



**World War One
&
World War Two
Legislation and other
Parliamentary Proceedings**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following provides a snapshot of legislation considered by the Parliament of Western Australia during World War One and World War Two. The legislation provides insight into the economic and social impact of the World Wars, including the level of perceived threat to home soil. More detailed information is provided on each Act in the pages that follow. The *Hansard* record of the proceedings over these years can be searched on the Hansard Archive area of the Parliament of Western Australia website (<http://www.parliament.wa.gov.au/hansard/hansard1870to1995.nsf/vwWeb1870Main>).

Information has been drawn from a search of the record of *Hansard* debates from those periods, with relevant commentary provided. Ministerial Statements by the relevant Premier in office at the time of the announcement of each war have also been included on page 5 and page 9 respectively. These provide context about the primacy of war and the requirement for the Parliament to act unitedly to conserve the interests of the State ‘as an integral part of the Empire’.

Control of Trade

The first legislation passed at the outbreak of both World Wars was aimed at curtailing war profiteering and hoarding.

Control of Trade in War Time Act 1914

The *Control of Trade in War Time Bill 1914* introduced two days after the outbreak of war and aimed at the prevention and hoarding by merchants taking advantage of the international situation, was heavily amended in the Legislative Council. Amendments included a clause limiting the period of operation of the Act. When the legislation reached its expiry date in mid-1916, a bill to extend the period was defeated in the Legislative Council.

The *Profiteering Prevention Act 1939* was part of a national price freezing initiative to control profiteering with a commissioner appointed to approve price rises. At the same time, the *Increase of Rent (War Restrictions) Act 1939* was passed to limit rent increases for the duration of the war and the circumstances under which tenants could be evicted.

Income Tax

The *Income Tax (War Emergency) Bill 1914* attempted to introduce a broad-based income tax, covering all income over £100 per annum. The bill was defeated on the second reading in the Legislative Council. In World War Two, the federal government assumed responsibility for income tax as a war measure—this responsibility was not returned to the states after the war.

Enemy Aliens

The *Enemy Contracts Annulment Act 1914* prevented companies with connections to enemy countries from holding government contracts. This legislation received bipartisan support.

In January 1915, the *Public Service (Temporary) Bill* was introduced, the purpose being to deal with a couple of public servants that the government had referred to military intelligence for “possible disloyalty”.

Enemy Subjects Employment Bill 1917

In February 1917, the *Enemy Subjects Employment Bill* was introduced by Hon James Cornell, MLC, into the Legislative Council. This bill sought to bar any person of German or Austrian origin from holding employment in either the public or private sector. The bill was defeated on the second reading.

Control of benevolent funds

In 1914, a large number of benevolent funds were created, often under the auspices of the Red Cross, to provide comforts for troops at the front, welfare services for returning soldiers, and support for the war effort. Appeals were launched for everything from sandbags to buglers —

The Premier: The latest fund established is “The Returned Soldiers Bugle Band Fund.”

Hon. FRANK WILSON: I have been nearly maddened by youngsters learning to play the bugle—I have one at home and I would not be inclined to contribute to that fund.

It was found that many of the groups formed to raise money had no legal standing to do so, and some were failing to hand over the money they had raised to the appropriate agencies. Some were calling themselves Red Cross groups without any franchise to use the name. *The War Council Bill 1915* was passed to control the well-meaning, but somewhat chaotic fundraising activities.

Reference to the situation that had prevailed during the early days of World War One informed debate on the *War Funds Regulation Bill 1939*, introduced to forestall a similar situation in World War Two.

Preservation of rights for soldiers overseas

The *Naval and Military Absentees' Relief Act 1915* provided that while soldiers served overseas they be treated from the viewpoint of residents of the State. Once enacted, this essentially stopped soldiers from having to pay a special impost under the land and income tax laws.

The *Franchise Act 1916* preserved the listing of soldiers on the electoral roll while overseas. It followed the Chief Electoral Commissioner assiduously removing all those who had enlisted in the armed forces, from the roll. This Act was largely symbolic as there was nowhere overseas for soldiers to actually vote.

Civil Defence (Emergency Powers) Act 1940

By August 1940, with the Battle of Britain raging, the reality of modern air warfare was being felt all around the world. The war was now being fought over British cities, and governments everywhere realised that no city, however remote, would be immune from attack. On 21 August 1940, the Western Australian government introduced the *Civil Defence (Emergency Powers) Bill*, to provide for a comprehensive civil defence structure to spring into action should the war come to our shores.

Every sizeable town was to have air-raid wardens, and fire and rescue services were to be expanded to cope with the aftermath of any air attack. It was a far cry from Frank Wilson's pronouncement of August 1914 —

I do not think Western Australia is likely to attract the attention of the Powers with which Great Britain is at war, nor do I think they are likely to come as far as our shores to injure us.

WORLD WAR ONE — ANNOUNCEMENT

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT — WAR BETWEEN BRITAIN AND GERMANY

Hansard, Legislative Assembly, 6 August 1914, p. 809:

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [4:44]: Before any further business is transacted, I desire to announce to the House that this morning I received from the Prime Minister the following telegram:

Official information has been received that war has broken out with Germany. (signed) Joseph Cook.

I immediately called into my office Ministers representing Executive Council, and also the Leader of the Opposition, recognising the fact that under the special circumstances the present was not the time to consider matters from a party point of view. We had a Cabinet meeting this afternoon at which the Leader of the Opposition was present, and we discussed various matters which may require attention in the immediate future. I recognise that this crisis is probably the most critical in the history of the Empire, but the time is passed when we might talk, and I suppose it is not even necessary for me to say so much that, so far as Western Australia and Australia generally are concerned, as one of the British dominions, we are intensely loyal and will do our part in maintaining the Empire. I recognise that so far as this particular State is concerned, and I can speak only from that point of view as the head of the Government, we can do but little to assist the Motherland at this critical time, but there are many things which can be done, and which should at the same time be of assistance, and this is by thoroughly protecting our own interests in the direction of preventing if possible—which I urge—anything of the nature of a panic; also that the people should place absolute reliance in those who are entrusted with the government of the State for the time being, just as we, as an Executive, are prepared to put implicit faith in those who are at the metropolis of the Empire, and will be responsible for the proper conduct of the war.

There is no member present who abhors war as much as I do. We regret that we are faced with such a critical position, but now that we are faced with it I am sure everyone will join in saying we hope the Empire of which we form a part will be eminently successful, that the war will be of short duration, and that as little suffering and loss of life as possible will be the result. I do not know that I need say much more than that under such circumstances, it will be recognised that there are many problems which the Executive will be called upon to solve during the next few weeks or months. We will probably have to act on some occasions almost spontaneously, and it may be possible that at some times our actions may not be thoroughly understood at the moment and we may be severely criticised. All I ask is that at the present juncture this House, and through the House the country, may accept the assurance from me, and I think I am entitled to say also from the Leader of the Opposition, who consulted with us, to-day, that our one desire is to protect the interests of our people as a whole, and we can do that by acting calmly and with due deliberation and consideration of the various matters which come before us, and also by showing the public that with proper confidence reposed in those at the head of affairs for the time being, we are likely to avoid what might otherwise be a calamity. The question of defending Australia as part of the Empire is under the control of the Commonwealth Government, but there are other matters which require some consideration. It is not merely a matter of military defence but it is also a matter of the defence of those who through this misfortune will find themselves out of employment. I hope it may be as light as possible, but the Executive proposes to take every possible means to prevent any undue hardship being imposed on any of our citizens. Already I know there are moves in some directions which are regrettable; perhaps they are what might be expected under the circumstances, but unless things remain normal we will be able by merely adjourning the House until to-morrow to take action which we trust will receive the endorsement of all hon. members, and which will prevent anything being done which will be to our detriment as a State and to our detriment as a portion of the Empire.

I do not know that I can say more excepting that on Monday last I wired to the Prime Minister on behalf of the Executive Council informing him that we were at his call at any moment, that we were prepared to set aside every other consideration to do what his Executive considered was essential for the proper protection of this part of the British dominions.

In conclusion, I hope that the outcome of this terrible war—probably it will be the worst known in our history—will be to adjust the differences which unfortunately have existed, and that it will have the effect of less demand being made on the people in the way of armaments, and that a better feeling will exist between the people of Europe, and that the British Empire, of which we form a part, will, as I previously said, come out with honour and glory to all concerned.

Hon. FRANK WILSON (Sussex) [4:50]: I think it goes without saying that we have entered upon the most thrilling phase of our national existence. When the civilised nations of Europe are at war, and Great Britain as well, then of course Australia, as a part of the British Empire, is at war also. We have heard from the Premier the announcement he has received that unfortunately Great Britain at last has been drawn into the fight, and it is not for us now to consider the right or wrong of the position. We believe that when the advisers of the Motherland have decided on this course, they have taken the only course open to them in honour, and therefore we stand with them shoulder to shoulder to protect this portion of the Empire. The crisis is such that it is necessary for all party differences, and personal animosities, to cease, and I have readily given the Premier and his colleagues my word that such will be the case as far as the Opposition in this House are concerned. We stand with the Government to assist them, if they require our assistance, to join in their deliberations, if they deem it necessary that we should take part, and to endeavour by all the power and experience we may possess, with them, to find a solution for all our difficulties as they come to be faced one by one. That these difficulties will be great goes without saying. The Premier has touched briefly on what the result may be. No man knows what the result will be, but that it will be disastrous is beyond all doubt. That we shall have to bear in a modified form some portion of the distress which must ensue during a war of this immense magnitude is also beyond doubt. Talking is of no avail ; we must stand together in order to act as the necessity arises. Undoubtedly Australians, and Western Australians, are loyal, loyal to their last shilling, loyal to their last man in the defence of the Empire. I am satisfied that the people will respond to the Premier's, appeal and will support the Parliament and the Government of this State in any step that may be necessary, not only in our own small way to safeguard the interests of the Empire but also to safeguard the interests of our people. I have readily promised the Premier to join with him in discussing the position, and I have readily promised him the support of hon. members on this side of the House. Defence, it is true, is a Federal matter, but there are many matters in connection with which the State Government will be called upon to take action, perhaps at the request of the Federal Authorities, and probably on their own initiative, in order that necessary legislation can be promptly put through and our people's position safeguarded to the greatest and fullest extent. With the Premier I hope that this terrible catastrophe which has fallen on the civilised world, will be of the shortest possible duration. That it can be very short I think we need not hope, but at the same time it may be short in comparison with other wars, and the magnitude of the operations make one hope that it will be comparatively short to what has been the experience of Great Britain in the past ages. I with my friends on this side of the House are delighted to co-operate with the Government to assist in every possible way, in order that they shall carry out their most onerous duties and grave responsibilities—they are undoubtedly grave—in the best interests of the whole of the people without recognition of party or sect in this State of Western Australia.

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan—Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [4:51]: It will be appreciated that under the circumstances we cannot do business where naturally party differences would arise, but as it may be necessary to introduce further legislation to deal with the position which has arisen, I propose to move merely that the House adjourn, with the intimation to hon. members that we meet again tomorrow as usual, but unless it is necessary to introduce special legislation no business will be transacted. I merely ask hon. members to be present to deal with any business if it should arise. I move –

That the House do now adjourn.

Question put and passed.

LEGISLATION — WESTERN AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

CONTROL OF TRADE IN WAR TIME BILL 1914

The first piece of legislation passed by the Western Australian Parliament in World War I was rushed through all stages in the Legislative Assembly on 6 August 1914, barely two days after the declaration of war. Its aim was the prevention of profiteering and hoarding by merchants. The bill was introduced by the Labor Premier, Jack Scaddan. In his second reading speech, he stated (*Hansard*, Legislative Assembly, 6 August, p. 830) —

I had placed in my hands this morning a copy of a circular issued by one of the wholesale houses to its travellers, giving them the prices they were to quote for this particular week. This circular, too, was issued on Monday, before war was actually declared. On cocoa, all lines, the advance is at one penny per lb.; on flour, 20s. per ton; on meats, all lines, 3d. per dozen, and the circular also mentions, in regard to lines controlled by other houses, that prices are not to be quoted. If evidence be required that a move is being made in the direction of advancing the prices of food supplies, we have it there, and it is considered that in order to protect the public, the Government should have the necessary power to prevent a set of individuals taking advantage of a period such as this for their personal benefit.

Other speakers in the short second reading debate presented anecdotal evidence of other example of war-driven price increases, and the bill had bipartisan support.

WAR COUNCIL BILL 1915

The War Council was formed shortly after the outbreak of war to oversee fundraising activities to benefit soldiers' service overseas and provide welfare for returning soldiers. The council was set up by administrative fiat, and comprised a number of politicians from both sides. After a while, however, it was discovered that the council had no legal standing to enforce regulation on war fundraising activities, which had popped up all over the state. Premier Scaddan stated (*Hansard*, Thursday, 25 November 1915, p. 2800) —

But in many cases persons in small towns without any authority form themselves into committees and call themselves a branch of the Red Cross Society. There is only one body authorised to establish branches of the Red Cross Society in Western Australia, namely, the Western Australian Branch of the British Red Cross Society. I know of cases where so-called branches have been formed and have declined to hand over the money to the controlling body. Under the Bill, however, unless they comply with the conditions set out they cannot appeal to the public for funds in the first place.

...

In 1916, the *Western Australian Day Funds Act* was passed to allow money raised by the WA Sandbag Fund— set up to raise money for sandbags in the trenches in response to a shortage—to be diverted to other purposes since the dire sandbag shortage had passed by the time the fund had raised a significant amount of money.

INCOME TAX (WAR EMERGENCY) BILL 1914

The introduction of this bill was an attempt to institute a broad-based income tax in Western Australia. Western Australia already had a limited form of income tax, mainly levied on businesses, and payable annually. The bill proposed a tax on all income over £100 per annum, at a rate of one per cent for incomes up to £200, rising by one per cent for each £100 beyond that figure, to a maximum of 15 per cent on incomes of £1 000 or greater.

The preamble of the bill stated that the measure was being introduced in response to a slump in the agricultural industries resulting from a series of bad seasons, and rising unemployment amongst urban workers. Later measures by successive government succeeded in gradually broadening the income tax base.

NAVAL AND MILITARY ABSENTEES' RELIEF BILL 1915

Second Reading.

Hansard, Legislative Assembly, 20 January 1915 p. 795:

The PREMIER (Hon. J. Scaddan — Brownhill-Ivanhoe) [8.43]: This is a very small measure but from the point of view of those who have joined and who intend to join the Expeditionary Forces, and are going to Europe and other distant places for the defence of the Empire, it is an important one. The object of the Bill is merely to provide that, while they serve in the Expeditionary Forces, they shall be treated from the point of view of our laws as if they were still residents of the State. The Bill also provides that where a person is subject to a law in Western Australia and is a resident elsewhere in the Commonwealth, and becomes a member of an expeditionary force, he will be treated as if he still resided in this particular portion of the Commonwealth, so far as the application of our laws is concerned. The Bill has been introduced at the request of the Federal Government who asked that, under the circumstances, those leaving us temporarily to do battle on our behalf and for the Empire should not

be treated as absentees in regard to our laws. They are still Australian citizens although doing service abroad for the Empire. Our laws provide that if a person is absent from the State for six months he becomes an absentee and has to pay a special impost under the land and income tax laws. This Bill will remove such disabilities and will treat members of expeditionary forces as if they were still residents of the State.

Mr. Smith: Would the measure apply to men joining British regiments, not necessarily Australian forces?

The PREMIER: Any resident of Western Australia, who joins the naval or military forces of either the Commonwealth or of His Majesty anywhere will, under this Bill, still be treated as a resident of this State so far as the application of our laws is concerned.

ENEMY CONTRACTS ANNULMENT BILL 1915

In May 1915, the state government introduced the Enemy Contracts Annulment Bill 1915 to provide a legal framework for reneging on contracts entered into with companies and individuals who were found to be connected with any of the enemy powers. The bill was introduced at the behest of the federal government, and in moving the second reading, the state Attorney General, Thomas Walker, quoted a speech by his federal counterpart —

Shortly stated, the facts show beyond all question that German capital and German influence exercise a monopoly of the base metal industry of the civilised world; that this monopoly is for all practical purposes so complete as to exclude effective competition; that it covers the whole sphere of the industry, limiting output, controlling markets, determining the channels of distribution and fixing prices; that the war, by closing most of the channels through which the metallic products were distributed, and the markets in which they were disposed of, has very seriously affected the industry, throwing large numbers of working men out of employment, causing great loss of wealth production, retarding the development of our great resources, and seriously menacing the welfare of the whole community; that peace holds out no prospects satisfactory, or even tolerable: to British and Australian interests, since it would but revive that complete domination of the industry by German influence, which insures the building up of German instead of British and Australian interests.

In responding on behalf of the opposition, the member for Murray–Wellington, William George, said —

I have been connected with the metal trade pretty nearly all my life and it is only recently that I ceased to have anything to do with it. I think [Prime Minister] Hughes's attitude has been absolutely correct and that he has shown to Australia the way in which the tentacles of the German octopus have been stretched into every branch of the metal trade. The Attorney General has mentioned that there are firms in Australia bearing English names and apparently British firms; which are in reality dominated by German money and control.

The bill received bipartisan support, and passed both houses.

In January 1915, the James Scaddan government introduced the Public Service (Temporary) Bill, the purpose of which was —

... to enable the Governor-in-Council, if necessary, to dispense with the services of any public servant during the period of the present war. The only object and reason why the measure should be put into operation, would be if the Governor-in-Council was satisfied, after inquiry, that any person was disloyal, or likely, in consequence of being in the public service, to obtain information which he could, or might, transfer to the enemies of His Majesty the King and of the Empire.

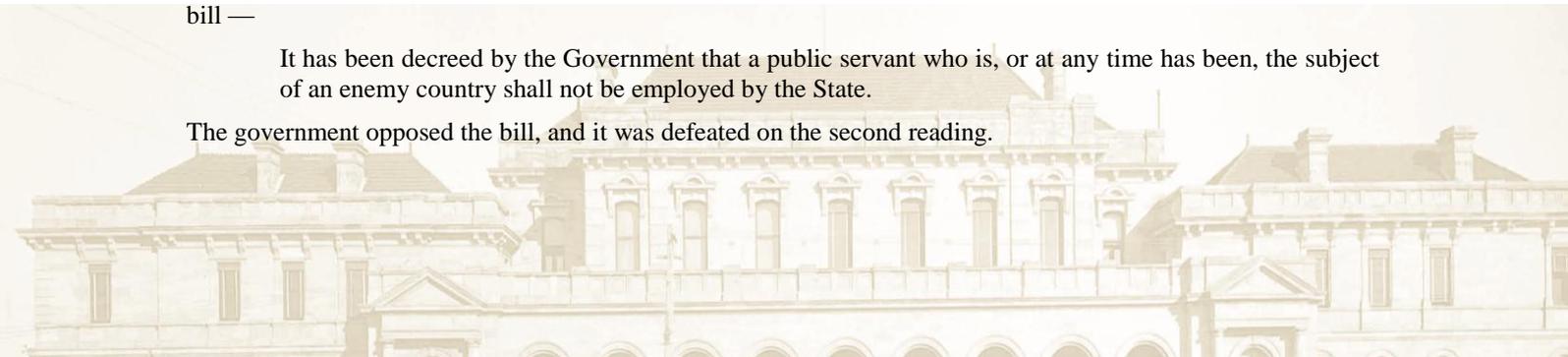
The government had found that it did not have the power under the public service legislation to dismiss public servants found to be acting in a disloyal manner. In his speech, Scaddan referred to cases of possible disloyalty that the government had referred to military intelligence. On investigation, the military intelligence authorities established that one of the cases was of a grave enough nature to warrant the dismissal of the officer from the service.

ENEMY SUBJECTS EMPLOYMENT BILL 1917

The intent of the private member's Enemy Subjects Employment Bill 1917, introduced into the Legislative Council in February 1917, by Hon James Cornell was to deny employment in both the public and private sectors to anyone who was, or had been at any time, a subject of an enemy country. Cornell said in introducing the bill —

It has been decreed by the Government that a public servant who is, or at any time has been, the subject of an enemy country shall not be employed by the State.

The government opposed the bill, and it was defeated on the second reading.



FRANCHISE ACT 1916

This legislation was designed to preserve the listing in the electoral roll of voters who were away on active service in the war. Not long after the outbreak of war, the Chief Electoral Officer had assiduously removed from the electoral roll the names of all those who had enlisted in the armed forces, on the basis that they were no longer resident at the addresses shown on the electoral roll. When the Attorney General found out about this, he instructed the Chief Electoral Officer to cease the practice, on the basis that it infringed the constitutional rights of those away on active service. It was then found that a legislative basis was needed for this action, hence this legislation. The bill received bipartisan support in both houses, and passed on the voices.

The Franchise Act, however, was largely symbolic, because as the Attorney General readily admitted during the debate, no facilities were available for soldiers on overseas duty to vote. In addition, a soldier on active duty, whether in Western Australia or overseas, could not alter his registration, so if he did not return on his discharge to the address under which he was registered, he still could not vote.

WORLD WAR II

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT—WAR BETWEEN BRITAIN AND GERMANY

Hansard, Legislative Assembly, 5 September 1939, p. 489:

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [4.36]: I propose to make a statement to the House about the national emergency that has arisen. All members are aware that a state of war exists between Great Britain and Germany. While we all hoped, with what proved to be unwarranted optimism, that this dreadful catastrophe would in some way have been averted, we have to face the actual reality that it has now overtaken us and must be prepared to do our part with the utmost resolution and fortitude.

The State Government has, of course, received official information that Australia is at war with Germany. During the past couple of days I have consulted with His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor, the Leader of the Opposition and other members of parties in the House, and also with the Lord Mayor of Perth to the end that we might be able to act unitedly and endeavour to take whatever steps are necessary to conserve the interests of Western Australia as an integral part of the Empire.

The time for talking has gone, and it is the responsibility of the Government and Parliament to set an example to the community by refraining from any form of undue or unnecessary panic or excitement in the conduct of the affairs of the State. We may have some differences; I hope and am confident that they will not be of any great dimensions, and I feel sure that I am expressing the feelings of all members when I say that the Parliament of this State is united and inflexible in the determination to do everything in its power to assist the cause of the Empire in the dangerous days ahead of us.

Members: Hear, hear!

The PREMIER: In every possible way we will endeavour to the utmost to prosecute the war successfully so that the cherished ideals of democracy may be preserved and may triumph over the curse of despotism. I feel that there is no occasion for this House to pass a motion affirming loyalty to the cause of the Empire. The spontaneous manner in which all sections of the community throughout the State have shown their willingness to do whatever lies in their power to maintain the cause of Empire has made patent to everybody that this community stands behind the Empire in whatever is necessary to carry the war to a successful conclusion.

In the session ahead of us the Government desires, as far as possible, to do its utmost to conduct the business of the House in such a way as to avoid controversial legislation or motions being brought down that would be likely to cause serious disagreement either amongst members or amongst parties in the House. The Leader of the Opposition got into touch with me early yesterday, as did the Leader of the National Party. I welcome their assurance that they are prepared in every way possible to assist in carrying on the government of the country, and to make everything else subordinate to the efforts of all of us in facing the days that lie ahead. It may be necessary for us to act quickly without giving an opportunity for the House to debate our action or give as much consideration as it would like to such action. I feel that the House will give us this credit, that anything we may have to do hurriedly will be done only because we are actuated by what we feel is in the best interests of the community as a whole.

As intimated in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech, the State Government is not only willing but anxious in every way to cooperate with the Federal Government in the defence of Australia, and in any steps that may be necessary to carry out that defence to a successful issue. Consequently, when late yesterday afternoon I received an invitation from the Prime Minister to attend a Premiers' conference at Canberra on Saturday next, I replied unhesitatingly that I would willingly proceed to Canberra so that we might all confer together as soon as possible. I shall leave by train almost immediately. I am sure that if any inconvenience is caused to members as a result of my hurried departure, they will readily assent to it in

view of all the circumstances. Many matters must arise that it would be better for all the States to deal with in a uniform way. I expect it will be necessary almost immediately to take legislative action on questions of importance dealing with defence, perhaps a moratorium, and essential commodities such as foodstuffs. No doubt prices will have to be regulated and controlled, and power may have to be taken to eliminate hoarding by some individuals when such a practice may be detrimental to the rest of the community. These and other subjects will no doubt be discussed at Canberra, and uniform action concerning them suggested by all the Governments represented.

I desire to say nothing more at this stage, except to pay a tribute to the calmness and commonsense exhibited by the people of this State since this time of emergency arose. From the many assurances and offers of assistance I have received from all sections of the community, it is apparent to me that we are a united and determined people in this time of stress and emergency. Whatever happens, the normal production and industrial life of the State must be proceeded with. At this juncture our best contribution to the success of our cause is to maintain our production and keep our people in employment, so that we may meet any adversity that may come to us with quiet strength and fortitude. I will conclude by associating myself fully, as I am sure every member of the House will do, with the Prime Minister of Australia when he epitomised our position by stating, "We stand by the Empire."

HON. C. G. LATHAM (York) [4.43]: In common with the Premier, I desire to express the deep regret of the members on this side of the House that the British Empire has found itself engaged in what may be a very bitter and prolonged struggle. This is the more regrettable because the wounds of the last war are hardly healed as we find the nation again plunged into conflict. We are all proud of the unity that exists within the Empire, a factor that is vitally necessary before any nation can embark upon a cause of this kind. Just as that unity exists between parts of the Empire so must it exist amongst the peoples of the Empire. I am, therefore, pleased to have the assurance of the Premier that in this House we shall be setting an example that might well be followed by the citizens of the State, namely that we will let party differences sink into oblivion, and turn our attention unitedly to giving to the Empire the best that we can as the need arises.

Two things are essential in the successful attainment of this objective. One is that our man power shall be so fitted as to be able to protect this country if necessary, and, secondly, that we shall carry on our industries so that our man power may be supplied with all necessary commodities. The Premier is about to leave for Canberra. I agree with him that whatever is done should be done on an Australian basis. That is most necessary. There are two matters in which the Australian and State Governments may encounter difficulty, one being that of getting sufficient money to see them through, and the other being the maintenance of supplies so necessary for our people. Both factors are vitally important. I hope the Premier will point out to the Federal Government the difficulty that will be experienced in this State of keeping our agriculturists in production—unless something is done to increase the price of the commodities that are being produced—should there be a call to arms. I believe all of us will be affected.

So many people will abandon their properties that we shall have great difficulty in maintaining a supply of those commodities that are so essential to the successful issue of a war. To-day there seems to be a surplus of wheat, but in 12 months' time we may find difficulty in obtaining sufficient supplies. I assure the Premier that anything we on this side of the House can do to assist either the Federal or the State Governments will very readily be done. In Australia we have the responsibility of maintaining the democracy and the Constitution under which we work, so that our people may remain a free people. We cannot say that of the nation with which we are in conflict. The responsibility is a grave one. Petty differences in politics are as nothing, compared with the unity that all parts of the British Empire are displaying in the maintenance of the freedom we have so long enjoyed. It does not matter how big or small the task may be, we stand completely behind the Premier in our desire to give effect to the wishes of the Australian and Imperial Governments.

MR. McDONALD (West Perth) [4.49]: On behalf of members of the National Party I endorse to the utmost the words of the Premier, particularly his wish that in this State we should make common cause with Great Britain and the rest of the British Commonwealth of Nations in meeting the conflict that has been forced upon us. We have one transcendent object, and that is to emerge victoriously from this conflict. Subject to this outstanding purpose, it is clear that our aim must be to maintain the industry and business of our country, so as to involve the minimum of unemployment and loss and dislocation. The Leader of the Opposition has said that the time is one pre-eminently for national unity, not only in this Parliament but in all concerns of the people. My party will lend the Imperial Government, the Federal Government, and the State Government every support in our power to enable the Empire to emerge victoriously from this struggle to preserve our national life and liberty.

Members: Hear, hear!

PROFITEERING PREVENTION BILL 1939

Hansard Legislative Assembly, 5 September 1939, p. 488 (Question without Notice):

Mr. TONKIN asked the Premier: 1, Is he aware that there has been in Perth during the past few days an unwarranted steep rise in the wholesale prices of certain commodities? 2, Will he give consideration to the advisability of immediately introducing, a measure for the purpose of controlling prices, both wholesale and retail?

Hansard, Legislative Assembly, 6 September 1939, p. 518 (Question without Notice):

Mr. TRIAT: In view of the present disturbed conditions, has the Government given consideration to the immediate introduction of legislation to provide—(a) That no Western Australian goods, foodstuff or any article, manufactured or otherwise, be exported until local demands are first satisfied; (b) that prices of all goods, manufactured or otherwise, all foodstuffs, raw materials, metals, wools, clothing, oils, etc., be fixed and controlled, this to apply to all imported goods as well as to Western Australian products?

The DEPUTY PREMIER (for the Premier) replied: The Government has given consideration to the introduction of suitable legislation. The Hon. the Premier intends to discuss the matter at the conference of Premiers which is to be held in Canberra on Saturday next. Suitable emergency legislation is certain to be introduced immediately following the return of the Premier.

Hansard, Legislative Assembly, 7 September 1939, p. 560 (Ministerial Statement):

Prime Minister's Telegram

THE DEPUTY PREMIER (Hon. H. Millington—Mt. Hawthorn): Before we conclude to-day's sitting I desire, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, to make available to the House the contents of a telegram received from the Prime Minister, which will supplement the information that I gave the member for Mt. Magnet (Mr. Triat) yesterday. The telegram reads—

Commonwealth Government would greatly appreciate if your Government would defer price fixation legislation and action pending matter being discussed at conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers in Canberra this; week. You have no doubt seen the announcement that Commonwealth Government proposed taking immediate action and desired to co-operate fully with State Governments. You will appreciate it is essential that principles and procedure should be uniform.

In view of the interest taken in this question, I deemed it advisable to make that information available to members.

The Profiteering Prevention Bill was duly introduced into the Legislative Assembly by the Minister for Labour, Hon A.R.G. Hawke, on 21 September 1939.

As was the case for its counterpart in 1914, a motion for suspension of standing orders was passed to enable the bill to pass through all stages on the same day. It was part of a national price control initiative passed by the Premiers' Conference mentioned by the Deputy Premier. The bill proposed the freezing of prices at the level prevailing as at 31 August 1939, and the appointment of a commissioner to approve any applications for price rises and investigate any occurrences of profiteering or hoarding. The bill did not receive bipartisan support in the Legislative Assembly, going to a division on the second reading, and was subject to a number of amendments in the upper house. It finally completed its passage on 11 October 1939.

CIVIL DEFENCE (EMERGENCY POWERS) BILL 1940

By August 1940, with the Battle of Britain raging, the reality of modern air warfare was evident around the world. The war was now being fought over British cities, and governments everywhere realised that no city, however remote, would be immune from attack. It was a far cry from Frank Wilson's pronouncement of August 1914 —

I do not think Western Australia is likely to attract the attention of the Powers with which Great Britain is at war, nor do I think they are likely to come as far as our shores to injure us.

On 21 August 1940, the Western Australia government introduced the Civil Defence (Emergency Powers) Bill 1940 to provide for a comprehensive civil defence structure to spring into action should the war come to our shores. Every sizeable town would have air-raid wardens, and fire and rescue services were to be expanded to cope with the aftermath of any air attack.

Hansard Legislative Assembly, 22 August 1940, page 399 —

THE MINISTER FOR MINES (Hon. A.H. Panton—Leederville) [5.23]: This is one of the most important and might also be said to be one of the most far-reaching Bills introduced into this

Parliament. Many Bills are introduced in war time that would not otherwise be necessary, and that applies to this measure. During the war of 1914–18 no fewer than 20 separate laws, due principally to that conflict, were enacted. This, however, is the first occasion on which a measure has been proposed for the protection of the lives and property of the people of Western Australia, owing to war conditions. During the last war there was a definite alignment of Britain, her Allies and her opponents. At present we stand alone with little or no knowledge as to the attitude likely to be taken by those nations not already involved in the war. In addition, we are not in the happy position of being able to send troops away to fight and having at the same time knowledge that we in Australia are free from attack. The position alters so quickly that to say what may happen from week to week is almost impossible. The Commonwealth Government is committed to sending troops overseas, but at the same time we have to be prepared against any hostile attack on our own land either by air, by a raider bombarding us from the sea, or by land forces: for it is possible though I think very improbable—at least I hope so—that an army may attempt to land on our shores. The Bill is to make provision for the protection of people and property in this State. While we all trust that the day will not arrive when we are faced with invasion, we must be prepared for an emergency.

...

This was the basis on which a conference was held at Canberra between the Commonwealth and State Governments, and the following resolutions were agreed to —

1. The Governments of the Commonwealth and the States are agreed on the urgent importance of the early completion of the measures already taken to prepare plans for the protection of the civil population of the respective States from the consequences of aerial attack, which may involve the employment of high explosive and incendiary bombs as well as the use of gas.
2. In the execution of that policy, the Governments of the Commonwealth and of the States also agree that—
 - (a) The preparation of suitable schemes of passive protection of the civil population and the application of such schemes in time of emergency are essentially a responsibility of each particular State.
 - (b) The schemes will be based on the scale of attack which will be conveyed secretly by the Prime Minister to each Premier, and such schemes will, in detail, cover the various points submitted to the conference by the Commonwealth Government as being essential features of efficient plans for the protection of the civil population.
 - (c) The Secretariat, Department of Defence, will be the central co-ordinating authority in connection with all national air raids precautions activities.
 - (d) The manner whereby liaison will be effected between responsible Commonwealth and State air raids precautions officers will be as suggested by the Commonwealth Government in the air raids precautions notes submitted to the conference.
 - (e) The Commonwealth War Book should record the important air raids precautions action to be taken by State Governments, and should be supplemented in due course by copies of the separate detailed State plans.

