You probably saw a few days ago reports in the national press that the Commonwealth has banned the export of all birds, whether trapped in their native state or whether they are aviary bred. Export of birds will only be allowed on a zoo to zoo basis, thus destroying the possibility of evasion of the regulations.

Several people originally approached me on this matter very nearly a year ago. Then as soon as Parliament assembled in 1959 several of us approached the Minister for Customs and asked him to use the power that the Commonwealth has always possessed to ban the export of birds on the two grounds, one that the trading of birds constituted a threat to the survival of some species of birds and secondly on the grounds of very severe losses and the cruelty concerned in the trade. Losses have been placed as high as 80% to 90% of birds trapped.

Senator Henty at that time promised to examine the matter fully. After making his examination he felt there should be a conference between the Commonwealth and State Officers to examine the whole question. He came to this conclusion because traditionally the protection of native fauna and flora has rested on the States' shoulders even though the Commonwealth control over export and customs gives the Commonwealth considerable powers.

It was hoped that an agreement could be reached between all the States of the Commonwealth on the best means to control this trade. The Commonwealth hoped to get this agreement for this reason. The Commonwealth has the power to ban the export of birds, but it has no power over the internal trading of birds between one State and another and, therefore, if there is one State which remains un-co-operative the efforts of other States can be destroyed by the one State permitting the internal trade to continue.

This conference between the Commonwealth and the States was held during last winter. Unfortunately there were one or two States that would not agree that the export of birds constituted a threat to the existence of certain species of birds and, furthermore, there were one or two States that would not admit that the number of birds trapped must very greatly exceed the number of birds traded. In other words, there
were one or two States that would not admit that the losses involved in this trade were particularly high.

It is difficult to get complete evidence of loss, but the late Crobie Morrison, who was a conservative and accurate man, placed the number of losses as at least 75%. This loss alone should surely have given everyone cause to doubt whether this trade should be permitted, quite apart from its effect on the survival of certain species of Australian birds. Unfortunately, one or two States have apparently taken pride in the trade, the Fisheries and Games Department of South Australia stated in their 1957/58 report that the demand for their live birds and animals from interstate buyers and overseas people remained firm; then followed a long list of birds, totalling tens of thousands, which have been traded in that State.

Because of these un-co-operative States it was not possible for the officers of the States and the Commonwealth meeting together to come to a conclusion that would have been of any help to the bird lovers of Australia. The only changes that these people agreed to were certain administrative ones which, in my view, would have increased the amount of red tape involved, and which would have done little or nothing to protect Australian bird life.

Senator Henty, who has always been most sympathetic to the point of view put forward by bird lovers, came to much the same conclusion. There were two choices open to him. It would have been possible to give the administrative changes arrived at by agreement with the States a trial for twelve months. On the other hand, he could decide to act now and use the Commonwealth power to ban the export of birds. Senator Henty, with the Government's approval, has chosen the latter course and I think we all give him our thanks that he has done so.

In the past years the money from this trade has come mostly from overseas, but in recent months the internal Australian trade, over which the Commonwealth has no control, has been building up to large proportions. If the export of birds is banned now, as it has been, the internal trade will probably not be sufficient, or certainly we hope it will not be sufficient, to maintain the trading industry which could well die a natural death.
However, if the Commonwealth waited another twelve or eighteen months before banning the export of birds the local trade may well have grown to such proportions that it would sustain trading in its own right. I think this could have been a significant factor in deciding the Government to act now.

This is my last statement until Parliament resumes next year. I am glad to have been able to end on a note that should appeal to many Australians from all walks of life, and I wish you one and all a Happy Christmas and Prosperous New Year.