake of gambling. If bookmakers were done away with altogether people would breed horses and run them for the sake of sport. I hope the House will carry the motion by such a majority that the Government, notwithstanding the remarks of the Honorary Minister, will feel that they are bound to bring in a Bill to entirely suppress street betting, and that they must also enforce the Police Act and do away with the bookmaker on all race-courses.

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [9.34]: At this time of stress, a time which we hope never to see again—I hope the Honorary Minister will do something other than laugh and snigger when a member rises to speak—at a time of stress like the present, all the money the people possess should be induced into proper trading channels. A lot of the money of the people to-day is being used in a way in which it should not be used. Betting is growing. When we take toll of the tax that is paid on betting, we find it is one of the heads of revenue, probably the only one, which has increased.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): This motion does not deal with that part of it.

Mr. ROBINSON: Under the heading of "totalisator tax" for 1914 the tax paid amounted to £12,070.

Mr. Foley: And it would be a lot more if the Government got the fractions.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: It will be a lot more if the Government do away with the bookmaker.

Mr. ROBINSON: And yet in a year of war, the most critical year this country has ever passed through, when there has been less money available for public and private purposes, when we are all urged to be careful and to save our money, we find that the tax paid is more than in the previous year, that for 1915, it amounts to £12,125.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister): Why not deal with it?

Mr. ROBINSON: Be quiet, Sir! I hope, Mr. Speaker, you will not think I am usurping your functions, but the Honorary Minister annoys every member in the House, and I am quite sure he annoys you too. When the tax on betting shows an increase it means that betting has increased, and I say that in this time of stress, we should look to see that betting and racing shall decrease. Therefore I welcome the report of the committee which says in the first instance, before we are able to grapple with this big question, we recommend Parliament to put a stop to some phases of betting.

Mr. Foley: And still allow the same scope for the revenue to improve.

Mr. ROBINSON: If the member for Leonora thinks the motion does not go far enough he can amend the motion, making it go further still, and stop all grades and classes of betting.

The Minister for Mines: We get no tax from the betting this motion deals with.

Mr. ROBINSON: I am only showing this is an index generally to the betting that is going on.

The Minister for Mines: That is what we want to deal with.

Mr. ROBINSON: You can do all these things, but let us do each of them in its proper turn. What we are trying for at present is to make the community more thrifty. I object very much to finding in respect to heads of public revenue, a falling off in all directions; when I run my eye over the various heads, such as land tax, income tax, stamp duty, land sales, mining, railways, tramways, and so on, through the whole list I find in each case there is a decrease in revenue, con-

sequent, of course, upon the drought and the war and the abnormal conditions. Yet when I find on the contrary that the tax on the totalisator has increased, showing that betting in that direction has increased also, I say it is time for the House to interfere.

Mr. HUDSON (Yilgarn—in reply) [9.40]: Possibly if the time occupied in the debate had been applied to the consideration of the proposed Bill, it would have been dealt with and carried ere this. I do not intend to labour the question any further. Any arguments put up against the motion have been fully replied to by other speakers, and particularly by members of the select committee, who have a closer and more intimate knowledge of the workings of that committee. I feel sorry for the acting Premier in the position in which he finds himself in having to defend the attitude of the Government in this case, and I feel sure he will take the remarks made to-night on this motion in a proper spirit. Moreover, I am convinced that the motion will be carried, and I hope that, on reflection, the Minister will see it is the desire of the House that some action should be taken in the direction indicated.

Hon. R. H. Underwood (Honorary Minister) interjected.

Mr. HUDSON: I have not made any remarks to the Honorary Minister, believing as I do that the best way to treat him is to disregard him altogether.

Question put and passed.

## BILL—MARRIAGE ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

Order of the Day read for the resumption, from 15th September, of the debate on the second reading.

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—VERMIN BOARDS ACT AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 14th September.

Mr. GILCHRIST (Gascoyne) [9.45]: I take up the case of the Lower Gascoyne pastoralists, not as a special pleader in a weak cause, but with the sincere conviction that their case is unanswerable and is based upon the most elementary principles of fair government. It is a small thing to ask that members should approach the matter with open minds and give to my advocacy the fair and attentive hearing, which is the more necessary in view of the fact that I am the only member who has seen the Gascoyne vermin fence and the only member who has had an opportunity to come into touch with all the settlers or even a majority of the settlers affected by it. My knowledge of the circumstances surrounding the matter and of the settlers' opinions and demands with regard to it might therefore, be considered to a large extent to be authoritative. Before reviewing the position, I lay down the proposition that the settlers within the Gascoyne vermin fence are honourable men. They do not desire and have never suggested any repudiation of their honourable obligations. Unless the unfair and groundless charge that the ratepayers of the Gascoyne vermin district are endeavouring to beat the Government for £66,000 is dropped, it is waste of time to further appeal to this House for justice and protection. In moving the second reading of this Bill the Minister for Lands said—

I want members to realise the seriousness of the question. It is a very serious thing indeed, inasmuch as the Government invested £66,000 on the distinct and definite guarantee of honourable men to refund it. To assist any section of the community to use a technical error or a small omission in regard to the creation of a district as a means of avoiding their liability and practically taking from the people of this State a sum of £66,000 would be distinctly unfair.

The Minister for Lands: What was done last session?

Mr. GILCHRIST: When the member for Subiaco (Mr. B. J. Stubbs) was speaking on the Address-in-reply he made reference to the Gascoyne vermin fence and the Premier interjected—"So long as they—that is the Gascoyne pastoralists—continue their present attitude, it is nothing short of robbery," and the member for Subiaco continued, "Absolute robbery. They are breaking a distinct promise; they secured the money under false pretences and are now repudiating their transaction."

The Minister for Lands: What did they do last session?

Mr. GILCHRIST: I will deal with that presently. The Minister for Lands, in reporting to this House at the close of last session, the failure of the conference between the managers of the two Houses in regard to an amendment to the Bill insisted on by another place, said—

The Honorary Minister tried to convince the Council managers that this was an honourable undertaking entered into evidently by honourable men, and that it would be wrong for any branch of the Legislature to use their position in the direction of giving these men an opportunity to repudiate an honourable understanding.

The Minister for Works: Some of them are repudiating it to-day.

Mr. GILCHRIST: If these insinuations were confined to members of the Government and their supporters, I would have nothing more to say with regard to this charge, but I find that the leader of the Opposition said, by way of interjection, "These people must not be allowed to shirk their responsibilities." This only goes to show the extent of the misconception of the position amongst hon. members and the barrier of prejudice which will have to be broken down before the Gascoyne gets a fair deal from this House in regard to the matter.

The Minister for Lands: That is nonsense.

Mr. GILCHRIST: When the amending Bill was before another place last session, assurances were given that our

settlers were prepared to shoulder the whole of this debt. Sir Edward Wittenoom, who has come in for the bulk of the criticism with respect to the action of another place in amending the Bill said—

It has been said in another place, in a most unfeeling and thoughtless manner, that this is becoming a common sort of thing. A lot of people rush into a business of this kind, ask the Government for the money, get all they can, spend it as quickly as possible, and when it has gone, ask to be relieved of the burden. Not one of these settlers has expressed such a sentiment. They do not wish to depart from their undertaking, and their desire is to repay every penny to the Government if the Government by assisting them will place them in a position to do so. There is no repudiation on their part. They are not asking the Government to let them off, but they desire to be placed in such a position that they will be able to pay off this money during a period of years, providing interest and sinking fund so that the State shall not suffer any loss.

Then later on, Sir Edward Wittenoom said—

They do not propose to repudiate any part of this debt, but they desire to pay off what they owe. It is a large sum of money for 39 men to pay, and represents over £2,000 apiece . . . . All they want is reasonable time and reasonable conditions under which to pay the money. Of course they cannot keep up the fence.

In a letter I wrote to the Minister from Carnarvon on the 1st February of this year, forwarding a resolution of the pastoralists within the fence, I said—

There is not the slightest suggestion that our obligations should be in any way repudiated, and the burden of the £66,000 will be honourably faced. I enclosed a letter from one of the smallest of the squatters, one of the hardest pressed of them, which might be taken as a fair sample of the pastoralists' opinion on this matter. After recom-

mending that the fence should now be made sheep proof only, he said—

Why not our Government take over the rabbit proof fence and give all station owners long terms to get this debt paid off?

That does not sound like repudiation. Add to this the resolution passed by the Gascoyne pastoralists at the beginning of January of this year, which contained this sentence—

They recognise the responsibility of the expense of erection, and are prepared to pay this if reasonable time is allowed, but protest strongly against any further liability being incurred on their behalf.

Last of all there is my statement when I was speaking on the Address-in-reply—

I absolutely deny that there ever has been from an authoritative source the slightest suggestion of repudiation.

In face of these repeated assurances I say it is distinctly unjust for the Minister and members of this House to assert, and persist in asserting, that the Gascoyne pastoralists are attempting to get at the State to the extent of £66,000, or to otherwise repudiate their responsibility.

The Minister for Works: Why do not they pay it?

Mr. GILCHRIST: I will explain that further on. I say positively that if the Minister would meet us in conference in a spirit of compromise and with a readiness to recognise our undoubted local rights, the deadlock would be overcome in 24 hours, and the State's moneys would be fully safe-guarded. What does this Bill propose?

The Minister for Lands: We must get this Bill through.

Mr. GILCHRIST: The Bill proposes to remove flaws in the principal Act in order to clear a way for the Minister to flout the wishes of local settlers in a matter that is exclusively local.

The Minister for Lands: Now you are getting on dangerous ground.

Mr. GILCHRIST: I am willing to remain there, and to show that I am on firm ground. If this Bill is passed in its present form, the Minister will have

the power to flout the wishes of the local people with regard to a matter that is exclusively local, and to force his will upon them in an arbitrary manner, and unquestionably with disastrous results to struggling settlers. The Gascoyne vermin fence is 327 miles long and runs northward from Shark Bay, starting at about the mouth of the Wooramel River, curving to the east slightly and finishing in the waters of Exmouth Gulf, crossing innumerable creeks and water-courses on the way. It cost about £200 a mile, although the work was let by open tender. The construction was supervised by officers appointed by the locally-elected board, but the preliminary arrangements were made by a board nominated by the Government. The fence originated through an agitation in the Gascoyne district for protection from the rabbits that were inside the No. 2 fence. These had apparently penetrated through the two great Government fences and were known to be making their way northward along the coast. The first idea was for a fence to be built practically due east from Shark Bay, starting at about Hamelin Pool and finishing where the northward line of the No. 2 fence ends and the fence bends round to the No. 1 fence. If this fence had been constructed I am satisfied it would have cost considerably less, and I think I am safe in saying that it would have cost considerably less than one-half of what the Gascoyne vermin fence has cost, and in addition it would have protected the whole of the North-West. The Minister of the day turned the proposal down and the local pastoralists, convinced that they were faced by a real rabbit peril, asked for power to tax themselves in order to build a fence of their own. This power was granted. This extent of the area to be fenced was still vague, though the east and west proposal had been abandoned. I find the Minister in charge of the Vermin Boards Bill (Hon. J. Mitchell) told the House in 1908 that the measure was introduced "at the request of the pastoralist and stock owners generally throughout the State." The member for Pilbara (Hon. R. H. Underwood), who knew more



about the Northern conditions than at least 46 other members of the House said—

Hon. H. B. Lefroy: Do you mean then?

Mr. GILCHRIST: I mean at any time, He said—

The number 1 fence has protected us so far, and I think it will be some years before the rabbits reach us. If the people in the Ashburton district get thoroughly and quickly to work the rabbits may be prevented from getting into the Pilbara district. I think, therefore, that the latter district should pay their share for the destruction of rabbits in the Gascoyne.

I can assure the House that the large majority of the settlers in the Gascoyne did not know that they were taking quite isolated action, and that they were quite unaware that such an undertaking was contemplated until the limited area was defined, the construction begun and the first rate notices issued. Within two years after the Vermin Board Act became law the drought was upon us. In one season most of the flocks had been reduced to a half or even a third, and many of them to a quarter of the previous numbers. I need hardly remind hon. members that the previous position will not be recovered for another three years. For four seasons the drought continued in unexampled severity. There was no chance of recuperation, practically no sources of revenue, and old settlers who had thought that their time of struggle, stinting and anxiety was over were faced with ruin. As a result of their unfortunate experiences the arrears commenced to mount up. In one case the arrears rose to a sum of £700, in another case to £500, and there was several cases where they amounted to £400 and £300. These arrears have to be paid in addition to the current rate which is going on, and which for each ratepayer ranges from £250 to £400 a man. The Vermin Board found it impossible to collect the rates and after a time gave up the attempt to do so, and subsequently the Government took over the functions of the board. The sale of the plant by the bailiff, pre-

sumably at the instance of the Government, at sacrifice prices, occurred just before this. The Government were in most cases the purchasers, I presume on behalf of the ratepayers who were the owners of the property.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: When was this?

Mr. GILCHRIST: That occurred either in the last two months of the last year, or in the first two months of this year. I am not sure of the exact date.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Was that before the Bill of last session?

Mr. GILCHRIST: That was before the Bill of last session.

The Minister for Lands: I think it was after. It was to pay the wages of the men which were in arrears.

Mr. GILCHRIST: The point I wish to make in regard to that is that the Government were taking over the Vermin Board's affairs apparently on behalf of the ratepayers. They had the ratepayers' property sold and bought some of it back on behalf of the ratepayers.

The Minister for Lands: That is not correct. The Government did not have it sold. The wages men had it sold.

Mr. GILCHRIST: First of all we appealed to the Government, but they practically recommended that this should be done.

The Minister for Lands: No, we simply said we refused to take any liability and the men themselves took action. In order to protect the men and to see that they got the wages we bought the material. We did it out of consideration to the men whose wages had been in arrears for three months.

Mr. GILCHRIST: I accept the explanation of the Minister for Lands. I do not wish to be unfair. I wish to state the case for the pastoralists as clearly as possible and not to over-state it, for I realise that a case that is over-stated quickly breaks down. I wish to convince the House, and not merely to make out a case that will put me right with the Gascoyne people. Meanwhile the drought had broken, and the fence had its first real testing. The innumerable water-courses I have mentioned came down in torrents,

and damage was done to the fence to the extent of over £3,000. I wish to impress two facts upon the House. The first is, that before the new expenditure of £3,000 or £4,000 was entered upon by the Government, the department apparently made no attempt to discover their legal position in regard to the recovery of rates. In July, 1914, the Kerr case was heard in the local court in Carnarvon and the local magistrate decided against the board. Immediately, the board intimated to the Government that flaws in the Act prevented them from collecting the rates. Instead of at once testing the case by an appeal, months were allowed to elapse during which—and this is an important point—arrears were piling up against the settlers, and the fence was being neglected and falling into disrepair.

The Minister for Lands: Why did they not pay up the arrears? There was no need to allow the fence to go into disrepair.

Mr. GILCHRIST: Why should some of them be obliged to pay, while others were not paying and were being protected by flaws in the Act? The Minister ultimately brought in a measure in January last validating certain illegal Acts of the Gascoyne board and correcting the flaws in the Act. When that Bill was abandoned the Minister immediately set about expending the sum of £3,000 in the way of repairs. Now we are informed that the Crown Law Department has said that the Carnarvon local court's decision was wrong, and therefore the amending Bill which had caused so much trouble between the two Houses in January was altogether unnecessary; but that there were other flaws in the Act which must be rectified. The Gascoyne people naturally ask why they have been subjected to all the inconvenience of accumulating arrears, during the many months interval between the decision of the Carnarvon local court and the securing of opinion from the Crown Law officers.

The Minister for Lands: That is a matter for the board. We had no power or interest in it. We could not take action.

Mr. GILCHRIST: The Minister did have an interest in the case. The Act says that if the interests of the Government are not being conserved by the board, if the rates are not being collected, the Government can step in and take over the affairs of the board. The board, immediately after the case went against them, informed the Government, I think by urgent wire, that flaws in the Act made it impossible to collect the rates. Was it not possible for the Minister to have brought down a Bill during that session to enable the matter to be rectified?

The Minister for Lands: It was for the board to appeal against the decision of the magistrate.

Mr. GILCHRIST: The board had no money to appeal with, or to pay wages with. They had to withdraw all their men.

The Minister for Lands: I had no power to appeal against it. I was not a party to the action.

Mr. GILCHRIST: If the Minister had guaranteed the position the appeal would have been made. He knew that, as the board had failed, the Government would have to take possession. If the Minister—I do not think it was the hon. member, but the Hon. T. H. Bath—had immediately taken action and seen that an appeal was brought before the courts in Perth the present unsatisfactory position would not have been dragging on so long.

Hon. J. D. Connolly: Who is administering the fence now?

Mr. GILCHRIST: The Minister for Lands. The second point I wish to impress upon the House is that weeks before the Minister incurred this new expenditure he received a resolution from the Gascoyne pastoralists definitely asking to be relieved of the burden of maintaining the fence, either by the fence being maintained at Government cost or else by abandoning it altogether. In either case the pastoralists assured the Minister that they would be responsible for the whole of the debt incurred in the erection of the fence. I defer until later in my speech the question of the wisdom of abandoning the fence,

out for the present stress the fact that the settlers of the district resolved that so far as they were concerned the fence must no longer be maintained at local cost. The department has seen it to absolutely ignore this resolution, and, therefore, I claim that the department is responsible for the expenditure on the fence since February of this year.

The Minister for Lands: That is not repudiation is it?

Mr. GILCHRIST: How can the Minister say it is repudiation when the Gascoyne people assert that they are fully ready to shoulder the whole of the debt, but that so far as they are concerned the fence must no longer be maintained at their expense.

The Minister for Lands: In other words, they desire the fence to go to rack and ruin and then lead us to believe that they are prepared to pay £66,000.

Mr. GILCHRIST: That is exactly the case.

The Minister for Lands: If the Bill passes I will believe it. I am prepared to meet them and discuss the matter.

Mr. GILCHRIST: I will tell the Minister later on what I will do in order to effect a compromise which the people are willing to make. I take my stand upon the rights of local autonomy. Who asked for the fence in the first place and who borrowed the money? No one but these few Gascoyne pastoralists. It was as purely local as the construction of a street in Carnarvon, or the establishment of waterworks in that town. And we have not local bodies, not to speak of State Ministries, the right to reverse disastrous policies, consistently of course with the safety of mortgagees' securities and the payment of the whole of the liabilities of the undertaking?

Mr. O'Loughlen: The roads and the waterworks would benefit the whole of the community.

Mr. GILCHRIST: They would benefit the whole of the local community.

Mr. O'Loughlen: The fences do not.

Mr. GILCHRIST: I say the fence is as purely a local undertaking as is the

construction of a Carnarvon street or a Carnarvon waterworks.

The Minister for Lands: But it is totally different from a financial point of view.

Mr. GILCHRIST: The Minister knows that in certain quarters there is an opinion in favour of the abandonment of all the Government rabbit-proof fences. I venture to express the opinion that if this becomes a question of practical politics, the question whether there has been full return for the money spent in those undertakings will never be considered, but merely the question of the effectiveness of the fences and the ability of the State to continue to pay for them. I am convinced that I am on firm ground, and that the local settlers are fully entitled to cry a halt on the continuance of expenditure which has proved to be beyond their means. Now let me deal with the question of the wisdom of abandoning this particular fence. The local people have paid to the Government £9,800 in interest and over £4,000 off the principal, or a total of £14,000.

The Minister for Lands: And they are in arrears how much?

Mr. GILCHRIST: I will deal with the arrears before I close. The local people now propose to tax themselves to the extent of £4,000 or £5,000 per annum for interest and sinking fund on a dead horse. Further than that, some of the pastoralists who have been paying right up to the time that the deadlock occurred inform me that they are willing the whole of the arrears owing by the small men should now be pooled and added to the principal debt, and that they will take their share of paying interest and sinking fund on those arrears. Are not the facts that I have been giving the House sufficient guarantee of the bona fides of these 39 men, not to speak of the 13 men who paid right up to the time of the deadlock? They have not lightly come to their decision to abandon the fence. They realise that if the fence is abandoned there will be a heavy impost upon them without any accruing benefit in the way of protection from rabbit invasion. They argue that it

would be a more serious disaster to have the rate forced upon them still, than to have the rabbits coming into their territory. Some go so far as to say that if the Minister has the power, and decides to continue, to enforce the full rate and maintain the fence at their cost, they will, notwithstanding, have the rabbits in addition to the crippling rate. In my opinion it is a pity that the agitation of 1908 in favour of the east and west fence was not persisted in, because if constructed, it would have run for the most part with the creeks, and would not have been so liable to damage by the rains. But now, when the winter rains come, the innumerable creeks crossing the fence break down many of the panels, and days elapse before the gangs are able to reach the spot and effect repairs. Meanwhile are the rabbits magnanimously held back rather than take advantage of the plight of the repairing gangs? Are the rabbits considerately keeping within bounds where the fence is broken down at the watercourses, which I understand the rabbits follow in the rainy seasons? It only requires a few rabbits to get through at half a dozen different places for the fence soon to be rendered utterly useless. Another obstacle in the way of the success of the fence as a rabbit-proof barrier is the existence of a range of hills known as the Kennedy range. For some reason, which has not been explained, and which can hardly be understood, the fence was constructed on the coast side of this range instead of to the eastward of it. Experts say it is only a matter of time till the range becomes a huge warren, from which the rabbits will swoop down upon the plain after the rains at a time when the fence is in the least satisfactory state of repair. In view of these two conditions—the large number of creeks running across the fence at right angles, and the range of hills running parallel to the fence—many persons consider that the effectiveness of the fence as a bar to the rabbits is highly problematical.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: The board is responsible for that.

Mr. GILCHRIST: For the moment I am discussing the effectiveness of the fence. We are offering to shoulder the responsibility of the extra expense incurred through any mistakes of the board, or of other persons. The Government officials have decided that the fence will be effective, and the repairing of the broken panels and the riding of the sections are in full swing. For this the Government take upon themselves all the responsibility, and proceed clearly understanding that they do so without the sanction of the settlers. They re-erect the fence at their own risk, and I assure the Minister that we will resist by all means at our disposal the attempt to coerce us to continue a burdensome local undertaking, which we have persistently announced our determination to drop. The member for Northam (Hon. J. Mitchell) said last year that "the State is entitled to have that portion of its area protected;" and I say that if the Government see sea value to the State in the retention, of the fence then we have no objection whatever to their acting upon their judgment. We hand over the fence to them free of cost of erection, but we adhere to our previous resolve that we will not be further responsible for its upkeep. While the Bill is in Committee I shall submit an amendment limiting the expenditure of money raised by the collection of the rate to the payment of interest and sinking fund. If that amendment is agreed to, I can assure the Minister the passage of the Bill will be expedited and the Gascoyne people will co-operate with the Government in putting the affairs of the Gascoyne fence upon a satisfactory footing. Let me conclude by reading to the House the resolution passed by the Gascoyne pastoralists at a meeting so late as June last, upon which resolution we take our stand—

At a representative meeting of the pastoralists of the Gascoyne district it was resolved that the Government be notified that unless they wish and are prepared to carry on the maintenance of the rabbit fence as a general charge against the State, they,

the pastoralists, desire that the fence be abandoned. They recognise the responsibility of the expense of erection and are prepared to pay this if reasonable time is allowed, but protest strongly against any further liability being incurred on their behalf.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. W. C. Angwin—North-East Fremantle) [10.25]: I congratulate the member for Gascoyne on having put up a good speech on a very bad case. It is well known that this Bill has been brought in with the object of validating past action. What the hon. member has been speaking about is something in the future. It has to be clearly realised that a terrible blunder was made in regard to the erection of the Gascoyne rabbit-proof fence, though not altogether in the manner described by the member for Gascoyne. From expressions of opinion which have been heard in the Chamber lately it would have been thought that certain gentlemen, when in control of the administration of this State, and with large sums of money to expend—amounting in this particular instance to about £63,000—would use the utmost care to ensure that the State was duly and properly protected before money was either expended or handed over to any private body for the purpose of being expended. But what do we find here? That £63,000 of the State's money has been handed over to a board not properly constituted, a board constituted illegally and not in accordance with the provisions of the Vermin Boards Act. That being so, it has been found that some persons—no matter if it was only two or three—availed themselves of the blunder for the purpose of relieving themselves from payment of the rate which they were and are entitled to pay. This measure has been introduced for the specific purpose of compelling those persons who will not meet their just liability, to come up to the scratch and to pay in the same way as others have paid who have shown themselves honourable men in that respect. Undoubtedly someone is responsible for

the blunder. Who it is I do not know. Perhaps, however, it would be just as well for me to mention that the blunder was committed before the present Government took office; so that we do not make all the mistakes so far as Western Australia is concerned. The loss in this instance is not a small one, either.

Mr. Robinson: There will be no loss.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is a decided loss.

Mr. Robinson: You will get every penny back.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is all we want. Without the passage of this Bill, however, it will be a matter of impossibility to enforce payment.

Mr. Gilchrist: We will help you to pass the Bill if you agree to the amendment.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: I am indeed pleased to hear the hon. member say that. It shows that the action of the Government in introducing this Bill for the purpose of validating the rate is justified, and is necessary for the protection of the State. Realising that the position is such, it is not necessary for me to take up the time of hon. members any further. \*

Mr. ROBINSON (Canning) [10.30]: I have taken some pains and trouble to ascertain for myself the exact position in respect to this Vermin Board matter which has been before the House on one or two occasions. The first time I heard it I must confess I did not understand the subject; it was new to me, and most of the speakers seemed to think that the House knew all about it. I have taken the trouble to inquire into the matter, and I am satisfied that this Bill is a proper Bill to meet the circumstances now, and I propose therefore to support the second reading. Before doing that, however, there are one or two matters that I think the House should know. In the first instance, when the rabbits were marching northward, the request was that the fence should be constructed east and west. The Government refused this request, but directed that a district should be fenced. When I turn to the Vermin Boards Act, 1909, I find that a

district is defined as a road district. The settlers in the Gascoyne district thereupon requested that a fence should be constructed around the district, understanding that the fence would be erected in accordance with the provisions of the Vermin Boards Act around the road board district. It is in respect of that very matter that the Minister is in a fix in collecting his rates. Instead of making a fence around the road board district, as the Act provides, he made a fence around about one-third or half, or at any rate a smaller portion than the road district.

The Minister for Works : That formed the area.

Mr. ROBINSON : The consequence was that when the Board went into court to sue, it found that the fence was not constructed in accordance with the Act, and it could not recover, and I do not think it can recover. To start with, the action of the Board was illegal, and the present Bill is to validate what was done or cure the mistake. By fencing, or creating, which is a better word, a smaller district than the road district, a number of persons escaped payment of the rates. The settlers within the Road Board district should have been included in that area, and then relatively there would have been a smaller burden for each to bear. By departing from the provisions of Section 6 of the Act, a much smaller area has been included, in which there are only 36 settlers, and those 36 settlers, instead of all those residing in the district, have become liable to pay the whole cost of this fence and the maintenance of it. Out of those 36 settlers, it appears that only one-third—in actual figures only 11—have paid their rates; the remaining two-thirds, or 25, have not paid any rates at all, and the board was in this position, that for the first two or three years, finding that the payments to the sinking fund and to the Government and for repairs came to more than they were receiving, they levied successive rates of 2s. each. The same old 11 paid up. Still it was insufficient to go round, and another 2s. was levied. If every-

one had paid 1s. it would have been sufficient. In making these remarks, I am not casting any blame on either the old Government or the present Government; I am only reciting the facts. The facts were that a 2s. rate meant something like £8,800 per annum levied on 36 settlers, an enormous sum, the largest tax that existed probably anywhere in Australia. And I am informed by some of those squatters who are called by the public wealthy, that the tax they had to pay to this Vermin Board was more than the income tax they had to pay to the State Government, and of course 2s. per acre was even more than the rental they had to pay. It would not have been necessary to levy this rate of 2s. from time to time if unpaid rates had not been allowed to accumulate. Arrears were permitted to accumulate from year to year until they reached the huge sum of £9,000.

The Minister for Lands : Eleven thousand pounds.

Mr. ROBINSON : No attempt of any kind was made until recently to recover the money in arrears.

The Minister for Lands : You understand we had no power.

Mr. ROBINSON : True, but these are the facts. No attempt was made until recently to recover the arrears. The funds of the board have been gathered yearly, instead of from all the people liable to pay, from the eleven who regularly did pay, and when money ran short the eleven were asked to pay up again for the reason of the extravagance of the board in the upkeep of the fence, which, by the way, cost £10 per mile, when the Government whom some people call extravagant, only spent 30s. a mile in the maintenance of their own fence. An attempt was made to enforce payment of the rates, and that attempt only came along last year, and for the last two sessions the Government have sought to introduce a Bill to cure the difficulties, but so far it has not succeeded in passing, mainly because the position was somewhat obscure, and members did not understand it, and also because the members were

afraid that possibly it would only mean a repetition of what had gone on before namely, that the 11 men would be called upon to pay the tax. I want now to come upon a very peculiar feature. In the year 1912, the Minister for Agriculture instructed the board not to sue certain settlers, but to accept promissory notes from those whom he listed for this purpose, and he instructed the board to sue the remainder. I make bold to say that a more unjust, unwarrantable, illegal action was never taken by a Minister of the Crown. I may say it was not the present occupant of the office. Of course the Minister had no authority whatever to interfere with the discretion of the board, or to say what men should be sued or what men let off. It was the Minister's duty to see that the board were not interfered with, or if interfered with at all, to make everybody pay their just dues. But he did interfere, and he issued directions to the board that some were to be let off by way of promissory notes. These gentlemen gave their promissory notes, not one of which has been met. They were made for 12 months; they might as well have been made for 100 years. The whole thing was utterly illegal from start to finish, and the procedure was grossly unjust.

Mr. O'Loughlin: Did the pastoralists know that it was illegal, or did they give their promissory notes in good faith?

Mr. ROBINSON: I cannot say, but it was grossly unjust to those not allowed to give promissory notes and who were threatened with legal proceedings.

The Minister for Works: Did they all have an opportunity to give promissory notes?

Mr. ROBINSON: No, a special list was made out. It is an extraordinary position, and the present Minister will find, if he looks up the records, that what I am saying is perfectly correct. I have in my hand, over the signature of the secretary of the board, a list of the whole of the ratepayers to the Gascoyne Vermin Board, and in answer to a question as to who were the privileged few allowed to give promissory notes, he says—

I cannot give the list of ratepayers who have given promissory notes as the letter of advice from the Department of Agriculture was marked "confidential." Perhaps if you apply to the department you will get it.

This is dated 22nd November, 1913. That state of affairs should not be allowed to exist. I feel confident it could not have arisen under the hand of the Minister who is now in office, for he knows too much of the routine of office to do such a thing. That it did exist should be condemned by every hon. member. It may be, and I believe it is, quite impossible, owing to bad seasons, for many of these men who gave promissory notes to meet their obligations. A payment of 2s. in the pound produces £8,800. A payment of 1s. in the pound would produce £4,400. Four thousand pounds is ample to provide interest and sinking fund for the redemption of the £88,000. Four hundred pounds is ample to provide for the administration of the board. Therefore, a rate of 1s. spread over a number of years to repay the £66,000 will recoup the Government every penny of the money. It has been said, I think in an irresponsible way, and I challenged the Minister for Lands when he made the statement, that certain of the Gascoyne pastoralists had repudiated their obligations.

The Minister for Lands: No; I said the department was repudiated, but not by the pastoralists themselves.

Mr. ROBINSON: However, the public got the idea that these so-called wealthy squatters had had £66,000 spent for them, and would not repay any of it. On inquiry, I can find no evidence of that at all. On the contrary, I find that the pastoralists of that area have regularly paid their dues year after year when these other 25 were let off. Let me give this illustration: What would be thought of the Mayor of Perth if he issued instructions to his town clerk that 111 men were to be sued for their rates because they were well off, while 250 other men who owed rates were to be allowed to give their promissory notes? Who is the mayor of Perth

that he should thus differentiate, and who was the Minister for Agriculture that he should dare do such a thing?

The Minister for Works: It is very often done by local authorities, and quite right too.

Mr. ROBINSON: It is illegal, wicked and wrong. I would make everybody who could afford to pay pay. If, unfortunately, a man cannot pay, the Government should take a reasonable position in dealing with that man. But there was secrecy about this. The list was marked "confidential." These things should not be. The remedy is quite simple. A little while ago the Minister asked, "What are you going to do with the fence?" I will ask, in reply, "how do we manage the No. 1 and No. 2 rabbit-proof fences"? The country maintains the rabbit-proof fences to-day, and had the fence that was requested been erected from Woornamel to the No. 2 rabbit proof fence, the country would have maintained it. But for some reason or another the Minister for Lands had thought fit not to do so.

Mr. O'Loughlen: He must have had good reasons; it was Mr. Mitchell; he never makes mistakes.

Mr. ROBINSON: I do not know what the reasons were. No doubt they were quite sufficient. But we have the fact that this fence has been built. Again, these pastoralists, good, bad and indifferent, hold their leases until 1928. This being the position, what attitude are the Government going to adopt in regard to the leases? The fence will in 1928 be the property of the Government. The Government are entitled to take that into consideration in the re-letting of their properties. If the fence is maintained until 1928 at the cost of the squatter, it is obvious that in 1928 the Government will be made a present of the fence. I am sure they do not want that. The squatter, I feel sure, has no wish to evade one penny of his liabilities. I have spoken with many of them, and they are all aghast that such a suggestion should be made. But they regard this as an ordinary business proposition. They say, "Our leases expire in 1928,

but if the Government are going to renew them on the same conditions as now obtain something may be said about keeping the fence in repair, because it will outlast the term of our lease. If the Government are going to increase our rents after 1928 is it a fair thing that they should make this charge?" It is sufficient for my purpose to say in conclusion that if the squatters are willing to pay principal and interest on their fence and repay to the Government the whole of the £66,000 it matters little to the squatters what becomes of the fence. So far as the Government are concerned, I would say that they, being the owners of the fence, should make some provision for maintaining it. It is quite possible that at a round table conference some *via media* might be found by which the fence might be maintained, the squatters be given additional time and the question of the leases dealt with. If recriminations are dropped, the squatters recognised as an honourable body and a proper heart to heart talk were held with the Minister without any side issues being brought in the whole proposition could be settled on business lines. I support the Bill.

On motion by Mr. O'Loughlen, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.52 p.m.