

**PERPETUAL EXECUTORS, TRUSTEES, AND
AGENCY COMPANY
(PRIVATE BILL)
18 January 1923**

Edith Cowan supported the Bill to establish the Perpetual Trustee Company. As this would overcome an existing monopoly she believed the resultant competition would promote efficiency in administration.

Mrs COWAN: (West Perth) [9.32]: I support the Bill. I was greatly surprised to hear the remarks which have fallen from the members of the Opposition. It is astonishing that so many of them should wish to continue a monopoly. It will be a very good thing for the community to have the Perpetual Trustee Company established, as it will afford great assistance to many people. There are people, who will not deal with the other company, waiting now to put their money into this company, and why should not they be considered? The directors of the WA Company do not object to the establishment of this company. They realise that there may be some competition in the matter of efficiency, but efficiency in the administration of the business affairs of such large numbers of people can only be highly advantageous. I am not opposed to the appointment of a public trustee, but I am a little surprised that members of the Opposition who listened to the remarks of their Leader last year should think such a department could be of any great efficacy. We have only two forms of trusteeship of a public kind, and one of them is the lunacy trusteeship.

Hon. W.C. Angwin: This is a lunacy trusteeship, too.

Mrs COWAN: If for that reason only, I should have expected the Opposition to support this Bill, because it would have prevented what happened in a case which evoked such strictures from the Leader of the Opposition, strictures with which I entirely agreed. That was a case of which we all know, and it was anything but satisfactory. It was not conducive to encouraging the public to entrust their business to State administration.

Hon. W.C. Angwin: That will not apply to this Bill.

Mrs COWAN: I do not say that it will, but members have advocated a public trustee instead of this company or with it. Let them have a public trusteeship by all means. But it surprised me to hear that advocated from the Opposition after having heard the very strong remarks against the public management of the affairs of certain lunatics. I agreed with those remarks at the time, and I still agree with them. I supported the

action to have justice done in the case of that individual, and my support would have been forthcoming this session had not illness precluded me from being in my place. It has been said that this company is going to take people from the country. We need not worry about that contention. There are plenty of people who can be employed by this company, and it seems to me they will come from the town and will assist people in the country to take care of the tremendous amount of money our primary producers are supposed to make. I am not sure that they make so much money; they may hold the value in land and not in cash, but if they have the cash, they will in future have two trusteeships from which to choose the more efficient to take charge of their affairs. I shall support the second reading.

Hon. W.C. Angwin: (North-East Fremantle) [9.40]: Western Australia has a very small population and it is fruitless to make comparisons with a country like England in regard to trustee companies. On one occasion I heard a gentleman refer to a trading company in this State and another in England as being in the ratio of a flea to an elephant when the relative populations were considered. A public trusteeship has been advocated, not only by members of the Labour Party but by men in public positions and legal men. The proposal has been brought before the public on several occasions and has received approval. If we permit another private company to start operations now while our population is small, its vested interests will become so great that we shall be building up strong opposition against the day when we inaugurate a public trusteeship. We cannot fairly contrast the number of companies in this State and the other States where the population is much larger. Those who are desirous of having their funds protected by a public trustee under the Government will not have an opportunity to avail themselves of those facilities, because private companies have come into existence, and to start a public trusteeship may not be a payable proposition. I regret that the member for West Perth (Mrs Cowan) referred to the public trustee in connection with the Lunacy Department. Unfortunately, that official had died prior to the charge being laid against him.

Mrs COWAN: I did not refer to any administration.

Hon. W.C. Angwin: The hon member did. The official had been dead a considerable time before any inquiry was made. I had an opportunity to look into that question and I have grave doubts whether that official was lax in his administration.

Mrs COWAN: I never said so. I was pointing out what a member on your side said. It came from the Leader of the Opposition.