

# Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 26th October, 1955.

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

## QUESTIONS.

### MOUNTS BAY.

#### *New Shore Line.*

Mr. COURT asked the Minister for Works:

In view of the controversy still current in respect of the ultimate fate of Mounts Bay arising from reclamations for the Narrows bridge (and possibly aggravated by what appears to be a temporary mound of reclamation soil), would he be prepared to visit the location with members of Parliament, and define for them the proposed new shore line?

The MINISTER replied:

The extent of the reclamation work in Mounts Bay now in hand is clearly shown by the boundary work done by the two pontoon grabs. There is a temporary deposit of dredged material removed from the new channel and turning area south of Barrack-st. This will be again pumped and placed in the Mounts Bay reclamation area.

### DIPHTHERIA.

#### *Compulsory Immunisation.*

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Health:

(1) Has his department authority to require the compulsory immunisation of children against diphtheria?

(2) If not, will he examine the necessity and possibility of obtaining this power?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) The question of compulsory immunisation has recently been re-examined by the department at my request, and I have been advised that on the whole it is not desirable and would probably not be practicable.

## GASCOYNE RESEARCH STATION.

### *Nature of Experiments Undertaken.*

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) What experiments are being carried out on the Gascoyne research station with respect to—

- (a) bananas;
- (b) other tropical fruits;
- (c) vegetables?

(2) Are any experiments being carried out to ascertain whether there are any mineral deficiencies in the Gascoyne soils?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Experiments current at the Gascoyne research station include the following:—

#### (a) Bananas:

1. Spacing trial—testing relative merits of close planting versus standard methods.
2. Longevity trial — recording economic aspects of maintaining older plantations in production.
3. Plastic bag trial—use of colour covers for developing bunches.
4. Fertiliser trial—use of major fertilisers—nitrogen, phosphoric acid and potash.
5. Soil treatment experiment—use of lime, sulphur and gypsum as soil conditioners.
6. Nitrogen experiment—comparison of sulphate of ammonia, blood and bone and whalemeal as sources of nitrogen.
7. Water usage experiment—comparison of results from several rates and methods of irrigation.

#### (b) Other Tropical Fruits:

1. Pineapples. Work carried out has included methods of watering both by flood and sprinkler, fertiliser comparisons, mulching and shading tests and comparison of planting materials. Work is continuing along soil treatment lines.
2. Pawpaws. Variety trials and marketing tests continue.
3. Avocado, Macadamia, Date palm, Custard apple and mango establishment.

#### (c) Vegetables:

Vegetable crops have not been subject to scientific experiment in the past because resources were concentrated on tropical products which were of major interest in the district.

Now that there is an interest taken in vegetables, a programme of work with appropriate vegetable

crops is being prepared for the coming season. It will include time of planting, variety, and fertiliser trials, with such crops as tomatoes, onions, beans, carrots, parsnips, pumpkins, cucumber, capsicums, etc.

(2) Yes. Answers to Nos. 1 (a) 4, 5 and 6 fall into this category. Minor element trials are not necessary on research station soils. Departmental officers will be happy to assist a planter where deficiency is indicated if he is prepared to co-operate with trials.

### **BILL—FERTILISERS ACT AMENDMENT.**

Introduced by the Minister for Agriculture and read a first time.

### **BILL—UNIVERSITY MEDICAL SCHOOL, TEACHING HOSPITALS.**

Report of Committee adopted.

### **BILL—MARINE STORES ACT AMENDMENT.**

#### *Second Reading.*

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 12th October of the debate on the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

#### *In Committee.*

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; Mr. Johnson in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Section 2 amended:

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: In connection with the definition of "bottles," is it intended that the Bill should cover soft drinks? If so, it is quite a serious matter. At present, most of the bottles containing soft drinks are branded, and the price of collection is governed by the owners. It is usually a question of negotiation between the owners of the bottles, the marine dealers and the shopkeepers as to what shall be paid. Bottles are very much more valuable than the figure paid for their collection. I think they are worth about 8d. each, or a little more, and something like 4d. is paid by the owner.

The Minister for Housing: It is 2d. or 3d.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The owners of the bottles pay 4d.

Hon. L. Thorn: What does the collector pay?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The shops used to pay 2d.

Hon. L. Thorn: The bottle-oh pays ½d., the same as he does for a beer bottle.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The cost of soft drinks is pretty high to the kiddies, and if the bottles can get into the dealer's hands he might hold 5,000 or 6,000 of them and say he would not sell them. Under the Bill, if soft drink bottles are included, there might be a great shortage of them; or the kiddies will have to pay considerably more for their drinks because of this bargaining power that is in the hands of the dealers. Is that right? I am sure that the sponsor of the Bill did not intend to put up the cost of the drinks to the kiddies. We should give consideration to amending the definition of a branded bottle so as to exclude anything relating to soft drinks. I have not an amendment at the moment. Would the sponsor of the Bill be prepared to report progress so that we could get together and see what can be done about this?

Mr. JOHNSON: As I understand the situation in regard to branded bottles for cool drinks, milk and other forms of liquid refreshment, it is that the measure does not materially change the position.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: It could, could it not?

Mr. JOHNSON: At present there is a good deal of disturbance in relation to the current situation concerning cool drinks because this is the beginning of the cool drink season. The practice of the cool drink manufacturers has been to try to establish the custom of returning the bottles direct from the retailer to the supplier. In effect, the idea is that full bottles go out to the store and a similar number of empty bottles are returned. At the moment a marine collector—the bottle-oh—can legally purchase the branded bottles from the homes of the people who have them and he can then sell them to a registered dealer who can return them to the supplier.

As the Act stands, unamended, I think it would be possible for the owners of branded bottles to prevent marine dealers from collecting and dealing in them. The current situation is that the bottle-oh is paid only 1s. 9d. a dozen for empty cool drink bottles while the manufacturers pay 3s. I think it is, to the shops. At present negotiations are under way whereby the cool drink manufacturers have offered to pay a further penny, which will remain in the hands of the storekeeper, for handling the bottles. I would not say the situation is 100 per cent. satisfactory to anyone in the cool drink trade. I can see a vague possibility of the trouble which is indicated by the member for Mt. Lawley in that this does lay open the possibility of a dealer holding to ransom a manufacturer whose branded bottles he has in his yard in quantity.

In a heatwave he could retain the bottles until there was a severe shortage, and then the small cool drink operator might

find himself in strife because of the difficulty in getting bottles quickly enough for refilling. The situation appears to be identical with that of the beer trade with the exception that the beer trade is much more heavily capitalised in relation to the number of bottles it has. The possibility of a dealer stockpiling a sufficient number of beer bottles to put pressure on the brewery appears to be somewhat remote, whereas the possibility of pressure being applied to the smaller people in the cool drink trade is much more real.

I do not feel that by adding to the definition of branded bottles or to the other things referred to in the amendment, would change the situation materially. I am not anxious to press the matter very hard. If the member for Mt. Lawley feels that a further study of the subject is warranted, and he can produce some useful amendment—not merely an argument—that will not destroy the purpose of the Bill which is, in particular, the protection of the small man, I will be quite prepared to accept it. If, however, the hon. member's intention is just to cast the whole amendment out, then I might be a little less co-operative. If he wants to report progress, I cannot object very strongly.

Progress reported.

#### **BILLS (2)—RETURNED.**

1. Junior Farmers' Movement.
  2. Coal Mine Workers (Pensions) Act Amendment.
- Without amendment.

#### **BILL—BANK HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT.**

*Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 12th October.

**MR. O'BRIEN** (Murchison) [4.51]: I rise to support the Bill because I consider that bank officials are employed in an occupation which entails a certain amount of mental strain. At times these people are working at a high pressure and I can remember, many years ago, when the manager of a country branch of a bank lived at the rear of the bank premises. He was responsible for a considerable amount of gold; in fact, many thousands of ounces were brought from the mines and lodged in the bank. That gold was in the manager's care.

On many occasions these bank officials are caused a good deal of mental anxiety. One official, because of the constant worry of his job, wandered away from home. It is true that he was found at a bank but it was not a bank building but the bank of a creek. Luckily the creek was dry at the time but the worry of his job brought about that state of affairs. I know of another bank employee who was working

long hours and his job was causing him a good deal of worry. I do not know his salary at the time but I believe it was quite small. One night he became so distressed that he went to the people who lived opposite and told them that somebody was trying to rob the bank. Like good citizens these people accompanied the official to the bank only to find that, because of the mental strain, the bank official himself had left on the lights when he had left the premises.

Farmers would argue that a forty hour week is not sufficient for a man to do a good week's work. But with our up-to-date methods and modern machinery that line of thought is no longer valid. We have got away from the days of a farmer holding a hurricane light in the eyes of his employees and saying, "Up boys, the sun is rising and we must get to work." Today, with our modern methods, we can reduce hours and show employees some consideration. We are in a mechanical age and must progress with the times. No problem is too great to solve and no bank is too small that it cannot allow a five-day week to its employees. Bank officials are entitled to a fair deal. They are citizens; they are eligible to vote and are therefore entitled to the protection of their representatives.

In the majority of occupations today, employees enjoy a 40-hour week and although bank officials are not doing laborious work, it calls for great mental power. I feel sure that if this amendment is agreed to bank employees and employers will co-operate in order to bring about the five-day working week without causing any trouble to the rest of the community. I support the second reading.

**HON. C. F. J. NORTH** (Claremont) [4.59]: Many years ago I practised as a solicitor in the Terrace and in those days I would have been sufficiently selfish to say that I would not agree with the idea of giving bank officials a five-day week; I would have thought it too awkward for the professions. But having listened over the years to the arguments advanced in favour of a Bill of this nature, I was much impressed by the remarks of the member for Nedlands, who said he would eventually move for a select committee.

That means either one of two things. It either means that the hon. member wishes to stall the entire Bill, which I do not think is his intention, or it means that he wants to find out if it will be possible to work out something whereby all the ramifications could be considered as to other businesses. In other words, the inquiry would determine whether we will move towards the New Zealand system where there is no Saturday business at all or whether the pressure from the community is so great that conditions must go on as they are.

Having considered the power of the Government with its numbers—at least till Saturday or perhaps afterwards; we do not know—it is quite certain that there will not be a select committee. So I must go further and not only vote for the second reading, but also for the third reading of the Bill in order to ensure that it will reach another place where there are businessmen of sound commonsense who, no doubt, will give it all the consideration that it requires and if necessary, move for the appointment of a select committee to consider the Bill and its probable effect.

There is a great deal behind this move. At this moment in the history of our country, we are subjected to what is called a bank squeeze and to those who understand the pulse of the situation, it would appear to be justified. There is a move from Canberra at the present time and from Dr. Coombs, to have less business conducted and to slow operations down generally. On those lines alone there are some views that could be expressed and fought out by a select committee of the Upper House.

In the Legislative Council we have a lot of balanced individuals, with great resource, occupied in a number of industries. Having received this Bill, they will give consideration to the matters involved. What are those matters? On the one side we have the ordinary views of the person in business who wants to keep conditions as they are at present and does not wish to be inconvenienced. The other view is the story we hear from America and the story we read in the paper every day of automats, and the fact that men will have fewer hours of work. That seems inevitable whichever way we look at life or industry.

I think it would be a good opportunity for the Legislative Council to have a thorough inquiry and decide what should be done about Saturday work generally before allowing a measure like this to go through. I say: Let us have an inquiry authorised in the Upper House, because I do not think we will get one here.

**HON. DAME FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER** (Subiaco) [5.3]: I would like to address a few words to the House on this matter from the point of view of the ordinary woman. I agree with the mover that a five-day working week would be a very good system if it could be worked all round, but not if it worked so that one section of the community had Monday off and worked on Saturday and the other section had Saturday off. It would be good if we all worked a five-day week from Monday to Friday and had Saturday free.

By that I mean there should be nobody working on Saturday at all. There should be no trains or trams running; there should be no picture shows; we should all stay at home and really enjoy what the mover has intimated—that is, a rest on Saturday. I

took the trouble to go to one or two banks to find out the position. I discovered that the men generally wanted the measure passed. Accordingly, I think it is only a vote-catching stunt.

During my talk with them, I said I would vote for it on condition that everybody else also had Saturday free. I was asked what I meant, and I replied that there should be no trains, trams or buses running; there should be no picture shows or s.p. premises open and so on. To this I received the reply, "Good life, no!" In fact, one man went so far as to say that it might be possible for him to obtain a job with an s.p. bookmaker on Saturday which would help to increase his salary.

I asked the officials in one bank if they could tell me the percentage and classes of people that attended the bank on Saturday mornings for the purpose of putting in money or drawing it out. The reply was that 75 per cent. of the people were housewives, but they added that they could quite easily come in on Monday. I replied, "Not a bit. If you know men or women as I know them, there is the possibility there will be no money on Monday because the man may have got it out of his wife on Saturday. At present she goes to the bank on Saturday morning and during that 1½ hours business she banks the housekeeping money."

In that particular bank in West Perth 75 per cent. of the people that enter are housewives who do so for the purpose of banking their housekeeping money for the week. How can they keep it at home? If they did, the children would cry and want something and the mother would give it to them. The man of the house would then ask for something else and she would let him have the money to get it. But if she puts it in the bank, it is another matter altogether because she knows it will be safe for another week and will be there to help her do the housekeeping.

I am going to vote against the Bill even though the bankers say they want it. It is a vote-catching stunt. The member for Moore suggested that we should work harder and produce more. In this State and in Australia generally, we are doing everything possible to work less and do less than we used to. I do not think bankers are overpaid, but that is a different matter altogether. I would not mind their rate of pay being increased, but I do not wish to see the housewife left with the money in the house on Saturday morning. She will not be able to look after it because of the demands of her children and husband.

The member for Leederville who introduced the Bill would say that the women could look after the money. Members may believe it or not, but a woman has a very tender heart and she often gives to the man she loves money she knows is necessary for the purchase of supplies for feeding the family the next week. I would like to revert, as I have done previously, in this

House, to the time of the last depression when the Government gave people so much money per unit to help them keep themselves. I have said before that on Saturday night I have had to go out on hundreds of occasions to buy food for householders because the menfolk had spent the poor pittance of 7s. per unit on betting.

Now that we have betting shops all over the place the men will be encouraged to obtain money on any pretext whatsoever so that they can go out and place it on bets. I am against this measure. If members think deeply about it, they will realise that I am right. I invite members to visit every bank and to see the percentage of people who want to keep their money in those banks till Monday of the next week. Besides all this, the people in the country work till Friday and they then go into the town on Saturday to do what business they have to transact. I object to the Bill. If there is to be a select committee, it is possible that it might be successful, but, on the other hand, it might not. I definitely oppose the Bill.

**MR. HEARMAN** (Blackwood) [5.10]: My views on this Bill are very similar to those expressed a week or two ago by the member for Roe. It seems to me that there is a tendency and need today when considering such matters to view the effect on costs; particularly the effect on the costs of our exportable goods where we are finding ourselves priced out of the world markets today. That affects all those associated with agriculture generally.

I know that in many cases farmers have very little regard for reduction in hours of work and that sort of thing. They are not impressed with the 40-hour week. I do know that a great many farmers employ labour and have difficulty in retaining it, and it has been necessary and fairly wide practice to endeavour to arrange their affairs so that they work through a full five-day week from Monday to Friday. On Saturday they go to the township and do what business they have to transact.

It provides an opportunity for the employees to go into town and participate in sports or to visit the shops as the case may be. It gives the employer the same opportunity, and accordingly a trip into town on Saturday is most desirable from both the employer's and the employee's point of view. Among other transactions banking has to be carried out by farmers on Saturday; and if the banks were closed it would inconvenience them and would necessitate a trip into town during the week, probably on Friday afternoon. That may not be satisfactory from the farmer's point of view.

There are farmers who find it necessary to be on the job with the employees on certain occasions and if they have to

go into town on Friday it will mean having to find other work for the employees to do, and the job must cease. From the employee's point of view it may mean that he would not be able to get into town on the week-end, and if he did get in on Saturday morning he would have to find somebody to cash his cheque and so on. It is asking a lot of a business community in a country town to take over the functions of a bank and provide ready cash for cheques.

That could be quite a difficulty in some country towns, and I refer particularly to towns like Boyup Brook where there are timber mills and flax mills whose employees are paid on Friday afternoon after the banks are closed. They are paid by cheque and they would have to get their cheques cashed by the business firms on Saturday morning. Sometimes the employees get quite big cheques. It would generally speaking, be a great inconvenience to the agricultural community and it could increase their costs, particularly their overhead costs, and could mean dissatisfaction at times on the part of the employee.

The House should, I think, seriously consider the effect the proposed legislation will have on the farming community before agreeing to such a measure, particularly in view of the present economic position in which we find ourselves in regard to exports. I think the member for Roe took the point very well, that if there was to be a five-day week it would be the proper and desirable thing to have it in all sections of business; right throughout the community.

If we are not prepared to go that far, it is open to question as to how far we should go in selecting any particular set of individuals. I know that in some industries it possibly pays the employers and employees to work five days a week. One of the arguments advanced for the five-day week is that it would enable workers to do their shopping and business transactions on Saturday morning. Now if we are to whittle away the facilities for trading on Saturday morning, then to be logical we should ask for a 4½-day week. This does not seem to make sense at all. I have no wish to see anyone working harder than is reasonably necessary.

I know that some sections of the community in particular callings are placed at greater inconvenience than other sections; I refer to workers like milkmen, newsagents, and others who work through the night, in all weather and in the open. I suggest that if there is any question of easing the lot of any section of the community, those employees should be considered first. If this Bill had provided that those workers could conveniently work a five-day week, I would view it more favourably than I am now doing because bank employees work under what are generally regarded as good conditions.

Some time ago there was a suggestion that milkmen should not work on Sunday mornings but there was an outcry against that. I merely wish to point out that the workers I refer to have a very much stronger claim to consideration in regard to a five-day week than bank clerks and others who work under good conditions. If this House is to consider relieving any section of the community from working a 5½-day or six-day week, then workers employed under arduous conditions should be considered first. It is true that transport workers work shifts and often they are called on to work over the week-ends, which means that they cannot participate in sporting activities on those occasions.

We should give a great deal of thought to this question before picking out any particular calling and giving it a five-day week. A line must be drawn somewhere. Can we safely legislate that retail shops should close on Saturday morning? If members believe that, they can introduce a Bill along those lines,—that is, if they think that the economy of the country can stand it—so that there will be two full days in the week on which no business will be done. Personally, I think the length of the working week should be considered from the viewpoint of reducing costs as far as possible.

During a period of inflation, or when the general public is complaining about difficulties of rising costs, we in this House should be careful not to take any steps calculated in any way, however small, to increase costs. I agree with the member for Leederville that if the banks close on Saturdays, people will get by. Of course, the public will get by; it got by when there was petrol rationing, but I do not think that was a good thing. It led to all sort of inconvenience and increased costs. If a case had been made out along the lines suggested by the member for Murchison that bank clerks were overworked and could not continue working for more than five days in a week, and the argument had been sustained. I might have been more inclined to agree.

Bank employees cannot be depicted as a section working under arduous conditions, when compared with those engaged in other callings. I have greater sympathy for sections of the community who work long hours, in the early morning and late at night and who have to work in the open in all weather. I have greater sympathy for people who work a six or seven-day week, for those who are engaged on unpleasant jobs, or for those who are liable to be called up at any time without prior notice. I refer to electricity and telephone linesmen, water supply workers and others who are liable to be called out at a moment's notice to work 12 hours' overtime in an emergency.

Those disabilities do not occur in the banking community. At the end of the financial year they might be called on to

work back a few nights, but they certainly do not have to work in the open during thunderstorms, like high-tension and telephone linesmen. Members of the Police Force are called on to work at all hours. I have more sympathy for those people than for bank clerks in regard to a five day week. I consider that the mover of the Bill passed over lightly the question of inconvenience to the public. Any business, whether it be banking, retail or other, must give service to the public, and if the public wants a service on Saturday morning, and it is reasonable to provide it, there is an obligation on that particular business to provide it.

That is a sound policy which has been accepted by the business community for many years. I am not impressed with the argument that the public could do with fewer banking hours without much inconvenience. If that argument is accepted, transport workers could very well say that the public could do with fewer hours available for travelling. Probably they could. The previous Government, for instance, reduced the number of metropolitan and suburban trains, but when the present Government came into office it increased the number of trains over the week-end and reduced the fares. The previous Government took the view that if employees were to be paid extra wages for working over the week-ends, it was fair to ask the travelling public to pay extra fares during that time. However, the present Government did not concur with that view. It put on extra trains and abolished the week-end surcharge.

If it is right to ask the railways, which is a government instrumentality, to provide satisfactory week-end facilities for travelling at no greater cost, surely it is not asking too much of the banking community to provide at least one and a half hours for transacting business on Saturday mornings. This is for the convenience of the general public from whom the bank employees make their living.

I do not think there has been any great demand by the banking industry for this curtailment of hours. It is true some bank clerks support the move. The industry has not shown that there would be any economy brought about by a five-day week, or that a cheaper service would be given. In fact, it has been suggested that the number of hours worked would be just the same. In view of all these factors, I find, along with a few other members, that I must oppose the second reading.

Mr. WILD: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

Motion put and negatived.

MR. WILD (Dale) [5.25]: Whilst it sounds very nice to give a promise of a five-day week, the time has come when

we should reorientate our thoughts along these lines because through every utterance we get from men of note, whether they be Australians, Englishmen or Americans, we are told that the answer to our economic problem today is greater productivity. If we are to accept the principle that bank employees should work a five-day week, can one not conscientiously say to the milkman, the newsagent delivering the "Sunday Times," or others, "If it is good enough for bank employees, it is good enough for the rest of the community?"

Mr. J. Hegney: Today milkmen are given time off.

Mr. WILD: In their application to the court, the bank employees submitted they worked under certain disabilities. The court in its wisdom, and taking into consideration the fact that they have to work a 5½-day week, compared with other sections of the community which work a five-day week, awarded them something as compensation. I have quite a number of friends among the banking fraternity, as have other members in this House, but I can truthfully say that there has been no move for a five-day week by them. I cannot remember any conversation I have had with bank employees during which they said they considered it was time that the legislature gave them a five-day week.

If the Bill is passed, it will make for further inconvenience for the business and farming communities, and others who use banking facilities. If we are to decide that all banks shall be closed as from 3 p.m. on Fridays, in keeping with the policy of the five-day week, one can fairly safely say that in many cases in the metropolitan area workers will not be able to do their banking. Some people may express the view that if the banking community is to have a five-day week, the worker in the shop and factory could do his banking business during the lunch hour. That may work out in some districts, but there are many industries in the metropolitan area where it would be impossible for workers to do their banking business in the requisite time during lunch.

Then the man in the country must be considered. Here is a section of the community which over the years has worked very hard. The normal custom of the farmer has been to work from Monday to Friday, and on Saturday to go to town with his wife and, in many cases, with his employee. While the wife is doing her shopping, he attends to his business with the agent firms and with the banks. On Saturday afternoons he may do some betting or have a few drinks. Saturday is their one day off. If we are to close the banks for business on Saturdays, it means that farmers will have to interrupt their working week to come into town to transact banking business.

Again, we have the case of farm workers who are taken into the town by the employer on Saturday morning. What would be their position if we had a five-day week for the banks? The employer would have to go in during the week and what would happen if the employee was left to his own devices because, on a farm, it is often a matter of team work necessitating the two men working together? Thus, it could prove to be a great inconvenience to the farming community in general if these people were denied the right to do their banking on Saturday morning.

In my view, it is time that we looked at this question from a completely new angle. While I am not saying that we should revert to the 44 or 48-hour working week, we have to take stock of the position in Australia particularly. I am not advocating a principle, but we have reached a stage in Australia where, if we do not get our heads out of the clouds, we shall cease to be able to build the tariff wall for protection or to sell our produce overseas because the cost of production will have been made so expensive here that we cannot get a market for it. I repeat that I am not suggesting a return to the 48 or 44-hour working week, but, in view of the fact that the courts have stipulated a 40-hour week, it is up to all of us—I am excluding no section of the community, from the man at the top to the man at the bottom—to do a little more to avert financial chaos.

This idea of saying that the banking people should fall into line with others who have a five-day working week would merely be the means of employees in other industries saying, "If it is good enough for those people to have a five-day working week, what about us?" Apart from the inconvenience that would be suffered by the community generally, it is most essential that the few hours available to the farmer and his men should be retained to give them an opportunity to transact their banking business on Saturday morning. For those reasons, I oppose the second reading.

MR. LAPHAM (North Perth) [5.33]: I support the second reading of the Bill, and must express my astonishment at the attitude of some members to the measure. I regret that the member for Subiaco is not in her place at the moment. I recall that some years ago, when the practice was to have two deliveries of milk daily and the suggestion was made that one delivery would be sufficient, the member for Subiaco raised quite an outcry, and maintained that all the children in Subiaco would die as a result of the loss of the afternoon delivery.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: How many died?

Mr. LAPHAM: Not one died. The same specious argument that was advanced in relation to milk deliveries is now being employed in relation to banking hours. I feel convinced that some of the members who have spoken on the second reading have given very little consideration to the question involved. This is a Bill for an Act to amend the Bank Holidays Act, and there are good reasons for introducing the measure. A bank is an institution that is peculiarly situated because it is not permitted to close its doors within the hours laid down. This matter is governed by Federal legislation, and therefore an amendment of the Bank Holidays Act represents the only means available to provide for Saturday morning closing. Even the Arbitration Court cannot give a bank the right to close its doors on Saturday morning.

I have a letter from the Minister for Labour, dated the 29th July, 1949, over the signature of "L. Thorn", and addressed to Mr. S. E. I. Johnson, as follows:—

With the exception of the Commonwealth Bank, the working conditions of bank officers in Western Australia are governed by industrial awards and agreements made in the State Arbitration Court.

The question which you have raised as to whether the working week should be completed in five or five-and-a-half days was dealt with by the President of the State Arbitration Court on the 9th October, 1947, when, in delivering judgment awarding the 40-hour week, he stated inter alia—

The 40-hour week does not necessarily mean a working week of five days, but the question of the hours and days during and on which the standard hours prescribed by the court order are to be worked, and all question of meal breaks and other breaks in the continuity of work are not dealt with by the court, but are left to be determined by the parties, or in the event of no agreement being reached, to be referred to the court for settlement after hearing the parties concerned.

You will note, therefore, that the desirability or otherwise of a five-day working week is one primarily for negotiation between the parties, i.e., the Bank Officials Association on the one hand and the representatives of the Associated Banks on the other. Failing agreement, the matter could be referred to the State Arbitration Court for determination.

The information conveyed in that letter is entirely wrong because the closing of a bank's doors is governed by the Bills of

Exchange Act, which is a Federal statute, and no State legislation can override a Federal Act. For the benefit of members, I shall quote the relevant provisions of the Bills of Exchange Act, as follows:—

Section 98 (2): When the day on which any payment, presentment, notice, noting, protest, acceptance, act or thing should be made, given, or done in connection with a bill, cheque, or note falls on a non-business day, it may be made, given, or done on the business day next following.

Section 98 (3): "Non-business" for the purposes of this Act means—

- (a) Sunday, Good Friday, Christmas Day;
- (b) A bank holiday;

Any other day is a business day.

Section 98 (4): Where in pursuance of the law of the Commonwealth or of a State any day is declared to be a bank holiday in the Commonwealth or in a State or in a part of the Commonwealth or of a State, that day shall, for the purposes of this Act, be a bank holiday in the Commonwealth or in the State or in the part of the Commonwealth or of the State as the case requires.

Thus it is obvious that a bank must remain open on Saturday morning in compliance with the Bills of Exchange Act. Neither the State Arbitration Court nor any State tribunal has the power to grant a five-day week for bank officials. Consequently, they have no alternative to approaching Parliament to have Saturday closing provided for as proposed in this Bill.

In case some members believe that the bank officials are not in accord with the provisions of the measure, I shall read a letter from the Bank Officials Association of Western Australia, addressed to Mr. S. E. I. Johnson, as follows:—

Members of the Association note with pleasure the Bill introduced by you to amend the Bank Holidays Act by insertion of the words in the Act "each and every Saturday" which will have the effect, if passed by Parliament, of introducing a five-day week for the trading banks in Western Australia, when gazetted.

The fact that bank staffs are at present required to work on Saturdays is undoubtedly the main reason for the inadequate intake of recruits, and this in turn throws a heavy burden of work on bank officers. It would be hard to find any other section of employees who work at such high pressure as do our members, and we must do our utmost to try and relieve this position.



Members thank you for your efforts in introducing this legislation and assure you that you have the whole-hearted support of all bank officers in Western Australia in having the Bill passed.

Yours faithfully,  
G. E. L. Throssell,  
President.

That is a clear indication to the House that the Bank Officials Association is whole-heartedly behind the member for Leederville in his action in introducing the Bill. Notwithstanding the provisions of the measure, the ordinary working week of 40 hours as prescribed by the Arbitration Court would remain. Normally, bank clerks start work at 9 a.m. and continue until a balance is struck, irrespective of what the time might be. These clerks are asking for a five-day week because they have no right to make their request to any other tribunal in the State. Therefore, I suggest that every member should appreciate his responsibility and be very careful in giving a decision on the Bill, and I trust that members will give this question the consideration it deserves by remaining in their places during the debate.

The Bill simply provides for the closing of banks for 1½ hours on Saturday mornings—that is all—and the bank officials ask for this concession as responsible men and women. I do not think anyone in this Chamber would suggest that bank officials are irresponsible persons. I believe all members will admit that bank officers are responsible citizens who have the welfare of the general business community at heart and that if they knew any suggested arrangement would act contrary to workable business practice, they would not ask for it.

To my mind, it is beyond belief that if normal business procedure would be made unworkable by the Saturday morning closing of banks, the bank officials would have asked for it. They know from personal experience that the 1½ hours for which banks are now open on Saturday mornings is quite unnecessary—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: This would not apply to the Commonwealth Bank.

Mr. LAPHAM: Why not?

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: We have no authority over the Commonwealth Bank.

Mr. LAPHAM: This makes provision for the Bills of Exchange Act to apply and the Bank Holidays Act would then apply to all banks in the State.

Mr. J. Hegney: The Commonwealth public servants got the five-day week before State public servants were granted that concession, and this measure might well be a precedent for the Commonwealth Bank.

Mr. LAPHAM: To my mind, banks are merely custodians and there would be no loss to the community if they closed on Saturday mornings. We recently heard a lot of piffle about the hardship that such action would cause the housewife, but it was nothing but piffle. My wife has no difficulty in handling the money I give her—none whatever.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Then why not give her a bit more?

Mr. J. Hegney: You are expressing the feelings of everyone here.

Mr. LAPHAM: I do not think it would be any hardship to the storekeeper or tradesman if the banks did not open on Saturday mornings and no business activity would be impaired to any extent.

Mr. Court: I do not think you are really serious about that.

Mr. LAPHAM: I am.

Mr. Court: Have you seen the Commonwealth Savings Bank on a Saturday morning—in both Perth and the suburbs?

Mr. LAPHAM: Yes, but it is simply a matter of changing a habit. People hate to break their habits, but when circumstances compel them to do so, they adapt themselves readily to the new practice.

Mr. Court: I think it goes much deeper than that.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Would you say we should not have transport to football matches at the week-end?

Mr. LAPHAM: The hon. member is becoming absurd, because he knows transport is a problem entirely different from that of banking. I would have expected a more sensible remark from him. The closing of banks on Saturday mornings would cause no loss of productivity, because banks produce nothing—

Mr. Oldfield: They produced the member for Leederville.

Mr. LAPHAM: To my mind, there would be a considerable saving if we closed the banks on Saturday mornings—a saving of the present useless expenditure of manpower. The work of bank officials at present on Saturday mornings is wasted effort. They have to go through the rigmarole of rising early, as on other weekdays, catching public transport, going to work and applying themselves to the preparations for opening the bank. Then they open, but only for an hour or two, after which they close the doors and go through the business of balancing.

If the balance is completed by midday or 12.30 p.m. they may be home by 1.30 or 1.45 p.m. and after an hour's rest they find their day completely gone. With a five-day week they could utilise the whole of Saturday about the home, mowing the lawn, digging in weeds and so on. They might be able to improve their physical and mental condition by a game of tennis

with their wives or by indulging in some other simple sporting activity which would be to their benefit, both mentally and physically. Instead of that today there is this unnecessary waste of manpower because these people are forced to go through the usual routine. They open the doors of the bank and operate for only 1½ hours before going home again—

Hon. L. Thorn: You said they had to get out their balances.

Mr. LAPHAM: Yes, they have to go through all this useless routine for 1½ hours' trading.

Hon. L. Thorn: Working out the interest rates, and so on!

Mr. LAPHAM: We have been told that the banks must remain open on Saturdays so that business people can secure change, but I have never before heard such a silly argument. How would a business get on before the banks opened if it had no change? Obviously businessmen make provision the previous day. Is it thought that a businessman would hold up his business on account of change simply because the banks were not open on Saturday mornings?

The Premier: He would not give any change.

Hon. D. Brand: He could get it from the s.p. shops.

Mr. LAPHAM: The member for Greenough has mentioned betting shops. How does the operator of such a shop get on with all the thousands of pounds that he is supposed to have at the end of a day's activities? What does he do with the money, in view of the fact that the bank is not open to receive it? The banks are not kept open till midnight on Saturday for the convenience of such people.

We know that the trots do not finish till 11 p.m. and so the bookmakers must do something with their day's takings. They make their own provision for that, and as far as I know no one has stolen any of the bookmakers' cash up to date, nor will they, in my opinion, because these are fairly astute businessmen. They are not likely to let any other person handle their money, and that applies to most business people. They will look after their own money and will be satisfied to provide their own safes or use night safe facilities. One can secure insurance for a very small premium, in any case.

The closing of banks from Friday afternoon till Monday morning would create no difficulty in regard to the handling of money. Unfortunately, it is a human failing that we contract habits readily and break them only with great difficulty. It goes hard with us when we endeavour to break a habit of long standing, and I know that many members in this Chamber have had the smoking habit and are finding extreme difficulty in breaking it.

Saturday morning banking is simply a habit following what has been the normal routine for years, but once it was varied there would be no difficulty. New arrangements would be made and would ultimately become the new habit and no one would want to move away from that. The fact that the banks did not open on Saturday mornings would not affect the business community in any way or cause shopkeepers to close their premises on Saturday mornings. The general business activity of a bank is more or less curtailed on Saturday mornings as one cannot go in and discuss a loan for home-building or for the purchase of a business or anything of that nature. If one endeavoured to do so the bank manager would quickly request one to make arrangements for an interview on Monday or Tuesday as the 1½ hours on Saturday morning would not be sufficient time in which to deal with such a matter.

Hon. L. Thorn: You are off the track there.

Mr. LAPHAM: I am not. Many insurance companies and other businesses are closed on Saturday mornings. Today the banks are constantly seeking staff and no wonder, when they work a 5½-day week, while the average clerical worker has a five-day week. For an individual to go to work in a bank when he could work a five-day week elsewhere would surely mean that either he was a hog for work or that he had some definite regard for the bank or did not want his Saturday mornings off. In the main, clerical workers feel that the free week-end is of benefit to them.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: What about travellers arriving by boat or other transport on a Saturday morning?

Mr. LAPHAM: What if they arrived on a Sunday?

Hon. L. Thorn: They could go to church.

Mr. LAPHAM: That would be a good idea. The member for Toodyay suggested that travellers arriving on Sunday could go to church, but if we had a five-day week for bank clerks, they could do whatever work was necessary around their homes on Saturdays and perhaps be able to attend divine service on Sundays, which unfortunately many cannot now do as they have the normal routine of cleaning up their gardens and so on to be followed on Sundays.

Hon. L. Thorn: That is a vain excuse.

Mr. LAPHAM: It can generally be said that bank officers are most co-operative—

Mr. Court: Have you ever asked one for a loan?

Mr. LAPHAM: There are many business people who have had occasion to seek the help of the banks, and they have been ably assisted. I refer principally to banking business that is conducted at Easter, Christmas, Royal Show week, during any

racine or sporting activities, or any abnormal occasion when it is found that if a bank manager feels that an individual has any difficulties with his banking, he co-operates with him to the full or deposes one of his officers to do so.

If some extreme circumstance cropped up which necessitated a bank opening its doors on a Saturday morning after this Bill became law, I am satisfied that the bank would co-operate with its customers if the business to be transacted were considered to be important. They have done so in the past and I see no reason why they should not do so in the future. I have found that bank officials seem to live for their banks alone. They all have the attribute of being extremely loyal to the establishment they work for.

Mr. O'Brien: They are very conscientious, too.

Mr. LAPHAM: Yest, extremely conscientious. I am satisfied that if it were necessary for any bank officer to come back on a Saturday morning to meet the convenience of the customer, he would be only too happy to do so. The member for Nedlands made quite a contribution to this debate and, in many respects, it was a very good speech. He put forward some interesting arguments. He intimated that he had conducted a survey of 73 business concerns which represented a cross-section of the business community. He asked this question of each firm—

Would your concern be put to inconvenience and higher costs or not if the banks were closed all day Saturday?

The result of the survey showed that 33½ per cent. stated that they would be inconvenienced. That is only one-third.

Mr. Court: You should not take text out of context. I explained that you have to consider the minority as well as the majority.

Mr. LAPHAM: The member for Nedlands went on to explain that 70 per cent. said that they would not be inconvenienced. Members know that any legislation that is brought forward in this House must of necessity inconvenience some of the people. It is impossible to please all the people. Consequently, one of the factors in considering legislation is what effect it will have on the majority of the community. I feel that that policy should be the one that activates the minds and thoughts of all of us when considering this and other legislation.

With regard to this measure, one-third of the people who were concerned in the survey referred to by the member for Nedlands said that they would be inconvenienced, but the degree of inconvenience was not stated. It could vary with each individual or concern. I am suggesting

that many of those who would be inconvenienced do not want to break the habit that they have formed.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Was not the point that of the two-thirds who were not inconvenienced, many did not open their establishments on Saturday morning?

Mr. LAPHAM: That was the case in some instances, but several did work on Saturday morning and they still said that they would not be inconvenienced. Therefore, the degree of inconvenience suffered by the 33½ per cent. minority could vary according to the mental condition of the officials of each concern. The main factor that should be considered by this Chamber is whether we are to legislate for a minority or a majority. According to the member for Nedlands, the majority would not be inconvenienced if this Bill were passed to provide for a five-day week for banking officers.

Mr. Court: That survey covered the traders only. Do not forget that there are many customers who attend the bank on Saturday mornings who are not traders.

Mr. LAPHAM: That is quite possible, but nevertheless they form a cross-section of the business community, and I consider that that generally sums up the position. I appreciate the results obtained from the hon. member's survey, and, in fact, I was quite taken with it. I am certain that the member for Nedlands was on the right track and that if a similar survey were made among other sections of our community much the same result would be attained, namely, that only a small number would be inconvenienced and that the majority would agree to banks being closed on Saturday mornings. We, in Western Australia, are not the only ones who have considered the introduction of a five-day working week for bank officials. It has been in operation in Tasmania for many years.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: In some districts only.

Mr. LAPHAM: Throughout Tasmania last year all banks were closed on Saturday morning.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Are you sure of that?

Mr. LAPHAM: Yes. In the early stages of the five-day working week there was some grumbling, but since then everybody seems to be quite happy and no attempt has been made to revert to the previous arrangement of banks being open on Saturday morning. That is because the people have formed new habits and they do not want to break that habit now and forgo having Saturdays and Sundays free to spend as they like. It has been said in this House that this measure is purely a vote-catching stunt, but I do not think that is a fair remark.

Mr. O'Brien: Definitely not!

Mr. LAPHAM: If a check were taken among bank clerks, it would readily disclose that 90 per cent. of them would be Liberal supporters. There is not the slightest doubt about that.

Mr. Heal: We will make them work seven days a week.

Mr. LAPHAM: Therefore, as 90 per cent. of them would be against the member for Leederville, what would he gain by introducing this Bill? He has only one idea in his mind, namely, that justice must be done to these people.

Hon. D. Brand: It is pretty clear he has only one idea.

The Minister for Lands: Give him credit for two.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You have five minutes to go.

Mr. LAPHAM: To sum up, I would like to make these points. This legislation is essential if bank officers are to enjoy the privilege of Saturday morning bank closing. I think I have convinced members that it is necessary for this House to deal with the Bill in the manner it has been presented for the purpose of granting a Saturday morning holiday to bank officers. They have not the right to go through the normal channels to approach the Arbitration Court or any industrial tribunal whatsoever. They must approach this Chamber to attain their objective.

Further, there is no suggestion that the 40-hour week will be reduced. In fact, if Saturday morning bank closing is brought into operation, the hours that are normally worked by the officers on Saturday mornings would be spread over the other days of the week. I am of the opinion that banks will perhaps remain open until a later hour on week days if this legislation is passed and, instead of closing at 3 p.m. they might be prepared to remain open until 4 p.m. in order to make up the hours that were normally worked on Saturday morning.

There would also be no loss in production because banks do not produce and there would be no loss occasioned by the trading community because they could still carry on as they do now. Today banks close at 11.30 a.m. on Saturday mornings but most shops remain open until midday. That in itself shows that there is no need for banks to remain open on Saturday morning. I would say that few customers use the banking facilities that are provided on Saturday morning.

It has been stated that the Commonwealth Savings Bank is extremely busy on a Saturday morning, and I appreciate that it might be, but if that bank were closed to the people who normally use it on that morning, they would soon make other arrangements. I have already said that there are no major transactions carried out by banks on Saturday mornings and

that is a sound reason why they should not remain open on that day. There are many businesses, warehouses, public accountants, solicitors and insurance companies that close their establishments on Saturday morning and they do not need any banking facilities on that day.

In the main, most of our business people enjoy a five-day working week. It seems that for the sake of a few, bank officials are compelled to work a 5½-day week. I am quite certain that this handicaps the recruiting of employees for banks. That is rather a good point, because if banks are to be good employers they must not suffer the disadvantage of having to work their employees for an extra half-day a week so that they may carry out their activities. If banks were closed on Saturday mornings, I am quite certain that no inconvenience would be caused to anyone.

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

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [7.30]: I have very little to say on the Bill. I do not want to repeat much of what already has been said. I must indicate some surprise that the Government has not expressed a view in regard to the Bill. The measure is important. It will have some effect upon our banking practices in this State. It will affect a large number of people; and from that point of view alone, we should have had some indication of what the Government thinks of it. As yet, however, there has been complete silence.

A similar Bill has been before Parliament previously. We have had such a Bill before us on at least one occasion, and perhaps oftener. We have been told that in Tasmania the closing of banks on a Saturday is already in operation. Some members say that applies only to Hobart and not the whole of Tasmania; others assert that it applies to the whole State. I think that is immaterial for the time being.

Of course, the argument to be used against that could be that in every State on the Australian mainland the banks are open on a Saturday morning; and if this class of legislation can be attributed to one particular party, we know that in all the States on the mainland either Labour Governments are in office today or have been in power, and yet no change has been made. Admittedly, someone has to make a start, and I am not suggesting that we should always follow the lead of the other States. But I do think it is worth while asking why the Governments in the other States have not seen fit to introduce legislation of this kind.

Mr. May: They are waiting on us.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not think they are. That is far from being correct. They would not even know we were introducing this class of legislation.

The Minister for Mines: There is nothing like setting a good example.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister for Mines has given us some indication of where the Government stands. He is the only Minister who has done so.

The Minister for Mines: You are very quick to jump to conclusions.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I take it from the Minister's remark that the Government is favourable to the Bill and I thank him for that information.

The Minister for Mines: That is a very poor deduction.

Mr. May: Would you like him to enlarge on it?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I would rather that the hon. member kept quiet for the time being.

The Minister for Health: It is a private members' Bill and is therefore a non-party measure.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister is getting me off the track again. Apparently the Government is not decisive. Before tea, the member for North Perth spoke at some length on the Bill and said that he did not consider the closing of the banks on a Saturday morning would have any detrimental effect on business in the metropolitan area. I have heard different views expressed. I represent a country constituency, and I feel that the closing of banks in rural areas would cause some inconvenience. I have been through my district, and in other country areas on a Saturday morning, and it is the busiest morning of the week so far as banking is concerned.

Mr. May: That is only because it has become a custom.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That may be so; the hon. member may be right. But if the banks are to close on Saturday morning, I would say that the stock firms in country areas, which do a very large volume of business on a Saturday morning—very much more than is the case in the metropolitan area—would also probably have to close.

Mr. May: You do not have stock sales on a Saturday morning.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No; but the farmers come to town on a Saturday morning in large numbers. It is their practice to do their business on the Saturday morning.

Mr. Johnson: That is not the only day they come in.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: That is the practice in the rural areas. It is the day the great majority come in, other than on a stock-sales day. They come in on a Saturday morning and do their business—at least, that has been my experience over a long period. It is a matter of how far we are going with the closing of businesses

generally on a Saturday. If this Bill becomes law, no doubt there will be pressure from other sections of the community for a Saturday holiday, and I do not think one could wonder at that.

The suggestion has been made—and I favour it—that this Bill should be sent to a select committee. I am not supporting the proposal with the idea of defeating the Bill. I would say to the Minister for Labour that it is necessary we should know exactly what effect the closing of the banks would have on commerce generally. So far as I am concerned in my official position, I have not had any request from bank managements or banking heads that I should either support or oppose the Bill. It appears to me that the banks themselves do not seem to be showing any particular interest in what may happen to the measure. But, as has already been pointed out by several speakers, it is not only the banks and the bank officers who are concerned, but also the general public.

We have to ask ourselves whether the general public will be inconvenienced; and, if so, to what extent. If this proposal for a select committee is agreed to—and I would say to the sponsor of the Bill and to the Government that, so far as it lies in my power, I would have the inquiry expedited and a recommendation made as early as possible—it should not take long to get the opinion of those concerned. We know already the opinions of the bank officers' representatives, but a select committee would give them an opportunity to state in full their reasons why banking should not be continued on Saturdays. They would also be able to say, as a result of their experience in the banking world, why Saturday closing of banks would not be detrimental to the general community.

The proposal would also give the bank managers or the heads of banks an opportunity to state their views if they so desired, and the commercial community would be in the same position. I am not unmindful of the fact that there would be certain people who would submit opinions from a purely selfish viewpoint. But there is that other section rightly concerned with banking, and from that section reasons might be forthcoming as to why a Saturday closing should not be agreed to.

Mr. Johnson: Who do you think that section would be?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: Such views could come from certain sections of industry and business.

Mr. Johnson: Industry does not work on Saturdays.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I do not know how the hon. member regards industry, but I would say that it consists

of any business employing a large number of people who work on a Saturday. I admit that it would not seriously affect manufacturing. I suggest to the sponsor of the Bill that if he accepts the proposal that the Bill be referred to a select committee, those who are advocating the closing of the banks on a Saturday morning would have a better chance of having their wishes acceded to than if we just go on and say we are going to pass the Bill in this House and then let it go. Surely the request for a select committee is not unreasonable.

For my part, I put it to the Minister for Labour that, if he has not already done so, he should get in touch with the Ministers for Labour in other States and ascertain why banks have not closed in those States on Saturday mornings. That information could be very quickly obtained. He could discuss with them by telephone why such legislation has not been introduced in those States. I suggest to the member for Leederville that he accept the proposal for a select committee; and I repeat that he will thereby have much more chance of achieving what he desires than if he insists that this House pass the measure and leaves it at that. It has yet to pass another place.

The Minister for Housing: Oh!

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: The Minister for Housing laughs at that. Perhaps he is indicating that the Bill has no chance in the other place.

The Minister for Housing: I think your guess is right, too.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If the Minister would agree to the suggestion I put forward, I think the Bill would have a much better chance of becoming law.

The Minister for Housing: Do you think it would pass in the Legislative Council if a select committee found in favour of it?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am not going to tell the Minister that it will become law if a select committee is agreed to, but I think it will have a much better chance of becoming law if a select committee can make investigations into it.

Mr. Lapham: Would the select committee—

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I would be guided by the recommendations of the select committee. It may be, as the member for North Perth said, that a considerable section of the business world would say that it had no objection to the closing of the banks on Saturday mornings. The survey made by the member for Nedlands indicated that a large section of the business world has no objection to the closing of the banks on Saturday mornings.

If we investigate the position further, we might find that a very considerable section has no objection, and some means might be devised to overcome the position. It may be that something could be arranged to provide for the taking of cash on Fridays at a period later than that at which the banks usually close. Recommendations could be made along those lines.

Mr. Johnson: Do you remember when the savings banks used to be open on Friday night, and they got so little business that they had to close?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I am glad the hon. member has mentioned the savings banks because the Bill will also cover them. I know that a considerable volume of business is done on Saturday mornings in the savings banks. In the country the post offices act as the savings banks, and they handle large sums of money. It may be that the closing of savings banks on Saturday morning would cause more inconvenience to a greater number of private people than business people.

Personally, I have had no pressure put upon me to oppose the Bill. The banks have made no representations to me. I am told that at present they are not prepared to support the proposal. Certainly if they are opposed to it they have not shown their opposition in any active manner, or else I would have thought they would have made representations to me. I say again, let us have this inquiry. It should not take long, and a recommendation should be forthcoming at an early date.

Mr. Johnson: Do you undertake to abide by the findings of the inquiry?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think, if we had an impartial inquiry, one could accept the finding. It may be that the finding would be that we should close the banks in the metropolitan area, but not in the rural areas; I do not know. If a select committee is appointed, I am not suggesting that it should bring in such a finding but a recommendation like that could be made. I suggest to the hon. member, and to the Government if it is supporting the Bill, that they agree to a select committee, and this would give the hon. member a better chance of having his Bill become law than he has under the existing conditions.

MR. McCULLOCH (Hannans) [7.50]: When the sponsor brought the Bill forward he said it was a short one. I agree that it is, but it has great significance. I do not know whether all members are acquainted with this fact, but quite a large number of workers in several industries are paid by cheque. I would have liked to see provision made in the Bill whereby the banks could be open to a later hour on Friday nights so that the cheques

could be cashed. It may be said that any merchant would willingly cash the cheques on a Saturday morning but that might not be so in all cases. Merchants today are fairly careful about exchanging cash for cheques, and I do not blame them.

On the whole, I do not see why the banks should not be closed on Saturday mornings. If provision were made so that workers who were paid by cheque on the Friday night would be able to cash their cheques on the same night, I feel that the banks could be closed on Saturday mornings. I remember that some years ago in Kalgoorlie the Commonwealth Savings Bank was open on Saturday between 7 and 8 p.m. The manager of the bank at that time asked me how I thought the unionists would view the idea of the banks not being open between those hours.

On that occasion it was open only for the intake of money. The bank official told me that on several Saturday nights prior to his interviewing me, not more than eight to 10 people had deposited money. However, application must have been made to some higher authority in the bank because today it is not open on a Saturday night. Personally, I have no growl about the banks closing. As far as the country areas are concerned, there might be some hardship. Of course, we have the post office savings bank, and if it is open and the farmers want to deposit or withdraw money, the facility would be there for them.

I venture to say that no firm in the metropolitan area utilises the Commonwealth Bank, particularly on a Saturday morning. I suppose quite a few people make use of the one and a half hours on Saturdays in which to deposit or withdraw money. However, I think they would make other arrangements if the facility were not available. Years ago we heard that the five-day week could never operate successfully. I do not think that any member in this Chamber would say that heavy industry has any grouse against the five-day week. I am prepared to say that the heavy industry and the banking industry are not comparable.

For a heavy industry to work on Saturday mornings it is necessary to start up machinery and do various other jobs for just a few short hours of work. This industry works a 40-hour week in five days because it was considered it would be more economical from the point of view of the industry, and that better service would be given by the workers. Some mention was made of the delivery of milk, and we were asked how we would like to forgo the delivery of milk on Saturdays and Sundays. Here again there is no comparison. We are here to consider the more essential things, and I say it is essential to deliver milk to homes on Saturdays and Sundays.

Some milkmen do not deliver on Sundays. Most of the people with whom I am acquainted get sufficient milk on a Saturday morning to see them through until the following Monday morning. To talk of milk deliveries is merely to drag a red herring across the track; the position is not comparable with that of banking. The big insurance companies in the metropolitan area do not employ all their staff on a Saturday morning. I would say that not more than five per cent. of the employees of those companies are required to turn out on Saturdays.

Furthermore, practically every one of the big warehouses in the metropolitan area is closed on a Saturday morning. It might be necessary to have a skeleton staff in some banks, but I do not think so. The banks are open for an hour and a half on Saturday mornings now, but it does not seem to me that there is any urgency for the practice to continue. I hope it is not thought that I have any great sympathy for the bankers. I do not think that many members on this side of the House would say that the banking association is any great friend of ours.

I think it is our opinion that where we see a five-day week can be operated, we should allow it to be established so that everyone may have the satisfaction and pleasure of participating in it. When there is any advantage proposed to the individual, we always hear the cry that we are trying to lessen his hours or increase his weekly wages. I take it that the position will be that the hours that are taken from the employees on a Saturday will have to be made up during the week. We will not, therefore, be giving anything away but will only be legislating for what we think can be done.

If, after a period, it is thought that it is not practicable, it would not be difficult to reinstate the position as it is now. In my opinion, it is practicable, and I do not think it is necessary for the banks to remain open. An armed guard travels around to various places on Saturday nights and takes possession of large sums of money and holds them over until Monday mornings. That seems to be a safe practice, and nothing serious has happened. Therefore, I do not see that we would be doing harm to anybody if we passed this legislation.

From my experience of banking officials on the Goldfields, I would say that they are always co-operative. If I wanted them to do a service outside ordinary hours, they always co-operated. On occasions, I have wanted as much as £200 worth of small change for certain purposes. These banking officials have come down early in the morning, so long as arrangements were made the day before, and have given me that change. Again in the evening, when the sports or other gathering had finished, the officials would open the bank.

as late as 7 o'clock or 8 o'clock at night, and allow the money to be placed in the strongroom. It is a rule of the bank, I understand, that the safe deposit at the bank cannot be opened by only one official. Two of them must be there and they both have keys to it.

The same thing has happened at gymkhanas on the Goldfields when we have had popular girl contests or other functions. Banking officials have even come to the sports in the evening and have assisted in counting the money. They have always given good service and it has not cost the organisations with which I have been associated one penny either for the extra time worked by the men in opening the bank or in helping to count the money at the conclusion of a sports gathering. If this measure were passed, I think all banks, both Commonwealth and private, would co-operate in making it a success, and they would be only too happy to assist if an urgent situation arose.

I would like to emphasise one point: I would be more happy in my support of the Bill if I thought that those workers who are paid by cheque could be provided for by opening the bank at some time on Friday evening so that the cheques could be cashed. Some members may say that there are not many workers in that category; but strangely enough I have met a number of them, and I suppose members know of other industries that pay their wages by cheque. The use of this form of payment is increasing and these days a cheque is fairly easy to cash. So long as the worker has no objection to the idea, I think it should be continued. But I would like some provision made to enable workers to cash wages cheques on Friday evenings.

**MR. MAY (Collie) [8.5]:** I wish briefly to express my views in connection with this matter. I feel that this legislation is a continuance of the public desire for a five-day working week. The Leader of the Opposition said that in his district all the farmers do their banking on Saturday mornings. My experience of farmers, in any district, is that they do their banking on any day that suits them; it is immaterial to the farmer, because he works at whatever time suits him. For instance, he might work five, six or seven days a week, and he does not mind what day he goes to town to do his shopping. So it is obvious that the farmers do their banking when it suits them and not on any particular day.

**Hon. Sir Ross McLarty:** You are a farmer, are you not? Do you work only when it suits you?

**Mr. MAY:** I work on a number of occasions when it does not suit me, unfortunately. But for the life of me I cannot understand how this legislation would interfere with the convenience of the farming community. The fact that banks and

other institutions are kept open on Saturday morning is more because of custom than anything else. I think many of our customs are being broken down by a more realistic approach to our everyday life because of the age in which we are living. Our customs are continually changing and we are living in a changing world. Banking on Saturday mornings is no exception.

No doubt, there are other avenues of business which are now operating on Saturday mornings but which will, before long, fall into line with public thought as regards a five-day working week. There is a definite line of thought these days that a five-day week should prevail. We are living in a machine age and surely human beings are entitled to some respite. Machinery is playing a bigger part in our daily lives than ever before, and individuals should benefit from it. If the banks were not open on Saturday mornings, the public would soon adapt itself to the fact and, before we knew where we were, it would become an established custom.

I contend that a five-day working week keeps the working class more physically fit because it gives them two days respite from their weekly toil. When it becomes a permanent part of our existence, I think its benefits will ultimately be reflected in the social services. Some people who work seven days a week break down in health but, by giving the working class an extra day's holiday, we shall be raising the standard of physical fitness; then, when they reach 50 years of age, or thereabouts, they will still be fit enough to carry on with their work. Many people who are now working six days a week, work on the seventh day in their own homes. As a result, many of them never get a respite from some form of toil. I think we should look at this point from the humanitarian angle and, all in all, I think the legislation is most desirable. I intend to support the second reading.

**THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn) [8.10]:** I do not propose to reiterate the points that have been submitted during the debate, but I would like to pass a few brief comments in regard to it. Firstly, the Leader of the Opposition said that he did not know what the attitude of the Government would be, nor had the Government expressed its opinion. As far as this Bill is concerned, every member on this side of the House can determine his own attitude, and if the same position obtains on the other side, every member will be free to vote as he thinks fit.

This is not a Government measure; it was introduced by a private member and I propose to support it, purely from the principle aspect. I wish to congratulate the member for North Perth on his fine address



before tea. His remarks indicated that he had given a good deal of study to the subject matter of the Bill. I propose to deal with a few points that I think are relevant, and my remarks will be brief—the Bill itself is the briefest we have dealt with in the session so far.

It has been suggested to me, by people outside the House, that the Bills of Exchange Act might need amending instead of the Bank Holidays Act. But the Bills of Exchange Act is a Federal measure and the Bank Officers' Association of Western Australia cannot obtain a five-day week through the Arbitration Court in this State. That is the reason which prompted the member for Leederville to introduce this amendment and include Saturdays in the schedule to the Bank Holidays Act. I think we should go back a little way and look at the position retrospectively. If a five-day working week for bank clerks were introduced tomorrow, within a short space of time the community would adjust itself to the altered circumstances.

Some years ago, the Civil Service Association of Western Australia made representations to the Government for a five-day week, and it was eventually adopted, and has been adopted by nearly all departments of the Commonwealth Public Service as well. I, and every member here, know that when the appropriate organisations made representations to the Government in regard to the introduction of a five-day week, there was a fair amount of opposition to the proposal. I can recall when the railwaymen of this State were trying to obtain a five-day week—not a 40-hour week, but a 44-hour week. Going back a few years, I can remember when men on public works in this State were granted a 44-hour week; they reverted to the 48-hour week after that. The navvies who helped to build the railways of this State with pick and shovel and horse and dray would not work more than eight hours a day, but they worked six days a week.

But the time came through altered circumstances when a 40-hour week for five days was introduced, and that has operated in practically 90 per cent. of industries. I recollect when a composite case was put up in Melbourne to Judge Higgins for a 44-hour week, that there was very vigorous opposition to the proposal. But the 44-hour week came in and workers worked till midday on Saturday. Without going into ancient history, let us revert for a moment to the women and children in the mining districts of England. They were forced to go into the dungeons of the earth to earn their livelihood, and when the humanitarians of those days decided that some alterations were desirable, the change was opposed most vigorously on the pretext that the country would be ruined if the women and children were removed from the mines. But they were removed, and the coalmines in England are still in operation.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You are going back into ancient history.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: It is not so ancient. It is quite modern history. A hundred years is nothing in the history of a nation. Let us consider our own Commonwealth. In this country men worked 52 hours a week. When there was an agitation, and enthusiastic leaders suggested a 48-hour week was sufficient, there was strong opposition. Now we come to the time when the shop assistants and bank clerks and others worked till 1 o'clock on Saturday.

I recollect the time when the shops remained open till 10 o'clock on Saturday night. There was then a reversion to 1 o'clock closing on Saturday, and they remained open instead till 9 or 10 o'clock on Friday night. When there was a request from the shop assistants' organisation, the trade unions and people generally who desired a change, some shopkeepers said that they would be ruined if their late closing night was cut out. They said they would not be able to stand up to it, that they would go bankrupt. What happened? Ask the shopkeeper, large or small, whether he would now like to keep his shop open late!

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: We had to march on Parliament House to get it.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The late shopping night was abolished and nobody went bankrupt.

Mr. Hearman: You will be wanting a 3-day week next!

Mr. Nalder: You are putting up a case for a 30-hour week.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am glad the two interjectors are interested because if they follow me they will see the point I am trying to make. The shop assistants finished their work at 1 o'clock; they now finish at 12 o'clock on Saturday, and as far as I know there is still the same volume of business carried on.

Next I will mention the Commonwealth and State civil services. Practically all the Federal and State public offices are closed on Saturday. I do not think that the average employer who works five days a week would like to work 5½ days. There has been talk about men being paid on Friday and questions asked as to how they would be able to cash their cheques and do their banking. I suggest that by an ordinary adjustment they could be paid on Wednesday or Thursday.

Mr. Wild: Do you believe in all services closing on Saturday?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: It would be improper for me to answer that question because we are dealing with the Bank Holidays Act, and a proposal to amend it to enable the banks to close on Saturday.

Mr. Wild: I suggest you tell your milkman and baker that they should not deliver on Saturday.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: If the banks were to close on Saturday morning the community would in a short while adjust itself to the altered hours. Human nature being what it is, there is a considerable amount of selfishness and thoughtlessness in all sections of the community; and I do not except myself from this. Undoubtedly a number of what might be referred to as good trade unionists would like to keep the banks open on Saturday morning. Many of them enjoy a five-day week themselves.

When we consider those who work five days a week we find that although they have all the morning in which to do their banking and their business, they will enter a bank or a shop two minutes before closing time and expect to receive all the service in the world. I would like to see this Bill accepted. In dealing with the interjection by the member for Dale, I would say that there is no comparison. This Bill has reference to working hours of a certain section of the community and his interjection deals with the supply of a commodity.

Mr. Wild: They are both services.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: It deals with the supply of a commodity which is perishable. In the cooler months of the year there is a double issue of milk left on Saturday night; there is no issue on Sunday.

Hon. Dame Florence Cardell-Oliver: Yes, there is to certain places.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: There is a tendency to reduce as far as possible the spread of hours for a particular section of the community. I am speaking from memory now, but only recently the tramway union was handed a five-day week by the Arbitration Court because it was found to be economically sound to introduce such an innovation. That is the tendency generally. Time and again the Arbitration Court has granted working hours to be worked in five days. What is more important in innumerable cases where there are negotiations between organisations of workers and employers, is that the working hours are cut out in five days.

Mr. Wild: If you close the banks on Saturday morning, how does the worker get in to transact his business?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: That is an old one. How do the workers who do not go near the banks transact their business?

Mr. Wild: There are plenty of them who do.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The same argument was raised when the shops were open on Friday night. The suggestion was that if the shops were closed on Friday night the people would not be able to do their shopping. I say it could be done.

The Leader of the Opposition said that I should telephone the Ministers of Labour in the Eastern States to obtain their views on the matter. In a question of this nature I think we should exercise our own judgment and initiative; it is not something that needs uniform legislation. It is a matter that should be considered quietly and reasonably by this Chamber and by the Parliament of Western Australia. If it was decided to accept this measure and it was found to work satisfactorily, we could turn to Hobart and see what we could glean from there. But from the inquiries I have made they would not like to revert to Saturday morning opening. In Hobart they close their shops on Saturday morning and everything seems to be going reasonably well.

I am one of those who believe that we must change with changing circumstances. I suggest the time is ripe to try this legislation; if it works everybody will be happy.

Mr. Wild: It will only be another step towards the 30-hour week.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: That is irrelevant.

Mr. Wild: It is not.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Dealing with that case brings me back to my earlier remarks when I said that men worked 52-hours a week and when it was thought that 48 hours a week would be sufficient in the circumstances, they were called agitators and extremists. But the 48-hour week was introduced. Later it was reduced to 44 hours a week, and then, of course, it came down to 40 hours a week. For years the Civil Service has been working a 37-hour week. Today there are men who, because of the nature of the industry, work only 36 or 37 hours a week—not 40 hours a week. The discoveries of science should make it necessary for many people to work only 40 hours a week; and with these discoveries continuing 38 hours a week should soon be sufficient.

I recollect addressing a meeting of farmers at Nyabing, 30-odd miles east of Katanning, when the line was going through from Nyabing to Pingrup. The men on the line organised sports gatherings for the children of the district. At that time I think a 48-hour week was in vogue. I was asked to say a few words to the children and to those assembled. I spoke only briefly and pointed out that the men of the Public Works Department were working 48 hours a week. I added that there was a demand and continued agitation for a reduction to 44 hours a week and that whatever the farmers might

think about workers on the line being extremists and agitators, the hours of work would soon be reduced to 40 before many years had passed.

In the course of my remarks I pointed out that the time would come when machinery could take the place of the horse and dray and the bulldozer would replace the pick and shovel. I also said that I was sure the men would be justified in asking for a reduction from 40 to 38 hours. I mention that to show the necessity and desirability of agreeing to an alteration when circumstances warrant it. I support the Bill and I hope the second reading will be carried. The Committee stage should be short because there is only one clause.

**MR. OLDFIELD** (Maylands) [8.28]: I reluctantly support this Bill. I say reluctantly because of the principle we have adopted in this Chamber since I have been a member. It is not the prerogative of members of this House to decide arbitration matters, and it is unfortunate that this question did not go before the Arbitration Court which is the competent body to deal with matters of this kind. At present the Act governing bills of exchange is a Commonwealth measure, and it is not possible for any member of this House to take steps to have it amended. Consequently, the member for Leederville, being desirous of making provision for a five-day working week for bank clerks, found it necessary to have recourse to a Bill of this description.

Many arguments can be raised against the measure. The question of the inconvenience that may be caused to people living in country districts can be debated. I am sympathetic towards those objections. Many objections can also be raised to the inconvenience that may be caused to trades people in metropolitan and urban areas, but most of them can be overcome by a little readjustment on the part of the people concerned.

We are living in a very selfish world. Most people today expect everyone else to give a service that they think fit, but no one seems to be prepared to give any service in return. There are many people who do not want to work a 5½-day week, but they want all the other services available for 5½ or 6 days, if necessary. Unfortunately, in services like transport it is essential for some of the employees to work on Saturdays and Sundays when most other people are enjoying a leisure period. As a recompense, they have time off during the week, or they are awarded penalty rates.

There are other services where the workers must remain on duty all through the week, such as those employed on water supplies, electricity, hotels, entertainment. It is necessary that if the vast majority of the community is to spend its leisure

time on entertainment, some people must remain at work to provide that amenity. People employed in the callings I have mentioned are prepared to accept the disabilities of the occupation of their choice. Like the member for Nedlands, I have taken a survey not only of my electorate, but also in surrounding districts in regard to this matter.

**Mr. J. Hegney**: Which electorate are you referring to?

**Mr. OLDFIELD**: I said my electorate and surrounding districts.

**Mr. J. Hegney**: Do you mean Morley Park?

**Mr. OLDFIELD**: I have not yet come across any person who has a reasonable objection, or who is hostile towards this matter. Most of them are in favour of it. Why should not bank clerks enjoy a 5-day week like the majority of workers today? Some of the people I discussed this with have said, "We will have to readjust ourselves, but there will not be any great inconvenience. We will raise no objection to it." I understand that the same result was discovered in most of the other surveys carried out.

In a few instances, objections were raised. It was not because of the banking facilities they would be deprived of on Saturday mornings; the reason for the objections goes further. It concerns their own selfish interest, because they felt they might lose business seeing that people would not be coming into the city or to the suburban branches of the banks, which are generally in the shopping centres, on Saturday mornings. Other traders, like hotel-keepers and others, are a little wary about losing some trade, but they must also realise that bank clerks, like many members of the community, after finishing their day's work, often adjourn to the nearest hotel with their workmates to have a few drinks.

Many of them do this. Take the large banking institutions in St. George's Terrace, and the Commonwealth Bank in Forrest Place. The number of bank employees who go to the nearest hotels must be great, and their business represents a fair amount to the publicans. It must also be realised that people coming into the city to do their banking on Saturday mornings may enter hotels and partake of refreshments. Consequently, the publicans do not want to lose that trade.

In discussing this matter with metropolitan branch managers of banks, I was told by every one of them that very little general banking is done on Saturday mornings. They say it is almost a waste of time. They also pointed out that at head offices of banks arrangements are made for certain of the staff to have some Saturday mornings off; I think it is one in every four Saturday mornings.

In the branches, it is a little bit difficult to follow this arrangement because for the most part there is a staff only of three or four people.

Whatever arrangements are made, the manager cannot have the Saturday morning off because from 9 a.m. to 12 noon he must be present in order to make available 1½ hours of banking facilities. People with whom I have discussed this matter and who are interested in the business of banking, all agree that the provision of night safes would be necessary at all branches to enable local tradespeople to lodge their Friday night's carryover and Saturday's takings.

If this Bill becomes law, the banks will no doubt take steps to provide night safes. I understand that several large trading concerns do not favour the system of night safes. They do not avail themselves of the facilities which are provided at the head offices; they prefer to keep their money in their own safes and this has resulted in their insurance premiums being increased slightly. These are but minor matters which can be overcome. Most traders—hotelkeepers, softgoods storekeepers, smallgoodsmen, bakers, butchers—know their business better than anybody else.

Such traders know their anticipated turnover on Saturdays; they know how many cheques can be expected, how many bank notes will turn up and what change is required. They make provision for all this on Fridays. The argument that the worker wants banking facilities on Saturday mornings can be answered by the fact that he has ample time in his lunch hour, if he works in the city, to do his banking business. If he works in the suburbs, a branch of some bank would be available there.

Mr. May: Most workers have no money left from their wages to bank.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Not according to the figures of the savings bank.

Mr. OLDFIELD: If there is not a branch of the Commonwealth Savings Bank in the suburb or district, there is every likelihood that an agent can be found in a chemist shop or at the post office. Banking facilities are always present. Forms can be taken from the bank by the wife so that the husband, if he desires to withdraw or deposit money, can enter the slip at night so that the wife can do the banking business in the morning. This can be done during the week.

With regard to farmers, if they are on the telephone and are in urgent need of a cheque book, they can ring the bank and the cheque forms will be posted to them. If the farmer comes into town on Saturday morning he can arrange for the cheque book to be left somewhere for him to pick up. Bank managers are very

co-operative on these matters and do not mind doing small favours like that for clients. Even deposits can be made through the post.

Most farmers today do not live beyond a half hour's travelling time from the town in which they do their banking business. Today we live in the age of motorcars, and almost every farmer has a good motorcar. The country roads are not that bad. Most of them can come into town if required to do their banking within a quarter to half an hour.

Mr. May: Many of them live in towns now.

Mr. OLDFIELD: That is true. If farmers object to Saturday closing of banks because that would result in their making trips into town on week days, the objection can be answered by the fact that every farmer spends some part of a day every week in town. Stock sales are held during the week; there are other events to bring them into town. Travelling today is unlike travelling in the old days where the horse had to be harnessed and a trip in a sulky took upwards of two hours. Today people are able to drive into town in minutes.

I know that many workers will object to this measure. They claim that they want Saturday morning facilities to enable them to make deposits or withdraw money to do shopping. As I said, we seem to be living in a selfish world. If the worker in the Midland Junction Railway Workshops requires to do banking business during the week, he can go to one of the many branches of banks at Midland Junction. No one can tell me that such an employee has no time in his lunch hour to do this, because when I made a visit there I saw some of the workers going in to town for a stroll to fill in the rest of their lunch hour.

The same position applies to almost every worker in any calling in the metropolitan area. Saturday closing might require a little readjustment on their part. Sooner or later, we have to face the position of Saturday closing because it is a progressive move and it will come, whether we want it or not. Fighting against it will not do much good because it is justified. It will come soon or in three years' time, but come it will.

Since the war ended, particularly during the last 10 years, when wholesale houses in Perth discontinued Saturday morning trading, the cry was heard that industry would be upset and retailers would not be able to get their supplies. Today there is not a wholesale house in the city that is open on Saturday. This transition has taken place in the last 10 years. It has been proved that business was not held up, and today shops are doing a bigger turnover than ever before.

It merely means that retailers have to watch their buying and they cannot put off their buying when the traveller calls around on the week day and wait until Saturday morning to ring up for urgent supplies by special delivery. That method involved a wastage of manpower and transport. Trucks experience great difficulty in backing into the lane adjacent to Boans to make special deliveries of goods on Saturday mornings which that establishment said earlier in the week it would not require. If a service is given to the people it will be availed of; but when that service is taken away, then within a matter of months the people will have readjusted themselves completely. If we were to ask people now whether any inconvenience was caused by the wholesale houses closing on Saturday mornings, they would probably have to think hard to recall when those houses were open on Saturdays.

The progressive steps we are taking to improve working conditions will lead ultimately to the position reached in Tasmania where all business houses are closed on Saturdays. Whether that is a good or bad step, only time can tell. If it is a retrograde step and causes inconvenience or severe loss of business, the appropriate Act can be repealed. If the readjustment is a matter for the Arbitration Court, then on application, if the case is substantiated, it will not hesitate to repeal any award that has been made. We should at least give this Bill a trial and face any difficulties that might arise. Progress is a thing which cannot be stopped, no matter how hard we try. I support the second reading.

**HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT** (Mt. Lawley) [8.45]: I have listened with interest to the remarks of the Minister for Labour because, in matters relating to working hours he has a good deal of knowledge and has gained a good deal of experience. He pointed out—and rightly so—that this is not a Government Bill and that each member of his party could support it or not as he thought wise. For my part, I regard it as a non-party Bill to be dealt with in the same way.

I intend to support the second reading because I believe that Australia and Western Australia particularly have adopted a 40-hour working week spread over five days so that as many persons as possible may be released from duty on Saturday. The question that arises is where the line should be drawn. No one would submit that everybody could be relieved from working on Saturday mornings. Take transport workers, hospital staffs and many others.

**Mr. May:** They could be given the equivalent on some other day of the week.

**Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT:** Yes, but that point does not arise under this Bill. Those people have to work on Saturday so that the comfort of the community may be served. I agree with the Minister's statement that from time to time, as the industrial and other efficiency of the community increases, the working hours could be reduced, and I hope that the day will come when we in this House have to work less, instead of sitting so late at night, but that state of affairs has not come as yet.

I see this drawback, namely, that it is difficult to be fully informed on a matter of this nature. Had this Bill been introduced by the Government, it would have inquired into the whole question so that it could ascertain the effect on the community and not only on those people who desire the passing of the Bill. That is the practice of Governments—to inquire into the pros and cons of a proposed measure to ensure that justice is done to the whole community.

But this is not a Government Bill. It is a private members' Bill, and no private member is in a position to have the requisite investigations made or to obtain the whole of the information desired. I for one am not. I do not know what effect the passing of the Bill would have on the community, on the banks, on industry or on the economic life of the State. In my view, the Commonwealth Bank would not be bound by this measure.

**Mr. Lapham:** In all probability, it would fall into line.

**Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT:** Possibly, but that is something I should like to know. The situation would be difficult if the Commonwealth Bank was the only bank open on Saturday morning. So far as I can ascertain from reading the Commonwealth Bank Act, the hours would be determined by the governor of the bank, that is, the hours of the ordinary bank and of the savings bank, and so the Commonwealth Bank would have to remain open in the terms of his decision. I presume, as the member for North Perth interjected, that it would fall into line. But would it? I do not know. That is a question on which it would be useful to have some information.

The governor of the Commonwealth Bank might decide to close the ordinary banking facilities, but keep the savings bank section open. This again might put other banks in a difficult position, particularly one such as the Bank of New South Wales if it is permitted, as it desires to open savings bank facilities. Nobody would like to see such a bank placed at a disadvantage, and I do not think the House would approve of that happening. These are matters upon which I should like to be fully informed. Therefore I consider that some further inquiry is justified before we pass the third reading.

Mr. Johnson: The information could be obtained.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I do not know whether the manager of the Commonwealth Bank would supply me with information as to whether that bank would be kept open or not. If I asked him, he would probably express surprise and say it was an extremely foolish question because he would not have the vaguest idea. That would be a matter of high policy for the governor of the bank to decide.

Mr. May: You would not consider asking him?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Would the hon. member?

Mr. May: No.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Neither would I. All these questions are involved. I have not the slightest idea how necessary it is at present to provide facilities for cashing travellers' cheques on a Saturday. The need might not be great. I do not know when the mail boats arrive.

Mr. May: Those cheques could be cashed anywhere, apart from the bank.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes, but I have in mind the travellers who have authority to draw through the banks, and inconvenience might be caused to them.

Mr. Moir: What about boats arriving on a Sunday?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I know that on occasion people have been greatly inconvenienced through not being able to obtain money on a Sunday. I myself have had that experience when travelling in the other States. I am in sympathy with the desire of the bank officers to have a holiday on Saturday mornings. I understand that at present only a skeleton staff is employed on Saturday by the banks, perhaps one officer in four.

The Minister for Health: It is only a matter of custom now.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: The Minister might be right; I am inclined to agree with him. Perhaps it might not make a great deal of difference. Perhaps there is warrant for giving bank officers the same advantage that so many of our citizens such as the civil servants enjoy. We know that the closing of the public offices on Saturday mornings causes inconvenience to a fairly large number of people, but the point is that the inconvenience thus occasioned is outweighed by the advantage to so many members of the community who work in the Civil Service. The same principle would apply to the bank officers.

Only when there is a definite disadvantage to a majority of the people should we say that the proposal cannot be approved. It would be a ridiculous situation if we could have no transport on Saturdays.

We would not be able to see a football match or attend other sporting fixtures unless we owned cars, and that would be very unfair. This, of course, is an exaggerated example carried to the extreme. I am not sure whether we could not do without a delivery of milk on Saturday mornings. I think the day will come when every home will have a refrigerator and when there will be no need for a Saturday delivery of milk.

Mr. May: Do you think we could do away with hotel bar trading on Saturday?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That might cause inconvenience to the hon. member, not personally, but as a representative of a very progressive district.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We will refer your suggestion to Collie.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: We might even consider closing the betting shops on Saturdays. Such a proposal would have the support of many people and would relieve those who work in the betting shops.

Mr. May: But they work only on Saturdays.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: That is not so. Many of them work during the week.

MR. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member may not discuss betting shops on this measure.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I am afraid I was led astray by some of the interjections. I approve of the principle contained in the Bill and would like to see it put into effect, but before giving a decision on the third reading, I should like to be fully informed about the inconvenience that will be caused to the public and about the attitude of the Commonwealth Bank. Those are important matters. It would be ridiculous to have the Commonwealth Bank offices all over the State open on Saturdays and all the other banks closed. I think the Commonwealth Bank would fall into line, but the question is whether it would, and that is a point on which I should like to be informed.

The Minister for Labour: Did you say that you would oppose the third reading of the Bill?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He did not.

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: I said I should like to have information on these points before giving a decision on the third reading. If inquiries could be made, perhaps by a select committee, I would support such a proposal. Meanwhile I shall vote for the second reading.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville—in reply) [8.58]: I wish to thank members for the support they have given the measure, particularly those on the Opposition side with special reference to the member for

Maylands, who seems to have converted some members, which is something that I doubt my ability to do. The situation of the Commonwealth Bank seems to be worrying the member for Mt. Lawley particularly, and so I will deal with that matter first of all.

Mr. May: That will be all right after the 10th December.

Mr. JOHNSON: Perhaps so. The Bills of Exchange Act defines the periods when banks must remain open. The Act does not do so by saying that the banks must remain open on those days, but it says that certain actions must take place on a day that is a business day. If they do not take place, the bank is liable to heavy penalties. That relates to the matter of noting, protesting, answering and such-like legal formalities.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Would that apply to Commonwealth Savings Bank withdrawals?

Mr. JOHNSON: It applies to everything which is a bill of exchange.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Is a withdrawal slip a bill of exchange?

Mr. JOHNSON: I have not a legal opinion on that point, but it is an order in writing addressed to a bank and I think it would come within the provision.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I would think it was a receipt for money received.

Mr. JOHNSON: I realise that there may be a legal quibble in this regard but I fancy it would not be of great importance. I believe legal opinion would show that it was a bill of exchange. To continue, banks must, under penalty, remain open on any day that is a business day and that is any day except a Sunday, Christmas Day, Good Friday and, I think, Anzac Day, and, in addition, any bank holiday—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: It does not say they must not remain open on a bank holiday. They can do so if they wish.

Mr. JOHNSON: They must be closed on a bank holiday.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: The Commonwealth Bank is not bound by that.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is bound by the Commonwealth Act.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: But the Bills of Exchange Act does not say they must close on a bank holiday.

Mr. JOHNSON: They cannot transact business on a non-business day. That is the effect of it. Even if there is a legal quibble in that regard, I would remind the hon. member and others who oppose the measure that, apart from being a piece of machinery used in the transaction of commercial business, banks consist more particularly of one asset only, the staff; the human beings who do the work, and bank clerks are human beings. I know doubts

have been cast on that statement on a number of occasions, but it is capable of proof.

Mr. Oldfield: What do they call them in country districts?

Mr. JOHNSON: There are a number of names for them, and having worked in the country during the depression years, I know some of them. In the defence forces, for instances, bank officers were regarded as very lowly beings, at least on entering. That was so when I entered, and they were promptly put on cook-house duties. I repeat that although they appear to consist of buildings, books and figures, banks are actually people and I think that if the member for Mt. Lawley were employed in the Commonwealth Bank and the management decided that it should remain open when all other bank employees were at bowls or indulging in whatever other attraction they fancied on a Saturday morning, his reaction would be interesting.

Would he be a good bank officer on that day, knowing that the vast majority of employees in his industry were at the beach enjoying the sunshine, playing bowls—incidentally, the Australian bowls champion is a banker—or following whatever pursuits they most favoured? There are a number of bankers who spend their spare time in the open air, fishing or following some other pastime or sport. In such circumstances, I think Commonwealth Bank officers would react in the same way as the bank officers did in Ireland, where they went on strike—a most unheard of thing—for six weeks and secured a rise in pay. There is something to be said for the Irish—

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: I think the average bank official would decide the question in the light of the extra remuneration he received for working on Saturday.

Mr. JOHNSON: That would have a considerable bearing, because the banking industry is reasonably well paid, though not in the lower ranks. The result is that great difficulty is experienced in obtaining juniors. The industry is reasonably well paid in the middle ranks and, in the higher brackets, much better paid than any member on the floor of this House. In other words, it is a good industry if one gets to the top, but getting there is extremely difficult and the rank and file have some real problems which leave them open to the temptations of heavy overtime. Being human, they have financial burdens which they find difficulty in carrying.

That would not apply as far as the juniors are concerned, because a temptation rate is not available to them. Their salaries are small and double-time would not be as much as they would receive, for instance, for playing in an "A" Grade football match as many of them are capable of doing and would prefer to do. That brings me to another point which worried the member for Nedlands; the desire of

bank officers, and particularly junior officers, to play games on Saturday mornings. In accountancy, which is related to banking, it is not normal to work on Saturday mornings, and that applies also to the rest of the clerical professions.

Unfortunately Saturday morning work in banking is universal. A junior in a bank who desires to reach a high standard in sport finds that he is obliged to work on Saturday mornings, and although banks close at 11 a.m., he can seldom get away before midday. By an effort on the part of the rest of the staff, he may be able to get away a little earlier—

Mr. Perkins: Does that not apply to the employee of any trading house in the city?

Mr. JOHNSON: They do not work on Saturdays.

Mr. Perkins: Boans and Foys do.

Mr. JOHNSON: They have employees in the shops but not many in the clerical sections on Saturdays. The retail trade cannot be regarded as part of the purely clerical industry. It is almost impossible to get the average junior in the clerical industry to work on a Saturday morning because he can get plenty of jobs entailing a five-day week. It is no use the junior who wishes to engage in sport knocking off at midday on Saturday if he is to take part in a junior game being held at the back of beyond. The fields upon which many junior grade games are played are a long way out of the city and the clubs are not sufficiently financial to provide transport for all their players—

Mr. Perkins: But the same thing applies to many other workers.

Mr. JOHNSON: That is so.

Mr. Perkins: Then why not approach the Minister for Labour with a request to bring in a universal five-day week? Why the disparity?

Mr. JOHNSON: One step at a time. The disparity which worries the member for Roe, who seems to object to anybody receiving as good as he has, has existed for a long time.

Mr. Perkins: I would like to take you home for a week-end and see how you fared.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: You would be sorry!

Mr. JOHNSON: The fact remains that the five-day week is common to the majority of workers and that has been resented by bank employees ever since it came into operation. It is the knowledge that this is an unnecessary disparity which has caused the bank officers to be so keen to secure this improvement in their conditions. The Leader of the Opposition has made it clear that the bank managements have not taken steps to oppose this reform—

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: They have not taken any active steps.

Mr. JOHNSON: —and they have knowledge of it. I agree that the bank managements are human and would like to play golf or bowls or go sailing in many instances. Having worked under them I have often doubted whether they are human, but I fancy medical evidence would prove that they are. The fact that they are human is probably the reason why the figures obtained in the last three or four weeks showing a comparison between Saturday work and Friday work are not as convincing as to make the managements decide to oppose this reform.

I know the figures were obtained and that sundry branch managers have inflated the figures in relation to the number of interviews they had on Saturdays, just to keep their alleys good with headquarters. The number of cheques cashed, and deposits made on Saturdays, in comparison with a normal working day can be checked from the books—

Mr. Court: That is a very unfair allegation against the branch managers.

Mr. JOHNSON: I was suggesting that even branch managers are human and consequently wish to stand well with headquarters. There is always an inclination to inflate one's own importance, particularly when reporting on one's self to those who holds one's future career in the hollow of their hands or, as has been said in relation to bankers, in the hollow of their heads.

The Premier: That was said here the other night.

Mr. JOHNSON: The reference escapes me. There are other points of which I think mention should be made. I think I have covered most of them. I made a few notes as a result of the speech made by the member for Roe. He asked, "Why not close everything?" That is a sensible question and one that naturally follows. As it becomes clear that more and more establishments are continuing to function without opening on Saturday morning, more and more reasons can be found why Saturday morning trading is not necessary. It is not logical to suggest that because we take the first step it is our intent to run a thousand yards. The intention of this measure is to move only one short step.

Mr. Ross Hutchinson: Do you think the effect of week-end closing will lead to unions demanding a half-day off during the week?

Mr. JOHNSON: That is an entirely different question that can be answered when it crops up. In reading literature from overseas, I have learned that in the United States they are worrying about automata-tion and have become aware that in the near future the working week must be reduced to 35 hours or 30 hours and a demand for that will probably follow. In the foreseeable future, when we get to the



stage of working a three-day week, conceivably there will be a double staff each working three days. However, that is quite a long way in the future and is not foreseeable in this Bill. There is a long way to go before we reach that stage. We have to carry out automatation.

Among other factors that make bank officers aware that they can be done without on Saturday morning is that most of the transactions with which they deal cannot be concluded on that day. No transactions concerning land can be completed because the Land Titles Office, the Stamp Office or related offices have not opened on Saturday mornings for years. The best one can achieve in regard to insurance is to take out a cover note until the office reopens the following week because the majority of insurance companies, if not all, work with something less than a skeleton staff on Saturday mornings.

The comments made by the member for Nedlands were dealt with by the member for North Perth fairly fully, and I do not propose to refer to them except to ask him how effectively and how long the industry he is still connected with will continue to work on Saturday mornings? I have found that the majority of accountants' offices do not work on Saturdays, although it could be that some interviews and such like do take place. The comments of the member for Subiaco were somewhat amusing, I thought, and her cry that the Bill was a vote-catching stunt revealed a great deal of jealousy on her part. The opportunity has been available to her to catch these votes during the years she has been in politics.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: She has caught enough.

Mr. JOHNSON: I am wondering what is behind that interjection. I find that the fact that times have changed has escaped her. It must be remembered that in the early years of senior bankers—those over 30 years of age—bank officers were regarded as the aristocrats of the clerical profession in that they worked a 32-hour week when everybody else was working a 44-hour week. Bank officers now work a 40-hour week when the rest of the clerical profession work only a 38-hour week and some only 35 hours. The loss of status is something which they feel materially, and in addition it is found that the salaries of those engaged in other industries have nearly caught up and, in some cases, have passed theirs.

The member for Hannans was concerned about the cashing of pay cheques. There are not many workers who enter banks to cash their pay cheques. In the main, they do that by some other means. Furthermore, if an employer does not pay in cash, I think there would be little difficulty in the employer cashing his own pay cheques. In fact, I think he could be legally compelled to do so.

The member for Maylands revealed that there had been some opposition to the measure from people such as city publicans who prefer bank officers to be brought into the city on Saturday mornings so that when they complete their work they can adjourn to the nearest hostelry to seek a couple of "quicknesses." Some bank officers do that, but if they did not have to work on Saturday mornings they could decentralise the trade by having the same quantity of amber fluid at their local hostelries instead of in city hotels.

The majority of bank officers, like most members here, are temperate people, and the volume of beer drinking by bank officers on Saturday mornings would not be very great. I fancy that the one or two hotels particularly favoured by bank officers, namely, those in the vicinity of St. George's Terrace, might be able to find figures to support that contention, but the majority of publicans would not be aware of it.

Mr. Court: There are two points which I raised that you have not dealt with. One is the economic effect of this and the other is your proposition to deal with the rush at the Commonwealth Savings Bank where a policeman is required to direct the traffic.

Mr. JOHNSON: The economic effect would be nil.

Mr. May: It is the human effect we are concerned with.

Mr. JOHNSON: I thought that was made quite clear by the member for North Perth.

Mr. Court: It is not his Bill. You are answering the debate, you know.

Mr. JOHNSON: Surely it is not necessary for me to cover all the ground that other members have covered. I thought I had said enough already. However, I will answer the question asked by the member for Nedlands. Banks have no economic effect as machines. They are not part of the productive chain. They produce credit under certain stimuli, but produce no goods. They are not productive bodies; they are part of the machinery of business.

Mr. Court: I did not mean that economic effect. I meant the effect on movement that is taking place on Saturday mornings.

Mr. JOHNSON: It could be done on some other day. It would not alter the volume of business except that to which I referred, namely, the amount of beer that would be consumed in one hostelry as against another.

Mr. Court: I am not concerned about beer. The less that is consumed, the better. I am concerned about essential trade.

Mr. JOHNSON: Essential trade is not affected. The Bill puts no bar on trade of any kind. There is no trade which is conducted on Saturday mornings that

could not be done on any other day. If the member for Nedlands thinks that because a bank is closed on Saturday morning everything else is going to stop automatically, I cannot follow his reasoning. I doubt if he has a reason. He seems to be just using words the meaning of which I fear he is not even aware.

I could make many more comments. I could refer to the fact that in the United States of America there are very few banks open on Saturday. In that country, their Bills of Exchange Act is different from ours. There are no banks open on Saturday mornings in either Tasmania or New Zealand. It has been indicated that there is every probability that a five-day week for banks will be introduced into Victoria very shortly under a Liberal Government. There is a great deal more information in regard to that.

The Commonwealth Bank is governed by legislation passed by the Commonwealth Parliament, and if the officers of that bank are to be permitted to be off on Saturday mornings, the Bank Holidays Act will have to be amended. As far as I and all bank officers can see, there is no logical reason for not passing this measure. There are important reasons why it should be passed, and the most important is that it would improve staff recruiting and make it possible for banks to increase their staffs, particularly by the recruitment of juniors. This would reduce the burden carried by the senior men whose medical histories show that many of them suffer from ulcers and heart trouble brought about by the strain of their work.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

*To Refer to Select Committee.*

**MR. COURT** (Nedlands) [9.28]: I move—

That the Bill be referred to a select committee.

My reasons have been foreshadowed during the second reading debate on this measure, but for the sake of regularity I would like to state them. They are six in number. Quite apart from that fact, I feel that any legislation of this nature must of necessity have as nearly unanimous backing as it can from a very wide section of the community. Any legislation of this type introduced with ill-will instead of good-will would have repercussions to the detriment of those immediately affected.

The six reasons that I feel are sound for having the Bill referred to a select committee are: Firstly, there are many people directly and indirectly affected and they are entitled to be heard. The appointment of a select committee is a convenient and desirable method by which

they can be heard. Secondly, the economic aspects of this measure, as distinct from the lesser factors of inconvenience, could be thoroughly examined by a select committee. Thirdly, a select committee would afford ample opportunity for people to be heard without their being put to any great expense. They could be heard in an informal atmosphere, and would have ample opportunity to present a case themselves and bring evidence in support of it.

The sections of the community to which I specifically refer are the employees directly affected, the employees' associations directly affected, the employers' associations, the trade associations, the banks themselves, the city and country interests, business people, the general public—including housewives, and the savings bank depositor. All those people have a right to be heard. They cannot personally attend Parliament and express their views, but can attend, at no great cost to themselves, and give evidence before a select committee.

Fourthly, a select committee could examine the effect of Saturday closing on savings bank depositors, and the operations of the savings bank deposit system. Fifthly, it could examine whether the Bill would bind the Commonwealth Bank. It could determine the effect if the Commonwealth Bank were not bound—I have my doubts whether it would be—because it could be detrimental to our own Rural & Industries Bank if it were not allowed to function on a Saturday, and to the Western Australian branches of the several trading banks.

Sixthly, the select committee could examine the methods necessary for providing ample security for depositors' funds. Finally, it could examine the methods of best achieving the objectives of the Bill and making sure that it is implemented, if that is the final decision, with the good-will of all sections of the community. For those reasons I move the motion.

**HON. A. F. WATTS** (Stirling) [9.33]: I propose to support the motion, and I do so substantially for the reasons that were given in the very interesting speech delivered earlier this evening by the member for North Perth. He made it perfectly clear to everybody who listened to him attentively, as I did, that the legal situation was such that the persons concerned in the employment with which this Bill deals had no recourse in this matter to any industrial tribunal.

The matter hinged, it was quite clear, on the question of bank holidays. Therefore it was only this Parliament which could say whether extra days should be added, as contemplated by the Bill, as bank holidays. Because of that, the hon. member went on to indicate that this

House should, as the only tribunal that could deal with the matter, proceed to adjudicate on the rights and wrongs of it and arrive at a determination, vice the industrial arbitration authority which would be able with all the machinery at its disposal to do so.

No industrial arbitration authority ever proceeds, as far as I know, to arrive at a decision on a controversial matter on the speeches of the advocates for both sides. It at least requires some evidence to be called in order to guide it in arriving at a decision. But the only information that is before me as a member of this House in the present circumstances is that provided by the statements of the advocates on both sides—to wit, those who support the Bill and those who do not. Their statements are of a most conflicting nature.

As I understand it, our business here is to ensure that what is done is for the greatest good of the greatest number. That, I take it, should be the attitude of any tribunal which is out fairly to adjudicate on any problem such as this. As I said, the member for North Perth made it perfectly clear—and I agree with him in all the circumstances of this case—that it is the duty of this Parliament to decide this matter because, such are the surrounding circumstances that it is impossible for anybody else to do so.

However, this Parliament should not be asked to do that on the ex parte statements of advocates for either side. Members should be asked to do it in the light of all the information that can be reasonably obtained by the various methods that are open to us under parliamentary procedure; and, of course, the most obvious course, and the one that is quite customary in many matters that come before Parliament is that of a select committee.

Personally, I have voiced no opposition to this measure. I believe it is quite possible that this House, especially after the interesting review of the situation given by the member for North Perth, might be prepared to agree that the only way to tackle it was to get all the information that could be obtained within a reasonable time and arrive at a decision so that the greatest good might be done for the greatest number.

In all probability evidence might be forthcoming that the gains to be derived by this legislation are much greater than the detriments. In those circumstances there would be no justification for further opposition to the measure. But at least we would have ascertained that that was the position. We would know whether the optimistic beliefs on the one hand or the pessimistic beliefs on the other that have been expressed by advocates for and against the Bill, were the more correct.

I can see no valid objection to enabling members to form, as members of the tribunal to which the hon. member referred, a fair opinion on this subject and adjudicate as they would do were they actually sitting as members of the industrial tribunal to which we are accustomed. I see no reason why there should not be a little delay and why we should not, at very small expense, by means of a select committee, obtain at least a fair outline of the effects of the measure.

Nor do I see why members of Parliament should be deprived of that opportunity in a matter of this kind. Of course, they are no better than advocates for one side or the other with preconceived notions, and with little or no justification for their opinions, because they have had no personal experience, and no personal contact with the circumstances which govern the matter. Believing that we should have that contact and ought to obtain the information we require, I propose very strongly to support the motion.

**MR. JOHNSON** (Leederville) [9.40]: Whilst agreeing with the Leader of the Country Party that this House should have all the information possible made available to it, I feel there is a duty laid on members of Parliament to do something for themselves. This Bill has been before the House for a number of weeks. Information is readily obtainable. It has been made available to members in a number of ways, particularly through speeches a fortnight ago as well as tonight; and if they are incapable of using a telephone to contact the various people concerned, then they have no right to be here.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: That attitude is not helping your Bill.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I feel it is the duty of all members to inform themselves on matters on which they intend to speak. If there were any doubt about the value of any of those types of persons mentioned by the member for Nedlands, there is no reason why he could not have made inquiries. The various organisations all exist at the other end of the telephone, and he has had a fortnight to contact them.

The argument by the Leader of the Country Party that arbitration always requires evidence is not 100 per cent. true, because we of the banking profession have had a number of variations in our award over the years and have never put evidence before the court in any way except through our advocates.

Hon. A. F. Watts: That has been done by agreement between the parties and not in connection with a contentious matter.

**MR. JOHNSON:** I cannot see that this is a contentious matter.

Hon. A. F. Watts: It looks like it from the different points of view I have heard expressed in the last four or five hours.

Mr. JOHNSON: It might perhaps be more fairly said that there is a great objection to change of any kind and a completely reactionary viewpoint by some members, who adopt that attitude automatically and admit that nobody has asked them to take it. No good purpose can be served by the appointment of a select committee that could not already have been achieved by the people concerned in two hours on the telephone. I oppose the motion. The appointment of a select committee is unnecessary, and the motion is only an attempt to delay the measure.

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [9.43]: As I indicated when I spoke immediately after the tea suspension, I favour this Bill being sent to a select committee. I certainly think members are justified in asking that that be done. The member for Leederville suggested that we could have obtained all the information desired in regard to the Bill by making use of the telephone. We do have an opportunity of hearing different views in the city and in our own electorates regarding this particular measure. Some of them are what I might term prejudiced views and have played up the pros and cons not in an impartial manner.

I had hoped the Minister for Labour would give us more information than he did when he spoke in support of the Bill. I draw the attention of the House to the fact that in all the other States, with the exception of Tasmania, the banks are open on Saturday mornings. If this class of legislation is considered to be desirable, particularly in the interests of those who work in banks, there must surely be some reason why the banks are still open on Saturday morning in the other States. I cannot help but feel that if the different Governments had been able to satisfy themselves that the closing of the banks on Saturday morning was in the best interests of the community generally, they would have done something to bring about that position.

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope the Leader of the Opposition does not want to make a second reading speech on this motion.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: No. I thought I was keeping on the track as to why the Bill should be referred to a select committee. I was going on to say that this matter might well be referred to a Premiers' Conference, because banking affects not only one State but the Commonwealth generally. The charge made that this move is to delay the Bill, is without foundation. I feel quite certain that those members who have spoken to the measure are genuine in their desire that the information should be obtained.

It may be that if we agreed to the appointment of a select committee the Bill could become law. There need be no

undue delay if a select committee is appointed. I would say that evidence would be readily forthcoming and the committee could get to work almost immediately and it should not be long in making its recommendations. I hope the proposal for a select committee will be agreed to. I repeat, there is much more chance of the Bill becoming law if a select committee is appointed than if a select committee is refused.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [9.47]: I am wondering whether the member for Leederville fears the evidence that might be produced before a select committee. It is difficult otherwise to understand his opposition to the referring of the Bill to a select committee. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, there need not be much delay. The opportunity will be given to those who can see difficulties to voice their objections; and I have no doubt that those who are anxious to see the measure become law will be glad to give evidence.

Those of us who have had experience of select committees know that much unexpected evidence and many points of view are expressed before such a body. It must be evident to members that if there were no objection to the measure, action would have been taken long ago to provide that banks would not be open on Saturday mornings. As the Leader of the Opposition has said, Tasmania is the only State—it is the smallest State—where the banks do not open on Saturday mornings. I suggest that this is not an accident, and there must be some reason why the banks continue to open on Saturday mornings in the other States, especially, as the member for Leederville has stated, the banks themselves are not raising any serious objection to the legislation.

It does seem to me, therefore, that these objections could very well be brought to light before a select committee. As I said in my second reading speech, this is a piecemeal method of dealing with the question. It could well be that the proper method is to do away with Saturday morning work altogether. Possibly, as the result of evidence before a select committee, that would become very plain. It would then be proper for the Government of the day, rather than a private member, to take the necessary action. Until the opportunity is given for the people who are interested in this question or have particular knowledge of it, to make that knowledge available to members, we are obviously only partially informed in dealing with the matter.

It is all very well for the member for Leederville to say we can go to the telephone and get the information, but when dealing with economic questions that can have a big bearing on the business life of the State, we should work on a better basis than that. Surely the general public and the business community have the

right to say just how the business life of the State will be affected! I am not suggesting that this particular question will have any big influence on costs or that it will put this State entirely out of line with the other States, but any action we take on matters similar to this must have some effect, and members should know what the effect will be before they take action.

Mr. Lawrence: Do you think it will affect our loan allocations?

Mr. PERKINS: If the member for South Fremantle has information on that point, I suggest he tell us about it, but he may have difficulty in doing that in this debate. A great many matters will be affected by the legislation. The member for Leederville has mentioned some. For instance, he spoke of the facility that will be given to the banks in recruiting junior staff. That will make the banking profession more attractive. If that is so, then it must be going to make the position more difficult for someone else.

If, in a period when the work force of the State is practically fully employed, we give more attractive conditions to one particular section of industry, and so recruit more people to it, then we must affect other sections. All that this adds up to, is a very good argument in favour of the appointment of a select committee where these questions could be examined in an orderly manner. The select committee could consider them and make its report to the House, and then we could have further debate and finally decide whether to accept the Bill or whether the question should be considered on a wider angle—which I personally support at the moment—by which the Minister for Labour could take action and decide whether we should have Saturday morning work.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [9.54]: The member for Leederville said this was a question on which members had had plenty of time to inform themselves; that it was quite simple for them to get on the telephone and ring up people. I think the member for Leederville should examine the question further as this is a large State and I defy anyone, in the course of two hours on the telephone, to secure a sound appreciation of the full ramifications of a measure of this nature over the entire State. That this question was debated for so long indicates that the member for Leederville has over-simplified the question, and nearly all the discussion by those who support the Bill has centred around the effect it will have on the business people in the city.

I am not as competent as some others to express an opinion on that aspect as I represent a country constituency, but I noticed that some of the points I raised during the debate on the second reading

were not replied to by the hon. member, and I am still not satisfied in regard to them. I believe that certain problems which might arise in my electorate would not apply elsewhere although other districts would probably have their own problems. I repeat that it would be difficult in a couple of hours' telephoning to gain a thorough appreciation of the impact of this measure, and for that reason alone I think there should be a wider inquiry with an opportunity to take evidence.

Another matter that has not been cleared up satisfactorily is the position of the employees of the Commonwealth Bank. It has been said that that bank would have to fall into line, but I doubt whether anyone here can speak for that institution, and a question crosses my mind as to whether anyone has made an effort to find out what that bank thinks of this measure.

Mr. Johnson: It would not be likely to break the law.

Mr. HEARMAN: The member for Leederville says the Commonwealth Bank would not be likely to break the law, but we do not know whether it would be bound by this measure. That is a point which could well be cleared up by a select committee, before which witnesses could be called and the matter determined. As it is, we are being asked to pass a Bill the full effects of which we are not able to assess because we do not know what they would be. The Commonwealth Bank might decide that the same conditions should apply here as in other parts of Australia, and then this legislation might not apply to it.

I do not know whether that would give the Commonwealth Bank an advantage over the trading banks, but it might. We have been told that at least one-third of the business people in the city are interested in keeping banks open on Saturday mornings. If that is so and there was only one bank open on Saturdays, those people might prefer to transfer their business to it. That is a reasonable supposition.

Mr. Johnson: Is it?

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not think the member for Leederville has convinced the House that the Commonwealth Bank would be bound by this legislation. It is governed by a Commonwealth Act, which would override our State Law. I am not at all satisfied on this point, and I do not think any member has convinced the House that we could bind the Commonwealth Bank. If we cannot and it decided to remain open on Saturday mornings, that could create a state of affairs that none of us might wish to see arise.

I think this matter should be put completely beyond all disputation, and we should be told where the Commonwealth

Bank stands in regard to it. The appointment of a select committee seems to be the most suitable way of clearing up the point. If we cannot find out in all the time that has been at our disposal, and the matter is still not clear, obviously we must get further evidence and information. If we had a select committee we would know, with a reasonable degree of certainty, what the effect of this legislation would be if passed.

That is something on which every member should satisfy himself before he agrees to any measure. For that reason—and that is sufficient in itself—I think the appointment of a select committee is justified and I support the member for Nedlands in the motion he has moved.

Mr. SPEAKER: I wish to draw member's attention to Standing Order No. 144 and most members know what it contains; it deals with tedious repetition, "either of his own arguments or of the arguments used by other members in debate." We have had a pretty fair sample of it tonight and I warn members that if they continue in that strain, I shall have to take some action.

HON. C. F. J. NORTH (Claremont) [10.21: There will be no tedious repetition from me, Sir. I can say what I have wanted to say for the last 20 minutes in a few words. I have been a member of a number of select committees and I have found that a lot of information can be gained as one travels around; one sees conditions which are different in one's own State. The member who sponsored the Bill spoke about telephonic communication and said that we could get all the information we wanted by telephone.

I do not think we should do that because I do not think we can get all the information we want in that manner. If a select committee were appointed to travel to Tasmania, members could see for themselves what effect Saturday closing had on the community. In these days of fast travel it would take only two or three days and members would be able to find out exactly what was happening in Hobart and Launceston.

Mr. Court: Are you holding that out as a bait?

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH: Some members say that the banks in Launceston are open on Saturday mornings and others say that the banks in Hobart are open on Saturday mornings but they are closed in Launceston. Nobody seems to know the exact position. I was a member of the select committee on gaols and also of the select committee to inquire into the West Perth markets. The markets was a big undertaking costing £1,000,000 and it would have been impossible for us to get all the information we wanted by telephone. We

had to do a great deal of hard work and on many occasions had to get up at 4 o'clock in the morning. If a select committee were appointed its members could travel to Melbourne to see the position in that city, where the banks are open on Saturday morning, and they could then go on to Tasmania in order to make a comparison. It would not take very long and we would know the exact position. I support the motion.

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

Ayes	....	....	....	17
Noes	....	....	....	19

Majority against .... 2

#### Ayes.

Mr. Abbott	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Brand	Mr. North
Dame F. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Owen
Mr. Court	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doney	Mr. Watts
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hill	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. Manning	(Teller.)

#### Noes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. McCulloch
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Moir
Mr. Heal	Mr. Norton
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Kelly	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Lapham	Mr. May
Mr. Lawrence	(Teller.)

Question thus negatived.

#### In Committee.

Mr. J. Hegney in the Chair; Mr. Johnson in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Amendment of schedule to Act 48 Vict., No. 9:

Mr. COURT: I do not propose to delay consideration of this measure, but I want to make a few pertinent comments in regard to this clause which is the vital part of the Bill. I suggest to those responsible for this measure that if they want a Bill of this nature to be fully and objectively considered by the Legislative Council, they put up a stronger case than we have heard so far.

Mr. Johnson: Is that a threat?

Mr. COURT: During the debate, the member for Leederville made what I considered to be an unsound comment when he said that we should have verified all this by telephone. Far from being inactive in regard to this legislation, I took it rather seriously and made a thorough investigation, as far as I could go. If I accepted everything that is in the file which I have before me as being gospel, I would not give it a second thought in so far as voting in favour of the Bill is concerned,

but I consider that two-thirds of the evidence submitted to me in writing is biased and for that reason I was anxious that the matter should be given more thorough and impartial examination.

It is not sufficient for the member for Leederville to brush this off and to say there are no economic considerations, because there are many. It is of no use him trying to say that my reasons for these economic considerations will be a direct concern only of the banks themselves if they are closed on Saturday mornings. The mere fact of banks being shut for a half-day could not have a serious economic effect, but there are many co-related factors that would have a great economic effect. Many responsible people will be most upset if they were responsible for bringing about an adverse economic effect. If justice is to be done by the people, a stronger case should be presented if it is to help those concerned with their problems.

Mr. JOHNSON: The threats made by the member for Nedlands in regard to what another place will do with the Bill deserve some notice to be taken of them. However, they should not be taken in this Chamber. We should deal with questions on their merits. The member for Nedlands, on three occasions, could have indicated what are these vague economic effects which he is talking about. However, he has given no indication of what they are. He talks and talks and talks and, in my opinion, he talks rot.

Clause put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

*House adjourned at 10.15 p.m.*

## Legislative Council

Thursday, 27th October, 1955.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### GOLDMINING LEASES.

*Number in Norseman District.*

Hon. G. BENNETTS asked the Chief Secretary:

Will he inform the House the number of goldmining leases, other than those held by Central Norseman and the Norseman Gold Mines Pty., in the Norseman district?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Chief Secretary) replied:  
Two.

#### SILICOSIS.

*Effect of Aluminium Therapy.*

Hon. G. BENNETTS asked the Chief Secretary:

Will he inform the House whether the aluminium therapy which is being used in the mining industry is having the effect of arresting silicosis?

The MINISTER FOR THE NORTH-WEST (for the Chief Secretary) replied:

The development of silicosis to the earliest stage at which it can be detected takes 10 years or more for most men in our mines. Aluminium therapy has been in operation a little more than five years and the position is being closely watched, but it is still too early to arrive at a definite opinion as to its effect.