

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 23rd October, 1952.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAYS.

(a) As to Construction of Refrigeration Vehicles.

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

(1) Is it the intention of the Railway Department to construct, in the near future, modern refrigeration vehicles for the transport of perishables to distant places in this State?

(2) If not, why not?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(1) Improved types of cool storage vehicles are now under consideration and a number of underframes are already on order for construction of the type ultimately decided upon. Self-contained refrigeration vehicles are not generally in use in Australia, experience in other States having shown that the types available are not entirely satisfactory.

(2) Answered by (1).

(b) As to Tenders for Equipment.

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

As "The West Australian" of the 21st October, 1952, credits the Attorney General with stating at the annual meeting of the Chamber of Manufactures that "the Railway Department will be allocating tenders to the value of £1,500,000 for railway equipment to local firms," will he state the reasons why this work cannot be performed at the Government railway workshops, particularly in view of the recent huge expenditure on introducing modern machinery?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

Through a typographical error, incorrect information was given to the Attorney General. The statement should have read, "The Railway Department had allocated tenders to the value of £1,500,000 to local firms."

This was part of an order placed in 1950 in Australia and overseas. Rearmament programmes delayed the supplies of materials. Some of the orders placed have been delivered and the remainder are in course of delivery, and are expected to be complete some time next year. At the time of their placing the railway workshops had not the capacity to undertake the work.

COLLIE COAL.

(a) As to Price to Government, Calorific Value, etc.

Mr. MAY asked the Minister representing the Minister for Mines:

(1) Will he advise as follows:—What was the price charged by Amalgamated Collieries of W.A. Ltd. to the Government for coal supplied from—

Co-operative Mine;
Proprietary Mine;
Stockton Mine;
Cardiff Mine;
Neath Mine;
Stockton Open-cut;
Ewington Open-cut;
Black Diamond Open-cut;

for 12 months ended the 30th June, 1952?

(2) What is the calorific value of each of these coals?

(3) What is the ash content of each of these coals?

The MINISTER FOR HOUSING replied:

(1) The price paid to Amalgamated Collieries by the Government for coal is based on the average cost of production from all mines and open-cuts, and separate prices for individual mines are not negotiated. The average price paid for the 12 months ended the 30th June, 1952, was £2 9s. 3d. per ton, but is subject to adjustment when costs and contract details are finalised.

(2) and (3) Calorific value and ash content for all coals mentioned are not available, as certain coals are mixed. The information on average deliveries is—

Coal.		Calorific Value. B.Th.U. per lb.	Ash Content. Per Cent.
Co-operative	Mine:		
Black	Diamond		
Open-cut	....	9,455	11.19
Proprietary	Mine:		
Ewington	Open-cut	9,296	7.42
Stockton Mine; Stockton	Open-cut	8,774	9.79
Cardiff Mine; Neath	Mine	8,045	11.75

(b) *As to Storage, Midland Junction*

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE asked the Minister representing the Minister for Railways:

What quantity of coal was taken from the storage dam at Midland Junction—

(a) for the period the 1st September to the 30th September, 1952;

(b) for the period the 1st October to the 15th October, 1952?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION replied:

(a) 3,459 tons.

(b) 3,141 tons.

NORTH-WEST.

As to Air Freight Subsidy on Perishables.

Mr. RODOREDÀ asked the Minister for the North-West:

(1) On what date will the air freight subsidy on perishables to the North-West commence?

(2) Will he consider adding Kooline lead field to the list of places to which this subsidy will apply all the year round, as this field is probably worse off for transport facilities than most others?

The MINISTER replied:

(1) 1st December, 1952.

(2) This matter will receive further consideration.

FIRE BRIGADES.

As to Headquarter's Machine.

Hon. J. T. TONKIN (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

(1) When and where was the fire brigade appliance machine 27 subjected to the necessary tests for braking efficiency prior to licensing by the Police Traffic Branch for the year 1951/52?

(2) What was the nature of the tests applied and what were the details of the results of the tests?

(3) Does machine 27 satisfactorily comply with Traffic Department requirements for licensing purposes?

(4) When was this machine first commissioned for service?

(5) Is the starting mechanism efficient and safe to operate?

(6) Is machine 27 the cause of the existing unrest amongst personnel and headquarters fire station?

(7) What action is it proposed to take to ensure the safety of the men who are obliged to operate the machine?

(8) When will this action be taken?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

I have a copy of the hon. member's questions here. At present I can say no more than that I know of no unrest whatever among the fire brigade personnel, nor do I know that machine 27 is faulty. This means that I will require the hon. member to put his question on the notice paper.

TRAFFIC.

As to Delay in Proceeding with Charges.

Mr. STYANTS (without notice) asked the Minister for Police:

In connection with certain questions and answers about the delay that occurred in action taken by the Traffic Branch against motor drivers, and the Minister's assurance to the House that though there had been some delay some months ago there would be no further delays because of a reorganisation in the police traffic office, has he read in this morning's "The West Australian" that two motorists who both pleaded guilty to the charge laid against them, on the 8th May last, only had their cases heard in the court yesterday? How does the Minister reconcile that with his statement to the House and does he still consider that no further delays will take place in the institution of proceedings against offenders?

The MINISTER replied:

In my last reply to the hon. member I pointed out that there had been a considerable lag and that steps had been taken to overcome that lag. I also said that it was hoped that current prosecutions would be heard within two months. It was made

clear that there were some arrears which would have to be gradually made up. I take it that the case referred to by the hon. member—

Mr. Styants: Two cases.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: or two cases were those that occurred in May last, and were among those which were in the arrears on which the Police Department was trying to catch up. As I pointed out, this is not an easy matter. A lot of inquiries have to be made, briefs have to be prepared and it is rather a technical matter which is quite difficult.

Mr. Styants: But these two people pleaded guilty.

The MINISTER FOR POLICE: They may have pleaded guilty, but the police were not aware that they would enter that plea. Full inquiries have to be made and action decided upon. Briefs have to be prepared before summonses are issued following upon which the plea of guilty can be entered.

WATER SUPPLIES.

(a) As to Inquiry into State-wide Flat Rate.

Hon. E. NULSEN (without notice) asked the Minister for Works:

Is an inquiry to be conducted into the question of uniform price of water in respect of Government controlled water supplies throughout the State to cover also metropolitan water supplies, with the object of establishing a uniform price of water on a State-wide basis?

The MINISTER replied:

The information is being sought—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: But this is Government policy.

The MINISTER FOR WORKS:—in order that the Government might make a decision on what is a very complex question.

(b) As to Government's Objective.

Hon. E. NULSEN (without notice) asked the Minister for Water Supply:

Is it the objective of the Government to have imposed a uniform charge for water throughout the State, inclusive, of course, of the metropolitan area?

The MINISTER replied:

I would point out that when the hon. member himself was a Minister, he knew all about the pleas for a flat rate, and the difficulties that existed then, exist now. Although the principle is embodied in the platform of the Country Party, it is essential that the Government shall have first-hand information regarding this question, and to that end it has appointed a committee of inquiry.

Hon. E. Nulsen: I merely asked if it was the Government's objective.

AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT.

Section "A" 1952.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have received from the Auditor General a copy of Section "A" of his report on the Treasurer's Statement of the Public Accounts for the financial year, ended the 30th June, 1952. It will be laid on the Table of the House.

BILL—FREMANTLE ELECTRICITY UNDERTAKING (PURCHASE MONEYS) AGREEMENTS.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—PRICES CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 21st October.

HON. A. R. G. HAWKE (Northam) [2.44]: I support two-thirds of the Bill.

The Attorney General: That is a good start.

Mr. May: But what about the other third?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Having listened to the speech the Attorney General made in introducing the Bill, the provisions of which I have read carefully since, I am not able to make out, in a logical way, the reason why the Minister and his Government have introduced the continuance measure. On the basis of the Attorney General's argument regarding the effects of price-control as against no price-control, he and his Government should be against any continuance of that system. The Minister gave us to understand, as have a lot of other people, that during the last year or so manufacturers, wholesalers and traders generally would have been able to sell their goods more cheaply to the public if no price-control system existed.

The argument is that the existence of the price-control system and the work it imposes upon those engaged in the production and distribution of goods, meant that those concerned had to incur costs which they would not otherwise have experienced in running their businesses and that the cost so incurred had to be included in the price of goods, with the result that the prices of controlled goods were higher than they would have been without any such control being exercised. We have also been told by those who put forward this argument that if goods were released from price-control, prices would tend to fall because of lessened costs and increased competition.

Even superficially, those arguments are not convincing. Apart from that, we know that when goods are under price-control the prices fixed by the authorities are only the maximum. There is nothing to

prevent a manufacturer, wholesaler or retailer from selling price-controlled goods at less than the maximum fixed. Thus it seems to me that the Attorney General was not as frank with us as he should have been in explaining why this continuance Bill was thought by the Government to be desirable. Actually, I think the Attorney General knows as well as anyone else that price-control is still necessary with regard to many commodities. I think he probably knows, too, that a much more strict system of price-control is really necessary if the system is to make the contribution to our economic and financial stability that it ought to.

Speaking for myself, I should think it would not matter much to anyone in this State whether the price-control system as operated during the last few years ceased to exist. By and large, in my judgment, it has been ineffective, because it has not in any respect been severe enough in seeking to achieve the objective of keeping prices at the lowest possible level.

Mr. Yates: What about the blitz on the Kalgoorlie butchers?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I have no information about the situation in Kalgoorlie. I understand that at one stage a blitz was made upon certain butchers at Kalgoorlie and I have an idea that it was not quite justified. Had a similar blitz been carried out in other parts of the State and in respect to other traders including manufacturers and wholesalers, the price level in this State might not have risen to the extent it has during the last few years.

The Premier: I have heard a claim made that price-control is keeping up prices in some directions.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I dealt with that point and briefly expressed the argument advanced by those who believe the very thing that the Premier has just suggested. On the other hand, I pointed out that the Attorney General, in portion of his speech, had put forward the same argument.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Was not there a case of an Eastern States firm having made 600 per cent. profit.

The Premier: In this State?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: No, an Eastern States firm.

The Premier: We have no control over that.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: But this is price control.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Had the Premier regularly studied the profit returns of firms operating in this State over a period of the last two years or more, he would know that some firms in this State have been doing as well as the firm just referred to.

The Premier: I should think there would be extremely few, if any.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: More than a few; and I believe that the great majority have been making excessive profits and have been covering up a great proportion of those profits, and not showing them in the way in which they should have been shown.

The Premier: They cannot cover up from the Taxation Department, can they?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I think some firms are capable of doing even that, but the covering up I have in mind is in relation to the statements of their operations published in the newspapers. The Attorney General—and this relates to the phase of the question we have been discussing—stated—

During the past 12 months, increased wages have been responsible for considerable rises in overhead costs.

It is rather a pity that the Attorney General did not give the House information as to what had caused the wages increase during the past year. Had he applied himself to that angle and given us the correct reason, he would have said, without any qualification, that the reason for the increased wages had been the increase in prices. The Attorney General knows quite well that all the increases granted in wages during last year occurred because and only because of prior increases in the cost of living. He knows, too, that each increase in wages has been anything up to three months behind the actual increase in prices that justified the subsequent granting of increased wages.

However, it is the practice—and a deliberate one—of the Attorney General and those who support the same policy to try to fasten most of the responsibility for high prices and inflation upon the wages factor. They do not mention anything about wages having to rise in order to try to keep somewhere near to the speed of the increase in the cost of living. They do not mention anything about excessive profits, or extravagant costs of administration in a large number of business concerns. They do not mention excessively high taxation or a number of other factors that play a direct and major part in causing prices to increase continually and the inflation problem to be intensified.

I shall quote another short extract from the speech of the Attorney General because I am at a loss to accept the figure he gave in that portion of his speech. He said—

The rise in the cost of living in Western Australia has approximated the same percentage as that for 1950-51, namely, an increase of 1.6 per cent.

In other words, the Attorney General told us seriously that the rise in the cost of living for 1950-51 was 1.6 per cent. and that a similar rise had occurred in 1951-52. The Attorney General might be right, but the figure is incomprehensible to me—and I am sure it must be to other members. I ask the Attorney General whether the figure should have been 11.6, or whether he would have us believe that 1.6 is correct. Evidently the Attorney General does not know whether it is correct or incorrect.

I should like to know who worked out that percentage and upon what basis it was calculated. To me it seems that either there has been an obvious mistake or else the figure has been put forward for the purpose of misleading and depreciating to a great extent the real increase in the cost of living. I trust that the Attorney General will have the figure carefully checked as soon as possible—immediately would be the proper time—in order that he may confirm the figure or make the necessary correction.

I have a copy of the "Quarterly Statistical Abstract" to the 31st March, 1952, as published by the Government Statistician, Mr. Little. At page 32 he has set down the quarterly increases in the metropolitan area in relation to the retail price index numbers of all items of household expenditure—in other words, the "C" series index. For the year 1947 the figure for the metropolitan area, with a base figure of 1,000 as the weighted average of the six capital cities of Australia from 1923 to 1927, was 1,161. For 1948 it was 1,264; for 1949 it was 1,410; for 1950 it was 1,538, and for 1951 it was 1,860. For the first quarter in 1951 it was 1,712; the second quarter, 1,827; the third quarter, 1,911 and the fourth quarter 1,989. For the first quarter in 1952—the latest figure given—it was 2,080.

As I said earlier, I have not the least information as to how the Attorney General's figure of 1.6 total increase in the cost of living for a whole year was worked out if, indeed, it was worked out. The figures I have just quoted appear to me to show very clearly how impossible is the one given to the House by the Attorney General. The extract I have quoted from the "Quarterly Statistical Abstract" shows how necessary and urgent it is for the Attorney General to have a careful check made of the figure he gave, and subsequently to report the result to the House.

In his speech the hon. gentleman also gave us some comparative figures of the movement of the total cost of living for the Perth metropolitan area during 1951-52 as against 1950-51. Those figures showed a comparison between the Perth metropolitan area and the average of the six Australian capital cities. On the figures he gave, the average for Perth was 2.6 per cent. below the average for the six capital

cities. The comparison, even if correct, could be misleading, because the figures for Perth are included in those of the six capital cities as are, of course, the figures from some of the other capital cities, where the cost of living is much higher than it is here.

The inclusion of Perth's figures would push the average up, and the comparison made by the Attorney General could easily be misleading. When he gave us this comparison on Tuesday I asked him, by interjection, whether the Commonwealth Statistician had used the figures for the Perth metropolitan area recently when the Commonwealth basic wage increase was declared. Members will recollect that in the recent quarterly adjustment of the Commonwealth basic wage in each State, the increase for Perth, or Western Australia, was the second highest in the Commonwealth. The increase in this State was 6s. a week, and it was exceeded only in the State of Tasmania where the increase was 8s. a week. The increase in Melbourne was 3s. and in Sydney 2s. I think the increases in Brisbane and Adelaide were about the same as in Melbourne and Sydney.

The Premier: I think Adelaide was 6s.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Perth was 6s.

The Premier: Adelaide was 4s. I think that is right.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If the increase in Perth was three times higher than Sydney, twice as high as Melbourne, one and a half times higher than Adelaide, and probably twice as high as Brisbane, it would be interesting to know why the cost of living increase in Perth is something we ought to start patting ourselves on the back about.

The Attorney General: You have taken one quarter, but you cannot do that. It is not at all accurate.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I know, and I am coming to that point. If the Attorney General cares to go back over previous quarters, he will find that Perth has not been below any of the other States to any worthwhile extent. So it seems to me that the Attorney General and the members of the Government would be unwise to develop the idea in their minds that the cost of living increase in Perth, and in this State generally, is something that we can start to be happy about. Obviously from the recent increases in the Commonwealth basic wage there is something in the Perth or Western Australian situation to be alarmed about.

The Premier: The same as in Tasmania.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Yes. I would think the Government of Tasmania ought to be alarmed about the increase which took place there during the three months immediately prior to the end of September.

The Premier: The increase there was 8s.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Yes. There might have been some special factor operating in Tasmania during that quarter, but I do not know about that. As far as I am aware, there was no special factor operating in this State. The increase took place in Western Australia without the assistance of any extraordinary factor, and I hope the Attorney General, when he replies will be able to give us some information as to why there should have been such a substantial increase in the cost of living in the State during the July-September quarter in comparison with the increases that occurred in most of the other capital cities and States.

The Attorney General: It is because of the food and groceries, of course. Our increases have been very low for some time.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: The Attorney General now suggests that the radical increase in the cost of living in this State in the last two or three months was due to substantial increases in the prices of food and groceries. I want to know why there was a radical increase in the prices of those commodities last quarter and why the increase should apply only to this State and possibly the State of Tasmania. We know that the tendency almost invariably is for the cost of living to move on at an equal level in all States. It will be necessary for the Attorney General to give us some better explanation than the one he has just put forward by way of interjection, and I hope he will be in a position to give us a satisfactory explanation when he replies to the debate.

I am not in favour of repealing the Profiteering Prevention Act of 1939, which is still on the statute book. The Attorney General will recollect that when he first introduced his Bill for the control of prices, members of the Opposition tried very hard to prevail upon him and the Government to withdraw that Bill and make such adjustments, as were thought necessary, to the Profiteering Prevention Act so that it might become the legislative instrument through which prices would be controlled in this State. However, the Attorney General and the Government were adamant in their determination to go ahead with their own new pieces of legislation, and they succeeded in placing that on the statute book. Since that time, we have had both Acts on the statute book with only one of them being operated, as obviously would have to be the case.

The other afternoon the Attorney General told us that the justification for repealing, or attempting to repeal, the Profiteering Act is the fact that the war is over—that is, World War II. We all know that World War II, as a separate war, if it was such, is over, but unfortunately it was followed by the struggle now taking

place in Korea and which might lead to World War III. Therefore, beyond any reasonable doubt, and I should think beyond any legal doubt, Australia is still at war, and consequently there is justification for keeping the Profiteering Prevention Act on the statute book. There might be a change of Government in this State next year and the new Government might prefer to use the Profiteering Prevention Act—

Mr. Needham: There will be a change of Government.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: —as against using the Prices Control Act. So I think the Profiteering Prevention Act should be left on the statute book to enable it to be used, if it is thought advisable to use it to give greater protection to the consuming public in this State; that Act is not doing any harm by remaining where it is.

Mr. Needham: It should be there in times of peace.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: If a change of Government were to take place next year—

Hon. J. B. Sleeman: Did you say "if"?

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE:—beyond any shadow of doubt the new Government would prefer to use the Profiteering Prevention Act as against the piece of legislation now being used by the present Government. The new Government would certainly make some amendments to the Profiteering Prevention Act. For instance, we would attempt to amend that Act to give consumers a direct full-time representative on a price-fixing commission and we would give the business interests in Western Australia a full-time and direct representative also; they would have equal standing in every respect with the person who would be chairman of that suggested commission. By that method I am convinced that the consuming public in Western Australia would receive a much better deal than they are receiving at present, and much better than they have received at any time during the last five or six years.

The Attorney General: Of course, that virtually exists now, because there is an appeal to such a commission.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: Judging by results, that does not exist at the moment. Is the Attorney General suggesting that the advisory committee has power to overrule the commissioner and the Minister?

The Attorney General: The advisory committee has not power to overrule the Minister, but it can advise the Minister.

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: What statements the Attorney General makes! He tells us quite calmly that the position exists under the Prices Control Act that the consumers' representative and the representative of business interests now have

equal standing with the Prices Control Commissioner, Mr. Mathea. When I ask the Attorney General whether the advisory committee, to which he was referring, has the legal right to overrule the Prices Control Commissioner and the Minister, the Attorney General, just as calmly, tells us that the advisory committee has no legal power to overrule the Minister or the commissioner in regard to the fixing of maximum prices.

I have never lost patience with the Attorney General, but I do say that he makes the most amazing statements in this House. He makes a calm, clear-cut statement one minute, and immediately he is challenged upon it he reverses it the next minute. If I ever become unfortunate enough to have to be tried for murder, I will not have the Attorney General to defend me. The Attorney General knows as well as I do, and he admits it now when challenged, that the existing advisory committee has not one shred of legal authority. He knows that all the legal authority under the legislation which is now being used is exercisable only by the commissioner and the Minister. So, at the moment, the consumers through a direct legal representative, have no legal standing or power, and neither have the business interests. As I indicated earlier, I intend to support two thirds of the Bill, and to oppose that clause which provides for the repeal of the Profiteering Prevention Act, 1939-41. In the meantime I support the second reading.

MR. W. HEGNEY (Mr. Hawthorn) [3.21]: Before the Minister replies I wish to make a few observations with regard to the Bill. Firstly, I would like to reiterate the statement I made when the question of price control was submitted to a referendum of the people of Australia. As they were entitled to do, those sitting on the opposite side of the House almost to a man urged the people of the country to refuse to give the Commonwealth power to exercise control over prices. I was one of those who believed, and still believe—and I think time has proved that our attitude is correct—that no 100 per cent. efficiency of price-control can be adopted by all the States acting in unison or acting separately. The right authority in whom this particular power should rest is the Commonwealth. But the people in their wisdom, or otherwise, decided that control should be taken out of the hands of the Commonwealth.

Quite recently there was a case in the High Court in which an appeal was lodged concerning the validity or otherwise of the Defence Preparations Act in regard to capital issues control. The High Court ruled that the Commonwealth Parliament was entitled to pass the particular Act and that it was quite valid. When one examines the judgment and sees its implications I believe it will be conceded that the Com-

monwealth now has the power, despite the fact that the referendum had the result it did, to exercise control over prices. Whether it will do it or not remains to be seen. Let us take uniform taxation, for example! I feel sure the Menzies Government would like to get right out of the uniform tax business at the present time and pass it back to the States. But the States do not want it, and I think the States would also like the Commonwealth to take over price-control. However, I am not sure that the present Commonwealth Government would accept that responsibility.

As I see the position, from the point of view of Western Australia, the Minister, with the full endorsement of his Government, has put the soft pedal on the administration of this Act ever since its inception in Western Australia. The people in this State were promised that rents and prices would be controlled. The only indication we have of the movement of price levels is the statistician's figures. Before dealing with that aspect of price-fixing, I would like to direct the attention of the Attorney General for a moment to the most recent conference of Prices Ministers regarding price-control. It has been said that if price-control were lifted the prices of commodities would be less. That is a general statement which was made recently in the Press, but we know that under the price-fixing law traders—as they are entitled to do—invariably charge the maximum price for their commodities. There is nothing under the law, apart perhaps from a gentleman's agreement with the particular trader, to make him charge less than the actual maximum fixed by law.

Reverting to the conference of Prices Ministers, I would like to deal with one commodity that is used throughout the length and breadth of the country; I refer to petrol. The companies demanded 2½d. per gallon increase, and had there been no price-fixing authority at all the people of this State would have been paying an extra 2½d. or even 3½d. a gallon for their petrol. Even under the present setup of price-fixing there was a difference of opinion in the various States. I would like to know from the Attorney General what attitude he and his Government adopted in the most recent demand by the oil companies for an increase in price. As far as I can ascertain, Queensland, Tasmania and South Australia were against any increase.

The Attorney General: You would be wrong.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I am not very far wrong.

The Attorney General: Oh, yes, you are!

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I think I am right in saying that the Western Australian Prices Minister favoured the increase.

The Attorney General: You would not be right.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I am either right or wrong, and there must have been a majority that agreed to the increase. I am given to understand that the three States I mentioned were against it. I have not the advertisements here with me but members in this Chamber will know that recently one of the most prominent oil companies in the world operating in Western Australia has had almost continuously, day after day, full page advertisements pushing its product.

I would like to know from the Attorney General to what extent, if any, an examination is made into the case of these particular companies who are advertising for an increase in their particular commodity. I do not know what "The West Australian" charges for full page advertisements, but I should say it would run into a few hundred pounds. This is not an isolated item, either. The oil companies have various forms of advertisements which, over a period of 12 months, must cost them hundreds of thousands of pounds. From where are they recouped? They are recouped from the users of petrol in Australia, and it must invariably reflect in the prices of a multiplicity of commodities. I believe that if the Commonwealth had had control there would have been a more intensive investigation into the justification for an increase in the price of such commodities.

I will now deal with another commodity which is used by practically everybody in the community; I refer to gas and electricity. The Electricity Commission has indicated that it has referred a certain formula to the Prices Commissioner, and that has been adopted by the State Electricity Commission with respect to an increase in the price of gas and electricity. As far as I can ascertain from the reply to a question submitted recently, the price of gas and electricity will be increased as the basic wage is increased.

Mr. J. Hegney: It will then go up much further.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I was going to say that there should be some overhauling and some close investigation of the position to see whether an increase in the price of gas and electricity is justified consequent upon an increase in the basic wage. I have not the actual figures with me, but it was indicated quite recently in reply to a question that gas and electricity charges would increase by a certain amount consequent upon the increase in the basic wage. On checking the particular figure with the amount quoted by the Minister acting for the Minister for Works, I found it was far in excess of that stated in the Minister's reply. I meet quite a number of people in the metropolitan area, and one of the most contentious matters that is mentioned to me from a domestic point

of view is the continually increasing cost of gas and electricity to consumers there, and of course that is reflected in the basic wage. Train and tram fares are continually being increased and those are items that affect the basic wage.

I do not propose to enter into details of fares at this stage except to say that I believe the Government bus running to Greenmount charges a fare of 1s. 4d., but if a passenger is going only as far as Midland Junction, the fare charged is 1s. 7d. because that is the fare from Perth to Midland Junction charged by the Beam buses. I think I am right in that statement, but I make it subject to correction. If a person were going to Midland Junction, it would pay him to ask for a ticket to Greenmount, because then he would be charged only 1s. 4d. whereas, if he took a ticket to Midland Junction, he would have to pay 1s. 7d.

These matters affecting the basic wage must be reflected in the purchasing power of the pound. Members on the Government side promised that if returned to office they would put value back into the pound. I shall proceed to show how they have carried out that promise. With the Leader of the Opposition, I refute the statement of the Attorney General that the rise in the cost of living in Western Australia approximated the same percentage last year as in 1950-51, namely, an increase of 1.6 per cent.

The prices referendum was held in 1948 and the basic wage in this State was then £5 15s. 9d. That was the time when the Premier, ably supported by his associates, declared that, if the States were empowered to control rents and prices, conditions would be better. Today the basic wage is £11 12s. 3d., an increase of more than 100 per cent.

The Premier: That has occurred all over the world.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: That is the excuse offered by the Premier. He did not make that statement a few years ago when he was urging the people to overthrow Commonwealth price-control. There are the figures—£5 15s. 9d. in May, 1948, and £11 12s. 3d. today.

The Premier: The 40-hour week and the strikes have been factors in the increase.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: There we have more excuses, but they are becoming threadbare.

The Premier: The 40-hour week increased the cost of living by 15 per cent. in one jump.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: If the Premier considers that the granting of the 40-hour week is disturbing the economy of the country, why has not this Government joined the employers in their approach to the Commonwealth Arbitration Court for a 44-hour week? The Premier has

not the courage to do that because there is a general election in the offing. The Premier has denied that his Government is a party with the Employers' Federation to approaching the Commonwealth court for an increase in the working week. He cannot have it both ways.

The Premier: I was just stating a fact.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Let me go a little further and show what substance there is in the Attorney General's statement that the increase in the cost of living has approximated 1.6 per cent. People are awaking to the facts and the "impropaganda" that has been put over for so long will not have effect. Many people believed that the increase in prices was due to the increase in wages. Anyone who has given attention to the economy of the country and the method of determining the basic wage realises that wages are lagging three months behind prices all the time. The change in the basic wage follows the change in the price levels as determined by the statistician. If there were no increase in the prices of commodities, there would be no increase in the basic wage.

Let me explain what the 1.6 per cent. means and show how unreliable the figure quoted by the Attorney General is. In referring to it as "unreliable" I do not do so in any derogatory sense. The basic wage, on the 31st January, 1950, was £6 18s. 1d. and on the 18th December, 1950, it was £8 6s. That represented an increase during the year 1950-51 of approximately 19 per cent., and it included the £1 a week increase granted by the Commonwealth court. We are now in the last week of October, 1952, and the basic wage for the metropolitan area is £11 12s 3d. Relating that to the basic wage of £8 6s. at the end of 1951, wages have increased by 40 per cent. The further the Government goes, the worse it gets. Fancy an increase of 40 per cent. since 1951! If I am any judge, I think that in the very near future the State Arbitration Court will be obliged to grant another increase in the basic wage because of the increase in the cost of living figures. Recently an increase of 6s. was granted by the Commonwealth court, and we can expect much the same variation at the next adjustment of the State basic wage. So, within the next week or two, I believe that the State basic wage will approximate £12 a week instead of being £11 12s. 3d. as at present.

The Profiteering Prevention Act has been on the statute book since 1939. It lay dormant during the war years because the Commonwealth, under the National Security Regulations, exercised control over prices. That was quite right. The State now has control of prices. We know that the executive of the Liberal Party—and I say this without quibbling, because it is the policy of the Liberal

Party—in no uncertain terms told the Government not to carry on with the Prices Control Act Amendment and Continuance Bill. Well, in the face of that, the Government has brought down the Bill and, in my opinion, it will be passed by another place. If an election were not impending within a few months, I feel sure that the Upper House would have thrown out the Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Amendment (Continuance) Bill, and also that it would reject this measure. However, it will probably pass this Bill also.

The Government is taking cognisance of the party's policy by linking with this Bill the repeal of the Profiteering Prevention Act. Once that repeal provision is passed by Parliament, it will not be long before no protective legislation whatever is available for the people of this State. The Profiteering Prevention Act is doing no harm. The State has administered price control since 1948 and, as far as I am aware, the Attorney General has not found that the Profiteering Prevention Act has presented any great obstacle. In the dying hours of the life of the prices control legislation, however, provision is made for the repeal of the Profiteering Prevention Act. The Government is anxious to get rid of both of those Acts so that all and sundry may have full sway, while the working people and the great mass of the consumers have no protection at all.

When the Minister replies to the debate, I should like to be given some particulars about the personnel of the Prices Branch staff. Speaking from memory, I think I was told in reply to a question that when the State took over from the Commonwealth in 1948, approximately 110 persons, including investigators, were employed by the branch. Shortly afterwards, the number was reduced to 70 or 77. I have now been advised that a number of employees have been given notice of termination of their services, possibly in anticipation of what may happen to this measure. On the other hand, the Minister mentioned that the number of complaints investigated in 1950-51 was 277, whereas for the year ended the 30th June, 1952, the number was 432. If the staff is to be further reduced, how does the Minister propose effectively to police the Act?

Western Australia is a big State, and if any substantial reduction is to be made in the staff, I suggest that the Commissioner of Prices will not have enough hands effectively and efficiently to administer the provisions of the Act. This again leads me to believe that the Attorney General and the Government are not anxious to ensure that the Act is administered with any degree of vigour, but that the sooner it is removed from the statute-book, the better pleased they will be.

In conclusion, I admit that there are certain commodities that do not need to be controlled and there are other commodities that ought to be controlled. It has been stated that when goods are in plentiful supply, there is no need for control, but I suggest that on occasion when goods are in plentiful supply, there is need for some form of price-control because of lack of competition and the actions of combinations and monopolies. I hope that when the Minister replies he will be good enough to tell the House what the position is regarding the personnel of his department and the real reason behind his asking Parliament to repeal the Profiteering Prevention Act.

Sitting suspended from 3.46 to 4.7 p.m.

MR. J. HEGNEY (Middle Swan) [4.8]: Price-control, as we know it, has become ineffective. Some time ago the Leader of the Opposition urged the Minister to lift control from the price of meat, as it was no longer operating satisfactorily. Everyone knows that that particular control has long since lost its value and its only effect has been to maintain the price of meat at the level fixed by the Prices Commissioner. Many people in the meat trade have told me how obsolete this control is. Its only result at the present time is that the workers—or their wives—have to pay for meat a price that is not computed in the basic wage.

The high cost of electricity and gas also is a matter of great concern to everyone in the metropolitan area. A week or so after the declaration of the basic wage at the end of last quarter the Electricity and Gas Department sent out its accounts, and the increased price was loaded back over the three months that had gone instead of just for the couple of weeks since the declaration of the increased basic wage. It has been said, in answers to questions in this House, that the Electricity and Gas Department has a formula under which any increase in the basic wage is reflected in the charges for gas and electricity.

That might be fair if the increase became applicable only from the date of the increase in the wage, but in the instance I have mentioned it was back-dated for a period of months. That is most unfair, in view of the acuteness of the position created by the present high prices. When introducing the Bill the Minister said that the cost in Western Australia was 1.6 per cent. or 2 per cent. less than the Australian average. The Commonwealth basic wage is higher in this State than in any other part of the Commonwealth except Tasmania, and on a mathematical basis it is difficult to understand why in this State the percentage should be so low although the basic wage is so high.

When the referendum on the question of price-control was held three or four years ago the opponents of the scheme to place that power in the hands of the Commonwealth contended that the individual States could deal more effectively with prices than could the Commonwealth, and that contention was urged strongly by the Premier of this State. The criticism then levelled against the proposal to give the Commonwealth control over prices was that there had been enough of bureaucratic control, which was ruining Australia and that we were building up in Canberra oligarchies that were not in the best interests of the people. It is ludicrous now to find that whenever a decision on prices has to be made—at least once a month—the Prices Ministers from all the States have to meet, together with their retinues of advisers, and hold a discussion as to what is to be the price of some particular commodity. Even then they often cannot agree and have to return and consult their respective Governments. Following that they then telegraph advice as to the way in which their respective votes will go.

That is a most unsatisfactory way of implementing price-control. Although some items are still controlled, price-control in general has lost its effectiveness, partly because it has not been policed as vigorously as it should have been. Clause 3 of the Bill proposes to repeal the Profiteering Prevention Act. Why is that necessary? Is it the policy of the Government to give industry an open go in future to exploit the public? Is it, in the future, to be given the right to do what it likes? Why should the Profiteering Prevention Act be repealed altogether when there are industries in this country exploiting the public? Why not allow it to remain on the statute book so that any Government may effectively use it if there is any exploitation or unjust action made by any organisation? It appears that the question has become political now, and the Government has to justify its existence and look after its own interests in the way that it was directed at a recent conference, and ensure that its supporters and the people who weigh in by contributing to party political funds get their pound of flesh. Therefore, I am definitely opposed to this provision because it is a most important aspect of price-control. Had it been administered effectively, it could have been a useful instrument for stabilising the economy. Today we are in a parlous position economically, because the country lacks stability and prices are continually on the increase following each basic wage adjustment. Yet we find that in the Commonwealth Arbitration Court there is a case being put forward to eliminate the quarterly basic wage adjustments and for the wages throughout Australia to be fixed for a definite term.

While that state of affairs was in existence, I was in this House when a Bill was brought down to effect quarterly basic wage adjustments so that a period of 12 months would not elapse before an adjustment could take place. All this is because prices have got out of control in many ways. There is no question but that there are many industries where there is inefficiency, waste and extravagance, and the people of Australia have to meet this unnecessary cost. Therefore, the Bill is important. If the Minister and his advisers performed a good job, there might be something in the legislation, seeing that the Commonwealth was refused the power of price-control. There is no doubt that the administration was much more effective under Commonwealth than State control. When the Bill reaches the Committee stage I propose to move to delete the provision for the repeal of the Profiteering Prevention Act.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley—in reply) [4.18]: When introducing the measure I did mention the figure of 1.6. The increased percentage for 1950-51 was 24.2 and the increase for the year 1951-52 was 25.8 per cent. The percentage increase was 1.6. I should have mentioned the other two percentages to the House previously when I stated that there had been a percentage increase of 1.6.

Mr. W. Hegney: It has progressively increased since 1948.

Mr. Johnson: That is an increase in the rate?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That is correct.

Mr. W. Hegney: That means it has increased by 100 per cent. since 1948 and not 25 per cent.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The increases I quoted were for the two years 1950-51 and 1951-52.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Yes, but an increase over what other year?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The increase for 1950-51 was 24.2 per cent.; that is, the increase from the year 1949-50 to the year 1950-51 was 24.2 per cent. and from that year to 1951-52 it increased by 25.8 per cent.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Over which year?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The increase took place during the year.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: But you gave us the figure of 1.6.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The percentage increase was 1.6.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: What was the base year for the purpose of comparison?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The base year was 1950-51. The increase for that year was 24.2 per cent.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yes, but a percentage is a relative figure. When you give your second comparison, 25.8 per cent., that refers to what base?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: It refers to the increase during the year 1951-52. It starts in June, 1951, and ends in June, 1952.

Mr. W. Hegney: Yes, but in what year do you start with 100 per cent. as a base?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The increase has occurred during the year.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: If we use the figure of 1.6 per cent., it refers to some base.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The difference between those two figures is 1.6 per cent.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: You have said nothing to indicate on what year 25.8 per cent. has been calculated.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: That has been the increase during the year.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: That means that the base figure includes the percentage increase for the previous year.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Oh, well—

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: I think you had better give it away.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: For all items, the percentage increase from the June quarter in 1951 to the June quarter in 1952 was 25.8 per cent.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The way the Attorney General put the position before the House was most misleading and obscure. I think he will admit that now.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I will admit that I did not put it as accurately as I should have done. The Leader of the Opposition asked if I could give any explanation as to why the basic wage increase for the last quarter in Western Australia was 6s. and only 2s.—

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: In Sydney or Melbourne.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes. I asked the same question of Mr. Mathea, and he said it related to foodstuffs and groceries, which had remained very low in price in this State. These are the various percentage increases for all capital cities from June, 1951, to June, 1952—

Percentage Increase June, 1951, to June, 1952.

Food and Groceries.			
Perth	....	....	32.0
Sydney	....	....	51.3
Melbourne	....	....	41.0
Brisbane	....	....	53.2
Adelaide	....	....	47.7
Hobart	....	....	41.4
			per cent.

Average for the six capital cities 50.4 per cent. So our percentage increase for food and groceries during that year was low.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Why has it been so?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Because prices have remained low.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: The prices must have been based on cost of production, plus margins.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The statistician does not disclose how he computes these figures. I have no more information than have members opposite. It is purely a matter for the Commonwealth Statistician as to how these figures are obtained, and he does not publish the information for many months after they are collated. However, those figures show that the price of foodstuffs remained very low in this State and are comparable with those in the Eastern States.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Was the decision not to publish the figures made by the statistician himself, or was it under Ministerial direction?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I am informed by the Commonwealth representative in Western Australia, who is our own Government Statistician, that it was done entirely on the initiative of the Commonwealth Statistician. I do not want to harp on the question of whether wages follow prices or prices follow wages. We know that in manufacture, production and distribution, wages constitute by far the greatest cost, and therefore wage increases from time to time must influence costs. How that can be adjusted I do not know, but it is a fact. Overhead and profits have a comparatively slight impact on the actual cost of any article.

In the case of petrol, where millions of gallons are handled, the computation of the actual price is very difficult, as it is with other commodities. In the manufacture of bread, for instance, it is generally admitted by the Prices Commissioner that the fixing of the price is an extremely difficult matter. An extra $\frac{1}{4}$ d. added to the price of a loaf gives an extremely great added return and, on the other hand, when bakers are deprived of $\frac{1}{4}$ d., it could mean a great loss to them. That has been one of the difficulties in fixing the price of bread, which is an essential commodity. Money values do not make for fine reckonings.

At some periods of the year bakers say they are not receiving a reasonable return, and at other times, at the point when the increases are made, they are perhaps receiving a little more than would be given to them if they had not incurred a loss previously. Advertising is carefully watched and any excessive outlay in this direction is disregarded when computing costs. That principle has been followed by every prices officer. As members know, no Government of the Commonwealth, as such, controls prices. Governments certainly decide whether or not commodities shall be controlled; that is a governmental or ministerial responsibility. But once it

has been decided what is to be controlled, the computation of prices is in the hands of the commissioner.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Have you decided for how much longer meat prices are to be controlled?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I will advise the hon. member of that through the Press tomorrow morning.

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Why cannot you tell us now?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Why cannot I?

Hon. J. T. Tonkin: Yes.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Because I have reasons of my own and desire to answer that sort of question at a proper time. In my view, not much was said as to why the Profiteering Prevention Act should not be repealed. When it was passed, it was not indicated that its operations should extend beyond the operations of the war in which His Majesty was engaged. It is admitted, from a practical point of view, that the war has ended, although technically it has not and might continue for some years. To have on the statute book an Act that is in conflict with another is not good in principle and therefore it has been decided to repeal those mentioned in Clause 4.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Hill in the Chair; the Attorney General in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1 and 2—agreed to.

Clause 3—Section 18 amended:

Mr. W. HEGNEY: I would like some information from the Minister as to the Government's decision with respect to meat prices. He stated earlier that we would be able to read it in tomorrow morning's issue of "The West Australian". On a matter of this description, when an important question is before members, as a matter of courtesy they should be entitled to know the attitude of the responsible Minister in connection with the prices of meat and of other commodities.

The Attorney General: Cannot members of Cabinet consult?

Mr. W. HEGNEY: As much as they like.

The Attorney General: They will consult.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: Not that anything will come from that! What I want to ascertain is whether, after Cabinet has consulted and deliberated, the Minister responsible for the control of the prices will inform the representatives of the people what is the position.

The Minister for Works: He will do so in his own time.

Hon. A. R. G. Hawke: Is that so? Semi-dictatorship!

The Minister for Education: He will do just as other Ministers in previous Governments have done.

Mr. W. HEGNEY: If the Government has arrived at its decision, Parliament should know. If Parliament should not be in session, the public could be informed through the Press and over the wireless. While it is in session and more particularly when it is dealing with a Bill of this description and Cabinet, as the Minister indicated, has considered the question, members should be informed straight away. That is all I ask. On the question of the administration of the department, I have had information that a large number of employees of the Prices Control Department have received notices of termination of employment. I ask the Minister if that is so, how many employees will remain in the department, how many are to be dismissed, and how he proposes, in conjunction with the Commissioner of Prices, properly to administer the Act? I trust the Minister will give members information as to the result of Cabinet's consultation.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: If I had the information respecting the staff position I would give it to the hon. member. It is a matter for the Public Service Commissioner. I will consult with that officer and later will supply the information required.

Mr. W. Hegney: Do you not know that they are being put off?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: I do not know what the position is.

Clause put and passed.

Clause 4—Acts Nos. 9 of 1939 and 19 of 1941 repealed:

Hon. A. R. G. HAWKE: I spoke against this clause at the second reading stage and I hope the Committee will defeat it.

Clause put and a division taken with the following result:

Ayes	.....	20
Noes	.....	19

Majority for

Ayes.

Mr. Abbott	Mr. North
Mr. Brand	Mr. Oldfield
Mr. Doney	Mr. Owen
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Griffith	Mr. Thorn
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Totterdell
Mr. Mann	Mr. Watts
Mr. Manning	Mr. Wild
Mr. McLarty	Mr. Yates
Mr. Nimmo	Mr. Bovell

Noes.

Mr. Brady	Mr. Molr
Mr. Butcher	Mr. Needham
Mr. Guthrie	Mr. Read
Mr. Hawke	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. J. Hegney	Mr. Sewell
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Styants
Mr. Johnson	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Lawrence	Mr. May
Mr. McCulloch	

(Teller.)

(Teller.)

Pairs.

Noes.

Mr. Ackland	Mr. Coverley
Mr. Hutchinson	Mr. Graham
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Nulsen
Mr. Naider	Mr. Kelly

Clause thus passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment and the report adopted.

BILLS (4)—RETURNED.

1, Child Welfare Act Amendment.

With an amendment.

2, Pharmacy and Poisons Act Amendment.

3, Health Act Amendment (No. 1).

4, Rents and Tenancies Emergency Provisions Act Amendment (Continuance).

Without amendment.

BILL—MINING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 2).

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR HOUSING (Hon. G. P. Wild—Dale) [4.43] in moving the second reading said: This is a small Bill to amend the Mining Act and is introduced at the request of unions at Collie in order to alter the personnel of the employee's representatives on the Coal Industry Tribunal. At present the board comprises five members, one being the chairman, two employees' representatives and two representatives of the employers. The employees' representatives in the past have been members of the Collie Miners' Union. Quite frequently smaller craft unions at that centre have had occasion, possibly because of a dispute or for some other reason, to go before the tribunal and have felt that they were not represented, as, in fact, at the moment they are not.

It is their wish that the Act be amended so that in future the tribunal shall comprise the chairman, two employers' representatives and two employees' representatives who shall actually be representatives of the craft unions that are appearing before the tribunal with regard to a dispute or some other mining matter. The unions I refer to are the Federated Engine Drivers and Firemen's Union, the A.S.E., the A.E.U., the Australian Collieries Staff Association, and the Collie District Deputies' Union of Workers. The amendment, if passed, will keep the tribunal at its normal strength of five. The Bill contains two amendments, the first one being to substitute for paragraph (b) of Subsection (2) the following:—

(b) Two, who shall in each case to be considered and determined by the tribunal—

- (i) be members of the Union;
- (ii) be referred to as the employees' representatives.
- (iii) represent the employees.

Subsection (6) provides that each member shall be eligible for re-appointment at the expiration of his term of office, so we have had to delete that provision and substitute for it the words—

The chairman and the employers' representatives shall be eligible for reappointment at the expiration of the term of their office.

This means, in effect, that the chairman and employers' representatives will be eligible for re-appointment, but as the employees' representatives will move between the craft unions and the Coalminers' Union, they will not be eligible for re-appointment as they have been in the past. The amendment is quite a small one, and it has received the concurrence of the unions and the Coal Industry Tribunal. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. MAY (Collie) [4.47]: What the Minister says is perfectly true. When the Coal Industry Tribunal was first set up it included two representatives of the Collie Miners' Union and two representatives of the employers. It has been felt since by the other unions in the coal-mining industry that when a case is referred to the tribunal for determination, the particular union concerned should be represented on it. At present the two employees' representatives on the tribunal are elected from the Miners' Union. The craft unions within the industry have requested that, when a case is submitted to the tribunal, two representatives of the union concerned should be on the tribunal. The request has come forward from the combined unions and I have ascertained from the Collie Miners' Union that the proposition is perfectly acceptable to that body. That is why this small amendment to the Mining Act is brought down.

Hon. E. Nulsen: It does not affect the goldmining industry?

Mr. MAY: No, not in any shape or form. It purely concerns the coalmining industry. There is complete unanimity amongst the unions in regard to it. I support the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—WAREHOUSEMEN'S LIENS.

Second Reading.

THE ATTORNEY GENERAL (Hon. A. V. R. Abbott—Mt. Lawley) [4.52] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is

to alter the law relating to the storage of goods by warehousemen so as to give them a lien over the goods stored, for the storage charges, and also to give protection under certain circumstances to the people who store goods.

Mr. Needham: What law are you altering?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The common law.

Mr. Needham: What Act governs the position at present?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: The ordinary common law. Similar provisions to those contained in the Bill are now to be found in Acts operating in each of the Commonwealth States. A warehouseman, as defined in the Bill, is a person lawfully engaged in the business of storing goods as a bailee for hire or reward. The Bill provides that a warehouseman shall have a lien on goods deposited with him for storage.

The lien shall be for the amount of the warehouseman's charges, namely the lawful charges for storage and preservation of the goods; lawful claims for insurance, transportation, labour, weighing, packing, coopering, and other expenses in relation to the goods; and reasonable charges for a notice required to be given by this measure, and for notice and advertisement of sale, and for sale of the goods where default is made in satisfying the warehouseman's lien.

The warehouseman shall, within three months after the date of the deposit of the goods, give notice of the lien, firstly to a person who has before the expiration of two months after the date of the deposit of the goods served upon the warehouseman a notice in the prescribed form of his claim to be the owner of the goods or of an interest in them, and a person of whose interest in them the warehouseman has received notice as prescribed; and secondly to the grantee of a bill of sale which relates to the goods and which was granted by the person depositing the goods or by any other person of whose interest in the goods the warehouseman has knowledge, which was registered in accordance with the Bills of Sale Act, 1899, prior to the date of the deposit of the goods; and which has not become null and void or in respect of which a satisfaction has not been registered; and also to any other person of whose interest in the goods the warehouseman at any time before the expiration of two months after the date of the deposit of the goods has knowledge.

Where the warehouseman fails to give a notice required by the provision of this measure, his lien shall be void on and from the expiration of the period of three months from the date of the deposit of the goods. In addition to the other

remedies provided by law for the enforcement of liens or for the recovery of warehouseman's charges a warehouseman may sell goods upon which he has a lien for charges which have become due, by public auction or if any other mode of sale is prescribed in the case of goods of a particular kind, he may sell goods of that kind in that mode. The warehouseman shall give written notice of his intention to sell—

(a) to the person liable as debtor for the charges for which the lien exists;

(b) to a person who has served upon the warehouseman a notice in the prescribed form of his claim to be the owner of the goods or of some interest in them, and a person of whose interest in them the warehouseman has received notice as prescribed;

(c) to the grantee of a bill of sale mentioned in paragraph (b) of Subclause (1) of this measure; and

(d) to any other person of whose interest in the goods the warehouseman has knowledge. Where the charges are not paid on or before the day mentioned in the notice, an advertisement of the sale, describing the goods to be sold and stating the time and place of the sale, shall be published at least twice with an interval between the advertisements of at least seven days in a newspaper circulating in the locality where the sale is to be held, and if the newspaper is not a daily newspaper, in a daily newspaper circulating in the City of Perth. The sale shall be held not less than 14 days from the date of the first publication of the advertisement.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Under what Act did these people previously have protection?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: None in this State. They had to rely on the common law. They had a right to sue in the courts for any claim they might have for charges; and, of course, if the amount was not paid the goods could be seized by the bailiff and sold under warrant of execution. The local court nearest to the premises of the warehouseman may, on application made in the manner, prescribed at any time after the service of the notice, by a person having an interest in the goods, make an order staying further proceedings under this section for such period and on such terms as it deems just. Finally, the provisions as to sale of goods shall apply only to cases in which some part of the charges in arrear are in respect of a period more than 12 months prior to the date upon which the notice of intention to sell is given. So at least some portion of the claim of a warehouseman would have to be in arrear for 12 months before he would have the right of sale.

If at any time before the goods are sold a person claiming an interest or right of possession in the goods or, as the

case may be, in any of the goods, pays to the warehouseman the amount necessary to satisfy his lien on the goods to which the claim relates, including expenses, or if the person claims an interest or right of possession in some only of the goods, the expenses payable by him shall be a part of the expenses which bears the same proportion to the total expenses as the amount necessary to satisfy the lien on the goods claimed bears to the total amount otherwise necessary to satisfy the lien.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Did you have any special reason for bringing down this Bill?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, it was done at the request of the Warehousemen's Association.

The Minister for Education: The position is a little difficult under the existing law, is it not?

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, because they have the responsibility for continuing to store goods. They may be up for damages and the only thing they can do is to sue through the courts and where the owner of the goods cannot be found, as is often the case—goods are stored and either forgotten or the owners have vanished—it is sometimes difficult to serve the necessary process. The court's consent to serve a process by way of advertisement must be obtained and it is an expensive and difficult business.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Under this Bill people who store their goods will have adequate protection, I take it.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, they will have full protection because the lien does not apply unless the warehouseman gives notice that he is claiming a lien, and he can take steps to sell only after some portion of his charges has remained unpaid for 12 months. If payment is made by a person who has an interest in the goods, and who is not the person primarily liable for the charges, he gets the protection of the lien for the amount that he has paid. From the proceeds of the sale the warehouseman shall satisfy his lien and pay the surplus to the persons entitled to it. Where there are conflicting claims to the surplus the warehouseman shall pay the surplus into the nearest local court, and there it will be dealt with under the local court rules and shall be paid out to such person as the magistrate thinks fit.

Where no claim to the surplus is made within 10 days after the sale, the warehouseman shall within 14 days after the sale pay the surplus to the Treasurer, who shall pay it into the public account. If within six years after the money is so paid to the Treasurer, a claimant makes a demand against the Treasurer for the money so paid, the Treasurer, upon being

satisfied that the claimant is the owner of the money demanded by him, shall order and direct payment to him. The period of six years is selected as being the period after which, by the Statute of Limitation, no claim for money can be made against an ordinary individual. The same responsibility, in this case, is placed upon the Treasurer. He must, at law, return it to the owner if it is claimed within six years.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Sometimes they have gone beyond that.

The ATTORNEY GENERAL: Yes, if that time had expired I think the Treasurer would still return the money if he were satisfied that the claimant was the owner. But in these circumstances it would be an act of grace on the Government's part and not a payment which was due under the authority of the Act. Those are the major provisions of the Bill which, I think, is a reasonable one. A similar Act operates in each of the other States. In my view the owner of goods has full protection and I commend the measure to the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. Nulsen, debate adjourned.

BILL—RAILWAY (MUNDARING—MUNDARING WEIR) DISCONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (Hon. A. F. Watts—Stirling) [5.8] in moving the second reading said: This Bill deals with the closure of a short railway which, for a number of years, has run between Mundaring and Mundaring Weir. This section of line, which is 4½ miles in length, was last used for passenger service in July, 1950, and for goods operations in September, 1951. Since then all passengers requiring transport have been adequately served by a railway road bus service, and goods traffic, which is mainly the fruit and produce of settlers in the vicinity, has been transported by road to Mundaring siding. The Transport Board, in accordance with the provisions of Section 11 of the State Transport Co-ordination Act, has examined the proposal to close the line.

Hon. E. Nulsen: Has there been any objection from the people in that area?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I will come to that in a moment. The board reported on the 29th April, 1952, that inquiries made locally revealed no evidence to support the continuance of the line, and from its personal inspection of the district the board did not consider the railway would be of any future use, nor that any increase of the present road transport service was justified. The Mundaring Road Board has stated that it has no objection to the removal of the line.

The railway was created originally because of the passage of the Coolgardie-Goldfields Water Supply Loan Act which authorised the raising of a loan of £2,500,000 for the purpose of providing a permanent water supply for the Coolgardie goldfields. This, at that time, was a most ambitious project and it entailed the building of a large reservoir, which is known as Mundaring Weir, some five miles from the township of Mundaring. The line was constructed in order to transport the materials and pipes and other gear required for this project. The line was completed in 1898 and was built by the Public Works Department. This particular section cost £17,602.

The specific object of its construction having ended, the line was bought by the Railway Department in 1909 for £11,000, and was opened for traffic in September of that year. As will be seen, the passenger service has ceased for virtually two years and the goods service for something over one year. The Mundaring Road Board has expressed its agreement and there has been no consensus of complaint from the settlers in the vicinity. It is now desired to recover rails from the line, and it is estimated that there will be five miles of 60-lb. rails, 17 chains of 45-lb. rails, 10 sets of points and crossings and approximately 7,000 useful sleepers. They will be used in the work of maintaining other sections of line which are sadly in need of some degree of rehabilitation—this particularly applies to the 60-lb. rails. Consequently, I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. Nulsen, debate adjourned.

BILL—MARKETING OF ONIONS ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [5.12] in moving the second reading said: This Bill was introduced in another place. Its object is to enable the Onion Marketing Board to vary the price paid to growers for their onions, and to bring the parent Act into line with the Potato Marketing Act. At present the Marketing of Onions Act requires that the board shall pay the growers the same price throughout the season. The only way to vary the price is by the issue of proclamations. This is a cumbersome process as each proclamation represents a pool, and the price paid to growers can be varied only by the issue of a further proclamation. The board could apply to the Governor for the issue of a proclamation each fortnight if it desired to do so, but it is not difficult to imagine the tremendous administrative costs which would result.

Each proclamation would be a pool and the board would be continually paying growers. Members will appreciate the cost of conducting all these small pools. It requires a lot of work and involves the use of a good deal of stationery and postage. I have a personal knowledge of pools, particularly as they apply to the Dried Fruits Pool payments and, of course, it is necessary to conclude one pool before they set out to start another. There are times when there is only a small sum of money left in the pool to conclude it. But it requires all that work again of making a pool payment to the growers, and this amendment is designed to simplify the procedure.

Mr. W. Hegney: Do they have to consult the Prices Commissioner at all?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: I believe the Onion Board fixes their price.

Mr. W. Hegney: Like the Egg Marketing Board!

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: Seasonal conditions and growers' programmes vary from year to year, and it is extremely difficult for the board to foresee the period during which a different pool should be constituted and defined by proclamation. The Bill will allow the board to determine on what basis payment will be made to growers, but I feel that if the board has power to adjust payments to growers it will give them an incentive to provide more onions during periods when they have previously been in short supply.

Recently I think a shipment of onions came in from the Eastern States, and this completely upset the pool price of onions in this State. Should it work this way in practice, consumers will also benefit as they will not be dependent on supplies from the Eastern States or oversea. It will be possible to compensate growers for the cost of storing their onions and should encourage out-of-season production. That is all that this small measure provides, namely to give the board power under the Act to conduct these pools, and to do away with the necessity of issuing a proclamation each time it wants to set up another pool. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Lawrence, debate adjourned.

BILL—SHEEPSKINS (DRAFT ALLOWANCE PROHIBITION).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [5.17] in moving the second reading said: This Bill was introduced in another place and is on the file. It is intended to correct an injustice and I feel sure that it will have the support of this House. All sheepskins sold in Western Australia are subject to a de-

duction in weight of 1 lb. in each 1 cwt. as a draft allowance before the return to the grower is calculated. Here again, I know what draft allowances are. It took the dried fruit growers of this State quite a time to do away with the draft allowance oversea. When we shipped perhaps 400 or 500 tons of dried fruit to the Old Country there was a draft allowance of 1 lb. taken out of each case. That used to amount to tons and tons of dried fruit being lost as the result of this draft allowance being taken out.

This is an old practice and was introduced when weighing machines were relatively crude, and some allowance was considered necessary to protect the buyer from short weight due to inaccuracy of the old type of machine. Modern scales are accurate and are subject to periodical testing by the Weights and Measures Branch of the Police Department. It follows, therefore, that there is no justification for a continuance of the draft allowance, and it should be abolished. At one time wool was subject to this impost but it was excluded on the 1st July, 1938, when the Wool Draft Allowance Provision Act, 1936, came into operation. Skins were apparently overlooked at that time, and no provision was made in that Act for the abolition of the draft allowance on skins.

Mr. W. Hegney: What is the draft allowance now?

The MINISTER FOR LANDS: The draft allowance is 1 lb. on each cwt. Agents make an estimated deduction in weight on skins which are not considered to be thoroughly dry, and this coupled with the accuracy of present-day scales makes the draft allowance unnecessary. The abolition of the draft allowance on sheepskins was discussed at a meeting of the Agricultural Council in July last, when the Ministers for Agriculture representing all States agreed that there was no justification for the continuance of the draft allowance on sheepskins, which has already been abolished in most other countries. The total number of sheepskins exported and used locally in Western Australia in 1950-51 was 1.4 million. The total weight is not recorded, but on the assumption that the average weight per skin was the same for the total as for those exported, namely 6 lb., the total weight of skins would be 8.4 lb. million lb.

A draft allowance of 1 lb. in weight for every cwt. on 8.4 million lb. would be 75,000 lb. At the present value of half wool skins of approximately 3s. per lb., 75,000 lb. weight would be valued at approximately £11,250. It is obvious that this is an injustice to growers when we consider that an amount approximating £11,000 is not paid to them. The Farmers' Union and the Pastoralists' Association have requested the abolition of the draft allowance, and it was as a result of these

requests that Western Australia had the matter placed on the agenda of the last Agricultural Council meeting where, as I have already said, it was unanimously decided to ask that this draft allowance be disallowed. That is all this Bill proposes to do. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. E. Nulsen, debate adjourned.

BILL—TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT (Hon. V. Doney—Narrogin) [5.22] in moving the second reading said: The Bill just distributed to members contains some nine or 10 amendments. One of these amendments, and probably the most important of them, requires the erection of certain warning and direction signs and lights in the metropolitan area. This particular provision does not affect the rural areas. Incidentally a recommendation for this amendment was submitted to me by the Commissioner of Police, and I need not add that it was accepted very readily by the Department of Local Government. It might be as well if I quoted the types of sign to which I have just referred the numbers needed and the costs likely to be incurred, and a little later the type of street lights. I had better explain that the costs to which I intend referring include fixing charges as well as purchase costs. The road signs to be erected at some cross streets and other spots in the metropolitan area are these—

	£
657 "Major Road 'Stop' " Signs with approved white reflectors, at an approximate cost of £9 each	5,913
100 "School" Signs at an approximate cost of £2 each	200
100 "Speed Limit" Signs (those are the cats-eye type) showing "15" at an approximate cost of £2 each (without white reflectors)	200
20 "Speed limit" signs showing "30" with approved white reflectors at approximate cost £5 each	100
20 "Speed limit" signs showing "25" with approved white reflectors at approximate cost £5 each	100
20 "No entry" signs at approximate cost of £2 each	40
50 "Pedestrian crossing" signs with approved white reflectors at approximate £9 each	450
Approximate Total	7,003

Mr. Yates: Are those the requirements for the metropolitan area or for the State generally?

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: I have already explained that there is no reference to other than the metropolitan area. I mentioned also warning signs and lights. Those are the lights generally known as traffic lights and sometimes called street crossing lights. Shortly we shall have to give earnest consideration to the installation of these traffic or crossing lights.

Mr. Needham: At intersections?

THE MINISTER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT: Yes. The question of payment for these lights will also have to be decided. Upon inquiry I have found that in Sydney the installation and maintenance of traffic lights and signs are made a levy on the funds of the Transport and Highway Department, which receives the major amount of motor vehicle taxation. In Melbourne the cost of installing traffic lights and sign posting is born by the municipalities. Thus in both Victoria and New South Wales, the installation and maintenance costs of the items I have mentioned are provided for against the proceeds of motor vehicle registrations.

The Bill further provides that the cost per year of metropolitan lights and signs may not exceed an amount of £20,000, which sum will be withdrawn from the metropolitan traffic fees. I have some figures bearing upon the facts I have just mentioned. The total of traffic fees distributed to local authorities during the last four years has been as follows:—

1948-49	£220,246
1949-50	£230,492
1950-51	£243,492
1951-52	£260,492

I have a note to the effect that, if the rate of increase shown during the last few years is maintained, the effect of setting aside £20,000 for traffic lights and traffic signs would not be felt by the local authorities concerned. The meaning of that is that if the income from the traffic fees next year should be again, say, £260,492, instead of distributing that among the local authorities in the metropolitan area, the sum for distribution would be £240,492. When that had been distributed between the number of local authorities in the metropolitan area, the difference between the new and the normal payments would be infinitesimal. I am making that explanation to show that there is unlikely to be any complaint from the various local authorities in the metropolitan area with regard to this method. If the payment were not made from this source, the local authorities would still have to find the money from somewhere else, so

that will make this method as popular as any other that could be put in its place.

The Bill also proposes that the fee for a driver's license may be increased from 5s. to 10s. as, according to the Local Government Department, it ought justifiably to be, having regard to the rise in pretty well all other expenditure. A further amendment results from the recommendation of the Commissioner of Police that he be given power to suspend or cancel a license in the case of a person whose license to drive any motor vehicle is under suspension, or who is otherwise debarred from holding or obtaining a license to drive a motor vehicle in any other state or territory of the Commonwealth. The recommendation of the Commissioner of Police is strongly supported by the Local Government Department.

There are three or four other amendments, but I think they can very well be explained at the Committee stage. There is nevertheless one more to which I make some reference. It is an amendment which provides, on behalf of the Perth City Council, that the official car of the Lord Mayor be permitted to carry the City's crest in lieu of the customary number plate. I will give any further information during the Committee stage. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Mr. Styants, debate adjourned.

BILL—MARKETING OF BARLEY ACT ACT AMENDMENT (CONTINUANCE).

Message.

Message from the Governor received and read recommending appropriation for the purposes of the Bill.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR LANDS (Hon. L. Thorn—Toodyay) [5.34] in moving the second reading said: This is a Bill to continue the barley marketing Act which was first introduced in 1946 by the member for Melville when he was Minister for Agriculture. The life of the parent Act was originally three years, and in 1949 consideration had to be given to its continuance. There had been a change of Government, but we were perfectly satisfied with the operation of the parent Act and, at the request of growers, decided to carry it on for a further three years. The Act had operated so successfully that it was continued in its original form.

This Bill simply extends the life of the parent Act for another three years, and I feel sure that the House will give its approval to the measure. Production for the 1951-52 season was 144,891 bushels of 2-row and 232,406 bushels of 6-row barley. These figures were lower than

those of the previous year, which were 285,010 bushels and 271,259 bushels respectively.

For the 1950-51 season, 2-row manufacturing barley was priced at 10s. 3½d. per bushel, less freight, while this year the price is estimated to be 14s. 3½d. per bushel, less freight. Six-row barley was 13s. per bushel less freight for the 1950-51 season, while for the 1951-52 season it is estimated to be 17s. 6d. per bushel, on bag basis, net at grower's siding. For 1950-51, 2-row feed grade barley was 6s. 5d. per bushel, less freight, and 6-row was 6s. 2d. There is no 2-row feed grade barley this year, but it is estimated that the price of 6-row feed grade will be 11s. per bushel, less freight.

During the 1950-51 season, 6-row barley was handled and shipped through Albany for the first time. At that port 86,865 bushels were handled and this resulted in a considerable saving to southern growers. Last season an experiment was conducted in handling barley in bulk. There were no facilities at Albany for bulk-handling and it had to be shipped through Fremantle. The experiment was a success, 87,000 bushels of 6-row barley being handled; and it is expected that in the coming season nearly all the export barley will be in bulk. To facilitate transport, the bulk barley was drawn from the Fremantle and Geraldton zones and the requirements for local consumption were drawn from the Great Southern in bags.

In company with the Minister for Agriculture, I recently inspected the barley crops in the Toodyay district. It is expected that the production there will be considerably higher this year than in past years. Growers in the districts from Toodyay to Calingiri and towards Wongan Hills have had quite good rains, and there is no doubt that the crops are looking remarkably well. Unfortunately, owing to the weather we have had during the last week or so, the barley has been so strong and high that a lot of it has gone to the ground, and I can appreciate that there may be some difficulty in harvesting it. However, there are indications that there will be quite an increase in production in those districts. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [5.40]: There is no reason why the passage of the Bill, which as the Minister has said, is purely a continuance measure should be delayed. This marketing board has justified its existence. It has conferred a benefit on the producer and has caused no hardship to the consumer. I have had occasion previously to refer to the constitution of the board, which was framed after consultation with all sections of the industry, and with those who would be

consumers of the product. Because of the way in which the board has functioned and the general satisfaction it has given, I think its life should be continued. I therefore support the second reading of the Bill.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

BILL—ALBANY PUBLIC CEMETERIES SUBSIDIES.

Second Reading.

MR. HILL (Albany) [5.23] in moving the second reading said: The Bill is very short, and it concerns only the Albany Municipality and the Albany Road District. It is for the purpose of enabling these bodies to subsidise the Albany Cemetery Board. It will be an impossible job for the board to carry on if the Bill is not passed. At present the cemeteries are in the municipality. Up until about 10 years ago they were controlled by the various churches. The Albany Cemetery Board was appointed and constitutionally gazetted, and the churches revested the lands in the Crown, and they have been made into reserve No. 22406 and are now under the control of the Albany Cemetery Board. The old cemetery has just about reached its capacity, and the new one is essential.

The new cemetery is Reserve No. 23074 and is in the Albany Road District. So it can be seen that at present the Albany Road Board cannot subsidise the cemetery board for the old cemetery, and the municipality cannot subsidise the board for the new cemetery in the road district. The Bill seeks to empower the municipality and the road board to pay out of their own funds, or from moneys collected by a special rate, to the Albany Cemetery Board, money for the purpose of establishing, maintaining or managing the Albany public cemeteries, or for the repayment of any moneys that have been borrowed.

Those of us who are interested in the old cemetery do not want to see it become like the East Perth Cemetery, so funds will be needed to maintain it in perpetuity. To establish a new cemetery means an expenditure of something like £8,000. This amount has been reduced to about £5,000, and the Housing Commission has stepped in, and saved the board about £2,500 by providing a rental home for the caretaker. At present the cemetery board is being financed by an overdraft through the R. & I. Bank. That is why it is necessary to include provision in the Bill to repay money which may have been borrowed.

The Bill provides for a rate of up to ¼d. in the £ on the unimproved value, or 2d. in the £ on the annual rental value on ratable land in the Albany district. The rate of ¼d. in the £ would provide £1,700 per annum. The Albany district extends over a considerable area, and in the North-East portion the ratepayers are more interested in Gnowangerup and Borden than they are in Albany. The Bill has been approved by the Treasury and the Lands Department, and it is satisfactory to the Rural Bank. The feeling in Albany is strongly in favour of it. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

MR. GRAHAM (East Perth) [5.47]: From a cursory look at the Bill, I have no objection to it. The chief purpose for my rising is to protest to the Government against the preferential treatment extended to a private member, in connection with his business, when certain steps have been taken to block other private members, some of whom have urgent business on the notice paper.

The Premier: You are a bit unfortunate in this connection. I marked the notice paper last night, but unfortunately there was some mistake. I wanted to give the member for Middle Swan an opportunity to introduce his Bill. I asked him today, whether, if time permitted, he would be prepared to introduce it, but he was not quite ready. It was intended that these two Bills should be introduced today.

Mr. GRAHAM: I do not intend to make an issue of this, but the Premier is well aware that there are some items of considerable importance and urgency, on the notice paper. I think it is wrong that there should be a promotion of business on the notice paper in favour of a supporter of the Government, when there has been a distinct bias shown against members of the Opposition who have sought to proceed with certain matters on their own account.

HON. J. T. TONKIN (Melville) [5.50]: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition desires me to say that he is wholly in accord with the proposal contained in the Bill and does not desire to delay its passage. On his behalf I therefore have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

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

House adjourned at 5.52 p.m.