

Hon. P. Collier: This will apply to judges only.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The amendment I propose to move will apply to judges. I move an amendment—

That the paragraph reading "the term does not include any person holding any office mentioned in Schedule 1 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899," be struck out and the following inserted in lieu:—"Wherever the term 'officer' is used in Part 2 of this Act, such term shall not include or apply to any person holding any office mentioned in Schedule 4 of the Constitution Acts Amendment Act, 1899, but otherwise the term shall include such person."

Hon. W. D. Johnson: I think we ought to see this amendment.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If members opposite really desire to study this amendment, I am prepared to report progress, but I should like to have made a little more headway. There is no catch about this.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: What effect will this have upon the salary of a judge?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: But for this amendment a judge might have his salary as well as his pension cut.

Hon. W. D. Johnson: Civil servants are already protected against the double cut, are they?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. All I want to do is to afford the same protection to judges.

Hon. A. McCallum: Who are included in the Second Schedule?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The Governor, his Private Secretary, the Clerk to Executive Council, Judges and Ministers.

Hon. P. COLLIER: I have no objection to the amendment if I understand it aright. I think the Bill provides that there shall not be a double cut in the case of civil servants, both as to their salary and their pensions, and that the amendment provides for a similar safeguard in the case of judges.

Amendment put and passed.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I move an amendment—

That the following be added to the definition of "Retiring allowance":—"The term shall not apply to a retiring allowance which had been granted and not paid in full before the commencement of this Act."

In certain cases, I am informed, retiring allowances have been fixed, and then, instead of being paid in a lump sum, have been paid out at so much per fortnight or

per month. The Public Service are fearful that the reduction might be made in instalments which have not yet been paid. It is not proper that those instalments should be subject to reduction. If the Treasury had had the funds, the amounts would have been paid out then and there; and that would have been the end of the matter.

Amendment put and passed.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.19 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Wednesday, 22nd July, 1931.

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

LEAVE OF ABSENCE.

On motion by Hon. G. W. Miles, leave of absence for six consecutive sittings granted to Hon. J. J. Holmes (North) on the ground of urgent private business.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Hon. C. B. Williams and the Labour Party.

Hon. C. B. WILLIAMS: I desire to make a personal explanation. The report of the speech I delivered on the Debt Conversion Agreement Bill that appears in the "West Australian" this morning, may leave a totally wrong impression of what I was endeavouring to convey. My only object in using the language I did was to definitely dissociate myself from the decisions of the

Premiers' Conference so far as they referred to the reductions to be effected in invalid, old age and soldiers' pensions, and the 20 per cent. cut in wages. I regret that my remarks conveyed any other meaning. For the last 26 years I have been a member of the Labour Party and if my remarks last night were misconstrued, it was probably due to my fault in using the language I did. I have no intention whatever of leaving the Labour Party, but the report in this morning's "West Australian" would lead people to think that I had left the party, which is totally wrong.

BILL—HIRE PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.

To adopt Select Committee's Report.

HON. H. SEDDON (North-East) [4.34]:

I move—

That the report of the select committee be adopted, and that the recommendations embodied in it be taken into consideration when the Bill is in Committee of the whole Council.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I second the motion.

HON. G. A. KEMPTON (Central) [4.36]: Before the adoption of the report, I wish to say a few words, because I am afraid I will not have the opportunity to do so when the Bill is in Committee. We have to thank the select committee for the work they have accomplished in connection with the Bill. I know what difficulties they had to contend with, as I have been a member of one or two select committees, and I am aware of the trouble it is to secure the attendance of necessary witnesses. Work of that description also involves great demands upon members' time, and when the House is not sitting, those concerned have to give the whole of their attention to the work of the select committee. At the same time, I think the main reason for the appointment of a select committee to consider the Hire Purchase Agreements Bill has been overlooked. Probably that was due to want of time. It would have been better had the tabling of the report been postponed for a fortnight, or for even a longer period, so that it would have been possible to secure information from farmers and others regarding the application of hire purchase agreements in the agricultural districts. It would have been better had

the select committee been able to travel to several of the wheat-growing areas, such as the Midland, Wongan Hills, Eastern Wheat Belt, Great Southern and, perhaps, Southern Cross. On the other hand, they could have arranged for free passes over the railways to be made available to representative farmers who could have come to Perth from various centres, in order to give evidence. In addition to Dr. Stow, Parliamentary Draftsman, the witnesses examined were G. H. Bacon and G. W. Le Vaux, representing the Agricultural Machinery Merchants' Conference; E. M. Barker and G. W. Day, representing the Hire Purchase Traders' Association; E. Kruse, representing W. Adams, engineers and merchants; W. G. Pickering, representing the Primary Producers' Association; J. Seyfort, representing the Wheatgrowers' Union; W. J. Winterbottom, representing the Chamber of Automotive Industries of Western Australia.

Mr. Cornell: Mainly motor cars and tractors!

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: That is a very representative set of business men.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: Yes.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But one-sided!

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: The group of witnesses was wonderfully representative of the hire-purchase vendors! The point that struck me in going through the evidence was that the witnesses represented a fine selection from the reputable business men of Perth who are connected with the hire-purchase agreements. But where were the farmers? Would it not have been just as well to have had half a dozen farmers who could have given evidence from their point of view? The select committee took evidence from the point of view of the hire-purchase people. The object of the Bill was to arrive at a fair deal as between the hire-purchase merchants and the hire purchasers. I am sure it was arising out of the urgent and persistent appeals from the farming community, that the necessity for the Bill was realised. We have had numerous instances of harsh treatment meted out to the men on the land, and that was what prompted the introduction of this legislation. Some years ago Mr. Drew, when a private member, endeavoured to bring in a hire-purchase Bill because he had heard of the harsh treatment that even in those days had been meted out to the farming community. Had he been able to

secure the passage of that Bill, much of the latter day difficulties and troubles would have been avoided. As it was, the Bill was treated coldly by members of this Chamber and eventually it was dropped. I will give the House a few instances to illustrate what has happened in connection with hire-purchase agreements. I have had the information supplied to me, and I am positive it is quite authentic. Here is one instance that occurred in the Kununoppin district. The statement reads—

I have noticed on several occasions you have endeavoured to do something to protect the farmers regarding the diabolical hire-purchase agreements under which the majority of us are compelled to purchase our machinery to enable us to farm our lands. Mine is a case in point which calls for adequate legislation to prevent us being robbed by unscrupulous agents who care not whether their clients get any satisfaction once they get a signature to their hire-purchase agreements. I will now quote details of my transactions with a company with regard to the purchase of a tractor.

Hon. W. J. Mann: What was the company?

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: I am perfectly willing to give the name of the firm to the President, but I do not think it would be quite wise to state it to members generally. I will even inform the hon. member.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Cannot you see that you are casting odium on all agents?

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: Certainly not. Let the hon. member wait until I have finished. He will then see that odium is not cast on all agents because of the information I desire to supply. I am endeavouring to quote an instance to show that one hire purchase vendor admitted that harsh treatment had been extended to farmers through the hire-purchase system.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That may apply to some of them.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: That will not establish for one moment that all hire purchase vendors are of that type. Every member who has spoken has stated that, while there are reputable merchants, there are some who are not reputable and who have given the farmers a bad time. I am sure Mr. Mann, with his experience of the country, cannot deny that.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Do not brand all of them alike.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: I am not doing anything of the sort. The letter continues—

On the 16th January, 1928, I bought a tractor for £479. The cash price at that time was about £425, but being compelled to ask for terms, I had to pay 14 per cent. for the accommodation. The tractor was delivered on my farm and demonstrated by the company's mechanic on 17th February, 1928, and as early as 8th March, 1928, and almost daily afterwards, I had trouble with breakages to different parts of the tractor till 30th May, 1928, when the engine block and fittings went to pieces (and with all the trouble I had not finished seedling). I claimed to have the tractor put in order under the company's much talked-of guarantee, but was told that the company who manufactured the tractor gave the guarantee and, as the guarantee started on the day I paid the deposit, the time had expired under which I could make a claim, notwithstanding that the tractor was not delivered by the agent company for 32 days after the deposit was paid. However, after a lot of wrangling, they agreed to repair the tractor at half cost, and my half would cost me £30, plus 14 per cent. I had it done, and commenced working again on 25th June, 1928, and it worked until 13th August, 1928, and on that date the tracks collapsed, and they being completely worn out I went to Perth and told the company I was sending the whole thing back to them, as it had never been any good. They told me I would still have to pay the full purchase price under their hire-purchase agreement. They also told me that these tracks had proved to be no good, and they arranged with another firm of track manufacturers to supply a different style of tracks, and they would fix them in for £100. So I had to consent to another £100, plus 14 per cent. before I could have my tractor in working order, and eventually got a start with the tractor on 2nd October, 1928, only to discover that the new style of tracks had altered the gearing of the tractor, and that the principle of the tracks made it impossible to turn with the working load, so it was scrapped for ever, after doing 1,200 acres of work. I have struggled on, meeting my payments until 1st June, paying so far a total of £500 7s. 5d. off the purchase price in addition to many pounds' worth of spare parts, freight, etc., and I still owe £150 on the rubbish. Of that amount £50 fell due on 1st June, 1930. I could not meet it. About that time a road contractor said he would pay the amount owing on it, and take the tractor, provided it would do his work, so I agreed to let him have it so that I could pay the company the balance. However, the contractor gave it a trial and found the same trouble as I did, so he did not go on with the proposition. I received a letter from the company dated 25th June, 1930, stating that they were taking proceedings for £50, and would repossess the tractor.

Hon. H. Seddon: What was the date of that letter?

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: I have not the date, but it is a recent letter.

Hon. J. Cornell: The wheat belt is strewn with cases of that kind.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: The letter continues—

On the 9th July I received a writ from the company, and had to go to Perth to see them, and on explaining my position, was treated like a criminal and told that they would put me through the Bankruptcy Court, and that bad farming prevented many farmers from paying their debts. After three days' worrying, a friend of mine was able to pacify the company, and they held the matter over until the end of the year 1930, with 14 per cent. added. I absolutely state that the tractor was skillfully handled and cared for, and loaded in accordance with the company's recommendations, and yet it is costing me £725 for an agent's experiment. Hoping these facts will be helpful to you, and that you will succeed in bringing some measure of protection to the working bullocks of Western Australia.

I have a further letter from the same farmer in which he states that his wife became ill with cancer and died, and while he was waiting for the burial in Perth, he received a telegram stating that the company had decided to put the bailiff into possession of his farm. I now wish to quote some cuttings from the "West Australian." Probably the members representing the districts concerned will remember the cases dealt with—

At a meeting in Katanning on the 13th February, 1930, members gave instances of what they considered to be dealings under hire-purchase agreements. One statement dealt with the sale of a tractor, which changed hands four times. The seller obtained nearly double its original value in the re-sale after possession, in addition to holding judgment summonses against defaulting purchasers for amounts aggregating the original sale price. The tractor was first sold under hire-purchase agreement for £193, and was re-possessed in default of payments amounting to £93. The second sale was for £150, of which £100 was paid, the default being £50. The third was for £120, the default being £45. The fourth sale was for £100, which presumably was paid in full. The owner, on those figures, had received £375 in cash for the tractor, and yet was owed £188, for the recovery of which summonses had been issued, for a machine valued new at £193.

Another instance quoted was that of a tractor sold for £625, the holder of the hire-purchase agreement receiving £475 in cash before default was made. The farmer called a meeting of his creditors and the owner re-possessed the machine, which he then sold for £275, at the same time claiming on the estate of the farmer for the £150 unpaid. This returned 7s. 6d. in the pound, or £54, so the owner received in all £804 for the machine, which new was valued at £625. Had the farmer not assigned his estate, he would have been liable for the unpaid balance of £100.

Another instance quoted was that of a farmer who purchased a car for £300, paid £200, and defaulted, his estate being assigned. The owner re-possessed the car, sold it for £200, claiming against the estate for the unpaid balance of £100, of which he received £37 10s. In this case the £300 car realised £437 10s. to the holder of the hire-purchase agreement.

In another case a farmer hire-purchased a motor truck for £360, paid two instalments of £120 each, and was unable to meet the final payment. He made an arrangement with the agent that he should pay £60 of the outstanding balance, the final £60 to be carried for another year. Before the last promissory note became due, the farmer placed his affairs in the hands of a trustee, informing the agent and offering a guarantee for payment of the outstanding £60. He made an alternative offer to pay cash immediately by disposing of the truck, for which he had been offered £130 cash. The agent re-possessed, and later made a claim against the estate for £30 for out-of-pocket expenses and commission in connection with the sale of the truck.

I could continue quoting similar instances for a long time, but what I want to show is that this trouble is occurring in the northern parts of the State, the Great Southern and the wheat districts, and that there is more than one agent concerned. Here is an instance from Hutt dated 13th August, 1930—

I beg to bring under your notice what can be done by machinery firms and what has been done by one machinery firm here. A farmer purchased a harvester from the company for £186 on three bills. One bill was paid. Owing to crop failure, etc., he was unable to meet the next two bills. The company exercised their right and re-possessed the machinery. That was all right, but they put in a writ, and got judgment against the farmer for £150—two overdue payments and interest—and they have advised the farmer that unless he pays up promptly, they will take steps to enforce the judgment. On being written to, asking them to value the machinery and credit the farmer's account with the amount, they replied stating that £150 was due to them for the hire of the machine, and demanding payment forthwith. The farmer valued the machinery at £100. If he had been able to pay the company £150, the position would have been—cash £60, claim £150, harvester value £100, total £310; original price £186, leaving a profit of £124.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Farmers are being robbed wholesale by those sharks.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: Every country representative has heard of such cases. I do not know whether metropolitan members are aware of them, but we are informed of them day after day as we travel through the country. Mr. Bacon, representing the

Machinery Merchants' Conference, stated in his evidence to the select committee—

When the Bill was first introduced into Parliament, we realised that there were excellent reasons why it should be brought forward, because we do know of cases where extremely harsh treatment has been meted out by some vendors to hirers. But when we looked at the Bill, we immediately realised that it was not going to work as introduced. There were many objections to it. So we got together and drafted out amendments, and then we decided that it would be far easier to re-draft a Bill embodying our amendments With the amendments we propose it does not make any difference to us whether the Bill is retrospective

The point of Mr. Bacon's evidence is that the merchants know of cases where extremely harsh treatment has been meted out by some vendors to hirers. If that is so, surely it is a very good reason why this measure should be made retrospective. Otherwise, what are we going to do to help the people who have suffered so severely in the past? If the Bill be passed in its present form, they will get no relief, because it will simply apply to the future. On Mr. Bacon's evidence alone the Bill should be made retrospective. Mr. G. W. Day, representing the Hire Purchase Traders' Protection Association, said, "If the amendments I have suggested are included, I will not be affected very much, even if the Bill does apply to existing agreements, because there will be an equitable basis of arriving at a valuation." Mr. Barker, Secretary for Nicholson's Ltd., said, "If the provisions we have suggested were included in the Bill we would welcome the measure." Mr. Le Vaux, solicitor, representing the Agricultural Machinery Merchants' Conference, was also examined. It is interesting to note that the hire purchase merchants were able to send a solicitor to give evidence before the select committee so that he might drive home their points. They would naturally have a good deal of effect on any body of laymen. Of course, Mr. Nicholson was a member of the select committee. Mr. Le Vaux said—

If the suggestion for altering the scheme be adopted, then it does not matter whether it applies to existing agreements or no. In my suggested Bill you will there see that the proviso gives the equity to the hirer. That is the one I suggest instead of the one proposed in your Bill.

Hon. J. Nicholson: Are you sure those suggestions were not adopted?

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: All the merchants were represented at the select committee, but practical farmers were not asked to give evidence.

Hon. W. J. Mann: We had before us representatives of the Farmers' Association.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: I understand that, and also that you had the solicitor representing machinery merchants.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You know what became of Mr. Le Vaux's Bill.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: I should like to see it. It must have been interesting.

Hon. H. Seddon: Have you read the evidence?

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: Yes, every word of it.

Hon. H. Seddon: And you do not know what became of Mr. Le Vaux's Bill?

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: Anyway, there was a proposal for a new Bill from the machinery merchants. If six representative farmers had been given the opportunity to draft amendments, I wonder how much the amendments would have resembled those presented by the merchants' solicitor?

Hon. H. Seddon: We might have had six Bills.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: It would have been a good thing if there had been a Bill from each side.

Hon. W. J. Mann: We did not ask Mr. Le Vaux to submit a Bill.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: And of course you would not ask the farmers to present a Bill.

The PRESIDENT: I suggest to the hon. member that this is not the time to make a second reading speech on the Bill. He can give reasons for or against the motion that the report of a select committee be adopted, and then the House can go into Committee on the Bill.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: I quite understand. I am only quoting the evidence and making these few remarks to show that it is necessary that the Bill be given a retrospective effect. I cannot do that unless I give some information about the conditions that prevail. Mr. Pickering, one of the two witnesses representing the farmers, said that in so far as the Bill was not retrospective, he considered it of small value to the in-

dustury. Then asked what measure of retrospective operation he considered was a fair thing, he replied—

We consider that all the agreements which are in operation at the moment should be subject to retrospective operation. Since the inception of hire-purchase agreements, our association has had case after case of injustice brought under its notice.

Mr. Pickering put in a letter from a Kattanning man which read—

Last March I owed £72 3s. 6d. on a Chevrolet car, two years old. Unable to make arrangements for a renewal or to pay it, I delivered the car to the local dealer as he gave me to understand that if I did so the car would be sold and I would get the full benefit of the sale. The local dealer overhauled the car and charged £14 for doing so. He then sent the car to Perth and sold it for £90. He is now also debiting me with what he terms hire-unpaid balance on car, £72 3s. 6d. So you see he has sold the car for more than is owing, yet still debits me with the full amount. I am a firm believer in law and order but the above is enough to make a man turn towards Bolshevism.

The only other evidence given was by Mr. Seyfort, Secretary of the Wheatgrowers' Association. When asked what experience he had he replied—

I have entered into about 20 agreements. I have had occasion to approach the vendors, and stop them from repossessing. The result of the experience, speaking personally, is that I had consideration from my people, but I think that in a great number of cases harshness has existed.

Mr. Seyfort cited the following case from Nungarin:—

A farmer bought a tractor valued at £630 including freight. He paid £558 in principal and interest on the transaction and had the tractor overhauled at a cost of £56. In March, 1931, the tractor was re-possessed. As well as losing the machine, he is billed under an order of the court to pay the firm £224 instalments accrued and overdue. The conditions of the purchase were that he had to pay one-third down and a third each, one after a year and one after three years. There was a substantial deposit. The first payment was in cash, the second was paid on the due date and he only fell short of the third payment.

Asked whether his experience was that firms had been reasonable, he replied that he would like to qualify that by saying, "Some of them were reasonable and some of them had been just as bad as the others had been good." Asked whether there had been cases of machinery being re-possessed while the

farmer had been engaged in his operations, Mr. Seyfort replied—

Yes, and local agents have taken the machinery without definite authority or warrant. They have not been properly constituted bailiffs. Re-possession has been done effectively by the removal of essential parts of a machine while in operation.

He was next asked whether the Bill should be made retrospective regarding existing agreements, and he replied in the affirmative. He said that his organisation had gone into that phase of the matter particularly as regards the moral aspect. He added—

We are not lawyers and our knowledge of jurisprudence is not great, but we do not view the position as implying a breach of contract, as the Bill merely seeks to set down an equitable basis for the settlement of accounts. We maintain that many of the agreements made were inequitable and immoral to such an extent that they should be invalid. Our opinion is that it is not a question of repudiation, but a forcing of honesty in transaction.

I was glad to see that my colleague, Mr. Hall, brought in a minority report. On the select committee there were two metropolitan members, one representing the eastern gold-fields, and one representing the South-West. My colleague represented the northern districts and it is significant to note that the one man on the committee who represented the wheat areas, where so much trouble has been experienced by farmers in connection with hire purchase agreements, was a member of the committee to submit a minority report. The metropolitan members and the chairman have not come into contact very much with the troubles that have arisen over hire-purchase agreements.

Hon. H. Seddon: I suppose you know one of the metropolitan members has been a farmer?

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: Possibly, but I mean at the present time. The trouble has been much greater during the last year or two than it was a few years ago. I am particularly pleased that the one member who represents wheat areas brought in a minority report. If a vote were taken to decide whether the Bill should be made retrospective, I am convinced there would be an overwhelming majority in favour of that. I understand that in another place when the Bill was being discussed a good deal was said on Clause 9, and the latter part of the clause was struck out in the belief that by so amending it the Bill would have

retrospective effect. Unfortunately afterwards it was found that that would not be so. There was not even a division on that amendment, and that showed that members in another place were not against the retrospective proposals. I am satisfied that if we can make the Bill apply retrospectively we shall again have it said, "Thank God we have a Legislative Council," for it will certainly be doing the right thing. I have tried to give reasons why the Bill should be retrospective, and I earnestly appeal to members, for the sake of those people on the land who have assisted to bring Western Australia out of a bad position time after time and who will do so again, to take this into consideration and vote to make the Bill retrospective. The Leader of the House, speaking on the second reading, used words showing clearly what he thought of the position in the country in respect of hire-purchase agreements. He said—

While I agree that there are many reputable firms handling the hire-purchase class of business, I know as a country member that there are some sleek individuals in the trade and that some of them, possessed of the beady eye of vultures, have watched, and are watching the dying struggles of farmers for the favourable moment to swoop down on machinery, on which in many instances the men on the land have paid hundreds of pounds. Usually in legislation of this kind principles are dealt with, and in this instance if hire-purchase agreements are harsh, or if they are not equitable it is the duty of the Government to introduce amending legislation to remedy the injustices.

What is the good of remedying future injustices? Why not go the whole hog and remedy the troubles of the past?

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: How far back?

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: To cover all existing agreements.

Hon. J. Nicholson: According to the Bill, all existing agreements will be protected.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: Is that so? Will the people having agreements at present be protected? If so I have read the Bill wrongly, and I am glad to hear Mr. Nicholson say that this is really retrospective.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I was referring to the amendments suggested by the select committee.

Hon. G. A. KEMPTON: They make the Bill retrospective to the time when it was introduced in another place. What is the good of that? Mr. Wittenoom thinks the machinery men hold the thick end of the

stick, and he declared there were instances when machinery had been repossessed although almost all the money had been paid. Mr. Drew gave particulars of harsh dealing. He said many dealers were fair and just, but that we required to make provision for those who were not fair and just. That is just it; we require to make provision for those machinery merchants who have not been fair and just, and to see if we cannot secure a fair deal for the men struggling on the land and being pressed by some very harsh hire-purchase agreements.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.20]: I desire to offer a few remarks on the motion for the adoption of this report. When the Bill was in the second reading stage I was precluded from addressing myself to it, and I will again be precluded from doing so when the Bill is in Committee. When the Bill went to the select committee I could find but little fault with it, other than the need for a retrospective clause. The Bill is of considerable importance to you, Sir, and to me and Mr. Williams, for it will be greatly felt in the province we represent. The demand for legislation to control hire-purchase agreements is not new. I recall about seven soldier conferences at which the agricultural section insisted upon motions for legislation in this direction. Also innumerable Primary Producers' Association conferences have moved in the same way. It can truthfully be said that the greatest pressure for this legislation has come from the farming community, just as the great need for it applies to the farming community. All I propose to do in the course of any remarks is to direct the attention of the House to certain amendments recommended by the select committee, amendments which, if they are not carefully watched when the Bill is in Committee, will totally destroy the effect of the measure. I am not going to find any fault with the select committee; it did its work, probably in its own opinion in the best possible manner. But what I want to find fault with is that after the principles, other than the retrospective clause set forth in the Bill, had been agreed to on the second reading, the select committee proceeded to destroy fundamentals. The first recommendation of that committee is to enlarge the scope of the Bill in respect of the definition of chattels, by including "chattel personal."

Hon. H. Stewart: It would have been better curtailed.

Hon. J. CORNELL: That is so. Under this proposed amendment, if any person were to go to a dentist and get a set of artificial teeth on hire-purchase, the teeth would become a chattel personal, capable of being repossessed. I agree with Mr. Stewart that the definition should have been curtailed. Practically the whole of the pressure for this legislation has come from the agricultural community; that is where the relief was asked for.

Hon. H. Stewart: In my opinion this has been used for an improper purpose.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I feel sure the Government never intended that the scope of the Bill should be extended, or at all events not to the degree that the proposed amendment of the definition of "chattel" will accomplish. If the recommendation of the select committee is agreed to, there will be no need for a definition of "motor vehicle" or of "vehicle."

Hon. J. Nicholson: The whole of those words are struck out. "Motor vehicle" does not stand at all. Do not say the select committee have failed to do a thing which actually they have done.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I hope the whole of the words will not be struck out, that the only amendment agreed to will be the Minister's amendment. As the Bill went to the select committee, this was incumbent upon any vendor who seized a chattel: the vendor had to furnish an account of the debt owing by the purchaser, and it was mandatory that in that account he should place a value on the chattel repossessed. Now the select committee recommend that the vendor may place a value on the chattel repossessed. They propose to make it merely permissive. The fundamental of the Bill was that where a chattel was repossessed the vendor had to place some value on it, so that there would be a starting point where negotiations could be entered into with the magistrate sitting in the local court to arrive at some value. If the select committee's recommendation be agreed to, who is going to break the ice and say the repossessed chattel is worth so much, the vendor or the purchaser? The other fundamental which it is proposed to alter is this: the Bill when it went to the select committee not only applied in cases of repossession, but gave any purchaser leave to go to a local court in respect of any

hire-purchase agreement when he thought the interest directly or indirectly charged was excessive, or in respect of the amount of expenses, or if he thought the transactions were harsh. In those circumstances he could have the agreement reviewed in a local court. That is absolutely essential when one knows the vagaries and the kindheartedness of the average cocky farmer.

Hon. J. Nicholson. That clause has not been struck out.

Hon. J. CORNELL: It is to be destroyed.

Hon. J. Nicholson: In what way?

Hon. J. CORNELL: If the select committee's recommendation in regard to Clause 6 is agreed to, all that the clause will do will be to apply in cases of repossession. I ask Mr. Seddon to controvert what I have said, if he can. The clause, as it went to the select committee read as follows:—

In cases of proceedings taken under the last preceding section or taken in any court in respect of any matter arising out of a hire-purchase agreement or for the purpose of obtaining relief under this section—

The select committee ask that all words after "last preceding section" be struck out. If that does not restrict the purpose of the clause to repossessing, I cannot interpret anything that I read. It is destroying the usefulness of the Bill. The recommendation amounts simply to confining the scope of Clause 3 to making a representative responsible for any fairy tale that may be told, or it applies only where a chattel has been repossessed.

Hon. G. W. Miles: It ought to protect the vendor, not the purchaser.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The Bill, when it went to the select committee, meant that if some unscrupulous agent did put anything over an unsophisticated cocky the cocky could get some relief by asking a magistrate for it. But according to the recommendations of the select committee, he will not get that relief. With regard to the recommendations as to auction sales as a basis of valuation, the Bill as it stands is perfectly satisfactory. If the machinery can be made satisfactory for assessing the lump sum for workers' compensation, we can safely say that the same machinery is competent to arrive at the value of a repossessed chattel. I hope Sir Charles Nathan does not subscribe to this particular recommendation.

Hon. Sir Charles Nathan: I was not a member of the committee.

Hon. J. CORNELL: He would not subscribe to it because, in his second reading speech, he clearly said it was hardly capable of consummation. Then I come to the question of retrospective effect. It is beyond doubt that when the Bill was passed in another place that Chamber considered it was retrospective in effect. It was only due to an error of judgment or faulty draftsmanship that the measure did not reach us with a retrospective clause in it. I know the sacredness of contracts. The select committee are prepared in their recommendations to go some of the way, namely, to recommend that any agreement entered into after the introduction of this measure shall have effect as set out in the Bill. In a way the committee are driving the thin edge of the wedge into the principle of the non-violation of contracts. If they are prepared to go some of the way, I have very little doubt that members in Committee will be prepared to go the rest of the way. It is generally understood that when the Bill becomes law there will probably be many more different forms of hire-purchase agreements than exist to-day. In the agricultural districts there is much more need for legislation to apply to agreements that are, than to agreements that are likely to be. It has been urged in some quarters that a farmer can get partial relief retrospectively under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. It was never contemplated by the Government that that Act should be used as a medium in respect to hire-purchase agreements. It was only brought down so that some machinery might exist for relief in very necessitous cases. I hope, when the Bill is in Committee, that some of the fundamental changes recommended by the select committee will not be agreed to, but I admit that other changes will be acceptable.

Hon. H. SEDDON: I move—

That the debate be adjourned.

The Minister for Country Water Supplies: Is it not possible for members to get on with the Committee stage of this Bill? I can see no necessity for the adjournment of the debate.

Hon. H. SEDDON: Certain criticisms of the select committee's report have been offered by members, and it is only just that members of that committee should be given an opportunity to reply to those criticisms.

Hon. J. Cornell: All I said can be answered in Committee.

Motion put and passed.

BILL—DEBT CONVERSION AGREEMENT.

Message from the Assembly received and read notifying that it had agreed to the amendments made by the Council.

MOTION—BUDGET ECONOMIES.

Debate resumed from the 16th July on the following motion by Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom:—

That in the opinion of this House steps should be taken to suggest to the Treasurer economies that may be made to assist in balancing the Budget for 1931-32.

HON. H. STEWART (South-East) [5.36]: One would have concluded from the speeches that have been made during this debate that the motion was worded in a very different form from what appears on the Notice Paper. When the motion was last spoken to, however, it was treated more along the lines that one would have expected it to be treated. It is certainly one which gives members an opportunity to make suggestions for economies. It is regrettable that the motion has been looked upon as condemnatory of the present expenditure on secondary and higher education. During 1917-18, when the Great War was raging, the Government of the day had a very anxious time. Many economies were introduced and steps taken to reduce expenditure within the various departments. One was able to see the effect of the economies in those days, but there has been no evidence of the same sort of thing within the last 12 months. Probably some of those economies could be effected if the Government were to appoint a committee of Cabinet, or a committee drawn from Parliament, or some other committee—outside of the service—to make suggestions for increasing the revenue, for savings in the cost of administration, and for reductions in privileges. Practically ever since I became a member of this Chamber I have felt that none of its effectiveness would be lost if the number of members were reduced from 30 to 20, and retirements were made every three years instead of two years, as is now the practice in South Aus-

tralia. Constitutionally and administratively, I can see no objection to such a course. I would even be prepared to bring down an amendment of the Constitution providing for this step to be taken. The services of the other 10 members would not be lost to the State. In the past members who have left the Chamber have readily found seats in another place, where their merits and qualifications have been fully recognised, sometimes to the extent of their being given Cabinet rank.

Hon. W. J. Mann: What about reducing the number of members in another place?

Hon. H. STEWART: I do not think the effectiveness of Parliament would be sacrificed if the number of metropolitan members were reduced by 50 per cent., the other seats to be left untouched. The members I refer to are not called upon to leave their homes for several days in every week. Their constituents do not bother them with work to the same extent as is the case with country members who have to attend not to matters that are small and trivial but to matters that are of public import. In the country districts, because of their comparative isolation, the communities concerned cannot deal so effectively with these matters as can their representatives in Parliament. The people who are developing this State have not at their doors the facilities enjoyed by dwellers in the metropolitan and suburban areas. An economy could well be effected in the matter of present parliamentary allowances. I realise the value of all sections of the community being represented in Parliament, but I do think that the obligations imposed upon individual representatives, both as to the time they have to sacrifice and the expense they have to incur, should be taken into consideration when weighing the matter. In these times it would be equitable for the remuneration and the allowances paid to parliamentary representatives, both Federal and State, to be reviewed. Due consideration should, however, be given to the extra expense and interference with business that occur in connection with members representing constituents outside the thickly populated centres. To illustrate my remarks I might suggest an alteration of the basis of allowances to members of Parliament. A certain amount might be fixed for all members in the metropolitan and suburban areas. It would be based on the fact that the repre-

sentation of a province or a district in Parliament requires a good deal of work preliminary to actual attendance in the House. It involves the study of legislation, the looking up of authorities, and so forth. These things absorb more time than the hours actually passed in the Chamber, if a member attends to his duties properly. The aspect is not one recognised by the general public at all. People say that we come here for so many days a week and get so much by way of annual remuneration. However, men of sound judgment always recognise that brains must be paid for. A member may not speak much in the House, but nevertheless his services even as a silent legislator may be extremely valuable by reason of his experience of life and his wide knowledge gained by observation and reading. I suggest that the further a member's home is from the capital city, the greater is the sacrifice demanded of him relatively to his business and domestic arrangements, and the greater the additional expense involved in his being here. Generally speaking, a member whose business interests are in the metropolitan or suburban area can attend to Parliamentary duties without those interests being interfered with greatly. On the other hand, a member who has to leave his centre on, say, Monday, returning on Friday, or perhaps Saturday, finds his efforts largely vitiated as regards the management of his private business.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Should not that be so?

Hon. H. STEWART: Probably the point is one on which I would join issue with the hon. member interjecting. It is the experience a man gets in administering a business that makes him a valuable member of Parliament. I disagree with the view that there is quite enough work to do in Parliament to occupy the whole time of a member. A wise man, unless in a position of pecuniary independence, does well, while representing the people in Parliament, to try to hold together the strings of his business. This enables him to retain his independence relatively to his constituency, and enables him to cast his vote regardless of whether his electors will again return him. I do not believe in professional politicians, or in men making Parliamentary representation their source of income. A certain number of Ministers

being necessary to carry on the government of the country, I consider that they should receive reasonable if not generous remuneration, because while they are Ministers their private businesses, which in my opinion should be maintained, must receive a serious set-back, owing to the amount of time a Minister has to devote to the work of the country. If the remuneration of a member representing a metropolitan or suburban electorate is fixed at, for the sake of argument, £200 a year or £1,000 a year, a member representing a constituency outside that area should be allowed something extra, perhaps 50 per cent. additional. Further, a member who has to travel a long distance to attend to his Parliamentary duties should receive a travelling allowance. In that way he can be placed on a level with members residing within an hour or two of the seat of government. I consider it necessary that there should be remuneration for members of Parliament, because every section of the community ought to be represented in the Legislature. I now turn to certain activities of Government departments. The Mines Department through their officials do much work which in my opinion they should absolutely taboo. I hold that the work in question should be retained by private enterprise. Yampi Sound, for instance, was brought to the fore by a report of the State Mining Engineer. I look upon the Mines Department and the Geological Survey branch as existing for the purpose of safeguarding the interests of the State, and for the purpose of informing the Government of mineral resources that are available. It is not for private enterprise to take up a lease after the mineral has been exposed and ask for a Government grant to develop it. Private enterprise should itself develop the lease. The practice has been to rush to the Government for a report by the State Mining Engineer, and to take that report to London for flotation purposes. What hope have private mining engineers who reside in the Commonwealth of establishing themselves in business if the Government trench on such activities? Much the same thing happened in connection with the Horse-shoe manganese mine. The company owning the mine were given a valuable concession, and on top of that they received an advance of £50,000 towards the purchase of rails for the construction of the private line needed to develop the mine. The flotation

of the company was rendered possible by the concession which was granted, and by the report of the State Mining Engineer. In other States that kind of thing is not done at all, or not to anything like the same extent as here. The field of endeavour is left open for private enterprise. People interested in the flotation of mining companies elsewhere engage the services of private mining engineers who enjoy public confidence. It has been stated that many of our trained mining men go abroad. The reason is that they are appreciated abroad. Avenues are closed to them here, because Government officials supply the necessary information free of charge. The same thing occurred in connection with Wilga coalfield and the Braeside lead mine. This mine was supposed to be a wonderful thing, and a pound for pound subsidy was granted to test it in the initial stages; but the mine, which is situated near Meekatharra or Marble Bar, proved a disappointment. If the present practice of furnishing reports gratis were abolished, probably the Mines Department and the Geological Survey branch could do with fewer officers. This would indirectly secure economy, while leaving the field open for men outside the Government service to earn their livelihood. Again, similar practices obtain in the Public Works Department in connection with electrical and other engineering schemes. In Victoria private engineers are called upon to advise local governing bodies regarding electrical and water supply matters. Here those bodies invariably obtain technical advice from public works officers, even where the Government are not carrying out the work. The practice has grown up, and it is not to be attributed solely to either Nationalist or Labour Governments. Although it has become part of the policy of the State, Western Australia has developed to such an extent that the days of swaddling clothes are past, and it is not now necessary to extend financial assistance in order to ascertain the resources of the State as it was in the early days.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: What about State batteries?

Hon. H. STEWART: I agree that good work has been effected by State batteries in the past, but the fact remains that so long as the Government are prepared to carry out certain tasks, private individuals will rest content and will not undertake similar work themselves. I have an extensive

knowledge of the mining industry throughout the State and it is astonishing to think that irrespective of whether the head office of a company is in Melbourne or in Perth, there are few such companies that are above going to the Government to secure an advance under the Mining Development Act.

Hon. V. Hamersley: I should think Wiluna comes under that heading too.

Hon. H. STEWART: It is desirable that those who are receiving assistance at present owing to unemployment should be afforded an opportunity to engage in work in return for whatever relief payment they may receive. Any properly constituted man or woman would feel the happier if he or she felt they were doing something in return for what they were given. Certainly the position in that regard is better in this State than elsewhere.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: But the Arbitration Court has stopped that sort of thing.

Hon. H. STEWART: Not altogether, because in some country districts men who receive assistance from local committees are working in return for what they receive. The steps taken by the Government recently under which the employment of single men on farms was encouraged should prove of advantage to those men. While by that means farmers, who were not in a position otherwise to do work that was in the interests of the State, were able to advance their operations, I certainly think provision should be made to prevent those well able to pay adequately for such work from taking undue advantage of such a scheme. That position is being watched closely by local committees.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: The Arbitration Court is responsible for the whole of the unemployment to-day.

Hon. H. STEWART: I agree with that interjection. I think the Government would be well advised if, in their endeavours to find work for the unemployed, they were to offer a concession to a company or syndicate prepared to construct a new causeway and to allow those responsible for undertaking the work to collect tolls over a given period.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That would be jolly good work.

Hon. H. STEWART: Work of that description was undertaken by a peer at Brighton in England. In a comparatively

short period, sufficient had been collected by means of tolls to recoup the peer for the expenditure he had incurred, together with interest, and then the bridge was handed over to the local authorities free of cost. At Middle Harbour, Sydney, a similar arrangement was arrived at, and it was estimated that on the basis of certain tolls, the bridge would be paid for in a given period. When about half that time had elapsed, sufficient had been collected to defray all expenditure and no further toll charges were levied.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: Was not that bridge erected by a local authority?

Hon. H. STEWART: I believe so. I also believe that the local authorities in this city are pretty stodgy and are not prepared to move like other people.

Hon. V. Hamersley: Would you propose to build the Causeway under day labour conditions?

Hon. H. STEWART: I am not going to build it at all. I am merely suggesting to the Government that they should be prepared to arrive at such an arrangement, in which event I believe no difficulty would be experienced in finding a company prepared to carry out the work under the conditions I have indicated. Even in these times I do not think any difficulty would be experienced in raising the necessary money. There is another way in which the unemployed could be given useful work. For many years past requests have been made in country districts for stock yards and trucking facilities at railway sidings. I do not think the Forests Department would be too autocratic, and therefore I am convinced that, in order to avoid the expense involved in purchasing materials from the State or private timber mills, a number of the unemployed, under proper supervision, should be allowed to cut bush timber and erect the stock yards and other facilities required in the country areas. When the work was completed, it could be handed over to the Railway Department. By that means many facilities that are required but have not been authorised owing to the estimated cost of the undertakings, could be provided and work made available for those who are in need of it at present. Recently I referred to the local authorities in the metropolitan area—

Hon. G. W. Miles: As being stodgy.

Hon. H. STEWART: I used that term. Various shades of political opinion have

been advocating the handing over of the metropolitan sewerage and other operations to a metropolitan board of works. When Premier, Mr. Collier announced his desire to move in that direction, an attitude that was totally different from that displayed by a Labour Government in power when the Perth trams were purchased. When times were more prosperous, the local authorities displayed a lack of enterprise in that they did not seek to take over various spheres of activities that could be conducted by them. Had they done so, they could probably have shown that the work could be carried out with greater satisfaction to the ratepayers than is apparent under Government control.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Was not a mistake made when the trams were taken over?

Hon. H. STEWART: Certainly. I suggest the establishment of a board of works to take over various activities of that description, quite apart from political control. Sir William Lathlain, with his experience of civic life in Melbourne, will remember the work of E. G. Fitzgibbon, secretary, and that of the first chairman of the Metropolitan Board of Works in Melbourne, and the negotiations that had to be undertaken there. They took time before Brighton, Sandringham and other outside suburbs could be induced to participate. Perhaps we can look to the present Lord Mayor of Perth to stir up his colleagues and create interest among local governing bodies with a view to achieving results that will be beneficial not only to the people of the metropolitan area, but to the taxpayers as well. Then again, such a body as I have in mind should control the electricity supply from the power station. If such a board of works were established, it would make for continuity of policy unaffected by Ministerial changes or the advent or departure of political parties. It would remove such operations from the sphere of political influence altogether, and nothing but good could result from such a move. Greater economy and efficiency could be exercised, and the financial operations could be carried out on a more satisfactory basis.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. H. STEWART: I have been informed that water rate notices are sent out

by 25 different local authorities, and that a Government officer goes around and reads all the meters. If that is so, there would appear to be room for greater co-ordination and efficiency to reduce the overlapping. If my information is correct, it should be feasible for one man to read the electricity and water meters.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: One is a monthly and the other is a six-monthly or yearly reading.

Hon. H. STEWART: At any rate all such work could be carried out by other than a Government body. In reply to an interjection earlier in the evening, I referred to State batteries, and I do not wish my remark to be misinterpreted. The present is not the time to refuse assistance to prospectors who have ore ready for treatment. A recent trip through a large portion of the goldfields brought home clearly to me that anything the Government can do to encourage men to go out prospecting should be done, and the Government should arrange for the treatment of the ore. Work is being done on many fields, bodies of payable ore are being located, and the ore is being broken. This will considerably increase the gold yield, but apart from that beneficial effect, it is keeping in employment men who would otherwise be out of work. The mere fact of a man having had no previous experience of prospecting does not debar him from engaging in that work, provided he receives a little instruction. Not always does the most experienced man reap the greatest rewards. From time to time new elms have stumbled on satisfactory finds. My attitude to education harmonises with that enunciated by the Minister for Education, Mr. Keenan, who said his great concern was to ensure a thorough primary education to all the children in the State.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That is being provided.

Hon. H. STEWART: But it is not always possible to achieve it. I have three letters from settlers complaining of the lack of adequate facilities. One of them points out that there is more than the statutory number of children for a school, and yet the district is still without facilities for primary education.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Then what is being done with the money?

Hon. H. STEWART: One locality is Boddington. The ex-Minister for Educa-

tion would probably remember the case. The school has about 50 pupils, but the accommodation was insufficient a couple of years ago. I believe the air space is less than would be prescribed for a factory, and if the finances permitted, additional accommodation should be provided for health reasons alone. The settlers are aggrieved at the lack of accommodation. The State has a deficit of about £1,500,000, and Sir Edward Wittenoom asked whether we could afford to spend the sum we are spending on secondary and higher education and on the University. I have had considerable experience of the education system, and I know fairly well what is being provided elsewhere in the way of University facilities. The facilities provided here have been greatly widened year by year, particularly lately, and it is no reflection on any one having a full understanding of the position to say that at a time of great financial difficulty, full investigation should be made and reductions effected in University and high school expenditure, without interfering with the system or crippling the future of the pupils at present in attendance. Other States have had to take similar action in times past. Curtailments could be made without sacrificing efficiency. It is difficult to provide for all requirements in the way of primary education, and it is necessary that any legitimate curtailment that can be made in the cost of higher education should be made. What is wanted in connection with secondary education is equality of opportunity for the best brains in the community. It is not altogether desirable, particularly in hard times, that higher education should be made easy of accomplishment.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: What I want to know is where are you going to get all the money from.

Hon. H. STEWART: The hon. gentleman's remark is irrelevant and I do not think he would have made it if he had been in his seat all the time. On the subject of education what I wish to emphasise is that we cannot over-estimate the value of research. The discovery and the training of one bright intellect might prove of inestimable value to the nation or to mankind as a whole. This is what is desirable from the national point of view rather than making available facilities to all who desire mental enlightenment on certain lines.

Apart from the question of education, I should like to offer some suggestions which, if acted upon, might have the effect of increasing the revenue of the State. The motion, as it is framed, will permit me, I think, to bring them forward. It should be possible to raise revenue in connection with the issue of scrip certificates. In New South Wales a charge of 1d. is made for every hundred shares issued. In Western Australia the charge is 1d. for every certificate, and there is no limit to the number of shares. I suggest that we make a charge of 1d. for every 50 shares issued. I recollect that in 1917 a certain Act was overridden by the discovery on the part of a member of the legal profession that an individual was not a company. With the suggested charge the State would receive a considerable amount by way of stamp duty in the event of a new goldfield being discovered. That is a matter that should receive attention also. Another proposal is that the fees of police court summonses should be increased. I understand the charge is 2s. 6d. in Victoria and something more than 1s. in South Australia. The charge might easily be increased to 2s. 6d. in Western Australia. I would also propose a tax in connection with restaurants.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: The motion is one to suggest economies, not to raise revenue.

Hon. H. STEWART: I am aware of that, but it is so framed that members may be allowed to offer suggestions. Some of my suggestions for raising revenue may be just as repugnant to hon. members as are Sir Edward Wittenoom's proposals for economies, but every extra thousand pounds that the Government can raise without penalising industry should be worth having, and if the raising of revenue is uniformly distributed and does not seriously affect the community, there is no harm in imposing taxation.

Hon. E. H. Harris: You are not suggesting a tax on meals?

Hon. H. STEWART: Yes; it is in operation in European countries.

Hon. J. Cornell: What about a tax on bachelors?

Hon. H. STEWART: It would be a reasonable and proper tax, and in connection with matrimony I would advocate a medical certificate of fitness, while in the case of the unfit and mentally deficient I

would urge sterilisation. Another source of revenue would be the stamping of all posters, wherever they might be exhibited. There would be no cost of administration there. It is in operation on the Continent and no one thinks anything about it. No matter where the sign may be put, it has to carry a stamp; otherwise the law is broken. Another proposal is in connection with horse-racing. One hon. member has suggested the legalising of starting-price bookmakers. My proposal is that each nomination, which would be in writing, should carry a stamp of the value of half-a-crown and that every acceptance should carry a fee of 1s. This would probably bring in a few thousand pounds annually. Another matter is the desirability of compelling every company to have a share register in Western Australia and to provide that local shareholders' names should appear on that register, at a charge of 5s. for every £25 worth of shares being imposed. Then, in the case of death duties on shares in this State the Government would be able to collect a fair amount of revenue. I suppose Sir Edward will reply to the speeches that have been made and then withdraw the motion. It has given us the opportunity to make suggestions and that opportunity has been fully availed of. When conditions were normal the administration of the State was in the hands of the same number of Ministers as we have to-day. The business of this House has been carried on for a good many years by one Minister, and I contend there is no excuse for seven others being retained in another place. I have nothing further to add at the present time except to support the motion.

HON. E. H. HARRIS (North-East) [7.55]: The motion moved by Sir Edward Wittenoom has given us the opportunity to make suggestions in the direction of effecting economies. It would have been a good idea if it had been possible to amalgamate the motion with that submitted by Mr. Holmes. Both are very much alike. It might have been wise for every member of the Legislature—and there are 80—to have offered suggestions at a stated period. The opportunity would then have presented itself for criticism of the proposals. The Government would have been able to sort out some that they might have considered useful. Furthermore, they might invite the public through the columns of the Press to

make suggestions, and those suggestions could be investigated. So, arising out of the whole lot, something might be gathered that would be worthy of consideration.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is a glorified King O'Malley idea.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The suggestions made by Sir Edward Wittenoom number five, but his remarks were confined largely to the suspension of all expenditure on State schools and grants to the University.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Not on the State schools, but on higher education.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: It is not my intention to dwell on that, more than to say as regards the folk who attend the University that a number of them could reasonably be asked to pay. Those who are not in a position to pay should not be altogether debarred from attending. In regard to the old age pension and the maternity bonus and a few other things, it is not desired that every person should get them, but I certainly think that those not in a position to maintain themselves are entitled to some consideration.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Hear, hear!

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Sir Edward suggested the abolition of the Arbitration Court and said his object was to reduce the burden on industry through the wage earners. I think the court is functioning very well; that is to say, it is doing its work and giving its judgments in accordance with the Act. If Sir Edward had looked at the Act, he might have noticed that Section 121 defines the basic wage as a sum sufficient to enable the average worker to whom it applies to live in reasonable comfort, having regard to any domestic obligations to which such average worker would be ordinarily subject. Those are the terms under which the Act is administered. If Sir Edward wants to relieve industry of the burden of wages, what he should do is to amend the Arbitration Act to provide that the court shall prescribe no greater wage than the industry is capable of paying. It has been said that industries have closed down simply because they cannot pay the prescribed wages. That is what happens to-day, and I suggest to Sir Edward that the way out would be to provide that the court shall declare a wage that the industry is capable of paying.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Unfortunately I am not the Premier.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The court has three members. I repeat what I said at the time of the passing of the Act in 1925, that if we had a President sitting alone and, when desired, assessors sitting with him, it would result in an economy. Section 69 of the Act reads as follows:—

The court shall have power in any dispute or other matters before it—

Then we get, under Subsection 10—

To direct that two experts (one nominated by the party or the majority of parties on the one side and the other by the party or the majority of the parties on the other), shall sit with the court as assessors on the hearing of any dispute or other matter to aid the members of the court with their counsel.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: What saving would that make?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The salaries of two members of the court, each £750 per annum. The employers' representative and the workers' representative on the court receive that salary, and I suggest that if their services were dispensed with, every organisation that went into court would be allowed to have assessors of their own selection. Those assessors who sat with the court would be fully acquainted with the trade the subject of the court's inquiries instead of, as at present, there being merely a representative of each side who, perhaps, are only more or less acquainted with the industry in question.

Hon. W. H. Kitson: But the assessors would have to be paid.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Even so, they could be paid a fee for their services, and so a small economy might be effected.

Hon. J. Cornell: Is there any necessity for the court at all, now that the Government Statistician lays down the basic wage?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am sure that the rule of thumb is an improvement on the old method, as anyone can tell from year to year what the basic wage is going to be. But we still have it provided by statute that there shall be an annual inquiry at which the representatives of both sides are remunerated by the Government in order that each side might be able to submit its case.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: But they cannot select their own umpire. They have a lawyer for an umpire.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Which I think is very wise. The suggestion was made that we should have as president of the court someone with the qualifications of a judge of the Supreme Court, and this House insisted that he should be appointed for life. Mr. Stewart has suggested that the number of legislators might be reduced. I interjected at the moment that he had stolen my thunder. I suggest there might be fewer than eight Ministers. We could dispense with one, and probably two. If we could secure a reduction of two, it might be an inducement for the remaining Ministers to dispense with some of the State trading concerns, which take up a good deal of their time. Also I should like to see instituted what has been suggested by Governments before to-day, namely, a metropolitan board of works. That would relieve the Government of quite a lot of work they are now called upon to handle and, as was suggested by Mr. Stewart, there would be continuity of policy and a permanent head, and the board would be free from political control, which would be in the interests of the organisation itself and the State generally. I would support any proposal to reduce the existing eight Ministers to, say, seven, and I would reduce the number of members of this Council from 30 to 20, giving each province two representatives. That might be awkward for country members if they had to attend all the agricultural shows. As it is, having three members for each province, it can be arranged that two be present in the House while the third is away. The provinces might remain as they are, each having two representatives instead of three. As for the Assembly, I suggest that 35 would be a convenient number of members for that House. That would mean a slightly higher proportion of reduction in that Chamber than in this one: but since our population is not increasing rapidly and is not likely to do so for some time, the people could be adequately represented by 35 members.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Why not abolish the Assembly and have only the Council?

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I suggest that we might do something in regard to the electoral rolls. We have had here some electoral Bills which I have opposed because the boundaries given were not co-terminous, and with the regulations governing the Commonwealth Electoral Act it was not

possible to fit in the boundaries of the State with those of the Commonwealth. I suggest, not that the Commonwealth should take over the rolls of the State as has been suggested in a Bill, but that the State might more economically get a consideration from the Federal Government and look after the Commonwealth roll for them. I have taken the trouble to turn up the cost of the electoral offices, both Commonwealth and State. The Commonwealth "Year Book" for 1922 shows that the salaries of officers and staff of the Commonwealth for 1920-21 aggregated £62,538, and for the State of Western Australia £2,971. And under the heading of "other expenses" the Commonwealth cost was £37,120 and that of Western Australia £1,314, making a total of Commonwealth £99,658, Western Australia £4,285. Then I have taken the period of the last issue of the "Year Book," 1930. There we find that for the year 1929-30 the Commonwealth expenditure on the salaries of officers and staff was £80,987, while the Western Australian expenditure was £2,637. "Other expenses" for the Commonwealth had increased to £165,282, while for Western Australia they had decreased to £1,119, making a total of Commonwealth £246,260, Western Australia £3,836. My object in quoting these figures is to emphasise the very large increase of expenditure by the Commonwealth Government in the conduct of the rolls during the last ten years. To make the comparison clear, I wish to show that the cost to the Commonwealth Government ten years ago was £99,658, whereas last year it amounted to £246,260.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: And for practically the same number of people, collectively.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: Yes. If the Commonwealth had taken over the control of the State rolls, as was suggested in a measure we had before us but which was defeated, the Commonwealth officer would have received his salary plus an amount for looking after Western Australia's rolls. It cost the Western Australian Government in 1920-21 £4,285 to look after the electoral rolls, whilst for 1929-30 it cost £3,836. The Commonwealth, during the period, more than doubled their expenditure, whilst the State reduced theirs to the extent of roughly £400. I suggest that the State could more conveniently look after the Federal rolls than the Commonwealth could look after the State rolls. Even if the Commonwealth

Government took control of the State rolls, the State would still have to maintain certain services, even in a skeleton form. First we have the Legislative Council rolls; then we have the licensing districts. All the inquiries and checking off of rolls and names of persons signing objections that are sent to the Licensing Bench have to be dealt with by that office. Then we have from time to time the shop poll referendum which is another service conducted by that department, and one which it would be necessary to maintain. It will be possible to effect a saving both to the Commonwealth and the State by the means I suggest, and the work could with advantage be done by the State. There is another direction in which in the interests of efficiency and co-ordination of departments something might be done. Western Australia could be divided into small squares like a draught board for departmental use. There is considerable overlapping in various Government departments, which are more or less water-tight compartments. I will enumerate a number of departments, each of which prepares plans. Draftsmen map out a plan to which each department works. I will refer first of all to the Province electoral districts and the Assembly electoral districts. The boundaries are not co-terminous. The Federal people have other districts which are not co-terminous and they have a plan prepared. Then we have our magisterial districts, local court districts, municipal districts, road board districts, licensing districts, and shop poll districts. The Mines Department prepare plans, as do the Lands Department, the Forests Department and the Water Supply Department. Each and every one of those provides a separate plan which more or less overlaps the others. If the map of Western Australia were divided into small squares, any department which entered one square should take the lot. As it is now, there is a great deal of overlapping. There are 13 different departments, each having plans of its own, but if my suggestion were adopted, greater efficiency would be brought about and a material reduction effected in the cost. The Medical Department is another important branch of the service, and then we have also the Town Planning Department and the office of the Registrar General. I am not sure whether these departments prepare plans, but they have big and important districts to look after. It would

assist them if a plan was prepared whereby, if one department entered a square, it would take over the whole of it. In many cases the road board and municipal boundaries overlap, and the junctions of many districts are along zig-zag lines. A lot of time might be saved if we worked on the checker-board plan, and straightened out many of the boundaries. This would facilitate the work not only of those particular bodies, but of any person who had dealings with them.

Hon. J. Cornell: Most of the road board districts make their plans by pasting together a lot of lithos.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I suggest that a draftsman is employed by the Government to map out road board plans. Whilst he is facing off his plan, there is another officer doing practically the same work elsewhere. Co-ordination of work in this direction would save a lot of time and expense. It is a great pity we are tied to the financial wheels of the Loan Council chariot. If Western Australia could take possession of the gold it produces, in other words commandeer all that we produce, and the Premier were to send it to the Westminster Bank, with the aid of our wheat and our wool we would soon be able to balance our Budget. Unfortunately, however, the Commonwealth Government have commandeered all our gold.

Hon. J. M. Macfarlane: The secessionists say that.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I am not sure of the legal aspect of the situation, or whether the State could in fact commandeer its own gold. We produce about 75 per cent. of the gold of Australia. If it came to a question of the rights of this State and those of the Commonwealth to commandeer the gold, I think the Commonwealth would be seriously embarrassed. They would have to send over an army to take possession of it, although their army has practically been disbanded.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: You would make a good corporal in the new army.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: I might be a very successful one if I had the opportunity. It has been suggested that some of the States are not doing what the Commonwealth desire in order to balance their Budgets. We would very promptly balance our Budget if we could commandeer all our own gold that we are now allowing the Commonwealth Government to take.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: That is what we want to do, balance our Budgets.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The Leader of the House may be able to tell us whether we can ignore the proclamation.

Hon. Sir William Lathlain: You would not get the gold bonus then.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: It may yet be that the Act which grants that bonus may never be proclaimed. The Act has actually been passed, but has yet to be proclaimed. The Commonwealth Government have announced their inability to pay because of their lack of financial resources, and I suggest that these will be worse in 1932 than they are now. We may find that the bonus will never be proclaimed.

Hon. J. Nicholson: It will be a deferred proclamation.

Hon. E. H. HARRIS: The mining companies would then have to rely upon the gold premium. I think they will be safe in doing that for many a long day. At any rate, it will give a satisfactory stimulus to the industry in place of a gold bonus. We are indebted to Sir Edward Wittenoom for giving us this opportunity to make suggestions, and I have much pleasure in supporting his motion.

HON C. H. WITTENOOM (South-East [8.25]): The motion suggests certain economies that will assist the Treasurer to balance his Budget. It is a very good motion, and I intend to support it. It has come down at a very opportune moment. I am inclined to think the motion has been dealt with as if it were one to cause us to make up our minds whether we should go on with higher education or not. Actually it was intended as a means of obtaining expressions of opinion from members as to the best manner in which economies could be effected in the matter of education with the least harm to the community, as well as in other directions. Economies could be effected in the cost of the University. I maintain it should not be closed, and I also maintain that fees should not be charged in all cases. A large sum of money has been spent on the institution, and great benefits have accrued to it by reason of the Hackett bequest. It would be unthinkable that it should be closed. It has taken years for its curriculum to be perfected, and to-day it stands in a place of pride amongst the Australian Universities. Those students who

can afford to pay fees should not be admitted free. I cannot see why the sons and daughters of wealthy people should have these benefits free, any more than wealthy people should receive the maternity bonus of £5. That bonus has now been done away with where certain incomes are concerned, and the same principle should be applied to the children of wealthy people attending the University. If a student, wealthy or otherwise, wins a scholarship, he is entitled to the privilege he obtains thereby. We have been informed through the Press that a number of students attending the University do so in their own motor cars. I believe there has been a reply by a professor to the effect that only a very small number of students turn up in motor cars. Which ever way they turn up, whether by car, by walking or by tram, scores of them must be able to pay fees.

Hon. E. H. Harris: Many of the Collie miners go to work in motor cars.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: I believe that is the case. If a student can afford a motor car, he can afford to pay fees to the University. The Government grant to the University was about £11,000, but has been reduced somewhat. It is a good deal of money. The number of students at the University is about 700, and the Government subsidy represents a huge expenditure for finishing the education of those boys and girls. Every effort should be made to reduce the existing high cost, but without impairing efficiency; and that is quite possible. Two or three Government departments have reduced their expenses materially without reducing their efficiency. The University has a magnificent pile of buildings at Crawley, and they are an ornament to the City of Perth; but no further buildings should be added at this stage. The Government are committed to pay the University in the near future about £85,000, of which amount £20,000 represents the cost of buildings put up last year or the year before. The previous Government promised the £20,000. A further sum of £65,000 is to be paid by the State for new buildings, including a laboratory. These new buildings are to take the place of the old buildings in St. George's-terrace, which have been used by the University for 15 or 20 years. If they have served the purpose so long, they could very well continue to be used until better times arrive.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: The Labour Government are to be thanked for that.

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: No. I greatly regret to say that the promise was made by this Parliament during the current session. The Labour Government are to blame for the £20,000, but not for the £65,000. Parliament after Parliament has had to put up with these unfinished and perhaps rather badly designed buildings, on the score of economy; and there is no reason why the University should not put up with a certain amount of discomfort during the next few years for the same reason. We are proud of our University, and a city like Perth should have such an institution; but economies are necessary, and I cannot help feeling that if there were co-ordination between the Government and the University, economies would result without incidental harmful effect. I have had a good deal to do with high schools, being a resident of a country town in which one exists. I would not support a suggestion for the closing of these institutions, even temporarily. We have the fine buildings, which have cost about £25,000 apiece, and a splendid organisation. If it were proposed now to start the high schools, I would say the time was not opportune; but I would be loth to see the high schools close down even for a short time, now that they exist. Being situated in country towns and in Kalgoorlie, they afford a splendid opportunity for a first-class education to the local boys and girls—an opportunity which is unrivalled elsewhere, I believe. The aim of secondary schools is to create efficient citizenship. Anyone who has had the opportunity, as I have had, or seeing the work of a district high school and the results obtained, would not like those schools to be closed. In this morning's newspaper there is a reference to the cost of the State high schools compared with the cost of the four secondary schools in Perth. A few figures are given by the writer, who declares that the cost per pupil in the State high schools is about £10 more per annum than the cost in the private secondary schools. It seems to me that the State high schools should be run a good deal more cheaply than the private secondary schools. It was stated that while a Government pupil cost approximately £38 per annum, a pupil of the private schools cost about £28. In this calculation the expenses of scholarships, interest on buildings, and free railway

passes associated with the State high schools, are not included; and therefore I cannot help thinking that if the question were gone into carefully, the cost of the State high schools could be decreased. I do not desire that the efficiency of those schools should be impaired; but I am of opinion that if the institutions were looked into it would be found that, as in the case of many Government departments, costs could be reduced without reduction of efficiency. Were I not to support the motion I would be virtually admitting that the Government have done everything possible with regard to economising. I cannot altogether pay them that compliment, but I do acknowledge that during the last 12 months they have put into practise numerous economies. Costs in the Public Works Department, for instance, have been greatly reduced. In that instance a start was made at the top instead of, as is often done, an office boy on 15s. a week being dismissed. The office of the Engineer-in-Chief ceased to exist, and his services were dispensed with.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: How do you propose to make up the million and a-half deficit?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Partly by these economies. The cost of running the Railway Department has been reduced enormously during the past 12 months, and, so far as we know, the efficiency is much the same. The mover suggested that there should be a committee of business men to run the railways. That might be a good thing; but, so far as I can see, the only person who can say whether the railways can be run more cheaply is the Commissioner himself. Information on that aspect should come from him. I hold that economies should not be brought about by such drastic measures as closing the high schools or the University, any more than closing down, say, half of Fremantle Harbour or closing some railway lines. The economies required should come to a small extent from each department. Drastic measures in the case of one or two departments would inconvenience the general public too greatly.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: How can we carry on without losing £1,500,000 a year?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: That amount can be partly saved by effecting economies in every department.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I think Sir Edward Wittenoom wants to know in what way you propose to save a million and a-half, so as to balance the Budget?

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: As regards the office of Governor, I personally would be indeed sorry to see the existing arrangement altered in any way. I hope the position will always be filled from Home, and that the arrangement adopted in the East will not be adopted here. At the same time I hope that the Government will not be in a hurry to fill the vacant Governorship. It is a good thing now to save even small amounts, and we can economise to the extent of £2,000 or £3,000 a year by leaving the position unfilled for the present. The Governor's residences at Perth and Albany are in a bad state of repair and dilapidated, and opportunity should be taken to put them in decent repair while the office of Governor is vacant. I felt inclined to refer to the vacant judgeship; however, I do not think I will do so. I quite agree with the mover that something might be done with regard to "Hansard." When we are told that the cost of "Hansard" is about 8s. per page, it is evident that some action should be taken. I also agree with the mover as regards the office of Agent General. As the mover stated, there can be no entertaining now, there are no loans to negotiate, there is no migration and no group settlement. Therefore a business man or a general agent on £1,000 a year would probably fill the position quite well, and the State would save about £2,000 per annum. I repeat, economies should be effected to some little extent in every department. Our effort should be to reduce expenditure without reducing convenience and utility.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Without annoying anybody!

Hon. C. H. WITTENOOM: Our schools are the result of the work of years. To close them down temporarily and afterwards re-open them would represent too great a detriment to education in Western Australia. The mover has been associated with the breeding of sheep and cattle practically all his life. Surely he would not suggest that during a period of depression like this, while we are all badly off and cannot sell our produce, we should stop breeding sheep and cattle. The result would be that when good times returned, it would take years to build up again the fine type of sheep or

cattle one had been breeding. The same consideration applies in the case of matters like education, the railways, and other services. I think the motion will serve an excellent purpose, and some of the suggestions we have heard this evening should prove exceedingly useful to the Treasurer in his attempt to balance the Budget.

HON. V. HAMERSLEY (East) [8.46]: In common with other hon. members, I desire to congratulate Sir Edward Wittenoom on the motion he has submitted at such an opportune time. It served to focus public opinion, as well as the attention of members of this Chamber, on important questions affecting the balancing of the Budget. His action has drawn from members of Parliament, as well as from the public generally, suggestive ideas for improving the existing situation. When Sir Edward advanced his ideas regarding the Education Vote, he reminded me of our boyhood's days when we used to take a stick and stir up the nests of sergeant ants. His remarks certainly caused much concern throughout the community and led to a ready response from a number of people who voiced a great deal of opposition or added support to Sir Edward's views. I have taken out some figures that tend to support the contentions of Sir Edward Wittenoom regarding the expenditure upon education, and I think they will be found rather interesting. In 1918, there were in Western Australia 663 schools with an average attendance of 41,971, with a cost per head of £6 15s. 7d. In 1925, there were 810 schools with an average attendance of 45,357, and a total cost per head of £10 11s. 1d. In 1930, there were 861 schools, with an average attendance of 48,587, and the cost per head, £11 9s. 10d. Those figures disclose a tremendous increase in expenditure in those few years. I remember hearing a former Leader of the House, Sir Hal Colebatch, remark upon the splendid progress made by Western Australia with her small population. He showed how well our expenditure on education compared with the experience in other parts of the world, and regarded that expenditure as an admirable accomplishment. In 1918-19 the amount spent on education, including grants to the University, the School of Mines, the Art Gallery, the Museum, Observatory, and a number of other activities grouped under a miscellaneous heading, gave a total of £421,293,

and in 1925-26 that vote had grown to £664,380, whereas in 1929-30 the figures had swollen to £791,957. The population of the State has not increased to a commensurate extent since 1918, and yet in that period the expenditure under that heading has almost doubled. To give some indication of how the expenditure on education has benefited the people as a whole, I ascertained the statistics relating to criminal offences and convictions over a corresponding period. I found that in 1918 there were 10,222 convictions; in 1925, 19,146 convictions; in 1929, 15,647 convictions.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Did those all relate to criminals?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Those convictions represent an increase of 5,500 since 1918.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Do you say that those are convictions for criminal offences?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Well, give us the New South Wales statistics, and see what they can do there.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Those statistics have a direct bearing on the question whether our education facilities are proving beneficial to the people as a whole. I realise that in good times we desired to give every encouragement to our young people to secure the best education possible. Now we have entered upon a new era and, as Sir Edward Wittenoom has pointed out, we have reached the stage when we must consider whether we can afford to carry on the good work we have endeavoured to accomplish. We must ascertain whether we can hope to balance the Budget, and yet find the money for the purpose I have been alluding to. When we appreciate the drastic reductions mentioned by Mr. C. H. Wittenoom in the value of wool and wheat, it must be apparent that it is impossible for the State to provide money to carry on expensive departments while our main industries are lagging behind in their returns. In former years Western Australia used to derive a large income from another remunerative source, but I do not know whether it is due to the Education Vote that the position has been affected. Perhaps it has done something to keep people in the metropolitan area, thus depleting the outer districts and rendering impossible much of the good work that was accomplished in years gone by. In earlier days the timber re-

sources of this State provided huge returns to the Treasury, but the trade does not seem so buoyant nowadays. There are wonderful markets practically at our doors. The value of timber exported from the State during 1921 and the years following to 1928 represented annually considerably over £1,000,000. In 1921 the value of our timber exports was £1,162,735. In 1927, an increase was shown to £1,653,876. In the following year, 1928, the returns dropped to £1,274,482, and in 1929, a still further drop to £967,038 was recorded, a falling off of £307,444. In 1930 the value of the exports dropped still further to £812,112. It is in that direction that we must look for augmented returns, by building up our operations in the timber industry. Sir Edward Wittenoom mentioned that he was connected with that industry, and I presume that his company are no doubt doing their best to embrace every opportunity to exploit markets and build up our export trade once more. It is to the credit of the Leader of the House that he recently transacted remarkably good business on behalf of the State. In view of his breakdown in health, he was granted leave by the House and paid a visit to South Africa. He was not idle. Sometimes a change from business to business is as good as a holiday. Mr. Baxter certainly adapted himself to the situation and transacted wonderfully good work on behalf of the State, for which we owe him a deep debt of gratitude. South Africa has been a large importer of our hardwoods, and Mr. Baxter was instrumental in arranging for advantageous trading operations in that regard. Although in former years South Africa imported large quantities of jarrah and karri, unfortunately in 1923 her imports totalled only 509,064 cubic feet, which had fallen by 1927 to only 188,893 cubic feet. It is strange that while we were losing the trade in our hardwoods, South Africa imported large quantities of pine. In 1923 the softwood imports amounted to 8,162,189 cubic feet, which had increased in 1924 to 8,981,105 cubic feet; in 1925, to 9,043,379; and in 1927 to 10,062,114 cubic feet. While our trade dropped from 500,000 cubic feet to less than 200,000 cubic feet, pine was being imported in considerably greater quantities than previously.

The Minister for Country Water Supplies: Our timbers are more suitable for many of their requirements.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Yes.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: But South Africa is using steel sleepers as a substitute.

The Minister for Country Water Supplies: Only in certain parts.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The authorities there are still glad to use a large quantity of our timber if only we can cater for the business.

The Minister for Country Water Supplies: Steel sleepers are used only in the wetter parts.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Minister was instrumental in securing some trade for this State, and I have no doubt that as a result of his visit our export trade has increased. This has meant increased shipping in our ports, which is a pleasing factor. I understand there is a move to follow up the work done by the Minister by sending a representative of the timber trade to South Africa, and I hope the outcome will be to restore the timber industry to its former activity. We must look to timber to produce a bigger proportion of the national income and make good some of the decline from other commodities. If we could get our timbers freely imported into South Africa, it would be a good advertisement for their use in other parts of the world. If it is found that South Africa favours our timbers, visitors to that country will probably advise their countries to take some of it also. I mentioned the shipping in our ports. Undoubtedly the Federal Navigation Act and the tariff have a big bearing on business. What we need are facilities to enable countries to trade with each other. The high cost of handling goods in our ports and the charges imposed against shipping entering our ports greatly affect business. The charges are so heavy that shipowners are not disposed to grant us the same charter rates that are granted to other countries. Every effort must be made to reduce those costs. Sir Edward Wittenoom referred to the State operating sawmills and competing with private enterprise. He also spoke of the Government having advanced money to the Griffin Coal Mine to enable it to compete against a company in which he was interested. I feel that the House has been more or less misled regarding the advance made to the Griffin Coal Mine for the construction of the railway connecting it with Collie. The company applied for the right to construct the line. Years ago there was an old timber

line connecting that area with Collie, but it had been pulled up. The track, however, was cleared and all that was necessary was to re-lay the rails. The Government declined to allow the company to put in a private line. The company then asked that the railway be constructed by contract, but the Government insisted upon its being built by day labour. The company expected to get the line built for about £8,000 at most, but the Government took 11 months to build $2\frac{3}{4}$ miles of line on a route already prepared, and the cost was £22,500. I heard that an engineer stated he could have built the line for £10,000 and would have had sufficient surplus over cost on which to retire. Sir Edward felt rather hurt that the Government should have encouraged the opening up of another mine in opposition to the Amalgamated Collieries. I well remember the opening up of the Collie mines and of the great opposition based on the argument that the coal was not equal in calorific value to Newcastle coal. The farming community also objected to Collie coal on the ground that the sparking was dangerous to the crops. The opposition was overcome by Lord Forrest, who insisted that if our own requirements could be supplied locally, the minor difficulties could be surmounted. I believe that eventually Lord Forrest gained the support of the whole of the farming community. The great importance of the industry was realised during the war period. The success of the Amalgamated Collieries is a credit to them, and a great advantage to the State, but it is an unheard of suggestion that no one else should be allowed to compete with them. The Government should be commended for encouraging another company to operate in the same industry.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: There was no objection to the company operating. The only objection was to the Government providing the money so that the company could compete with private enterprise.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: It was a Western Australian company with capital subscribed in Western Australia, and it is not right that the company should be brow-beaten. They desired to build the line themselves, but were not permitted to do so. The Amalgamated Collieries did not have to build their lines; the Government built them and did not charge the company for them.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: How much have you paid back to the Government?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The Griffin mine has a good quality coal, and that is what the Government require.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: There is no objection to the competition; the only objection is to Government money being used.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: If a better coal is found, it must prove advantageous to the State.

Hon. H. Stewart: That is the question. Is it a better coal?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: Private enterprise has found this seam, and it is a better coal than has previously been found in Collie.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: Talk about the £22,000! Where did that come from?

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: We owe Sir Edward Wittenoom a debt of gratitude for having moved the motion, which has attracted considerable attention. It has focussed our minds on the need for economy. The hon. member mentioned the Arbitration Court, monopolies, and State enterprises, and all his references have stimulated thought. Drastic economies will have to be effected, because of the serious drop in the prices of our export commodities. It is impossible to continue to pay people the same wages and salaries as they previously received when private incomes have been divided by three.

Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom: And also when we have a deficit of £1,500,000

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: The cuts now being made in various directions are nothing in comparison with the enormous reductions being suffered by pastoralists, wheat-growers, and many others whose past experience had been good returns and good incomes. There is now less money to go round, and the whole community must recognise that. The coat must be cut according to the cloth that is available. I support the motion.

On motion by Hon. Sir Edward Wittenoom, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE MINISTER FOR COUNTRY WATER SUPPLIES (Hon. C. F. Baxter—East) [9.17] I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn until Tuesday, the 28th July.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 9.17 p.m.

Legislative Assembly,

Wednesday, 22nd July, 1931.

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

QUESTION—APPRENTICES, EXAMINATION.

Mr. PANTON (for Mr. Raphael) asked the Premier: 1, Is it the intention of the Government to continue the examination of apprentices, as laid down in the various awards? 2, Are the Government aware that no apprentices have been examined in the order tailoring since July, 1930, excepting apprentices finishing their time? 3, Are the Government aware that a three years' apprenticeship is provided for in this trade, and that if no examination is held this month many of the apprentices will be half way through their apprenticeship before being examined at all?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Yes, either at the Technical School or by examiners appointed. 2, No, all apprentices entitled to their final certificates have been examined,

and there was a complete examination of all apprentices in the order tailoring trade in 1930, and an examination of apprentices entitled to their final certificates in January, 1931. 3 (a), No, the apprenticeship is as follows:—coat making, 5 years; vest, trousers and skirt making, 3 years; pressing, fitting and trimming, 4 years. (b) All apprentices will be examined this year.

QUESTION—GROUP SETTLEMENT.

Mr. WITHERS asked the Premier: Has his attention been drawn to the leading article in the "West Australian" of 21st July concerning questions on group settlement as follows:—(a) How much is due from group settlers, and how much has been paid? (b) How many settlers have paid in full, and how many are not paying at all? (c) How many settlers possess 12 cows or fewer; what amount of interest is due from this section; how much of it has been collected, and how many of these settlers have paid in full?

The PREMIER replied: Yes.

BILL—FEDERAL AID ROADS AGREEMENT.

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

BILL—DEBT CONVERSION AGREEMENT.

Council's Amendments.

Bill returned from the Council with a schedule of five amendments, which were now considered.

Standing Orders Suspension.

On motion by the Premier resolved: That so much of the Standing Orders be suspended as is necessary to allow the message to be taken into consideration forthwith.

In Committee.

Mr. Richardson in the Chair; the Premier in charge of the Bill.

The PREMIER: These amendments have been made at the request of the Prime Minister. They involve not the slightest variation of the Agreement, but are merely in-