

Legislative Assembly

Wednesday, 12th October, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.

POLICE.

Mt. Barker Station.

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

Can he state when work is likely to commence on the erection of the new police station at Mt. Barker?

The MINISTER replied:

This work was listed for consideration in the current Estimates, but with the restricted finance available for police building, there is little chance of it being proceeded with this year.

RAILWAYS.

(a) Proposed Line, West Midland-Welshpool.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Railways:

Adverting to replies on the 6th October relative to the proposed West Midland-Welshpool line—

(1) Has a route been surveyed for the proposed line?

(2) Is the line likely to be commenced in the next three years?

(3) Can residents and/or owners who will be affected by resumptions or land purchases for the new line be permitted to view the planned route of the line? If so, where?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No. Reconnaissance only of the proposed route has been made to date.

(2) This will be governed by the availability of funds.

(3) This matter can be further considered after completion of the survey.

(b) Drainage of Midland Junction Yards.

Mr. BRADY asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Has the Chief Civil Engineer's branch of the Railway Department any plans to properly drain—

(a) the Elgee-rd. approach to marshalling yards at Midland Junction;

(b) the railway workshops yards at the eastern end of Midland Junction;

(c) the yard of the loco. department, Midland Junction?

(2) Is he aware that large quantities of water lying around in the above locations during the past winter greatly inconvenienced employees obliged to work in the areas referred to?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) (a) No specific plans have been prepared for improving existing drainage other than normal maintenance.

(b) The first stage of the road and drainage programme has been completed. The second stage will be proceeded with when funds are available.

(c) The position is similar to No. (1) (a).

(2) No, but no doubt the position could have arisen in consequence of the heavy flooding experienced last winter.

LOAN MONEYS.*Expenditure, etc.*

Mr. ANDREW asked the Treasurer:

(1) What was the amount of loan moneys spent in the years ended the 30th June, 1940, 1945, 1950, 1955?

(2) What was the aggregate of loan moneys spent by the State up to and including the years ended the 30th June, 1940, 1945, 1950, 1955?

(3) What was the total amount of interest on loan moneys paid in the years ended the 30th June, 1940, 1945, 1950, 1955?

(4) Would he give the percentage ratio of the interest payments to the total revenue of the State for the years mentioned above?

The TREASURER replied:

		£.	s.	d.
(1)	1940	1,939,548	15	10
	1945	747,864	0	8
	1950	8,351,015	6	5
	1955	16,524,754	13	5
		£.	s.	d.
(2)	1940	98,909,099	10	0
	1945	103,308,582	2	7
	1950	121,892,757	13	4
	1955	203,246,260	14	5
		£.	s.	d.
(3)	1940	3,528,757	11	11
	1945	3,413,765	0	4
	1950	3,367,761	14	11
	1955	5,625,199	8	8
		Per cent.		
(4)	1940	31.73		
	1945	24.46		
	1950	13.05		
	1955	12.30		

BETTING.*Record of Applicants' Previous Offences.*

Mr. ANDREW asked the Minister for Police:

(1) Though the House has been informed that traffic and starting price betting offences would not be taken into account when applicants applied for a betting licence, why are these called for and put on the file before the Betting Board considers an application?

(2) Will he give instructions that this practice be discontinued?

(3) Will he give instructions that the lists of this type of offence already on the files be taken off?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) All applications for licences and registrations are submitted to the Commissioner of Police as provided for in regulations Nos. 19 (3) and 67 (2) for inquiry

and report. Such reports naturally include all court records. Traffic offences and obstruction charges associated with starting price betting in themselves do not necessarily influence the board in its decisions.

(2) Not at present.

(3) There are no lists of police records attached to files. Details of offences are portion of the application form which has to be filled in by the applicant.

**ROTTNEST ISLAND
ACCOMMODATION.***Equal Consideration for Applicants.*

Mr. ANDREW asked the Minister for Lands:

(1) Is it correct that many people are never successful in their applications for accommodation at Rottneest Island?

(2) As it is alleged that some people are always granted accommodation each year, will he make inquiries and endeavour to see that everybody gets equal consideration?

The MINISTER FOR MINES (for the Minister for Lands) replied:

(1) It could so happen that some applicants for accommodation at Rottneest have been unsuccessful. Many apply only once or twice in a period of years, and if unsuccessful, would come in this category.

Some applications do not comply with the requirements laid down by the Board of Control and others fail to include the required cash deposit. Some 1,296 applications were recently dealt with for summer accommodation and, of these, 1,038 desired occupation during the school holidays. Available accommodation was allocated to 276 individual families covering the period from the 14th December, 1955, to the 11th January, 1956. A further 198 applicants were successful in obtaining accommodation before and after this period.

(2) As applying to the past two and a half years, this allegation is entirely unfounded. A card index system was inaugurated about 12 months ago and by this method the names of all applicants, whether successful or otherwise, are recorded and general particulars are noted. An extremely small number of applicants are given accommodation in succeeding years. A sub-committee deals with all applications, and a recommendation of acceptance is dealt with by the full board.

HORTICULTURE.*Prevention of Queensland Fruit Fly.*

Mr. NORTON asked the Minister for Agriculture:

(1) In view of the large importation of bananas from Eastern States, which was 5,172 bushels last December and may have been higher since, does he consider that

the horticultural division of the Agricultural Department has sufficient inspectors to make a thorough inspection of all fruit, as is required to make absolutely certain that no Queensland fruit fly enters this State?

(2) If sufficient inspectors are not available, what precautions are being taken to ensure that the Queensland fruit fly does not enter this State?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. In the event of a large consignment or an emergency, additional staff can be diverted from other duties if necessary.

(2) Answered by No. (1).

ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

Underground Cables.

Hon. C. F. J. NORTH asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Has the State Electricity Commission any particulars regarding the move in South Australia to equip an Adelaide suburb with underground electric cables?

(2) If so, will he advise the House whether this is being done by some new type of plastic tubing?

(3) Is it possible to compare as yet the likely cost, as against normal poles and exposed wires?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) Yes. Further, at the annual meeting of the Electricity Supply Association in South Australia in November, 1954, full demonstrations—including the types of plastic cable, plastic covers for joint boxes—and films of the new method were shown.

(2) Yes.

(3) Yes, it is dearer. It is not possible as yet to determine the long term durability or maintenance costs. However, a small portion for distribution in Goulburn, New South Wales, has been installed and members of the Electricity Supply Association are watching the experiment closely.

DRAINAGE.

Carlisle-Welshpool Areas.

Mr. JAMIESON asked the Minister for Works:

(1) Is he aware that over 20 homes in the Carlisle-Welshpool areas are still inundated, surrounded or almost surrounded by water?

(2) As a large proportion of these houses were built in the last two years, did his department warn the local authorities of the possible danger of flooding in these areas when an abnormal winter occurred?

(3) What is approximate value of the properties affected in the eastern end of Bishopsgate-st., Carlisle?

(4) What would be the approximate cost of drainage of this area?

(5) What is the approximate value of the properties affected in the Ellam-st., Welshpool, area?

(6) What is the approximate cost of drainage of the Ellam-st. area?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) I am aware that there are a number of houses which have been affected by flood waters in the areas stated.

(2) No. The department is not in possession of sufficient information to enable such a procedure to be taken. In any case, it is considered to be the local authorities' responsibility to seek information before giving permits to build. Any information the department has is readily supplied.

(3) £26,000, on the basis that flooding has not occurred. (10 houses.)

(4) Not less than £250,000 for the main drains.

(5) £19,000, being 10 properties affected by the Ellam-st. swamp.

(6) No estimate can be given without considerable investigation.

EDUCATION.

Junior Examination Results.

Mr. ANDREW asked the Minister for Education:

(1) How many students in Western Australia took the Junior Examination last year?

(2) Would he give—

(a) the number and the percentage of passes?

(b) the percentage of passes for each high school throughout the State?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 3,403.

(2) (a) Number passed—2,565.
Percentage—75.3.

(b) 5-year High Schools.

Albany	67.78
Bunbury	55.85
Collie	82.35
Eastern Goldfields	69.76
Geraldton	93.44
Kent Street	98.48
Northam	70.40
Perth Modern	100.00

3-year High Schools.

Boulder	71.43
Claremont	86.57
Forrest	83.67
Fremantle Boys	87.18
Girdlestone	77.12
Midland	85.26
Perth Boys	80.27
Perth Girls	99.21
Perth Junior Technical	58.06
Princess May	88.00

CHILD WELFARE.*(a) Transfer of Boys from Seaforth Home.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Child Welfare:

What is the name of the home to which the delinquent boys formerly going to Seaforth, are now being sent?

The MINISTER replied:

The Anglican Farm School, Stoneville.

(b) Maintenance and Assistance to School.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Child Welfare:

(1) What amount, per boy, is being paid by the Government towards their upkeep?

(2) Has any other financial assistance been given to this home? If so, how much and for what purpose?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) No weekly rate of maintenance is paid by the Child Welfare Department, but that department finances all requirements for each boy's upkeep.

(2) Yes. The Child Welfare Department pays all reasonable costs incurred in the care and reformation of the inmates.

(c) Position Regarding Film Projector.

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Child Welfare:

(1) Were the Seaforth Home officials recently asked to give up the projector provided and partly paid for by the Salvation Army?

(2) If "Yes" is the answer to No. (1)—

(a) what was the cost of the projector;

(b) how much was subscribed by the Salvation Army;

(c) what has been the outcome of the request for the handing over of the projector?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) It is understood that the Salvation Army obtained a film projector through the Education Department some time ago and shared equally with that department in its cost. With the closure of Seaforth Home, it is further understood that the Education Department has requested the return of the projector.

(2) (a) £292 2s. 6d.

(b) 50 per cent.—£146 1s. 3d.

(c) The projector is still in the possession of the Salvation Army.

HOUSING.*Type of Homes, Salter Point.*

Mr. WILD asked the Minister for Housing:

(1) What area of land is owned by the State Housing Commission at Salter Point and from whom was the land purchased or resumed?

(2) Are the houses to be built on this land to be of brick or timber framed?

(3) How many of each, or both, are to be built at Salter Point during this financial year?

(4) Has any work yet commenced and what is the nature of the building being undertaken?

The PREMIER (for the Minister for Housing) replied:

(1) Approximately 50 acres. Purchased from Whitfords Ltd.

(2) Both brick and timber framed.

(3) 47 brick—80 timber framed.

(4) 80 homes under construction—24 brick, 56 timber framed.

**SELECT COMMITTEE—PERPETUAL
EXECUTORS, TRUSTEES AND
AGENCY COMPANY (W.A.)
LIMITED ACT (PRIVATE)
AMENDMENT BILL.**

Report Presented.

Mr. Court brought up the report of the select committee, together with a type-written copy of the evidence and correspondence referred to in the report.

Ordered: That the report and recommendation be printed.

**SELECT COMMITTEE—WEST AUSTRALIAN TRUSTEE, EXECUTOR
AND AGENCY COMPANY
LIMITED ACT (PRIVATE)
AMENDMENT BILL.**

Report Presented.

Mr. Court brought up the report of the select committee, together with a type-written copy of the evidence and correspondence referred to in the report.

Ordered: That the report and recommendation be printed.

BILL (2)—FIRST READING.

1. Child Welfare Act Amendment.

2. Superannuation and Family Benefits Act Amendment.

Introduced by the Premier.

BILL—LOCAL GOVERNMENT.*Restored to Notice Paper.*

On motion by the Minister for Railways, the Local Government Bill was restored to the notice paper at the stage it had reached in the previous session.

BILL—PRICES CONTROL.*Third Reading.*

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn) [4.45]: I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

HON. A. V. R. ABBOTT (Mt. Lawley) [4.46]: This Bill is the most important of the Government measures which have been introduced this session, because, in my view, it will, if passed, have a greater effect on the community, than any other measure, and, in my opinion, to the community's grave disadvantage. Most members yesterday had the privilege of hearing the Earl of Home when he told us that Great Britain had made a wonderful economic recovery, and had by now, both economically and otherwise, regained its position as one of the great powers of the world. As we all know, the policy carried on in that country has been one of freedom from controls and of allowing economic conditions of free enterprise to take effect. There is no doubt that it has done so with great advantage.

I do not propose to argue this Bill on the same lines as I did during the second reading. In view of its importance, however, I want to make another protest and give another warning to the Government of the great ill effects it will have on the community and on the economic life of Western Australia, if it is passed. It is no good saying, as both the Premier and the Minister in charge of the Bill have said, that the Government wants the power so that it can be used if required, but required in whose view?

Government departments have a tendency to grow and a Minister must act largely on the professional advice of his departmental head. That is the natural and only way that government can be carried on. If the Prices Control Branch is re-established, I can foresee a very large government department being set up, and it will find work for itself at great expense directly to the Government, and indirectly at a still greater cost to the community. The Bill has been passed in a very harsh form, despite the protest from this side of the House.

I admit that I was Minister when the Bill was first placed on the statute book, but we were then emerging from a state of very trying conditions brought about by the war; and what had been carried on and introduced by the Federal Government for a number of years was passed as the law of this State at the time. But similar conditions do not exist now, and if one considers the autocratic powers that the Government has sought and has so far received from this House, one must realise what an impact such a measure must have on the community. It is equally

as severe as, if not more severe than, the Taxation Act, and we all know the impact that that Act has on the community, however necessary it may be, and the great expense that department is to administer.

Under this Bill, the commissioner would have power to require any information and to insist upon any questions being answered; and any refusal would constitute an offence. He could require the production of documents of all kinds relating to the conduct of a business. Thus the business of a firm would be at the mercy of the department concerning all information, whether confidential or not, and I say that such information cannot be made available to a great many people without a certain amount of leakage occurring.

Any scheme that in the opinion of the commissioner involved a departure from the trader's normal course of trading would be prohibited, and power is to be taken to prohibit a sale until a price has been fixed. When I was in office, I had many complaints on this score. The commissioner has to make very thorough inquiries and investigations before a price can be fixed, and at times many weeks of trading were lost as a result. Then the onus of proof is to be put on the trader. I am sorry that the member for Fremantle is not in his seat at present to repeat his views on this provision. The commissioner's averment is to be *prima facie* evidence against the accused without any other proof being required of the commissioner. Thus, the trader would be forced to prove his innocence.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Were you wanting me?

Hon. A. V. R. ABBOTT: Yes. I feel that principles are principles. For many years we have heard the member for Fremantle declare himself against placing the onus of proof on the defendant. This is a principle that should never be introduced into British law.

The warning I am giving the Government is this: The question of a just price presumes certain antecedent questions. Who is going to say what constitutes a fair price? Who is going to be the judge, and what is the principle involved? This is a problem almost impossible of solution because it has been found, the world over and in numerous situations, that it is impossible to say at what price goods should be sold. If the price is not acceptable to the market, difficulties arise, such as our experience at the moment with wheat, where the exporting nations have more wheat than they know what to do with, and ultimately the surplus will probably be destroyed or, as happened with coffee in Brazil, it will be dumped into the sea.

There is only one way to encourage the greatest productivity and that is to give an incentive to all. In saying that, I do

not mean that any one class of the community should receive an incentive; everybody from top to bottom should receive an incentive to give of his best and, in return, should receive what his efforts avail him. I oppose the third reading.

MR. WILD (Dale) [4.55]: I have not previously taken part in the debate on this Bill, but I feel called upon to speak on the third reading because I have never in my life heard so much drivel as fell from the lips of the Premier and the Minister for Works—I regret that they are not in their seats at the moment—when they spoke about companies that made a profit up to 17½ per cent. being the ones to come under price control.

During the debates, this measure has been attacked by my colleagues academically. I am not in a position to debate it on that level; I would prefer to attack it on actual facts such as we know exist today. Can anyone deny that, since price control was abolished for the first time in the postwar years—one might say for the first time since 1939—there has been a considerable reduction in the cost of most of the basic commodities? I live in a spot where there is no delivery of groceries and where we have no butcher and, in the main, I do the shopping and can speak from a practical point of view.

It is of no use members of the Government speaking as the Minister for Labour has done for years. While sitting on the Opposition side of the Chamber, he shed crocodile tears about price control, and I expected nothing from him other than the introduction of legislation in an endeavour to put into effect what he propounded from this side of the House for six years. When one reads his speech in moving the second reading, one can only conclude that he propounded an academic theory and did not get down to the hard core of things.

Under the present freedom of trading, people are able to buy commodities cheaper and better than when we had price control. No one can claim that the customer is not in a position to discriminate; small self-help stores are springing up all over the place. Never since the war has there been such competition.

Mr. May: Do you agree that prices have continued to rise?

Mr. WILD: We all recognise that when employees obtain an increase in wages, prices must rise to some degree. What I wish to point out is that, once we allow the law of supply and demand to operate, we get competition between traders, and that is exactly what is happening today. Let me quote some of the items that I buy—commodity lines that appear on our tables every day. Take bacon: We can go to certain stores in Hay-st. and pay 7s. 6d. a lb. for shoulder bacon. The member for Victoria Park knows that in the market in

his district, it may be bought for 3s. 10½d. a half-lb. That has brought other shops into line—Freecorns, Wills, Carters and, in fact, shops all over the metropolitan area.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Did you say 3s. 10½d. a half lb.?

Mr. WILD: Yes.

The Minister for Labour: And you also said 7s. 6d. a lb. Your arithmetic is faulty.

Mr. WILD: Take a commodity like tomato sauce. The normal price of Rosella brand under the Retail Grocers' Association was 3s. a bottle. One can buy it in practically any of the stores today for 2s. 6d. and I think it can be brought for 2s. 3d.

The Minister for Labour: You should correct your bacon prices. You said it was 7s. 6d. per lb. in town and 3s. 10½d. per half-lb. in Victoria Park.

Mr. WILD: I am glad of the correction. It is 3s. 10½d. per lb.

The Minister for Labour: You have saved your bacon!

Mr. WILD: This applies to most of the commodities required today. Pork sausages are 1s. 4d. per lb. in the marts today and 2s. 4d. and 2s. 6d. in plenty of the stores in Perth. My wife paid 2s. 10d. for them one day last week and when she told me about it, I said that I could have bought them for 1s. 4d. One member on the Government side of the House said there were only certain places where one could obtain these cheap commodities, yet from one end of the metropolitan area to the other the same thing is going on. Even out where I live at Gosnells, or at Kelm-scott, there are these self-help stores, simply because of the competition that exists in that field.

We have heard a lot about meat and buying on the hoof, but the same situation applies there. Until a few months ago there was not a great amount of competition in meat but I ask the Minister to look at what is happening in that regard today. The position is exactly the same as with the self-help grocery stores.

Only a fortnight or three weeks ago I saw Mr. Frank Boan out at the Victoria Park mart with two of his directors, looking at the tremendous queue of people stretching out into the street and all waiting to buy cheap meat. The next thing was that his store immediately put in something similar—due to the competition in the meat market, and now we have Carters, George Wills and even Freecorns, in the field, and only because there is no price control.

I wish now to touch on the point raised by the Premier the other day and it was this that brought me to my feet. I refer to the question of denying a company the

opportunity to make a profit. I cannot see the necessity for the veiled inference, when the Premier did not use the name but referred to a cement company. There is only one cement company in Western Australia that has been operating for more than 12 months, and so it had to be the Swan Portland Cement Co. which made a profit of 17½ per cent. last year. I have no money to invest but I would suggest that when the Minister for Justice, in his heyday, had a hotel and was interested in business, he put his money into those ventures with the object of getting a fair return.

Furthermore, when one does that one is doing the very thing which the Government always talks about in relation to full employment. If a company is not making a decent profit the first indication is a slackening off and then the boss walks about and looks to see who can be dispensed with. Before we know what is happening, everyone employed there is suffering from the jitters as no one knows that he will not be sacked. When a company is making a fair profit everyone is certain of full employment.

Next I will deal with General Motors Holdens, a firm which has been black-guarded because it is alleged to have made a gigantic profit in the last couple of years. It is interesting to examine its figures of employment. During the past year that firm maintained in its Fishermen's Bend factory, 13,822 good Australians in full employment and their average wage for the previous financial year was £18 18s. per week. While the firm was doing that, it was putting out 337 Holden cars per day. That organisation brought its capital to Australia, set up a big factory and gave employment to Australians—13,000 odd in one factory, plus all the employment caused by the operation of the subsidiary companies supplying materials and so on.

Mr. Moir: What about the profits it made?

Mr. Brady: Do not you think its profits excessive?

Mr. WILD: The member for Guildford-Midland may be jealous that he has not any shares in that company. It is ridiculous for the Government to endeavour to create class hatred because a firm is making a few shillings. If we could follow the American idea, where the union secretaries, when things are going badly with the company, seek out the employer and say, "What is wrong? You are not doing well enough. What about putting in some new machinery in order to speed things up and make more money?"—

Mr. Brady: They do some things in the right way.

Mr. WILD: That is why America is one of the most prosperous countries in the world. I oppose the third reading.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [5.6]: It is unusual to oppose a third reading when a measure has already passed the other stages in this House and I am surprised that the member for Mt. Lawley has repeated the act which amused us so when he dealt with the measure on the second reading, because although he poses as a comedian, I am afraid he is not very effective. He tried to draw crocodile tears from us with the suggestion that a trader would be upset if the officers of the Prices Commission were able to go through his books and understand the workings of his business.

The Bill provides that officers of the Prices Commission shall be sworn to secrecy in regard to such matters and so it appears that the member for Mt. Lawley is trying to defend people who commit offences. If he used that logic in which members of the legal profession are supposed to be trained, he would realise that that is what he is doing, and without being paid for it, either. If he were in court defending a person accused of an offence, that would simply be the exercising of his profession, but here in this House of Parliament he is supposed to uphold the law and it is not the duty of the Opposition to defend people who commit offences.

However, that is what the member for Mt. Lawley seems to be doing. He is mixing his two lives and is bringing a completely wrong attitude into this Chamber. There are some moral requirements of members of Parliament, and although it may be right for members of the legal profession to defend in court folk whom they know have offended against the law, it is not right for members to defend in this House any action that is illegal. If necessary the law can be amended when there is a change needed, but that is different.

To stand here and try to defend people from an investigation of offences committed against the law appears to me to be completely wrong, because no honest and decent trader in a reasonable community would have the slightest objection to having his books investigated by anybody. If the hon. member refers to the country he is so keen on and which members of his party defend and adore so much—the U.S.A.—it will be found that they laud there the practice of telling their competitors everything about their businesses. At least, they say they do that, but I do not believe every statement that comes from that country.

That is one of the things they preach—* that as soon as a man discovers some secret to improve his business he should tell everyone in competition with him in order not to retain an unfair advantage. I gather that is not done here, and I am inclined to think it is not always done in America. However, the honest trader who is not doing anything illegal or morally unjustified will not be ashamed of having

his books investigated, and if the legislation is administered as efficiently as we expect it to be, it will be applied only in cases where there is reasonable belief that exploitation has taken place, and so the affairs of the decent trader will not need to be investigated. We saw crocodile tears shed about the suggestion that a charge by the commissioner should be *prima facie* evidence sufficient for the hearing of a charge and, as a primary statement, there appears to be some justification for that view, yet there is also some justification for saying that it is wrong. If we pause to examine the legislation and the actions that must take place before a charge can be made under it, it is obvious that no person would be likely to be charged before a court without very considerable investigations having first been made. I imagine that the powers which are to lie in the hands of the commissioner are such that it is extremely unlikely that anyone will be brought into court without there first having been a detailed investigation resulting in something very close to proof before a charge is laid.

Again, in his humorous style, the member for Mt. Lawley spoke about incentives. I have a recollection of his leading the debate for the Opposition on the suggestion that the Arbitration Court should be instructed to apply the "C" series index rises as they came along. The granting of basic wage rises in accordance with the index is not an incentive. An incentive requires something more than plain justice, and yet here we have a man who is prepared to deny justice, talking about incentives to everyone. The workers are also people and are entitled to incentives under the hon. member's own argument.

Are we supposed to laugh at this sort of stuff, which is really not amusing? It is completely illogical and I think any member of the legal profession, with an allegedly trained brain, should be ashamed to be heard using such illogical arguments. We know something of the argument about incentives and we have heard it lots of times. We realise that there are some points for it and some against, but how anyone who can deny common justice can preach incentives in the same breath is absolutely beyond me and, I fancy, beyond anyone but the member for Mt. Lawley.

The member for Dale used the word "drivel" in relation to speeches that had been made from this side but I fancy he was in much the same class himself. For instance, his statement that people are in a position to buy cheaper now than they were during the operation of price control overlooks the fact that although there have been some small downward movements in some individual items in the last few months since price control, and particularly since Federal price control was dropped, prices generally have risen like a 5th November rocket.

Mr. Wild: Have they risen in the last four to six months?

Mr. JOHNSON: Yes, they have. The hon. member has only to look at the "C" series index to realise that.

Mr. Wild: You do not know.

Mr. JOHNSON: If wages had not been pegged—

Mr. Wild: You are in such a narrow little groove at Leederville that you do not know what is going on outside it. So do not talk to me about drivel. Anyway, after next March, you will have plenty of time to think about these things as the economic adviser to the Bank of Australasia.

Mr. JOHNSON: The drivel which derives from Dale is being continued.

Hon. L. Thorn: Wipe your chin!

Mr. JOHNSON: However, the matter under discussion is whether prices have risen or not. We do not have to worry about whether we can get bacon for 7s. 6d. a lb. or 3s. 10d. a lb. for proof of the fact. We have to refer to the court index. That index, which is scientifically created and which is not without some flaws but even so is a reasonable basis of measurement, indicates that prices have risen and are continuing to rise. They have continued to rise and have been rising since about 1939, without any doubt. There has been no downward movement, of any appreciable amount, since then. There have been differences in the rate of rise but prices are still rising, and the suggestion that goods are cheaper now than they were during price control is drivel and has no connection with fact.

There have always been occasions when some shops have sold some individual items cheaper than neighbouring shops, and vice versa. We understand that that has something to do with the law of supply and demand, advertising or one of those commercial processes which are so much admired by members opposite. The fact that the member for Dale could quote one particular item—the quote may or may not have been accurate—does not prove anything in the same way as one swallow does not make a summer. This continual lauding of the value of competition is tiresome. Competition, and the law of supply and demand are fallacious.

Mr. Bovell: Rubbish!

Mr. JOHNSON: They have only a limited effect and there is no real value in them. What is the effect of competition? Competition is a man-made struggle and is for one purpose and one purpose only. The effect and direction of competition is purely for the obtaining of a monopoly. For instance, the football competition is for the monopoly of the premiership and the team which has won a premiership does not say to all the other teams in the competition, "You share this with us."

Mr. Court: The member for South Fremantle would not like to hear you say that.

Mr. JOHNSON: Each year somebody has monopolised the premiership and the objective of each team has been to monopolise it for as many years as possible.

Mr. Manning: Has the price of footballs gone up since price control was abolished?

Mr. JOHNSON: I believe it has, but I cannot speak from actual experience. As far as footballs for schools are concerned, the price has gone up. The whole idea of competition is one of those theories which were created by economists to suit conditions at the time and which were thought, in the long long ago, to be an accurate description of the situation. However, it has proved to be a description of the situation which existed only in the minds of the economists. That is not uncommon.

In normal trading, after competition has begun to hurt and the number of competitors has been reduced, there is an inclination for the competing parties to get together. The result is either a trade ring, a cartel or a complete monopoly of the trade by the strongest competitor. But competition is something that cannot be produced by law. It is not natural to men, and, in fact, is not natural in any way. It would be far better if members opposite, instead of lauding a false theory, did something about co-operation rather than competition.

Mr. Bovell: The whole basis of nature is the survival of the fittest. You will have to fit yourself for that at the next election.

Mr. JOHNSON: I know that I should not answer that interjection, but I would point out that those who survive are those who co-operate with their fellows in survival.

Mr. Yates: With those who are left.

Mr. JOHNSON: Take the co-operation that exists between ants, particularly Argentine ants. They have a high survival rate and I have had experience of it in my own home.

The Minister for Labour: That is an antiquated idea!

Mr. JOHNSON: I understand that the co-operation between the various other forms of life is one of the reasons for their continued survival. Those forms of life which do not co-operate but fight among themselves eventually disappear from the globe.

The Premier: I think you were merciful to the member for Vasse.

Mr. Oldfield: You are delaying private members' business.

Mr. JOHNSON: The answer to that interjection—I know that I should not answer it—is that it is largely because of a lack of co-operation. The member for Dale spoke about a firm making a decent profit being a good employer. The intention of this Bill is to keep prices decent; to keep profits decent. There are such things as indecent profits and perhaps the member for Dale has a different viewpoint as to what is a decent or an indecent profit. For instance, I know that the member for Nedlands feels that the creation of profit in any form has the blessing of Heaven and that profit is in itself virtuous.

Mr. Court: You are letting your imagination run riot.

Mr. JOHNSON: More humane people think that it is possible for profits to be indecent. Such organs of opinion as, for instance, the organ of the Anglican Church, "The Anglican," found it necessary to comment on the profits of General Motors Holdings. The suggestion of the writer was that that particular profit was, if I remember rightly, indecent; in any case, the writer said that it was outrageous.

Mr. J. Hegney: Do not forget that that profit is taken out of the country, too.

Mr. JOHNSON: The member for Dale also spoke about the unions in America and the way they did not compete with their employers but co-operated with them. Some of the forms of co-operation of the unions in America include going on strike, as the employees in the motor industry have done to acquire certain agreements. Among the agreements that they have acquired by co-operation with their employers is guaranteed employment by the year—complete employment—and agreements for a regular increase in income. They have forced their employers to undertake to pay an increased real wage as well as increases in monetary wages each year.

Without referring back to the written reports and relying on a memory that could possibly be wrong, I think the increase agreed to in the motor industry was an annual real increase of 3 per cent. The employers have undertaken to raise the standard of living—the real standard—by 3 per cent, per annum. Those employers did not do it out of the goodness of their hearts; they did it as a result of a type of pressure. We in this country are free from that particular type of pressure. So it would appear that none of the points the member for Dale attempted to make was completely accurate. The points he made all partly drew a picture of the situation but partly failed to disclose the whole situation.

The only arguments that can be adduced against this Bill are, to put it politely shaky, if not completely false, and

so it would appear to follow, by logic alone, that the measure must be supported. It would be wise for members opposite to realise that although there is a need for an Opposition in a Parliament, and for an active Opposition if a democratic Parliament is to work effectively, it is not part of the duties of an Opposition to oppose purely for the sake of opposing. An Opposition that cannot be constructive is neglecting its duty and if, in its opposition, it cannot show that it has something better to offer, or at least something as good as the proposition of the Government, it is failing in its duty.

After listening to members opposite, I would say that they have no proposition at all in mind and if they have any suggestions for the better control of prices and profits than are contained in this Bill, they have not said so. If they have a duty as an Opposition, it is a duty to produce something better and to display to the people that they have some ideas other than of opposing everything. They have failed completely in that and in their failure have demonstrated that this Bill is the best that can be produced by the assembled brains, if there are any, of the State Parliament. As members will have gathered from the speech, I support the Bill.

HON. DAME FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER (Subiaco) [5.30]: I would like to say a few words on this measure. I am the only woman in the House, although I know that by law there is no sex in this Chamber. I do not think for one moment that a great many of the members who have spoken on this measure from the Government side know what they are talking about.

Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: It is my job in life to see, as far as possible, that the merchants give us cheap goods. I have found, especially in the last few months, that prices have declined with respect to most of the goods we wish to buy. For instance, the price of vegetables, has declined as has also the price of meat. Only yesterday I bought some tea from one shop and it cost me 3s. 6d. a half pound, whereas in another shop the price was 3s. 9d. per half pound for the same brand of tea. Naturally I would not go to the shop where I had to pay 3s. 9d., but to the one where I would pay 3s. 6d. for the half pound.

I do not blame members opposite for what they say, because we all know they do not make the law. They advocate that such and such a thing should be done, but behind them is a caucus that says it must be done, and they have to do what they are told. I am sure many of them would have preferred this Bill not to have been brought down.

The Minister for Lands: Do not be a hypocrite!

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: The member for Leederville talked about ants being co-operative. He does not know what he is talking about. They do not co-operate with me. The Argentine ant eats the white ant.

Mr. O'Brien: What about the bush ant?

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: I am not going to co-operate with ants, and I hope members opposite will not do so either. That is one of the silly statements that have been made. The other night I listened to speech after speech in which members quoted what happened 10 years ago and said, "You did this and you did that." Of course we did. As the member for Vasse has said it was after the war and many of our men were engaged on active service. They were not producing on the land because they were not able to. As a result of this, prices had to be controlled to some extent. Gradually, however, we lessened the control of prices. I am glad to see that today prices are not controlled as they were then.

If we look at the matter factually we will see that we have an efficient control already. If members opposite wish to do something, they should not control the price of everything. I could give members a much cheaper and a far better dinner than they would ever get under price control. Of course, there are people who want to buy beans or peas at 2s. a lb. These are out of season and are not really on the market. There is nothing to prevent such people, however, from waiting until the supplies of beans or peas are plentiful. In the meantime they can buy cabbage or other green food if they desire.

Some member made a very pertinent remark and said, "We must make this law permanent because we would then get a better class of man to go into the services." I could tell the House quite a lot about men in the armed services, particularly in the last war when prices were controlled. I know of one case of a man in my electorate who had become insolvent. He was a storeman. It was quite easy for him to find employment on the price fixing commission. He was tempted to take the appointment and was told, "Come along. It does not matter whether you know anything about the job or not."

There is the case of another man, with whom members are familiar who escaped gaol. He was well known and respected, but knew nothing at all about price control or goods generally. This man was a great musician. Although he knew nothing about price control, he was given a position in the Prices Department. I have never heard anything more awful or absurd. Even today when one goes into a shop and asks a girl how much a certain article costs, it is often necessary for her to look up the price list in order to supply the information. It takes a minute or two

to do that, but that girl, or it may be a man, has to be paid for that work, and all that adds to the price of the article.

I think members opposite should let the Bill slide out so that the caucus will not know. Let it fade away. If they do not, I hope it will fade away in another place. I am convinced the Government is doing the wrong thing. Let us consider the time when there was control. On one occasion I saw 10,000 cases of apples being thrown into Shenton Park lake. That was when the price was controlled. The apples had gone bad because they could not be sold under a certain price. As I have said, 10,000 cases of them were put into the lake. That could happen again.

Mr. Andrew: Why do we hold our wheat today?

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: I will leave that to the wheat growers to answer. Many years ago when wheat was hard to get on the Continent, I remember the dictator Mussolini insisting that the grape vines be torn down in order that wheat might be grown. They tore down the vines in order to get cheap wheat, although we in Australia were protected. Here we gave our wheat farmers 12s. 2d. an acre and asked them not to grow wheat. It was, of course, the people who paid. Do we want to go back to the days when goods, although plentiful, were subsidised because people could not get a certain amount of money for certain goods and the amount was made up by the Government? The people, of course, had to pay the price. It is wicked for members opposite to propose a measure such as this.

The Minister for Works: How do you explain the fact that the Liberal Government in South Australia still retains price control?

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: I live in Western Australia and I expect the laws of Western Australia to be ahead of those of the other States.

The Minister for Works: If it is wicked here, it is wicked there.

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: We should show the world what to do. When I was Minister for Supply and Shipping I had to go elsewhere in order to obtain goods. We had nothing here, and I had to go across to the Eastern States to get all we could. We did not get it by talking controls, but by begging the Eastern States to give us this, that and the other. Although prices were controlled we were successful in getting the Eastern States to agree to give us those supplies. But those days have passed. I am amazed at the Minister for Works! Why should we imitate any other country?

The Minister for Works: If it is wicked here, it is wicked there.

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: When they had their s.p. betting in South Australia, I said it was wicked. They have found it was so and it has been stopped. I say that members opposite are doing another wicked thing here. Before they do it, they should listen to reason. They should go home and ask their wives.

The Premier: What for?

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: Their wives would tell them that they did not want controls, and that they could provide a better dinner today than they could under controls. Everything is becoming cheaper in price, and if the process were permitted to continue I feel sure it would be better than instituting controls. Members opposite should let decontrol continue for a few years and if at the end of that time, they are in power and feel that the position is not going well, then perhaps they could think about instituting controls again.

The Minister for Lands: It is easy to see that you have given a lot of thought to what you are saying!

Hon. Dame FLORENCE CARDELL-OLIVER: As you know, Mr. Speaker, I am leaving this House shortly. I hate to feel that I am leaving a place that has an inferiority complex. I am amazed to hear such remarks as, "Why should we not do as South Australia does?" or, "Why should we not do as Queensland does?" I could mention many countries in the world which I would not like Western Australia to copy. I ask members not to copy other countries that are doing the wrong thing.

The Minister for Lands: Why do not you tell your Leader that?

HON. SIR ROSS McLARTY (Murray) [5.41]: One of the greatest concerns I have about this legislation, should it become law, relates to the administrative side. When speaking on this Bill the Minister admitted that there would be difficulty in getting an efficiently trained staff. He said it would take some time to get such a staff together. In States where there has been price control and where it has been lessened, they have at least kept on a skeleton staff. In Western Australia we have been without control for some considerable time, and the staff that existed under control has now found other avenues of employment. If there is a chance of price control being effectively administered, there must be an efficiently trained staff.

I do not know where the Minister will get this trained staff from. I would say that it will take some months—that is a conservative estimate—to get together a qualified staff that could deal with price fixing. During that time business generally will be subjected to examination and investigation by people who are not fitted to carry out such a duty. That could have a serious effect on business, and instead of

helping the general economy of the State, it could do a great deal to bring about confusion and uncertainty.

As far as I know, there is nothing the Government has done so far to try to get such a staff together. I believe that the administration of price control in Western Australia will cost much more, if it is reintroduced, than it did previously. The Minister has said, and so has the Premier, that it is not proposed to impose a blanket control, but to control only goods where it is considered the necessity arises. We have had very little indication of what those goods are. Where a particular class of goods has been mentioned, the information I have been able to obtain in regard to them has been that excessive profits are not being made. So I cannot help feeling that there might be an uneasiness in the business world with regard to the proposed administrative set-up of the department which will have to be formed should the Bill become law—and it will be another permanent government department.

I am making a guess now, but I would not be surprised, judging from past experience, if this department costs £100,000 per year. If inspectors have to be employed, running from one end of the country to the other, and a clerical staff has to be built up, then, having regard to our experience of what happens in regard to the build-up of government departments generally, I think one is justified in saying that the cost of the proposed department will be much greater than previously, and could well reach the figure of £100,000 per annum.

Hon. L. Thorn: Where would they get the staff from?

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: If the hon. members had been listening to me when I began my speech, he would have known that that was the very matter I raised—the extreme difficulty of getting trained staff to deal with this particular problem.

Hon. L. Thorn: Any man capable of doing that work today is in a good position.

Hon. Sir ROSS McLARTY: I think that is so. Certain price rises have taken place recently, and I regret to see them. But I do not imagine that this Government, or any price-fixing authority, will be able to do anything about them. There have been price increases outside the State. What can we do about them? If we fixed such a price that those importing the goods were unable to make a profit, they would just cease importing them, and we would be in greater difficulty than at present.

Something has been said about the competition that is taking place in industry generally, and it is a fact that competition is keen. I doubt whether in many lines competition has ever been keener. I would think it probable that if we introduced

price control at this stage, instead of reducing the price level, we would be much more likely to increase it. That would apply to a number of goods. I would not be surprised if, in the future, there is a decrease in the cost of a number of consumer goods. I know that primary producers are not getting the prices they were receiving some little time ago; and if their prices are not so great as previously, that must have a general effect upon the economy of the State.

This Bill has been debated at considerable length, both at the second reading and Committee stages. I have tried to tell people, wherever I have been, that my party is opposed to the reintroduction of price control in this State, telling them that I did not think it would achieve any useful purpose; but, on the contrary, that it would bring about confusion and uncertainty and would be detrimental to business generally. I believe, too, that it would prove detrimental to consumers. If we have a price-control administration, I feel certain it will exist only to approve of certain price rises. That has been our experience in the past, and I have not any doubt at all that that will be the attitude in the future. It will not mean that prices will be kept down, but that an organisation will be set up to approve price rises from time to time. Consequently I voice opposition to the Bill.

MR. ANDREW (Victoria Park) [5.50]: It was not my intention to speak on this Bill; but when members of the Opposition opposed the third reading, I thought that I would also put forward a few of my opinions. One thing we must all realise is that the economy of countries is undergoing change all the time. It is becoming more and more a managed economy.

Mr. Yates: What sort of a change?

Mr. ANDREW: There is more organisation in the national economy of all countries, including those that are conservatively controlled, such as America, which is the home of private enterprise. We know that we cannot really have a prosperous era without prices tending to rise, and that is something we have to take into consideration when we are discussing what is in the best interests of the people of a country.

I mentioned America a moment ago. The member for Subiaco said that we do not need to follow other countries, but it is necessary to provide illustrations to prove particular points. In order to maintain a price for farm produce, America is taking surplus production off the market, and it does not really know what it is going to do with that produce. I would ask members opposite who talk so much about competition, whether they think that America should allow its farmers to sell their produce for what they can get and

take no organisational action—in other words; take no measure of control over the output of its primary producers.

Mr. YATES: You would not want price control in Victoria Park. You get cheap goods there now.

Mr. ANDREW: The hon. member is speaking of minor happenings in Victoria Park and special circumstances. Someone made reference to General Motors Holdens. I have a grievance in regard to Holden cars. They do not have an efficient horn.

Mr. YATES: Do you own one?

Mr. ANDREW: Partly. The Traffic Department should take notice of the fact that these cars are put on the road with most inefficient horns. I have had personal experience and was nearly involved in an accident on that account. Persons travelling in front of a car fitted with one of these horns cannot hear it. I have travelled for miles behind a truck along Albany Highway. I continually sounded the horn, but the driver of the truck could not hear it, and the only way I got past him was to squeeze by with two wheels off the road. Holdens made a huge profit last year, yet that is the sort of equipment on their cars. Nevertheless, our friends opposite say that better articles and more efficiency are obtained through competition.

Some years ago the Leader of the Opposition led a campaign here against Federal price control. This was at the time of the referendum, and members of the Opposition used a number of arguments against price control. One argument was that they were opposed to price control; another was that the States could control better than could the Commonwealth. On one hand, they said, "We can do a better job with controls than is now being done." On the other hand, they submitted that controls were no good and produced inefficiency. Those arguments cancel each other. What they missed on the swings they wanted to make up on the merry-go-round, and they misled the people by arguments in which they themselves did not really believe.

I am of the opinion that the Commonwealth Government was doing a pretty good job with regard to price control, but our friends who represent big business did not want control at any price. They wanted to remove the controls that were then in existence. They believed that if they could get people to vote against Commonwealth control and take over that control themselves, they could then do away with it. That is not really playing the game. If they were opposed to price control, they should have said so straight out, instead of using arguments that cancelled one another.

With regard to the statement that price control does away with competition, I have never heard one member opposite indicate how it does so. The argument is that if a

person is selling an article at 4s. 9d. and the controlled price is 5s., the vendor automatically puts his price up to 5s. But if he could sell in competition with another person whose costs amounted to 5s. and he was able to lower his costs and sell at 4s. 9d., or 4s. 6d., he would actually sell more of the goods and should get a much better overall profit.

Mr. COURT: You apparently did not hear what the member for Mt. Lawley said about the predicament in which the Victorian price control authorities found themselves over the very thing you are talking about.

Mr. ANDREW: I do not remember hearing the member for Mt. Lawley make a statement along those lines, but I am giving an illustration of what actually could be done. As a matter of fact, a businessman in Perth, who manages rather a big business, said, "I am selling articles at a certain figure, and if a higher price were imposed, I would sell at that price." He would not be compelled to do so. I cannot see how competition is eliminated by price control, if men want to extend their businesses and sell more articles at a rate lower than that fixed by the Prices Commission. Not one member of the Opposition has illustrated how competition is eliminated by price control; mere assertions have been made.

I would like to point out to the Opposition that the controls that they oppose are those which do away with the power of certain folk to gain higher profits and exploit the people. As I said earlier, the economy of the country is changing. There is more control and management of a national character in the economy of the nation. Take the Bills we have been dealing with, such as those covering spearguns, jury service, free enterprise, and so on. They are all control measures, and there is no opposition to them in a general sense.

I was in the Swan district a number of years ago, and the prices growers were getting for dried fruits were rather appalling.

Hon. L. THORN: Is that where I saw you?

Mr. ANDREW: I think I met the hon. member once or twice. The only way they could get a higher price which would enable them to stay on their vineyards was to gain control. The member for Toodyay knows that he and I were on the deputation when the Minister for Agriculture said he would recommend the introduction of a Bill for an Act to control the marketing of dried fruits. The hon. member supported that measure for control because he knew it was necessary. He and I and other members have supported other control measures that have been introduced to help particular sections of the community but, generally speaking, members opposite, when we deal with measures

to control people so that they will make only a fair profit and not an exorbitant profit, oppose them and say that those people should have a free hand to charge what they can get. Right through our economy, the tendency is for improved national management.

The only way by which we can really get prosperity, as has been demonstrated so often in many places, is to have more organisation. It will not be necessary to implement price control in actual fact, except on those goods in respect of which prices above a fair amount are being charged. While goods are in plentiful supply, we do not have exploitation of the people by means of high prices the same as we do when goods are in short supply. The Act will only be needed for those goods which are in short supply. Members opposite have, on occasions, supported price control when they thought it necessary. We think it is only necessary to have price control in respect to certain goods which are in short supply; we do not want it to have general application. I support the Bill.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [6.2]: I addressed a few remarks on this measure during the second reading debate, and I would not have risen on this occasion except for the reference by the Premier to the profits made and dividends paid by certain commercial companies. It must be remembered that investors sometimes have to wait a long time before they receive any return on the money they invest. I am going to quote a personal instance. I was a bank clerk in Albany many years ago at the time when the Western Australian Worsted and Woollen Mills Ltd. was established there. The Government of the day encouraged the establishment of the industry at Albany, and £1 shares were sold to private individuals at par.

This company suffered many reverses during the depression years and, in 1933, it was found necessary to decrease the capital by two-thirds, with the result that the investors found that up till that time they received no dividends on one-third of their investment. Time progressed, and it was not until 1947, I think, that a dividend was first paid to the shareholders of that company, which has not only provided Western Australians with employment since its inception but has shown the world that we, in Western Australia, can manufacture textiles and other woollen materials as well as they can be manufactured in any other country.

Therefore, the big capitalists that the Premier inferred received large dividends are not always placed in that position. Western Australians are called upon to invest in ventures which, as in the case of the Western Australian Worsted and Woollen Mills Ltd., keep them waiting a long time before they receive any return

on the capital they subscribe. The investor takes a risk, and he is entitled to a measure of return on the money he has provided to enable an industry to be established. In fairness to investors, I feel that this instance should be quoted. I am glad to say that today the Western Australian Worsted and Woollen Mills Ltd., are on a sound financial basis; but it is only because of the patience of investors that this industry has been maintained in Western Australia.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR (Hon. W. Hegney—Mt. Hawthorn—in reply) [6.7]: I do not propose to detain the House at great length as I do not think the remarks made by the Opposition on the motion for the third reading of the Bill justify any further delay. Members of the Opposition put forward nothing new but just rehashed what was said by them on the second reading. Boiled down, it means that they are opposed to the principle of price control. We had an exhaustive debate on the second reading and during the Committee stage. I do not feel that the matter introduced by members of the Opposition should be replied to, because much of it was of very little value. I would like to pass one remark on the concern expressed by the Leader of the Opposition. He felt that if the Bill passed, the Government would have difficulty in obtaining a competent staff. I do not think the Leader of the Opposition is worried one iota about the ability of the Government to obtain competent staff. Is that his only objection to the Bill?

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: No.

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR: Of course it is not. Where there is a will there is a way, and if the Bill does pass, the Government will use every effort to see that a competent staff is recruited. I know that the Leader of the Opposition did not mean to insinuate that there were no competent men available. If the Bill passes, I will consult with the Premier in the first place, and then ascertain what officers could be seconded. I would try to get some of the most competent men in the State Public Service for the job. I think we could make an arrangement under which men of high repute, character and efficiency could be made available to us in order to see that the Act was implemented.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What experience would they have in regard to the businesses they would have to examine?

THE MINISTER FOR LABOUR: I wish now to quote, not from extracts from my own speech, or indeed from the Leader of the Opposition or any other member of this House, but a few pithy but valuable extracts from the South Australian "Herald" of the 9th June last.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The Premier has already quoted them.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: At page 285, the report shows that the Premier was introducing the Prices Bill.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: The Premier read them to us.

The MINISTER FOR LABOUR: They are worth reading a second time. We have just listened to some speeches by the Opposition, for the second occasion, so this can be mutual. I shall quote a few extracts that the Premier did not quote. The Premier of South Australia said—

The most important reason is the necessity for South Australia to keep its costs of production as low as possible.

A little later he said—

Experience has shown that control of prices is essential for this purpose. In two other States where prices have been decontrolled, the effect of decontrol is that the increase in the "C" series index in those States has been about three times as great as it was in South Australia during the corresponding period.

This is very convincing evidence of the serious effects of decontrolling prices at the present juncture, and of the advantage which South Australia gains by retaining control. Another reason which actuates the Government in proposing an extension of the Prices Act is the existence of trade associations and trade arrangements by which prices can be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise prevail. The effects of these arrangements on prices and on supplies of commodities are from time to time reported to the Government; and so long as the Prices Act remains in force the Government is in a position to ensure that no harsh or unfair arrangements are allowed to operate. If the Prices Act lapsed, the Government would be powerless in such matters.

Further on he said—

The Prices Department is at present operating with a relatively small staff and many kinds of commodities have been decontrolled. Nevertheless, arrangements are in force between the department and persons and associations concerned in various trades and industries with the object of ensuring that prices remain reasonably stable. These arrangements are quite effective, but they depend for their effectiveness on the fact that the Prices Act is still in force and can be used, if necessary, to impose a stricter control.

So, he goes on, and he indicates why South Australia will retain its Prices Act. I do not think it is necessary to reply to the matter raised by the member for

Dale. There was very little substance in it, and there was none in what the member for Vasse put up.

Mr. Bovell: My word, there was!

Mr. SPEAKER: As there is not time to put the vote before tea, I will submit the question to the House after the tea suspension.

Sitting suspended from 6.14 to 7.30 p.m.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	....	....	....	....	19
Noes	....	....	....	....	17
Majority for					2

Ayes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Lawrence
Mr. Brady	Mr. McCulloch
Mr. Heal	Mr. Moir
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Norton
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Styants
Mr. Kelly	Mr. May
Mr. Lapham	

(Teller.)

Noes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. Nimmo
Dame F. Cardell-Oliver	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Owen
Mr. Court	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Doney	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Waite
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Wild
Mr. Mann	Mr. Bovell
Sir Ross McLarty	

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Ayes.	Ayes.
Mr. Graham	Mr. Brand
Mr. Tonkin	Mr. Ackland
Mr. Nulsen	Mr. Yates
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Nalder
Mr. Sewell	Mr. North

Question thus passed.

Bill read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—POLICE BENEFIT FUND ABOLITION ACT AMENDMENT.

Returned from the Council without amendment.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Received from the Council and, on motion by Mr. Jamieson, read a first time.

BILLS (2)—THIRD READING.

1, Junior Farmers' Movement.

2, Swan Lands Revestment.

Transmitted to the Council.

BILL—ACTS AMENDMENT (LIBRARIES).

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—MARINE STORES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

MR. JOHNSON (Leederville) [7.37] in moving the second reading said: This is an extremely small Bill to amend the Marine Stores Act, only a portion of which is under review. It is of general interest to realise that this legislation, like many other Acts, is of considerable age and therefore is no longer in keeping with modern trends. In introducing the Bill it is my intention to deal only with that portion of the marine stores business that is conducted by the humble bottle-o, namely, bottles and branded bottles.

For the information of members, however, I would point out that this Act was originally introduced in 1902 and has only been amended once for the purpose of altering the fees prescribed. To indicate how obsolete this legislation is, I will refer to the definition of "marine stores" in the Act which reads—

"Marine stores" means partly manufactured metal goods, second-hand anchors, cables, sails, old junk, rags, bones, bottles, jute goods, and marine stores of every description, copper, iron, brass, lead, Muntz metal, scrap metal, broken metal, or defaced metal goods.

I do not know what Muntz metal is but perhaps someone who is interested in the trade may know. In the Act, a chandler is defined as follows:—

"Ship-chandler" means any shop-keeper in a seaport town whose principal business is the sale of cordage, canvas, and other furniture, and general necessities of ships.

This Act stems from the sailing ship days, but we are now living in the days of the rocket ship. The whole Act requires amending because since it was placed on the statute book considerable change has taken place. For instance, outside of the amendment I am introducing, the Act deals with bones. In the period between its introduction and the present day a complete sideline trade on bones has arisen between the butcher and the dealer and I consider that the whole of that trade is contrary to the provisions of the Act.

The same applies to rag-dealing at present. We are all familiar with the bags that are thrown on our front lawns by various charitable institutions that are endeavouring to collect rags to raise money. I suggest that that action on the part of those charitable institutions is ultra vires the Act. I suggest it would be well worth while if the officers of the Crown Law Department were to examine how closely the provisions of this Act conform to our modern age and decide whether the Act should be completely rewritten.

The Bill relates to another feature of the marine stores trade which has grown up only in the last few years. I am referring to dealing in bottles, particularly branded bottles. The practice of manufacturing branded bottles for one particular purpose has only grown up in recent times. Whether the introduction of this particular method of handling bottles was to evade the provisions of this Act I do not know, but I imagine that the real purpose was to ensure that bottles of a particular size or shape were returned to the original maker so that they could be refilled by the mechanical methods which have been introduced since 1902.

If members examine the provisions of the Bill they will see that they all refer to branded bottles. The intention of the measure is to insert among the definitions set out in the Act one that defines branded bottles and also, to indicate that branded bottles are intended to be regarded as marine stores and to ensure, by amendments to other sections of the Act, that people who are empowered to collect bottles shall also be empowered to collect branded bottles and to deal with them solely in one way. That is, a branded bottle can only be disposed of by a licensed collector to a licensed dealer, and, in turn, it can only be disposed of by the licensed dealer to the proprietor of the brand or his authorised agent. That is a fair and safe method of dealing with the bottles.

The circumstance which caused me to introduce this amending Bill is one which the House is entitled to hear so that members can understand it. I fancy that members opposite will say that the Bill interferes with private property, namely bottles. I imagine that will be the attitude of the Opposition. The property in the bottle that carries a brand does not appear to me to be absolute. Although there is the legal fiction that only the contents are sold and the bottle remains the property of the proprietor, there is no right remaining in the proprietor of the bottle to claim it until after the contents have been used. That in itself is evidence that the property in the bottle is not absolute.

The second point is that on every occasion damage is caused by a bottle, the owner of the brand is disinclined to accept responsibility. If the tyres of a motorcar are damaged as a result of travelling over a broken bottle and the owner of the car is able to claim damages from the proprietor of the brand, I imagine there will be an immediate disavowal of ownership of the bottle. Furthermore, there have been occasions on which proprietors of branded bottles have refused to accept bottles other than those bearing their brand, to take delivery of them, to pay any fee for receiving them, or even to give house room without a fee.

I have justice in saying that the proprietor of the property in the bottle is not regarded as completely absolute. It is a

type of legal fiction, and the rights of the proprietor of the brand are well protected in the provisions of this Bill, in that bottles can be dealt with only in a manner that ensures their going back to the proprietor. I think that is quite just.

About 18 months ago, at the request of a constituent, I took a deputation to the responsible Minister in regard to this trade. Included in that deputation was a marine collector in a small way, named Moysey.

Mr. Oldfield: Is he a Scotsman?

Mr. JOHNSON: I do not know. He did not appear to be a foreigner. I think he was an Australian. Moysey explained that he was a licensed marine collector under the terms of the Act and had a police licence to collect bottles. He had been collecting for some time and had been delivering his bottles to a bottleyard which carries a marine dealer's licence. However, the proprietors of the brand of bottle mostly in use, the beer bottle, had issued a permit to him to collect bottles bearing their brand, but on finding that he delivered bottles to a yard other than their own, had withdrawn the permit.

The result was that although he had a police licence to collect bottles, and under the terms of this Act was permitted to go into the backyard of any householder when invited and take empty bottles away, his livelihood was removed because the only bottles he could collect were those not used for holding beer. If one were to examine the bottle heap in any backyard, one would find the majority of those there were beer bottles. The average householder who calls a bottle-o in does not want one who can take away only sauce bottles, wine bottles and medicine bottles, but is not authorised to take away beer bottles.

The reaction will be to tell such a bottle collector to go away, and then to find some other collector who can take away all types of bottles. Moysey had his livelihood destroyed because the permit to collect beer bottles had been withdrawn from him. The reason was that, after due warning had been given, he continued to take bottles to the yard of someone other than the proprietor of the brand. An attempt was made to persuade the proprietors of the beer bottles to restore his permit, but they decided to make an example of him.

He was a bottle collector on a small scale, but he liked that avocation and wanted to continue in it. That was about 18 months ago. Today he is no longer collecting bottles. In fact he is no longer doing anything. He committed suicide. Whether it was as a direct result of this action I do not know, but I think it helped to induce him to do away with himself. He was very upset about the withdrawal of the permit. Some time after the deputation to which I referred earlier, he decided to go somewhere else and today he is no longer with us.

Mr. Oldfield: This Bill will allow more people to become bottle collectors.

Mr. JOHNSON: I am not certain of that point. Like most other Bills, it has to be tried for a while to see how it will work. There is a limit to the bottle trade and I might say that the Marine Dealers' Union is of the opinion that it is preferable to have a limitation placed upon the number of people allowed to carry on that type of business. As a Parliament, I think we should be in agreement, that if a limitation is to be imposed on any trade, there is only one authority to impose it, and that is this House.

It would be, I imagine, within the powers of the police, the authority under this Act, to restrict the number of licences issued. If the police think that that cannot be done, then it might be necessary to issue a new regulation under the Act to give the police that power, or it might be necessary to amend the Act by inserting the requisite provision. That is one of the aspects that can be found out by experience, and dealt with in the next 12 months by way of an amendment to the Act.

There are a number of points relating to the collection of bottles which perhaps should be mentioned, although they are not wholly affected by this amending Bill. The branded bottles used in the cool drink trade are handled in a specific way to suit that trade. If I interpret the existing Act aright, every storekeeper who buys a bottle from a customer should have a licence under this Act. I do not think that anybody considers such a licence is necessary, but it appears to be the law. If it becomes necessary to effect an alteration, a further amending Bill might be required.

The cool drink companies assure me that the method which suits their trade best is that when they send a truck load of cool drinks to a store, they can pick up the same number of empty bottles. To do that, they have to make some arrangement whereby customers buying bottles of cool drink from a shop pay a deposit which is refunded by the store when the bottles are returned. The cool drink bottles, which are returned to them, go through the washing machines and are refilled. In hot weather this is very important.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: Would not this Bill cover cool drink bottles which are not branded?

Mr. JOHNSON: Even apart from this measure, they are still covered by the Act because a bottle is still a bottle.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: A branded bottle belongs to a particular person and he can collect his own bottles. You will be bringing them under the Act for the first time.

Mr. JOHNSON: That is not so. I think they have always been under the Act. Through the non-application of the Act, which has been the case up to date, no one without a marine collector's licence could collect a bottle, whether branded or not.

Mr. Manning: How about the small boys who go around collecting bottles?

Mr. JOHNSON: This amendment will not affect them any more than the Act, although the job done by the small boys is apparently ultra vires the Act. This legislation has been in existence for a long time, and is older than the boys, myself, and many other members of this House.

The fact that the proprietors of beer bottles have been taking steps to create a monopoly should induce members of this House to support the Bill. They have been using their power over marine collectors, the same power that was applied to Moysey to destroy his livelihood when he did not bow to their ruling, which was to ensure that all marine collectors dealt with them and them only. As I have indicated, they are prepared to withdraw their permit to collect and in at least one case have done so. The terms of the permit include an undertaking by the marine collector to deliver to their yard all bottles collected and not only the bottles bearing their brand, and there is no doubt they ensure that the marine collectors understand that the instruction means all bottles branded or otherwise.

There have been occasions on which they have refused to accept certain bottles, but those occasions have been very few. I have been told that if any marine collector is foolish enough to take along a peculiarly shaped bottle, he not only is paid nothing for it at the bottle yard, but the bottle is smashed, notwithstanding the brand. That, however, is purely hearsay. I fancy that the Coca-cola people would take appropriate legal action if it were reported to them. I mention that only for what it is worth; it was told me by people who said it had been done in their presence.

The major reason for introducing the Bill is to ensure that the attempt by this group to monopolise this trade and dominate the lives of small independent people shall not be successful. I know that I can depend upon the support of those members who have spoken in another debate dealing with monopolies, and I commend the Bill to the House feeling sure that it will be passed. If any member can suggest amendments that will achieve the objective I have indicated, I shall be only too happy to receive his co-operation. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Police, debate adjourned.

BILL—RETAILING OF MOTOR SPIRITS.

Second Reading.

MR. OLDFIELD (Maylands) [8.4] in moving the second reading said: The introduction of this Bill is due to certain activities in the oil industry, namely, those associated with the overbuilding of service stations. These activities, I believe, have been examined by most, if not all, members of the House, and have become a matter for concern with the general public, with local authorities and now with Parliament itself. The title of the measure is—

A Bill for an Act to provide for the establishment, promotion and protection of independent and competitive trading in the retailing of motor spirits.

This proposed legislation is aimed at creating a more competitive atmosphere in the wholesale petrol trade. It does not aim at destroying any normal trade practice or policy, but is designed more along the lines of combating any restraint of trade. It may be said that there is similar legislation before the Chamber at the present time, but in view of the position facing the retailers of motor spirits, it has been found expedient to introduce legislation to deal with this matter alone.

There are obvious signs of active competition between petrol retailers, but unfortunately the competition between wholesalers leaves much to be desired. More so today than ever before, the upsurge of petrol stations in the metropolitan area and country districts has increased competition amongst retailers, but the relationship of the wholesaler to the retailer is marked by many undesirable features, the main one being in the form of restraint of trade.

As a result of arrangements between the various oil companies, resellers have become, as it were, tied houses; that is, they are now bound to market only one brand of petrol, and this will continue unless legislation granting them release from this restraint of trade is accepted. I must stress the fact that this measure is not intended to be destructive towards the oil industry in any shape or form, but it is designed to ensure that there are not forced upon small business men conditions that allow them no real freedom in the operation of their business.

I shall explain the events leading up to the state of affairs that has necessitated the introduction of this Bill. The salient features are—

- (1) How the petrol retail trade became a tied industry in the first place.

- (2) Why the retailers today strenuously object to being forced to market under conditions imposed by the wholesale oil industry.
- (3) What other relief can retailers obtain except that granted by Parliament.
- (4) The anticipated position if the oil companies are forced by legislation to trade fairly and without restraint of trade between petrol resellers.

After having sold petrol to retailers who all operated what the trade knows as multiple stations until August, 1951, the major oil companies introduced what is known as one brand or single brand marketing. Prior to the introduction of this new marketing system, one or two of the major companies purchased a number of the best-situated and largest-selling retail establishments. They purchased these existing businesses through agents such as solicitors, etc., and so, for the first time in the petrol reselling history of Western Australia, became directly interested in the ownership of retail petrol establishments.

Following this, they and smaller companies endeavoured to sign up as many proprietors as possible to sell only their brand of motor spirits, lubricants, etc. Their reasons, as indicated to all petrol resellers and to the retailers' organisation, for introducing this one-brand scheme were mainly based on the fact that it would allow the wholesalers to distribute their products more economically. This intimation was also conveyed by means of circular to members of Parliament. In the official story to the daily Press, these reasons were mentioned, and throughout Australia single brand marketing was gradually introduced.

In this State the petrol retailers through their organisation decided not to oppose the introduction of the scheme as they were well aware that the companies, through their marketing policies, did not sell in the most economical manner. Unlike in most, if not all other Australian States, petrol retailers in Western Australia obtained very little concession to sell under this one-brand scheme. They mainly adopted it because the story of economical selling was featured. The companies indicated that this method of selling was successful in other parts of the world and would undoubtedly result in saving, not only to the oil companies, but also to the retailer and to the motorist consumer.

The petrol resellers are business men and they realised that the really economical method of distributing the spirit was for a tanker to pull into a bowser and off-load 1,000 or 1,500 gallons as against 200 or 300 gallons, and they

were prepared to favour any scheme that would reduce the cost to the motorist consumer.

Mr. Hearman: Did not the retailers accept the one-brand proposition?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes, they were prepared to accept it on the facts explained to them at the time. They signed up willingly with the companies, but I am showing that the reasons given for the one-brand policy at that time were not altogether factual. Within weeks or months of the trade adopting this solo-brand scheme, it became obvious that the economics were the last of the oil companies' worries in their fight for single-brand representation both through existing service stations and new service stations, which even then were starting to mushroom through the metropolitan area and in larger country centres. In the propaganda that was put forward, the companies indicated that this method of selling was successful in other parts of the world and would undoubtedly result in savings here, not only to the oil companies, but also to the retailers and to the consumers by reason of the reduction in the cost of distribution.

It is obvious that a tanker which off-loads 800 or 1,000 gallons in one operation must be able to operate more economically than that which goes from site to site, off-loading only 200 or 300 gallons at each place. Today the cost of distribution by tanker has been reduced but we must not forget that distribution from the depot to the retailer by tanker is only part of the distribution to the ultimate consumer, the motorist. The service station features largely in the distribution and re-selling of petrol, and service stations cost money to build. It costs much more to erect a modern service station than to purchase a tanker.

The Minister for Education: Some of the blocks cost a lot of money.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes, and it costs at least £15,000 for the erection of a modern service station and that, at 5 per cent., means an interest bill of £15 per week. I understand that the oil companies, like other large enterprises, operate on overdrafts and are therefore subject to an interest bill which must be met each quarter. They therefore must be recouped and the money can only be obtained in one way, from the lessee of the service station, who in turn can recoup himself only from the motorist who, in the ultimate, pays any added cost.

I claim that it is far more economical to have a few extra tankers engaged in delivering petrol from the depots to the resellers than it is to erect service stations at every suitable corner within the metropolitan area in an endeavour by each company to outsell its rivals. When we are

caught up in a war of the magnitude of that taking place between the major oil companies, the person most likely to be hurt is the little operator who may find five or six company-owned service stations erected around him, or the lessee of one of those company-owned service stations. They and the motoring public are the people who suffer. I have contended, and will always contend, that it is not an economic method of distribution to erect service stations unnecessarily as I believe the cost must ultimately be passed on to the consumer.

The Minister for Education: Do you think the price should be controlled?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Within a matter of months of the trade adopting the single-brand scheme, it became obvious that the companies had agreed on the single-brand service stations and that policy spread throughout the metropolitan area and into the larger country centres. As the battle for new positions went on, the fight for them and for the franchise of the existing sites became fiercer. Eventually the retailer was forced to realise that he was in the midst of a petrol war, in the course of which the wholesalers were battling to outdo each other in regard to the number of petrol outlets controlled by each.

Many retailers who were already operating in the multiple marketing days endeavoured to continue selling more than one brand of petrol and hoped, by doing so, to satisfy any company which was not established in its own right, within a given distance, with a one-brand service station. They hoped that that would remove the need for any new service stations in their vicinity. When that was first attempted, the retail petrol trade was forced to realise that the oil companies intended to keep the industry tied, even where the so-called one-brand agreements had expired or were non-existent.

No company other than that with which they were dealing would supply these service stations with either petrol or lubricants and they had no option but to keep selling the products of the company they had first dealt with on the solo-brand basis. If a reseller is not altogether happy with his wholesaler and wishes to change to another brand of petrol, the company marketing that other brand will not supply him. It says to him, "You are already marketing one brand of petrol and therefore we cannot supply you."

It has been stated to the retailers from time to time that no oil company will supply its products to a site that has been reselling another company's product unless it has been out of operation for a period of 12 months. I can appreciate the oil companies having adopted such a policy as they may have to deal with a disgruntled type of person, of whom there may be many in the petrol reselling business today and who might desire to cause unnecessary trouble

by changing wholesalers frequently. If that were allowed, it would involve the removing of equipment and the installing of alternative apparatus, thus causing unnecessary expense.

It is particularly important to note that many petrol retailers did not adopt the one-brand scheme voluntarily. They intended to keep selling a number of different products but, following the suggested agreement between the various oil companies, their case became hopeless because owing to their original type of pump agreement, the oil companies were in a position to give 30 days' notice of their intention to remove the equipment. Retailers who continued to sell a number of brands received the 30 days' notice and were left with only one company's pumps on the site and that forced them into one-brand marketing. There have been instances in the country areas of petrol retailers who refused to become one-brand stations and were penalised by the oil companies in regard to modern equipment and deliveries.

I understand that in some areas where they held out, electric pumps are being put in, but many country districts have been deprived of such equipment, owing to the refusal of the service stations to supply one brand of petrol only. I am speaking now largely of centres which would obviously support only one service station and where the operator elected to remain a multiple-brand station. It is interesting to note that in the metropolitan area there are two service stations which still supply more than one brand of petrol. Here I refer to the new car distributors—

Mr. Heal: How does that come about?

Mr. OLDFIELD: These two resellers are still permitted to market multiple brands. One of them has been given electric equipment and the other has been supplied with certain electrically-operated pumps only and still has some manually-operated pumps. For a very good reason, the oil companies are willing to allow multiple-brand marketing to continue in the case of the large car distributors which place new cars on the market, because when a motorist takes possession of a new car, he must have a certain quantity of petrol put in it.

It is a psychological fact that a motorist who starts off with a particular brand of petrol in his car—whether he has owned a vehicle previously or not makes no difference—tends to continue using that brand. That applies both to petrol and oil. He takes over his new car and there is a sticker placed on the windscreen, stating that after 250 miles he is to bring the vehicle back for servicing, for oil change and so on, and he generally sticks to the type of motor spirit and lubricant originally put into the vehicle by the people who sold it to him.

Mr. Cornell: Do you really think that is so?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes, and the oil companies believe in its psychological effect. As an obvious restraint of trade arrangement between the oil companies exists not only in Western Australia but also in the other States of the Commonwealth, legal opinion was obtained by the Federal Association of Service Station and Garage Proprietors, and the crux of the information given was that they had no legal redress whatever. They were tied to one company, even though an agreement did not exist or had expired, and they could be forced out of business by the oil companies refusing to supply them, if that was the whim of the wholesale industry.

I have here a copy of the legal opinion obtained, and I ask members particularly to note that the retailer has no legal redress and cannot seek relief in the court from the arrangement between the wholesalers which forces the retailer to buy from one company only. The first question asked was: "What is the effect of the two agreements produced?" They were agreements between oil company and reseller and had been produced for legal opinion. The second question was—

Can the garage owner force the petrol company with which it has entered into the agreement to supply it with all brands of petrol which he may require for the purpose of resale or can the petrol company insist upon the garage proprietor supplying no petrol to anyone except petrol of its own make?

The legal opinion was—

The answer to this question must obviously depend upon the text of the agreement in question. I shall accordingly deal separately with the two annexed agreements.

So we come to the further question—

2A. On the expiry of the present agreement, if the garage owner refuses to renew the agreement or extend the term of the agreement and the company with which he is now dealing thereupon refuses to supply him with petrol, has he any remedy against such company to compel it to supply him?

2B. If on the expiry of the agreement the garage proprietor refuses to renew it and the other companies thereupon refuse to supply him with their petrol on the ground that he has become a one brand station, does this operate in restraint of trade, and has he any right to force the other companies to supply him with petrol.

The legal opinion goes on—

At the back of these two questions there looms rather largely a strong suspicion that there is some agreement between the petrol companies, that on the expiry of the present agreements they will act in the manner suggested by these two questions.

I have not before me sufficient facts to be able to assert that such an agreement does exist, but apparently there are strong grounds for suspicion that it does.

That was counsel's opinion and the answers to the queries raised were—

In my opinion, therefore, I must answer questions 2A and 2B by saying that there would be no remedy in law available to the garage proprietor. If the suspected agreement between the petrol companies could be proved I feel impelled to say that it reveals an extraordinary absence of commercial fairplay and commercial morality and it is somewhat surprising to find that it is beyond the reach of any legal remedy. I feel that if such an agreement exists it is a very proper case for legislative interference and that in all probability the best approach by legislative means would be to have a system of licensing by which petrol companies must obtain licences on certain conditions and the conditions to be imposed should be such as would ensure that any legitimate trader who is ready and willing to purchase at the ordinary price must be supplied otherwise the licence to the petrol company shall be revoked.

That was counsel's opinion as to the remedy open to the resellers who found themselves in a predicament, one into which many of them had been pushed.

Mr. Jamieson: Why your sudden interest in the reseller's point of view. In 1953 you were not too interested in their welfare.

Mr. OLDFIELD: In 1953 they were not too interested in my welfare, or in the welfare of the then member for Canning. The present member for Canning can feel quite happy in the knowledge that he had the petrol resellers on his side in February, 1953.

Mr. Jamieson: I am not denying that. I simply asked you a question.

Mr. OLDFIELD: If the member for Canning asks stupid questions he should not expect an answer. He asked me why I am so interested in this matter. It is obvious that the petrol resellers, who so ably helped the member for Canning to become a member of this Chamber, do not have much confidence in the hon. member because they have not asked him to handle this matter for them.

Mr. Jamieson: That is the sort of answer I would expect from you.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I might also ask, "Why the sudden interest in any particular legislation which a member may introduce from time to time?" One could ask why has the member for Leederville suddenly taken an interest in the Marine Stores Act? It is because from time to time cases of injustice are brought to our notice

and we are asked, by those to whom we are responsible—because, after all, they elected us—to take on a job, and we do it.

Mr. Jamieson. The trading hours are in the interest of the resellers.

Mr. OLDFIELD: We are not dealing with trading hours; they are not mentioned in the Bill. I am not endeavouring to deprive the public of a service that it obviously wants. The public demands the present trading hours; if that were not so the service station proprietors would close earlier. But they remain open because the motorists demand that service.

Mr. Jamieson: Economic circumstances rather than the motorists' welfare.

Mr. OLDFIELD: There is no mention of trading hours in the Bill, so we will not discuss them.

Hon. L. Thorn: The present Government promised to rectify trading hours but did nothing about it.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Members must keep order.

Hon. L. Thorn: He is worried about this by-election.

Mr. OLDFIELD: I might mention in passing, as the matter of hours has been raised, that I would say those trading hours are here to stay because the garage proprietors realise that the public wants those hours and they realise also that the motorists must be considered.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the member for Maylands had better get back to the Bill.

Mr. OLDFIELD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. After examining that legal opinion we find that the fact that the petrol retailer is forced to sell only one brand of petrol is undoubtedly against the best interests of competitive trading among wholesalers and retailers and is in direct contradiction to what the oil companies told the petrol retailers and their organisation on the introduction of this scheme in 1951.

I should like to quote some of the statements made at that time and members will note that they all tend to give the retailer the impression that one-brand marketing would be voluntary and that the retailers would be permitted to return to multiple marketing at any time in the future, if they so desired. I have a letter from one of the major oil companies, dated the 21st August, 1951, six days after the commencement of the present scheme. The letter mentions the name of the company and goes on to say—

... has no desire or intention of acquiring, controlling, or operating service stations. We believe in the principle of stations being owned and operated by independent businessmen.

That is an extract from a letter written by one of the major oil companies and one

which has taken a major part in erecting service stations on its own behalf. Further on the letter states—

We propose to arrange for those resellers who have been wanting to sell ... only, to remove surplus pumps and modernise their stations. There will be no coercion—whatever action they decide to take will be entirely voluntary.

Then a little further down the letter states—

Solo operation would not interfere with the reseller outlet policy. Actually it would strengthen it because no company would open up new outlets to compete with existing stations which are concentrating on that company's products. There will be plenty of room for all companies to retain their share of the motor spirit market as there are 11,000 resellers in Australia, of which thousands will probably continue as multiple stations for years.

Mr. Heal: What company was that?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Unfortunately, we are not supposed to advertise in this House, so I will refrain from mentioning the products concerned. But these letters are available for members to peruse if they so desire. Here is another letter, dated the 3rd September, 1951, from the same company. Part of it reads—

Regarding the question of supplying multiple brand stations, this company has no plans to withdraw its pumps from such stations, and will continue to supply them with our petrol, as long as this does not result in uneconomical distribution. We also reaffirm that this company's proposals for single brand stations refers to petrol only, and we will continue to supply our motor lubricants to all resellers.

It is true, as that extract says, that this company will today supply its motor lubricants to a station reselling another company's motor spirit. But the reseller is unable to take advantage of it because he is bound by his agreement to the company supplying him with motor spirit; that company will not allow him to market another company's lubricants. So the scheme falls down. This company, which is willing to supply its lubricants to a reseller who is selling another brand of motor spirit, will not allow a competitor's lubricants to be sold by resellers selling that company's motor spirit.

Here is another letter from one of the major oil companies showing a statement which had been released to the Press. It states—

... will continue to supply products to multiple stations and is not giving an exclusive franchise area to any

dealers. He went on to say that some companies . . . lubritorium accounts and other accounts had been pressed by other companies to sign solo agreements with them, but rather than do so they had requested . . . assurance to supply their total requirements, and this the company will do.

Here is a further letter dated 21st August, 1951, and signed by four different oil companies. It is a combined letter setting out the retail outlet policy and it states—

1. We will continue to supply independent resellers.

That was on the multiple basis. Then we come to what is probably one of the largest if not the largest wholesaler in the Commonwealth. It is a statement to the W.A. Automobile Chamber of Commerce and made by the general manager in Western Australia of the company in question. He states—

I would like to repeat that . . . dealers, as we will call resellers agreeing to sell . . . petroleum products exclusively, will remain in every way entirely free and independent businessmen, able to make up their own minds on how to run or build their own businesses. We want to keep it that way.

Here is a further circular from the same company—

Resellers to whom the . . . franchise will be offered will remain in every way free and independent businessmen, entitled to make their own decisions about their own business and the way in which they run it.

I have many more letters and circulars which go on in the same strain. I do not want to weary members but they are here if members would like to read them at any time. A perusal of the statements proves that the oil companies did not tell the petrol resellers, either individually or collectively, that one-brand marketing was to be ultimately a tied-house scheme with no freedom to change the supplier after the contract had expired or even though a contract was never in existence.

Incidentally, the agreement between the companies that they will not supply each other's one-brand service stations has been tested in this State and in both cases the companies have refused to supply either lubricating oils or petrol to the proprietors asking for supplies. In one of the two cases the proprietor owns his own petrol pump and underground equipment.

I have here a letter from one of the major oil companies addressed to Messrs. Ryan's Garage, cnr. Scarborough Beach-rd. and Shakespeare-st., Mt. Hawthorn, and dated the 19th July, 1954. It states—

We are in receipt of your letter of the 12th instant enclosing an order for . . . motor spirit and various lubricants

and your cheque for the sum of £88 12s. 6d. drawn on the Bank of New South Wales, Mt. Hawthorn, bearing date the 13th instant and numbered 248025. The order is not accepted by us and accordingly we return same herewith together with your cheque referred to above.

Mr. Hearman: Was that order for 4-gallon tins?

Mr. OLDFIELD: I can see that the hon. member intends to doubt the veracity of some of the statements. This is the order sent to the oil company in question:—

	£	s.	d.
500 gallons—motor spirit			
@ 2/11½ per gallon	74	9	7
2 x 4 gallons—motor oil			
30 @ 10/1½ per gallon	4	0	10
2 x 4 gallons—motor oil			
40 @ 10/1½ per gallon	4	0	10
4 x 1 gallons—motor oil			
30 @ 11/7½ per gallon	2	6	6
4 x 1 gallons—motor oil			
40 @ 11/7½ per gallon	2	6	6
4 x ½ gallons—motor oil			
20 @ 14/1½ per gallon	14	1½	
4 x ½ gallons—motor oil			
30 @ 14/1½ per gallon	14	1½	
	88	12	6

That order was not accepted by the oil company concerned. I would like to read a letter addressed from another major oil company to Messrs. Manolas Bros., Adelphia Service Station and Garage, Claremont. It is dated the 8th July, 1954, and reads as follows:—

We have for acknowledgment your letter of the 7th July wherein you have ordered a supply of ——— motor oil in 1-gallon tins, and enclosed cheque for £10 9s. 3d.

That is not for petrol but for lubricants. The letter continues—

Under the terms of our trading policy, the sale of ——— motor oils is restricted to dealers, and under these circumstances it is regretted that we cannot make supplies available to you.

That is surely proof that an arrangement does exist in regard to restrained supplies to retailers within the wholesale industry. That brings us to the second point which is that the retailers object to the present arrangement. I would like members to appreciate the fact that there are a number of ways of tackling this problem of restraint of trade which is undoubtedly interwoven with the overbuilding of service stations and so on. There is a Bill before the House now

dealing with restraint of trade but certain things in that Bill are contingent upon proving restraint of trade which would be hard to do in the circumstances.

When the petrol sellers realised that the oil companies were undoubtedly attempting to control the retail trade, their first reaction was to strive for government intervention. Members will recall in regard to the licensing of service stations, which was mentioned at one stage, and also the licensing of oil companies, that last year the organised retail trade through its association, the Western Australian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, placed a petition in the hands of the Premier, the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the Country Party.

That petition was signed by 95 per cent. of the petrol resellers then in business in the metropolitan area. With that petition they presented a case for the licensing of petrol, reselling sites and wholesale oil company suppliers. At the conclusion of their case, they again mentioned that the question of restraint of trade in the industry was of equally deep concern as was the actual building of new service stations; and without prejudice to their case they said—

Was it not fair to grant retailers relief from a monopoly already in existence and legislate to the effect that any oil company operating must supply any retailer under normal circumstances with the commodity they vend.

Those words were taken from the conclusion of that petition. They asked for this legislation even if there was opposition to the licensing scheme. I for one believe that members on both sides of the House will agree that the policy of solo brand marketing should be broken because of what has happened, particularly when it has the effect of allowing wholesalers to decide the future of any individual retailer. We are confronted from time to time with publicity from these people and even the petroleum information bureau tells us that this overbuilding of service stations is normal and that it is reasonable to keep retailers tied to one brand because they do it in other parts of the world.

Perhaps we should consider what the oil companies think about their present activities. For instance, late in 1951 the Western Australian Automobile Chamber of Commerce wrote to the managers of the major oil companies asking them to assist in any way possible towards restoring a little sanity in the petrol trade. It will be noted in both the following letters that the top executives of the two companies from whom the letters come expressed the hope that market stability would be restored.

The first letter is dated the 27th December, 1951, and reads as follows:—

Our managing director ——— is away from the office on a short annual vacation but I have made him aware of the general outline of your letter of the 19th December, and, in reply, I can assure you on his behalf that we have already taken steps which we confidently anticipate will help to bring the complicated situation in Perth to a satisfactory conclusion. The lines on which we are working are, in general, not dissimilar to those outlined in your letter.

You may rely on our support in your efforts to discover a satisfactory solution to the difficult situation which has arisen.

In harmony with your closing paragraph, I can assure you that we also are anxious to see market stability restored both on the wholesale and retail side in the sphere of influence of your association.

There is another letter from a major company, also addressed to the president of the same association, the final paragraph of which reads—

It is hoped that at an early date some formula will have been worked out that will contribute to the restoration of stability in the retail trade in Western Australia.

At this stage even the oil companies themselves realised that stability was not in existence, and we have gone from there to a worse position. When there is no stability in existence it is bad enough in itself. As late as March, 1955, the Western Australian manager wrote out a preface to a sales bulletin which goes to all dealers. In it he stated—

I think I may have told you . . . on one or two occasions that my policy has been to endeavour to hold the market which we enjoy per medium of a greater efficiency and a better service on all existing sites. I told you that I hoped by this means to set an example to the rest of the industry and to convince those concerned that successful marketing did not necessarily depend on the opening of a multiplicity of sites with consequent disturbance to the retail trade.

I am under heavy pressure at the moment to hold our position, and while this is undoubtedly due in large measure to the very large number of new sites which have commenced operations, I feel that more could have been achieved if a greater number of ——— dealers gave the standard of service which the motoring public are being educated to expect. If this had been done, gallonage losses at individual stations due to the onset of

new site competition would have been far less serious than they are in some cases and a wholesome corrective would have been supplied to some ambitious companies per medium of a scanty reward on their capital investments.

It concludes—

I am still anxious to hold new site development to an absolute minimum in the hope that this policy may receive general endorsement by the wholesale industry, but I can only do this if, by our joint efforts, we can hold or improve station gallonages.

An extract from the bulletin reads—

We know that there are factors outside your control. New site development, after-hour trading, etc., must be a pain in the neck to you. However, it's not much use crying over spilt milk, and we can only hope that in these respects sanity will soon return to the industry—especially, we point out, to our competitors.

That statement of the position is from the managing director of a major oil company in this State to his own dealers. It shows that in December, 1951, they realised that the position had got out of hand and that no stability existed in the trade. In March of this year they were still hoping to see sanity return to the trade. I would like to draw a comparison between the average Australian's idea of fair play and what goes on in this industry today. I believe that if we were confronted with any other type of retailer, such as grocers, storekeepers, chemists, hairdressers or butchers, who approached us and said: "We are being dominated by our wholesalers, our purchasing avenues are being restricted and we are being forced to buy from one company only without any freedom of choice," we would all take immediate action. As a matter of fact, members on both sides of the House have signified their intention of supporting another measure which is aimed at doing just that.

I ask whether this industry is any different from the normal retailer. If it is, there is no need for this legislation. But if the reseller of petrol is to be given the same consideration as the retailer of jam, meat or bread, then this legislation is required. Further verification of the fact that the retail trade should be granted this legislation to relieve it of tied-house marketing, can be found in many other countries of the world where retailers are obviously unhappy with the marketing arrangements enforced by the world's major oil companies.

Let us look at the United States of America and see what is happening there at the moment. At present in the United States there is a small business committee

from the House of Representatives investigating the monopolistic practices by major oil companies towards service station operators in that country. Reliable figures show that 60,000 petrol stations in the United States out of 130,000 change hands every year. That represents more than one-third of the petrol stations. It is evident, therefore, that there is something drastically wrong with the supplier and lessee position in that country.

I would like to quote from the "National Congress of Petroleum Retailers." It is an official bulletin dated the 19th April, 1955, and reads as follows:—

These hearings began March 28 with testimony from dealer witnesses as to unfair, destructive or monopolistic practices to which they had been subjected by their supplying companies. It was followed by testimony by M.C.P.R. officers and counsel showing the extent to which instances of lease cancellation, T.B.A. pressure and price discrimination cited by the individual dealer witnesses are characteristic examples of general patterns of supplier domination which plague the industry.

The testimony covered not only lease cancellations and price discrimination practices but also commission stations, company operation, price leadership practices and other devices by which suppliers fix and control both retail and wholesale prices of gasoline and compel dealer compliance with the dictated prices.

Dealing with the evidence submitted, there is a letter to the secretary of the Western Australian Automobile Chamber of Commerce from the secretary of the N.C.P.R. The letter reads, in part—

We have read this article with interest and note the similarity of the problem now facing Western Australia with the problem which has been prevalent here in the United States for a number of years. For your information we are enclosing herewith a copy of testimony presented by Mr. Cash B. Hawley, Second Vice President of National Congress of Petroleum Retailers, before the Small Business Committee of the United States House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., on May 28th, 1955.

Page 1 of the testimony referred to contains the following:—

Spokesmen for the major integrated oil companies are very eloquent in condemning government interference in business and government interference with the law of supply and demand as an infringement of the American system of free enterprise. What has disturbed me through the years is that these companies do not live up

to their own statements. While verbally praising free enterprise, and insisting on non-interference by government in business and in the supply-demand relationships of the market place, they have been and are at the same time engaged in crushing free enterprise in the retail petroleum business through various forms of supplier interference with the laws of supply and demand in the retail distribution of gasoline.

Further evidence placed before the committee was as follows:—

These five supply-demand interferences which foster destructive over-competition and reduce retailers' margins below the level which would be fixed in the market place in the absence of such interference, are an important reason for the failure and quitting of business of some 60,000 service station operators every year.

That is the effect of one-brand marketing in America, which prompted the American Congress to investigate the position. According to a further letter from the secretary of the N.C.P.R. dated the 11th July, 1955—

On June 29, Chairman James Roosevelt made an important statement in Congress summarising what our evidence had shown and calling for remedial legislation as recommended by N.C.P.R. to strengthen Section 3 of the Clayton Act to effectively prevent T.B.A. pressure and give lease protection, and also strengthening Section 4 of the Clayton Act to assist private suits against monopolistic practices.

Mr. Roosevelt reviewed the evidence presented at the committee hearings showing that retail gasoline dealers are deprived of basic rights under the anti-trust laws through lease domination, price discrimination and various other practices leading to monopoly.

Such evidence as has been received by the sub-committee calls for immediate and effective action, Chairman Roosevelt declared.

That brings me to a consideration of what relief can be obtained for these people. I have read the legal opinion of an eminent Q.C. in South Australia, which has been verified by legal advisers in this State. It is clear that the petrol retailers can obtain no relief under the present laws in connection with the refusal of supplies and restraint of trade between wholesalers and retailers.

I will mention, in passing, that the Conservative Government in New Zealand, with the support of the Labour Opposition introduced what is known as the Motor Spirit Distribution Bill which sets out to encourage free and competitive trade. But that legislation contains certain unsatisfactory features—(a) it licenses both

wholesaler and retailer; and (b) it controls the industry wholly and solely. In other words, it sets up a licensing board; and before any person can enter the trade, before he can build a service station, he must first obtain a licence. The basis is similar to that which exists in connection with the hotel trade in this State and in other States as well. I agree that with regard to liquor there must be some control; but I consider that so far as service stations are concerned, it is possible to have freedom and normal business practice.

Of course, I have no intention of trying to introduce legislation along the lines of the New Zealand measure, because I feel it is a little too restrictive and works both ways. It restricts the wholesaler and the retailer; and all it does is to allow the retailer to market multiple brands of petrol. It also interferes with freedom of enterprise, in that it debars the wholesaler from any financial interest in a service station or a petrol-reselling outfit.

Members have had time to study my Bill, in which there are only two small operative clauses. The measure is far simpler than the New Zealand legislation, and is directed against the wholesaler who blatantly refuses to a service-station proprietor the right to buy its product, while at the same time telling the public that it is necessary to build service stations to sell that product.

I think that it was last year that the South Australian Government decided to introduce legislation to control in that State a situation similar to that with which we are faced today. The oil companies were told that legislation was proposed, and they suggested that there was no need for any such measure because they would undertake not to build any more service stations for two years. I understand that promise was not kept, and that the Government intends to proceed with its legislation. It has been mooted in other States, too; and on the 25th August, 1955, there was an article in the "Examiner," a paper published in Launceston, Tasmania, to the effect that if the State Government was not satisfied with the oil companies' scheme, a parliamentary inquiry would be recommended to caucus. The oil companies had drawn up a plan to meet the situation created by the erection of large numbers of petrol stations throughout Tasmania. The Attorney General, Mr. Fagan, said that the companies' proposals would be submitted within a few weeks, and if the Government were not satisfied with what was proposed by them, legislation would be introduced to control the industry.

We find that much the same thing has happened in South Africa. I do not propose to read the letter which I have on the subject, but members can peruse it if they desire. It is from the national secretary

of the South African Motor Trade Association, and is dated the 26th May, 1955. It must be borne in mind that one-brand marketing made its introduction in South Africa at approximately the same time as it appeared in Western Australia, and South Africa has been faced with a state of affairs similar to ours. The letter mentions that 1,450 new stations have been erected in the last four and a half years, and protective legislation is being sought.

If this Bill is passed, the oil companies will not be forced to spend funds on the provision of equipment. But they will commit an offence if they refuse to supply a legitimate reseller with their product. The second provision of the Bill makes it unlawful for an oil company to enter into an agreement with any reseller under which he is given any consideration or reward on the condition that he markets only one brand of petrol. Any other conditions can be imposed, but nobody can be tied to one-brand marketing. That will enable a service-station owner who wishes to change his wholesaler to do so, and it will permit a retailer to market more than one brand of spirit.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: What about his pumps.

Mr. OLDFIELD: There is no provision in the Bill regarding pumps. It will be incumbent upon the reseller to provide himself with equipment. For £350, underground equipment and a pump can be installed, and that is not a lot of money when we consider the amount of gallonage involved. The man who sells ice cream has to provide £1,000 worth of refrigeration, and any person reselling a product is expected to provide the necessary equipment. It is not intended, by this measure, to dictate to the oil companies what they shall do. The New Zealand measure makes it mandatory for a company to install a pump on application from the licensed reseller. That is not the case with this Bill. It is not proposed to interfere with the freedom that exists, but the Bill will prevent unfair conditions being imposed upon resellers.

It is an unfair condition when a person builds a service station, markets "X" brand of motor spirit but cannot market "Y" brand, whereupon the "Y" brand distributor puts up a station and takes away half of the trade of the service-station owner. If the service-station owner were permitted to put in pumps for the "Y" brand, he would be able to retain all the gallonage, but would split it between the two companies.

We must not lose sight of the fact that six major oil companies are operating in Western Australia. There are nine in Sydney and nine in Victoria. It is to be expected that the other three will make their entrance to the Western Australian market in the near future. A company has placed its product on the market

within the last 15 months and has captured a fair gallonage, and there is a market for the other three companies. Are we to have this occur: when they come to this State and erect stations on suitable sites—assuming there will be any left!—or tear down shops and replace them with service stations and when they establish themselves, the companies in existence will come along and put in a couple of stations alongside to outdo them?

One company has stated that it will build one station in every three; that for every two stations established by competitors, it will build another. That will continue; it has been stated by the company as its policy. It must do that to hold the gallonage. The company is not interested in the gallonage going through individual service stations, but the gallonage going through the depot—the State-wide figures. That is what the company has to show to the head office in Melbourne, and the head office, in turn, has to show the Australian gallonage to its principals in America or England, as the case may be. They are concerned about the Australian market as a whole; they are not concerned about how many outlets are required.

At the outset I explained that it is much more economical to put a bowser on an existing site than to erect a new service station. The distribution by tanker to the site may be a little more expensive, but we cannot have it all ways. Let us be frank. We all know that thousands of pounds have been paid for vacant blocks of land, and we know that building leases have been entered into. In Beaufort-st., Inglewood, on a block of land which cannot be sold—it belongs to an estate—a 15-year lease has been entered into, and under that lease buildings to the value of £20,000 have been erected. This means that more than £1,000 a year has to be written off because it is dead money as far as the company is concerned. To that amount we can add the interest, and this means that a sum in excess of £40 a week has to be met.

Mr. May: Who pays that?

Mr. OLDFIELD: Ultimately, the motorist must. This service station is doing a gallonage of about 8,000 a month. At the time the service station was erected, the profit margin was £15 per 1,000 gallons, but today it is £20. Giving the lessee the margin of £20 on the petrol he retails, it means that the whole of his margin goes in rent, and all that is left to him is what he can make out of accessories, lubricants and the lubritorium. But actually what is happening is that the lessee does not pay £40 a week rent, but £25. The oil company might possibly be saving £1 or £2 a week in distribution to that site, but the remaining £13 or £14 has to be made up.

The executives of the oil companies are amongst the shrewdest business brains of the world, and they ultimately pass the cost on to the consumer—the motorist. So, whichever way we look at it, under the policy which obtains today, any saving resulting from the fewer tankers required on the road, and the bigger drops at the site, is far more than offset by the provision of these extra outlets. Recently, it was necessary for the Government to accede to a request by the local authorities to impose a restriction on the erection of service stations, by amending a regulation under the Road Districts Act to restrict them to each half-mile. I was a member of the Bayswater Road Board at the time, and I had to agree with the sentiments that actuated the members of the board in joining with the other authorities to ask for that regulation.

But I must also say that that, in itself, is a restriction upon enterprise which we do not really want. We do not want to restrict it. If a corner can stand two service stations, let us have them. If someone wishes to erect a service station where four are already in existence, let him take the risk of going broke; that is his responsibility, and it is competition. But we want to do away with the need of the oil companies to keep on erecting service stations to match their competitors; and out-build their competitors, if possible.

We want to return to the days when, if a service station was in a popular position, and doing a gallonage of 20,000 or 30,000 a month, or even only 10,000 a month, each and every company could be represented on it. We would then have the position of one service station marketing six brands so that it would be doing, say, 6,000 gallons a month—1,000 of each brand—which would be far better than having six service stations each doing 1,000 gallons a month; and that is the position we are fast arriving at. Members realise it, and so does the trade, and the resellers are most conscious of it.

Naturally enough, they are fearful for the future because not only is their livelihood at stake but their life's savings are bound up in the enterprise which they have undertaken. They are deserving of some form of protection at this juncture. So I suggest that all members, at their convenience, check the truth of the statements I have made tonight. They can also check with their own resellers, the veracity of the arguments I have put forward; they can make a few inquiries and see what the position is. If they do that, I have no hesitation in saying that each and every member of this Chamber will be in agreement with this measure.

Mr. Court: Is the Bill meant to have retrospective effect?

Mr. OLDFIELD: No. There is no retrospective effect, and there is no repudiation because it does not repudiate any existing

agreement. Any person who has in the past signed an agreement has done so with his eyes open, and any such agreement will have to live out its full time. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by the Minister for Labour, debate adjourned.

BILL—BANK HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st September.

HON. L. THORN (Toodyay) [9.22]: When introducing this measure, the member for Leederville stated that it was the policy of the Bank Officers' Association to have a five-day week, but where does the public come in? Are not members of the public entitled to consideration? The banking service in our different States is essential to the trading public and in the other States of Australia no move has been made to introduce legislation of this nature. In Queensland and New South Wales where there are Labour Governments—and in Victoria, where until recently there was a Labour Government—no move has been made to introduce measures of this kind.

Mr. Brady: What about Tasmania?

Hon. L. THORN: I believe it operates there.

Mr. Moir: We do not always approve of what other Governments do.

Hon. L. THORN: I am surprised that the Labour Party in Western Australia is so anxious to introduce this legislation.

Hon. A. F. Watts: I wonder if it is.

Hon. L. THORN: On the last occasion when the member for Leederville introduced such a Bill—

Mr. Johnson: You are blowing hot and cold.

Hon. L. THORN: I will have the hon. member blowing before I have finished. He seems anxious, yet the Leader of the Opposition says he is not. On the last occasion when such legislation was introduced it was defeated at the second reading and the Labour Party instructed the member for Leederville not to call for a division.

Mr. Johnson: That is a lot of rot.

Hon. L. THORN: It is not.

Mr. Johnson: It is, and I should know.

Hon. L. THORN: The hon. member is a judge of rot because he talks so much of it. I doubt whether his party is sincere in its efforts to get this legislation

on the statute book because, if it had been, it would have called for a division, which it did not do. I believe it was smarting from a previous occasion when some bank officers and others associated with the banks opposed so strongly the Labour Party's policy on the nationalisation of banking. The Labour Party has not got over that. The banks render an essential service to the public and it is necessary that it be rendered on Saturday mornings when trade is in full swing and business people and others require banking facilities.

If the Bill were agreed to, most of our businesses would have to draw on Fridays all the money required for change and other purposes on Saturdays and would have to run the risk of holding it overnight. That is too big a risk to ask them to take. If Labour is sincere in regard to the five-day week, why not go the whole hog? But no! They want the publicans to keep their premises open till 9 p.m. on Saturdays—I daresay most people do—and they want the trams and buses running over the week-ends so that they can travel to their sport. They are working seven days per week for the convenience of the public.

Mr. Lapham: The operators are working only five days.

Hon. L. THORN: Then let the banks increase their staff and do the same thing. I am arguing in the interests of the trading public who require these facilities on Saturday mornings. After all, the banks are open for only two hours on Saturday mornings.

Mr. Bovell: For 1½ hours.

Hon. L. THORN: I recollect that my bank opens at 9.30 a.m. and closes at 11 and works as far as possible with a skeleton staff. I wish the member for South Fremantle were here, because we ask our lumpers to work over the week-end—

Mr. Brady: Surely you do not compare them with bankers!

Hon. L. THORN: According to the member for South Fremantle, they are of high standing and are fine workers.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: He is right.

[Mr. J. Hegney took the Chair.]

Mr. Brady: They are two different classes of work.

Hon. L. THORN: I thought the hon. member was comparing the lumpers with the bankers.

Mr. Brady: They are good men.

Hon. L. THORN: Of course they are.

Mr. Brady: You were glad to work with them at one time.

Hon. L. THORN: What about our railwaymen, bus drivers and power house staff? What would we do if the power

house employees did not work and provide us with power over the week-end? The same applies to our bakers, our retail shops and our Police Force.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: Do not forget the publications.

Hon. L. THORN: Yes, they work day and night, seven days a week.

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Like the policemen, always on duty.

Hon. L. THORN: Yes, I remember having a few words to say on a similar Bill in 1952. At that time I quoted a letter from the Chamber of Commerce and this is what was stated in that letter—

Bank Holidays Act Amendment Bill.

Members of the Perth Chamber have asked that the following views be presented to you in opposition to the above Bill, introduced by Mr. S. E. I. Johnson, which is at present before Parliament.

Saturday is not a general holiday in Western Australia and there is a legitimate and real public need to be met by the banks on that day. It would not be desirable to legislate for the closure of the banks on Saturday mornings, whilst ordinary trade is still being carried on. It is considered that whilst ordinary trading is conducted on a Saturday morning, the commercial community, retailers and the public, are entitled to expect banking facilities to be made available to them, especially with respect to change, deposits and withdrawals.

Retailers and others would be called upon to hold large sums of cash over every week-end if the banks were to be closed on Saturday mornings, and this may encourage theft and lead to substantial losses.

The closing of the Commonwealth Savings Bank would be detrimental to the public, who will not have facilities to make deposits of their wages and savings on Saturday mornings.

In view of the difficult economic situation at present and the need for greater effort on the part of the whole community, the members of the Chamber of Commerce trust that the Government will oppose and defeat the amending Bill.

Here is a further letter from the Chamber of Commerce—

Bank Holidays Act Amendment Bill.

Further to my letter of 1st instant, the Fire & Accident Underwriters' Association have written to my Chamber concerning a statement by Mr. Johnson, when he introduced the above Bill. A press report states that the insurance offices enjoy a similar privilege, namely, Saturday morning closing.

The association advises that this statement is totally incorrect and would like to have the statement refuted. In confirmation of this I herewith enclose a copy of the association's letter.

And here is the association's letter—

Bank Holidays Act Amendment Bill.

In introducing the above Bill (which provides for the closing of banks on Saturdays) in the Legislative Assembly on the 24th ult., Mr. Johnson (Labour, Leederville) is alleged to have stated that this was a privilege enjoyed by insurance offices. Notice to this effect appeared in the Press report the following morning but, as you are aware, is totally incorrect. My committee, therefore, hope that should an opportunity present itself, your organisation will see that the statement is refuted in the proper quarter.

That is the opinion of the Chamber of Commerce, which is vitally interested in the commercial life of this country. I repeat that banking is a most important service to the community from the point of view of trade and commerce, as well as the general public.

Mr. Johnson: If it is that important, it should be a lot better paid.

Hon. L. THORN: I will not argue against that; perhaps the hon. member could attend to that. In the business centre of Midland Junction, which I know well, there are men from the Main Roads Department, the Public Works Department, pipeline workers and many others. These people come into Midland Junction on a Friday night, and members would be astounded at the number of cheques that are cashed there over the week-end. It is necessary for the hotels and other businesses to have these banking facilities on Saturday mornings so that they can obtain their change and do their final banking before the banks close for the week-end. If the member for Leederville could make other arrangements in regard to bank officers' salaries, it would be a different matter.

I think these people render a service to the community—an essential one—and it should not be taken from the public on Saturday mornings. I know that workers in many industries are enjoying a five-day week and I would have no objection to giving the privilege to bank officers; but there is a real necessity for banks to remain open on Saturday mornings in order to render an essential service. I wonder what effect this legislation would have on the Commonwealth Bank. I do not think that institution is subject to State legislation but I suppose, if this measure were passed, it would, by agreement with the Bank Officers' Association, make arrangements to close in the same way as the trading banks. But, as I have pointed out, the Commonwealth Bank is a savings bank

and, as such, renders a service to small depositors. It is in their interests that that bank should remain open on Saturday mornings and, as a result, I oppose the second reading of this Bill.

MR. BRADY (Guildford-Midland) [9.37]: I was not keen to speak on this measure as the hon. member who introduced it is quite capable of replying to the debate. But as the member for Tooday referred to Midland Junction, I think that I, as the member for Guildford-Midland, should tell the hon. member exactly what workers in Midland Junction believe.

Hon. L. Thorn: If you do not agree with me, then you do not know much about it.

Mr. BRADY: I know that the hon. member has put up a weak case. He mentioned that the Eastern States did not have this legislation but he was careful not to mention the fact that Hobart has not, for a considerable time, had banking facilities on Saturday mornings. The businessmen of that city would spend thousands of pounds in order to retain the five-day week. On Friday night the whole of the business community in Hobart closes down and no shops open until Monday morning. I have not heard of any dislocation of trade in Tasmania as a result. As a matter of fact, most of the businessmen would not want to revert to the old conditions.

Hon. A. V. R. Abbott: In what parts of Tasmania does that apply?

Mr. BRADY: Particularly in Hobart. It was in operation when I was there in March. It was not possible to buy anything at any shop or go into any bank on a Saturday morning.

Mr. Court: I have heard that Launceston will not have a bar of it.

Mr. BRADY: I am not talking about Launceston; I am talking about Hobart. The closing on Saturdays has not disrupted commerce in Tasmania, and I have not heard of any businesses closing down as a result of no Saturday trading. As a matter of fact, the biggest chocolate manufacturer in the southern hemisphere is in business in Hobart and is quite happy to remain there. So if all these supposed disabilities arise as a consequence of banks closing on Saturday morning, all Hobart's business would probably have been transferred to the mainland or to Launceston, as suggested by the hon. member. Surely that cannot be taken seriously.

Hon. L. Thorn: Tell us some more about Hobart.

Mr. BRADY: I do not want to talk about Hobart, but perhaps I will refer again to Midland Junction, as the hon. member wants me to do. The fact remains that the banks in Midland Junction are open only for one and a half hours and it is ridiculous for the member for

Toodyay to suggest that all the shopkeepers and the workers flock into town on Saturday morning to do their banking. The truth is, of course, that the hon. member could count on the fingers of one hand the people that do their banking business on a Saturday morning.

At about 11 a.m. today I was arranging, for many weeks ahead, banking facilities for a new Australian bricklayer who intends to do all his business from 100 miles distant from the bank. He has no intention of going to Midland Junction every Saturday morning to carry out his banking. With the advent of safe deposits and modern methods of banking, such arrangements can quite easily be made. Therefore, I say that the member for Toodyay was well off the track in making the statement he did.

The workers in Midland Junction have always advocated a five-day week. That is their policy which has been endorsed year after year at Labour conferences. They are therefore anxious to see bank workers enjoy a five-day week, the same as they do themselves. We hear quite a lot about business people being inconvenienced if banks should close on Saturday morning. Even in country districts business people are rapidly adopting the policy of closing their establishments for a half-day on Saturday. Of all the hundreds of centres in Western Australia, there are only 16 where the shops open on a Saturday morning.

Hon. L. Thorn: You are wrong there.

Mr. Perkins: You are definitely wrong in making that statement. You mean Saturday afternoon; not Saturday morning.

Mr. BRADY: Yes, I meant Saturday afternoon. Well, what do those business people do with their takings on Saturday evenings and also on Sundays? They cannot do their banking until the Monday morning.

Hon. L. Thorn: There are only a few that open on Saturday afternoon.

Mr. BRADY: I am telling the hon. member that shops open in 16 country centres, but there are 170 centres where the shops are closed on Saturday afternoon. This shows that the majority of the people in the country are prepared to put up with the inconvenience of not being able to bank on Saturday morning and are quite prepared to carry out their banking business during the other five days of the week.

Who are the big business people that do any business on Saturdays? I would say that in the main they are the hotelkeepers. The bulk of their business is done on Saturday afternoon and Saturday evening, but they cannot bank their takings

on Saturday night or on the Sunday because the banks are closed. Therefore, they cannot be suffering any inconvenience as a result of that.

The member for Toodyay raised similar arguments to those he has put forward against this Bill, when he debated the closing of shops on Friday night. We have had Friday night closing for many years now, and the people seem to have managed quite well. The members of the s.p. betting organisations also handle hundreds of thousands of pounds between them, not only when they were operating illegally, but also now when they are conducting their business within the law. They have handled up to £400,000 within the last few months.

What do those people do with their cash on Saturday night? They are compelled to hold it until the following Monday morning. Therefore the more one analyses this matter, the more one realises that bank employees have a good case for the introduction of the five-day week. It is merely a question of the banks becoming more socially conscious in regard to their employees.

I would not be surprised to know that many banking executives would welcome this amendment to the Act. However, in view of the high positions they hold, and out of loyalty to their employers, they cannot be expected to come out into the open to encourage bank workers to advocate for a five-day week. However, I am quite sure that those executives are of the same opinion as many other businessmen who do not work on Saturday mornings. They would like to cease work on Friday night so that they might have a complete rest during the week-end or have the opportunity of indulging in some sport or carrying out various chores around their homes.

The men that work in banks have to travel 10 or 15 miles in many instances merely for the purpose of working for only one and a half hours on a Saturday morning, and after they cease work naturally they have to cover all that distance again to return to their homes. Why should these workers have to suffer that disability when it is not necessary? It is not reasonable in view of the fact that two-thirds of the workers today are enjoying the five-day week.

In considering the economics of the State, does it pay to transport these workers backwards and forwards from their homes to their place of employment, or is it economical for them to use their own vehicles to travel to and from work on a Saturday morning? If we agree that it is economical to bring in a five-day week for workers in other industries, we should also agree that the same applies to the workers in the banking industry. Therefore, I ask the House to support the Bill.

The member for Toodyay put up a weak case when he twitted the member for Leederville on not calling for a division when he introduced a similar Bill previously and in suggesting that the Labour Party was upset because bank employees had not supported the nationalisation of banking. That is the biggest joke of the season. In fact, the question of the nationalisation of banking was never raised. I can say that as chairman of the Labour Party.

The fact remains that the Labour Party is big enough and broad-minded enough to admit that members of the Bank Officers' Association can vote as they like, and the same applies in this case. This is not a Government Bill, but a private member's Bill, and we know that many bank employees are not supporters of the Labour Party. They might not be Labour supporters even after this legislation is passed, but the fact remains that a private member has introduced the measure, and as the Labour Party is all for a five-day week, the majority of members on this side of the House will no doubt support it. There might be one or two who do not wish to support it, perhaps because of representations made in their electorates but, in the main, I am sure the Bill will receive favourable consideration by members on this side of the House. I support the second reading.

MR. PERKINS (Roe) [9.49]: When, previously, a similar Bill to this one was introduced to the House by the member for Leederville, I made the comment that it was rather a clumsy way to tackle this question, and I repeat that comment now.

Mr. Johnson: You still know nothing about it.

Mr. PERKINS: If the hon. member will listen to me, he may know a little more about it. The point is that the member for Guildford-Midland has actually made a better speech in dealing with this question than did the member for Leederville, in that he has tackled the broader aspect whereas the member for Leederville is only tackling the problem from the point of view of one set of employees. Obviously if we are to tackle this question of Saturday morning work only from the angle of the Bank Officers' Association, we are going to have a piecemeal solution of the problem. We could, perhaps, eventually approach it from the point of view of other interested employees and arrive at the position where there would not be any Saturday morning trade.

We have heard from the member for Guildford-Midland that it is the policy of the Labour Party to have a five-day week. If that is so, why does not the present Labour Government introduce a Bill itself, rather than leave it to one of its private members to bring legislation forward? Why does not the Government bring down legislation to amend the Factories and Shops Act with a view to instituting a

five-day week? I believe we could then debate the question much more logically than we can while dealing with it in this piecemeal fashion, which it is inevitable we will do when considering the Bill before the House.

No doubt there is quite a bit to be said for a five-day week but I do not wish to discuss the pros and cons of that now. If we are to discuss it properly we should discuss it on a Bill brought forward by the Government, as a Government measure, to amend the Factories and Shops Act. If we are to have any Saturday morning trade or business at all, it is not very sensible for a portion of the business community to be working while another portion is not. It is not providing as full a service to the public as that to which it is entitled.

The debate so far has been from the point of view of business firms that wish to do business with the banks. I have no doubt that there are a lot of people who come into the city to trade on Saturday morning, and that they not only want to deal with the retail establishments but also desire to do business with the banks. As a result of this, they make their visits to the city to cover not only their trading needs but also whatever banking business they may have.

If the banks are open on Saturday morning these people are able to cover all they want to do in one trip. The banking hours for the rest of the week are somewhat restricted and it is convenient for some people to attend the banks on Saturday morning. If business were restricted to a five-day week, I do not suggest that it could not be done in that shorter period. However, if we are to deal with this question logically, we should deal with all business establishments and not merely with a portion of them as is being done in this measure before the House.

There is one other aspect which I think I mentioned when speaking to a previous Bill. From time to time we are making various alterations in our business methods and so forth; we are trying to improve the conditions of people working in industry as much as possible. I think that is a very desirable objective indeed. Obviously, it is not desirable that people should have to work harder, or more unsuitable hours than is absolutely necessary. If we can rationalise our business methods and our business hours to give people generally more convenient working conditions, that is all to the good. But it does, of course, affect many sections of industry other than those that are being immediately dealt with. If we are to make working conditions in certain sections of industry more attractive, then obviously the tendency will be to attract people away from less attractive sections of industry.

It has been very difficult over recent years to hold the population in our country districts, largely because of the attractions

available in the metropolitan area. It is quite obvious that some counter attraction must be offered. Over many years past there has been a tendency to look on the people who live in the country districts as being a rather tougher race apparently, than those living in the metropolitan area, and the idea seems to be that they do not need quite the same conditions as those in the metropolitan area. I think that day is fast going. We must give equal attractions to people wherever they work, whether it is in the metropolitan area, the country districts, or anywhere else. The method of levelling up the attractions, of course, is perhaps, to make the work a little better paid in the less attractive areas.

At various times I have suggested in this Chamber that in order to help people, in our rural areas in particular, it may be necessary to offer better conditions. The result of that, of course, may be that the people as a whole will have to pay little more for what is produced in those country areas. When I have made that suggestion in the Chamber, I have drawn down on my head an avalanche of criticism from members representing industrial areas, for raising the cost of food. I would like to point out to members, however, that they cannot have it both ways. The alteration of the cost to industry is a natural corollary to some of these alterations which are effected from time to time. Very often they are not great alterations but they all add up to a considerable amount over a period of time. I want to stress that particularly. I do not think it is an important point but it is one that Parliament should bear in mind when considering these questions.

It is a comparatively minor point when compared with the more important question of discussing this Bill. The important factor is that this is a piecemeal method of dealing with this particular question. If the member for Leederville and the member for Guildford-Midland feel strongly on this point, and if they feel it is highly desirable that action should be taken in the near future, then I suggest that they get the Minister for Labour to introduce a government Bill altering the Factories and Shops Act to enable us to have a debate on this entire question of Saturday morning work.

Mr. Johnson: Would you support it?

Mr. PERKINS: Let us have a debate. When the various questions are raised, we can consider them.

Mr. Johnson: You would not support it?

Mr. PERKINS: I cannot say whether I would support it or not. The member for Leederville has been in Parliament long enough to enable him to realise that it is only after consideration has been given to all aspects that action is taken. Unfortunately, the member for Leederville is apt to consider only one aspect, after which he rushes in to take action. He does not

consider all the other phases. That does not make for good government, and it is not the reason why we are put here by the electors. In the circumstances, I cannot support the Bill. I think it should have been brought down by the Government, and in view of the criticism voiced by the member for Leederville, he should have taken action to press the Government he supports to bring down legislation instead of tackling the problem in this piecemeal fashion.

MR. BOVELL (Vasse) [10.0]: As a former bank officer, I feel disposed to support the move of the member for Leederville to improve the conditions of bank officers, but, as a legislator, I have the responsibility of viewing all the circumstances governing the closure of banks on Saturday mornings. I know from my experience in the bank and from my association with bank officers that their work takes them to the four corners of the State. In country towns they have accepted their responsibility and joined with the community to try to improve the local conditions. Bearing that in mind, I think they would not take an unfair advantage over other sections of the community in regard to a holiday on Saturday mornings.

I agree fully with the member for Roe that this matter should be dealt with by the Government. If we are to have a five-day working week, that should be a matter for government policy. I do not consider it is a matter to be dealt with piecemeal. When the member for Leederville introduced a similar measure some years ago, I quoted some figures relating to banking in Western Australia and the parts played by the Commonwealth Bank and the Associated Banks. At that time the question concerning a certain section of the Commonwealth Parliament desiring to nationalise the banking system was very alive. Generally speaking, bank officers agreed, and I support their contention, that nationalisation of banking was not in the best interests of this country.

Individual bank officers stated that their objective was to give service to the bank so that fair competition in our monetary affairs would encourage private enterprise. This Bill, in my opinion, is premature. The member for Roe has stated the case very well regarding the five-day week. If we are to consider the position of bank officers, then we must at the same time consider the position of clients of the banks, and we have to consider their opinion in regard to Saturday closing. As is to be expected, I move among my constituents. Some are indifferent to the proposal to close banks on Saturday morning but others think that banking facilities should be available at that time.

In regard to savings banks, small depositors require a certain time in the week to conduct their business. It must be

borne in mind that on week days banking hours are from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Mondays to Fridays, and 9.30 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Saturday mornings. I have read with considerable interest that a proposal is afoot to establish a savings bank department of the Bank of New South Wales. If this department is established, it will be in the interests of savings bank depositors in Australia, particularly in Western Australia. I would like to see our own savings bank revived. I do not know if this is in the Premier's plans. I see him shaking his head. The more competition there is, the better will the community be served.

The effect on trade and commerce must also be considered in conjunction with Saturday morning closing. In introducing this measure, I feel that the member for Leederville has not submitted sufficient evidence to obtain a mature and reasoned assessment of whether the closing of banks on Saturday mornings will be in the best interests of the community. I believe that bank officers hold a reasonable view. If they are of the same frame of mind as when the nationalisation of banking was a live topic, they will agree that it is unfair for them to take any advantage over other sections of the community. In reply, the member for Leederville should quote some concrete evidence regarding the effect on bank clients, savings bank depositors, business men and people residing in country districts.

While in recent years, fortunately, some phases of primary production and the producers themselves have been enjoying a period of prosperity, this position did not always apply. The expense and time occupied in going into their country towns more than is necessary must be considered. The outlook of primary production is not as encouraging as it was in the past few years. The wheat industry is in a precarious position. Wool prices are falling. The dairying industry is in difficulties, as it has been for a number of years. This all adds up to the fact that producers in country districts must be given consideration regarding expense and time spent in going in to country towns to conduct their business. If it is the will of Parliament that a five-day week shall prevail, then the bank officers should enjoy that privilege, but I believe, and I repeat, that bank officers will not ask for a privilege over other sections of the community.

MR. COURT (Nedland) [10.81: I am amazed at the ominous silence from the ministerial benches on a measure which has a more far-reaching effect than the mere decision as to whether one section of the community is to have a five-day or six-day week. The object of the Bill, as I understand from the introduction given by the member for Leederville, is to shut down the banking system in Western Australia on Saturdays and so release bank employees for the full week-end, as is the

case in certain other industries. He explained that there are certain difficulties in approaching the matter from another angle by amending the bills of exchange law because that is outside the jurisdiction of this Parliament, but he seeks to attain his objective by amending the Bank Holidays Act and thereby making it possible for the banks throughout the State to be closed on the Saturday.

If the decision that has to be made by this Parliament could be confined to the question whether the bank officers should be released from duty on Saturday mornings, I do not think there would be any insurmountable difficulty in finding general agreement, but unfortunately it does not end there, and I think we should all take stock and realise that a decision is not as simple as would appear from the explanation of the measure submitted by the member for Leederville.

I agree with previous speakers that it is wrong for the Government to allow a measure of this sort to come forward as a private member's Bill, but presumably with its concurrence; it is even more wrong to allow it to come forward as a private member's Bill without a Minister taking the adjournment with a view to indicating how the Government feels towards a measure which could be so far-reaching. It could be, possibly unwittingly, the start of an ever-increasing and damaging effect on the country's present state of prosperity.

The problem cannot be dissociated from the whole field of industry and commerce. We cannot put a circle around this problem and say this is where it begins and ends. The banks—and I refer to them as institutions and not as a collection of individuals—must not overlook the fact that they have a very definite place in this community and a duty to serve the community. The general economic position in Australia at present is very delicately poised. The general cry that seems to have been taken up throughout Australia is that we must preserve or protect our prosperity. One of the biggest problems confronting Australia at the moment in the task of preserving or protecting our prosperity is to achieve more in tangible effort with as much or less money than we have been spending. This problem is partly psychological. It is very important to realise that people react emotionally and psychologically to certain catch-cries and certain leads given by the Press and by prominent people on economic issues.

Pressure from a group such as the banks for a concession at this stage could, in my opinion, trigger off a wave of further demand from widespread sections of the community throughout the whole of industry and commerce. I invite the attention of members to the fact that there is a tendency in free countries to liberalise, if anything, the hours of merchandising, and

I say merchandising as distinct from banking because I do not wish to be misunderstood. There is a tendency to liberalise the hours of merchandising because experience has demonstrated that it is beneficial to the economy to allow more liberal hours of trading.

In this country we seem to be doing the reverse; we seem to be wanting to restrict merchandising, rather than encourage it. In that I blame many employers more than I do the employees, because there are quite a few employers who, as the member for Guildford-Midland mentioned, are quite happy to take the week-end off and not consider the interests of the community. If we spend any time in considering the Hobart situation, the thing that must impress us about the Saturday closing is the complete futility of it. There is a dismal silence in Hobart on Saturday morning and I can imagine why the people of Launceston do not want to follow that example.

Mr. May: It applies in Tasmania.

Mr. COURT: I suggest that Tasmania is an entirely different proposition from Western Australia or any other State of Australia.

Mr. May: You said Hobart.

Mr. COURT: That is only a part of Tasmania, and the impression conveyed by the member for Guildford-Midland, was that Tasmania had adopted the system of Saturday closing whereas, to the best of my knowledge, it is confined to Hobart.

Mr. Johnson: I understand it is Tasmania.

Mr. COURT: I have been assured by a visitor to Tasmania as recently as February of this year that it does not apply to the whole of Tasmania. I am referring to merchandising as distinct from banking; I am not sure about the banking situation. We have always regarded—and still do regard—the bank officers and employees generally as constituting one of the more stable sections of the community. Properly advised and acquainted with the possible implications of this Bill, I am sure they would want the matter deferred at this stage, even if we could make out a strong case on paper to support this Saturday closing as against the inconvenience that would be caused by no Saturday banking.

Let us take a quick look at the situation. We have only one real example of Saturday closing and that is in Hobart. We have what is claimed to be a permanent Labour Government in Queensland and a Government that claims to be nearly permanent in New South Wales and we have had Labour Governments in Victoria. If my information is correct—and the member for Leederville

touched on this in his speech—there have been moves in those States to have this change made in the banking holidays so that Saturday morning banking would be discontinued, but for some reason or other, no doubt based on sound economic considerations, it has not been approved. The member for Leederville did blame the Myer and some other stores for the fact that it had met a sticky end in Victoria, but surely he would not suggest that they could bluff the Government into dropping such a measure unless sound economic argument had been brought forward in the interests of the community.

As the member for Vasse said, we ought to be more concerned about the interests of the community as a whole rather than of any one particular section. The member for Leederville did touch on the situation in the United States of America where there are widely varying banking conditions, but with what they refer to as banking, we in this country do not always agree, so the two positions are hardly comparable in many ways. There, however, they are permitted more flexibility in hours of trading as bankers and do trade for varying hours in many of the States, but the fact remains that the legislatures of the American States, as a general principle, have not seen fit to curtail the banking hours to a five-day week. The result is that the practice varies between banks, between towns and between States.

In view of the situation that exists under the Bills of Exchange Act, and in view of the fact that only Tasmania has seen fit to abandon, in certain parts, Saturday morning banking, I suggest that this problem should be attacked on an Australia-wide level; and there is a proper place for it to be attacked by the Government, namely, the Premiers' Conference. I understand that is the place where the Premiers of each State can discuss these matters of high economic and other importance, and reach a degree of general agreement, whether each State is affected prejudicially, or otherwise.

For this reason I feel the Government should take charge of the measure and give us a clear lead on its attitude towards the Bill and whether it is prepared to negotiate on an Australia-wide basis. In the banking system as we know it in this State, there is the question of the savings banks. From my observations—particularly since the Bill was introduced—it would appear that the use made of the savings banks on a Saturday morning is extremely heavy. The member for Leederville would not deny for a moment that in the banking chamber of the Commonwealth Bank on a Saturday morning, there is anything but a milling throng to use the savings bank facilities. In fact, I would say it is used almost to the point of embarrassment as far as the customers are concerned.

There is a twofold advantage to this Saturday morning banking. The main advantage is to the thrifty who want to make their small deposits on the Saturday morning, assuming they have been paid on the Friday. Experience has taught some housewives that it is not a bad thing to get the £1 or £2 they wish to save, into the bank on Saturday morning, before the afternoon when various temptations arise. Many of these people use the Saturday morning for their banking business. I am certain that unless we offer the general public some alternative—say, Friday night banking—we will impair the saving habits of many of these people.

I do not think the member for Leederville would be unfair enough to suggest that the savings banks in the metropolitan area are not used heavily on at Saturday morning. At what other time are they going to be used? Saturday morning is a valuable time to a large section of the community for shopping and business transactions. It is quite a family morning. Whether people do their shopping and banking in a suburban area, or in the city block proper, is beside the point; the fact is that many people use Saturday mornings for these purposes with the result that the suburban areas and the city block are being increasingly patronised on Saturday mornings. I submit that if we curtail this activity on the part of the population we could have a repercussion so far as retail sales are concerned beyond all the expectations of this Chamber.

One of the first things to achieve if we want to create a buoyant turnover, is movement. We must have people moving in and through a merchandising area. A merchant can have the best goods in the world, at the cheapest price, but if he has no people available with whom to transact business, he is wasting his time. The fact that these people do move about to do their banking and carry out their business on a Saturday morning does make a contribution to the prosperity we are enjoying at the present time. Members on the other side will say, "What about Hobart? The shops are closed there."

Mr. Brady: I was thinking of this prosperity you are talking about.

Mr. COURT: Hobart is so small and isolated, that it is not comparable with any of the mainland capitals. The sponsor of the Bill did not give us a very strong story in support of the country situation. He has been a banker in the country and he dismissed the matter rather flippantly by referring to various places in the country where banking is conducted in a rather unorthodox fashion. That might be true in certain isolated instances, but, generally, it is not true, and it is a reflection on the banking system.

What the hon. member said also overlooks the fact that many of our country towns which were one-horse towns a few years ago are, today, thriving, busy centres. I would say that most of the business in those places is conducted through the orthodox banking channels. These people are not to be denied. I wish to refer to the fact that whilst we are not out to make things tougher for any section of the community than is reasonable, some people accept a calling or profession where the demands on them are different from those that are made on the ordinary person. A man might go in for architecture, law, medicine, banking or he may follow some manual pursuit.

The Minister for Lands: Politics.

Mr. COURT: Yes. I presume the Minister is classing politics as a profession; or is it just an occupation?

The Minister for Lands: A disease, mainly.

Mr. COURT: That might be an appropriate observation. When people go into these various occupations they accept the demands that go with them. It is pertinent to say that the Sunday before last I was bombarded by a very keen young gentleman who is in one of the banks. He said he was told, and rightly so, that he had the right to come and see the local member and express in clear terms how he felt about a particular measure. I must say that this young gentleman was, initially, a little rude, but after a while he was quite good in presenting his case. He made it clear to me that he wanted to play cricket on Saturday mornings. For that reason—I suppose it was as good as any—he wanted me to support the Bill.

We got talking about things, generally, and I pointed out that when a person followed a particular calling he accepted the things that went with it; that he had a duty to serve. I pointed out to him that it was Sunday and he was about the sixth person that I had interviewed that morning. As members know, we are expected to be available to our constituents seven days a week. When a person accepts the position as a member for a district he accepts all the hazards, disappointments, expense and other things that go with it. It is not one's place to whimper about it, having accepted the position.

So I pointed out to this young gentleman, who is following a banking career, that, as a member of a particular profession—the member for Leederville will know about this from his past experience—one has to do quite a few things which are out of the ordinary course of duty. I ask members to consider the proposition at the moment not as an isolated case where we can put a ring about the banks and make certain conditions for them, but one which will have a psychological impact on other sections of industry and commerce.

I have received requests from both factions in respect of this Bill. The bank officers have been in touch with me and left me in no doubt that they want the measure. Various traders and trade associations have been in touch with me and have left me in no doubt that they are opposed to the Bill. I took the trouble, as I felt it was my duty, to obtain from a fairly wide cross-section of businesses an opinion as to the possible effect of this Bill and their attitude towards it. Some of the information which I propose to give the House may appear to break down the case I have endeavoured to state, but on reflection it will be seen that it does not do so because I am basing my main approach to the problem on the question of service to the community at large rather than to a certain section.

This survey, made possible by co-operation from several sources, which I must thank for their impartiality and generosity, covers 73 business concerns, varying from large to small, and 16 different key fields of trading. The question asked of the proprietor—if he or the top man was not available it was asked of the accountant or some other person at that level—was—

Would your concern be put to inconvenience and higher costs, or not, if the banks were closed all day Saturdays?

Those questioned included concerns such as shipping, bakeries, theatres, bus companies, butchers, builders' hardware merchants, builders, carriers and carters, dairies, air services, clothing and departmental stores, retail grocers, hotels and dry cleaners.

The results of the analysis are that those who said that their businesses would be inconvenienced represented 33 per cent. of the total, while those who said they would not be inconvenienced represented 67 per cent., but with some fairly important provisos. They said they would not be seriously inconvenienced if they had some alternative banking facilities. When questioned as to the alternative facilities they would require, there was a degree of indecision. Some said they would settle for night safes and others said they would need greater protection on their premises by the installation of more expensive and more carefully-installed safes, and so on. Others wanted an extension of banking hours on Fridays.

A break-up of the survey is interesting. The business concerns that it shows would be most affected by Saturday closing of the banks, in the various divisions of the survey, were as follows:—Grocers, for some reason, said, 100 per cent., that they would be adversely affected; hotels 75 per cent.; bus companies 66 per cent.; dairies 66 per cent.; hardware 50 per cent.; clothing and departmental 39 per cent.; theatres 33 per cent.; bakers 25 per cent., and shipping businesses 24 per cent.

It will be seen that the majority of those businesses are such as have to give a close and constant service to the public. The reasons most frequently given by the concerns that would be inconvenienced by Saturday closing of banks warrant analysis. I have picked out eight of them as being worthy of statement. They are—

- (1) We would have to carry Friday's and Saturday's takings over the week-end. This would increase our security problem and raise our insurance capital cost.

I am quoting the exact words of the individuals in each case.

- (2) We need heavy supplies of change from the banks of Saturdays.
- (3) Many people, especially those who work five-day weeks in the suburbs, can only do banking business on Saturdays. This brings them to the shopping centres and to the city. If there was no banking, fewer would come and trade would suffer in consequence.
- (4) We need to bank daily.
- (5) We fear the precedent. If the banks close, soon other essential services would follow.
- (6) Night-safe deposits would not be sufficient and we do not wish to keep such large amounts of money on our own premises over the week-end.

This opinion was held mainly by large stores, bus companies and theatres. That is a précis of their general reaction in those cases.

- (7) It was stated by a shipping company "We pay many ships' crews on Saturdays."
- (8) You have only to look in Commonwealth Savings Banks to see how much the people need them open on Saturdays.

The sources which reported that they would not be inconvenienced gave mainly one of the two following reasons:—

- (1) We do not bank on Saturdays.
- (2) We do not open on Saturdays.

From this it will be seen that even with the best of goodwill there are still a lot of people affected by Saturday banking. I wish to emphasise again the fact that the circulation of people, whether for banking or other purposes, of itself creates business activity which results in higher turnover and higher prosperity from which the banks and their employees in turn gain their share of benefit. In conclusion I desire again to make the point that there is more in life than just earning a living. There is the desire to serve at all times in whatever vocation we have selected.

I feel that the House has a duty to examine the position thoroughly, in the absence of a definite statement of government policy, and because of the wide implication of this measure it will be my intention, if it passes the second reading, to move for the appointment of a select committee to examine the Bill and its effects.

On motion by Mr. O'Brien, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

THE PREMIER (Hon. A. R. G. Hawke—Northam): Before moving that the House adjourn, I wish to advise members that the Government will ask them to sit tomorrow night.

House adjourned at 10.40 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 13th October, 1955.

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

BILL—PARKS AND RESERVES ACT AMENDMENT.

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—INSPECTION OF SCAFFOLDING ACT AMENDMENT.

Third Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.34] in moving the third reading said: I had intended to get some information in connection with this measure, but during this week a couple of days have been taken up with several other matters and I have not been able to obtain the information sought. If the hon. member who raised the point is anxious about it, he can move for the adjournment of the debate, and I will get the information for him by next week. I move—

That the Bill be now read a third time.

On motion by Hon. J. McI. Thomson, debate adjourned.

BILL—LOCAL AUTHORITIES, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA MEDICAL SCHOOL APPEAL FUND CONTRIBUTIONS AUTHORISATION.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Assembly.

BILL—CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.35] in moving the second reading said: There is only one point covered by the Bill, and that is a liberalisation of the franchise of this Chamber. The intention is to liberalise the franchise so that the wife or spouse of a householder or freeholder shall be entitled to enrolment. It merely widens the Constitution to permit of the husband or wife, as the case may be, of the householder or freeholder voting at elections for this Chamber.

Down through the years, when amending Bills of this nature have been introduced to Parliament, they have always originated from the Legislative Assembly. During the debates, we have had complaints that, as those Bills dealt with the franchise of this Chamber, they should be introduced in this House. So, as a constant dropping of water wears away a stone—

Hon. H. Hearn: And the same thing applies to this Bill.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY:—we have, on this occasion, decided to introduce the Bill in this House.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Does it apply to de facto wives, too?