

Hon. G. FRASER: Not to the extent of 10 per cent. One would think that the local authority was prepared to give way all sorts of sums. My experience is that it is hard work to get anything out of them. It would certainly be difficult for a district to handle anything in the shape of an outbreak of an infectious disease.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: The clause provides that every local authority may subsidise an infant health centre without any limit. Then it goes on, with the approval of the Commissioner it may be something else. We are giving an invitation to every local authority to subsidise these institutions without limit. For the reason the Minister opposes the amendment, I shall support it.

Hon. E. H. GRAY: I am sorry the amendment has been moved. It will injure infant health centres and will mean they will get less revenue than they get now. I do not know why the clause was inserted in the Bill. The total cost of a health centre is about £270 a year at the most. We should copy the example of Victoria and New South Wales, and supply all the necessary funds from the State finances and special rates struck by the local authorities.

Hon. V. HAMERSLEY: That is another taxation measure. I hope the clause will be deleted. I have the assurance of one of my own centres that no less than £3,000 was raised by means of the hospital tax last year, but towards the hospital and the health centre only £150 came back. The clause constitutes an open door, so that no money will be left to the local authority.

The CHAIRMAN: Before the vote is taken, I give my vote with the noes, and for this reason, that the words Mr. Thomson proposes to strike out give something, but that the words he proposes to insert, in the event of the words in the clause being struck out, give nothing. The position to-day is that a local authority may subsidise a nursing system or a hospital, public or private, to the extent of ten per cent. of the ordinary revenue. The effect of Mr. Thomson's amendment will be to add an infant health centre to the nursing system and the hospital, and consequently the amendment represents a free gift.

Amendment put, and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	..	10
Noes	..	..	..	..	6

Majority for .. .. 4

#### AYES.

Hon. L. B. Holton	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. E. H. H. Hall	Hon. H. V. Piesse
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. A. Thomson
Hon. J. M. Macfarlane	Hon. C. H. Wittenoom
	(Teller.)

#### NOES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. W. H. Kitson
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. Sir C. Nathan
Hon. E. H. Gray	Hon. G. Fraser
	(Teller.)

Amendment thus passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Progress reported.

*House adjourned at 11.55 p.m.*

## Legislative Assembly.

*Wednesday, 19th October, 1932.*

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

### QUESTION—UNEMPLOYED.

#### *Relief and Country Work.*

Mr. SLEEMAN (without notice) asked the Minister for Railways: 1, Is he aware that recipients of unemployment relief are being

forced, against their will, to go to employment in the country at wages representing £1 per week over sustenance allowance, and that the Charities Department have ruled that any such recipient refusing to accept such employment shall be struck off sustenance? 2, Does the Minister agree with that ruling?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS replied: I am aware of what the hon. member has stated, and I agree with the ruling.

### **MOTION—BULK HANDLING BILL SELECT COMMITTEE.**

*Admission of Press.*

**HON. N. KEENAN** (Nedlands) [4.37]:  
I move—

That so much of the Standing Orders having reference to the publication of the proceedings of a select committee be suspended so far as to permit the select committee appointed to report on the Bulk Handling Bill to exercise its discretion in admitting the Press to its meetings.

It is necessary to submit this motion because of Standing Order 352. The select committee appointed to deal with the Bulk Handling Bill consider it would be a great advantage to allow the Press to report the proceedings. It would lead, we believe, to a larger production in the time that our labours will cover, because witnesses coming before us will be aware of the evidence already given, and will therefore give only relevant evidence, and not that discursive evidence which merely traverses ground already covered by previous witnesses. Therefore, for the purpose of economy of time, and for general efficiency and the proper conduct of our proceedings, the select committee ask that this motion be carried.

Question put and passed.

### **BILLS (2)—THIRD READING**

1. Land Tax and Income Tax.
2. Public Service Appeal Board Act Amendment.

Transmitted to the Council.

### **MOTION—LAND ALLOTMENTS FOR UNEMPLOYED.**

Debate resumed from the 21st September on the following motion by Mr. Sampson—

That in the opinion of this House the provision of allotments of land suitable for the erection of homes and the establishment of small farms is desirable, and that such should be made available for approved unemployed or partially unemployed residents of the State.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [4.41]: I see no objection to the carrying of the motion; at the same time, I consider that the mover has lagged a little behind what has already been done. His suggestion has been in operation for quite a length of time in this State. While we have not done all that ought to have been done, still we have done all that was possible with the funds available.

Mr. Sampson: What has been done is only infinitesimal.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS**: It is not to be expected that people shall continually be going on to small farms to produce commodities with which the market is already over-supplied. When an attempt is made to settle people on small farms within a reasonable distance of the metropolis, they are apt to get into their heads the idea that they are expected immediately to produce vegetables and similar commodities. The market for those things in this State is limited, and many of our troubles with small farms are due to the fact that the holders are trying to grow, and to sell, produce for a market that is already over-supplied. If we could put married people on the land and say to them, "That is all there is to be done for you," it would be all right; but unfortunately it does not relieve our finances at all. In fact, the result is rather to increase our financial responsibilities.

Mr. Sampson: Only temporarily.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS**: Not temporarily, but for quite a long period. Were it for only a few months, it would not matter. Besides giving such people sustenance, the Government have to give them timber and iron; and iron has to be bought. The Government have not an unlimited quantity of galvanised iron in stock. To obtain galvanised iron, money has to be sent out of the State.

Mr. Marshall: What about jarrah shingles?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Jarrah shingles have been a great success in this State, but they cost much money. To-day one cannot obtain shingles at anything like the price at which galvanised iron is available, I regret to say.

Hon. M. F. Troy: The price is an extraordinary thing.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The price is due to two reasons—firstly, the sales tax—

Hon. M. F. Troy: The sales tax has been altered.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know that the price paid by the Government included sales tax. The Government have bought a good asbestos roofing for some of the cottages already erected. I am surprised that the hon. member has not availed himself of the opportunity to go out and inspect 40 cottages erected by the Government with asbestos roofing; but of course he prefers to listen to stories told him by people who with a wet pen and a few lines to the newspapers propose to correct all our ills. The cottages are all situated within half a mile of this place.

Mr. Sampson: The member for Fremantle (Mr. Sleeman) gave some information with regard to houses.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The member for Fremantle has given the House a great deal of information at various times, some of it obtained from persons who advised him wrongly.

Mr. Sleeman: I do not think so.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am sure of it. If we could dispose of unemployment by making land available and saying to people "Go on it," it would not be so bad; but hon. members know that there have been frequent protests in this House against the small amount of money that is paid by way of sustenance to the unemployed. The only reason why the amount is so small is that we have not sufficient funds to go round. If we divert a fair proportion of those funds to the purpose suggested by the motion, there will be more complaints. It usually costs about £50 per unemployed to make a home on a farm. After being thus started, he does not save enough out of sustenance money to do his first planting. Where the Government have put unemployed on the land at Nannup, for instance, seed and fer-

tiliser have had to be supplied. And wire netting will be needed to protect their crops, and we shall have to do the same here, close to the metropolitan area. The ideal system is where we can get people on part-time employment. I regret there are not many who can do much in that respect and so show a little interest in building up homes for themselves. Something of the sort may be done down Fremantle way.

Hon. P. Collier: But that country would not be so suitable as land up in the hills.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I know of nobody in the House more zealous in looking after our forestry interests than is the Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. P. Collier: But you might purchase some of the larger holdings in the hills and subdivide them.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member is now going to add to our troubles. Immediately we should start using the little money we have in the purchase of expensive properties around the city, what an outcry there would be in this Chamber! But there is a little prospect of additional settlement at Fremantle.

Hon. P. Collier: But that is not the object of this motion—not at Fremantle.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Following up the standard set by the member for South Fremantle when Minister for Works, something might be done, but unfortunately the Commonwealth Government, who own the land, are not willing to release it. Still, there is a prospect of settling down there 50 or 100 men at present engaged in waterside work.

Hon. A. McCallum: You mean if you can get the land.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes.

Mr. H. W. Mann: Then there is all the land up at Churchman's Brook.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, good fruit country.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think you had better have a chat with the hon. member beside you about that catchment area. We have to give consideration to many aspects, the first being that we have no right to go in and destroy the State forests. Then we must keep our catchment areas clean. One can go almost anywhere within, say, 200 miles of the metropolitan area, and find that all the good pieces of land have been picked out. On the way down to Albany he will find that all the good swamp lands have been selected, even

in isolated places. The good land that is required is not in the hands of the Crown.

Member: There are hundreds and hundreds of acres at Cranbrook.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: No, there are not. No one is more anxious than I to put the unemployed on the land, but I want to do that on a basis that will avert the misfortune of their finding it a millstone around their necks for the rest of their lives. There is a lot of Crown land around Albany. We have been advised it is unsuitable, and we are led to believe that advice is sound, because nobody has selected the land. Owing to fertiliser playing a very important part in development, and also from what we know of fodder plants that will grow on slightly inferior soil, we have placed 20 picked settlers in there, and are going to wait until those settlers have determined for us whether it is advisable to go on with the development of that land. If so, the member for Albany will be delighted to have us place further settlers there. But we have to get away from the idea of growing vegetables and other commodities with which already the markets are over-supplied. We have to get on to something we can export.

Mr. Sampson: The unemployed are not getting vegetables.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member might so organise that they will get them. A little while ago vegetables were being sent in to the markets and debit notes were being sent out to the growers.

Mr. Sleeman: The motion does not suggest vegetables.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: If unemployed men are to be put on the land, I believe there is still a prospect for dairying, pig-raising and poultry-keeping, because we are able to dispose overseas of our surplus in those lines. But to enter upon those avocations requires a fair amount of capital. If one starts dairying, even by the most gradual process, he has to have money for his cows and pastures and fencing. So, too, if he is going in for poultry, he must have properly erected pens and feed for the birds. The same argument applies to pig-raising. So it is a question of what amount of capital is available. The hon. member who moved the motion read to the House a series of letters signed by Mr. Randal. If the hon. member, who is I believe chairman of

the Roads Board Association, would interest the local authorities as that author suggests, then I believe we might be able to provide something satisfactory. But to-day the whole of the responsibility is thrown on the Government. In older established countries it is possible for county councils and shire councils to render some assistance, but here there is so much developmental work to be done by those bodies that they have no surplus revenue, and so the whole thing is thrown on the Government. The hon. member says it will cut out sustenance. But we have been farming here for a good many years, and unfortunately we find some farmers coming off the land and joining the unemployed. It must be remembered that immediately we set up another army of people on sustenance, they can unfairly compete with the man who has to pay his way. Give a man a block of land and fertiliser and seed and sustenance, and what hope is there for the other man who has to enter into competition with him? That is a perfectly sound argument. The hon. member said that if sustenance were provided for a while for those settled on the land, they would soon become comparatively independent.

Hon. M. F. Troy: It would mean sustenance for 10 years.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I believe we have to get some other avenue through which permanently to settle our unemployment difficulties. It is of no use putting men on road work or railway work, because at the end of the job they will still be looking for more work. So we shall have to provide something more permanent than that. We made a start in November of 1930, and that has been followed up gradually in various parts of the State.

Hon. M. F. Troy interjected.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Please do not mention that. There is already on the Notice Paper a motion which I would not like to anticipate.

Hon. M. F. Troy: But you were paying them sustenance.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not think the hon. member should force me to say something which at the moment I do not desire to say. When we started that, we thought it was an ideal system. We were going to provide people with cheap homes, and they were going to have part-time em-

ployment in the city, and the wives and families were going to feed the pigs and look after the fowls. Unfortunately, the dream did not come true. I am not mentioning any particular place, but there is certainly one place. If we have to provide people with homes, they must have galvanised iron for their shack and a galvanised tank for water, and tools, and wire netting, and seed and fertiliser. The cost of unemployment is already sufficiently difficult, without any additions. We give them the land free, and there is no rent to pay except that they are asked to pay the survey fee. There are no rates for two years, so eventually they will receive a free block. Already we have spent a considerable amount in assisting settlers to that extent.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: You would not give that land at Geraldton free.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We do not give away every bit of land, but we are giving away land on those unemployed settlements. Of course we would not give it up at Geraldton, where there is a market, and where there is money available to develop the land, and very little cost is entailed. We are trying to encourage the settlement of unemployed on some areas set aside for the purpose.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That is the difference between down here and up at Geraldton.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I think it was a repurchased estate up there.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: No, it was not.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Well, we are not getting rid of suburban areas under those conditions.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: The people up at Geraldton are prepared to pay.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: As the people have to pay everywhere. I will not have the hon. member think we are picking out Geraldton for unfair discrimination; we are charging for the land down here, too. All those settlements were started a long time ago. I want to assure the House that we will do everything possible for the unemployed, having regard to the money available. There are plenty of avenues through which members could interest local authorities and philanthropic persons in the assistance of these unemployment schemes. The

hon. member who moved the motion referred to the wonderful work that has been done in other parts of the world. In Canada they started this system, but it became top-heavy and collapsed. I think that in this State it might be claimed that our system has become top-heavy. I have here a reference to a scheme entered upon in Germany, where they set aside large sums of money for the assistance of the unemployed. This scheme was financed to the extent of 48,000,000 marks, or 11,000,424 dollars. This was taken out of a rent tax. The people there have to pay. Most of them have money with which to feed themselves and to put up a small frame house which is estimated to cost 428 dollars. The scheme was known as the Suburban Houses and Lots for Unemployed Industrial Workers. The men had to be in employment, self-supporting, and to be subject to not very long periods of unemployment. Even there it has been found that the lots are continually changing hands. In Switzerland, where it is said there is no unemployment at all, 73 million marks have been set aside to assist people. Even there the scheme has been pronounced as premature because there seemed to be no definite idea in the minds of the men who took the blocks as to what they were going to do. In those parts of the world there seems to be a ready market within reasonable distance of the settlements, but even so, difficulties are being experienced. In this State the market is limited, and there are no other markets offering in Australia to which we could send our goods. Outside Australia markets are limited, unless we export to Europe, which entails long distance freight.

Mr. Sampson: The people on such blocks would produce their own requirements.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Even from the hon. member's district during the last two years, we have had repeated applications for financial assistance from men who have been on blocks for not less than ten years.

Mr. Sampson: That is no proof.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But we are asked to undertake an extensive system of settlement, and I am pointing out the difficulties. We know that capital expenditure must be incurred and the Government would still be called upon to provide sustenance

payments. What we ought to do is to try to produce goods that would be readily saleable, control the market, and organise development to raise goods that could be exported. That is not an easy task. The Government will continue their efforts as far as possible. I am hoping that during the next few months we shall be able to absorb a few more married men in such schemes, but it is a very costly job. Certainly the cost is not so great as it was in the past. We put a man on a holding and see that he earns the money. The value of his work is determined, and he is paid nothing in excess of £2 per week. Still, capital outlay is necessary, and to provide that would leave less for men who are out of work. I have no objection to the motion being passed. It will mean nothing, because we are working along those lines.

Mr. Hegney: You do not think it will solve the unemployed problem?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: We started schemes in 1930 and the House criticised us for doing so, because members were afraid of what had happened previously. Whatever we do, we have to be most careful in expending public funds. The House would have reason to complain if we embarked on capital expenditure and deprived of assistance the men who are drawing sustenance. The passing of the motion will only confirm what the Government are doing. I was anxious that the hon. member should tell us how the local governing bodies could and would help.

Mr. Sampson: That was not a suggestion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member read an article.

Mr. Sampson: This is the first time you have referred to the local governing bodies.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The hon. member quoted an article. I do not think the scheme is possible.

Mr. Marshall: Do not you think the local authorities could rate such people out of existence? Is not that the usual experience in the hills?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I hope not. Settlers are granted two years exemption from local rates. If we can organise a scheme to assist people to provide part of their living requirements, we are anxious to do it, but we cannot put unemployed on the land and expect them to provide for themselves in less than a long period. There

may be opportunity to provide land for men in part-time employment, but they must be within reasonable distance of the market, and in this State that is hardly possible. The motion will not spur the Government into doing something that is economically unsound.

HON. A. McCALLUM (South Fremantle) [5.6]: The Minister admits there is a possibility of doing something to assist the casual workers on the water front. More than once I have raised the question in this House, and when in office I tried to establish a scheme to enable the workers at the port to occupy their spare time to their own advantage and to the advantage of the State. Their need is more pressing now than it was then because there is so much more time lost by the men on the waterfront. Those men would be the best to help. The Minister admitted that he has the same difficulty as we experienced in finding suitable land. We tried to get the Naval Base property, which the Commonwealth Government took and made no use of, and for which they are asking an exorbitant figure. When in office we could not make a deal with the Commonwealth Government.

The Minister for Lands: We hope for a reply next week and one a little more encouraging than we have had in the past.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: It seems to me the Commonwealth are playing the dog-in-the-manger. They have a huge stretch of country out of use and decline to dispose of it the people who would use it. I know what they paid for it, and it seems to me they are piling on to the cost the couple of million pounds they threw into the ocean at the Naval Base. Perhaps the best scheme of all would be to amend the Closer Settlement Act. Another place might be more amenable to reason during the present time of stress. We had to make three attempts before we got that legislation on the statute-book and the Minister has said it is practically useless.

The Minister for Lands: It is of no use at all.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Of no use at all, owing to the so-called safeguards inserted by another place. Perhaps the Legislative Council would now listen to reason and en-

able us to make the Act more effective so that the Government would be able to accomplish something under it. There are big holdings near Fremantle, but I am afraid they would have to be compulsorily resumed. To attempt to buy such land would be nearly as bad as trying to get the Naval Base property from the Commonwealth Government. The men who would take up such blocks would not be producing commodities for the market so much as they would be providing for the requirements of themselves and their families.

The Minister for Agriculture: There was a market for onions.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: There is a large acreage under onions and it looks as if a phenomenal crop will be dug. Lately we have been importing onions from Egypt, and I suppose when the crop in the Fremantle district is ready, the price will be down to nothing. I have never known vegetables to be so cheap as they are in Fremantle at present, but many families are unable to buy them even at the present low figure. Particularly does that apply to the casual worker on the waterfront. Over 1,600 men are available for work at the Fremantle harbour, and hundreds of them go for weeks without getting an hour's work. I am safe in saying that the 1,600 men do not average 30s. per week per head the year round. It would be a good thing if those men could be provided with land where they could employ their spare time in growing produce for their own homes. The water problem does not enter there. There was another proposition, and I do not know whether the Minister has examined it. I refer to the University endowment land.

The Minister for Lands: That land is too elevated.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes, it would mean going down 100ft. to get water.

The Minister for Lands: Would it not be necessary also to erect some shelter?

Hon. A. McCALLUM: Yes; it is not the pick of the country, though it is good land, but it has disadvantages.

The Minister for Lands: That coastal country you tried to get is ideal, and I think we might get it.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: If that could be obtained and the men given some assistance, it would make a big difference at the sea-

port. The younger members of the family, who are idling their time away at street corners, would be able to do something on a five-acre block. As the business of the port improves, probably the whole of the 1,600 men will be required. Within the last month every man was employed. If the number had not been available, shipping would have been delayed. The Arbitration Court, when framing its award, considers the needs of the peak period and the number of members the union should admit. It is essential that the business of the port be done with all despatch and that sufficient labour should be available to meet peak periods. This casts an obligation on the country to ensure that in slack times other avenues are open to the workers. When in office I found it most difficult to get land. It was that which blocked me from introducing a scheme. I think the Minister is in a better position than we were to secure an amendment of the Closer Settlement Act. It would be worth while considering that phase because, if an amendment could be secured, there is a property on which it would be possible to operate successfully. The position in the agricultural districts, particularly in the wheat belt, should be examined. Although vegetables are very cheap now in the metropolis, they are very expensive, owing to the freight, in the wheat belt. The freight is the killer. I should think that in some of the main centres of the wheat belt it would be possible to establish settlements so that vegetables might be grown locally and the freight saved. This would depend on the water. The soil is there, suitable in quality and of sufficient quantity. If suitable centres could be found and blocks thrown open for the production of vegetables in given areas throughout the wheat belt, it would be a sound policy to pursue, and would assist the wheat farmer to obtain vegetables at a reasonable price.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: Ten people out of a hundred and ten started growing tomatoes at Geraldton and exports are now worth £30,000.

Hon. A. McCALLUM: I have the inland centres more in mind. Most of those centres are unable to get as much in the way of vegetables as the people would like, and if they were procurable at a reasonable price there would be a ready sale. The

freight charges on vegetables into the wheat belt are altogether too high, and neither the farmer nor the workers in those districts are able to buy them. Near towns like Northam and Merredin, some on the Great Southern line and others along the Wongan Hills line, it should be possible to establish a few vegetable growers. Of course, in addition to Fremantle, there is a big outlet for such commodities at the ports of Bunbury and Albany. On the continent of Europe the scheme has operated for some time. I did not know about it until I reached England. It operates both in Belgium and Holland. The scheme there is very much the same as the proposal I have brought up in this House on more than one occasion. Such settlements cannot be effected unless suitable land is available, and it must be available at a reasonable figure. The problem is to get the Closer Settlement Act amended, or get possession of the Naval Base property. Until this is done I do not think the Minister can proceed very far. I am glad he is continuing his negotiations with the Federal authority.

**MR. BROWN** (Pingelly) [5.18]: When the matter was brought up last session by the member for Swan I gave him my support, and I also support this motion. I am not in favour of all the unemployed being put on small blocks, but those who are desirous of having a piece of ground of their own and growing vegetables in order to keep the pot boiling might well be encouraged to do so. It may be difficult to get the land. Between Brookton and Armadale, however, there are many rich swamps which could be utilised if they were cut up into small holdings. If a man were out of employment he could grow quite a lot on such a property. At the show I attended recently a man who held only a quarter of an acre of land obtained the greatest number of prizes in the vegetable section.

**Mr. Hegney**: It must have been good land.

**Mr. BROWN**: It was ordinary York gum country, but was well watered. The swamps I referred to are Crown lands, and there would be no difficulty in getting water there. It would also be possible to grow fodders and milk a few cows.

**The Minister for Lands**: Would that justify the construction of a railway?

**Mr. BROWN**: I do not say that, but the land is certainly available. Each settler would require house accommodation and that would constitute an expense. If colonies of unemployed men were established on small holdings it would still be necessary for the bread winners to go away occasionally to find remunerative work. During their idle time, however, they could grow quite a lot of produce which would greatly assist in keeping down household expenses.

**The Minister for Lands**: Where would they get work such as you indicate?

**Mr. BROWN**: They might have to go away. Men on sustenance are now living in rented houses and are able to grow nothing. If they were close to some town they could grow something for the upkeep of themselves and their families. They are only casual workers at any time.

**The Minister for Lands**: To what men are you referring?

**Mr. BROWN**: To those on sustenance. Close to nearly all provincial towns there are vacant lands available for settlement; some of this land is quite good, and in many cases sufficient water facilities are available.

**The Minister for Lands**: What would you do with it?

**Mr. BROWN**: If this motion is carried the Government will be able to do something.

**The Minister for Lands**: Don't be silly. We have already made available small lots of land in your electorate, but not one has been selected.

**Mr. BROWN**: I know of townships close to which 5-acre blocks have been taken up, and a considerable amount of produce has been grown upon them. As I said before, it would be necessary for these people to be provided with house accommodation. It would be better to have the unemployed producing something than that they should be living in a rented house and doing nothing for the rations they get. I would not like to see the system adopted that exists in the Old Country and in Middle Europe, where men live on small pieces of ground for generations, and can never get any further. People must have larger holdings if they desire to make a living entirely from the land. Even the whole of the group settlement blocks are not being utilised.

**The Minister for Lands**: It is a question of finding the land.



Mr. BROWN: There is any amount of land available. The Government are spending a great deal of money in providing sustenance work, which very often is not reproductive and is of no benefit to the State. If we spend money to encourage people to grow produce, it would be of advantage to the Government and the State. I know we are passing through hard times. The motion is a laudable one, and if it is carried into effect it should be provocative of some good.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [5.25]: I was interested to hear what the Minister and the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) had to say about land they hoped would be available for settlement near Fremantle. I also heard what they had to say about restricted markets. Quite recently a big business man from Malaya passed through. He was very much struck with the quality and cheapness of our vegetables. He told me there was a tremendous market for vegetables, if they could be transported to Malaya. About a fortnight ago a notification appeared in the Press that the Singapore boats, the "Centaur" and the "Minderoo," are to have freezing space installed almost immediately. I believe the "Centaur" is to miss a trip at Christmas time so that the work may be done.

Mr. Lamond: Are you advertising it?

Mr. ANGELO: No, but I do want to have this new market opened up. There is a likelihood of another boat running in conjunction with the "Kangaroo," and thus giving a combined service to the Far East. If the proposals come to anything, there will be nothing to prevent a fortnightly service being installed. This would enable settlers who are established on the land referred to, near Fremantle, to avail themselves of a splendid market for their produce, and they could also supply themselves with their household requirements.

HON. M. F. TROY (Mt. Magnet) [5.28]: Probably this is a time when it might be possible to induce people to take up small areas of land in the hope of being able to make a living from them. In more prosperous times it is not possible to get people to make the necessary sacrifices that are entailed in going on the land. When the State has been in prosperous circumstances, settlers have

met with misfortune, as a result of which it may be said that far too much Government assistance has been rendered in the attempt to put them on their feet again. We have had that experience in Western Australia. A large measure of the assistance that has been given to people on the land in the last 10 years has not been either to their advantage or the advantage of the State. It is quite possible that now so many people are devoid of a means of livelihood, they are more willing to make the necessary sacrifices and do what they can to provide for themselves and their families by producing from the land. In such circumstances the Government might be able to finance a scheme of this sort at lesser cost than would have been the case a few years ago. It is only by financing such a scheme at a reduced cost that settlement of the kind can be successful. I hope it is not intended that these people should make a living on a small block of land by selling their produce in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Sampson: It is only seasonal work.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The market would very soon be oversupplied, and if that policy were persisted in, disaster would follow both for the new settlers and for many of those who are already established in the business of supplying vegetables to the metropolitan area. In my opinion, sufficient produce is already available to meet the requirements of people in the city, but this scheme would be an aid to the casual worker. It has often occurred to me that it is a pity that men in casual or even permanent employment in the city do not go out into the urban areas and keep a cow, poultry, and so on, and grow vegetables for themselves. What could do better than to have a large number of people engaged in providing for the requirements of themselves and their families to a much fuller extent than is done to-day? It would make them more responsible citizens and give them an object in life, which is badly required in our civilisation to-day. I do not desire to be critical, but we have given people considerable leisure in these days, and they do not know how to occupy their spare time. Many indulge in street betting and attend football matches—I do not object to that—and the races, and, generally speaking, do not make use of their leisure in a way calculated to improve themselves or the community gener-

ally. If many of those people kept a few cows and pigs, and poultry and grew some vegetables, what a difference it would make. I would like this scheme to be undertaken actively in the country areas. I am convinced there would be a greater number of people prepared to engage in it to-day than at any previous time during the last decade or more. When people are struggling and at their wits' end to provide for their domestic requirements, they are prepared to make sacrifices. I am inclined to think that both casual and permanent workers, either with hand or brain, have a greater sense of responsibility now than they had some years back. It is quite possible that, in those circumstances, greater success could be achieved with a scheme such as that under consideration than would have been possible years ago when people, being in better circumstances, preferred to buy rather than grow their own requirements. The scheme is attractive in many aspects, but there are some aspects that call for careful consideration. It would not be good for the State to have, adjacent to the city, a large number of people settled on these small blocks under the impression that employment could be secured for them later on. It would not be good policy on the part of the Government to establish a greater number of people on blocks under the scheme and allow them to be under the impression that they could get temporary employment. There is a limit to work in the city and it would be wrong to put everyone on the land who is out of work for the time being, and allow them to go there in the hope that work would be found for them in due course in the city.

Mr. Sampson: There is seasonal employment available in most townships.

Hon. P. Collier: And always a surplus of labour available.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The phase of the scheme that I favour is that it will mean people will do something for themselves and their families by providing for their own requirements. They will, in the course of doing that, gain experience that will be of benefit to themselves and the community generally. From that standpoint I favour the scheme. It has been said that there are many people at our ports who are merely engaged in casual labour, and that they

would be glad to take up blocks. Perhaps they would be, in these times. I remember, however, that when we reconstructed the Group Settlement Scheme, a great many blocks on the Peel and Bateman Estates were abandoned. I personally had those blocks offered to men at Fremantle. The holdings, with their houses and improvements, were most desirable for casual workers. Anyone taking up one of the blocks could have a cow or two, some pigs and fowls, and grown fruit and vegetables. I regret to say that I did not get a solitary response to my proposal.

Mr. Sleeman: The blocks were a long way from the work at the port.

Member: A good road is provided through the district at Fremantle.

Miss Holman: The blocks are no good to timber workers.

Hon. M. F. TROY: Anyone who took up a block there could have got to Fremantle quite easily, and a group of men taking up blocks there could have made arrangements for getting to and from their work. I did not get a single application for one of those blocks. Though I did my best to get them taken up, I failed to get a response. It was not suggested that the blocks would provide for the full requirements of anyone taking them up, but they would have enabled the men to provide about 60 per cent. of their requirements. I overlooked the fact that I did receive one application, but the individual required financial assistance from the Government. That is what we are all looking for. I would retire from this place with its contentious atmosphere, which at times makes me angry, if the Government would provide me with sufficient sustenance to enable me to live elsewhere.

Hon. P. Collier: There is an offer!

The Minister for Lands: We will not accept it.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Minister referred to settlers having been placed on sustenance on the Herdsman Lake area. I take it from the motion standing in the name of the member for Mt. Hawthorn (Mr. Millington), that the settlers there are still on sustenance. There are abandoned holdings in the Busselton area, where the Government have placed men on sustenance at the rate of £2 a week. They have a house, a certain amount of cleared land, and by run-

ning a cow or two and poultry, they are able to make a living out of the blocks. That sort of scheme can be successful only as long as the Government are prepared to continue extending financial assistance.

The Minister for Lands: For every additional cow they have, we reduce them 5s. a week.

Hon. M. F. TROY: I should think the Government would reduce them to that extent.

The Minister for Lands: So, if the settlers have a few cows, I was wondering how much money they would expect to get from the Government.

Hon. M. F. TROY: It would be interesting to know how many cows they have got. Some of the blocks would not carry many cows. When the Labour Government were in office, we offered some of the blocks that had been developed by the expenditure of £2,500 or more, for £200, and could not get buyers. I know the resources of the Government are limited, but this is the time when people may be prepared to go on the land and make sacrifices without which land settlement cannot be successful. It is, literally, hardship that makes character and makes for success. We have instituted schemes and there has been no success. For years we have spoilt people and have told them that the Government would stand behind them. We cannot do that to-day. The settlers always criticise the institution through which assistance has been afforded them, and they demand the impossible. In this State we have adopted the attitude that so long as a settler does his duty, the State will stand behind him: if he does not do his duty, the State will not stand behind him. The Agricultural Bank does not adopt that policy, and I think there is a great necessity for reorganisation there with a view to securing the improvement of land settlement conditions in Western Australia. I support the motion, and I hope the Government will settle a number of people on these small blocks. As I said previously, this is the time when there is evident a greater sense of responsibility on the part of our people than has been apparent for many years past. I believe they will make the sacrifices necessary to ensure success.

MR. H. W. MANN (Perth) [5.40]: The whole tone of the debate has indicated sympathy with the unemployed and a desire to do something to take them from the city. The suggestion advanced by the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum) would serve admirably for the casual workers at Fremantle. Indeed, his proposal would be suitable at any other port where there is casual labour. I think it was that hon. member who made reference to agricultural towns. Along the eastern railway and some of the loop lines may be seen men who went from the city five or six years ago, and, instead of returning after the wheat season was over, remained behind and built humpies for themselves. The next year they took their wives with them, and, in some instances, a couple of children as well. I have seen several places where the men have used rough timber and beaten out kerosene tins with which to run up small two-roomed shacks, and have grown sufficient vegetables to meet their requirements. When the rabbiting season was productive, they made a few pounds that way, and then were able to do some fencing and other work pending the next wheat season.

Mr. Sampson: Life is happier and better under such conditions.

Mr. H. W. MANN: The cost of living for them is low. They have nothing to pay for food and very little for water supplies. They can earn sufficient to make their living conditions happier than they were in the city.

The Minister for Lands: And they have not had a single penny from the Government.

Mr. H. W. MANN: That is the point I am coming to. The whole of such schemes revolve around the individual. The man who will kick for himself is worth two of those who must be subsidised by the Government. The latter will stay on their 10-acre blocks so long as the Government subsidy lasts, but when that cuts out, they leave. I have in mind a small settlement adjacent to Hines Hill. The whole of the 10-acre blocks behind the station have been taken up by men in casual employment on the pipe-line or on roads in the district. They have a couple of cows each, a few pigs, and poultry. They are making what is to them a comparatively good living on their places.

Hon. M. F. Troy: They have nice little homes.

Mr. H. W. MANN: Each man started with one room and then made additions from time to time. Eight or ten families are

there, and they have made a very decent settlement of the area. They have the advantage of the goldfields scheme, which provides them with a permanent water supply.

The Minister for Lands: For which they must pay.

Mr. H. W. MANN: Exactly, and that also applies throughout the eastern wheat belt. There are at least four or five months during which employment can be secured at wheat lumping and carting, and, in the interim, the men have developed their blocks and provided themselves with better homes. I think it would be preferable to provide such people with advances of £15 or £20 instead of making available £150 or £200 for the erection of a home, for which rent has to be paid. I think it would be a good scheme if the Government were to make available small grants of, say, £20 to enable people in the circumstances I have indicated, to purchase a little iron and hessian to aid them in the erection of their homes.

The Minister for Lands: We are doing that for a limited number now.

Mr. H. W. MANN: The Government could do it for a greater number.

The Minister for Lands: The difficulty would be to get the money.

Mr. H. W. MANN: Instead of building workers' homes at £300 or £400 each, if smaller grants were made available, as I suggest, the Government could enable three or four men to have comfortable homes on the 10-acre blocks in the outer area.

Mr. Sampson: More like a dozen men could be settled for the larger amount.

Mr. H. W. MANN: Members who go through the eastern wheat belt must have seen at various sidings small settlements such as I have indicated. At some centres it is not possible to secure a 10-acre block, as they are all gone. As members are aware, there are about 20 10-acre blocks surveyed adjacent to country townships. They were idle for years until one or two, with a spirit of adventure, decided to go out and take up some of the blocks. Now they have their homes there and in the off-season they can earn sufficient to keep them when there is no work available. I suggest such a scheme to the Minister, since in time it would take 500 or 600 men, or perhaps as many as 1,000 men, off the streets of Perth. There are no prospects here except for casual work, at any rate not for a long time to come. The dole is a miserable living, therefore I seri-

ously commend the hon. member's motion to the Government.

**MR. HEGNEY** (Middle Swan) [5.47]: I have listened with interest to the various speeches made on the motion. The hon. member who moved it put it forward as an absolute solution of the unemployed difficulty.

Mr. Sampson: A partial solution.

Mr. HEGNEY: Very partial indeed. It cannot by a long way be regarded as anything in the nature of a solution of the difficulty, but it is a very desirable policy if it can be carried out. The leader of the hon. member's party, however, has said that it is impracticable at the present to implement this policy. Therefore the unemployed workers who are anxious to help themselves will not get the opportunity to do what the hon. member wishes, at least for some time to come. Adjacent to the city there are lands available and if workers could get a title to blocks, or could be placed there, they no doubt could help themselves, but it is doubtful whether the areas would support the holders entirely. The member for Swan knows that there are a number of producers in a small way in his electorate, and that they have been having a difficult time during the past few years, particularly the poultry farmers. It is only within the last 12 months that the poultry farmers have been getting ahead of it, and that is due to the fact that they have been able to export a considerable number of eggs, and, again, the exchange has helped them. The same thing can be said of the pig industry, which is at present in a parlous condition. I know a man who has been established in the industry at Belmont for 25 years. He has given up the whole of his time to the raising of pigs and the last few years have been his worst period.

The Minister for Lands: Those people cannot pay their way.

Mr. HEGNEY: This man is almost exasperated and he does not know if he can hang on. Unless the export trade in pigs can be developed, the industry is not going to be of much further use to him. Again, there is the difficulty with regard to the kind of pig to be raised for export. The Minister for Agriculture told us that a certain class of pig should be reared, and other authorities advise that the breeders should con-

centrate on a different class of pig. It is due to the initiative of Mr. Watson of Fremantle that export to some extent is being maintained, but apart from that very little has been done in the way of exporting from Western Australia. There is another industry that it is possible to develop; I refer to tobacco growing. But there would have to be a policy laid down. The land on the outskirts of the metropolis is suitable for the growing of the tobacco plant and some has been successfully grown at North Bayswater. A fairly large area is owned there by a company and blocks have been let at a nominal rental. The occupants, however, have nothing to enable them to carry on developmental work, not even enough to enable them to grow vegetables for their own use. In any case it would take a few years to cultivate the area because they would require all the essentials including fertilisers and water. With the goodwill of the Government, something could be done in the way of developing certain allotments, but as a solution of the unemployment trouble it would be a very small contribution to that very difficult problem. Once people are settled on blocks of land, they require road facilities immediately. I know of a case of a first-class poultry farmer who has occupied his property for nearly 17 years, and it is remarkable that he has been able to remain there so long, remembering the difficulties he has had to contend with. But, in spite of all the difficulties, he has an excellent proposition and is exporting eggs. The member for Guildford, in whose electorate the area was formerly included, tried very hard to get a road constructed to the property, but he failed. The farm is now in my electorate but up to date I have not succeeded in getting road facilities to the property. It is always the same wherever there are new settlements. Road facilities are needed and then schools are required for the children that are growing up. Therefore it is a bigger proposal than the member for Swan thinks it is. I also know from practical experience that it would prove no solution at all of the unemployment problem. I am aware also from my own experience that what is suggested is not capable of fulfilment. My father was a farmer in the Old Country and when he came here he became an industrial worker. He secured an acre of ground in the Midland district. It was excellent

soil and he was able to produce all the vegetables that were required for about nine months of the year. That helped considerably, but the fact remained that in his case he was employed at the workshops, and that helped to keep him going. The member for Swan's proposal means that it would be incumbent on the occupants of the holdings to make a living from them. We are aware of the difficulties that are being experienced by market gardeners and poultry raisers, and so if we increase the number the chances of all making a living will become remote. There are many people on small areas who never do anything to improve their blocks, but there are also workers who, given the opportunity, will make good. Having regard to the extensive nature of our territory, it should not be difficult for workers to secure a small plot to work. In this way they could help themselves, but it should not go forth that a proposal of this nature would solve the difficulties that exist at the present time. I support the motion in the hope that it will do some good, though I am very doubtful about it.

**MISS HOLMAN** (Forrest) [5.55]: I agree that the motion if carried into effect is not going to solve the unemployment problem. At the same time I think the hon. member's idea is a good one; it has been in practice in the timber districts. Several blocks were made available in the Pemberton area some time back by the member for Mt. Magnet when Minister for Lands, and since the present Government have been in power I have made applications for the granting of additional blocks to other workers, sometimes successfully. On the blocks that are being worked some of the occupants are getting along quite well, and if the Government could be persuaded to allow them to build homes on the blocks, under the workers' homes scheme, they would do even better and would become more contented. During the last week end I heard from one family on a block at Jarrahdale that they were very pleased with it, and that they hoped to be able to market a number of bags of peas and other produce. But the point is that some of the men engaged in the timber industry have been employed at their work for many years without any hope of getting a stake in the country. This would be a good opportunity to assist them by granting them small blocks in the gullies

around the mills, so that, when work was slack, they could engage in cultivation. As conditions are so bad just now, many of these men could work out their sustenance on the blocks. A number of blocks could be thrown open and the holders could engage in the production of vegetables and other requirements for their own use. In that way they would improve their standard of living. If something of this kind had been done when the mills were working, there would not now be so many timber workers badly off. It would be better to give these men the opportunity to have small blocks close to their work. Giving them areas on the Peel Estate would be of no use because that area would be so far away from the mills. They could not make a living on the Peel Estate. At several centres men are most anxious to take up blocks. The Minister for Lands paid a special visit to Hoffman Mill last April in order to receive a deputation from the men on that mill, with a view to land being made available to them. They were desirous of getting to work immediately. Unfortunately, however, the areas they wanted were not to be found close by the mill. Still, small areas would be available in the gullies. At Wuraming Mill and also at Nanga Brook, some of the men are most anxious to select small blocks. The swamps on Whitaker's Mill are settled by several families, and just outside Jarrahdale families are settled on blocks. Again, Pemberton has garden blocks. I should like all timber workers to be given opportunities to take up small fertile bits of gullies which are of no use to the Forests Department and which the department would release.

**MR. MARSHALL** (Murchison) [6.2]: I support the motion. Like most Government representatives, the Minister for Lands, though not exactly hostile to the proposal, stressed the expenditure involved. However, the motion aims at avoiding what we desire to avoid. No doubt the Minister is influenced by the policy which has obtained with the present Government and previous Governments for many years. When money was plentiful, wheat and wool being at high prices, Governments lavished money on the establishment of industries. People are now disposed to believe that every form of land

settlement involves the expenditure of huge amounts.

The Minister for Lands: I wish it did not. There is plenty of land available.

**Mr. MARSHALL:** The Minister went on to enumerate the things needed by settlers—galvanised iron, wire, seed, and other things, altogether running into thousands of pounds. I do not think the mover desires any scheme of that nature. The substance of the motion was expressed by the member for South Fremantle (Hon. A. McCallum), who argued in support of the proposal. In years gone by, when I was a small lad, miners were given 30 acres of land to improve and cultivate, without any Government assistance, and subject to certain conditions as to fencing, building and working. I knew a man who, after doing eight hours' work daily, walked seven miles each way each day to improve his holding.

The Minister for Lands: Forty blocks of land within seven miles of Perth are lying idle to-day.

**Mr. MARSHALL:** I do not doubt that.

The Minister for Lands: The blocks would be occupied if the Government would spend money to that end.

**Mr. MARSHALL:** The Australian people have become so used to the Government continually forking out cash to them that they hesitate to take on anything which involves the expenditure of capital of their own, if they have any. However, blocks should be made available as proposed, and people should be encouraged to make homes on them. Thus these people would be assisted to provide for their own households, instead of producing to overload markets glutted already. Any number of people would take up and develop such blocks. From Bellevue to Wooroloo one can see farms of the kind suggested by the motion.

The Minister for Lands: Do you mean the farms near Wooroloo station?

**Mr. MARSHALL:** Yes, almost adjoining railway property; and there are others at Parkerville. Each holding carries a pig or two, a cow, and fowls. The holders supply themselves with butter, bacon, ham and so forth. Incidentally they work on the railway line. One or two grow grapes, and if they do not produce wine, sell the fruit. As regards land settlement in general gigantic mistakes have been made in the past. Money

being plentiful, perhaps 80 per cent. of the men placed on the wheat belt under Government conditions, became the victims of over-capitalisation. My belief is that the expenditure of that vast amount of money did not turn even 25 per cent. of the settlers on the wheat belt into practical farmers. This State has been altogether too eager to produce wheat. Unless we encourage our citizens to go on blocks of their own, the conditions of older countries will be reproduced here: a population of industrialists available only for the manning of factories and shops; crowded and congested cities; disease and ill-health rampant. We ought to induce our people to live as nature intended them to live. Man is a land animal, and should live on the land. He should not be so eager for Saturday afternoons on the racecourse, or for other forms of recreation that are not always too healthy, although when moderately indulged in are good. The very best of health is enjoyed by people living in the open country and incidentally devoting their spare time to making their surroundings comfortable and home-like. We should encourage such people rather than those who have a keen desire for city life. It would be a pathetic shame if in years to come this country of vast dimensions should develop a slum life. I do not believe that to carry the motion into effect would entail upon the Government the expenditure of even small amounts of money. The homes already built on the blocks I have in view are perhaps not handsome, but they are good homes.

Mr. Wansbrough: They are good enough inside.

Mr. MARSHALL: Yes. The Government have spent large sums in providing wooden homes for city workers, with the same result as has oppressed and is oppressing farmers—namely, over-capitalisation. The workers cannot now afford to meet the payments on those homes. Deeply involved financially the workers are also out of employment. Each homeseeker's case must be treated on its merits. Some people must have homes in the city; others are well suited in the suburbs; others again do best on blocks where they can produce a good many of their household requirements. The children of this last class would be inclined to stick to the land. Parents should be encouraged to settle on small

blocks in wholesome surroundings. The Government should not again give large areas of 2,000 or 3,000 acres to individuals for the purpose of growing wheat. The millions spent on the wheat belt have produced, not good farmers, but experienced wheatgrowers.

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

Mr. MARSHALL: Before tea I was intimating what should be the policy of the Government, namely, to infuse in the citizens initiative and self-reliance. There is no better way of achieving that policy than by watching closely the forms of intense culture. We have had a lesson very dearly bought by the taxpayers. I am not blaming the Government, but huge sums of money have had to be written off, due to our eager desire to "overland" the settlers, to give them unnecessarily large areas on which to produce wheat. I have known the Agricultural Bank endeavour to incite settlers to take up more land, notwithstanding that already those settlers had greater areas than they could develop. Consequently what between the payment of rates and taxes and the necessity for eradicating pests, and now the decline in the price of agricultural commodities, the settlers find themselves in a hopeless financial mess. The motion is worthy of consideration. We should not follow the policy of older countries and grant large areas of land, but should encourage our people to get on to small farms, not that they may produce commodities already over-produced, but that they should develop initiative and self-reliance, and not be continually looking to the Government for monetary assistance. That is all that the motion implies, namely, that the Government should throw open the land and, if possible, assist the settlers to develop it. Personally I do not admire the policy of financial assistance, for it has proved very costly to the State, and in future all Government advances should be very carefully scrutinised. We must get the people to rely on themselves rather than upon the Government. Take the group settlers: while the 10s. per day payment was in vogue we had innumerable applicants for blocks, but as soon as the 10s. per day sustenance was withdrawn the settlers abandoned the blocks. I hope all future Governments will consider the advisability of providing capital to

workers who may desire to erect inexpensive homes. We have had numberless instances of people erecting expensive homes which to-day are millstones round their necks. We do not want congested areas in the city. That is no good for the State, as older countries have demonstrated.

The Minister for Lands: The right system for a young country is decentralisation.

Mr. MARSHALL: That is the right system for all countries. The motion is a good one. There will be no compulsion on any person to take one of these small farms. Yet with the depression quite a number of people are realising the mistakes of the past, when they invested in expensive city and suburban homes which produced nothing, and in consequence now that we have the depression and all this unemployment those people find themselves in unenviable positions. The motion contains the germ of a policy which the Government should consider, and all future Governments would be well advised to work along those lines. No matter how much prosperity we may experience in the future, I hope there will be no lavish expenditure such as there has been in the past, and no issuing of huge parcels of land. It has often been said by departmental officials that a farmer requires not less than 2,000 or 3,000 acres of land in order to make a living. This would lead people in older countries to believe that our land was worth nothing. We have been over-generous in the past, and I hope those mistakes will not be made again, but that all future Governments will adopt the policy of closer settlement. I will support the motion.

MR. PIESSE (Katanning) [7.35]: I commend the hon. member on having introduced the motion, which has given to the House an opportunity to consider one of the many suggestions for further land settlement as a means of checking unemployment. At the beginning of our unemployment trouble this question was taken up by the residents of the town in which I live, as one which might assist the country in overcoming the difficulty of having so many people out of work. At various times proposals have been put up to the Minister, who has always been ready to consider them. I remember the closer settlement proposal for taking over a certain percentage of the

land held by Agricultural Bank clients in the Cranbrook and Mt. Barker districts and making it available in smaller areas for closer settlement. From the experience of the settlers in that district it is now proved, through the sudden collapse in the price of wool in particular, that many of them hold too much land to be profitable. They are not altogether to be blamed, because in many instances they were encouraged by the low price of the land, and by the then policy of the Agricultural Bank, who suggested that to make a success of a farm from 2,000 to 5,000 acres of country was required. It is now proved that the authorities were wrong in that contention, and you, Sir, have a knowledge from recent visits to the district that the settlers are not able to carry on, unless they can be relieved of some of the land they are unable to utilise. I want to give the Government credit for having gone into the question of closer settlement in that district, and I can only hope that in the near future, before the session ends, the Minister will be able to tell the House what he has in mind in regard to the closer settlement proposal. Going back a long way, I can remember that it was the question of land settlement between Albany and Beverley which brought about the construction of the Great Southern Railway. Perhaps it not known to members that when the late Mr. Anthony Hordern obtained that concession one of his ideals was to settle that land in small blocks. Had he not died before the railway was completed, and before his scheme could be put into operation, no doubt we would have seen much closer settlement and a very much greater population along the Great Southern than are to be seen to-day. For Mr. Hordern, a man of wide vision and experience, was able to see great possibilities for closer settlement all along that line. One of the features of his scheme was to bring that country into closer settlement. He often referred to the proverbial 10 acres and a cow as being sufficient to support a man in the Albany-Mt. Barker district. Perhaps so small an area might be considered insufficient to maintain a man and his family. Yet we know of people in the neighbourhood of Albany who are doing quite well on small areas. I do not expect that by the House passing this motion we are going to get far. We cannot



throw on the Government the whole responsibility for formulating a scheme which will mean closer settlement in every part of the State, because the climate and soil vary greatly, and certain localities are more suitable than others for growing certain products. But I suggest to the Minister that he continue with his scheme for small farm settlement which he has been instrumental in putting into operation in the neighbourhood of the Porongorups, and that also the Government encourage those already on small holdings to further develop their blocks. I have a number of constituents in the Mt. Barker, Cranbrook and Kendenup districts who are feeling the pinch seriously. They have only small holdings. When times were good, their prospects were promising, but since times have become bad and they have been unable to get employment during part of the year, they have experienced great difficulty in carrying on. Before the Government decide to put other people on blocks, they should give consideration to present settlers. There are many men who have tried and have proved themselves capable, and are deserving of further help. They need only a little more assistance, and that could be provided by giving them unemployment relief work in the neighbourhood when it was available. They would then be enabled to return to their holdings when the fruit season arrived and, for part of the year, would be able to maintain themselves. The Minister for Lands has done remarkably well during the present troublous times. We know the difficulties and drawbacks attached to the development of a scheme of this kind. The Minister pointed out the difficulty of finance. We appreciate that, but it is never too late to start to formulate a scheme. The success of such a scheme would depend upon the ability of the people taking up blocks to make a success of their individual holdings. People need only a small shack to start with. In the southern part of the State we have a climate that is claimed to be one of the best in the world. We should aim at giving the settlers already on the land, as well as those we anticipate placing on the land, a reasonable chance to make homes for themselves. Then, when they have become attached to the land and are not unduly worried by debts and liabilities, we shall have a reasonably good asset and bright hopes of future success. All who take up land are not successful. That is the experience at Katanning,

as at other places. I have lived at Katanning since the inception of settlement there, and not half the people who took up land at the outset are there now. But many of the people who left the land were not unsuccessful. Some of them sold to others, probably advantageously. I could point to dozens of men in the district who started without any capital at all. They probably had advantages that do not offer to-day. They had not the present high cost of living to contend with, and the cost of necessities for making a start on the land was then small as compared with now. The Minister pointed out that before people could be placed on the land, a roof must be provided for them and their families, but that fencing, wire, wire netting and galvanised iron were at almost prohibitive prices. Until we can get down the cost of essential requirements in the initial stages, we shall be in difficulty. It is no use a man going on the land unless he has an axe. To buy an axe costs twice as much as in the early days of the settlement of the Great Southern. An axe-handle to-day costs 3s. to 3s. 6d. in the country, whereas formerly it could be bought for 10d., 1s. or 1s. 2d. All those increases in costs militate against the success of settlement in the early stages. It has been said that if this country were in the hands of Germans, Hollanders, or Danes they would make a success of it, whereas our people cannot do so because they are less frugal. Our early settlers had to be more prudent than are the settlers of to-day. In the early days of settlement they had to encounter greater difficulties. At that time we in the towns hardly saw a farmer more than two or three times in a year. The wife drove to the town in a spring cart and purchased the necessary food and stores. The man stayed at home and made his farm before he started to frequent the town. We have to get back to those conditions. Many of our settlers want to walk before they can crawl and there are many allurements and many avenues for spending money that should be applied to the development of their holdings which did not tempt the settlers in the early days. The Government would be wise to treat the motion seriously.

The Minister for Lands: You know what we have done in the Kojonup district for you.

Mr. PIESSE: I know what has been done by the Minister and I give him credit for it. I am not asking him to do impossibilities. The point is that if things could be done in

the early days, when people had very little money, they could be done to-day. We must conform to the conditions of earlier days and get down the cost of things that are essential in the initial stages of settlement. I hope something practical will result from the motion. It is impossible for the head of one department to conceive a plan to cover the whole State. The Minister would be well advised to take the opinion of men who have made a success of land settlement in different centres. It might assist the Government and Parliament in formulating a policy if boards of advice were appointed—men competent to advise on the different districts to which they belong. I hope the Government will give all possible encouragement to improving and developing suburban lots for cultivation by affording relief in the shape of rent and provide the land at the lowest possible price, free of rent and taxation for the first five years. Lots of ten to 200 or 300 acres should be granted according to the locality. Many of our settlers are holding too much land and are rendered land-poor. Excess land which is suitable should be made available for settlement.

**MR. SAMPSON** (Swan—in reply) [7.55]: I appreciate the generosity displayed by members generally towards the motion. I am sorry that the Minister was unable to be present when the motion was moved.

The Minister for Lands: I am always here.

**MR. SAMPSON**: Or alternatively that he did not have time to read the report of my remarks in "Hansard." The proposition must not be confused with group settlement. In the Old Country it has special reference to places like Worcestershire, Liverpool, and other parts where seasonal work is provided for people who hold allotments. There, as the Minister for Lands said, the work is carried on under the control of local authorities, and a number of Acts govern those settlements. The position here is that many men are out of industry and will never have an opportunity to return to it, and it is on their behalf as well as on behalf of others that I have spoken.

**MR. F. C. L. SMITH**: Are you replying to the objections raised?

**MR. SAMPSON**: Yes. The proposition is not one of group settlement: nor am I sufficiently enthusiastic to think that such a scheme would entirely abolish unemployment, but it will provide a palliative, and if it does that, the moving of the motion will have been justified. I should like to introduce one new matter, namely, the usefulness of the proposition in a place like Albany. With very little expense Albany might be made an impregnable port, and the artillerymen engaged might be provided with holdings on which they could work when not engaged on duty. A little thought given to other centres would make clear many opportunities. It has been said that the Government are already doing something on the lines I suggest. I am gratified to know that, but I would be better pleased if what is being done were taken as an earnest of what is to follow. I hope the Government will seriously devote themselves to settling approved unemployed on the land in the manner suggested. An objection has been raised that there is a lack of markets. I am fully aware of the lack of markets, but the fundamental justification for such settlement is the production by holders of allotments of their own requirements. A great percentage of the unemployed are unable to enjoy fruit, vegetables and various other foods that could be produced on such holdings. The production of these foods on small holdings would have no very bad effect on the outside market. The increased production of eggs, for instance, would enable more frequent and regular shipments of that commodity to be made overseas, and this would be a very good thing for the poultry industry. With respect to the cost, it has been suggested that considerable expenditure would be involved. I would repeat that houses have been erected at Melville at a cost of £50. If a house can be erected in the metropolitan area for that sum, an even lower amount should be sufficient in the country, where the aesthetic requirements of the people are not as severe as they are in the metropolitan area. I was pleased to note the remarks by the member for Mt. Magnet, who delivered a sound and closely reasoned speech as to what could be done by those who had the will. That is half the battle. Where a sufficient building

could be erected for £15 or £20, the cost of the settlement of approved unemployed on allotments would not amount to a great sum. We must not regard the sum of £15 or £20 as being in any way impracticable. One has only to go through the outer suburban and country districts to note the type of shack erected there. These often provide a happy home for those people and we must admit that they are not so badly off as others would be. It does not call for much money to provide a comfortable shelter of that sort. There can be no comfort, however, in a home where the bread-winner is out of work and the family is dependent on rations. If a man is given a small block of land and his sustenance is continued for a while, he will have an opportunity to make himself a comfortable and happy home, to become a good citizen, and to bring up a healthy and useful family. I am positive that when the land is provided or debited against the holder £100 in cash would be ample, and this sum, in addition to providing tools, seed and fertiliser, as well as a cheap house, should also provide sufficient for a cow. The outlook for such people would be immeasurably improved. With the member for South Fremantle I acknowledge the splendid opportunity that awaits unemployed who can secure land in the vicinity of our chief port. I know that around Bibra Lake, Coogee Lake, Hamilton Hill and Spearwood, there is a good opportunity for the production of berry fruits. The cape gooseberry has never yet been a glut on the market. The remarks of members in respect to the Naval Base area are therefore fully justified. I hope the Government will give consideration to every centre. In his remarks the Minister referred to the South-West. I do not want this scheme to be confused with the scheme for the establishment of people in the South-West and the development, particularly of that part of the State. The motion deals with the provision of homes for approved unemployed. The blocks, in the case of allotments for casual workers, are to be of an area up to five acres, and in the case of small farms of an area up to 50 acres. When I speak of five acres I do not say that in many instances an acre would not be sufficient. The other day I was reading a case of a most

successful man on a small block of three-quarters of an acre at Bunbury. He had achieved splendid results. If the member for Bunbury were present, I am sure he would endorse what I am saying. This man has been on his block for only a little over two years. His products included all kinds of root crops. I appreciate the statement of the Minister that everything possible will be done. No man and no Ministry can do more than that. If, after saying that, he will stick unflinchingly to it,—

Mr. H. W. Mann: Do you doubt him?

Mr. SAMPSON: No. I am sure he will do everything he can. The member for Perth, evidently following a natural instinct, is a doubter. When the Minister says he will do everything he can, I believe him. I accept his statement, and I hope the hon. member will not encourage a doubt in my mind or in the mind of anyone else. It was said that sustenance would be required for 10 years by those who went on the land. I do not believe that. It is an indictment either against our land or against our manhood. I am sure the hon. member who made the remark will, after consideration, regret having done so. Some people do act unfairly, but the great majority play the game and do their utmost. On the results secured depends the happiness of the approved persons and the happiness of their families. The man who is given the opportunity that is indicated by this motion, and fails to take advantage of it, is lacking in those elements that go to make a responsible human being. I appreciate the encouragement which members have given to the motion. The member for Forrest gave it her blessing. She said she had given serious consideration to it, and I am grateful to have her full support. I was a little doubtful whether the member for Middle Swan was in favour of it or not, but in his final remarks he showed that he approved of the motion. I thank members for the reception of the motion, and the Minister for his assurance that everything that can be done will be done. I trust the matter will be treated with a full recognition of what it implies, consideration to an approved section of the unemployed.

Question put and passed.

**BILL—FINANCIAL EMERGENCY TAX.***Message.*

Message from the Lieutenant-Governor received and read, recommending appropriation in connection with the Bill.

**BILLS (4)—RETURNED FROM THE COUNCIL.**

1, Special License (Waroonia Irrigation District).

With amendments.

2, Swan Land Revesting.

3, Supply (No. 2), £860,000.

4, State Trading Concerns Act Amendment (No. 1).

Without amendment.

**MOTION—AGRICULTURAL BANK.***Relief for Mortgagors.*

Debate resumed from the 21st September on the following motion by Mr. Piesse—

That in the opinion of this House legislation should be enacted to afford relief measures to necessitous mortgagors of the Agricultural Bank.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [8.14]: I do not propose to agree to the motion. The mover says it is aimed at providing for Agricultural Bank clients similar protection to that afforded to private mortgagors under the Tenants, Purchasers and Mortgagors' Relief Act Amendment Act. I do not know whether the hon. member made a mistake. The Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act applies principally to agricultural areas and the Tenants, Purchasers and Mortgagors' Relief Act applies principally to the city.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Not only to the metropolitan area.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is confined almost entirely to residences and for such like dwellings. The House passed the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act restricting mortgagees in certain directions and protecting the mortgagor. I cannot believe that Parliament would pass an Act to enable the Government to carry on the affairs of the country and allow them to violate any principle embodied in such an Act. If there

is any complaint to be made against the Agricultural Bank it is that the trustees have been too lenient.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Did not we specifically exclude the Agricultural Bank from the operations of the Act?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but the member for Katanning (Mr. Piesse) has suggested that the bank should be brought under the provisions of the Tenants, Purchasers and Mortgagors' Relief Act. There may be some reason for complaint on the ground of over-liberality on the part of the bank. A little while ago the member for Mt. Hawthorn (Mr. Millington) asked a question regarding the number of farmers who had been dispossessed. The member for Katanning quoted the number that was given in reply to the member for Mt. Hawthorn, which showed that there had been 600 odd farmers dispossessed in the agricultural areas and that the remainder had been dispossessed in the South-West. The reason why those people were dispossessed was not that they had been evicted, but because the Government have not been able to provide them with money to allow them to continue operations at a loss. There are instances that have been mentioned prominently in the Press showing that, over a period of 30 years, we have continued to make advances to farmers and yet have failed to secure interest payments from them. While the times are as difficult as they are at present, all available money has been utilised to help farmers who can achieve success with a little help.

Mr. Kenneally: Under the legislation we have passed, the Commissioner would extend assistance to such a farmer.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Yes, but the legislation we have passed would not protect the men we have dispossessed.

Mr. Kenneally: Then what objection is there to bringing them under that legislation?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Because in a little while it may be necessary to appoint a commissioner apart from the judges we have already. As hon. members know, we are working with one judge short, and I think the House will agree that during the past two years we have added considerably to the duties of judges by asking them to do work that we would hardly have recognised in early days as within their province. They have been appointed commissioners to undertake all sorts of duties.

Mr. Marshall: One of them has even been appointed a Lieut.-Governor.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: To please even the hon. member, that has been done.

Mr. Sleeman: It was a very good appointment, and I hope you will keep him in it.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: It is not likely that the Crown will do something to its mortgagors that outside people are prevented from doing. If we are to make available the same processes that are used by private mortgagees, we would undoubtedly overburden the Commissioner who is to-day charged with the hearing of these applications. The member for Katanning mixed up his statements by referring to the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act and the great benefits that have been secured to farmers in South Australia. He intimated that there were 5,000 clients operating under the Act in that State. Surely that remark alone should at least give him some food for thought, either as to the state of the industry in South Australia or to the conditions under which the farmers are operating. Last year we produced 43,000,000 bushels of wheat in Western Australia with 500 farmers only under the Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. In South Australia 46,000,000 bushels were produced and they have 5,000 farmers under their Farmers' Debts Adjustment Act. The hon. member should agree that we should not harass the farmers unnecessarily and make their position worse. Let us give them their freedom. Our legislation was introduced to prevent restrictions on banks and so on.

Mr. J. H. Smith: Where is there that freedom while the huge interest bill is hanging over their heads?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: At the moment the interest bill is not affecting them one bit.

Mr. Piesse: Isn't it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Not a bit. The farmers have not been able to pay the interest. The state of the industry has not permitted them to do so. That is not the question at the moment. It is this: When the industry has been rehabilitated, will the settlers be called upon to pay more on account of what it cost to re-establish it? The reference to the 905 properties on the hands of the Crown should at least assure the member for Katanning that we have no desire to have many properties on our hands. It has always been the desire of the Government to dispose of their land, and to see that

the people are kept working it so as to enable them to pay their way. The fact that we populate our agricultural areas is of no benefit to others. We have a different interest from that of the private mortgagee. Our interests are national; theirs is individual or selfish. It must be so, and consequently the Government take a different point of view from that of the hon. member. I am sorry the member for Katanning has submitted his motion because if we refuse to agree to it, the farmers will think they have no security of tenure. As a matter of fact, no State has afforded security of tenure on conditions more favourable than this House has granted during the last two years. It is the easiest and most simple system possible. It does not interfere with credits being obtained from outside by those who desire to protect themselves under existing legislation. The tabling of such a motion does not do justice to the men who are carrying out essential work in the country areas. The rejection of the motion would lead them to believe that the Legislative Assembly is unfavourably inclined towards them and unsympathetic to their desires. Undoubtedly that impression will be created. On the other hand, if we agree to the motion we will handicap them to a much greater degree. I am sorry the member for Katanning has brought this matter up because he is able to keep in touch with Government departments to find out that we are doing everything possible to keep people on the land. As a matter of fact, the member for Mt. Magnet (Hon. M. F. Troy) has repeatedly stated that if there is any fault to be found with the Agricultural Bank it is on account of over liberality.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: What will you do regarding that aspect.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Nothing at the moment.

Hon. J. C. Willecock: It is about time that someone did something in that regard.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: In what way does the hon. member mean?

Hon. J. C. Willecock: The State has lost a lot of money through keeping on the land people who cannot possibly succeed.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Under existing conditions—

Hon. J. C. Willecock: I do not refer to the present, but to normal times.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: While we have the present system—

Hon. M. F. Troy: What system?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The system of providing a man with a block of land irrespective of whether he is qualified to work it, and to give him extended financial backing.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: What do you intend to do about it?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: That sort of thing has been stopped to-day, because there is no capital available for the bank to advance further money to those people. Hon. members know the amount of loan funds that have been authorised during the past two years and are aware that the Government have not had nearly as much capital made available under that heading as in former years. Every penny we have secured from Parliament has been utilised to keep the best farmers on the land.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: Then you are not one of those who referred to "robbing the Treasury of trust funds."

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know what the hon. member means.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: I refer to statements made last week regarding the Country Party propaganda.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I am not the Treasurer, but if I were, I would not be party to the robbing of the trust funds.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! That is not mentioned in the motion.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: But the motion has a good deal to do with trust funds. In the old days, in anticipation of loan funds being raised, money was used and trust funds were recouped when loans were floated. It is not fair to the farmers to submit a motion such as that under discussion because it will not provide the remedy the hon. member desires. Its rejection will make the farmers feel that the House is unsympathetic and the mere tabling of it is calculated to buoy them up with hope that will not be realised if the motion be agreed to. I will give the House one instance to show that we have reached a stage at which we have been forced to remove settlers from their blocks where the properties have been over capitalised. There was a farmer settled in the district represented by the member for Greenough (Mr. Patrick). In 1917 the

farmer enlisted and, after four months in camp, he was discharged as medically unfit. He was granted the benefits of the Discharged Soldiers' Settlement Act and he was placed on a property purchased for £1,700, which was a fairly large price to pay in those days. His average return since then has been  $4\frac{1}{2}$  bushels on a beautiful salmon gum block. His liability to the Crown now amounts to £5,080. Because the Government told him that we desired to take him off his block and put him on a smaller property where he could make a living with the cows he possessed, the whole district is in an uproar.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: That agitation was to help someone into Parliament.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Then I hope, in the interests of the State, that sort of thing will not help that class of man into Parliament.

Hon. M. F. Troy: He did not get there.

Hon. J. C. Willcock: He is going to have another try next election.

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I do not know anything about that. The interests of the people should be safeguarded rather than that sort of thing should be perpetrated in this State. I hope the member for Katanning will withdraw his motion. I give him my assurance that he cannot name one man we have dispossessed who had a reasonable chance of paying his way when prices become normal. There have been very few evictions in the agricultural areas. If we were to take action under the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act, we would get an order from the court in every case. That would be a cumbersome method to adopt, and surely Parliament has sufficient confidence in the Government to know that they have control of the situation. I cannot imagine Country Party members supporting the Government if they knew that we were doing something that we passed an Act of Parliament to prevent other individuals from doing. I am indeed sorry that the member for Katanning has moved his motion, which will tend to mislead the farmers. He has come to me and to the Premier with cases he wanted investigated. Where the man concerned has had a reasonable chance of paying his way, the hon. member has never been turned away without a sympathetic hearing. I hope the House will reject the motion.

**MR. GRIFFITHS** (Avon) [8.29]: The Minister expressed regret that the member for Katanning (Mr. Piesse) had introduced the motion. I am quite sure that hon. member adopted that course with the best of intentions. But whether his motion will achieve the object he has in view and will better the conditions of Agricultural Bank clients, is a somewhat moot point. This opens up a subject which I, as a member representing an agricultural constituency, have been anxious to have discussed in this Chamber, and that is the question whether the wider legislation that is going to deal with the mortgaged farmers in the State is likely to be brought on and considered. When we consider that the farming community is staggering under a burden of debt totalling £32,000,000 it really makes one wonder what is going to be the outcome, whether those people will ever be able to continue under that load, or whether interest will go on accumulating, as it has a painful habit of doing. I suppose a percentage of the settlers will eventually have to be pushed off the land. Recently I asked the Premier whether legislation was going to be brought forward in this Chamber in regard to the question of security of tenure, which is one of the ideas the member for Katanning has in mind. I have it on reliable authority that many farmers cannot see any hope of their getting out of the morass through which they are struggling. Important legislation has been promised. It has been stated in answer to the question I asked, that uniform legislation was not intended throughout the States. We have here the report of Senator Massey Greene that at a meeting of the committee appointed by the Premiers' Conference in July last certain recommendations were made to the State Governments, and it was for each of those Governments to take its own line of action. The official statement is that the committee examined the legislative enactments of the various States relating to moratoria, etc., and prepared a report embodying 10 points on which anomalies had arisen. Uniformity and reciprocity of legislation is desirable, and the report itself is being submitted for the early consideration of the Premiers of all States. The Premier has left for the Eastern States, and I presume we shall hear towards the end of this month what it is intended to do in the way of dealing with this outstanding and difficult problem. The statement of Mr. Hill, the

Premier of South Australia, on the same subject was—

Legislation for the whole of Australia to give farmers security of tenure and protection for five years and an adjustment of liabilities during that period is the most important move for the man on the land that has ever been brought forward. My best news is that in policing the plan we made a further step forward in the process of rehabilitating Australia. For the first time since the Premiers' Conferences have been held, all Governments considered legislation of a uniform character to meet the difficulties of the primary producer.

I take this opportunity to repeat what I said in the Press that legislation should be brought forward to deal with the grave position of the farmers. This is the place wherein to voice our ideas, and I am taking that step now, as I have taken it before. I hope something in the nature of legislation will be forthcoming this session, so that the intolerable position of the farming industry may be relieved and put on a better footing.

**HON. M. F. TROY** (Mt. Magnet) [8.37]: I do not say that I am supporting the motion; I desire to offer a few remarks regarding the position of Agricultural Bank clients. The Minister has said that the bank has treated its clients most liberally. The Government have treated the clients most liberally.

The Minister for Lands: All Governments have done so.

Hon. M. F. TROY: In fact if the bank trustees had stood up to their responsibilities to a greater extent the position of the industry would not have been so bad. I have no wish to complain because my relations with the trustees have always been of the very best, but I realise their difficulties, that there has always been too much political influence. The Minister referred to the case of a settler in the Greenough district. That man is a personal friend of mine, and has been so for many years. But with the kindest feelings towards him I had to tell him the facts; I made it clear to him that his position was absolutely untenable. I cannot say that the Minister was wrong in what he did; it should have been done years before, and not to-day. There are dozens of files dealing with bad clients, men who should not have been tolerated for a week, let alone years. They have been car-

ried on until their capitalisation was so huge that the bank has no possibility of recovering any portion of it. The bank has 800 properties on its hands, but there will be no chance of disposing of them until their value has been reduced by two-thirds. The position of the Agricultural Bank is parlous to-day. The general manager in giving evidence before the Group Settlement Commission said that the liabilities were about 12 million pounds.

The Minister for Lands: Thirteen millions.

Hon. M. F. TROY: And that the assets were considerably less. The advice that I gave to the Premier when the Labour Government were in power was that the bank ought to be placed in a position in which it could not be influenced. The bank should be made independent of politics, and the trustees should be removed from all influences, and they would then deal fairly and equitably with all farmers. With regard to many of the settlers, what is the use of carrying them on any further? No one will keep a man in employment if that man does not do his work. Here it is customary to carry on a section of people who cannot possibly make good. If many of them were not able to make good after producing wheat for ten years when the price averaged 5s. a bushel, how can we expect them to make good under existing conditions? I bear in mind that at the present time there are many settlers whose occupation of the land extends over five, seven or eight years. Those settlers cannot possibly make good now. I understand that there are settlers who have been in occupation of their holdings since 1910—that is, 22 years—and a fair percentage of them are worse off to-day than they were ten years ago. If the resources of the bank are frittered away on those who will not attempt to make good, then we shall find that the good settlers will also fall by the way. The bank requires to be re-organised, and the trustees should be put in an independent position. At the present time, members of Parliament have to approach the bank trustees in the interests of clients. The hon. member's motion will not accomplish anything. The Minister has told us that the bank charges 5 per cent. interest. Do I understand that that applies to all settlers?

The Minister for Lands: All except soldier settlers who are charged 4½ per cent.

Hon. M. F. TROY: If the bank is advancing money at 5 per cent., it is doing very well, because there is only one bank from which it is possible to get money at 5 per cent. and that is the Commonwealth Bank.

The Minister for Lands: Even that bank is not taking on any new clients, so you would be lucky to get anything there.

Hon. M. F. TROY: The Commonwealth Bank is not permitted to do business. If one took a gilt-edged proposition to the bank, it could not be accepted because of the promise to the Federal Government. The Federal Government's policy is to strangle the Commonwealth Bank. That is not mere tittle-tattle, but ascertained fact. Though the Commonwealth Bank lend at 5 per cent., they are not prepared actually to lend money, because the Federal Government do not want the Commonwealth Bank to interfere with the private banks. To-day, as regards the liabilities which our settlers owe to the Agricultural Bank, if the rate of interest were reduced to 1 per cent. it could not be paid. If the Act were amended to-morrow so as to provide that the settler should have his money at one-half per cent., he could not pay even that interest. It appears to me that unless there is an increase in the prices of our products, there will have to be a general writing-down everywhere; and a general writing-down cannot begin with this State, but must begin beyond the State. As long as the State is called upon to meet its full liabilities, it cannot give relief. There must be a general writing-down of Commonwealth and State liabilities before our settlers can obtain relief. Ninety per cent. of them cannot make good on present prices, in the absence of severe writing-down. Not the most competent farmer can make good with wheat at its present price of 2s. 6d. per bushel. Either we must write-down, if the State can afford it, or we must wait for better times. As regards the motion, apart from giving a little enlightenment, it cannot achieve what the mover desires.

MR. PIESSE (Katanning—in reply) [8.47]: I made it clear in moving the motion that I had no intention of reflecting unduly upon the management of the Agricul-



tural Bank. I stated that I was not aware of any serious injustice done by the Agricultural Bank, but that my motion aimed at giving to Agricultural Bank clients, who constitute three-fourths of the wheat farmers of Western Australia, the same protection as is afforded to other borrowers or mortgagors. The Minister for Lands knows that throughout our wheat producing districts there has been much unrest as to security of tenure, more particularly on the part of Agricultural Bank mortgagors. I am somewhat surprised that more representatives of agricultural districts have not supported this motion.

Mr. J. I. Mann: Do you think the carrying of the motion would make the farmers any better off?

Mr. PIESSE: I think that if the motion is carried into effect, Agricultural Bank mortgagors will obtain the same rights and the same protection as are granted to other farmers mortgaged to private banks. I may refer to the Minister's speech in moving the second reading of the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Continuance Bill. The hon. gentleman pointed out that legislation of this nature had been passed in order to meet the emergency in the financial position of our farmers.

The Minister for Lands: I wish you would quote from that speech in the country.

Mr. PIESSE: I did not bring forward the motion without serious consideration. But for the fact that the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction measure was introduced as a continuance measure, I would have moved to include the Crown in the principal Act. Members who are acquainted with Eastern States legislation covering a position somewhat similar to ours must realise that the position is not an ordinary one. While earlier Eastern States emergency legislation excluded the Crown, we now find the New South Wales Premier actually promising to introduce a measure which will bring within the scope of such legislation debtors to the Crown to the extent of more than £50,000,000. I have no desire to embarrass either the Government or the bank. If Mr. McLarty and his co-trustees were compelled to go to the court, that fact would not cause them to become vindictive.

The Minister for Lands: They would all be forced to go to the court, and would lose touch with the bank.

Mr. PIESSE: The Minister contends that protection should be extended to about one-third of Western Australian wheatgrowers, while the other two-thirds should have no protection whatever. Under the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act protection is provided for all mortgagors to private banks and private mortgagees. Yet the equity under securities held by the Agricultural Bank is not protected. I shall not say that coming under the Act would make the Agricultural Bank trustees go as far as they can to protect equities, because they act most justly in the great majority of cases, though there may be exceptions. I should suppose it would be somewhat of a relief to the trustees to be brought into line with other mortgagees. The financial position does not affect only the farmers of Western Australia; it is Australia-wide. All Governments are at this very time considering further legislation for protection and relief of mortgagors. South Australia asked the Director of Debts Adjustment to make a report on the farming situation. The director emphasised that mortgages should be written down in keeping with present valuations. The New Zealand Prime Minister, Mr. Coates, spoke similarly regarding dairy farmers of the Dominion. I do not wish to labour the question, nor do I wish it to be treated lightly, as it is a burning question throughout the wheat areas and also in some wool districts. I think the member for Nelson (Mr. J. H. Smith) will bear me out in saying that there is great necessity for such protection in the South-West. Plainly, large slices of farming capital have disappeared during the recent price slump. The Agricultural Bank undoubtedly will be compelled in the near future to deal with other securities which naturally require review. While I am sure that the trustees will give reasonable consideration to each individual case coming before them, I view the whole position with some alarm. As I have already pointed out, 905 farmers have been dispossessed within the last three years. Even during the year 1931-32, since the passing of the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act, 655 farms have been repossessed by the Agricultural Bank. There is a further phase of the security question. Besides the

Agricultural Bank there are others to be considered—unsecured creditors who have done a great deal to assist Agricultural Bank clients. Those unsecured creditors would in many instances have given such relief to the farmer as would have saved him from foreclosure. In view of the statements of the Minister for Lands, and in view of the fact that I am precluded from moving an amendment to the Mortgagees' Rights Restriction Act, I shall not press the motion, especially as I have ventilated the question and now realise that the Minister for Lands is fully seised of the facts of the position. I am hopeful that the hon. gentleman will afford every protection to farmer mortgagors. In view of his expressed desire to give every security of tenure to mortgagors of the Agricultural Bank, I ask leave to withdraw the motion. I do so with a full knowledge of the seriousness of the position, and in the hope that the Government will at once look into the question and confer with the Agricultural Bank trustees with a view to ensuring that no further evictions are made unless there is good reason to believe that the Agricultural Bank's client is solely responsible for the position in which he finds himself.

Motion, by leave, withdrawn.

## **BILL—DIVORCE ACT AMENDMENT.**

### *Second Reading.*

**MR. WELLS** (Canning) [9.2] in moving the second reading said: I appreciate that any member attempting to amend such delicate legislation as the Divorce Act is treading on thin ice. However, this Bill will not in any way seriously affect the principles of the Act. Perhaps the quickest method by which to expound the measure will be to explain one of the cases which has led up to its introduction. Seven or eight years ago a young couple in this State got married. Twelve months after the marriage the young man caused his wife serious consideration as to his mental capacity.

**Mr. Kenneally:** He was not the first husband who has done that.

**Mr. WELLS:** She did not like to bring in a doctor to give a certificate and send her husband to an institution, so she wired to his people in the Eastern States. They immediately sent to this State his brother, who discovered that the apprehensions of the wife

were fully justified. So he took his brother back to his parents in Victoria. Three months later that young husband was placed in an institution for the insane in Victoria, where he has ever since remained, medical evidence having proved that he is a lunatic with no possible chance of recovery. If that young man had been interned in an asylum in this State, after six years the wife could have applied to the court and got a divorce or separation from her husband. That is what the Bill is endeavouring to provide, even though the husband is in Victoria.

**Hon. P. Collier:** Then this amendment is to meet the case of one individual?

**Mr. WELLS:** Not one alone; there are other similar cases. There may be many, and certainly I know of more than one.

**Hon. P. Collier:** Individual cases make bad law.

**Mr. WELLS:** This is not a solitary case. During the intervening years that young woman has battled along and brought up her child in a most exemplary manner. She has now formed an acquaintance with an exceptionally fine young man and they desire to get married.

**Hon. P. Collier:** You are very frank about it. It seems like a speech pleading for a divorce in a court.

**Mr. WELLS:** I am merely putting up this case as an illustration of what is required. Because the husband is interned in an asylum in the Eastern States, the wife is unable to obtain a divorce under our Act. Without the Bill, if she is to get her divorce she will have to go to the Eastern States at considerable expense.

**Hon. P. Collier:** The hon. member has already remarked that she desires to get married again. Certainly this is new legislation.

**Mr. WELLS:** It is quite simple in its application. All that the Bill is intended to do is to give that woman and others in the same position the right to get a divorce in this State, and thus save the expense of going to the Eastern States. It is very necessary that this amendment should be made in the parent Act. It will do nobody any harm, and possibly it will relieve suffering in a number of people penalised under the existing Act. Why should any man or woman whose partner unfortunately has been interned in an asylum in the Eastern States be debarred from re-marrying?

Mr. Marshall: How would the Victorian law apply? Could not she go to Victoria for her divorce?

Mr. WELLS: Yes, but why should she be put to the expense of going to Victoria?

Hon. J. C. Willecock: We are to put the State to the expense of altering the law in order that she may be saved the expense of travel.

Mr. WELLS: It will apply to others.

Hon. P. Collier: If we pass Bills to remedy individual hardship we shall have hundreds to attend to.

Mr. WELLS: It is not the only case I know of; the Bill will impose no hardship on anybody.

Hon. P. Collier: It might impose a hardship on the prospective husband.

Mr. WELLS: I want members to take this seriously. I hope we are not all silly here to-night. The Bill is worthy of consideration.

Hon. M. F. Troy: It is a silly effort.

Mr. WELLS: I commend it to the right-thinking members of the House, and I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Attorney General, debate adjourned.

## **MOTION—UNIVERSITY FINANCE, GOVERNMENT SUBSIDY.**

*To inquire by Select Committee.*

Debate resumed from the 28th September on the following motion by Mr. J. MacCallum Smith—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the financial administration of the University for the purpose of ascertaining to what extent the State is justified in continuing the present annual subsidy of £31,000.

**THE ATTORNEY GENERAL** (Hon. T. A. L. Davy—West Perth) [9.10]: I should like to say first of all that the University is not under the control of the Education Department, and that the only reason why I should have secured the adjournment of the debate was because, being Minister for Education, and the University being an educational institution, it might be thought I was the proper person to deal with it. Also, of course, I am able to get in touch with the authorities governing the University more easily perhaps than can

some members, and am able to ascertain their views on anything concerning themselves. Not, of course, that I am here to express their views only, but because it is proper for the Government to take into consideration views expressed on anything connected with the University. At the outset I should like to tell the hon. member who moved the motion that the University is perfectly willing that the House should make the inquiry suggested in the motion. But I think it fair to the University that some of the statements made by the hon. member, which were inaccurate, should be answered. His first complaint against the University was that their annual report was late in coming forward. He said he had been unable to obtain a copy of a report later than that for the year 1929-30. I am informed—I do not guarantee the accuracy of this, although Professor Whitfeld, who gave me the information, is a man of accurate statements as a rule—that the annual reports had been furnished up to date except that for 1931, which was the last. The professor states—and this seems quite reasonable—that there has been some argument with the Senate as to the exact form in which that report should appear. It was provided and submitted to the Senate, but some of the members of the Senate did not like the tone of the report, it appearing to them that it rather looked as if they were crying for more. So the report was sent back for re-drafting.

Mr. Angelo: And it has taken them 12 months?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, because the report we are talking about is the report for the period which terminated on the 31st December, 1931, and of course it could not be prepared until the year was finished. It was then prepared in the ordinary way and, as I say, there has been some argument about it. Anyhow, I do not expect the motion would have been brought forward if the only complaint entertained by the hon. member was that the annual report was late in coming. The member for North Perth made a complaint regarding the shortness of the comments in the report on finance. I must confess I did not quite understand what he meant. I do not see why the report of the University should discuss finance at great length. All that the people are entitled to know is what money has been spent.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Seeing that the University authorities approached the Government for more money, they should give the details.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The report the hon. member spoke about was that for the year 1929, and a lot of water has flowed under the bridge since then. The University since that date has submitted to a 20 per cent. reduction in the grant made by the Government each year with the resultant 20 per cent. reduction in the salaries of the whole staff of the University. The hon. member apparently did not know that that was so.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Yes, I did.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member, I think, stated that there had been no reduction. Actually the Government grant has dropped from £31,000 to £25,200 for the current year.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: I took the figures from the balance sheet.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes for year 1929.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: And for the year 1930.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: When the Financial Emergency Act was passed, the statutory reduction was inflicted on the University in common with all other institutions and persons receiving grants from the Government, and the £31,000 which had been the annual grant to the University was reduced to £25,200. For the year 1931 the amount shown was £27,900 because it was a broken year. For the year ended the 31st December, 1932, the Government grant will be £25,200. A further comment made by the hon. member was on the inadequacy of the auditor's report. The hon. member is very much more intimate with high finance than I am, he being a bank director, but I come into contact with the work of auditors and I have not been accustomed to find auditors do more than check up the books of records of the particular institutions whose accounts they are auditing. I do not consider it part of the function of an auditor to comment on the manner in which the money of the institution audited is spent. It appears to me that the auditor's report, criticised by the hon. member, is a perfectly proper report for an auditor to make. His duty is to see that proper re-

cords are kept, that all the money spent has been expended on the things it was designed to be spent on, and that the expenditure has been duly authorised. Another point made by the member for North Perth was that our University was heavily endowed and therefore should be able to carry out its work with less Government assistance. As Professor Whitfeld said to me, it seems to be impossible to make people understand that the endowments to the University of Western Australia are absolutely earmarked and cannot be used for administration purposes. Not only do the endowments not assist the University from a financial point of view: they actually harass it. The bequest of the late Sir Winthrop Hackett was earmarked for specific purposes. Most of it was for the building of what is known as the Hackett Memorial Hall. The balance of it was for the provision of bursaries for students who desired to attend the University. Not one penny of that money goes into the coffers of the University. The bursaries enable students to attend the University and obtain free tuition there—students who otherwise could not have attended. They are living-expenses bursaries, not bursaries that entitle students to free education because tuition is already free at our University. So, although the endowments have allowed the University to become possessed of a most noble pile of buildings, they have not only not assisted the financial aspect, but have actually embarrassed it. The increase in the number of students at the University is shown as follows:—

1927	..	..	..	..	361
1928	..	..	..	..	453
1929	..	..	..	..	545
1930	..	..	..	..	618
1931	..	..	..	..	725
1932	..	..	..	..	762

Mr. Patrick: What is the average number that graduate?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I cannot answer the question, but I should imagine that the percentage is high. The member for North Perth proceeded to quote certain figures abstracted from the Commonwealth Year Book, and made certain deductions which purported to show that the expense of educating students at our University was something like three times as great as that of any other University in Australia. The

figures he took were from the Commonwealth Year Book for 1931, page 319. He stated that the administration expenses—he emphasised administration expenses—of the University of Western Australia for the year 1929 amounted to £147,428. He divided that sum by the number of students and concluded that the cost for every student was £200. With all due respect to the hon. member, I am sure that he examines the accounts of his own business with more accuracy than he did the tables of figures in the Year Book, because he added to the administration expenses a sum of £86,000 which was part of the Hackett bequest spent on the erection of the hall. That year it happened that £86,000 was spent; the next year over £100,000 was spent on the hall, but that had nothing to do with the cost per head of educating the students. The hon. member should have noticed that he was making a mistake by adding that column in, because the figures immediately above, under the heading of "buildings and grounds," show Adelaide £12,000, Queensland £370, Melbourne £4,000. He might have detected that there was something very peculiar about it when the expenditure in poor little Western Australia jumped to £86,000 for the year. He should have suspected that there was some explanation.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: I treated all the Universities alike.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Of course he did. He said that the total represented the administration expenses and the total is in the sixth column. The preceding columns are—No. 1, salaries and administration; No. 2, scholarships and bursaries; No. 3, general maintenance; No. 4, buildings and grounds.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: I do not think I said that. I said the figures might vary.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I merely wish to point out the incorrectness of anything that may have created a wrong impression.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith interjected.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think the hon. member should take it that way. I think he was careless in giving the figure of £147,000 as representing the administration expenses, and then dividing it by the number of students and saying that each student in Western Australia cost £200, whereas students in the other Universities

of Australia cost about £78 per head. All I wish to do is to let the House know what the true position is. Actually this is the right proportion of expenditure per student—

	per head.
Sydney .. ..	£75
Melbourne .. ..	£75
Queensland .. ..	£84
Adelaide .. ..	£58
Western Australia .. ..	£79
Tasmania .. ..	£74

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Those figures show a big increase on Adelaide.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, but it has to be remembered that the other Universities in Australia charge fees. Western Australia does not charge fees, so £79 for the cost per head here seems fairly reasonable. The smaller the University, the larger is likely to be the cost per head. The staff necessary to cover the whole curriculum would be, say, a score of men—I do not know what the actual number would be—and that staff would perhaps just as conveniently deal with 700 students as with 1,000 students. So the small University is likely to find its cost per head a little higher than that of a large University. I wish to say no more on the subject of finance, but I do wish to join issue with the hon. member on his view regarding the purpose of the University. He spoke as if the only excuse for a University was that it enabled people who were fortunate enough to attend it to become better equipped for making money. If that is his view, I must entirely disagree with him.

Hon. M. F. Troy: I should say so.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is a view that is frequently expressed in the community. We are told that if the University cannot place in the learned professions all the students who pass through it, then it is no good. If it is necessary for a man who takes a degree in English literature to earn his living as a bank clerk or as a farmer, we are told that the work done by the University for such a man is so much waste of money. To give an instance, a friend of mine was fortunate enough in the earlier part of the century to be elected to a Rhodes scholarship. He went to Oxford and took a scientific course, and when he returned to Western Australia, he became a

farmer. I have heard people claim that that was a shocking waste of money.

Hon. M. F. Troy: A great advantage.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I entirely disagree with the view that it was a waste of money.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Why should the community be called upon to pay for that fancy education?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think it is fancy. Mine may be an idealistic view, but I should like to see the day come when most members of the community capable of it were able to take a University course.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And receive some culture.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. The important side of University education is its cultural value. A man is no worse a navvy because he is a trained carpenter, and is no worse a trained carpenter because he has taken a degree in English literature.

Hon. M. F. Troy: He is a better one.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: A vastly better one. He runs a chance of being a better citizen in that he can enjoy the better things of life, and see more things that are beautiful in life.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: At the expense of the community.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If the good to the community through the number of these persons is worth it, it does not matter whether it has been an expense or not.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: I do not know that it is worth much to the community.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Many people do not take that view.

Mr. Angelo: We cannot absorb all the men who pass through the University. I know of engineers who had to go elsewhere because we could not absorb them.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Apparently the hon. member takes the same view as does the member for North Perth, that the University is a kind of technical school established to give people a technical training to enable them to earn a better living.

Mr. Kenneally: Is it an undue load for them to carry?

Mr. Angelo: But they are going out of the State.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: What should we do? That point of view suggests

that we should not allow a man to be trained as an engineer because, if so, he may have to leave the State in order to get a job as an engineer. We are therefore to prevent him from becoming an engineer, and keep him as an unskilled person in the community. That is not right. In every community where the population is not rapidly increasing we find the engineering, the legal, and the medical professions, containing more qualified persons than the community needs. These people find other avenues for employment, and they are no worse in those other avenues because of the skilled training they have had, and their cultural acquirements.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Most of our brilliant people leave the State for jobs elsewhere.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Suppose they do, must we worry about that?

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: We must worry if we are put to the expense of educating those people.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Why should Victoria, New Zealand or England be put to the expense of educating the people who come here from those parts? There is reciprocity going on all the time.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: How many come here?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Scores of them. We have to be international in things of this kind. If we want an engineer to do a difficult job, we get the best available in the world.

Hon. P. Collier: School teachers and mechanics and other skilled people come here.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The important part about University education is its cultural side. If we could have made available to the whole community the cultural side it would improve the standard of the community. The cultural side does not make snobs of people.

Hon. M. F. Troy: There is a chance of building up snobs in that way.

Hon. P. Collier: Sometimes the culture is exhibited once a year at the University ball or in the procession through the streets.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is a criticism of the defects of our University.

Hon. P. Collier: It means that we are not getting much value for the University education.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The ideal University education makes a man a better citizen whatever he does. If it makes a man disposed to look down upon honest manual work because he has a University degree, it is an utter and complete failure.

Hon. M. F. Troy: That is not education.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not think a good education has that effect on a man. I have quoted the case of a man who went to Oxford and became a farmer on his return. He is a good farmer.

Hon. M. F. Troy: He turned his education to good account.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: He is no worse a farmer because he has had the cultural side developed and he is a better citizen for it.

Hon. M. F. Troy: And a better farmer.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: At the present time it may be financially disastrous for a young person to go through the University. There are many walks in life in which a person must start when quite young, and into which that person cannot get if he or she waits until later, in order to go to the University, or to complete a course at a State secondary school. To that extent education may be a serious financial handicap.

Hon. P. Collier: That is proved so every day.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have to clean that up. It is the result partly of our arbitration system, and partly because of the lack of foresight on the part of employers and unions working together. It is due to the fact that a person's remuneration must be given to him in accordance with our laws and according to his age and not to his length of service. I quoted the case the other day at a University gathering I attended, of a boy who was sent to me by a constituent to see if I could get him a job in a bank. I wrote to the manager of the bank to which the lad had applied, but the manager replied that although the boy was of a splendid type, was the best of all the applicants, he was too old at 17. The lad's father and mother had slaved, battled and sacrificed to enable the boy to complete his course at the Modern School, and obtain his leaving certificate, only to find to their anguished

horror that they had done him a bad turn by so doing.

Hon. P. Collier: They could have got him in at 15.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, or at 16; but he was too old at 17 to start in the bank, although the extra work he had done in acquiring a better education and a better trained mind and greater knowledge might well have served him in good stead.

Hon. P. Collier: It is the same with regard to our public service.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: At present there is no avenue into the public service through our free University. That is a disgraceful state of affairs. We ought to make the most important avenue into our civil service through the University.

Hon. P. Collier: Even a leaving certificate does not enable a boy to get into the service.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Boys have to join as young children.

Hon. P. Collier: At 15.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Before they have a chance of finishing their education. From the cultural point of view, the most important time for a person's education is after he reaches the age of 14. Up to that time he is acquiring a knowledge of the machinery whereby he may later on acquire the culture.

Hon. P. Collier: If they go on until they get their leaving certificate most likely they are barred from the public service.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, from the banks, from big firms such as Dalgetys, Elder Smiths, and from other avenues.

Hon. P. Collier: And they are taking jobs as tram conductors.

Mr. Kenneally: There is an undue consideration for cheap labour.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We have to frame our industrial laws and our business habits in such a way that a man can pursue his education even to the extent of getting a University degree, without having closed upon him many of the important avenues through which he can earn his living.

Mr. Kenneally: And without being penalised in later life by having to take a lower wage because he has done so.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: An employer cannot be expected to pay to a man with a University degree, who wants to go into his office, the same wage as if he had already spent five years in learning the job.

Mr. Kenneally: You can see the alternative, which is to penalise the family twice.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not agree with the hon. member.

Mr. Kenneally: The family is penalised by having to keep the lad at school in order to get his education, and is penalised again when he goes to work and receives a lower rate of wage.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: He would not get a lower wage.

Mr. Kenneally: He would get a lower wage in accordance with his age.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It is absurd to pay people according to their age.

Mr. Kenneally: Would you pay a man of 21 junior rates?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, if he could only do junior's work in the type of work that requires to be learnt. A man may become an apprentice at any age. He would be paid the same wage as an apprentice of 21 as if he had started as an apprentice of 17.

Mr. Kenneally: You mean he would get the same wage at 21 in his first year as if he had started at 17?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Certainly. The man's age is not the point. If a person embarks upon a calling which has to be learned over a period, the employer cannot be expected to pay him more because he is 21 than if he started at 16.

Mr. Kenneally: At 21 he is a potential family man, but at 16 he is not.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That point of view means that if a boy fails to start a course of employment, which is progressive, when at some tender age, he can never do so. If that point of view is carried to its logical conclusion, and if a man does not start in a skilled calling at 16 or 17, he is condemned to be an unskilled worker for the rest of his life. It is impossible to get away from it unless employers are to be compelled to take a certain quota of persons of 21 together with others at 16. That is the point of view that has brought us into the present position. The Government say to the University, "We will give you your education there for nothing." Another side of the Government's mind says, "If you take that University education which we say is very good for you, you are settled for anything except as a school teacher or some other calling of the kind."

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: I do not think this has anything to do with the motion.

Hon. S. W. Munsie: In the railways lads are being dismissed at the age of 21, and many are being re-employed as casuals, and are getting from 25s. to 27s. 6d. a week more than they would be entitled to if they had remained on.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That may be so. The remarks of the member for North Perth have led me to make the remarks I have made.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the Minister is in order.

Hon. P. Collier: There is no limit to the range of the discussion on a motion of this kind.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I believe in education. I think education has not been the immense success which the idealists of 60 years ago thought it would be, but I still believe in it. I do not agree with the point of view of the member for North Perth. The result of education has to be regarded as quite outside the question of enabling a few people to make a better living. If that is all it is, we can give the education in our technical schools. It might be better to train people as publicans.

Hon. P. Collier: A lot of people make money without any education.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Probably on the average a person with a University degree makes less money than those who have no degree. That is not the point—the mere making of money. Everyone cannot make money.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: That is no reason for increasing taxation; money does not count, apparently.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: As I read the mind of the member for North Perth, he says that insofar as a University education does not enable a man to get a better job, education is no good; if we have men with university educations for whom there cannot be found what I may describe as university jobs, he says we should pull in our horns and stop that type of education. I do not agree with him. I think that, generally speaking, our new civil servants should come from the university. All our teachers should pass through that institution, and so on. I do not think it matters that we have among university men carpenters, plumbers and all the rest of them, but I do say that plumbers, carpenters and other tradesmen



will be better citizens if they have had a university education.

Mr. Kenneally: A lawyer would not be handicapped if he secured a job on an adding machine in a bank.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I should not say so. I think I would be just as good a man as another who had no education at all.

Mr. Kenneally: Do you say you would be good on the adding machine?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: No, arithmetic was always my bad point.

Mr. Nulsen: Would you be any good at adding up costs?

Hon. P. Collier: What is wrong with our system is that after boys of 15 to 20 leave the secondary schools or the university, avenues of employment are already closed to them. I have had boys of ages ranging from 18 to 20 with university degrees asking me to get them positions as tram conductors.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: And I challenge the Leader of the Opposition to join with me in altering that position.

Hon. P. Collier: I will do so.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: We may be confronted with difficulties as to the best way to do it. One way would be to make the University the normal avenue into the civil service.

Hon. P. Collier: I think it ought to be.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: But the difficulty is not that they should be allowed to enter through the University but—

Hon. P. Collier: That that form of employment should be closed to them.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is the position. I believe that, with proper application, we could make the University the normal avenue leading to employment in banks, commercial houses and other institutions.

Mr. J. H. Smith: That would be all right in the metropolis, but what about the country districts where the people cannot afford to send their children to the University.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The hon. member entirely misunderstands the point. It is not suggested that these young persons should be required to go through the University.

Hon. P. Collier: No, but that the avenues of employment should not be closed to them.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is the point. They should not be debarred from securing positions after they pass through the University. I think the motion is a proper one to agree to, and I am informed by the University authorities that they will be very pleased if the select committee is appointed, and they will give every possible facility to enable their expenditure to be overhauled.

On motion by Hon. M. F. Troy, debate adjourned.

## BILL—LAND AND INCOME TAX ASSESSMENT FURTHER AMENDMENT.

### *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 28th September.

### THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS

(Hon. J. Scaddan—Maylands) [9.49]: The Bill submitted by the member for Perth (Mr. H. W. Mann) is a simple one, but very important. I was led to believe from his remarks that a similar amendment to the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act passed this House on a previous occasion, but, due to the fact that certain other provisions included in the Bill that also contained this particular amendment were not acceptable to both Houses, the Bill was lost. I suggest to the member for Perth that it is possible, even if we pass the Bill, it will not prove effective because he has moved to amend an Act that no longer exists.

Mr. H. W. Mann: You might have put me right before.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is not my duty; the hon. member should have seen to that for himself. The Bill seeks to amend the Land and Income Tax Assessment Amendment Act of 1924, but, subsequent to the passing of that Act, the Land and Income Tax Assessment Act was consolidated. The consolidated Act embraces the amending Act that the member for Perth now proposes to further amend, but I take it that the 1924 Act no longer exists. I suggest it may be worth while for the hon. member to withdraw the Bill and give notice of his intention to introduce another that will amend the consolidated Act. It appears in the same volume as the

Act that he seeks to amend. The procedure could be then followed normally, with the certainty that if the Bill were passed, it would be effective.

Mr. H. W. Mann: We can amend it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is a one-clause Bill to amend an Act that does not exist, so I do not know how it could be amended to meet the situation.

Mr. Kenneally: The point you make is one that should call for a ruling.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not suggest that the House should defeat the Bill on a technical point.

Mr. H. W. Mann: The Bill was drawn up by the Parliamentary Draftsman.

Mr. Kenneally: The point the Minister raises is technical and important, and we should have a ruling.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I do not know that Parliament is competent to give a ruling on a matter that might possibly have to be taken to the courts to secure a decision as to the constitutional phase. However, I do not propose to labour that point. The Bill provides for a small but important amendment. I do not know whether I would be justified—I do not wish to be offensive in the slightest degree—in suggesting that the member for Perth knows just what effect his amendment will have. I had no idea of its purport even when I had read the Bill in conjunction with the Act, until I discussed it with the Crown Law authorities. For the purpose of showing the application of the amending Bill, I propose to quote from the consolidated Act passed at a later stage, subsequent to the passing of the Act that the member for Perth proposes to amend and which, I say, does not exist now. However, the wording is exactly the same. Section 10 reads as follows—

(1) The lands and classes of lands hereinafter specified are exempt from assessment for taxation under this Act, viz.:—

(a) All lands owned by or on behalf of His Majesty.

(b) Public roads and thoroughfares; public reserves for health, recreation, or enjoyment, public parks, university endowments, cemeteries, and commons.

The next paragraph is that one that the hon. member seeks to amend—

(c) All lands owned by any person or society, and occupied or used exclusively for or in connection with any public hospital

(whether supported wholly or partly by grants from the Consolidated Revenue Fund or not), benevolent institution, public charitable purpose, church, chapel for public worship, or the site of a residence of a minister of religion ministering at some place of public worship, or the site of, or occupied for the purposes of, a school attached to or connected with any place of public worship, or as a mechanics' institute, or school of art—

The member for Perth stopped at that point when he quoted this section, but it proceeds—

—all lands the property of and belonging to any religious body, and occupied only for the purposes of such body; all lands on which is erected any municipal or State market, town hall or municipal chamber; and all lands owned by or vested in any municipal corporation, road board or other statutory public body.

Mr. H. W. Mann: That is provided for.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I shall give a material reason why the whole of the paragraph should be read, and that is why I suggest the hon. member does not fully realise the application of the amendment he proposes. The paragraph concludes with the following proviso—

Provided that the exemption shall not apply to any such land which (not being the site of, or intended site of, or occupied for the purposes of a school or hall used or to be used for educational purposes the property of and belonging to a religious body) is a source of profit or gain to the users or owners thereof.

It will thus be seen that paragraph (c) deals with two classes of land that would be exempt—first, all the land owned by any person; secondly, all the land the property of and belonging to any religious body and occupied for the purposes of such body. The material difference there is if a person owns land or any society owns land that is occupied or used in connection with any public hospital, benevolent institution and so on, in accordance with the list included in paragraph (c), the person who is the owner of the land is exempt from taxation. If the land is the property of a religious body then the amendment will not apply because that land is already exempt. The hon. member merely proposes to make an additional exemption of land not the property of a church or religious body but of property held by a church but owned by a private person or society.

Mr. H. W. Mann: The Minister is quite wrong.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** I am not.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** The land must be in the name of a clergyman or a bishop, and therefore that person must be exempt. The Minister himself raised the point when it was asserted that he held certain property in or around the city, but he pointed out he held the property on behalf of the Crown.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** That does not alter the fact that the hon. member proposes to amend the Act as I have suggested and the owner of the land, irrespective of who he may be, will not then be assessed by the Commissioner of Taxation. In other words, the Commissioner of Taxation, before he can make an assessment, has to prove that the person occupying the land is not using it for the purposes set out.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** That is quite right.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** It is, but what the hon. member does not understand is that the Commissioner of Taxation cannot take into consideration whether the land is used for purposes that do not allow him to assess. Having arrived at that position, the hon. member proposes to insert the words "or held" in the paragraph, which will have an entirely different effect because he proposes to permit the private owner of the property from being assessed as he should be because he is holding the land out of use by allowing it to be held by an institution. Although the owner did not use it for any other purpose, he would be exempt from taxation that he should pay as a land owner.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** You are rather straining the point.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** No.

**Hon. M. F. Troy:** That is highly improbable.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** I do not think so.

**Hon. M. F. Troy:** Highly improbable, but I can see through it.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** So can I and that is why I am drawing the hon. member's attention to the point. The Act as it operates provides that if the land, although owned by a person not actually using it, is used or occupied by any of the organisations set out, it is exempt. Now the member for Perth wants to alter the position so that all that need be required is that it be held. It will be simple enough for a

man paying a fair sum annually by way of taxation on land held out of use to arrange with one of the institutions or churches to hold the land for him, and then he would immediately be free from assessment. I do not think the House would suggest that it should apply in that way. The trouble is that the proof that the land would be used for any other purposes is not with the owner but with the Commissioner of Taxation. If I own land and I want to be exempt, I must submit the grounds on which I claim the exemption. What I think the hon. member has in mind is that, owing to difficulties that have arisen with certain churches in particular—I stand to be corrected if such is not the case—is the fact that they are holding land which, in some cases, has been granted in new townships for church purposes, and because the blocks have not been built upon, the holders have been called upon to pay land tax. The hon. member therefore considers that as the land is being held for future church purposes it should be exempt from taxation, although it is not then being occupied or used. I do not think he intends to go any further.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** The title must be in the name of some person, and I am asking that the person holding it shall be exempt.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** He must be a member of that particular body.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** Of course.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** But according to the Bill he need not be. If it is a religious body that holds the property, it is all right.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** Who else holds land for church purposes except clergymen and those connected with churches?

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** The Bill does not say that. The Act provides that all lands the property of and belonging to any religious body shall be exempt from taxation. What the hon. member desires is to provide that where the land is the property of any religious body occupied, used or held exclusively for the purpose of that church, it shall be exempt from land tax.

**Mr. H. W. Mann:** That is what the Bill says.

**The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:** It does not. I consulted the Crown Solicitor and he said that in one case it is the property of the church and in the other case it may be the property of any person

in the State. The hon. member wants to say that any person can hold it and that the land may still be exempt. If I were the owner of a considerable area of vacant land in the city, and I was paying £500 a year in land tax, it would be worth my while to go to one of these institutions and say, "Under the amending Act brought in by the member for Perth, I am prepared to allow you to hold this land, subject to your undertaking not to use it for any purpose, and you may hold it until such time as I require it again, and instead of paying £500 annually in the form of taxation, I will give you £250 annually towards your institution." Is that what the hon. member wants done? I do not think he does. That is a possibility that arises out of what the Bill proposes. The hon. member might make his amendment such as will meet the wishes of those who are desirous of granting this protection.

Mr. H. W. Mann: There is no suggestion of private persons coming in.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What is the meaning of "private person"? The Interpretation Act sets out the meaning and the hon. member will find that the words embrace everybody. That being the case, it is no use trying to read something into the Bill that is not there, or taking something away that is there. What Parliament is anxious to do is to permit a church that is holding land for the future use of the church to be free from taxation, but Parliament is not anxious to allow an individual to escape his responsibility as a taxpayer by transferring the mere holding of the land as is proposed by the hon. member's Bill. I suggest that the hon. member should withdraw the Bill and re-introduce it in an amended form, so that it shall give effect to his desires.

On motion by the Minister for Lands, debate adjourned.

# **BILL—WESTERN AUSTRALIAN AGED SAILORS AND SOLDIERS' RELIEF FUND.**

## *Second Reading.*

Debate resumed from the 28th September.

**THE MINISTER FOR LANDS** (Hon. C. G. Latham—York) [10.8]: I have no objection to the Bill. It sets out how funds shall be raised for the purpose of providing

for aged returned sailors and soldiers belonging to the Imperial League in Australia. It also provides for the setting up of a trust to hold the fund, and that the fund shall not operate until 1940. Thus, it has eight years to accumulate. That, it seems to me, is a very worthy object. There is no doubt that the aged members of the league will be glad to be able to fall back on this fund, which will be better than the old age pension. Of course it is not intended that it shall apply to those in receipt of full pensions. I support the second reading of the Bill.

**MR. CORBOY** (Yilgarn - Coolgardie) [10.10]: I have no objection to the Bill but I should like to draw attention to the fact that the title refers to the Western Australian Aged Soldiers and Sailors' Relief Fund, and that in Clause 5 the word "nurses" appears. As a matter of fact, the Returned Soldiers' League includes nurses.

Mr. Parker: It also includes widows of soldiers.

Mr. CORBOY: Yes, but the title of the league is the Returned Soldiers, Sailors and Nurses' League, and the provisions of Clause 5, therefore, are not really in accordance with the title of the Bill. I may be wrong, but it appears to me that that is the position.

**MR. PARKER** (North-East Fremantle—in reply) [10.12]: I do not think there is anything in the point raised by the hon. member. The title cannot always set out the full provisions of a Bill.

Hon. M. F. Troy: It can be amended in Committee.

Mr. PARKER: Yes, but I do not think that will be necessary.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

## *In Committee.*

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Interpretation:

Mr. PARKER: The incorporated name of the league is as printed in the Bill. The league will be known as the "R.S.S.I.L.A."

Mr. Corboy: All right.

Clause put and passed.

Clauses 4 to 7, Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

# **BILL — NEWSPAPER LIBEL AND REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.**

## *Second Reading.*

**MR. PARKER** (North-East Fremantle) [10.21] in moving the second reading said: This Bill is first of all to correct a fault which has crept into the Newspaper Libel and Registration Act, 1884. The original Bill was copied directly from the Imperial Act, and a rather curious error arose. The Imperial Act is an Act of 1884, and Section 9 states—

It shall be the duty of the printers and publishers for the time being of every newspaper to make or cause to be made on or before the 14th day of January, 1885, and thereafter annually in the month of January in every year, a return of the following particulars—

Reading the section strictly, it is only papers which were in existence prior to January of 1884 that have to be registered. The peculiar wording of the section was noted in England, and an amendment was made to the English Act by deleting "on or before the 14th day of January, 1885, and thereafter." I doubt whether at the present moment there are more than one or two Western Australian newspapers that have to be registered. The amendment proposed in this Bill will make the law what all along it has been thought or intended to be. In case of error it is as well, perhaps, to amend that section while we are at it. The main part of the Bill is to bring our law into line with the law of England and. I venture to say, with the law of all other parts of the British Empire.

**Mr. J. MacCallum Smith:** Editors ought to be boiled in oil.

**Mr. PARKER:** Some of them, perhaps: some gentlemen who call themselves editors, but are not.

**Mr. Marshall:** That is how a row starts!

**Mr. PARKER:** There is a peculiar Western Australian Act known as the Newspaper Libel and Registration Act, 1884, Amendment Act, 1888.

**Mr. J. MacCallum Smith:** A very good Act indeed.

**Mr. PARKER:** A very good Act for a newspaper which sets out to libel a man who cannot hit back—a very excellent Act for that purpose.

**Mr. J. MacCallum Smith:** It stops blackmailing.

**Hon. P. Collier:** Are there any papers of that kind?

**Mr. PARKER:** No; and that is a good reason for bringing in this Bill when it will not tread on anyone's corns. I do not know of any litigation that is likely, and the Bill is not intended to meet any future case.

**Mr. J. MacCallum Smith:** It is intended to provide opportunities for blackmailing.

**Mr. PARKER:** It is far better to provide opportunities for an individual to blackmail a newspaper, than to allow a newspaper to blackmail an individual. A newspaper is far more important, and can do far more harm. A good honest newspaper editor does not require the present Act at all, except that when he does really libel and damn a man, knock him out of business and ruin him, then that man, under the present law, cannot take action against the newspaper, because under that law as it stands the man who takes action, the plaintiff, has to provide security for the costs of the newspaper.

**Mr. J. MacCallum Smith:** You know that in practice that is not correct.

**Mr. PARKER:** I know it is correct.

**Mr. J. MacCallum Smith:** It is not.

**Mr. PARKER:** I know it is, and I have an instance in which my client was ordered to put up money and could not do it. Incidentally, he still owes me. However, that was some time ago.

**Mr. Corboy:** It does not account for this amending Bill, does it?

**Mr. PARKER:** No; and I have no prospective clients of that kind.

**Mr. Corboy:** Was it a local paper that made a man do that?

**Mr. PARKER:** I am not here to speak as regards individual cases or newspapers. I have no paper in view at all in this matter. I might almost put it that this Bill is purely and simply technical. I cannot see why newspapers should be different from persons who libel. The same law should apply to newspapers and individuals alike.

**Mr. J. MacCallum Smith:** Solicitors are protected.

**Mr. PARKER:** They are not, unfortunately. I wish they were.

**Mr. J. MacCallum Smith:** Are they not?

Mr. PARKER: No. While this particular Act exists, a plaintiff must put up security for costs.

Hon. P. Collier: Before he can take action?

Mr. PARKER: He issues his writ, and before he can proceed very far, the defendant applies—

Hon. P. Collier: Before the plaintiff gets a hearing in court?

Mr. PARKER: I will read the section. It is Section 3 of 52 Vict. No. 18—

On an affidavit being filed by the defendant in any action for libel brought after the passing of this Act that the plaintiff in such action is an uncertificated bankrupt or has within 12 months of the issue of the writ or summons in any action aforesaid liquidated or compounded with his creditors, or is a person without fixed domicile, or is to the belief of the defendant and some other person of repute without visible means of paying costs if unsuccessful, the court or a judge thereof in Chambers may order all proceedings in the action to be stayed until such security shall be given to the Master of the Supreme Court as he shall think sufficient: Provided always that either the plaintiff or the defendant in such action shall be at liberty to appeal to the Full Court to vary, rescind or reverse such order.

The practice is this: After the writ is issued, at any time the newspaper likes it files two affidavits to the effect that the plaintiff has no means at all; and then the man possibly has to admit that he has no assets and is not earning sufficient to pay costs in the event of his being unsuccessful.

Hon. P. Collier: He might be a politician, and consequently have no money.

Mr. PARKER: And it might be just prior to the elections. Then the Master of the Supreme Court goes into the matter, and the solicitor for the newspaper sets out in skeleton form what he anticipates his costs will be. The Taxing Master goes into it, and agrees or disagrees. Whatever amount the Taxing Master agrees to as the probable amount of the newspaper's costs, that amount is fixed as security; and the plaintiff has to find security for that amount, usually in the region of £100. When the Act was passed in Western Australia, the argument used was that any man of straw could have a hit at one of the newspapers, which in those days were by no means financial, and maybe ruin the newspaper. Perhaps at the time there was some justification, in view of the opportunities for black-

mailing a newspaper and perhaps putting it out of existence.

Hon. P. Collier: What is the date of this?

Mr. PARKER: The year 1888. Since then there has been enacted a highly laudable provision which entirely and absolutely protects not only newspapers but every person against whom action is taken. If the person who takes the action has no means, he is not debarred from continuing his suit, but has to take it in a cheap and expeditious manner. He is not allowed all the frills of procedure in the Supreme Court. That provision applies at the present time, and is used daily, especially in actions relating to motor car cases. We have advanced with the times, because we have the Poor Persons Legal Assistance Act. But in the case of actions for libel the Newspaper Libel and Registration Act prevents that. It also prevents the old scheme of proceeding in what we know as in forma pauperis, where the plaintiff had to apply to a judge in Chambers, stating that he had no means, and then proceeded with his suit as a pauper. Further, he got no costs, and he paid no costs. But then we went farther, and got the Poor Persons Legal Assistance Act. I doubt if that would be of any use against a newspaper. Then we have the Local Courts Act which entirely protects a newspaper from blackmail. Section 88 of that Act reads—

A person against whom an action founded on tort is brought in the Supreme Court, whatever the amount claimed may be, may, upon an affidavit that the plaintiff has no visible means of paying the costs of the defendant if a verdict is not found for the plaintiff, call upon the plaintiff to show cause before a judge in chambers why he should not give security for the defendant's costs of the action, and why in default of such security the action should not be remitted to a Local Court, or the proceedings in the action be stayed.

That is almost daily applied in the Supreme Court. You say the plaintiff is a man of straw, and the judge says, "Has he got means to pay the costs?" The Judge comes to the conclusion that the plaintiff has no means, and so directs him to have the case tried in the local court. There it is tried by a stipendiary magistrate after the payment of a fee of £1 to have it set down. The costs in the local court are on such a scale that for a libel action a solicitor is not by any means breaking his neck to pur-

sue it. So there is no question of any "spec" actions such as we sometimes hear of solicitors taking on. And one can rightly understand that the stipendiary magistrate, a man dealing as a rule with small claims, is not thinking in thousands when he does give damages. So no man would take a libel for the purpose of blackmailing a newspaper and have it heard in the local court. Therefore it is clear that the striking out of those provisions from the Act will not in any way encourage libel actions against newspapers.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: Won't it!

Mr. PARKER: I cannot understand why there should be any objection to a man if he feels he has been injured taking his action to make a newspaper pay. A newspaper is a very powerful institution, and if it does wrong it should pay. Even if it does not do wrong it will make a lot of money while the libel case is on.

Hon. P. Collier: Yes, newspapers have been known to build up their circulation by deliberately libelling people and get prosecuted and so known all over Australia. That was so in the early days of the "Bulletin," while the "Truth" always looked for a libel every month.

Mr. PARKER: If it is a good libel action it pays the newspaper because people advertise in the paper, knowing that everybody is going to read it.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: It pays the solicitors better.

The Minister for Railways: Make the individual responsible for the libel sign his name and there will not be many libels.

Hon. P. Collier: Will this Bill cut out the editorial "we" and make them use the first personal pronoun?

Mr. PARKER: A newspaper publishes something which makes the person commented upon feel wronged. Why should he not have the same right against a newspaper as he would have against an individual? Section 4 reads as follows:—

At the trial of any action against the proprietor, publisher, editor, printer, or any person responsible for the publication of a newspaper for any libel published therein, the plaintiff shall be non-suited unless he give evidence at such trial as witness on his own behalf.

Members will understand this if they place themselves in the position of jurors. If a person takes action for libel he must

go in the witness box if he wishes for large damages or else the jurors will say he is not game and therefore not worth large damages. Not infrequently has a plaintiff on hearing that he will have to go into the witness box dropped an action for libel against a newspaper, saying he would rather suffer the libel than go into the witness box and have to admit one or two things that had occurred in his past life, some youthful folly of which he had since become ashamed. Very often it is something that really means nothing, notwithstanding which he shrinks from having it published.

Hon. P. Collier: He does not want it revived.

Mr. PARKER: Not only that, but it is curious that people are apt to magnify these trivial little faults of their own. So a newspaper may write a damaging article and say, "When he gets into the witness box we will make him commit perjury or admit what we have written about him." When a paper is writing news with a view to selling it, the news should be accurate, and the paper should be prepared to stand up to what it has written, and not ask the victim of an article to go into the witness box to be shot at and have all sorts of questions fired at him by an unscrupulous lawyer, who would say, "Did you not do such and such a thing?"

Hon. P. Collier: Which he may never have done at all.

Mr. PARKER: That is so. Then he is asked has he done so and so.

Mr. Corboy: Have you given over beating your wife?

Hon. P. Collier: I stopped an interjector at a meeting one night by saying, "I will tell this audience what I know about you." Actually I knew nothing about him.

Mr. PARKER: Some newspapers adopt the same attitude.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: That is very unfair. You ought not to say that.

Mr. PARKER: I say some newspapers do.

Mr. Corboy: The cap must be fitting.

Hon. P. Collier: Oh yes, some newspapers do.

Mr. PARKER: There is no doubt about it. We are extremely fortunate in the papers we have in this State, and so it is an opportune time for bringing in this amendment. The newspapers cannot object

to the Bill, for it is only placing them in line with everybody else. That section about the plaintiff going into the witness box is wrong and I think we should bring our law into line with the law of England, where the law of libel has stood the test of time.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: In the Eastern States they are talking about bringing the law of libel up to the level of ours.

Mr. PARKER: Of course a newspaper has quite a lot of privileges, as set out in the Act. It is only right that newspapers should have.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: They should not be allowed to publish anything.

Mr. PARKER: Not unless it is true.

Hon. P. Collier: They would have very much reduced circulations if they published nothing except what they knew to be true.

Mr. PARKER: They should certainly take every precaution to test the truth of what they publish. It is only right that that section should come out, and the entering of the witness box be left to the discretion of the plaintiff, instead of his having all sorts of mud thrown at him by an unscrupulous lawyer instructed by an unscrupulous client.

The Minister for Railways: But generally the lawyer instructs his client.

Mr. PARKER: We are always known by the company we keep. The next section we are asked to strike out is this—

No action shall be brought against the proprietor, publisher, editor, printer, or any person responsible for the publication of a newspaper, for any libel published therein, after the expiration of four months from the date of the publication of such libel in such newspaper.

Fancy four months! It is six years in the ordinary law for libel. That is the time given in which to take action. It is because you may not feel the full effect of a libel perhaps for six years.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: And all your witnesses may have gone.

Mr. PARKER: If the newspaper is honest it should test the facts before it publishes the article. Suppose such a thing as this happens: A day after an election to the Upper House, a representative just then elected is grossly libelled by a newspaper saying, perhaps, that he had been guilty of bribery. That might not really affect him financially until six years afterwards when he goes up for election again.

Mr. Kenneally: Oh what rot!

Mr. PARKER: I am taking an extreme case.

Mr. Kenneally: You are simply providing for six years' blackmailing proposition.

Mr. PARKER: I am not speaking of blackmail.

Mr. Kenneally: But this will provide for blackmail.

Mr. PARKER: No, I am trying to prevent newspapers from blackmailing people.

Mr. Kenneally: And you are trying to let people blackmail newspapers for six years.

Mr. PARKER: I do not know what the member for Kimberley would say if hearing that one of his constituents had published something about him in the local paper to-day he realised what he would not be able to see it for four months.

Hon. P. Collier: Very often four months is altogether too short.

Mr. PARKER: The law of libel throughout the British Empire for years has provided that an individual may have six years in which to take his action. In the law of slander, two years is provided. At present six years is provided for a private individual. Why on earth should a newspaper be in a different position from a private individual if there is a libel?

Mr. Kenneally: A man reads a libel and does not know it is libellous for six years! Such a man should be in Claremont.

Mr. PARKER: Some of the hon. members' friends might be in Claremont, but I am not speaking of them.

Mr. Kenneally: If they were, they would meet some of your friends there.

Mr. PARKER: Suppose a man in Claremont were libelled, does not the hon. member think that when he came out he should have a right to take his action?

Mr. Kenneally: He may not recover in 20 years, and you do not provide for him.

Mr. PARKER: Does the hon. member think he should have only four months? As long as a man lives, he should have an opportunity to take an action for libel against a newspaper. A newspaper should not publish anything unless it is satisfied that the statement is true. How could a newspaper be affected? The court proceedings would cost the newspaper a mere nothing.



Hon. P. Collier: All the odds are against the individual every time.

Mr. Kenneally: The individual should take action in reasonable time.

Mr. PARKER: It has been held, and it has been the law in other parts of the Empire for many years, that six years is a reasonable time. Six years is the time allowed a man to take an action for the recovery of an ordinary civil debt, say a loan of £5.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: But we in Western Australia have progressed.

Mr. PARKER: I am asking that we progress further. I do not want archaic laws, special privileges for a special class.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: You want us to go back a hundred years.

Mr. PARKER: If I did, I would remind the hon. member that to the 18th century, I believe, newspapers had to obtain special permission before they were allowed to be printed at all.

Mr. Panton: Stop them three months before the election.

Mr. Corboy: Anyhow, they are now printing, not newspapers, but coupons.

Mr. Panton: That is a libel, anyhow.

Mr. PARKER: It has been said concerning myself that I am having a shot at newspapers from behind a hedge.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith: You are speaking in a privileged Chamber now.

Mr. PARKER: I am aware of that. But I am prepared for the hon. member to obtain a copy of the "Hansard" report of what I have said, and I will sign it and he can publish it in his newspaper. Then he can sue me for libel if anything I have said is libellous. I will find security for costs, too.

Mr. J. MacCallum Smith interjected.

Mr. SPEAKER: The member for North Perth will have an opportunity later to reply to the arguments of the member for North-East Fremantle.

Mr. PARKER: If he can find any reply to them. There is no occasion for members to become heated over this question. It is a plain and simple proposition intended to bring newspapers into line with private individuals and to bring our law into line with the law of England and, I believe, with

that of every other portion of the British Empire. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. J. MacCallum Smith, debate adjourned.

*House adjourned at 10.50 p.m.*

## Legislative Council,

*Thursday, 20th October, 1932.*

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

### QUESTION—STATE'S DISABILITIES, COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

Hon. H. SEDDON asked the Chief Secretary: Will he lay on the Table of the House the report of the Committee on the Disabilities of Western Australia under Federation, 1932?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: Yes. Copy herewith.

### BILL—CATTLE TRESPASS, FENCING, AND IMPOUNDING ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.