

to attend one meeting out of every three. The amendment is a good one, and if the member cannot give sufficient reason why he cannot attend the meeting, the seat should be declared vacant. In my case I resigned.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: The words "sufficient cause" are fairly wide and could be misinterpreted. Therefore I propose to accept the amendment.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 37—agreed to.

Clause 38—Longest possible term of office:

Hon. R. C. MATTISKE: I move an amendment—

That the words "or president" in line 10, page 44, be struck out.

The reason is that we have already made provision by amendment for an alternative method for the election of mayor or president to conform to either of the systems existing at the moment, under which the mayor is elected in accordance with the Municipal Corporations Act or the president in accordance with the Road Districts Act. To make this consistent with the previous amendment it is necessary to extend the term of office of president from two to three years.

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: This is consequential upon an amendment that has already been passed and I accept the amendment moved by the hon. member.

Amendment put and passed.

Hon. R. C. MATTISKE: I move an amendment—

That after the word "years" in line 11, page 44, the following be inserted to stand as paragraph (b):—

to the office of president is 12 months where elected in accordance with Section (10) Subsection (4) or two years where elected in accordance with Section (10) Subsection (5) paragraph (b).

Hon. J. D. TEAHAN: This is consequential and I propose to accept it.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clause 39—agreed to.

Clause 40—Councillor may nominate for election to office of mayor or president without resigning:

Hon. R. C. MATTISKE: I merely wish to draw the attention of the Committee to the word "president" in line 3 and to point out that it is quite in order.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 41—agreed to.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 10.28 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 7th August, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Legislation to Reduce Powers.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Premier:

(1) Has he been informed of the move in Tasmania to restrict the powers of the Legislative Council in that State?

(2) Will he seek detailed information of the proposal?

(3) Will he give consideration to legislation in Western Australia to reduce the powers of the Council to the equivalent of those of the British House of Lords?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) and (2) Detailed information will be sought.

(3) Yes.

UNFAIR TRADING AND PROFIT CONTROL ACT.

Judgment re Cockburn Cement Pty. Ltd.

Mr. JOHNSON asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Has the judgment been given in the case Cockburn Cement Pty. Ltd. v. Commissioner of Unfair Trading?

(2) Will he make copies of the three judgments available to all members of both Houses?

(3) Who are the directors of the three companies mentioned in the charges?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) When available, a copy of the judgments will be laid on the Table of both Houses.

(3) Cockburn Cement Pty. Ltd.

H. W. L. Reddish—Chartered Accountant.

A. E. Weston—Chartered Accountant.

R. J. Dumas—Company Director.

L. N. Shorter—Managing Director.

E. W. Gillett—Legal Practitioner.

Cement Sales Pty. Ltd.

E. F. Downing—Queen's Counsel.

L. N. Shorter—Company Director.

Swan Portland Cement Ltd.

H. P. Downing—Queen's Counsel.

A. E. Sandover—Director.

G. O. S. Law—Business Manager.

E. F. Downing—Queen's Counsel.

C. R. Bunning—Engineer.

DRAINAGE.

Funds for Pinjarra-West Coolup Districts.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has any provision been made in the 1957-58 loan programme for drainage work to be carried out in the Pinjarra and West Coolup districts?

(2) If funds are available, what amount has been provided and where will the work be carried out?

(3) When is it expected to make a start on the work?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. However, it is proposed to carry out from revenue some improvement of the outlet of Fauntleroy's Drain near Peel Inlet.

(2) and (3) Answered by No. (1).

EDUCATION.

Construction of School, Mosman Park.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Education:

Does an examination of the population density in Mosman Park reveal that there is any necessity for the construction of a new school in that district—

(a) at the present time; or

(b) in the future?

The MINISTER replied:

The enrolment at Mosman Park school is showing a slight tendency to decrease. There is ample accommodation at the school.

POLICE.

Drivers' Licence Fees, Fines, etc.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) What was the amount of money raised from drivers' licence fees for each of the following years ended June, 1953, 1954, 1955, 1956 and 1957?

(2) What was the yearly total of traffic fines for the above period?

(3) What was the cost of Traffic Branch administration for each year in the above period?

The MINISTER replied:

(1)—

Year ended.	£
30/6/53	49,444
30/6/54	86,000
30/6/55	95,448
30/6/56	101,089
30/6/57	112,839

(2)—

Year ended.	£
30/6/53	36,872
30/6/54	61,184
30/6/55	76,339
30/6/56	121,874
30/6/57	101,653

(3)—

Year ended.	£
30/6/53	260,000
30/6/54	293,612
30/6/55	331,248
30/6/56	281,173
30/6/57	288,560

PUBLIC BUILDINGS.

Expenditure from Loans.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Treasurer:

(1) What was the expenditure from loans on the erection of, or additions to, public buildings for each of the financial years, 1955-56, and 1956-57?

(2) How much of the amount in each of such years was expended—

(a) in the metropolitan area;

(b) outside that area?

The TREASURER replied:

(1)—

1955-56	.....	£2,146,867
1956-57	.....	£2,847,478

(2)—

(a) 1955-56	.....	£1,733,304
1956-57	.....	£2,319,379
(b) 1955-56	.....	£413,563
1956-57	.....	£528,099

CITY OF PERTH PARKING FACILITIES ACT.

Regulations and By-laws.

Hon. A. F. WATTS asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) In the event of the regulations made under the City of Perth Parking Facilities Act, published in the "Government Gazette" on the 5th March, 1957, not being disallowed by either House of Parliament, will it be necessary for further by-laws or regulations to be gazetted and laid on the Table of the House before parking restrictions or controls can be imposed by the City Council in respect of streets coming within the plan in the "Gazette" of March, 1957?

(2) If so, under what section of the City of Perth Parking Facilities Act will such further by-laws or regulations be required?

(3) Also, if so, what was the object of gazetting the regulations on the 5th March?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) Section 21, Subsection (4) which requires a by-law to be confirmed by the Governor. Such by-law will then be required to be laid on the Table of the House in accordance with Section 36, Subsection (4) of the Interpretation Act, 1918.

(3) The object was to permit the City Council to proceed with preliminary planning and works as specifically provided for in Section 3 of the City of Perth Parking Facilities Act, 1956.

RAILWAYS.

Institute, Bunbury, Future Plans.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

(1) What is to be the fate of the old Railway Institute in Bunbury?

(2) What are the future plans for the site?

The MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT replied:

(1) It is to be demolished by the Bunbury branch of the Girl Guides Association, which plans to use serviceable material in the construction of its own premises.

(2) Tentative plans are to use the land as a site for railway refreshment rooms and bus terminal facilities.

Proposals to use the land as indicated are being formulated but have not yet been considered by the commission.

SHIPPING.

Delays at Ports of Albany and Bunbury, etc.

Mr. ROBERTS asked the Minister for Supply and Shipping:

Were any ships kept waiting for berths during the year ended the 30th June, 1957, at either of the ports of Albany or Bunbury? If so—

(a) How many;

(b) how long;

(c) what was the reason for delay;

(d) what was the period of delay;

(e) what was the cargo, either awaiting loading, or discharge, into such delayed vessel?

The MINISTER FOR MINES replied:

The required information is being sought from the respective harbour boards.

Upon receipt of their replies, the hon. member will be advised.

GASCOYNE RIVER.

Experimental Clay Bar.

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has he received reports of the success or otherwise of the experimental clay bar in the Gascoyne River from—

(a) the engineers;

(b) the geologists?

(2) Is consideration being given to the construction of further such bars?

(3) If the answer to No. (2) is "Yes," when will the preliminary work commence?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

Following construction of the clay bar, the river commenced to flow on the 3rd February; stopped on the 22nd April; started again, the 6th June; stopped on the 2nd August.

No conclusions can be reached from observations over the limited period between the 22nd April and the 6th June. Investigations are proceeding. Observations over a long period may be necessary to prove if any real benefit will result.

(2) Not at present.

(3) Answered by No. (2).

TRAFFIC.

Traffic Act Regulations re Pedestrians.

Mr. CROMMELIN asked the Minister for Transport:

(1) Do the Traffic Act regulations provide that it is compulsory for pedestrians to walk on the right hand side of a road if there are no footpaths available?

(2) If so, can the police prosecute offenders for breaking this regulation?

(3) If the answer is in the negative, what steps are being taken to enforce the regulations?

(4) Can pedestrians be prosecuted under the minor traffic offences regulations?

(5) If so, are prosecutions proceeded with?

(6) If the answer is in the negative, is he considering having the regulations amended so as to be able to deal with offenders?

(7) Is he considering amending the regulations to force pedestrians to use crosswalks to a greater extent?

(8) Is there a penalty for a motorist who drives over a crosswalk whilst a pedestrian is using it? If so, what is the penalty?

(9) Is pedestrian traffic sufficiently controlled in the city block to allow a free flow of motor traffic?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes, Regulation No. 331.

(2) Yes.

(3) Answered by No. (1).

(4) No, but steps are being taken in that direction.

(5) and (6) Answered by No. (4).

(7) This is desirable but not considered practicable until more crosswalks, and intersections, such as Barrack-st., are fitted with traffic lights.

(8) Yes, a maximum penalty of £20 or one month's imprisonment.

(9) Greater control as indicated in answer No. (7) would permit a better traffic flow.

FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT.

Method of Prosecutions and Convictions.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY asked the Minister for Labour:

(1) Did he read an item of news in "The West Australian" of the 29th May, 1957, headed "Mistake," in which it was

reported that a Scarborough barber had been visited by a shops and factory inspector on the 3rd May last, when sweeping out his shop at 7.30 a.m., and had been fined £3 for allowing the inspector to occupy a chair in his shop?

(2) Did the inspector ask the barber to cut his hair, or provide any other service prior to the stipulated opening hour?

(3) If so, is it the practice of the Factories and Shops Department to prosecute and obtain convictions in this manner?

(4) On whose orders are such prosecutions taken?

(5) Is it intended to continue to prosecute and obtain convictions by this subterfuge?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No.

(2) The barber mistook the inspector for a customer and requested him to take the chair, but the inspector did not do so and no service was suggested or given.

(3) It is a principle which has always been strictly observed—definitely for over twenty years—by inspectors of the Factories and Shops Department that in no circumstances does an inspector encourage a shopkeeper to commit an offence.

(4) Prosecutions are authorised by the Chief Inspector of Factories.

(5) Answered by No. (3).

NATIVE WELFARE.

Relief for Natives, Canning Desert Basin.

Mr. GRAYDEN asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

(1) Has he seen the statement published in the "Daily News" on the 6th August, by an A.N.A. helicopter pilot engaged on a charter survey of the Canning Desert Basin, which reads "We encountered numerous groups of natives roaming the barren wastes unclad and starving, especially the very young and the very old"?

(2) Is he aware that this position must exist throughout the inland desert area in poor seasons, as was emphasised by the select committee which recently inquired into conditions in the Laverion-Warburton area?

(3) What action does the Government intend to take to give immediate relief to the natives in question?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Native Welfare) replied:

(1) Yes.

(2) No.

(3) The Native Welfare Department's district officer for the Kimberleys is attending to the matter and a supply of foodstuffs is being despatched by helicopter to the native party concerned on Thursday the 8th August.

METROPOLITAN MARKET TRUST.*(a) Extension of Operations.*

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) Is there any plan under consideration for extending the activities of the Metropolitan Market Trust, either in its present location or by operations in another area or other areas?

(2) If so, what is the nature of such proposed extensions?

(3) Is any change in the constitution of the trust proposed?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) and (2) Consideration is being given to an alternative site for the Metropolitan Markets consequent upon the proposal for the removal of the railway marshalling yards from West Perth.

(3) No.

(b) Alteration of Activities.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Agriculture:

Further to his reply concerning an alternate site for the Metropolitan Market Trust, if another site is developed is it the intention of the Government to extend or in any way alter the activities of the Trust?

The MINISTER replied:

The matter is in such a nebulous state at the present time that no consideration has been given to it. It is problematical whether anything will be done at all.

OLYMPIC AQUATIC CENTRES.*Government Financial Assistance.*

Mr. CROMMELIN (without notice) asked the Treasurer:

(1) If this Parliament grants a portion of King's Park to the Perth City Council for the purpose of establishing an olympic aquatic centre, will the Government if approached by the council for financial assistance, accede to its request?

(2) If so, will the Government grant the same assistance, pro rata, to any other municipal authority that may approach it for assistance in establishing an olympic pool in its area?

The TREASURER replied:

No. I should add, of course, that the Government does make available some financial assistance to local governing authorities in country areas to assist them to establish local swimming pools.

COMMONWEALTH DIVORCE BILL.*Amending Legislation in Western Australia.*

Mr. MARSHALL (without notice) asked the Premier:

(1) Has the Government given any consideration to the provisions contained in the Divorce Bill being introduced by Mr.

Joske, M.H.R., in the Federal Parliament, to obtain uniformity in the divorce laws of Australia?

(2) Will it be necessary for the Government to introduce legislation to amend the existing divorce law in Western Australia if the Bill referred to is passed in the Federal Parliament?

The PREMIER replied:

(1) No.

(2) As far as I am aware, any law in this matter passed by the Commonwealth Parliament would override any State Act with which it might conflict or to the extent to which it did conflict. Whether Mr. Joske's Bill will be persevered with in the Federal Parliament is now open to some doubt, because according to the newspapers, a revolt among the State Liberal Party members in New South Wales is taking place in regard to the Bill.

BILLS (4)—THIRD READING.

- 1, Legal Practitioners Act Amendment (No. 1).
 - 2, Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Continuance.
 - 3, Bills of Sale Act Amendment.
 - 4, Occupational Therapists.
- Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILLS (3)—RETURNED.

- 1, Agriculture Protection Board Act Amendment.
- 2, Fremantle Prison Site Act Amendment.
- 3, Dairy Cattle Improvement Act Repeal. Without amendment.

MOTION—MUNICIPAL CORPORATIONS ACT.

To Disallow Uniform General Building By-laws.

MR. OLDFIELD (Mt. Lawley) [4.49]: I move—

That the uniform general building by-laws, made under the Municipal Corporations Act, 1906-1956, published in the "Government Gazette" on the 5th June, 1957, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 9th July, 1957, be, and are hereby, disallowed.

I move the disallowance of the uniform building by-laws with a certain amount of reluctance because I readily admit not only the desirability but the absolute necessity for us in the near future, to arrive at some uniformity in the metropolitan area and throughout the State in respect of such by-laws because of the anomalous position that arises from time to time; because of the inconvenience experienced; and also because of the added expense imposed at

times on people through the ignorance regarding building regulations, of builders and contractors who are unable to keep up with the by-laws in each of the different local authorities.

However, desirous as it is to have uniform by-laws, it has taken about six years for the drafting of them to be completed, so I feel very little harm can be done in delaying the allowance of such by-laws for a period of six or eight weeks, or until such time as some of the anomalous situations and obnoxious features have been either modified or removed. Also, I am aware of the fact that the Minister has appointed a committee from the Local Government Department to inquire into and study these proposals. That committee is to make certain recommendations for varying, amending and even deleting some of the proposals now included in the by-laws. However, as the member for Fremantle will readily agree, there is always a danger when either House of Parliament allows regulations to become law when they contain certain objectionable features because, under the Interpretation Act, once they become law, it is impossible for either House to take any further action.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: This is another instance of it.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes. Once the regulations become law only the Minister can do anything about amending or repealing them. Technically speaking, these by-laws are operating today, but the Minister has seen fit to grant a certain amnesty. They were gazetted on the 5th June and the Minister has granted an amnesty until the 1st September, a period of almost four months. We also know that under the existing law once a regulation has been gazetted, it becomes law and should be enforced until such time as either House of Parliament disallows it. Legally speaking, the uniform general building by-laws are the law today, but they are not being carried out by the local governing authorities throughout the State.

I realise that we had to have some period before they became effective in order to iron out little difficulties that arise. I do not want to weary members with regard to individual items. No doubt other members will wish to speak to this motion and will give instances where they consider the by-laws are, or could be, ineffective. The first that comes to my mind—and this clause is not only anomalous but could also inflict undue hardship on many people—is paragraph (b) of By-law No. 41 which deals with the minimum permissible distance that a building may be placed from the boundary. As regards brick homes, the clause prescribes that it shall be no closer than 6ft. from the boundary, but in the case of brick veneer homes the distance prescribed is only 4ft. It is obviously a mistake and I have since heard that that mistake is admitted. But

many more mistakes are to be seen throughout these by-laws, and if they become law we can do nothing about them.

Obviously, those who were charged with the responsibility of drafting these by-laws intended that the same distance of 6ft. should apply to a brick veneer home or, alternatively, the distance of 4ft., which is applicable to a brick veneer home, should be also applicable to a brick home. I do not know what was in the minds of those who drafted the by-laws; but certainly there was no intention of making it possible for a person to build a brick veneer home 2ft. closer than a brick house to the boundary fence.

Another objectionable feature is to be found in By-law No. 405 which prescribes that each residential dwelling, first-class, shall contain four habitable rooms. In another part it sets out that a habitable room is one in which people normally live and does not include bathrooms, toilets, laundries, etc. If that by-law were to become law, and thus become enforceable, every person who wanted to build a home, not only throughout the metropolitan area but also throughout the rest of the State, would be faced with the position of having to build a home with four habitable rooms plus a laundry, bathroom and w.c. As I said, that provision would be applicable to the rural areas, including farms. Farmers would not be worried about that provision which sets out that they have to build 6ft. from the boundary fence, but they would be worried by this latter provision when providing accommodation for a married couple, or single men's quarters. They would have to provide four habitable rooms, plus a laundry, bathroom and w.c.

Furthermore the State Housing Commission is proceeding with a policy of building McNess homes for aged couples, as funds permit. These dwellings have two habitable rooms and are being built in West Perth. No doubt at some time in the future the commission will proceed with the erection of these cottages in other areas. The two habitable rooms comprise a bedroom and a living room to which there is a dining and kitchen annexe. Under the by-laws that will be classed as a two-habitable-room dwelling. When one sees the cottages with a living room and a dining and kitchen annexe, as well as a bedroom and a laundry, bathroom and w.c., one finds them to be rather neat and comfortable and quite large enough for any old lady to take care of. They are certainly large enough for an elderly couple. But that type of home would be precluded under these by-laws.

In addition, there are many people whose economic circumstances would not permit them to build more than a three-habitable-room dwelling. Possibly they want only two bedrooms with a dining-lounge room and kitchen or kitchenette—a kitchenette is not prescribed as a habitable room—with the usual conveniences.

So it can be seen that the imposition of these by-laws in their present state could restrict certain people and prevent them from ever being able to own a home of their own, or certainly one within their means. For many people, even if they have a small family, the extra room would be only a waste, and certainly an expensive one. Retired people also may want to build a small cottage but under these by-laws they would have to build a house in which there were one or two more rooms than they required for their normal needs.

Reverting to the provision which states that a brick house must be built no closer than 6ft. from the boundary fence, within the metropolitan area today many blocks are so narrow that it would be impossible to build a suitable house and still keep 6ft. from either boundary fence. There must be some elasticity, particularly in cases where the blocks are small, to enable people to build closer to the boundary fences. In some instances it would be most unfair to impose this restriction, particularly where young people bought land in the hope that they would be able to build their own homes.

In some instances because of the narrowness of the frontage, and with the 6ft. provision, it would be impossible to build a contemporary home, most of which are the barn-type structure, especially the modest and less pretentious home. This type of dwelling is fashionable today and people like them to stretch across the full width of the block as far as possible. In other words, they prefer width to depth. There is the further aspect of people who have built their homes in the past and those who hope to do so in the future, and who may be proceeding with their building operations, finding they are not able to build a garage or a carport alongside their respective houses. A carport is termed as a garage and as such would be prohibited. There are many technicalities contained in these by-laws, and members of this Chamber, being laymen, would not be expected to understand the import of them all; in some instances they would not know if they were desirable, necessary or otherwise.

I understand a large section of the contracting and building fraternity is quite alarmed as to what could happen if these by-laws were passed in their present form. I also understand that some of the local authorities who have shown concern through their various associations for the promulgation of uniform by-laws are also realistic enough to be apprehensive as to what could be the position if these by-laws were not suitably amended before being actually enforced. These local authorities are, of course, unable to be outspoken about this because they have been screaming for uniform by-laws for the past six years; but nevertheless there is considerable apprehension apparent among

certain members as well as among some of the staff of the various authorities concerned.

Apart from the undesirable features I have outlined, there are, of course, some which are of a less objectionable character. We are all aware that the matter was discussed at great length in the Legislative Council last night and, no doubt, members have read the report in "The West Australian." I would like to mention, in conclusion, one further aspect which I think illustrates the future hardships and injustices which might occur. At least one local authority I know of—and no doubt there are others who could report similar instances—has said that during the last two months the rate of applications for building licences, and the issue of these building licences, has more than doubled.

On speaking to the building surveyors and those responsible for the issue of these licences, I was told without any equivocation whatever, that the sudden spate of applications for building permits was the direct result of the by-laws which are at present on the Table of the House, and which are to become law on the 1st September. All the people making application are trying to beat the gun, and, as I say, the rate of the normal flow has doubled. This alone shows that considerable apprehension is felt by people who may be contemplating building in the near future, and in some cases, the not-too-near future. They realise that they must take out their permit now or they might be debarred from being granted a permit for the type of dwelling they may have contemplated on the land which they have selected. In some cases, they have previously discussed these matters with their builders and contractors and decided what they wanted, but will not be permitted to have after the 1st September.

As I said at the outset, I trust that the inquiry being made into these many anomalies and undesirable features will result in a report being furnished to the Minister in the next few weeks, so that a new set of by-laws may be drawn up and approved—a set of by-laws which will be acceptable to the people generally. Accordingly, I reluctantly move the motion standing in my name.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

MOTION—ROAD DISTRICTS ACT.

To Disallow Uniform General Building By-Laws.

MR. OLDFIELD (Mt. Lawley) [5.7]: For the reasons I have already outlined in my previous motion, I move—

That the uniform general building by-laws, made under the Road Districts Act, 1919-1956, published in the "Government Gazette" on the 5th

June, 1957, and laid upon the Table of the House on the 9th July, 1957, be, and are hereby, disallowed.

On motion by the Minister for Works, debate adjourned.

MOTION—PAPERS, LATE F. C. DEAN.

Files re Hospitalisation.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [5.8]: I move—

That all the files relating to the hospitalisation at Royal Perth Hospital, the 5th February, 1957, and other matters including the coroner's finding in respect of Frances Christine Dean (deceased), be laid on the Table of the House.

Firstly, I want to explain that I will be very brief about this matter, because the file has been seen by me through an arrangement made with the Minister for Health. I am not at liberty, however, at this stage to disclose the contents of the file to the House. I would like to acknowledge the courtesy that I have received both from the Minister and from the member for Subiaco.

I would explain that one of the members of this particular family is a constituent of the member for Subiaco and that hon. member has been very active on behalf of the person concerned. I would not like it to be thought that there is any suggestion on my part that the member for Subiaco has not done his full and proper share as member for that constituency. That is far from being the case, as members will see when the file is tabled by the Minister. The hon. member has done all he could in respect of this matter on behalf of his constituent.

However, there are several members of the family in other electorates, and, with the full knowledge of the member for Subiaco, I am moving for this file to be tabled. The request for the tabling of the file comes primarily from the family of the deceased person. They feel very upset about it. There are two main factors, amongst others, which concern them deeply. The first is the handling of their mother's case during her hospitalisation following an accident she had on the 5th February, 1957. Secondly, the family has some misgivings regarding the coroner's inquiry, or inquest.

The Minister would not agree to table the file in reply to a normal request and said that he would not do it without a motion of the House. It is for that reason that I am moving this motion. As I have said, I have seen the file as a result of an offer made to me by the Minister in this Chamber. As members are aware, however, in examining a file in the Minister's office many limitations are imposed on the person carrying out this examination. It would be improper for such person to

use that information, to make comments either in the House or to the Press, or in any other way, and, in my opinion, the only appropriate course to adopt in this matter is to move for the file to be tabled. It will then be in full view of the public.

Mr. Nalder: Are all the members of the family agreeable that this should be done?

Mr. COURT: Yes, I have checked that because it would be wrong to have the file tabled, particularly in view of its contents, if the family were not agreeable. I discussed that point with the Minister. The family is emphatic that they would like the file tabled. My own view is that the best way to allay their fears, and in the interests of all concerned, is to table the file. This would make it a public document. From what I can see, there are several matters which, with some explanation, would remove doubts and suspicions, and the sooner it is done the better it will be for the departmental officers concerned, the institutions concerned, and the family concerned. The family is genuinely upset about this matter, and whilst it is not desirable as a matter of normal procedure to have such a file tabled, I am firmly of the opinion that in this particular case it should be tabled.

THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH (Hon. E. Nulsen—Eyre) [5.12]: I have no objection to tabling the file. I did feel that it should have been the responsibility of the House and not of the Minister, owing to certain information on that file, and other implications concerning the family generally. But I have no objection to it being tabled.

Question put and passed.

Papers Tabled.

On motion by the Minister for Health, ordered—

That the file dealing with the hospitalisation of Frances Christine Dean be tabled for two weeks only.

MOTION—STATE TRADING CONCERNS.

Request to Government to Sell.

Debate resumed from the 31st July on the following motion by Mr. W. A. Manning:—

That this House, in view of the necessity for additional funds for expansion of both primary and secondary industries and essential requirements, requests the Government to sell the following trading concerns—

- (a) State Hotels.
- (b) State Saw Mills.
- (c) State Brickworks.
- (d) State Implement Works.

and place the funds so receivable partly to the capital of the Rural & Industries Bank and the balance to providing essential requirements.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—Melville) [5.13]: The member for Narrogin wants to sell the State trading concerns. He was very careful, however, to select the ones he wants to sell. He would not want to sell the State Shipping Service, although that is a State trading concern; and the criticism that he levelled against State trading concerns generally must apply to the State Shipping Service. But, as I have said, that hon. member very carefully excludes that service from his motion.

The member for Narrogin does not know very much about State trading concerns. He is under the impression that they were all started by Labour Governments, as a result of Labour policy. Of course they were not! The first State hotel, for example, was established by a non-Labour Government.

Mr. Nalder: How long ago?

The Premier: And why?

Hon. D. Brand: Yes, and why?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If the member for Katanning will be a little patient, he will get all the facts in good time.

Mr. Nalder: I thought I might help the Minister.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: The Minister does not require any help on this subject—he might on some others, but not on this one. The member for Narrogin said that State trading concerns should serve some purpose. Of course they should, and what is more, they do. They serve a useful purpose very well, as I shall endeavour to show. The hon. member said there were several ways of looking into this matter. I'll say there are! Of course, if one is out to dispose of some of the concerns, because one believes it is wrong for the State to engage in trading, then one would make a speech such as the member for Narrogin made.

He was at great pains to show precisely the losses sustained by the State Hotels Department and also the losses recently sustained by the State Saw Mills. But when he came to the State Engineering Works, he did not quote any figures; he just said that those works made a profit. Then he endeavoured to show that the profits did not amount to much because the works really made the profit as a result of being given work by the Government.

Mr. Court: I thought that was the most pertinent part of his speech. I heard it, and I consider that what he said is very true.

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: He put it this way: He got down to details of the losses for the State Hotels Department, the State Saw Mills and the State Brick Works, but he would not quote any figures for the State Engineering Works. He must

have had them. There was a reason why he did not quote those figures—because they would have shown up his argument a bit. So he glossed over the matter by saying they made a profit, but that the profit was to be expected because they were getting Government work.

Mr. Roberts: Did they make a profit on contract No. 1100/56?

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS: If I were the hon. member, I would not stick my neck out so far. The mover of the motion was out to achieve a certain result, irrespective of whether or not he correctly drew the picture. Let me go back to the question, "Did they serve some useful purpose?" The useful purpose they served was that they protected the consumers of this State against exploitation, and that is very, very definite. They protected the people against the result of honourable understandings which prevailed in private industry. They protected the people against combines which kept up prices. That is a very useful purpose in any community.

Before the State Brick Works were established back in 1911-12, there was, in the State, a brick combine, and the price of bricks was so high that it threatened to make it extremely difficult to carry on satisfactorily the Government's programme for establishing workers' homes. In order to make bricks available at a reasonable and satisfactory price, the State Brick Works were established because of a public demand that that be done.

I said earlier it was not the policy of a Labour Government which resulted in the establishment of the first State hotel. The Government under Sir Walter James established the first hotel at Gwalia, because one was needed there and private enterprise would not provide it. Because the need existed, as it does in some of our towns, for a hotel, the Government of the day established a State hotel to meet the need. Then there was the establishment of another hotel at Caves House because the Government desired to develop Yallingup as a tourist attraction, but a hotel would not have been a payable proposition for private enterprise and one would not have been established had the matter been left to private enterprise. So the Government of the day, in the interests of the State generally and not for the purpose of making profits, established a hotel itself. That served a useful purpose, and still does.

The first State saw mill was established as a result of a request by the Commissioner of Railways who impressed upon his Government that the price of sawn timber was extraordinarily high owing to the action of the combine that existed. It was necessary, in order to bring prices down, for the State to enter into competition, so the first State sawmill was

established for that purpose, and it was established not by a Labour Government. It was built by the Wilson Government in order to meet the need which existed at the time to bring prices down to a reasonable level. I agree with the member for Narrogin that the mills should serve a useful purpose, and they do. That was why they were established.

I referred to the fact earlier that the member for Narrogin does not want to see the State Shipping Service sold. He should if he is to be consistent, because it is a State trading concern. But he was very, very careful to exclude that concern for the simple reason that he would have been in serious trouble politically if he attempted to carry that out.

Hon. D. Brand: Do you think it should be sold?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, I do not. Neither do I think the other concerns should be sold. The State Engineering Works were first of all established as an implement works, at the request of farmers, who felt they were paying too much for farming machinery and who wanted the machinery to be manufactured in the State at a more competitive price.

Hon. D. Brand: What was the result?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The immediate result was bad. In the earlier years, the State Implement Works suffered substantial losses and the machinery which they made was not always satisfactory because they were called upon to make too many varieties of machines and not permitted to concentrate on a few. Gradually they overcame those difficulties as they acquired more knowledge and experience until today when the works have been built into what is probably the best equipped shop of the kind in Western Australia, and the quality of the work carried out there is outstanding.

There are letters on the files of the department from highly placed men in civilian and naval life who have had personal experience of the quality of the work done. They have complimented the men and the works on what had been done for them, and the price at which the work was carried out. The head personnel of the American naval command who were here during the war period were particularly outspoken in their praise of the works and what had been done for the American Navy at short notice and in quick time. It is well known that an excellent job was done with regard to army contracts undertaken by the works during the war years, and one example which comes readily to mind was the making of track links for Bren gun carriers. The works made a big contribution to the needs of the nation during that period.

As I have already said, the mover of this motion gave the impression that the State Engineering Works achieved something of a profit but inferred that one need not

take very much notice of it because it resulted from the works being handed Government contracts. What the hon. member does not know is that the works gained a lot of those contracts in open competition with private firms under tender conditions. The undertaking also loses a lot of Government work if its quote is above the price tendered by private firms.

Mr. Court: It gets some of the work by unfair methods.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No, it does not.

Mr. Court: What about the matters referred to in your answers to questions in this House?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That was not an unfair method.

Mr. Court: Not much! The same thing would not be tolerated in any other community.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In that instance, a saving to the Government was effected, and we were entitled to make the saving. It was a saving of Government money. Is there anything unfair about that?

Mr. Court: It has yet to be proved that that was a saving of Government money.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I can prove it, and quickly.

Mr. Court: It was a very unfair method of getting business. Can you give us the figure, including capital, which was spent to do the work?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I have not the information with me here, but I would have no objection to giving the particulars later. That could be done quite simply. Members should know that when tenders are called, the right is reserved of not letting the tender to the lowest quote.

Mr. Court: But you did not give any of the other parties a chance to revise their tenders.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It was the right of the Government to save money.

Mr. Court: You are making out a very poor case.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Only so far as the hon. member is concerned.

Mr. Court: You are making out a perfect case of unfair competition by the Government.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Let us look at the profits of the State Engineering Works, about which the member for Narrogin has given little information. In 1946-47 the State Engineering Works made a profit of £2,725. That was made after meeting interest and sinking fund charges. I would point out that private firms do not charge interest on capital invested against the profit and loss account

before they arrive at the profit. The capital is obtained from shareholders without having to pay them interest.

Mr. Court: They have some borrowed money; that is, in most cases.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Of course, they do. They have some borrowed money, but not all borrowed money. But the capital of the State Engineering Works is all loan money and the whole of it is expected to earn interest. That is the difference. Here are the other profits made by the State Engineering Works—

	£
1947-48	4,893
1948-49	13,652
1949-50	31,006
1950-51	21,035
1951-52	27,391
1952-53	33,676
1953-54	31,772
1954-55	43,971
1955-56	59,984

Was the member for Narrogin giving this House a complete picture when he glossed over all those successive profits from 1946 to 1956 by saying, "Oh yes, they made a profit, but . . .?"

Hon. A. F. Watts: Have those profits got up to the earlier losses yet?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Yes; they have exceeded them. The accumulated losses were £98,234.

Mr. Court: If the works could not make a profit in those 10 years, they could never do so during their existence.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Now we get the square-off! It is the old, old story. Try to explain it away! Try to cover it up first; but when it is brought out into the open, then try to point out that they did not really make it at all, because of the conditions. Don't forget this: The period to which the member for Nedlands now refers, and which he says was a wonderful period, is the very period that he himself admitted in argument with me was a period during which private enterprise was finding it extremely difficult to make profits. Deny that!

Mr. Court: I do.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Oh, yes!

Mr. Court: The matter under discussion concerned only one trading year. You have been referring to 10 years.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: When I was quoting profits for the past three or four years for various firms in this country, the hon. member endeavoured to show that I was exaggerating, and the profits were much lower because it was a difficult period.

Mr. Court: And I was correct.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Now he says that was a wonderful period for making profits!

Mr. Court: You are referring to 10 years. I was referring to one year. Don't run away from the point.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: The hon. member is the only one likely to run away from the point.

Mr. Court: You are!

The Minister for Transport: I think you would do better if you remained silent. You haven't taken a trick yet. You haven't even looked like taking one.

Mr. Court: I am well in front.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: In view of that result, I do not think there would be the slightest justification for trying to sell the State Engineering Works. One has to remember that sometimes when this much vaunted private enterprise obtains substantial contracts, it has to sublet a portion to the State Engineering Works because it is incapable of carrying out the work, since it has not got the equipment.

Mr. Roberts: Do the State Engineering Works ever sublet contracts?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Not if they can help it.

Mr. Roberts: Do they?

Hon. D. Brand: Do they?

Mr. Oldfield: Would you agree to let the State hotels become community hotels?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is another question. Let us have a look at the position of the State Saw Mills. The member for Narrogin would want to dispose of those—I suppose he would give them away to somebody.

Mr. W. A. Manning: I said sell them.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: It must be kept in mind that if the State Saw Mills are incurring losses now, that is partly the result of the action of the McLarty-Watts Government in establishing an additional mill—the Kent River mill. That increased the capitalisation of the department and so made it extremely difficult for the State Saw Mills to continue to make profits when a recession occurred in the industry. A somewhat similar situation is to be found in regard to the State Brick Works. The McLarty-Watts Government found it desirable—one might even say necessary—substantially to enlarge the brick works.

Mr. Ackland: Did those two actions meet with your approval?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No. I thought it was a mistake to establish the Kent River mill—very definitely. The State Brick Works were substantially enlarged by the McLarty-Watts Government in order to increase the output of bricks because private enterprise was not able to meet the demand. So I agree with the member for Narrogin that these State trading concerns should serve a useful

purpose; and I repeat that they do. The useful purpose of the State Brick Works was to supply people with bricks when private enterprise could not do it.

This very substantial increase in the capitalisation of the State Brick Works, in order to make it possible for them to meet a peak demand, has made it extremely difficult for them to continue to make profits now when the peak demand is over and there is a recession. If one expands one's business to the extent that it is capable of meeting a peak demand, it is to be expected that when there is a normal replacement the capitalisation is such that there will be extreme difficulty in making profits.

But the McLarty-Watts Government did not expand the State Brick Works in order to make profits. It expanded them in order to meet the demand for bricks, which was a peak demand. So to that extent the works served a very useful purpose. Since their inception, the State Saw Mills have made a total contribution to revenue by way of interest and profit of no less a sum than £1,796,225.

Mr. W. A. Manning: Does that allow interest on capital?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: I said by way of interest and profit. What private business could continue to show substantial profits under the system of bookkeeping we apply to Government concerns, under which the profit is paid into Consolidated Revenue and is not used to reduce capitalisation, so that the original capitalisation remains the same and the business has to find interest on it? What private business is ever run that way? So the comparison is not a fair one at all.

The Premier: Does the member for Narrogin want to sell the State Electricity Commission?

Mr. W. A. Manning: Not yet.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: If I may go back to the illustration that I was giving in regard to the State Saw Mills, the average payment in profit and interest amounts to £41,772 per annum. Interest rates have varied from time to time, and the present rate they are paying is 4½ per cent., an increase of ½ per cent. on the previous year. On the capital at the 30th June, 1956, the average net profit—and that is a point some member raised a moment ago—works out at 1.4 per cent.

The capital amount has increased since the 30th June, 1951, from £537,389 to £1,497,250 for the 30th June, 1956, and the main reason for that substantial increase in capitalisation was the taking over of the Kent River mill and the acquisition of Buckingham mill. So is there a case for disposing of these works?

Members: No!

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: Each one of them, on the criteria suggested by the member for Narrogin, has justified its

existence. Each one serves a useful purpose and has done it particularly well. Of course, this move is not new. Back in 1930, the Government of the day put a Bill through Parliament to enable the Government to dispose of these trading concerns without reference to Parliament.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: We had two breakfasts here in order to put it through.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is right. It shows how keen the Government of the day was about this matter. But when it got the power, it also got cold feet. So we have this situation. If it is desired to erect a pump house in King's Park, the matter has to be brought to Parliament. If it is desired to take two or three square yards from King's Park, that matter has to be brought to Parliament.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: That's not a bad idea.

Member: ... an excellent idea.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: On the other hand, if it is desired to sell £3,000,000 or £4,000,000 worth of the people's assets; if it is desired to sell the State Engineering Works, and the State Saw Mills and the State Brick Works, there is no necessity to bring the matter to Parliament at all; it can be done in St. George's Terrace.

The Premier: You don't even have to bring it here by way of regulation.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That is the situation today because a previous Government—the Liberal-Country Party coalition—had the same idea as the member for Narrogin, "Let us get rid of these State trading concerns and let us make it easy to get rid of them." So it can be done by administrative act. It would be a sorry day for the people of Western Australia if that happened. It would be a sorry day if we disposed of the State ships.

At the time the State Shipping Service was established, the meat trade was tied up because the black boats came down and the whole space was bought up by one firm, which held the other pastoralists up to ransom; and to break that meat tie-up, the State ships were first established—not to meet passenger requirements. Having been placed on the coast, they have been developed; and it would be a very foolish person indeed who would contemplate disposing of the State Shipping Service and leaving the North without it.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Nobody does contemplate it.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No; but it is a State trading concern, and there can be applied to it the same criticism that the member for Narrogin wanted to apply to the other State trading concerns. Let me emphasise that the State Saw Mills were first established because the timber combine was charging too much for timber.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Are they a member of the Sawmillers' Association?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: No.

Hon. A. F. Watts: How long since?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: That was not the question I was asked.

Hon. A. F. Watts: How long since?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: A few months. They were established for a purpose, which they have served. The State Brick Works were established to deal with a brick combine and to bring prices down, which they did, and the State hotels, not to make profits but to provide a service where private enterprise neglected to do so. So there is not the slightest justification for giving consideration to this proposition, and I hope the House will indicate that in no uncertain way. I oppose the motion.

HON. A. F. WATTS (Stirling) [5.46]: I do not altogether agree with the Minister, particularly when he endeavours to drag the State Shipping Service into the matter. He might equally as logically have brought in our State railway system, because, so far as I am concerned, the former serves much the same purpose as the latter was intended to serve.

The Premier: I might have supported the motion if it had included the railways.

Hon. A. F. WATTS: I will not be wearisome by reiterating my ideas on the railways, but will content myself with saying, as I have previously stated in this House, that my views on the North-West shipping service are precisely the same and that there is as little justification for shutting down or closing that one as there would be in the case of the other one. I do not think there is much comparison between the North-West shipping service and, for example, the State hotels.

Let us be truthful with ourselves. It is true that the State hotels have from time to time made profits and it is also true that in more recent times those profits have been very small—and in some cases there have even been losses—with the result that their situation today is not a very satisfactory one. That may to some extent be due to their circumstances. In certain instances there may not be the scope for making a profitable business such as there would be in some other places, but the fact remains, I would suggest, that the majority of the State hotels are not a credit to the State.

I have been in a good number of them in recent years and it certainly seems to me that a great deal requires doing to them before they will even measure up to the average standard of country hotels in this State. In order to do that work, it will cost the State a great deal of money. We already hear of propositions to renovate and alter the State hotel at Bruce

Rock and I say that if that hotel is to be carried on with any credit to the State, it is high time that the work was done and I repeat, that it will cost a lot of money; money which I suggest the State is ill able to afford to spend on a matter of that kind.

We are already sufficiently hard held in the provision of funds for essential things that we want from day to day and which are a crying need owing to the increase in our population, in certain instances, and the increase in our demands, in others. I repeat that we have not the money and I do not think we are likely, within a reasonable time, to have any surplus money to spend on jobs of that kind. There are a great many of the seven or eight State hotels that require considerable improvement, either structurally, by way of renovation, or by way of internal furnishings which, in some cases, if not obsolescent are at least somewhat antiquated.

I would suggest that this unfortunate circumstance and inability or reluctance to make the necessary provision at Bruce Rock because of a shortage of funds, may have been responsible for the rapid rise of the growth of the members' club in that district, and so I do not think there is any question that the State would be better off if it were to dispose of the State hotels as opportunity offers. I am not suggesting that they should be given away. I believe they have a far greater value than is disclosed as their capital cost after depreciation and so on has been allowed in the report of the Auditor General—a far greater value.

And so, alternatively, it might be desirable, under certain reasonable conditions, to let these premises to private people who would be in a position to conduct them under lease. I am certain that by either of those methods the State would benefit. I realise that there are some difficulties and I have no doubt we would have to pass an Act of Parliament to make them licensed premises, because as far as I know at present they have no licences such as other hotels have under the Licensing Act, but are merely entitled to sell liquor because they are Government-owned and the Government is above all legislation, presumably. Therefore, rather than go through the cumbersome method in each case of applying to the Licensing Court for a licence, I suggest steps would have to be taken to license the State hotels by legislation if they were to be disposed of.

There is also, I have no doubt, the question, if we are going to sell them, of providing freehold titles, because, if I understand aright, some of them are on Government reserves and that would no doubt, in some cases, require legislation. As a matter of fact, if I understood him aright, it was these difficulties which restrained the

former Attorney General and Chief Secretary, Mr. H. S. W. Parker, in about 1949, from bringing this very matter of the disposal of the State hotels before Parliament.

There were so many problems associated with it at that time in regard to licences, titles, and so on, that before that hon. gentleman retired from the Cabinet, he had not had time to deal with it, although I knew from him that it was very much in his mind—mainly for the reasons that I have just been discussing—that it would seem to be better for the State to have the capital value of those premises—which despite the condition that some of them are in, I should say is very much greater today than their original cost—and expend that money in some other and more desirable directions, in which case the State would be relieved of the responsibility of running those premises which I think, with no exceptions today, could well be catered for as other premises are.

I would not for one moment suggest that they should all be disposed of to one proprietor. I think it should be a matter of individual sale, because the State hotels are widely separated and would, I think, be better conducted by separate individuals, but all that could only be ascertained for certain if and when we proceeded to offer them for sale or, failing sale, for lease, and I do not think there can be much argument with regard to that.

There is, so far as the State Brick Works are concerned, in my view, at the present time no better argument why we should retain them. I admit that they were expanded and I think at the time wisely expanded when the member for Dale was Minister in charge of them because, as the Minister for Works has pointed out, there was then a very great necessity for a substantial stepping up in the production of bricks in Western Australia—a stepping up not by a few thousands, which was being done by private enterprise, but by many hundreds per cent.—to which even the enlarged State Brick Works made only a fractional contribution.

But it seems to me that an effort should be made to try to dispose of them because that peak period is passed, as the Minister has just told us, and I do not see—though I may be wrong—any reasonable prospect of it coming back again. So it appears to me as though that particular institution is likely to continue to constitute a loss to the State and, as the Minister said, under our peculiar system of bookkeeping—and it is peculiar—the losses that are made are, as it were, capitalised and the liability of the State in regard to them will become even greater.

Again I am not suggesting that they should be given away. If an effective contract cannot be made to get the State out of the obligation which already exists in regard to them, do not make it. I would

be the last person to suggest that the State should give an asset away or sell it at an unreasonably low figure. Far from it; all I suggest is that I can see nothing wrong with the idea of entering into negotiations to see whether a successful contract can be made, because underlying this motion of the member for Narrogin is the belief that the funds that could result if these successful sales could be brought about, could be expended on things that are more essential to the community at the present time.

Repeatedly, in this House, we have heard of the difficulties of persons wishing to get advances for certain purposes from the Rural & Industries Bank, and the difficulty of providing that bank with the capital out of loan funds, and we know that that is the only source from which it can get capital which can be advanced by it, particularly through what is known as its agency department.

Mr. Johnson: Are you not going to give that away, too?

Hon. A. F. WATTS: Will the hon. member confine his remarks to the four things in this motion and refrain from implying motives which do not exist? It would be wise for the hon. member to refrain from doing so, because he knows that what is in this motion is all that is intended to be discussed. As I was saying, the Rural & Industries Bank is not able to assist in the ways it should and the matter has been represented and discussed in this House half-a-dozen times.

This motion suggests—I think wisely—that if any return can be got from these trading concerns in the event of their being disposed of, a portion of it should be used to increase the capital of the R. & I. Bank, so that its services might be made more readily available to a great number of people who require them. I will not go into details because that would take too long and would probably be hardly within the terms of the motion, but, in general terms, we all know that it has been shown here that there is need for further funds for that particular institution and we all agreed, incidentally, to the creation and running of the R. & I. Bank, partly in substitution for the former Agricultural Bank, except in mere matters of detail, when the Bill was introduced into this House by Mr. Wise, then, I think, Premier or Minister for Lands.

We all agreed to the general principle of its establishment with no opposition, but complete support. What argument there was concerned details as to the powers of the bank and the methods of carrying out certain functions conferred upon it by the Act, so there is no question that we regard the R. & I. Bank as a necessary and reasonable part of the State's

utilities or instrumentalities and are only too anxious to see that, particularly in so far as it can assist the rural industries, it is supplied with the money with which to do so. From time to time reference has been made in this House to its inability to make those provisions. The member for Roe has raised the matter on several occasions, once by substantive motion. I have made reference to it myself several times and so have other members on the Opposition benches.

So the intention of the member for Narrogin is to transfer funds that are, in his opinion—and to a great deal in mine—doing far less good today than they would if they were to be used in the manner indicated by the words in the last four lines of this motion which are, namely, “and place the funds so receivable partly to the capital of the Rural & Industries Bank and the balance to providing essential requirements.” Everybody knows that there are numerous and constant demands being made on the Treasury for loan funds which, while they are being made available from time to time, are made available in slow stages in many cases and, in some cases, only after long delays which the member for Narrogin is obviously anxious—to what extent he can—to obviate.

I see no reason why the State Brick Works and the State Saw Mills—both in the same category, in my opinion, taking into consideration all the circumstances to which I have just referred—should not at least be offered if, as I say, a reasonable proposition can be obtained in the course of time. Again I reiterate that I am not one to advocate that the State's assets should be given away at a ridiculously low price or at any price which is not within measurable distance of their value.

When we come to consider the State Engineering Works, here we have a story which has just been told to us by the Minister for Works. I am not satisfied, of course, that if the State Engineering Works had not been in existence the work performed by those works could not have been done just as well for the various people to whom the Minister referred. I know, however, that a great deal of excellent work has been done at the State Engineering Works. Looked at from the point of view other than that held by the Minister, this would probably be the most attractive proposition which the State could sell at present. I venture to say that those works could be disposed of fairly readily at a most satisfactory price and the State would then have all that value for transference to other things which, as I have already stated, have been in many cases long delayed and must be further delayed for lack of sufficient funds.

An agreement could be made—I venture to say that it should be made—so that there could be some assurance that this institution would be properly carried on and available to the same people as it is available to now for the work that it does. Thus it does not seem to me that the terms of this motion are so ridiculous as they would at first appear. If it had been suggested that they should be sold without more ado, the Minister for Works might have been entitled to give vent to some of the observations that he did, but the objective of bringing this motion forward by the member for Narrogin is set out in the last four lines of it; that is, in order that something may be done to economise and to relieve the somewhat deplorable position that we find ourselves in, or, in other words, a shortage of funds.

The member for Narrogin is suggesting—and I think I can agree with him—that these things are not as essential to be run by the government as are those essential services which, in this country, a State must run, such as schools, hospitals, water supplies and the like. It is of no use our talking, in this country, of companies running water supplies. Those conditions do apply in some countries of the world, I understand. There they have water companies, the same as we have gas companies, but in this country I think it is hopeless to talk about those things. We have to content ourselves with the fact that Governments, all over the Commonwealth, have taken upon themselves—because there is little escape—the responsibility of providing these public utilities, and they have to continue providing them.

However, the magnitude of that task is, has been, and will be, very great and we do not want unnecessarily to load ourselves with functions which somebody else might be able successfully to take on and carry out. So I suggest to the Minister the desirability of a slightly closer investigation into this proposition, and in order to give him the opportunity to do that, I will support the motion.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [6.6]: I support the motion moved by the member for Narrogin which support was fully expected, I presume, from the smile on the Minister's face. The motion is in two very distinct parts and I think it is important that we should consider each of those parts because the Minister for Works has got himself rather steamed up over the motion and has read more into it than, firstly, is actually written into it and, secondly, than what was actually said by the member for Narrogin.

Firstly, the motion requests the Government to sell the four State trading concerns listed. Secondly, the reason given for selling these concerns is to place the funds so receivable partly to the capital of the Rural & Industries Bank and the

balance to providing essential requirements. The object of the member for Narrogin is very worthy. This motion could be approached on two separate and distinct lines, but I am afraid that one cannot completely divorce one from the other.

One line of approach is to stick to the urgent financial position that concerns the State and advocate the sale of these trading concerns for no other reason than to provide urgently needed funds, funds which from time to time the Government declares it has not got. There is a considerable amount of money tied up in these State trading concerns and if it were receivable by the Government within a reasonable period, it could work wonders in carrying out some of the works which I believe are urgently essential for carrying out the functions of government in this State.

The other line, of course, is to approach the motion purely on the basis of whether one supports the principle of free enterprise or of whether one supports the principle of socialised industry. I think there is something of both in this motion. The member for Narrogin touched on both issues, but I gathered, from the introduction of his motion, that his main emphasis was the making available to the Government moneys that it could use for essential works.

Mr. Marshall: Can you suggest a buyer for these concerns?

Mr. COURT: At the moment I could not suggest a buyer by name, but I will say that there would not be any great difficulty in disposing of these concerns at a price which would be fair and equitable. Nobody is suggesting that they should be sacrificed or given away at a price which is less than what they are worth. It would be advisable to realise on these concerns at a fair and equitable price. The Minister for Works has referred to them as the people's assets. If we accept that definition, I will also accept the reservation that they must be sold at a fair and equitable price. There has been no suggestion from the member for Narrogin or from the Leader of the Country Party that they be sold at anything less than a fair and equitable price.

The whole system of Government trading in this State of ours is in, what one might term, a sorry mess. It is not a question of whether the State trading concerns are profitable or not or whether they serve a useful purpose. There is a strong objection to this type of undertaking by a Government. It is true that, from time to time, situations arise which appear to be so urgent that Governments will sacrifice their principles to overcome that temporary emergency. In some cases it has been justified, but in other cases history has proved that the Governments have been wrong.

In facing this proposition concerning our State trading concerns, we have to accept this point of view: If the Government is sincere in its intention in carrying on State trading concerns profitably, successfully and efficiently, it must also accept the inevitable that business cannot remain static. A business must expand if it is to thrive. It is the whole history of private enterprise that a business must expand, and so a State must expand if it is to be successful. If we trace the history of business, it will be found that it is not only a process of expansion but it is a process of expansion either internally or through a process of amalgamation, of absorption and merger.

Sometimes it is automatic and natural growth that bring about natural expansion. For instance, the Government at this time is faced with abandoning the Wundowie charcoal iron project and saying, "We have finished with that stage of the venture and do not intend to proceed any further," or else it has to spend a lot more money on it. In fact, it is spending just on £1,000,000 to expand the Wundowie charcoal iron industry. I give that as one example of what can happen when we get involved in a State trading concern. It has either to expand or go out of existence.

One cannot reach a certain point in business and then say, "I will not expand any further." That brings me back to what I mentioned in regard to the natural growth of a business if it is to succeed. The Government cannot spend money on the expansion of State trading concerns and at the same time spend it on roads, water supplies, education, hospitals and the like which should be the first consideration of a Government, particularly in a country such as this. We cannot spend the money twice. We cannot put it into trading ventures on the one hand and at the same time put it into schools and other essential public works.

If the Government were to have some reasonable expectancy of continuing these concerns at a profit, it might have some argument for saying, "Out of this extra money we are going to expend, we are going to have money from profits," but the history of these concerns is such that there will not be a flow of profit from the undertakings. The Minister for Works became cross with me and tried to say that I was changing my ground when I interjected during his speech by referring to the ten years' period—from 1946 to 1956—of the State Engineering Works. That was a decade of most extraordinary trading conditions. A man who could not make money during that period would never make money. It was a seller's market. If one had something to sell, one could easily sell it and virtually dictate the price and terms.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Mr. COURT: Before the tea suspension I had been developing the theme regarding the financial cost of expanding industry, whether it be State industry or whether it be private industry, and I had reached a stage in my remarks dealing with the potential income that a Government, such as this one, could expect from profits in the future.

The Minister for Works took me to task when he was speaking and I interjected regarding my reference to the trading period 1946 to 1956. I made an observation to the effect that anyone who did not make money during that period of extreme postwar buoyancy would not be capable of making any money, and the Minister accused me of shifting my ground because, in another debate, the question of the decline in profits about 1955-56 had been under discussion. I still stick to my submission that when the matter was previously under discussion, we were debating a particular year and not the whole decade following the 1939-45 war.

The point I was trying to develop was this: The Government cannot, in the light of past experience over a long period of years going back to prewar, expect to have any cash income from the profits of these trading concerns. It might have some, but it would not be sufficiently great an amount to justify the necessary capital to keep these concerns on an expanding basis. That is, of course, if we accept the proposition that a business cannot remain static; it must expand. That is the history and the whole story of industry; it is one of expansion.

The Government has shown a tendency and a determination in recent months, to continue expansion, and it must expect the natural reaction from private industry that would normally want to expand or establish here, not to do so. The immediate reaction is that this is a Government fundamentally opposed to private industry in the sense that we know it. I can imagine no better declaration by the Government to give confidence to private industry, to bring it here and encourage private industries already here to expand, than the acceptance of a motion such as this one, with all the safeguards that have been suggested by the mover and others who have spoken on it.

The Minister for Education: Can you explain why your Government did not take similar action while it was in office for six years?

Mr. COURT: I was not in the Government, and I was not even in Parliament at that time.

The Minister for Education: You took an active interest.

Mr. COURT: The situation is slightly different in our party, if I have to digress on this point. The Liberal-Country Party

Government made its own arrangements and, although I was an active member of the party, I had no influence over the Government.

The Minister for Lands: You consider it was not right for that Government not to do it?

Mr. COURT: I am not suggesting it was right for it to continue with these trading concerns.

The Minister for Lands: Do you think it should have continued with them?

Mr. COURT: At that time there was a natural reluctance to dispose of anything as we were coming out of a period immediately following a war. The Minister would reasonably accept that position.

The Minister for Education: That Government was seven years in office.

Mr. COURT: Yes, but there was an aftermath of the war years which now has been cleaned up, and the present more approximates normality than any other time since immediately prior to the 1939-45 war years.

Mr. Lapham: Does this motion mean that if your Government assumes office, you will sell all State enterprises?

Mr. COURT: I am not speaking on behalf of the party; I am giving my views on a private member's motion about four State trading concerns. I am not going to be sidetracked into other matters such as the transport system, the State Shipping Service and the Rural & Industries Bank. I am debating the motion put forward by the member for Narrogin which deals with four State trading concerns and, for reasons I will give in a few moments, it would be to the benefit of this State if they were disposed of and the funds made available for other essential purposes. In other words, it is an excellent opportunity for the Government to obtain a very large sum of money for essential works and allow someone else to carry on these enterprises without any demands being made on the Government for their future expansion.

Mr. Toms: You agree with the Government selling iron ore?

Mr. COURT: I am not discussing iron ore.

Mr. Lapham: Is anyone interested in the purchase of these concerns?

Mr. COURT: The hon. member is making the statements; I have not made them. If I mentioned that someone was interested, the hon. member would want to know what I was getting out of it. It is a matter of a decision or suggested decision by this House. There is no suggestion that the Government sell these concerns for less than they are worth; the proposition is that they be sold at fair and equitable prices.

Mr. Lapham: Would you know what would be an equitable price?

Mr. COURT: It is irrelevant at this stage.

Mr. Lapham: I do not think it is.

Mr. Toms: It wouldn't be a fair price for long.

Mr. COURT: Why not? If one buys a motorcar for its current value of, say, £700, one cannot expect to come back and change the price later.

Mr. Toms: Without these State trading concerns, there would be no deterrent to prices being increased.

Mr. COURT: Surely the hon. member is not suggesting there is not keen competition today!

Mr. Toms: These trading concerns do provide a measure of control.

Mr. COURT: Not under present conditions.

Hon. D. Brand: What effect have the State hotels, anyway?

Mr. COURT: The four industries concerned, as mentioned in the motion, are the State Hotels, the State Saw Mills, the State Brick Works and the State Implementation Works. Those four concerns are surely in competitive industries today where there is open competition in each. The sale of these businesses would not have any upward influence on the price structure of this State; it might be the other way. These are four industries where there is very keen competition. The competition is so keen that the Government, in my opinion, had to employ unfair trading methods to obtain a proportion of the business for one of its concerns.

Mr. Johnson: When the Government does it, it is unfair, but when it is private enterprise, it is not.

Mr. COURT: The hon. member cannot accuse private industry of doing things and whitewash the Government because it is doing it. He must admit that some of the things would be classed as diabolical if done by private industry or private trade associations.

Mr. Jamieson: A Government is responsible to the people, but private concerns are not.

Mr. Roberts: Fair enough.

Mr. COURT: I will deal with that in a moment if I get to that stage and get over the hurdle of interjections which are using up my time, because, no doubt, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Oldfield: The East Perth Football Club would not agree to your suggestion that hotels are in open competition.

Mr. COURT: That is a matter for legislation and the court. Surely the hon. member is not suggesting that the Licensing Court is not acting in accordance with the law!

Mr. Oldfield: The court could not give reasons.

Mr. COURT: It is a matter for the court, and I will not buy in on that; it is its business.

The Minister for Lands: You would not sell the State Saw Mills, would you?

Mr. COURT: I would be glad to.

The Minister for Lands: As a result of the State Saw Mills withdrawing from the Sawmillers' Association, there has been a reduction in the price of timber.

Mr. COURT: The Minister is putting his head out.

The Minister for Lands: I will put it out then.

Mr. COURT: The State Saw Mills had been in that association for a mighty long time, and all of a sudden when things got difficult, it decided to withdraw and see if it could get business by any means.

The Minister for Lands: If you sold the State Saw Mills to a member of that association, there would not be any reduction in prices.

Mr. COURT: The Minister is grossly misinformed on timber, and I suggest he check with the Minister in charge of the State Saw Mills, who would tell him a different story.

The Minister for Lands: I have and in regard to the principle of it.

Mr. COURT: Before I finish, I want to develop one aspect in this matter which I think is very important and I think this is the appropriate time to bring it before the House. I consider one of the developments which have taken place in industry in the last generation has been the development which, for want of a better name, is classed in West Germany and the United States as people's capitalism. When we examine the development which has taken place in connection with industry, it can be classed as nothing short of an economic revolution. During the period immediately after the first world war, there was a clamour for an economic system which would not only raise general living standards and give greater security, but which would provide a more equitable distribution of goods and services. I think it is a paradox, if that is what the socialists are wanting in a general way, that they have literally achieved their objective through this growth of people's capitalism. The reason why I mention this is that I feel it is relevant. If the Government sold these four concerns, they would not fall into the hands of some octopus, cartel—

Mr. Potter: Monopoly.

Mr. COURT: —or monopoly, words which are used without fully knowing their meaning. The fact remains this development is taking place in certain countries, and it has produced higher

standards of living. It has produced a great spread of wealth compared with what used to exist, and it has produced a great opportunity for people who did not have such an opportunity.

Mr. Potter: And with heavy Government subsidisation.

Mr. COURT: It has produced security, the like of which has never before been known in these countries and, contrary to general expectation, it has produced great social benefits for the people. If we examine the relative positions of these people, before and after, we have to agree that there has been a steady advance along these lines. This system has the advantage that we would not have someone seeking control of these businesses merely to gain power. The businesses are virtually in the hands of the people.

The spread of ownership of these companies over a reasonably short period is amazing. We find that the big corporations today have such a colossal number of shareholders with such a terrific spread of capital, that they are virtually in the hands of the people. We find also that the mutual institutions have now entered into the field of buying equities and the people by buying ordinary common stocks, have assumed a greater influence in the operations of these companies.

I mention this because there is a fear on the part of the Government and some Government supporters that the sale of these concerns will mean that they will immediately be in the hands of some great octopus which would abuse the privilege of ownership. I have in mind a particular field of investment which has been considerable and which is expanding throughout the world. I have here the position of 20 college and university endowment funds in the United States. Over a period of eight years—less than a decade—the variation in their investments is remarkable, and it gives point to the proposition I have submitted. Their proportion of bonds at the 30th June, 1946, was 41.4 per cent.; preferred stock 16 per cent.; and common stocks—ordinary shares as we know them—42.6 per cent., making a total of 100 per cent. The position at the 30th June, 1954, was—bonds, 35.2 per cent.; preferred stock 9.8 per cent., and common stocks 55 per cent., making again a total of 100 per cent.

We can follow that theme right through the private pension funds that are operated for the benefit of employees. We see the steady trend towards a greater spread. It is a further paradox that the more industry expands, the more it has to spread ownership because of the great demands for capital. Whereas in the old days private companies could manage to get along with their private resources, the more technical industry has become, the more it has had to call on widespread

capital, and the result has been great expansion in the actual ownership of the companies.

This has been accelerated by the greater number of public companies. In the days of the private companies it was well-nigh impossible for the ordinary man in the street to become interested in them, but today, with open markets for the shares and no restrictions, virtually, on transfers, shares can be bought in the great public companies—some large and some small—on the open market.

Mr. Potter: That is why there are inflationary tendencies throughout the world.

Mr. COURT: No. The hon. member is wrong. Whilst the great demand for capital in industry is partly due to inflation, it is due to a much greater extent to the technical achievements in industry. Where, for example, a hand machine would, 20 years ago, get by in industry, today there is probably an intricate machine, doing the same work, and it would cost perhaps a minimum of £10,000. Once these technical features are introduced into industry to cut down the burden of humdrum jobs, it follows that we have to get machines at greater cost; and that will ever be the tendency. This tendency will accelerate even more when we get into the age of automation to a greater extent than we are at the moment.

If these concerns were sold, as suggested by the member for Narrogin, there are several advantages which I think would accrue to the Government and to the people of the State. Firstly, the Government could get on with the job of governing instead of having to worry about the trading concerns. It does not matter what Government is operating a trading concern, it is going to be under fire; its management is going to be criticised; its employees will be criticised, as will be its products, its prices and its service. Criticism naturally flows to a Government concern. Everyone gives it a kick. Some of the men in it can be most able and have the most earnest desire to run it successfully, but the fact that it is a Government concern makes it a butt for not only members of Parliament but the public. Is it not a good thing for the Government to stay outside of these influences and to get away from some of the pressures that are inevitable in government?

Mr. Johnson: What about price control?

Mr. COURT: The hon. member cannot think of anything but a straight-jacket type of economy. He does not trust industry as far as he can kick it, and he cannot kick it far.

A further advantage to the Government and the State is the fact that someone else has to provide the capital, firstly, to own the concern and, secondly, to expand

it. If it makes a loss or proves to be a bad investment, it is the private investor who suffers and not the Government or the people at large. A further point is that when it is a private concern the responsibility for its operation, efficiency and success or failure is pin-pointed to the person actually responsible.

Mr. Marshall: What benefit is that to the consumer if he cannot get the goods?

Mr. COURT: The hon. member must have been reading my notes because I am just coming to that point. If private industry runs it, the public gets what it wants and not what the Government of the day thinks it wants.

Mr. Marshall: At a price.

Mr. COURT: It is a vitally different thing to give the people what they want instead of what the Government thinks they want. I conclude on this note of examining the motion again on a basis slightly different from what I adopted when I started to discuss it. I have asked myself: Is the motion practical? Can it be given effect to if the Government so desires? The answer to each of these queries, to my mind, is definitely, "Yes."

The motion is in three parts. It states why the sale is needed; it refers to the urgency of funds. It says what is to be sold and there are listed four concerns that should be sold; and, thirdly, it has listed what will happen to the proceeds.

The first one to be answered is: Why is a sale needed? It will immediately release funds. This has been amply stressed. It will get rid of a non-government function and it will avoid further demands on the Treasury for expansion. It will remove what I consider to be unfair competition by a Government concern taking advantage of statutory provisions and Government influence. It will immediately stop losses being a charge upon the Treasury; and what is probably more important, it will be a demonstration to private industry that the Government is anxious to encourage private industry to run these things while it, the Government, gets on with the job of providing the essentials for an expanding community.

If we examine the list of what is to be sold, we will observe that included in it are the State Hotels, the State Saw Mills, the State Brick Works and the State Engineering Works. No one can say that these four industries are not amply catered for. There is the know-how and the capacity in industry to deal with them.

In the three producing industries—the saw mills, brick works and engineering works—we have factories and production units looking for more and more to do to keep their units on an efficient economic basis. If these concerns were sold back to private enterprise, rather than increase

costs, it would definitely reduce them—or give a capacity to reduce them—by a better planned production.

The Minister for Mines: Building costs would be much higher.

Mr. COURT: Why?

The Minister for Mines: Because it is only competition that keeps them down now.

Mr. COURT: They have all the competition they need without the Government shows.

The Minister for Mines: That is all that is keeping the prices down.

Mr. COURT: The Minister can think only in terms of private industry trying to grab too much.

The Minister for Mines: Not at all; I have a lot of admiration for private industry.

Mr. COURT: The Minister thinks only of industry in terms of profits and not of the immense good it has done. The third leg of the motion deals with the question of the proceeds and the use of them. This has been amply covered by the mover of the motion. He said to place the funds so receivable partly to the capital of the Rural & Industries Bank and the balance to providing essential requirements.

Mr. Potter: What are essentials?

Mr. COURT: The essentials of education, hospitals, water and power.

Mr. Nalder: They are not needed nearly so much in the metropolitan area as they are in the country.

Mr. COURT: I quite agree, and the proceeds of the sale of these four ventures would make a mighty difference to the expansion of these amenities in the country areas where the emphasis has been placed by the mover of the motion.

Earlier in my speech a question was asked regarding the possibility of selling these industries. I think it is practicable to sell them today at a fair and equitable price. There is no suggestion by anyone on this side of the House that they should be given away or sold for less than their true value.

Mr. Andrew: Like the whaling station.

Mr. COURT: It must have worried the hon. member when the whaling station was sold for such a handsome price compared with the original cost to the Government.

Mr. Johnson: What did they do with it?

Mr. COURT: This State retained the industry. If I remember correctly, the industry was sold to a private concern at a price much in excess of what the

Premier indicated as the State Government's offer. Does the hon. member suggest that it should have been sold to the State Government at less than it was sold to someone else?

The Premier: Certainly. It is time they did something for us.

Mr. COURT: The price was much higher than that offered by the State Government. It is practicable for these industries to be sold if a genuine effort is made to dispose of them. I commend the mover of the motion for his approach to the problem. The Government is sorely in need of these funds, and if it is that badly in need of them, this is a worthwhile method of producing a substantial pool of money with which to undertake essential works. I support the motion.

On motion by Mr. Oldfield, debate adjourned.

BILL—BANK HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 31st July.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn) [7.59]: A similar Bill has been before the House on a number of previous occasions and the member for Leederville, when introducing the present measure, dealt extensively with its implications. I do not propose to reiterate the contentions he submitted. I merely desire, as a member of the Government, to indicate that whilst the Government is not sponsoring this measure, it whole-heartedly supports the hon. member in his effort to amend the Act.

Mr. Roberts: Why won't the Government sponsor it?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: If the hon. member will wait for a moment, he will understand why. As a matter of fact, to deal with the interjection, the member for Leederville is quite within his rights in introducing such a measure, and the members of the Government agree with his submission. I have taken the trouble to read the speech of the member for Leederville and I feel that he answered any possible objections which might be raised against the measure. I have also looked up the Hansard reports of previous debates on this short measure and I find that some of the arguments advanced against the Bill were similar to those that have been advanced whenever any effort has been made to bring about a desirable change in certain conditions.

I understand that the Bank Officials' Association is not seeking a reduction of hours. That organisation seeks to have a five-day week and, no matter what case is submitted to the Arbitration Court, that authority cannot grant the request.

I recollect well when the standard of working conditions was 48 hours per week in this State. There was no question of a five-day week, but men worked six days a week and shop assistants and others worked until 10 o'clock on Saturday nights. When an effort was made to reduce the hours and to abolish the late shopping night, those who did not desire any change said that the shopkeepers would be ruined. Time showed that when the working hours were reduced and the shops closed at 1 o'clock on Saturdays, and later on when the late shopping on Friday was abolished, no shopkeepers went broke, so far as I know.

It is not so long since the clerical workers, or what are generally referred to now as white-collar workers, had no organisation and they had to work under conditions imposed upon them by individual employers. There was no overtime and no set standard hours. Following that, the 44 hour week was introduced and the same argument was applied as was the case when the 40 hour week was adopted. I can remember when men in the Public Works Department and in the railways worked a 5½ day week. It was suggested that they should work a five day week because it would be more economical. There was opposition to that move and there has been opposition in the courts of this country to the five day week for factory and other workers. But no one would suggest now that we revert to the 5½ day week.

I anticipate the arguments that will be advanced against this measure. Some people will say "How will the industrial or other workers do their banking if the banks are not open on Saturday mornings?" Where there is a will there is a way and it is wonderful how a community can adjust itself to changing conditions and circumstances. It is not so long ago that the Civil Service Association made representations to the Government for a five-day week. Its members worked a 5½ day week and offices closed at 12 noon on Saturdays. In some quarters there was a fair amount of opposition to the proposal for a five-day week. It was said that if the Lands Department or some other department closed, people would not be able to transact their business. But the offices closed even though for a time skeleton staffs carried on.

The same applies to the Commonwealth Public Service. I suppose that 99 per cent. of Commonwealth public servants work a five-day week, including those in the Taxation Department. One might say, "How will the people be able to pay their taxes if the Taxation Department is not open on Saturday mornings?" The Taxation Department soon found a way out of that difficulty.

The Premier: It is a pity that the Taxation Department does not work a lot less time.

Mr. Bovell: Especially the land tax section.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: It all depends on the results but the point is that in both the Commonwealth and State Civil Services a five-day week obtains, and apparently it is quite satisfactory. I have no doubt that if a five-day week were introduced for the bank officials, the community would soon adjust itself to the altered working hours.

Mr. O'Brien: Of course it would.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I believe in, and it is the policy of the Labour movement wherever possible to institute, a five-day working week.

Mr. Court: Can you tell us why your Labour confreres in the Eastern States will not agree to this?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: As far as that is concerned, I can answer that by saying that Hobart has enjoyed a five-day week for many years.

Mr. Court: What about the mainland States?

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Wait a minute! Hobart has enjoyed a five-day week for many years and when I was there two or three years ago, I made extensive inquiries to find out whether this suited the convenience of the citizens of Hobart. Neither storekeepers nor managers of banks nor anyone else would like to revert to the Saturday morning opening. Now let us deal with the matter raised by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition. It is quite possible that those in the Eastern States do not want a five-day week.

Mr. Court: They have no Legislative Council to stop them, and have not had one in Queensland for years. The same sort of thing applies in New South Wales.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I think the Deputy Leader of the Opposition will realise that somebody has to make a move first.

Mr. Court: But they have been approached and have refused.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The Government in Tasmania has made a move and made it some years ago. This State should not have to wait until Queensland or some other State makes a similar move.

Mr. Court: I am asking you why they have not agreed to it. There must have been good reason why.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: The hon. member may be able to explain it. I do not know of any valid reason why they did not agree.

Mr. Court: I think you know, but you will not tell us.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I do not. As far as this State is concerned, I believe that we should not have regard, in

a case like this, to whether Queensland or South Australia is for or against a five-day week. I think we should look at the position from our own point of view. In similar cases it has been found, when an alteration has been effected, that no hardship has been placed on any section of the community. I know that if the banks and shops were open until midnight every night, we would find some of those who are enjoying a shorter working week, or a five-day week instead of a six-day week, going into the shops or banks about five minutes before closing time. I believe that this is an opportunity for the Parliament of Western Australia to help the bank officials or those employed in the banking industry to obtain a five-day week.

Mr. Roberts: You have not yet answered my question as to why the Government did not introduce the Bill. You said you would answer it.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I explained that the member for Leederville is quite within his rights in introducing the Bill.

Mr. Hearman: That is not an answer to the question.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I am just indicating the position. The member for Narrogin introduced a motion which dealt with the disposal of State trading concerns. What happened? His leader supported him.

Mr. Roberts: We are not the Government.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: And are not likely to be for quite a while. The member for Narrogin was ably supported by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition and all I am saying is that the member for Leederville introduced this measure as a private member's Bill. It is a Bill dealing with industrial reform and as our policy is a five-day week, we agree with the Bill introduced by the member for Leederville.

Mr. Hearman: Then why not make it a Government measure.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I cannot understand the hon. member. I hope that the measure will pass through both Houses of Parliament.

MR. W. A. MANNING (Narrogin) [8.10]: The member for Leederville, when introducing the Bill, said much the same as he did last year when he introduced the same sort of legislation. A good deal of his time was spent in endeavouring to separate from the responsibilities of banking, the services which banks render. He did the same thing last year. He was most insistent that banking was one thing and the service rendered by the banks was another. He spent a lot of his time trying to prove his point. To me service is part of banking because the two cannot be separated, and how the hon. member

can separate what goes on inside a bank and banking is more than I can understand.

What we had to decide last year and what we have to decide this year is whether the banks provide an important service on Saturday mornings. If we try to separate service from banking, we will not be able to provide any answer and that apparently is what the member for Leederville would like. I suggest that if the banks do not want that portion of their business, which is regarded as the service side of banking, there is no reason why they should retain it. We will soon be able to find someone else to take it up. That was clearly established at the inquiry last year. If the banks do not want to render a service, there are others who are ready to step into their shoes.

Why do other concerns want to do this? Because there is a demand for service, and at present the banks provide it. The speech of the member for Leederville, which I examined again after listening to him, is a repetition of what he said last year. I endeavoured to find something which was new, but failed to do so. The only thing I could find this year was that he condemned those who work in the banks, and I cannot understand why. He said that people who joined and remained in the banks were dumb and weak-spined for doing so. I cannot understand why he made that statement or where it will get him. I feel that the banks are rendering such a service that their staffs cannot be as dumb or weak-spined as the member for Leederville would have us believe they are.

In my opinion, the community wants the service which the banks at present are rendering on Saturday mornings. If we want proof of this, we have only to look at the growth of banking activities over the last 12 months, particularly the savings bank sections. We could see the writing on the wall last year and one has only to look at the number of savings bank agencies that have been opened up. All these agencies are situated in shops that are open longer than others, such as chemist shops and the like, because the banks find that there is a demand for their services over long hours. Surely that is proof enough.

There is no point in saying that nobody wants the service that the banks are providing, because there is no doubt that the public demand is there. I am quite sure that since we dealt with this matter last year, our case has been proved. I have indicated that the member for Leederville has presented us with nothing new to change the opinion of anybody in this House. The evidence is available for all members to see and to help them deal with the question. Accordingly, I do not propose to say anything further except to indicate that the member for Leederville has done nothing to convince us that

the position has changed over the last year. My point is that the actions of the bank prove that the demand is even greater now than it was eight months ago.

MR. GAFFY (Canning) [8.16]: It is not my intention to take up the time of the House but I merely wish to point out that I agree with the member for Narrogin when he says that nothing new has been submitted. That being so, nothing new has been submitted against the case. I believe the case was submitted most logically last session and that it cannot be improved upon. To my mind, one statement made by the member for Narrogin was quite ridiculous. He said that if the banks did not want to offer the service to the people, there were others who would be quite prepared to take it on. I do not know where he got that idea. If he is referring in an oblique manner to the armoured escort service, I would point out that at no time have they indicated that they were endeavouring to be a banking service. All they are doing is offering a service between the public and the bank. They do not offer this service to the retail traders or to commerce but to people in other walks of life.

They offer this service to starting price bookmakers and those bookmakers who are on the course and handle a good deal of money in doing so. I would suggest that the opposition to the five-day week for bankers comes from the retail traders. By way of interjection, the member for Harvey asked the member for Leederville if he would consider an amendment which would give the banks a half day on Monday as a holiday. That to me suggests that they might consider giving them Monday but definitely not Saturday. The only reason for this question that I can think of is to be found in the evidence submitted to the select committee by the retail traders who said that Monday was their slackest day and that Fridays and Saturdays were their busiest trading days.

There was some suggestion during the course of the speech of the member for Leederville that the Commonwealth Bank would not come into line with the private banks. One member painted a pathetic picture of bankers and their families starving in the gutter. In rebuttal of that, I would like to quote a legal opinion I have received from Downing and Downing. It reads as follows:—

The proposed inclusion in the schedule of the Bank Holidays Act, 1884 of the words "each and every Saturday" will be to make it obligatory for all banks, including the Western Australian branches of the Commonwealth Bank, to close all day on each Saturday.

I would like to quote another legal opinion from Mr. T. S. Louch, Q.C., who among other things, says this—

Prior to Federation there were two statutes in Western Australia which dealt with this matter, viz., the Bank

Holidays Act, 1884 and the Bills of Exchange Act, 1884. These statutes had their counterparts throughout the British Commonwealth.

In 1909 the Federal Parliament passed the Bills of Exchange Act. The first schedule to this Act shows that it overrides the whole of the W.A. Bills of Exchange Act, 1884, but still leaves it open to the State to appoint bank holidays under the Bank Holidays Act, 1884.

Further, the opinion states—

As matters stand at present,* therefore, the State Government can determine what bank holidays there shall be in Western Australia; and pursuant to Section 98 (4), such holidays then become non-business days for the purposes of the Bills of Exchange Act.

Further on Mr. Louch says—

I therefore think that any such amendment to the State Bank Holidays Act would apply to the Commonwealth Trading Bank as well as to other banks.

I do not think I could add any more than that, and I support the measure.

MR. I. W. MANNING (Harvey) [8.21]: This question of banking hours is one that has received a lot of attention in this Parliament over the past four years, and the Bills that have been introduced by the member for Leederville have not been successful. As has been mentioned by several speakers, this matter was also considered by a select committee which was tendered a great volume of evidence for and against the closing of banks on Saturday morning.

There are three main points which I think should be considered. The first is that put forward by the bank employees regarding their desire to have Saturday morning off. They believe that is an industrial reform that could be given to them. Secondly, there is the point of view of the customers of the bank—and here I refer to the traders, the farmers, the general public; those people who have difficulty in obtaining change on Saturday mornings, and difficulty in depositing their cash takings; added to which are those who come to town to do business on Saturday morning.

It is a well-known fact, particularly in the country—and I should imagine it applies equally in the metropolitan area—that people do not come to town to conduct one line of business only. If they have banking business to conduct, they come to town to carry out that business as well as any other they might have on hand. Accordingly, with the various business houses and the banks being open together, we find that one is attracting business to the other, and that is very

important from the point of view of the customer of the bank, particularly in the country areas.

The point of view of the employers must also be considered; and I now refer to the Associated Banks. They claim that their business is to render service and they employ their staff to provide that service. The whole of their purpose in this world is to provide service for the trader and the general customer of the bank. So the question of closing banks on Saturday morning is a much larger one than would at first appear to those people who have advocated that banks should close on Saturday morning.

Judging from the volume of evidence adduced before the select committee, a far greater number of people would be placed in difficulties by the closing of banks on Saturdays than those who would receive any benefit from it. When we consider doing the greatest good for the greatest number of people, we should take that point and give it serious consideration. Even though we have some 3,000 odd bank employees seeking Saturday morning off, the value of Saturday morning banking to a great number who are opposed to it, is something which we should not brush aside lightly.

Mr. Potter: How do we know they are opposed to it?

Mr. I. W. MANNING: In answer to that interjection, I would refer again to the volume of evidence placed before the select committee by the people who came forward on behalf of particular industries, including the retail traders, as was mentioned by the member for Canning.

Mr. Lawrence: Do you refer to the metropolitan area or the country?

Mr. I. W. MANNING: I think that applies mainly to the suburban and country areas. From the evidence that was given to the select committee, the city block is something which is entirely different again to the suburban and country areas—particularly larger country towns which are beehives of activity on Saturday mornings.

Mr. Lawrence: The suburban areas have banking facilities now even after the banks are shut.

Mr. I. W. MANNING: The hon. member might be referring to savings banks, but so far as the business people are concerned, I think this question is one of trading banks. We should not, of course, treat lightly the wish of the bank officers who want Saturday morning off, and there are other approaches that could be made to this question than merely bringing a Bill before Parliament. I believe it is a matter that could be decided on a Federal basis.

Mr. Marshall: You always find some way around it.

Mr. I. W. MANNING: It might be a good idea to compromise on these questions rather than throw them out completely.

It is all very well to say, "Shut the banks on Saturday mornings and go hang the rest," but I believe that this Parliament should consider the greatest good for the greatest number of people. We should approach this matter on a Federal basis and ask the Premier to bring it up at a Premiers' Conference. He could discuss it with the Government representatives of the other States and after they have had a look at the overall picture and decided what the effect would be on an Australia-wide basis, they could come to a decision.

Mr. Potter: Would you still oppose it if it were handled on a Federal basis?

Mr. I. W. MANNING: I do not propose to answer that interjection.

Mr. Jamieson: I do not think you can.

Mr. I. W. MANNING: I would like to continue with the point I was making. In the evidence given to the select committee by the Associated Banks, it was stated that to close banks before the shops was to put the cart before the horse. In Tasmania everything is closed on Saturday mornings and there is no need for the services of the banks because all industry is closed down. Perhaps that point could also be considered by a Premiers' Conference; namely, that a move be made to close all business on Saturday morning.

Mr. Lawrence: What about s.p. shops?

Mr. I. W. MANNING: Then these people would not feel they were likely to be in difficulty if the banks were closed on Saturday morning.

Mr. Evans: Would not the shopkeepers howl?

Hon. L. Thorn: If they closed the pubs?

Mr. I. W. MANNING: Those are points which I consider require serious consideration. Rather than say we cannot agree to the request of the bank officers to close the banks on Saturday morning, we should look at it from the other angle and consider the possibility of closing all commerce and industry as well as banks. We would find that in granting this concession to one section of the people, we would dissatisfy another. I do not say that is a major point we should consider, but it is very important that if we give this concession to one section, we should look at the possibility of giving it to the other. I commend that approach.

I am amazed at some of the statements made by the member for Leederville and his approach to this question. He claims that so little business is done on Saturday mornings that the services of banks are not required at that time. He also said that most of the business done by banks is not banking, and he claims that banking should be confined to the safe keeping and lending of money. This would seem to indicate that the only employee the

bank should engage is the manager because the lending of money is his business.

If the other business carried on by the bank is to be handed over to alternative facilities, as the member for Leederville suggests—and he claims that the alternative facilities are sufficient to handle this type of business other than the holding and lending of money—then we will reach the stage where the banks will have to take a very close look at the staff they employ. The banks claim they are desirous of giving a service; they employ staff accordingly. If their activities are to be confined to banking, as suggested by the member for Leederville, then they will only require the manager, because whenever I go to borrow money he is the person I have to interview.

This question is not one which can be considered lightly. It is not one on which we could say, "All right, close the banks." Too many sections of the people are involved and too many points, other than the mere closing of the doors of banks, have to be considered. Whilst I do not think that this matter should be brushed aside lightly, I would point out that in putting forward their case before the select committee, the Bank Officers' Association contended that the time had arrived when the public could do without banking facilities on Saturday mornings. The customers of the banks are wondering what they will do if no banking services are available to them.

Mr. Lawrence: Could they not draw their money on Fridays?

Mr. I. W. MANNING: The banks claim that this measure conflicts very much with their approach to this subject. Their approach is that they are a service industry, that their purpose is to provide a service, that they employ staff to give that service, and if trade, commerce and the general public require that service on Saturday morning, that service should be available. In making a contribution to this debate my approach is to request the Premier to raise this matter at a Premiers' Conference and bring forward two points. Firstly, what would be the Australia-wide effect of closing banks on Saturday mornings, bearing in mind the effect on the economy of trade and commerce, and the desires of the people. If agreement on the point can be reached on an Australia-wide basis, I see no reason why it should not be put into effect. Secondly, and most important of all, consideration should be given to the closing of all trade, commerce and industry on Saturday mornings.

MR. OLDFIELD (Mt. Lawley) [8.35]: This is the third consecutive year that such a measure has been before this Chamber. On the two previous occasions, it was carried, obviously because the Government had the majority. When it was before this House two years ago I, as

member for Maylands, supported it, and my predecessor, the then member for Mt. Lawley, also supported it from this side of the House. Last year, I and another member from this side of the House also supported the measure. I must say that my mind is still unchanged.

It may be true that no fresh evidence has been brought before the House, and that charge has been made. The question is whether fresh evidence is required because this Chamber has approved of this measure on two occasions previously. It was not this House that rejected the Bill, but another place. Possibly the claim could be levelled in another place that fresh evidence has not been forthcoming to change the attitude of members there. We do not need fresh evidence here because if our minds remain unchanged since the last occasion, the Bill must be carried.

There need not be a prolonged debate on the Bill because reference to Hansard of last year and the year before will amply indicate the views of members. In the two previous debates, most members had something to say on one or both occasions. In my previous contribution, I mentioned the fact that we were living in a most selfish world, so selfish, in fact, that none of us are prepared, as individuals, to make ourselves available for the convenience of others, but we all want others to be available for our convenience.

I suppose one can go into many industrial establishments here such as the Midland Junction Workshops, where for years the workers have enjoyed free Saturday mornings. They applied for a five-day week and were granted it.

Mr. Ackland: You mean a free week!

Mr. OLDFIELD: The hon. member has again brought up something dear to his heart. We can find many industrial establishments which for many years have granted Saturday mornings off. Originally, this concession was granted to allow the workers to have an opportunity for shopping. The very people, the staunch unionists, who are supposed to stand up and see that decent conditions prevail for their fellow-workers, would be the very first to scream if the retail stores were to close on Saturday mornings. This is because some of them like to give their wives the excuse that they are going to town or going down the street on the pretext of doing some shopping.

Mr. Lawrence: Or to take a few library books down.

Mr. OLDFIELD: And legitimately to take a few library books down, with a few s.p. tickets in their pockets as well. Looking around here, I have noticed that even members of this House, who have the opportunity during the week busy as they are to have a haircut, occupy chairs

in hairdressers' shops on Saturday mornings to the exclusion of the people who are unable to find time for that purpose between Monday and Friday.

The SPEAKER: The hon. member must not reflect on the actions of members of Parliament.

Mr. OLDFIELD: At times they are selfish.

Mr. Lawrence: What about that bodge haircut you had on Saturday?

Mr. OLDFIELD: It is most refreshing to hear an interjection from the hon. member on the odd occasion when he wakes up. What I have said also applies to banking, and no doubt members of the public who are able to do their banking on any day, sometimes leave it until the last moment on Saturday mornings.

Hon. L. Thorn: You do it yourself.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The same thing always happens. If there is a debate on polling hours, there is always argument whether the booths should close at 6 p.m. or 8 p.m. Whatever happens, the last hour will be the busiest.

Mr. Hearman: Just like the pubs!

Mr. OLDFIELD: It is always busiest at the deathknock in trade and commerce, as evidenced by the Christmas Eve shopping rush. Mention has been made of what happens in retail establishments in the city on Saturday morning. The proprietor of a large drapery and ladies' wear store in Perth, who commands a large amount of trade and, in fact, possesses more than one shop in Perth, together with a chain of country stores, though not a large chain, informed me that 90 per cent. of the takings was in the till between 10 and 10.30 a.m. on Saturdays. After that, the people about are only window-hopping. I think that the bank officers can substantiate this observation. Much of the banking done on Saturday mornings could well and truly be done on Friday evening, during the week or left until the following Monday.

Mr. I. W. Manning: The banks would not be able to cope with it.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Of course, they could cope with it on Monday mornings, when they are not now busy. If one were to go down the street on Saturday morning, one could see the people making deposits or withdrawals at the suburban savings banks, but there is nothing to prevent the wives of those people going in with withdrawal forms on the Friday, forms which had been signed by their husbands previously.

Mr. Hearman: Many people would oppose their wives doing that.

Mr. OLDFIELD: There is nothing to stop the wives even making the deposits on Monday mornings.

Mr. I. W. Manning: What about their washing?

Mr. OLDFIELD: It is often considered here that country members see things from a country point of view. As a metropolitan member, I do try to see things from a country point of view. I wish that that were reciprocated by some country members who do not give the metropolitan area consideration at times.

Mr. Roberts: The metropolitan area has had too much of a go.

Mr. OLDFIELD: It is impossible for the metropolitan area to have had too much of a go because we have only 21 members against 29 members representing country electorates.

Mr. Roberts: What about the allocation of educational funds?

Hon. L. Thorn: There is a rumour going around that you will join the Country Party.

Mr. OLDFIELD: The hon. member has been misinformed during his trip to Darwin.

Mr. Jamieson: That will upset the merger, I suppose.

Hon. D. Brand: I know of an amalgamation that will muck you up before long. It will not be the amalgamation you are speaking of, either.

Mr. OLDFIELD: If the hon. members have finished with their crossfire, I shall proceed. To conclude, I reiterate what has been said on many occasions in this House. Facilities can be made available under which banking can take place, and money for safe keeping lodged on Saturday morning, if that is the worry of retail establishments and hotels which have a fear of holding over the week-ends the takings for Saturdays and Sundays. That can be overcome by the provision of night safes.

I notice that most modern banks being built in the suburban areas have included night safes. That facility is not availed of by some of the people who claim they must have banking facilities on Saturday mornings, as evidenced by the fact that periodically hotel safes containing takings for Friday nights, Saturdays and Sundays have been stolen. There are times when people in business can lodge their deposits on Friday afternoons, but they have not availed themselves of the opportunity. Likewise, the banking of Saturday afternoon's takings presents no obstacle because of the existence of night safes and the armoured escort service. I support the second reading of the Bill.

MR. HEARMAN (Blackwood) [8.45]: I listened carefully to the Minister's remarks and noticed that he evaded the question as to why the Government did not sponsor this Bill. He said it was in line with

Government policy and then added that, of course, a private member has the right to introduce a Bill.

The Minister for Labour: And of course he has!

Mr. HEARMAN: Of course! But that does not answer the question why the Government did not introduce the Bill if it is in line with Government policy.

The Minister for Labour: Don't be so childish!

Mr. HEARMAN: Obviously any Government that seeks to put the responsibility on to a private member to introduce legislation which is in accordance with its own policy must have some reservations about that policy. Furthermore, it seems to me that the Minister's interest in this question is rather superficial. He argued, for instance, that there has been a five-day week worked in industry for a number of years, and that in many cases it suited industry.

I can readily understand that, particularly as it relates to industries in which there are certain industrial processes, such as heating boilers. If the same number of hours can be worked, and without the necessity to heat the boilers so often, it is desirable to make that economy. But that does not apply to a business such as banking. I do not think that additional economic costs are involved in opening on Saturday mornings. In any case, even if there are, the people who are responsible for the management of the banks are prepared to accept those additional costs within their own institutions. Therefore it seems to me that that argument is not valid as it applies to the banking industry.

It was also said by the Minister that human nature is flexible and will get used to anything. That is perfectly true. It will get used to practically anything, except hanging. I suppose that if we had the banks open on only two days a week, those who had to do banking would manage somehow to do it. But it does not seem to me that that in itself would be a very logical argument for the introduction of legislation for a two-day banking week. Of course the people concerned would adapt themselves to it; they would have to.

On the same basis there are people who eat only two meals a day. But we prefer to eat three; and I do not think that it can be logically suggested that because we could get used to eating only two, therefore it would be a good thing to go in for only two. The Minister's logic appears to me to be superficial; and, furthermore, the Government would appear to have some reservations about sponsoring this legislation, which reservations the Minister is not prepared to make public.

So far as the Bill is concerned, I am one who represents a country electorate, and there are certain aspects of the proposal which affect that electorate. I have discussed these on the floor of the House and

privately with the member for Leederville; and he knows very well that one of the things that concerns me is the provision of adequate banking facilities for people on wages who work a five-day week in many instances a number of miles from a town, and who require banking facilities on Saturday mornings.

I am well aware that people such as road workers, mill employees and the like could use savings bank facilities. But many of these folk are endeavouring either to build or pay for a house, or to start some sort of a farm; and they require normal banking facilities, such as the provision of finance, either temporarily or for a long period.

The Minister for Labour: Don't you think that they would extend to others the privilege that they enjoy?

Mr. HEARMAN: I do not see how a man who works a five-day week some miles away from a bank will enjoy the privileges of a five-day banking week. The man who works a five-day week and who is at some distance from a bank of any description wants to do his banking on a Saturday morning, and I feel that he should be able to do it. It is true that savings bank facilities are available, but they are not always the facilities that these people need; and it seems to me that there is a case to be made out in this connection. I know that the member for Leederville has given the matter some attention and has not yet agreed that he can produce a satisfactory service for these people who, I feel, are entitled to it.

In country towns, in many instances, there are not a great number of facilities available on a Saturday morning. I refer to entertainment facilities; and, in fact, there are not many of them available over the week-end. I do not like the idea of a man going into town with a pay cheque on Saturday and having it cashed by a storekeeper by paying his grocery bill, and then being left with the balance of his wages in his pocket. Unless he goes to the savings bank, he has no means of banking that money. So he has the whole week-end in town with the s.p. bookmaker and the pubs at his disposal—two very good means of spending his money. It appears to me that this proposition is not going to encourage the wage-earner to be thrifty or to give him opportunities that we should be prepared to provide him with for the saving of his money. I believe that thrift is something that we should encourage in the community; and that so far as the country districts are concerned, a five-day banking week would place at a disadvantage wage-earners who went into a town with pay cheques.

Already, as a matter of fact—due to the fact that many do not arrive in town until Friday evening or Saturday morning—the storekeeper acts to some extent as a banker by changing their cheques for them. But while the storekeeper can

change a cheque, he cannot also hold a man's money. It is not his job to do that. So the man still has to look after his cash. I believe that if a man has an overdraft, and is trying to build a house and wants to pay as much into the bank as he can to reduce his overdraft, he should be given every facility to do just that, and not be told that he can do it by post or in some other way.

I know it is possible to bank by post; but I am acquainted with a great number of these men, and I know that they will never do it. They prefer to bank over the counter; they hate writing. I know many of them and have lived amongst them; and generally speaking, the idea of banking by post does not appeal to them.

The other point on which I would like to hear the member for Leederville concerns the position of the savings banks. It is fairly generally the case that the post office is the agent for the Commonwealth Savings Bank, and the Rural & Industries Bank has either the local chemist or newsagent to act for it. I have no particular quarrel with that. It is true, as the member for Narrogin pointed out, that these people very often, looking for business, will remain open longer than the normal trading hours. I would like to ask the member for Leederville where he stands in connection with savings banks that are sponsored by the trading banks, of which there are quite a number.

Naturally, if a bank has a branch in a town, it also acts for the savings bank in that town. If the bank premises are closed on Saturday morning, does the hon. member suggest that the savings bank section should remain open in that building, or that it should be closed as well? While the member for Leederville may be quite happy at the prospect of all savings bank business going to Government-sponsored banks, it seems to me that there may be quite a number of people—including bank officers—who might prefer to see their own banks and their savings bank branches in genuine competition with Government banks. If so, their own banks must provide comparable facilities. That means that the savings bank branches would have to be open for approximately the same hours as the Government-sponsored banks.

I would like to hear from the hon. member what the view of the Bank Officers' Association is on that point. I find it hard to believe that the bank officers employed by the trading banks would cheerfully say, "We are not concerned about our bank's savings bank branch; we do not mind if it loses business to the Government banks." After all is said and done, a person who starts off with a savings bank account is likely to develop that into an ordinary account with the bank as he grows older and his family responsibilities increase. It is difficult for me to believe that the employees of trading

banks would cheerfully concede that savings bank business to the Government banks. If that is the case, and if the hon. member is able to say with authority that it is the case, I must say that I shall be extremely disappointed in the association.

To conclude, I would like to recapitulate. I do not think the Minister has told us why the Government is not prepared to sponsor this legislation. I do not know whether the member for Leederville will be willing to tell us. I feel that the imposition of the five-day banking week in the country would be a distinct hardship on wage-earners who cannot get away during the week to do normal banking transactions without sacrificing some of their working time and their pay. We should encourage thrift in them.

Further, I would like the House to remember that in many country towns, apart from the starting-price bookmaker and the pub, there are very few entertainment facilities available. And those two particular businesses provide ample opportunity for people to squander their money if they are that way inclined. Finally, I would like to think that bank officers were prepared to put their savings bank branches in genuine competition with Government-sponsored savings banks.

MR. COURT (Nedlands) [8.58]: It is most unfortunate that this measure has developed around it a degree of contention. There are several aspects of it which, when considered in a calm way, can remove the air of contention and allow the matter to be considered in an objective manner; and the sooner we can get back to that basis and take personalities out of it, the better it will be.

Mr. Jamieson: Are you going to capitulate?

Mr. COURT: Nothing of the sort!

Mr. Jamieson: So long as we know!

Mr. COURT: If the hon. member will listen for a while, he may agree with me privately, even if he does not do so publicly. The Minister tried to make light of the fact that the Government did not introduce this legislation. He parried the blow by saying that a private member can introduce a Bill. With that we do not disagree. But if this matter is one of such importance to the Government, obviously it was the responsibility of the Government to say, "We will bring down this measure," and declare once and for all that this was a matter of Government policy.

I have on several occasions tried to draw from the Minister an explanation of why this question received such a cold shoulder from Labour Administrations in other parts of Australia which do not have to reason with a Legislative Council. Queensland, in particular, has not had a Legislative Council for years and the Government had an overwhelming majority in

the Legislative Assembly, which enabled it to put through whatever legislation it wished.

For all practical purposes New South Wales has for some years been in an identical position. I will now quote the words of the member for Leederville with regard to the Eastern States the other evening—

Mr. Johnson: I feel there should be no need for further debate on the matter, but I wish to emphasise that even the spineless worm that the average bank officer is industrially—

Mr. Roberts: They will be glad to hear that.

Mr. Johnson: They agree with me on that and they will not entirely forget those who tried to help them or those who opposed the move.

It was at that point that the member for Leederville emphasised the attempt he had made to make this question a political issue. The debate continued—

Mr. Bovell: I would like you to elaborate on this spineless worm business because it is a serious reflection on bank officers.

Mr. Lawrence: Do not blush!

Mr. Johnson: I know the hon. member was a bank officer and I know he would not like it thought that he was a spineless worm and I point out that he found occasion to retire from the service and he has not been the only one to do so. I might mention that moves are afoot in all States of the Commonwealth to introduce legislation to amend the provisions for bank holidays. There are some practical difficulties because of the mechanics of the various State Parliaments and to some extent owing to the set up of party machinery and so on, but I would remind members that one of the first actions of a certain Liberal politician in the storm-wracked State of Queensland—

I might add that he was speaking before the events of last Saturday.

Mr. Bovell: It is all calm over there now.

Mr. COURT: To continue—

—on being elected, having been a teller in a bank, was to raise the subject. It is not political unless one cares to make it so.

Hon. D. Brand: How did the Liberal Party member get on with his Bill?

Mr. Johnson: He received the same sort of unintelligent opposition from—

Mr. Roberts: The Labour Government.

Mr. Johnson: —the Gair Government as I am getting from Liberals, here.

Leaving out the events of the last few months in regard to the Queensland political scene, at the time when the Queensland Government would not have a bar of this legislation, the political turmoil that has since caused the downfall of the Gair Government did not exist, and that Government was on friendly terms as far as we know with the A.L.P. throughout Australia and was speaking as an A.L.P. Government.

When we translate the scene to New South Wales I have yet to find where a Labour Government of that State, with complete control of both Houses, has seen fit to bring down this legislation. The only reasons I can find for that are, firstly, that the Government there felt it would not be a desirable move at this point of time and, secondly, that it was something that should be done in concert with the other States.

Mr. Johnson: There is agitation for it in all the States.

Mr. COURT: If it has been a red-hot issue for a considerable time, can the hon. member tell me that the bank officers would not know, through their association, how to approach the question both industrially and politically?

Hon. D. Brand: Particularly if the move in Hobart has been the success we are led to believe it is.

The Minister for Justice: I think the member for Leederville should be complimented on his initiative.

Mr. COURT: I will not answer that. I believe the Labour Administrations in those other States felt it was a matter that should be done in concert, and I cannot understand why the Premiers have not got together on this issue at a Premiers' Conference and come to some decision on it. It may be that behind closed doors at a Premiers' Conference they have said, "No."

Mr. Johnson: This is too unimportant for that.

Mr. COURT: It is not, because of the position of the Commonwealth Bank, and if the decision was made at a Premiers' Conference with the concurrence of the Commonwealth Government, it would help materially to overcome one of the practical difficulties which could, but might not, arise. I have reason to believe that the Commonwealth Bank would not, after a period, remain closed and there is good reason why it could completely ignore this legislation in spite of what the member for Canning said this evening. I am certain that if it so desired, the Commonwealth Bank could remain outside this legislation.

Mr. Johnson: Why?

Mr. COURT: Because it has power to ignore this legislation. I am referring to the Commonwealth Bank and the State cannot bind the Commonwealth.

Mr. Johnson: It is not the Commonwealth Government in the right of the Crown, but a trading organisation.

Mr. COURT: That may be so in regard to certain functions of the Commonwealth Bank.

Mr. Johnson: What happened in Hobart?

Mr. COURT: I am not interested in Hobart. Members opposite bring that question up repeatedly. We know what happened to the shops in Hobart on Saturdays. Therein lies the explanation of the Hobart scene, and there is no need to go over it again. The Hobart commercial world can function as a separate unit much more easily than the mainland States can, as would be obvious to any member who visited Hobart.

A further reason why the time is not yet ripe to make this decision in Western Australia is the question of Saturday morning trading. It is common knowledge that that question is under discussion and that there have been conferences between the appropriate unions and employers' organisations, though with what result I do not know. Members opposite might well know the decision, but I do not know whether anything conclusive has been done or whether the question has been deferred.

However, this is a vital issue and it would be wrong of us at this time to make a decision on the Saturday banking question. It should be clear to members opposite, including the member for Leederville, that we would raise no objection—I speak as a private member because this is a private member's Bill as we understand it, or as I understand it.

Mr. Jamieson: I am glad you corrected yourself.

Mr. COURT: If a decision had been made at a Premiers' Conference that this action should be taken, and the Commonwealth Bank gave an assurance that it would conform, I would have no objection, but it is crazy for us to step out of line at this time. The general trend in banking and trading hours everywhere is to liberalise them, though not to increase the hours of employees.

The Minister for Labour: We want to labourise them.

Mr. COURT: To socialise them would be more correct. There is no suggestion that the individual should be called on for greater effort or to work longer hours or accept worse conditions, but it is world-wide trend to increase trading hours, particularly in the retail field, without imposing unfair burdens or worsening conditions of employment. I think those are good reasons why this question should be deferred. I presume the Premier can place this matter on the agenda of the Premiers' Conference or request that it be placed there.

Mr. Evans: How far do you think it would get?

Mr. COURT: If the pressure mentioned by the member for Leederville is being applied in each of the six mainland States, it should have some effect and surely the Premiers of those States will have to take notice of it! Is it not easier and more practical for them to make the decision together and then go back and talk to their respective Parliaments and inform them that they have undertaken to implement this legislation? I would not oppose the measure if the decision had been made by the Premiers' Conference or if a decision had been made to close shops on Saturdays. The hon. member cannot convince me that the average bank officer is so irresponsible that he is not conscious of his role in the community. They are a responsible section of the community and are capable of examining the pros and cons of the questions.

Mr. Johnson: They are afraid to express their views.

Mr. COURT: I believe that individually the more responsible of them would agree that there is an argument against this decision being taken at the present time.

Mr. Jamieson: They would not say that in front of their managers.

Mr. COURT: Apparently, the hon. member puts these men in the same class as the member for Leederville did when he said they were spineless, but this is 1957 and not 1857.

Mr. Johnson: If you have an opinion of your own in the bank, you get the boots put into you.

Mr. COURT: I think the hon. member was shown the greatest tolerance. He is a living advertisement of the great tolerance shown by our trading banks towards his political and other views.

Mr. Jamieson: His experience was not singular.

Mr. COURT: I think he received very good treatment, and apparently the hon. member agrees.

Mr. Jamieson: I do not agree with your distorted views.

Mr. COURT: I have given cogent reasons why this decision should not be made now and I have yet to be satisfied that the problem of the Commonwealth Bank has been overcome. Perhaps the managers and staffs in this State would wish to conform to whatever was laid down for the other banks, but there may be pressure from higher up. The tendency is seen plainly in other States where trading is extending many hours outside normal banking hours.

I know the member for Leederville will not agree with me on this issue. He tries to say there are mysterious functions of banks which are not really banking.

I think he referred to chromium plating and other descriptions in that regard, but he cannot convince me that we can have banking at present without these appendages. It would be plain suicide for any bank to try to dispense with them. A further contention put forward by the member for Leederville is that the banking industry is not a service industry. I fail to see what a bank is doing if it is not giving a service.

Mr. Hall: It is not a self-service anyhow.

Mr. COURT: That is probably one of the most pertinent remarks that has been made this evening.

Mr. Johnson: You have been talking a long time.

Mr. COURT: I have before me an extract of the evidence given by the banks' representative before the select committee. This is available for members to read if they so desire and, amongst other things, it states—

Banking is an industry amongst others, which provides certain essential services to the community. In the expression "community" banks include not only those engaged in commercial activities of all kinds but also private members of the community. The banks' experience of Saturday morning trading indicates that banking services are required on this day to a very considerable extent by people who are precluded by their employment from attending to their banking needs other than on Saturday morning. Our investigations confirm that on Saturday mornings the banks are used extensively by various types of customers, including five-day week workers, for withdrawal and deposit of funds or the remitting of money abroad, and also for consultation with managers and accountants by borrowers, prospective borrowers and others. It must be obvious that many of the Saturday morning customers could not make use of banking facilities at any other time unless they were permitted to be absent from their employment.

That summarises fairly well that which I take it is the official view of the banks in regard to their relationship to the community, and it emphasises, first and foremost, that they constitute a service industry and an essential one at that.

For the reasons I have stated, I consider it is not opportune to press this matter in order that it may be placed on the statute book. If the Government so desires, there is ample opportunity for it to obtain a Commonwealth-wide decision on it not only among the Premiers themselves, but also from the Commonwealth Government and so get rid of the contention that surrounds this particular issue, much of which has been generated quite unnecessarily.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville—in reply) [9.17]: I would like to thank all those members who have spoken to the debate and to reply to them quite briefly. First of all, in replying to the member for Nedlands on the question of the closing of the Commonwealth Bank, I would like to quote a further portion of the legal opinion given by Mr. T. S. Louch which was not quoted by the member for Canning. I trust that the member for Nedlands will get hold of his pencil and put this down. This further opinion is as follows—

In 1915 in *Heiner v Scott*, 19 C.L.R. 381, it was held by the High Court that the business of the Commonwealth Bank was not a governmental function; and if that was so in 1915 it would be a fortiori now in the case of the Commonwealth trading bank since it has been separated from the other activities of the Commonwealth Bank.

I trust that is perfectly clear. I have said the same thing a number of times, I know, but the member for Nedlands automatically takes the attitude that anything I say is wrong.

Hon. A. F. Watts: There is a certain amount of reciprocity about that.

Mr. JOHNSON: That which I have just quoted is the opinion of a Q.C. that was given on the subject. Now that I have quoted it, I hope the member for Nedlands will accept it.

Mr. Bovell: Q.C.'s often differ in their opinions, you know.

The Premier: So do Queens.

Mr. Bovell: That is over my head.

Mr. JOHNSON: I would like to thank the Minister for Labour for confirming that which was confirmed by the Premier on the last occasion I introduced a measure such as this, namely, that the Government supports this legislation. This is a private member's Bill, as has been emphasised by all concerned, and it is not a Government measure. Nevertheless, on each occasion a similar Bill has been introduced, the Government has stated that it is in line with its policy and supports it. That is plain and open enough, and if any members on the other side of the House cannot understand that, it must be for the reason that the parties to which they belong do not have the same regard for the opinions of private members as has the Government which is now in office. The matter of the closing of banks on Saturday morning is not important, except to a fairly small group of individuals.

Mr. I. W. Manning: Don't be so sure about that!

Mr. JOHNSON: That small group of people are those directly concerned, namely, the bank officers. In an industrial community, even of the size of ours, bank

officers comprise only a small part of industry. Anyone who gives any thought to the pattern of legislation or to the planning of legislation by the Government, must realise that it is impossible for a Government to attend to all the things that it would like to do, even if it were 50 years in office. When a private member brings a Bill forward and persists with its introduction, and it is in line with Government policy—

Mr. Roberts: It is wasting the Government's time.

Mr. JOHNSON: Private members are allowed to waste the Government's time.

The Premier: I think members of the Opposition raise these issues only to dodge the merits of the Bill.

Mr. JOHNSON: I was developing that aspect at some length because it explains the reasons—which the members of the Liberal Party in particular find so hard to follow—why this measure has not been introduced by the Government or by previous Labour Governments. It is not a very important matter and it is not likely to come to the surface unless someone kicks up a fair-size fuss. I have been a little persistent with this legislation. This is the fourth occasion on which I have introduced a Bill similar to this one. Had I not been in politics, or had there been no ex-bank clerk in this House, the matter would not have been raised in the manner it has. Had an approach been made to the Government for its introduction, the Government probably would have said, "Yes, we agree that a Bill should be introduced, but there are many more important matters to be dealt with that affect a larger number in the community than bank clerks."

Mr. Court: You are damning the Bill with faint praise if you follow that reasoning.

Mr. JOHNSON: If the hon. member understands that point, he will realise why a Bill has not been introduced by Labour Governments in the past. Having visited all States, except Queensland, earlier in the year, I would point out from my own knowledge, that similar moves are afoot in all States. However, owing to certain aberrations by organised bank officers in certain other States, they are not even on bowing terms with Labour Governments and the possibility of an approach on a friendly level between a Labour Government and organised bank officers—in New South Wales in particular—is absolutely out of the question.

Mr. Hearman: Are they on bowing terms with the Government in this State?

Mr. JOHNSON: The position in States other than New South Wales is slightly different. For instance, in Victoria there has not been a private member's Bill discussed in the Legislative Assembly for over

20 years. There even appears to be some difficulty in having the matter raised in that State. Therefore, I think that those points are fairly clear.

The Minister for Labour referred to the opposition that was raised previously to the proposal to reduce the working week from six days to five-and-a-half and later from five-and-a-half to five. We all know, as a result of past history, that although there were great cries raised at the time, business and commerce have progressed from good to better, more or less, ever since. To confirm my argument, the Minister also stated that, in his opinion, the community would adjust itself to new conditions fairly quickly.

The member for Narrogin once again finds it impossible to differentiate between those things which are essential in banking and those things which are not so essential but which are, as I said on the last occasion, similar to the chromium on a motorcar. In other words, it is not the chromium that makes the car go. It would appear that I would be flogging the dead horse in trying to get the member for Narrogin to understand.

One point was highlighted by the member for Canning, namely, that all the opposition appears to stem from members of the retail trade only. I fancy that possibly the opposition from that source could be responsible for the difficulty the member for Narrogin has in understanding the point that I am trying to make. The member for Harvey referred to three points which he thought should be considered. They were: The viewpoint of the bank officers, the customers' point of view and the viewpoint of the banks themselves. From the evidence in connection with the banks, it is clear that they are not concerned with the profitability angle of Saturday morning closing. The representatives of the banks made that point quite clear when giving evidence.

As can be seen from the transcript their only concern is in relation to the service given to the customer and not to profitability. Therefore, as far as they are concerned, it is the customer who has to be considered and not the bank proprietors. The second consideration was the bank officers. It is they who are asking for this facility and they thoroughly understand the situation. Also, as has been shown previously by their activity, Saturday morning closing could be introduced without much damage to the banking trade, even taking the customers into consideration.

The member for Harvey went on to deal with the volume of evidence. I feel that in evaluating evidence, one must give a little consideration not only to volume but also to content. There is more food value in a bag of oats than there is in a bag of chaff or even in five or six bags of chaff.

Mr. I. W. Manning: Of course, that is where you are so terribly biased!

Mr. Andrew: What are you talking about?

Mr. JOHNSON: I was merely making the generalisation that the volume of evidence should be properly evaluated and should not be judged on volume alone. The evidence given on behalf of the industrial workers—which is a very large body of workers—is contained on about two pages of transcript. That evidence is short and to the point. It is the evidence of the secretary of the Industrial Council of Trade Unions, who is the appointed representative of the industrial workers of Western Australia which is an organised body and it is committed to the policy of a 40-hour five-day week. That was short but it covers a very large area. The matter of the Federal basis has been referred to a number of times and I feel it is only being used as a smoke screen to hide the fact that the people who are opposing this are opposed to any improvement in industrial conditions for anyone.

Mr. Bovell: Rubbish.

Mr. JOHNSON: There are no legal reasons why Western Australia should not benefit by this reform and the effect on banking as an industry throughout Australia—and I refer to the evidence of the bank's own representatives—is that if this reform were given effect in Western Australia, it would not disturb banking proprietors in any way. They are not frightened that if we have it in Western Australia, it will spread to other States, and they are not concerned that it will disturb business in any way. That is their opinion, and they are more qualified than members of the Liberal Party to state their own case.

The member for Mt. Lawley supported this proposition, as he has done on previous occasions, and he referred to the selfishness that seems to be natural in people; they do not mind how long somebody else has to work so long as they are off.

Mr. I. W. Manning: Give him a job milking cows.

The Minister for Transport: Cows are all you know anything about; you know nothing about political issues.

Mr. JOHNSON: I did not hear all that the member for Blackwood had to say but did get some of it. He complained about the Government letting a private member have the responsibility of introducing this Bill to provide for a five-day week in the banking industry. A five-day week in the industry means that employees only have to heat the boiler five days a week instead of six. In this industry, they do not just sit down at their desk and carry on where they left off the day before.

The teller does not leave his cash in a drawer at the end of the day; he locks it up in a safe and in the morning has to get

it out in order to get started. The ledger keeper has his books in the strong room where they are safe, and each morning has to get them out again. If we examine the evidence before the select committee, we find it was agreed there would be a minimum of 15 minutes per work day—possibly longer—involved in these operations. Therefore, in a five-day week there are some real benefits to the banking industry. This industry is similar to any other industry, and a five-day period instead of six days a week has something to commend it. The work could be done in five days instead of six, and much more cheaply. I think I have replied to most of the points made.

Mr. Hearman: What about the wages men in the country?

Mr. JOHNSON: There would be only a small number of wages men in the country.

Mr. I. W. Manning: There are over 3,000.

Mr. JOHNSON: The people the hon. member is referring to would be served by a mail service, and there are 10, 20 or 30 different ways of dealing with the proposition. I would emphasise that a person only needs the ability to fill in a pay-in slip and address it to the bank and, if he cannot do that, the bank will supply addressed envelopes for his use.

There is just one other point to which I would like to refer before concluding. It relates to a judgment in the Arbitration Court in connection with the bakers case, and I made reference to it last year. The bakers or Operative Bakers' Union approached that court with the idea of getting what the bank officers want—a working week of five days instead of six—but it was refused by the court on certain grounds which related to one point only. That was that because of the increasing mechanisation of that particular industry, the small man in the trade looked like being squeezed out if the five-day week were allowed.

The president of the court, Mr. Justice Neville, said that if it were not for that one point, he would have granted the award. He implied that he would grant it within a fairly short time. He did say that the public desires fresh bread on six days a week, and the volume of that desire did not mean that the public interest was so great that this industrial reform should not be granted. I would say that the volume of people who desire fresh bread six days a week is far greater than people desiring banking six days a week. If the public interest in that case is not considered sufficiently strong to warrant refusing an industrial reform, the same applies in this case. Arguments against giving this reform are not strong enough to warrant its refusal.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Bill passed through Committee without debate, reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILL—HIRE-PURCHASE AGREEMENTS.

Second Reading.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [9.42] in moving the second reading said: The Bill which I am now introducing contains a great deal of detail but does not call for any great change in the industry to which it refers. To paraphrase one of our well-loved members, "it is quite a harmless big Bill."

I would like to start by paying a well-deserved tribute to the private members' draftsman who did all the detailed work in preparing the Bill and its companion measure which stands next on the notice paper. Mr. Turnbull has a job of real importance that occupies his full time, yet he is able to prepare draft Bills for private members, principally in his own time, well knowing that many of them will fail to become law. In this case it is only fair to record that he prepared a draft Bill for me after our earliest discussions and when I took it back with my comments, cheerfully set to work to almost completely rewrite it with the result members see before them. I hope that members will co-operate with me in giving him one of the rewards that he deserves by making this Bill law.

Members will remember that last year I introduced a Bill dealing with the same subject. It was not discussed. No one but myself spoke to the second reading and the Bill became one of the slaughtered innocents at the end of the session. Both at that time and during the recess, I had several talks on the subject with the Minister for Justice under whose control this legislation comes. He has continued to encourage my research into hire-purchase matters, has given me every encouragement to prepare this Bill for presentation to the House, and is aware of the general terms of the measure.

I thank the Minister most sincerely for that help and encouragement, which I greatly appreciate, but I want to make it clear that the responsibility for the contents of the Bill is mine and that while I am confident that, in its main provisions, it is in general conformity with the policy of the Labour Party, it is a private member's Bill which members of Cabinet did not see any earlier than other members. There does not seem to be any necessity to persuade members that there is need for legislation in this field.

Mr. Nalder: The printer must have made a mistake as on the front page it appears as though introduced by a blank.

Mr. JOHNSON: That is different from the proof I have; the name of Johnson was glamourised on it.

Mr. Nalder: It is not on the Bill.

Mr. JOHNSON: The Act which this Bill is to amend has been on the statute book for twenty years. Every State in the Commonwealth, every member of the British Commonwealth of Nations and the most developed trading nations have legislation in this field. In fact, some clauses are almost word for word with the New Zealand Act; and other portions are parallel to British legislation. The point at which we may differ is on the degree of control and the actual method of application.

As I said last year, and now repeat, I am not aiming to prevent the hire-purchase trade. I believe that it fills a very necessary place in our commercial life. Without it, there would be far fewer goods of several kinds sold, specifically motorcars and household equipment, and it is not impossible that the development of the mass market for those goods would have developed far more slowly were it not for the device of hire-purchase. Without the mass market, it is probable that some, if not all, of these goods would have remained in the luxury class and our standard of living would be thereby lower. It is also possible that had there been no development of hire-purchase, there would have been a development of our economy in a different manner and we could have had more houses and fixed assets and fewer motorcars and washing machines. It is an interesting mental exercise to speculate just how life would have developed without hire-purchase—but we are here for a practical purpose. Hire-purchase is with us and I believe it is here to stay.

In the last few years we have seen a remarkable development in the cultivation of clover in Western Australia—particularly subterranean clover. This has led to a great expansion of the various stock-feeding industries—milk production, beef production, sheep and wool sections—which have all benefited. The Esperance Plains development, adding a new province to the State, is almost a direct result of the spread of the use of clovers. But it has not been an unmixed blessing. Brand new diseases or sicknesses of sheep and cattle have been traced directly to misuse of clover feed, and, as a suburban householder, I could wish clover to Kingdom Come because it is constantly recurring in my lawn and garden, despite its great benefit elsewhere. Hire purchase is very like clover—having very large benefits in a general sense, but possibilities of serious economic sickness if used to excess or by the wrong people at the wrong time; and the certainty of being regarded as a weed under certain circumstances, when it invades places in which it conveys no benefits.

This Bill is designed to provide the control that will permit all the useful parts of the industry to continue to grow unchecked, to prevent excessive use by those who are financially vulnerable and to

eradicate those weedy growths on the outskirts of the industry which tend to give the decent people in the industry a bad name and which do so much harm to the individuals whom these racketeers exploit.

That there are excesses in the industry is too well-known for there to be any need for my giving of details. Every report from the Bankruptcy Court gives instances of people who got into financial trouble because of obtaining too many goods on hire purchase. Members will recall the case reported in the Press some months ago in which the magistrate revalued a repossessed vehicle by about £700 in favour of the person from whom it was repossessed. Reports from the Married Women's Court show that a cause of family strife is that one or other of the partners of the marriage had pledged the family credit to an extent that was beyond the family income's capacity to meet. Enough to cause friction in any home!

The most obnoxious actions take place in relation to repossessions, and I have been told of incidents which sound like the plots of gangster films. Other members will want to give details of their knowledge of this, so I will not deal further with this aspect. On the subject of interest rates in hire-purchase much could be said. There is no need to refer members to advertisements asking for funds for employment in the industry, offering 10 per cent. interest, and there are some as high as 12½ per cent. The leaders in the industry offer lower rates but even there it ranges as high as 7 per cent. for long-term money, and there has been real difficulty in filling Government loans and in obtaining finance for housing because of the pressure on the finance market for hire-purchase money. This has caused all interest rates, including hire-purchase rates—I might mention the Commonwealth loan rates which were announced in tonight's news at 5 per cent.—to rise with definite deleterious effect upon the whole economy.

Every user of borrowed credit has had to pay extra because of the excess growth of hire-purchase; and the cost to the individual who buys by hire-purchase is outrageous. While the interest rates provided in this Bill are high by any reasonable standard, they are maxima and, against the pattern of current rates that have developed in the past few years, are not excessive. We could have still been operating at a much lower level of interest rate had not the Menzies-Fadden Government lifted the lid as a recompense to their financial friends as soon as they stole office.

Mr. Bovell: Rubbish; use a bit of intelligence!

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: They have been there a long time and they will be there for a long time, too.

The Minister for Transport: No, the people will wake up.

Mr. JOHNSON: I strongly disapprove of the rates of interest which are in this Bill, but the condition of the money market being so sadly damaged by Federal mismanagement, I have no option but to propose them and hope that a better, wiser and more responsible Government will emerge at Canberra before too long—

Mr. Roberts: Under whom—the Doc.?

The Minister for Transport: Why not?

Mr. Roberts: We do not know which party you belong to—the A.L.P., D.L.P., or Q.L.P.

The Minister for Transport: There is only one Australian Labour Party. It does not change its name like you do—Liberals; Nationals!

The SPEAKER: Order! I ask the Minister to keep order.

The Minister for Transport: I am sorry, Mr. Speaker, but I am being provoked.

Mr. JOHNSON: As I was saying when disturbed by the inane interjection of the member for Bunbury—

Mr. Roberts: I knew you would say that before the night was out.

Mr. JOHNSON: I have no option but to propose the rates of interest and hope that a better, wiser and more responsible Government will emerge at Canberra before too long and that when that does occur we will see a down turn in interest rates in general and in hire-purchase in particular.

The pattern of this Bill is the current legislation in New South Wales as members will see by the side notes. Not only are the headings and general outlay similar but the detail contents as well. The only differences are the retaining of 21 days, as in our current Act, in a number of instances of giving notices and taking various actions, instead of 28 days as in New South Wales and the continuation of the use of 12 months for the re-opening of transactions—the present period in our own old Act.

The principal provisions as to interest rates and minimum deposits and form of agreements are translated verbatim from New South Wales. There is a reason for this. As members are aware, hire-purchase can function only if there is a certain amount of capital available to provide the backing for the transactions. This capital is partly share capital—drawing very considerable dividends but subject to the possibility of reduction if bad times come—and partly in the form of debentures or time deposits on which the several companies guarantee interest at rates which vary from about 4 per cent. to 12½ per cent. Of all the money in the money market of Australia, this type of capital is the most fluid and most easily transferred from one State to another. Perhaps it would be unfair to describe it as "hot" money, but it is pretty warm.

If the economy of Western Australia is not to suffer a considerable setback, it is essential that in considering this type of legislation, we do not make conditions such as to cause a wholesale outward migration of the hire-purchase capital at present in use in this State. I have been very careful about this because the amount in use in Western Australia is small compared to that which is in use in Australia as a whole. For instance, were New South Wales to make hire-purchase conditions more severe than any other State, there would not be a wide enough market for the capital used in that State to fully migrate, particularly now when the rate of expansion is slowing down. But were conditions in this State to become sufficiently more severe than those in New South Wales to make transfer worth while, then we can be certain that as the present loans matured the capital concerned would flow to New South Wales quite quickly, with the result that the market in Western Australia would dry up.

We would then have the doleful spectacle of all the sales of cars, trucks, refrigerators, radios, etc., for Western Australia being made by New South Wales firms and the buyers having to pay not only the higher New South Wales charges but freight on the individual items. There would be a heavy reduction of Western Australian business, although there would be really wonderful opportunities for the few with ready cash to buy on a falling market, and probably there would be a sharp fall in prices in this State—but I think the price in unemployment would be far too high to pay.

Mr. Court: I am glad you are acknowledging the relationship between hire-purchase and unemployment because it is a very real factor and has been acknowledged in New South Wales as well as abroad.

Mr. JOHNSON: No one is suggesting that there is not a relationship between volume of sales and employment, but it does not mean that all sales are made at reasonable prices; and there is such a thing as a reasonable price. In hire-purchase, a reasonable price is not always present.

In providing, as I have done, for identical rates with New South Wales, I have ensured that there will be no outward migration of this warm money—possibly even a small inflow—because in that State there is a 1 per cent. turnover tax on hire-purchase transactions and, being a private member, I could not provide for that in this measure.

The State of New South Wales was chosen as my model in this matter because not only have they had detailed legislation since before the war but they have only just recently revised their Act. The debate on the amending Bill took

place on the 11th and 16th April of this year and should be read by members before taking part in this debate.

Mr. Roberts: Does this measure depart from the New South Wales legislation to any great degree?

The SPEAKER: Order! This is a technical Bill and I suggest that the hon. member should allow the member for Leederville to develop his argument. The member for Bunbury will have other opportunities during the debate to find out the position; and also in the Committee stage.

Mr. JOHNSON: I have already dealt with that point, and I would refer the member for Bunbury to the transcript which he will get later, as apparently he has not been listening or else the sound has gone in one ear and right through the hole.

Mr. Court: That is not fair comment. He asked an intelligent question. He asked to what extent you had departed from New South Wales.

Mr. JOHNSON: I explained that.

Mr. Court: I was listening to you and you did not.

Mr. Roberts: I have been listening and I have not heard it. I will be interested to see where it is mentioned in the transcript of your speech.

The Minister for Transport: You heard it, but it did not register.

Mr. Roberts: One cannot even ask an intelligent question of the member for Leederville.

Mr. Andrew: Who is making the speech?

The SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. JOHNSON: I have been accused of a lack of humour because I find it hard to take a joke; I find it mighty hard to take the member for Bunbury.

The Minister for Transport: And so say all of us.

Mr. Roberts: That went in one ear and out the other.

The Minister for Education: There is nothing there to stop it.

Mr. JOHNSON: The debate on the amending Bill in New South Wales took place on the 11th and 16th April this year, and should be read by members before taking part in this debate. The reasoning used by the Minister for Health, Mr. Sheahan, in introducing the Bill, shows that he was concerned with the problem of possible capital migration and high interest rates.

The first speaker on the Liberal side on the debate, Mr. Brain, who is also the Opposition Whip, had this to say—and for once I find myself in agreement with a member of that party—

This is the crucial point with which we are concerned—the level of prevailing interest rate on h.p. agreements. These, in my view, are high, just as the profits in turn made by h.p. companies are high.

That is recorded on page 4716 of the New South Wales Hansard. Later, in the Committee stage, a Liberal Party member moved for a reduction of the rates by 1 per cent. The idea was not strongly pressed and was negated for lack of effective support by any figures—I think I could have been far more effective on the subject.

Mr. Roberts: In your opinion.

Mr. JOHNSON: I want to make two points quite clear—firstly, the interest rates in this Bill are chosen because of the possibility of capital migration and not because I think them just. I think the whole structure of interest rates too high, not only hire-purchase but also all the others. Secondly, if any members opposite intend to attack this Bill with arguments about restriction of trade, stifling of competition and particularly too-low rates, I will give notice now that I will quote Liberal Party members in New South Wales against them. One or the other will obviously be a phoney, and I prefer to give the benefit of the doubt to those I do not know.

Mr. Court: That is not going to frighten us.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is my opinion that the Commonwealth Government is the one which should assume the responsibility for control of aspects of trade such as the hire-purchase industry, which has such a direct effect upon the economy as a whole.

Mr. Roberts: Does that apply to the banking industry?

Mr. JOHNSON: The matter of interest rates and hire-purchase rates seems to be setting the pace in that market and is essentially an aspect of the Commonwealth power over banking. In this regard another reason for my close adherence to the pattern of the New South Wales Act is that with the growth of uniformity, it becomes more possible to ask other States to join in exercising pressure on the Commonwealth to accept the responsibility that is properly theirs. I now ask the Treasurer to place the matter of interest rates on the agenda for the next Premiers' Conference with the idea that if every State has somewhat similar legislation on hire-purchase, it should be possible to adopt a programme aimed at a gradual reduction of rates in this field with

a resultant lowering of rates all round, and perhaps a freeing of capital for such industries as housing, farming development and base metals.

Mr. Court: Will you add that request to our request for Saturday morning banking?

Mr. JOHNSON: This is an important request and the one the hon. member is talking about is of minor local importance. The question of interest rates is not only Australia-wide, but an international one also. It is one that concerns the development of Australia and is therefore of major importance.

Mr. Court: You gave us the impression at one stage that the other Bill was the most important.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is very important to a limited number of people, but this question affects the whole economy of the country. To get back to the subject matter, the principal provisions of the Bill are—

Minimum deposit on all transactions, 10 per cent. The Government to have power to set higher minima by regulations for different classes of goods.

I hope that, in the interests of uniformity, it will adopt the rates set out in New South Wales which range from 20 per cent. on new cars to 33½ per cent. on second-hand vehicles, 10 per cent. on industrial machinery and 10 per cent. on household goods, all with higher minima for periods over three years.

Mr. Crommelin: That is not contained in the Bill as it now stands.

Mr. JOHNSON: No, that is in the New South Wales regulations. The maximum rates as far as interest is concerned are set out in the Bill at flat rates of 7 per cent., 9 per cent. and 10 per cent. on the three classes of business.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Are you going to give us an example of how the formula on page 40 works out?

Mr. JOHNSON: I would prefer to do that in Committee.

Hon. A. F. Watts: Very well.

Mr. JOHNSON: It is dealt with extensively in the New South Wales debates. There are provisions giving purchasers greater protection against the many rackets worked against them by the less reputable traders, and provisions for rebates when agreements are paid before expiration—something that is done by all the respectable folk in the trade now. There is provision for the purchaser to have the benefit of rebates on insurance and to prevent the overloading of charges in the guise of insurance premiums and there is power to control insurance rates relating to hire-purchase goods.

The Bill also contains provisions very similar to those in our present Act to allow the reopening of transactions, but in much greater detail. More power is given to magistrates to follow the real sale of repossessed goods and to avoid the practice of phoney sales to confederates. In fact, there are provisions in this Bill which, when combined with those in another Bill which I hope to introduce soon, cover every type of malpractice in relation to selling: on terms of which I am aware and which are not already covered by the Criminal Code.

Fundamentally, the Bill is a Committee measure and I propose to go no further at present. When the House has debated the Bill, I will attempt to answer all legitimate queries and criticism. There should be quite a lot. But I do suggest that those who find that they have a query as to the working of this or that clause should bring the point forward when in Committee on the clause concerned.

Finally, may I ask that proposed amendments be made known a day or two before the Committee stage as, being a private member, I have not the facilities of a department on which to draw for advice and legal assistance, so I need a little time. I thank the House for listening to me for so long on one of my hobby horses and I trust that there will emerge a useful measure that will provide protection to the unsuspecting purchaser from the sharks in the trade without causing any damage to legitimate trade in Western Australia. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Court, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 10.10 p.m.