

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: As far as possible by this measure, I want to avoid the idea that politics will be soiled. As far as we are able, we should strive to cleanse politics wherever possible.

Mr. Potter: Enlarge the franchise.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: While members opposite feel there has been no necessity for the public to say, "This is dirty politics," I would like to add that there is a large percentage of the people, and the whole Opposition, who feel that there has been dirt in politics here.

Mr. May: Something like the party propaganda we got from Sydney.

Hon. Sir Ross McLarty: He answered you.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I look forward to the time when the hon. member reads the answer to his letter. The member for Subiaco said that this had been done before. Never before has it been done with the intention of giving any party a political advantage.

Mr. Potter: It has never been done to give a party a political advantage.

Mr. ROSS HUTCHINSON: I commend the Bill to the House. It would be strong meat for the Government to swallow; but if it is big enough, it will be able to do so. I hope the public will be well and truly informed as to what has happened in the past and what can happen again in the future.

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

Ayes	15
Noes	23

Majority against 8

Ayes.

Mr. Bovell	Mr. W. Manning
Mr. Brand	Sir Ross McLarty
Mr. Cornell	Mr. Perkins
Mr. Court	Mr. Roberts
Mr. Crommelin	Mr. Watts
Mr. Grayden	Mr. Wild
Mr. Hearman	Mr. Hutchinson
Mr. I. Manning	

Noes.

Mr. Andrew	Mr. Marshall
Mr. Brady	Mr. Molr
Mr. Evans	Mr. Norton
Mr. Gaffy	Mr. O'Brien
Mr. Graham	Mr. Potter
Mr. Hall	Mr. Rhatigan
Mr. Heal	Mr. Rodoreda
Mr. W. Hegney	Mr. Sewell
Mr. Hoar	Mr. Toms
Mr. Jamieson	Mr. Tonkin
Mr. Johnson	Mr. May
Mr. Lawrence	

Pairs.

Ayes.	Noes.
Mr. Thorn	Mr. Kelly
Mr. Oldfield	Mr. Hawke
Mr. Nalder	Mr. Sleeman
Mr. Owen	Mr. Lapham
Mr. Ackland	Mr. Nulsen

Question thus negatived.

Bill defeated.

House adjourned at 11.12 p.m.

Legislative Council

Thursday, 25th October, 1956.

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The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 3.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

WAR SERVICE LAND SETTLEMENT.

(a) Bulldozing at Denbarker and Narrikup.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) When were tenders called for bulldozing for clearing properties for war service land settlement in the Denbarker and Narrikup areas?

(2) How many tenders were received?

(3) Was any tender accepted?

(4) Was the lowest tender accepted?

(5) If not, what were the various tender rates, and why was the lowest tender not accepted?

The MINISTER replied:

Tenders are not called for heavy clearing on an acreage basis, as this method did prove unsatisfactory. At Narrikup all clearing was carried out by Government machines. At Denbarker the greater portion of clearing operations has been carried out by war service land settlement machines. To hasten development last year, a number of known experienced contractors were employed on an hourly basis.

(b) Narrikup Properties.

Hon. J. McI. THOMSON asked the Minister for Railways:

(1) Are there any properties in the Narrikup area which have been developed, or partly developed for war service land settlement, and which it has now been decided are not to proceed to allotment to any settler?

(2) If so—

- (a) how many are there?
- (b) what are the reasons for abandonment?
- (c) where are they actually situated?

The MINISTER replied:

- (1) No.
- (2) See answer to No. (1).

SITTING DAYS AND HOURS.

Extension by Suspension of Standing Orders.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH (without notice) asked the Chief Secretary:

In view of the state of the notice paper of this House and the length of the notice paper in another place, and in view of the Chief Secretary's desire to give members of this House every opportunity to discuss the legislation now before us and that which will be presented to us in the next few days, will he indicate to the House when he proposes to move for a suspension of Standing Orders in order to increase the sitting days and hours of this House so that ample consideration will be given to legislation, and so as to avoid a repetition of the practice of dealing with legislation in the early hours of the morning and almost up to Christmas as has occurred in previous years?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied:

When I shall move for the suspension of Standing Orders in order to extend the sitting days and hours, I am not in a position to say at the moment. However, with co-operation from all members of the House, I feel sure we can get through our programme without sitting into the early hours of the morning as the hon. member anticipates. When I say, "with co-operation from all members," I mean no unduly long adjournments of debates after Bills have been introduced. If members will co-operate in this respect, we will get through the legislation a great deal faster than usual. At the moment, however, I am not in a position to say when Standing Orders will be suspended.

BILL—FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [3.40] in moving the second reading said: The object of this Bill is to allow friendly society dispensaries to supply and sell medicines and appliances to any person whether or not a member of a friendly society. These dispensaries are entirely autonomous. They must pay their own way, and they have no call whatsoever on any other friendly society funds.

I have been informed by the Friendly Societies Council in this State that Western Australia is now the only State in which friendly society dispensaries are not allowed to trade with the public.

In the past it has been argued that as friendly society dispensaries did not pay taxation, they would have an advantage over private chemists whose profits were taxable. However, as a result of the Commonwealth's Income Tax and Social Services Contribution Act, friendly society dispensaries have been subject to taxation since the 4th November, 1955.

As members know, for the payment of a small quarterly contribution, friendly society dispensary members and their dependants are supplied with medicines at a considerably reduced price. The dispensaries work on a very narrow margin, and the imposing of taxation has created a great strain on their finances which, if this Bill is not passed, might necessitate an increase in the amount of quarterly contributions or a reduction of benefits.

The vast majority of friendly society dispensary members belong to the lower income bracket, and any increase in charges or reduction in benefits would add to their undoubted financial problems. The added income resulting from trading with the public would enable the dispensaries not to increase their charges or reduce their benefits.

The Commonwealth Government is aware of the valuable service given by friendly society dispensaries, and has authorised any member of the public to have his National Health Act prescription or his pensioner medical service prescription dispensed at any friendly society dispensary which was operating as at the 1st August, 1945. Dispensaries which commenced after that date can supply members and dependants only. However, should the prescription be for, say, eye drops or nasal drops, the dispensary could not supply a dropper unless the patient was a member of a friendly society. It is to correct anomalies such as this, and to bring Western Australia into line with the other States that this Bill is introduced. Friendly society dispensaries are located in Perth, Leederville, Fremantle, Victoria Park, Subiaco and Boulder. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. L. A. Logan, debate adjourned.

BILL—POLICE ACT AMENDMENT (No. 1).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [3.43] in moving the second reading said: All members of this House will have observed with regret the alarming increase in this State in the tendency in brawls or other arguments for the use

by certain cliques of lethal weapons such as the knife and other types of weapons which, apart from their murderous attributes, are obnoxious from our point of view.

The reasons for this, of course, fall into two categories. Firstly, there is the fact that included in our very valuable migration programme have been southern European migrants, who are accustomed to the use of the knife in self-defence and in argument; and secondly, there has been the extension into this State of youth movements of a regrettable type. It goes without saying that this tendency must be stamped out. To do so it is necessary to include in our legislation a sufficient deterrent and punishment.

This Bill seeks to amend the Police Act to provide that any person who is found carrying a lethal weapon without lawful excuse can be convicted as an idle and disorderly person and imprisoned for a maximum term of six months.

Since December, 1954, knife attacks have caused three deaths and have injured eight other people. There was no actual premeditation in eight of these cases, the knife being used solely in a moment of heat. It is apparent that there must be provision enabling the warning of migrants from southern European countries that Australia frowns on the use of weapons.

The excuses of custom and ignorance might possibly be made for these migrants, but there can be no excuse whatsoever for the use by our own youth of knives and such despicable weapons as sharpened bicycle chains, knuckledusters and the type of loaded bludgeon known as a "cosh."

Remembering the exuberance of their own youth, I am sure members have regarded with amusement and tolerance the exaggerated dress fashions and behaviour of some of the modern youth of both sexes. The mature experience of members has enabled them to realise that this has been merely an expression of individuality and rebellion against conformity, a phase which very few of us fail to experience.

But it is an entirely different story when hoodlums band together in gang warfare, and it has been necessary for very firm action to be taken by the police to curb these dangerous attacks of rowdiness. The police have been able to interrupt or to prevent clashes between some of these different groups; but it is known that injuries have been caused that have not come officially to police notice, and that the friends of those hurt have preferred to take violent retributive action of their own.

It is hoped that the passing of this Bill, and the publicity that will be given to it, will deter the use and carrying by vicious and irresponsible persons of weapons which the normal Western Australian regards with alarm and disgust. Victoria, New

South Wales and South Australia possess legislation forbidding any person from carrying an offensive weapon.

Paragraph 4 of Section 65 of the principal Act makes it an offence if a person found in possession of a weapon cannot give a good account of his means of support. This provision cannot be applied in most of the cases I have quoted, as, in the majority of these, the person concerned is in employment. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham, debate adjourned.

BILL—BETTING CONTROL ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [3.47] in moving the second reading said: This is the first of two Bills, the purpose of which is to increase both the amount of betting tax paid by bookmakers and that proportion of the tax that is retained by the racing and trotting clubs.

Betting legislation has now been in operation for a little more than a year; and I am of the opinion that it has succeeded in its primary object of eradicating what had undoubtedly developed into a social evil. I refer to the sordid method of street-corner and hotel starting-price betting which, while an offence to most right-thinking people, presented many difficulties so far as human nature and punitive action were concerned.

While it is in the nature of an experiment so far as this State is concerned, it must be remembered that betting control has operated successfully in Tasmania for some years, and quite recently the British Government indicated its intention to license off-course premises.

The licensing in this State of betting shops has been said to be responsible for a reduction in attendance at racing and trotting meetings. While the principal spokesman for the W.A. Trotting Association is adamant that this is the sole reason for the reduced attendances, W.A. Turf Club officials do not agree with him. The W.A. Turf Club concedes that economic conditions have affected attendances and patronage of bookmakers and the totalisator. This fall in attendances has been experienced in other States where licensed off-course betting does not exist.

As the Bill seeks to differentiate in the tax imposed on off-course and on-course bookmaking, it becomes necessary to provide definitions of "off-course turnover" and "on-course turnover." Members will note that these definitions include what are known as commissions. This term, as I suppose most members are aware, refers to sums of money which certain persons place on certain horses. If the bookmaker

concerned considers the sum is too large for him to hold, he distributes a proportion of it among other bookmakers and this reduces the risk of loss to himself.

A legal doubt exists as to whether betting tax can be collected when this is done, and the Commissioner of Stamps has met with some resistance in this regard from one off-course bookmaker. The definitions proposed by the Bill will clarify the matter and indicate clearly that commissions are subject to taxation.

The Bill provides that the measure shall come into operation on a proclaimed day. This, of course, is necessary, as a specific date will have to be set from which the new rates of tax will operate. It is proposed that, as from the proclaimed day, on-course bookmakers shall pay a certain tax on turnover of up to £50,000. An increased tax will be payable on turnover exceeding £50,000. Off-course bookmakers will pay increased tax on their entire turnover, whether under or over £50,000.

Representations have been made to the Government for increases in the amounts of betting tax which are retained by the racing and trotting clubs. At present, racing clubs are allowed to retain 20 per cent. of the tax paid by on-course bookmakers. The clubs are required to utilise one-half of the proceeds towards increasing stakes and may use the remaining half as they think fit. The Bill provides that this 20 per cent. shall be increased to 60 per cent. This is a substantial increase; and in view of the reduced patronage that is evident, should be of considerable assistance to the clubs.

At present, the W.A. Turf Club and the W.A. Trotting Association are each paid 10 per cent. of the tax collected from licensed off-course bookmakers. This applies to bets made on races in and outside Western Australia. As it does not seem right that local clubs should benefit from bets placed off the course on races in the Eastern States, the Bill proposes to confine the clubs' 10 per cent to races in Western Australia. I will explain the increased financial benefits to the club when I introduce the complementary taxing measure. I move —

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. Murray, debate adjourned.

BILL—BOOKMAKERS BETTING TAX ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [3.50] in moving the second reading said: This is the complementary Bill to which I referred when introducing the previous measure. At present, bookmakers are required by the parent Act to pay a tax of 1½ per cent. on all

bets accepted by them. The Bill seeks to alter this by imposing varying rates of taxes. Under these proposals off-course operators would pay a flat rate of 2 per cent. and on-course bookmakers would pay the present figure of 1½ per cent. on that part of their turnover which does not exceed £50,000, and 1½ per cent. on turnover in excess of £50,000.

The reason for not increasing the tax on on-course turnovers of under £50,000 is that the smaller on-course bookmakers do not operate on the average on as many days as the off-course operators. It is felt also that as on-course bookmakers do make some practical contribution to racing and trotting business by attracting people to the course, they should be entitled to a lower rate of taxation than that paid by the bookmaker who is not part of the racing set-up on the actual course.

Based on operations for the year ended the 31st August, 1956, these increases would add a further £133,000 annually to the betting tax collection. I will explain how the added amount will affect Government revenue and the racing and trotting interests. Under the proposals the Government will receive 40 per cent. of the new taxes on on-course turnover as against 80 per cent. of the present taxes.

On the basis of operations for the year ended the 31st August, 1956, this 40 per cent. would amount to £32,776 a year on racing meetings, and £14,060 on trotting meetings, making a total of £46,836 from on-course turnover. In respect to off-course turnover, the Government will continue to receive the present figure of 90 per cent. Based on last year's operations this will return £126,464 to the Government from racing meetings within the State, and £47,390 from trotting meetings in Western Australia. The tax on races outside the State will bring in £140,515. Members are aware that betting is not conducted here on trotting events held outside Western Australia.

The total of the figures I have given, that is in connection with both on-course and off-course turnover, is £361,205. As the return to the Government last year was £274,839, the increase to the Government under the new proposals is estimated to be £86,366. This, of course, is based on last year's figures, and may be more or less, depending on the business done by the bookmakers.

This increase, however, could be adversely affected by the consideration the Government is giving to reducing bookmakers' licence fees. Last year these fees totalled £80,745 of which £5,745 comprised advance payments for the current year. The fees for the actual year, therefore, were £75,000. If some reductions are approved, the income from licences would be reduced and might considerably affect the increase of £86,366 resulting from the new turnover tax.

I will now deal with the effect the proposals would have on the racing and trotting clubs, and will take the on-course amounts first. Last year, at the present rate of 20 per cent., the racing clubs received £15,117. The increase to 60 per cent. would return the clubs £49,163 or over three times as much as last year. The proposal to levy the present tax of 1½ per cent. on turnover of up to £50,000 would result in £42,926, as last year's total turnover on up to £50,000 was £3,434,143. By taxing turnover of more than £50,000 at 1½ per cent. a sum of £39,013 would be paid on £2,600,885.

Last year's turnovers of up to £50,000 at trotting meetings amounted to £1,806,372. A tax of 1½ per cent. on this would amount to £22,578; and 1½ per cent. on £838,143, the over £50,000 figures, would amount to £12,571. This is a total turnover tax for on-course trotting bookmakers of £35,149. Under the new proposals, the trotting clubs' share of this would be £21,090, as against £6,607 last year.

The turnover last year for all off-course betting was £16,684,210. The proposed new flat rate tax of 2 per cent. would amount to £333,684, of which £281,029 would represent racing activities and £52,655 trotting events. The racing figures are evenly divided between betting on races within the State and that on those outside the State. The racing clubs' share of 10 per cent. of this tax would be £14,051, and the trotting clubs would receive £5,265.

Now to compare the total amounts it is estimated the clubs would receive under the new proposals, with the actual amounts they received last year. The total amounts the racing clubs received last year from turnover tax on both on-course and off-course operations was £32,702. The new taxes would give them £63,215 or practically double last year's revenue.

Last year the trotting clubs' share of the tax was £10,147. The new proposal would return them £26,335 or 2½ times last year's figures. It can therefore be seen that while the proposals more than double last year's share to the trotting clubs and almost double that of the racing clubs, the increase to the Government is only about one-third of last year's figure and this would be curtailed if bookmakers' licence fees are reduced. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. J. Murray, debate adjourned.

BILL—PIG INDUSTRY COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [3.58] in moving the second reading said: The principal Act

was introduced in 1942 for the purpose of establishing a fund to provide compensation when pigs and carcasses of pigs were destroyed by reason of the pig having contracted tuberculosis, swine fever, swine erysipelas, para-typhoid or any diseases that might be proclaimed from time to time. This proposal was first submitted in 1939 but was rejected by the pig producers and treatment interests. At that time disease was not a problem, and this was probably the reason for the non-acceptance of the proposal.

Subsequently the Midland Junction agents arranged to deduct a small amount from the sale of pigs of over 40s. in value for the purpose of covering buyers from losses sustained through diseased animals.

An outbreak of swine fever which occurred in October, 1942, appeared to originate in frozen pork brought to the State from an overseas country where the disease was prevalent. A relaxation of some of the quarantine laws brought about by conditions associated with the war, established a risk that numerous pests and diseases could be introduced from other countries. Approximately 3,000 pigs were destroyed in five or six weeks, before the outbreak was finally brought under control by the Department of Agriculture.

The parent Act provided for the creation of the Pig Industry Compensation Fund, into which is paid all sums received from stamp duty on the sale of pigs and from penalties imposed under the Act. The amount of duty varies according to the sale value of the pig, with a maximum duty on any one pig of 3s. 9d. This maximum was increased from 2s. 6d. in 1951.

The amount of compensation paid is three-quarters of the market value of the pig; but for the purpose of assessing compensation, the maximum market value is set at £15. It was increased from £10 to this figure in 1951. The Meat and Allied Trades Federation has proposed that the maximum stamp duty be increased from 3s. 9d. to 5s.; and the maximum figure for market value, from £15 to £24. These increases reflect the changes in monetary values, and will make allowance for possible variations in the market value of pigs.

The operation of the principal Act has a steadying effect on market values, as it affords protection against loss to buyers, who would otherwise buy at a lower market price to protect themselves against possible loss when the pigs are slaughtered and subjected to inspection. Under the Act, compensation is payable to pig butchers who claim as owners. The Act assists the department in the control of pig diseases in the State, owners being ready to notify outbreaks of disease without fear of loss.

Compensation is paid to farmers who have pigs condemned for disease or following the death of pigs from disease on

their properties when certified by a veterinary surgeon, inspector under the Stock Diseases Act, or meat inspector.

For the information of members I would mention that the annual income of the fund has amounted to:—

	£	s.	d.
1951-52	8,005	14	6
1952-53	9,334	6	1
1953-54	12,210	13	3
1954-55	8,692	14	8
1955-56	11,292	3	10
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	49,535	12	4

Annual payments have been—

	£	s.	d.
1951-52	3,488	7	10
1952-53	3,489	19	7
1953-54	2,108	18	0
1954-55	3,589	11	3
1955-56	2,605	14	2
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	15,282	10	10

Therefore the fund, at the moment, would show a credit balance of £34,000 odd. Members may wish to know why it is proposed to increase the payments at a time when the fund is in such a healthy condition; but if they recall the number of pigs that died as a result of disease in one five or six weeks' period, they will see that the fund could easily be depleted should such an outbreak occur at present. The fund has proved to be very beneficial to the pig industry generally, and the measure deserves the support of the House. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. L. C. Diver, debate adjourned.

BILL—LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT (No. 3).

Second Reading.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY (Hon. G. Fraser—West) [4.5] in moving the second reading said: This Bill seeks to increase the rates of percentages used in assessing the annual fees payable by licensees. The Grants Commission has penalised the State when determining the amount of the grant to be recommended as the collections in this State from liquor taxation have been substantially less than the amounts that would have been collected had the tax been levied at the rates operating in the non-claimant or standard States.

The yield from liquor licensing revenue in 1955-56 was £300,545, which is estimated to be approximately £150,000 below standard in that year. This will lead to an unfavourable adjustment of a like sum in

the Grants Commission's assessment of State effort in this field. It is expected that the additional revenue which would be collected under the proposals in the Bill would be approximately £120,000.

The Bill also provides for the percentage rates to follow the practice in other States of having a uniform basis of taxation for all classes of licence. Under the existing legislation, the percentage rate for clubs, temporary, brewers and spirit merchants is one per cent. less than for other licences, such as publican's general, hotel, wine and beer licences.

Tax is levied on the net value of purchases excluding excise and costs of carriage. Under the Bill, the fees for these types of licence will be increased from 5 per cent to 8½ per cent. Others will be increased from 6 per cent. to 8½ per cent. The vice-president of the Licensed Victuallers' Association has advised the Treasurer that its members would be able to carry the increase to 8½ per cent. I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

On motion by Hon. N. E. Baxter, debate adjourned.

BILL—PROFITEERING AND UNFAIR TRADING PREVENTION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. R. C. MATTISKE (Metropolitan) [4.7]: I have paid close attention to the remarks of previous speakers and particularly the Chief Secretary, who urged members to consider this measure on a non-party basis. I sincerely hope all members will speak and vote on the measure on that basis, so that we may act in the interests of the State as a whole instead of merely looking after the interests of certain sections of the people.

I am strongly opposed to any person who, through advantageous conditions or circumstances, is able to exploit his fellow men, and I feel that we should take strong disciplinary action in that regard. In the immediate postwar period we certainly experienced economic conditions which were conducive to exploitation, and members will recall that at that time we had operating a price control which partly coped with the position. I say "partly" advisedly, because there were certain persons who, having been granted a satisfactory price by the Prices Commissioner, were only too glad to shelter under his cloak when clients complained of prices being too high.

There is another aspect in which the then legislation was not complete, in that it dealt with goods and services but did not deal with labour. We all recall that

in the immediate postwar period the building industry was in dire straits, as the result of which we were considerably behind in supplies of building materials and labour. Consequently conditions were right for those who had the materials and labour to exploit the public generally. Under the price-control conditions then obtaining, certain building materials were controlled.

Members will recall, also, that during those abnormal times unorthodox methods were adopted in an endeavour to overcome the housing shortage. Self-help builders were encouraged and given support, with the result that many persons whose avocation was far removed from house building were engaged over week-ends and in other spare time they had in an endeavour to erect their own homes. They were protected to a degree, so far as materials were concerned, as those were subject to price control; but they did not have complete protection so far as labour was concerned.

Tradesmen, and particularly carpenters, bricklayers, plasterers and others who were essential to the self-help builder, and who made their services available at week-ends, unfortunately did exploit their fellow citizens. There were many instances where tradesmen were charging £5 per day and upwards for their services, and I feel that was a form of exploitation just as bad as that of the individual who sold goods at an enhanced price. I therefore contend that the then legislation was not complete.

The measure which we now have before us is commendable in many ways though I think it, too, is quite incomplete, and I feel that another important feature is that it is about 10 years too late. In the immediate postwar period we had conditions where the supply of consumer goods was considerably behind the demand and hence we had conditions which were ripe for exploitation and profiteering. At present, fortunately, we have passed through that stage and now have a condition in which consumer goods exceed demand; the very condition in which the normal operations of free enterprise will ensure that prices do come down.

The Premier has told us that that is the case and that we are oversupplied in most commodities. Our Minister for Housing has told us that the housing problem has now been solved; and therefore I cannot see why we should be so very concerned at the present juncture, when the conditions are so favourable for price control or anti-profiteering, or whatever we like to call it, to apply itself through normal economic means.

Various speakers during the debate have mentioned isolated instances where they suspect that profiteering might be possible, but those instances do not of themselves warrant our passing legislation

which is going to be extremely cumbersome of administration, and extremely costly to the State, not only financially and at a stage when our finances cannot afford it, but costly also to the extent that we are likely to have repercussions from outside the State.

I recently attended a building industry conference in Melbourne, at which there were present representatives of the building industry throughout Australia. Those men were very well informed as to the nature of this legislation and were alarmed at the consequences it could have. Many of them, manufacturers with branches or agencies in this State, openly admitted that if the legislation were passed in its existing form they would certainly have to give consideration to altering their policy so far as the supply of goods to Western Australia was concerned. If that unfortunate condition should eventuate, I feel we would then face shortages of certain goods in this State—goods that we cannot make here, and for the manufacture of which we rely on the Eastern States.

I am firmly of the opinion that there is absolutely no need for this legislation as it stands at present. I may be wrong. I would strongly urge the House to make haste slowly. By that, I mean we already know that a select committee in another place is inquiring into restrictive trade practices. Would it not be better to await the outcome of that committee's findings, to see for sure whether there does actually exist in this State a condition, in which anti-profiteering measures are necessary? It may happen that that committee would find that there is no need for an anti-profiteering measure, in which case there would be no need for this legislation, or for the huge cost that it would involve.

On the other hand, if the select committee inquiring into these restrictive trade practices finds that there does exist that unfortunate position let us then take the appropriate action against those directly concerned. If we rush into this legislation blindly now, we will do so without the support of industry and commerce and without the support of a large section of the public. After we have seen the finding of the select committee to which I have referred, if such action is warranted then let us take it; and I am certain we would have the full support of industry and the public, because no one would tolerate for a moment any such unfair practices.

I would strongly commend to the House that we urge the Government to act along these lines: Firstly, to await the result of the investigations of the select committee inquiring into restrictive trade practices; secondly, to co-operate closely with the leaders of commerce and industry in an endeavour to find out the best means of

attacking the individuals directly concerned; and, thirdly, to introduce the necessary legislation to give effect to it. If that course of action were adopted we would be able to remain strongly united in this State and continue our healthy growth. Members should consider that aspect seriously.

HON. L. C. DIVER (Central) [4.20]: I rise to support the second reading of this Bill, conscious of all that has been said by those who opposed it. I trust that I will be able to support the Bill more fully if certain amendments are agreed to in the Committee stage. I say that because I feel that this measure is one step towards the solution of a series of facets that confront our community in Australia.

In this chamber, we have heard mention of how sectional interests will affect this one and that one. However, insufficient stress has been laid on the position that will be occupied by our country; insufficient stress has been laid on those people who are living on fixed incomes—such as civilian widows, invalid pensioners, old-age pensioners and that group of professional people who make provision for the eventide of their life during their working days, in order to enable them to have a tangible sum of money with which to live in reasonable comfort in the latter years of their lives.

Hon. H. K. Watson: They are the forgotten people.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: They certainly are.

Hon. H. K. Watson: And they are also forgotten under this Bill.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: No; I cannot agree with the hon. member, because he would have us continue, continue, and still continue with a cycle of inflation. He believes in nobody making a sacrifice; he said so in his speech yesterday.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I did nothing of the kind.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: The hon. member said, "Leave us alone; everything will work out all right." The only thing with which the hon. member would agree would be the pegging of wages. I agree that the question of increases in wages has to be tackled, but at the moment I am dealing with the under-privileged people who are relying either on pensions or on fixed incomes.

Hon. H. K. Watson: And you are still making them buy their meat at auctions.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I will deal with that interjection in due course. I was speaking of the people who are on the lowest rung of fortune's ladder at the moment; those who have no brick and mortar investment; those who have no substantial interests in shares of any worth—while institution which can follow the inflationary spiral.

I feel the time has arrived when we should all face up to what is ahead of us; the time when we will all have to make

sacrifices. We have become a nation of accusers; a nation of finger-pointers—all pointing at the other fellow and indicating his shortcomings, while not being prepared to make any sacrifice ourselves.

It has been said that it would be a fearful thing to interfere with private enterprise. We are told, "Leave private enterprise to itself and it will work out its own salvation!" If private enterprise was prepared to compete freely, I would agree with that contention and with those people who oppose the Bill. But that is not a fact; and the people opposed to the measure know it as well as I do.

There are many groups of people—and I do not blame them, because they endeavour to faithfully represent their respective groups—who manufacture articles; and, having done so, set the price for those articles. They have what constitutes unofficial price fixing. I do not suggest that all those groups are offending; I do not think they are. I do think, however, that some of them are offending. The man in the street does not know—I do not know—which group may be offending. We are assured that everything concerning their affairs is fair and above board.

On the other hand it is freely admitted in the city that improper practices are taking place between the wholesaler and the retailer. That being so, is it not fair and just that we, as the representatives of the people, when making laws, should provide the necessary machinery for an inquiry to be made when there is sufficient ground or cause for one, to ascertain whether that state of affairs does exist, and whether a certain group is taking an unfair profit as a result of its privileged position? Is there anything wrong in appointing a tribunal to look after the interests of the people?

Hon. J. Murray: There is no tribunal provided in the Bill.

Hon. R. C. Mattiske: It is wrong to give one man so much power.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I said I would support the Bill provided certain amendments were made to it, and I have no doubt that the measure could be amended in such a manner. I think it is right that the tribunal I have mentioned should be appointed. If that is offensive to those who oppose the Bill then the Government should be empowered to make the necessary inquiry. As I see the overall picture of every section of our community having to make a sacrifice, I feel it is only right that we should have some law which will enable these inquiries to take place, not along the lines mentioned by some members who referred to persecution and the like; not at all.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is what the Bill facilitates.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: If we look up the statutes that have been passed, we will find that many of them which provide for similar processes could be open to a similar charge. The point is that not only should we endeavour to create this facility but we should try to be fair. Any legislation passed should also be of such a nature as to create confidence in the people whom we are going to ask to make sacrifices; it should appear to be just, as well as be just.

I envisage that when we are finished dealing with this Bill it will be of such a nature that there will be certain things which from time to time—a limited number—will require attention; but the mere fact that such a piece of legislation is on the statute book will act as a deterrent to those who otherwise would exploit their position.

I cannot foresee the creation of the great monster that some people would have us believe we are going to create. I would say here and now that, whoever may be appointed to act as commissioner under this Bill, if he were to exercise his powers in the manner foreshadowed by all those who oppose the measure, then on the next appearance of the legislation before this Chamber I would take the necessary steps to end its life.

Mention was made of wartime controls. I do not think either the Minister or the Government for one moment contemplates the reintroduction of anything of that nature. It has been said by Mr. Watson that if this Bill does become law, all sections of the community should come under its provisions. However, I would like to inform the House that during the period of wartime controls there was not one primary producer who offended against that legislation to the extent that it was necessary to have even a formal inquiry into his affairs. So that just shows to what extent red herrings can be drawn across our trail.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Weren't all primary producers' products controlled and taken off them literally?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: No; they were not! Mention has been made of why the auction system should not be included, and it came from a champion of free enterprise. He amazed me, for when certain sections of the wool-producing industry contemplated having an organisation to carry on after Joint Organisation concluded its operations at the end of the war, it was the supporters of free enterprise who told us of the virtues of the auction system and how it gave a true value of a commodity. Yet I live to see the day when the man who is looked on as the leader in this House of free enterprise turns around and queries the wisdom of the auction system.

Hon. J. Murray: Not the wisdom; why it is not included in the Bill.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Mention has been made of controlling primary produce. It is a remarkable thing that on a couple of occasions "The West Australian" has mentioned certain subjects. One is the wheat industry, and the other is the petrol marketing industry, of both of which I think I am now fitted to say I have some knowledge. In both those instances their ideas and my ideas conflict. It is rather interesting in regard to the former—that is the wheat industry—that they would have had the wheat farmer reduce his acreage by 20 per cent. so as to reduce the wheat production in Western Australia.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That is the principle on which the Potato Board works.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I am almost alarmed at the professed ignorance of Mr. Watson, because the potato industry is one which relies substantially over the years on the sale of its commodity within the State of Western Australia. But for the information of Mr. Watson—I know he knows—only one fraction of the wheat produced is used within Western Australia, and it has to compete on the world's markets with the vast bulk of its production. It has to stand up against world competition and is a commodity which is produced in Australia and can, without being subsidised, stand on its own feet and compete on these markets, cheaper than any other wheat in the world.

If we were to really get our desserts so far as that goes—I am not asking for them—we would get even a greater price than today. But to try to draw a comparison between the potato and wheat industries is just unthinkable.

The other point I was making in regard to "The West Australian"—and I disagree on major issues—is that dealing with the petrol industry. As all members are aware, a select committee was constituted, comprising five men. That select committee later became an honorary royal commission and spent months and months going into the pros and cons and sifting the facts of the retailing of petrol in Western Australia, and after all our deliberations, within 48 hours of the release of that report that newspaper came out with an editorial to the effect that we "struck a dry well". It is questionable whether the people at the newspaper office had read the report.

We were in possession of 2,000-odd pages of transcript, after listening to weeks of evidence, a good deal of which was confidential; and yet the people behind the paper, who are so clever, came out in 48 hours and said that we had struck a dry well. It shows just how some of the thinking is done on some of the major matters in this State. In fact, as everyone knows, the paper made a violent attack on the Country Party members of the Legislative Council, and it is continuing to do so.

We have now reached a stage when thinking people are not paying a great deal of attention to the editorials of that paper. One of its latest was an attack upon a man who was looked on as one of the greatest financial advisers in the Commonwealth; and he was taken to task because he said we should try to stop this inflationary spiral. It shows how little credence we can place on a paper which resorts to such tactics.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Was it Niemeyer?

The Chief Secretary: I would not be surprised at anything that paper did.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: It was Sir Frank Richardson. I would like to point out the difference in the reception given by the "Daily Telegraph" and the "Morning Post" of London to the English legislation, and that given by "The West Australian." The editorial is headed "Two Blows Against Monopolies," and reads as follows:—

In its Restrictive Trade Practices Bill the Government is preparing two blows against monopoly. The first is a knock-out. As soon as the Bill becomes law collective resale price maintenance will be prohibited: this will mean the sudden end of the whole apparatus of private courts, stop lists and agents provocateurs, which has so much troubled the public conscience. Broadly, as the Lloyd Jacobs Committee recommended, the individual manufacturer will be able to ensure that the price he fixes for his product will be kept by the wholesaler or retailer, but his sanction will be an ordinary action in the existing courts.

There is no abuse in that article. I could read from it extensively, but I do not intend to. This is a Tory newspaper in Great Britain, and it received the legislation dealing with monopolies in a vastly different and much more pleasant manner than did our local newspaper.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Was that dealing with the Bill we are now discussing?

The Chief Secretary: The hon. member should have thought of that when he was speaking.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Is that article dealing with this Bill or the English Act?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: It is dealing with a similar Act to that which Mr. Watson quoted yesterday. Certain exception has been taken to the onus of proof contained in the Bill. I now quote from the "Commonwealth Survey" for the 4th September, 1956. An article headed "U.K. Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1956," states—

Following the undertaking given on 13th July, 1955, in the United Kingdom House of Commons debate on the Monopolies Commission's report on collective discrimination, the Government introduced the Restrictive Trade Practices Bill on 15th February, 1956,

and it received the Royal Assent on 2nd August (Restrictive Trade Practices Act, HMSO, 3d.). The essential features of the Act may be summarised as follows:

- (a) public registration of restrictive trade practices;
- (b) establishment of a judicial tribunal to be known as the Restrictive Practices Court, to determine whether or not they are in the public interest, and machinery for prohibiting those which proved not to be;
- (c) laying down criteria upon which such an issue can be judged, with the onus of proof upon those who seek to justify the practice.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Yes, before a court. Here you do not have to appear before anyone. It is the commissioner who starts the hare running here.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: The article continues—

- (d) rendering unlawful the collective enforcement of resale price maintenance, coupled with the provision of new methods to enable individuals to secure maintenance of resale prices which they may choose to fix;
- (e) formation of a smaller and more compact Monopolies Commission for dealing with those matters which are inappropriate for reference to the new Court.

The suggestion that monopolies are non-existent is just making us appear too simple altogether. Those people know as well as I do that improper practices do prevail and that it is necessary that something be done.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Can you give us any good examples as to why the Bill was introduced, because nobody else has?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: I have been asked to do something that my friend Mr. Watson said a judicial committee should be appointed to do. I, as an individual, am asked to stand up and make an assertion in regard to something that the Bill proposes to create. How I would leave myself open! What could I prove?

Hon. A. F. Griffith: You are going on guessing, too.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: Does the hon. member say they do not exist? Go down the town and ask the people.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: If you have asked anyone, give us the benefit of your inquiries.

Hon. L. C. DIVER: It would be a breach of faith on my part to do so, but the hon. member knows that such things do

exist. He is simply drawing red herrings across our path to prevent justice being done.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Don't you think the Government should have given us some instances?

Hon. G. Bennetts: It made mention of one or two.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: It did not bear them out.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Can the hon. member refer us to one provision in the English Act that is contained in the Bill?

Hon. L. C. DIVER: The hon. member dealt with it extensively yesterday, and he should be well aware of what is and what is not in it. I think the title of the Bill definitely wants amending, and I shall endeavour to have it amended—the title and short title—to read “An Act to Control and Regulate Trading and Unfair Profit.”

I have several amendments on the notice paper; but perhaps the most important is the one dealing with the life of the measure, and the time when it will come before Parliament again. I suggest this amendment because none of us knows what the passage of time will bring; and if during the period of the legislation something should occur, I would be the last one to want to give it unlimited life. Consequently I wish to make perfectly sure that within a limited time it shall come before us so that we can debate it in the light of its operations, and not in the light of fear, which is the guiding light of many people today.

I would like to have a further amendment inserted, beyond those that appear on the notice paper, to provide that the commissioner shall furnish a report of his activities during the last preceding year. With those few remarks, I support the second reading.

HON. R. F. HUTCHISON (Suburban) [4.54]: I wish first to repeat the very good interjection made yesterday by Mr. Wise that guilt breeds fear. It is the best thing I have heard said here in connection with an approach to the Bill; and if those members who oppose it are not fearful, I do not know what they are making such a fuss about, because to my mind this is the very thing that is needed in Western Australia to curb some of the practices that are going on at the present time, as everyone here knows.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: I deny knowing any such practices.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: The hon. member must be a very obtuse person and must go around with his ears and eyes shut.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: If there are so many, can you name one?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I am not going to be caught out like that at the moment. We are just as astute as the

hon. member. “The West Australian” this morning had a sub-leader in which it asked that the people be allowed to decide this matter. “The West Australian” published some vicious sentences about the Bill, but it has now calmed down enough to ask that the people shall decide the question.

This seems to me to be just the one thing that no one on the opposite side wants. They do not want this legislation on the statute book. That, to me, would make it very desirable that it should go on the statute book. Mr. Watson spoke yesterday, and he is a pastmaster at a little character slaying under the privilege of Parliament, now and again. I have heard his praises and innuendoes before, but I do not take any notice of them, because he is one who would be in the forefront of those trying to keep the measure off the statute book.

Point of Order.

Hon. H. K. Watson: I take exception to Mrs. Hutchison's remark that I am an expert on character-slaying, and I ask for a withdrawal.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Under the rules of the House, I withdraw. I must—

The President: Order!

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: I withdraw.

Debate Resumed.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I refer to a report in the paper this morning where, in connection with Mr. Roche's speech, Mr. Watson said—

Point of Order.

Hon. H. K. Watson: On a point of order, I understand that members are not entitled to refer to newspaper reports of debates in this House.

The President: They must not quote from newspaper reports on current legislation.

Debate Resumed.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Do not take him too seriously!

The Chief Secretary: You are not quoting, but saying what you saw in the paper.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Yes. I was wondering whether clean or dirty water runs down the Kojonup drains. Mr. Watson said that £35,000 was paid to the members of the Ministry, and he wondered whether they would come under this measure. I would say, because of the calibre of the present Ministry, that is a cheap price to pay.

The Chief Secretary: They are underpaid.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Very much so. I have heard it said that this Chamber is an expensive one. I will let it go at that.

Hon. G. Bennetts: We could abolish it and save that much.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: That would be a happy day. I was amazed at Mr. Watson's approach to the measure, because I think the Bill that he supported and was mainly responsible for having passed through the House last session—the rents Bill—was a principal contributing factor to the practices and troubles that give rise to the bringing forward of this type of legislation.

What is the Bill for? It is to stop robbery in trade. If that is not a worthwhile objective, tell me what is! It is only to stop the robbing practices which at the moment are going on in trade. I have discovered them since I have been inquiring into some of the ways of trade in Western Australia.

I will mention something that I consider to be wrong, and I refer to interest rates of some of the finance companies. In this regard I could mention the interest charges on furniture particularly, when it is paid for on time payment. Those interest charges are hitting the people of this State, and that is one of the things that needs inquiry.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Will this Bill cover that?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I have heard all the red herrings which have been drawn across the trail in regard to this Bill. There has been talk of socialism, communism, and all the rest of it. When some members get worried about a Bill they talk about its being communistic and they bring all these stupid sayings into the debate. Everybody knows that this is down-to-earth legislation, introduced by a statesman, and we have a statesman at the helm of this State at present.

If the Premier of this State introduced this Bill there was a good reason for his doing so. Everybody here knows that that is true. I am only a housewife, but I know how the housewives of this State are being robbed. I am not too learned in legal phraseology, but I would say that unfair trading practices would mean the taking of profits by big concerns up to a saturation point. I refer particularly to General Motors Holdens, and companies like that.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Will this Bill stop that?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Of course it will!

Hon. L. A. Logan: Of course it can't do that. Don't be silly!

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: There is the cornering of markets. We saw that not long ago in regard to potatoes. I walked around with other housewives trying to buy potatoes. We saw what happened until the Government stopped the rot. Some of these big concerns tried to bring

pressure to bear on the Liberal Premier in South Australia and tried to force him to lift price control, but he refused because the people were suffering. They had had a bad season in the Eastern States and they were short of potatoes. We all know what went on.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: What went on?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: All sorts of unfair trading practices are being carried out, and I am amazed that those who represent the farmers in this House have had anything at all to say against the Bill. This measure will protect the farmer as much as anybody else.

Hon. L. A. Logan: He will not come under this Bill.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: This Bill will protect him as much as anybody else. I read the farmers' journal, and I have seen articles written in it. Those articles do not confirm what some members have said here. At their conferences speakers have blamed interest rates and the unfair trading practices that are going on in this community.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Farmers will not come under the Bill.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Of course they will!

Hon. L. A. Logan: They don't!

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: There is also the question of fixing prices at the source. Let me mention the case of women's wearing apparel. It is not possible, in Perth, to buy some brands of dresses cheaper at one shop than they are being sold elsewhere. Even at a sale not a penny is taken off the price because the prices are fixed at the source—and unfairly fixed too. I know all about it because I am a dressmaker by trade, and I know exactly what work is required in making a dress. The profit on those things has reached saturation point, and that is why hardship is being felt in so many factories today. We all know that these things are occurring.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What a wicked State we live in!

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Yes, we do!

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: With wicked people in it!

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: There are other wicked places with wicked people in them.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: My word there are!

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Mr. Simpson said that this was a young country and its people should have vision and courage. They were very nice words, and I echo them. But they were spoilt when he went on to say that by the introduction of legislation such as this—which after all

is only to deal with unfair trading and to prevent robbing of the public—we showed a lack of vision and courage.

I disagree whole-heartedly with the last portion of his statement. I think this legislation will help us to have vision and courage, because it has been introduced to protect the people of this State. The honest person has nothing to fear from this legislation; it is the dishonest people who fear it.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: You think that right always prevails in the courts?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: It does pretty well. If we are going to make Western Australia a happy hunting ground for rogues, all we have to do is to defeat this Bill. But if we want to keep the people happy and stop them from being exploited, we should agree to this measure.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: You have the greatest number of rogues under control.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Some members have mentioned the subject of wages. We were told by the wise men who are now telling us that this Bill is not necessary, that if wages were pegged prices would not rise. As I have said before, the very opposite happened. We saw inflation set in, and during that time wages were pegged.

I think Mr. Teahan made a very good speech on this subject. He spoke the truth, and I do not intend to repeat what other members have said and so waste the time of the House. If members read his speech they will find a lot of meat in it. It is true that if wages keep chasing prices it does not do anyone much good. But in every case it is the worker who is going short all the time. Would members say that there is any fairness in pegging a worker's weekly wage and yet, while his wages are pegged, allowing a rise of 8s. in the "C" series index? That is what members are saying. That is what Mr. Baxter always says. He is always saying that the worker is the cause of all the trouble, but I know differently.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: I did not say that in my speech yesterday, or at any other time.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I have seen records of production of high workmanship; those records have no equal in any other country.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: Have you seen the records of production of low workmanship, too?

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: It is all very well for the hon. member to say things about workers when they cannot answer him back. I would like him to say some of these things to the workers outside of this building.

Hon. N. E. Baxter: You are here to talk for them.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: There has been a large sum of money poured out in advertisements and statements in the *snide Press*. Also, a Mr. Hepplewaite—I think that is his name although I would call him by another—has spent a large sum of money in an endeavour to defeat this Bill. I had one communication from Sydney which I would like to read to members.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Give him a bit more publicity. It is quite useful.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: It was a dreadful piece of propaganda.

Hon. L. H. Roche: We have all had it.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: Then members know what I mean. It is worse than the reference to the Kojonup drains. In this pamphlet he talks about the people's union and about research publicity. I would like to know where these people went for their research. It was certainly not in Kojonup. He talks about communism and all sorts of rubbish like that. It is just too silly to ask adult people to take cognisance of some of the remarks. I get disgusted when I read these things. People like that publish that sort of propaganda to catch the ordinary people and to try to channel their thoughts along certain lines.

During his speech Mr. Cunningham made a great play about freedom. I would like to see where there is any freedom in trade today, and I challenge the hon. member to tell me of any instance where there is free trade. The newspapers in Western Australia—and in fact throughout Australia—condition people's minds, and not for the benefit of the people either. They publish all sorts of scandalous things and have great headlines in the paper in regard to the same subjects. That is no good for the people of Western Australia, or anywhere else. We have no freedom today.

Hon. J. M. Cunningham: You're telling me! Your party is the one that has taken most of the freedom away.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: The only freedom we have is that given to us by Acts placed on the statute book by the Labour Party. It has introduced social service measures and so on and once those freedom-giving measures reach the statute book, nobody challenges them. That position cannot be denied.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Like compulsory unionism, compulsory voting and compulsory enrolment. That is all Labour legislation.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: I have always argued in favour of compulsory enrolment.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: That is your idea of freedom.

Hon. R. F. HUTCHISON: My word it is! The hon. member should not talk about compulsory enrolment to me. I will have plenty to say about it when the measure dealing with enrolments is introduced. I would like to echo Mr. Diver's words—that this measure will be a deterrent to the dishonest trader and to the dishonest company. For that alone it is worthy of a place on our statute books.

I hope I have given other members who have not spoken, and if they are going to support it, an idea of what else they can say in support of it. I hope, too, that what I have said will make those who are against this Bill too ashamed to get up and speak against it. It is aimed at those who are robbing the people in our community. I support the Bill.

HON. A. F. GRIFFITH (Suburban) [5.10]: After the storm shall come the calm. I have read through the Bill on a number of occasions, and I find its contents extremely interesting. But I want to take the opportunity of spending a few minutes discussing the ground the State has covered in the last few months.

We had an election in this State in April this year; and when one goes to the trouble of having a look at the policy speeches of the parties concerned, particularly the policy upon which Governments are elected, it is very interesting to see what a change takes place in the minds of Government members between the time they are campaigning, the time they are elected, and their subsequent activities.

I have with me "The West Australian" of the 10th March, 1956, wherein the Premier of this State, Hon. A. R. G. Hawke, speaking at Northam, told the people of Western Australia the policy upon which he asked to be re-elected as Premier of this State. I failed to find in the policy speech of the Premier any mention of the Government's intention to introduce a Bill of this nature.

Members will probably recall that "The West Australian" ran a forum during the course of the election campaign, and it put to each of the party leaders certain questions which it asked for the benefit of the public. The paper asked the leaders to express their views on a number of matters; and in "The West Australian" of the 29th March of this year the following appeared as a heading "Where do the State leaders stand?" It was question No. 5, which dealt with the position of controls and it read—

In its election policy neither side has made any reference to price control and rent and tenancy restrictions.

Does this mean that you do not wish to introduce them? In all the circumstances, other than war, would you regard their use as justifiable? Would you then apply them with or without a popular vote on the question?

It is most enlightening to read what the Premier of the State said on the 29th March, 1956. He said—

Legislation to prevent profiteering and to prevent rack-renting would be introduced if circumstances justified such action.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Well, are they not justified?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Continuing—

The legislation should provide that before any particular commodity or service were brought under control a regulation would require to be issued and each year could be debated and decided in Parliament.

That is what the Premier of Western Australia said on the 29th March, 1956.

The Minister for Railways: What did Sir Ross McLarty say? Give us his views, too.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: He does not believe in price control.

The Minister for Railways: But you can tell us what he said.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not think it would help my argument at all. However, if the Minister would like to be patient whilst I read through his comments to see whether they would assist me in my argument I will oblige him if he so desires. Sir Ross McLarty said this—

The Liberal and Country League is opposed generally to imposing controls other than those essential for requirements of defence and economic stability. There is no possible justification for the reintroduction of price control or rent and tenancy restrictions. These controls are only warranted in times of national emergency when the power to impose them is normally assumed by the Commonwealth Government. In postwar years price control became increasingly ineffective. The Prices Branch did not control prices. It merely recorded price increases. Statistics show that prices rose far less after price controls were lifted.

Price control encouraged shortages, dishonesty and black markets. It discouraged production. It built up large and expensive bureaucratic departments.

Price control defends the least efficient in industry. It inhibits management from cutting costs and encourages the shoddy manufacturer to reduce quality.

The lifting of rents and tenancies restrictions halted the rot in rented property. Fifteen years of inadequate rentals meant a prolonged neglect of repair work and painting which was promoting slum conditions in many cases.

Improved housing standards and increased accommodation are two of the immediate benefits which have resulted.

In the present circumstances the operation of a Fair Rents Court is adequate protection against excessive rentals being charged.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: That is dishonesty!

The PRESIDENT: Order, please!

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Continuing—

Despite the gloomy prediction of the Minister for Housing that "hundreds and perhaps thousands" of cases would appear before this court, very few cases indeed have been submitted.

I read that for the benefit of the Minister for Railways and it has not affected my argument adversely; in fact, it has strengthened it.

However, what I want to point out to the House is that in March, 1956, the Government of the day made no mention of price or rent control. It considered then that both controls were unnecessary; and when a question was put to the Leader of the Labour Party in this State in regard to this very question, his answer was "a regulation would require to be issued—"

The Minister for Railways: "Could."

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister should not try to put words into my mouth. This reads, "would require to be issued."

The Minister for Railways: You read "could" before.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I realise the last four words are the same.

The Minister for Railways: You read "could" before. I am only trying to correct you.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister was under a misapprehension. It reads—

... would require to be issued and each year could be debated and decided in Parliament.

Have we seen anything of that nature happening? Have we seen the intention of the Government carried out in any shape or form?

Even when Parliament opened and His Excellency the Lieut.-Governor and Administrator delivered to us the Government's policy speech, it contained these words: "however, our position is fundamentally sound." I have examined the contents of the Lieut.-Governor's Speech but I can find no mention that a Profiteering and Unfair Trading Prevention Bill would be introduced this session. However, I am subject to correction. Perhaps mention of it is there. The Chief Secretary seems anxious to say something.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You cannot get him to speak.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: After telling the people of the State only five months ago—and, in fact, telling them again only in August last—that the affairs of the State are fundamentally sound, the Government has now found it necessary to introduce a Bill of this nature.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They got their instructions from the Trades Hall and they had to follow them.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I did not know where they got their instructions from.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They got them from the Trades Hall. That chap that goes East came back and told them what to do.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Those two statements cannot be denied, because I have quoted from the Premier's policy speech.

The Minister for Railways: You cannot live in the past, you know.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: "The West Australian" was reported to have published in one of its leading articles that it was surprised—

The Minister for Railways: Naturally!

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: One of the matters that was to the fore in the Labour Party's policy was price control but it was not mentioned in the Government's policy that was outlined to the people prior to the last election.

Hon. H. L. Roche: If they are surprised, then you are surprised, too, I take it.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am not surprised at anything they do after what I have seen them do.

Hon. H. L. Roche: "The West Australian" I mean.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am referring to the Government.

The Minister for Railways: That is a touchy point.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It is not a touchy point at all. I will read another article if the Minister would like me to do so.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: The hon. member—

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If Mrs. Hutchison is sick of listening to my speech perhaps she will not stay here.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: No, I don't want to leave.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: We now find that we have this Bill before us for consideration with all its 40 clauses. I venture to suggest that it is a far better Bill now than when it was first printed. We have to thank the members of the Country Party in another place for many of the amendments that were made to it.

The Chief Secretary: That is the object of Parliament; to improve a measure after it has been introduced by the Government.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: It is a sad state of affairs when a hotchpotch of a Bill is introduced and somebody with sound ideas has to attempt to amend it.

Hon. F. J. S. Wise: In these days there is no such thing as the law of the Medes and Persians.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I would like to make one or two brief references to the remarks made by the champions of this Bill. Mr. Teahan surprised me last night when he said that he wondered why there were so few shoe shops in Perth. He must be very unobservant, or else he walks round the city with his eyes closed. One has only to think for a moment to realise that there are literally dozens of shops in Perth selling shoes. Mr. Teahan tried, I think, to instil in the minds of members that there is some sinister state of affairs existing in regard to shoe stores.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: There is, too!

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I took myself mentally along Hay-st. and discovered that there are many shops in that street alone that sell shoes. To name some, there are Betts and Betts, Ezywalkins, Aherns, White's Alex Kelly's Walsh's Cox Bros., and many more. Even Woolworths and Coles sell some sort of footwear. If that is the sort of argument that is advanced in support of this Bill it is an extremely poor one.

I presume to cross swords with my friend, Mr. Heenan, for a moment. He told us of the way the members of the judiciary decided cases that were untrue and unfair and where undue influence was exercised. He visualised a number of things on which the judiciary made up its mind. I will not argue with him on that; but I would like to point out to the hon. member that when those practices are exercised, the issues are heard before a court of law; before a judge of the Supreme Court or before a magistrate, depending on the nature of the case. The issues are heard before a man who has passed his examinations and who is fully qualified in the administration of the law. The man who is brought before him, therefore, gets a fair trial.

However, under this legislation the commissioner becomes the court; and the only time a man has the right of appeal is when he is convicted by the commissioner, whose powers are practically unlimited. I think it is interesting to read what the Sydney "Sun" had to say about this legislation. In that newspaper the following appeared:—

A Touch of the Gestapo in Western Australia.

The PRESIDENT: Order! Is the hon. member aware of Standing Order No. 390?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I am quoting—

The PRESIDENT: From a newspaper referring to debates during the same session. The full text of the Standing Order is as follows:—

No member shall read extracts from newspapers or other documents referring to debates in the Council during the same session.

Does that newspaper article deal with this debate?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes; it deals with the Bill, Mr. President.

The PRESIDENT: I am afraid that the hon. member cannot quote it, then.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Very well, Sir. But I think I can speak of it from memory without quoting it.

The Chief Secretary: You should observe the spirit, as well as the letter of the Standing Order.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Chief Secretary could well take a leaf from the same book on occasions. The article says the Bill introduces into Western Australia a touch of the Gestapo, and instances some of the powers that the commissioner is given. It says further that the Bill gives to the commissioner the right to control a man's business, to control his buying and selling.

The Chief Secretary: You know that is not true.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If the Chief Secretary had read the Bill, he would know it was true. In certain circumstances the commissioner can tell a person what he has to buy, what he has to pay, and what he can sell it at. The article also says that the commissioner on mere suspicion can search a person's premises after obtaining a warrant and he can use force to get what he wants.

The Minister for Railways: That is necessary at times.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The commissioner can get a warrant and use force. He can brand a businessman and declare him as a profiteer, confiscate his records, or dominate his business. All those powers are contained in this Bill. It is rather difficult in this day and age to contemplate that any Government would introduce such a Bill and expect to pass it in that form.

It was said by Mr. Bennetts that the advertisements in connection with the opponents to this Bill spoke of crucifixion. That is just a figment of his imagination. When I challenged him by way of interjection, he could not stand up to it. He made that remark to make it look bad for the opponents. He said little children were being crucified because they had to pay 6d. for their ice creams.

To my mind that is utter nonsense, and he cannot expect members of this House to be influenced by statements of that nature. We know that children pay 6d. for their ice creams, and sometimes more; but so do the adults. We also know that when a person paid 2d. for ice cream, he was receiving £2 6s. a week as wages. We can compare that with what he is receiving today.

I was interested in the remarks made by Mr. Diver. One of his contentions was his satisfaction that the primary producer has been taken out of the scope of the Bill.

Hon. L. C. Diver: I did not say that.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I understood the hon. member thought that as goods sold at public auction were taken out of the Bill, the primary producer would be protected. When Mr. Roche spoke on this measure he referred to the public auction clause. I asked him what would happen when goods being sold by public auction did not reach the reserve. He replied, "We will take them home." This clause states "provided nevertheless that the term 'goods' does not include goods bona fide sold at public auction." I suggest it is not beyond the realm of possibility that goods not bona fide sold at public auction can very easily come under the terms of this Bill.

Hon. H. L. Roche: Because they are not sold?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: If the commissioner desires, and his powers are so terrific, he can decide anything he wants to decide. Under this Bill he can do practically anything he wants to.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Or anything the Minister wishes him to do.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Or anything which the Minister may direct him to do.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: What is wrong with that?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: There is nothing wrong with that in the minds of certain people, because certain people think the public should be controlled. I know that certain people in this community would be happier to have the Minister controlling than to have the courts, as the judiciary of the land, meting out justice where it should be meted. There is no question about that. The interjection of the hon. member fits in with the policy to which she subscribes. I say there is a lot wrong with the Minister having control.

I think it is far better that we, in this British-speaking country, maintain in every possible degree the present system of jurisprudence—a system of control giving the defendant the right to appear before a court. Under this Bill a person has no right of appeal to a court unless he has been convicted by the commissioner.

After that he has a right to make an appeal. It is interesting indeed to compare the tenor of this debate with something else I heard.

The Chief Secretary: I was thinking about that.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister seems to have a guilty conscience. When another Bill was before the House, this point arose as put by the member in charge of the Bill: In the interests of the community a person should be named on suspicion for trading in liquor. Certain members of this House replied, "But that is against British justice." I well remember Mr. Heenan saying, "This is not a fair go. Such a person does not even get a trial because a policeman has only to go to him and say that he is a suspect, and that person can be listed."

The Minister for Railways: Without even examining his case.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Minister is in my corner. The policeman can call on two justices to name such a person without any trial. This House thought that was not desirable, and the circumstances of the case before us are the same.

The Chief Secretary: Not by a long way.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: In what respects are the circumstances different? Let us take a hypothetical case out of imagination, and say that one person suspects another of making an unfair profit, whatever that might be. What course of action is open to the person with that suspicion?

The Minister for Railways: There would be an examination.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: He would first of all complain to the commissioner that a certain set of circumstances was in the process of being carried out. Would the commissioner not be obliged to conduct an investigation? He would, on mere suspicion; and he would have to enter the suspected person's premises to investigate his books.

The Chief Secretary: He could not go to two J.P.'s and have the complaint dismissed.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The commissioner can tell the suspect that the evidence he is about to give will be taken on oath; the commissioner can confiscate his books, and is allowed to take certified copies. How long would it take to make certified copies of a person's books? The commissioner has power to search his premises with a warrant. All kinds of powers are given to him.

When was the Government's original intention to introduce the Bill made? I find it impossible to believe it was made subsequent to the 2nd August, 1956, when this House met for the first time this session, because I cannot find any reference to this Bill in the Lieut-Governor's Speech,

The Chief Secretary: Much of the legislation is not referred to in the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech. There are 100 Bills to be dealt with, but only 10 or so were included in that speech.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Lots of things which have been done were not in the policy speech of the Government, either. What is the real purpose behind the Bill? The Government says it is to curb inflation. Overnight the necessity to curb inflation arose! The Government said it was to keep prices down. What products are controlled today? We know that many goods are controlled by boards. Potatoes are controlled by a board; onions are controlled by a board; milk is controlled by a board; bread comes under wheat products; eggs are controlled by a board; electricity and gas are controlled by the S.E.C.

Hon. L. A. Logan: By a monopoly.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I notice that my electricity bill goes up every quarter whenever wages rise.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: Did you say wages rose?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Of course they do! If the hon. member thinks he will pin a case on that one, he is mistaken. Fares are controlled by a board; rates and taxes are controlled by various authorities in the districts in which we live; butter prices are controlled by the Commonwealth. Those are many of the items in the "C" series index which are controlled. Today we can walk around the city and see that because of the law of supply and demand—where the supply is obviously greater than the demand—big and small emporiums are advertising goods for sale at greatly reduced prices.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: Where? Mention them.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I know the hon. member is one-eyed, but she is now going around with even that eye closed. Mr. President, you would not permit me to quote from the newspapers. But picking up today's newspapers we can see full-page advertisements of goods for sale at reduced prices. I am sure the hon. member is a good bargain hunter. One can buy things today at a far lower cost than a short time ago because of the law of supply and demand.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: That is not true.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I ask the hon. member to withdraw that interjection.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member should withdraw that remark.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: I withdraw it.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not know how much longer a set of circumstances is going to prevail in this House under which, in all good faith, a member can make a comment which he believes to be true, particularly when he can read with his own eyes, and then Mrs. Hutchison can

say by way of interjection, "It is not true," and having said that, then, because the Standing Orders provide that she must withdraw, she withdraws. That is a deplorable state of affairs.

What I have said is true. There have been any number of advertisements in the paper—this morning, yesterday and the day before yesterday—indicating goods for sale at reduced prices; and I would counsel the hon. member, in the interests of decency, if she is going to make interjections, to stick to the truth and not get away with the things she does simply because the Standing Orders provide that she can do so.

Who is this Bill aimed at? What is its real purpose? I have read to the House quite a long list of products that are now controlled by boards. All one has to do is to go into any shop today and buy any product he likes.

Hon. L. A. Logan: With the price marked on it.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: Yes. And if one does not like a particular brand, one can buy another. I asked a question in this House about the brick situation; and I found that the State Government, because it has the biggest brickworks in Western Australia, has over 1,000,000 bricks on hand that are described as seconds. Again, building materials are regularly and easily available. On the statement of the present Minister for Housing, the cost of houses has come down considerably; and I cannot see any necessity for legislation of this kind.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: What about the finance companies?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: The Premier has been invited—

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: You didn't hear that!

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: —and some of us in this House have asked the Chief Secretary and other members who have spoken to the Bill to tell us of one instance in which what has been alleged to have been an unfair profit has been actually made. I have heard it said in this House that representatives of the trading and commercial community in Perth went to the Premier and said, "Where are they? Give us an opportunity to attend to the abuses, if they exist." But they got no co-operation in that regard. We have not been told of one suspect. So what is the purpose of the Bill?

The Minister for Railways: You have nobody to be afraid of, then.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: When red herrings are spoken about, this can be regarded as one of the largest of them. "You have nobody to be afraid of!" The Criminal Code is amended; and of course it is said, "Nobody need be afraid unless

he commits a crime." We know all about these things; but to my mind this Bill is different.

The Minister for Railways: You are not afraid of being hung, are you?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: No. But sometimes I think I might put myself in that position in certain circumstances.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You would like to, I suppose.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I cannot see the necessity for legislation as vicious as this Bill. Believe me, it could be vicious in operation. I would like to deal with the question of the commissioner himself for just a moment.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: For just a moment?

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: I do not know whether the Government has anyone in mind for this appointment. I do know of other instances in which people have been appointed to positions whom the Government did not like, and they have been smartly moved. In this instance, I do not know who the Government has in mind. But he must be a man of impeccable character and of great learning. He must be a man experienced in business.

Hon. A. R. Jones: A spy.

Hon. A. F. GRIFFITH: No, he does not have to be a spy. He would have an army of spies. I do not think he could do all the spying himself. In order to bring these co-called criminals to justice, he would need to have an army of spies who would be constantly on the lookout for things that are envisaged as likely to happen. If this perfect man is found, he will be put in the seat of justice. He will be regarded as far better than the courts, and a far greater man than the Chief Justice of this State or any magistrate we could think of. He will be more important; he will have a lot more power. He will be handed this job of commissioner and the Bill provides that, subject to the Minister's control, he may employ people to assist him in his administration.

I venture to suggest that, in order to administer this legislation—if it could be administered properly—he would need a crowd of people around him who were just like himself, because it would be quite impossible for him to do even a small amount of the work which it is apparently considered he would have to do.

When the Chief Secretary introduced the Bill, he said it would be a test of this House of review. He used words to that effect, and asked members to be uninfluenced by any outside propaganda, but to make their own judgment on the measure and vote accordingly. I say very sincerely that if there is any member in this House who is free to do that, let him, in the interests of justice and commerce and of the economy and the development of this

State, throw out this Bill. I propose to vote against the second reading and I hope that, in the interests of Western Australia, that is as far as the Bill will get.

HON. G. E. JEFFERY (Suburban) [5.57]: I was very interested in the opening remarks of Mr. Griffith when he said that price control was only an index by which we could gauge the rise in prices. I took the trouble to obtain Arbitration Court figures concerning the basic wage, which is bound up with price control; and I would suggest that those figures indicate that the situation is different from what Mr. Griffith conveyed.

On the 1st July, 1939, the basic wage was £4 2s. 2d.; and on the 1st July, 1945, it was £5 1s. That was the war period, and it will be seen that the basic wage increased by 23 per cent. In the immediate postwar period, there was national price control. On the 1st July, 1945, the basic wage was £5 1s.; and on the 1st July, 1948, it had risen to £5 15s. 9d. In that sum there was an amount of 5s., which was a real increase granted on the 26th February, 1947. Including that figure, the basic wage increased during that period of three years by 14 per cent.

I come next to the period when there was no price control. On the 1st July, 1948, the figure was £5 15s. 9d.; and on the 23rd October, 1950, it was £7 6s. 6d., the increase in a period of two years and three months being 26 per cent.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Why?

Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: Because there was no price control.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Increased rents did that!

Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: I will deal with that later. The basic wage on the 18th December, 1950, was £8 6s. 6d.; and on the 27th July, 1953, it was £12 6s. 6d., representing an increase of 48 per cent. Then we had the period when the worker paid the piper and the basic wage was frozen. On the 27th July, 1953, the wage was £12 6s. 6d.; and on the 31st March, 1955, it was £13 10s. 7d., an increase of 9½ per cent. In the period of price control from the 1st July, 1939, to the 1st July, 1948, the basic wage increased by 41½ per cent. In the period from the 1st July, 1948, to the 27th July, 1953, the increase was 112 per cent., over five years. I will leave those figures with members so that they can form their own conclusions.

Earlier in the debate, a member referred to profits made by the workers. I will give a few facts regarding that matter. As one who recently left industry and had a much better job than the average worker, I am acquainted with the facts. In 1949, a man with a wife and two children paid no tax. In 1955, on an income of £640 18s.,

he paid £14 12s. in tax. In other words, he was taxed at the rate of 6s. a week out of his income.

During the period of wage fixation, the worker lost, by pegging of the difference between the statistician's figures and the figure granted by the court, the sum of £67 5s. 7d. In the September quarter of 1953, the worker lost 4s 1d. per week or £2 13s. 1d. in total. For the December quarter, the respective figures were 2s. 7d. and £1 13s. 7d. In the March quarter for 1954—

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Are you arguing this Bill or the reintroduction of controls?

Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: I am giving reasons for the introduction of this measure. In the March quarter, 1954, the difference in the figures was 6s. 3d. or an aggregate of £4 1s. 3d. Other quarterly figures were as follows:— June, 1954, 19s. 11d. and £12 8s. 11d. respectively; September quarter, 1954, £1 3s. 10d. and £15 9s. 11d.; December, 1954, £1 2s. 9d. and £14 15s. 9d.; March quarter, 1955, £1 4s. 1d. and £15 13s. 1d. The total loss to the worker from the September quarter 1953, to the March quarter, 1955, was £67 5s. 7d.

The quarterly publication of the Australian and New Zealand Bank for October of this year contains a graph and figures regarding prices in factories. Using June, 1939, as the base year and the figure of 100 as being the nominal wage rate and the figure of 100 representing goods principally home-produced, we have the following figures:—For June, 1939, the figure was 100 for goods home-produced. For 1945-46 it was 126, and the wage rate was 134.43. For 1955-56 the figure for goods principally home-produced was 357; and for the wage rate, 336.4.

The difference there becomes more apparent when we realise that for the last quarter of that year the average for goods principally home-produced was 369 and the wage rate was 343.9. I suggest that the worker made a fairly solid contribution to this country; and, at the same time, if we read "Rydge's" journal, we find that many businesses have been so prosperous that to give their annual balance sheets and dividends an air of respectability they had to issue bonus shares.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Western Australian companies?

Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: Yes; one Western Australian company was mentioned today. The figures for the oil companies were given and they show 6.73 per cent. on a capital investment of £123,000,000. During the debate it was said that in South Australia, where there is price control, ordinary petrol sells at 3s. 6d. per gallon and the super grade at 4s. In Western Australia the ordinary is 3s. 8½d. and the super grade 3s. 11½d., so I suggest that the oil companies in South Australia are

in a much worse position than those in this State, while the method of price fixing there must give the oil companies a reasonable return on their investment.

I suggest that the people of Western Australia are getting a raw deal from the oil companies. I think the difference in the price per gallon gives the companies a good return although they may lose ½d. on the super grade. I will read the figures of the British Petroleum Co., for 1955, as given at the 47th annual meeting of the company held on the 7th June at Britannic House, Finsbury Circus, London. It is as follows:—

During 1955 substantial progress was made in all aspects of the BP group's operations. Our total sales increased by 15 per cent., crude oil production by 25 per cent., and refining throughput by 23 per cent., while exploration and marketing operations were further diversified and extended. The company thus played a full part in meeting the free world's expanding demand for petroleum, which increased by 11 per cent. in 1955, continuing the post-war trend which has resulted in a doubling of world consumption of oil products in the last ten years.

We come next to something which is also very interesting—

Our total refinery throughput in 1955 was 29,500,000 tons, 5,500,000 tons more than in 1954. This increase was mainly due to 1955 being the first complete operating year of Aden refinery, and the first operating year of Kwinana refinery in Western Australia, commissioned in February, 1955.

The figures for the company's operations are interesting in regard to their profits when the aggregate for the companies operating in Australia was 6.73 per cent. To continue—

The amount available for reserves and dividends is £46,189,539 compared with £17,043,404 for 1954. In view of anticipated requirements for future capital expenditure, your directors have placed £28,500,000 to general revenue reserve and have recommended a final dividend on the ordinary stock of two shillings per £1 stock unit free of income tax, making a total for the year of three shillings per £1 stock unit free of income tax.

Hon. H. K. Watson: Are you speaking in the House of Commons or in the Legislative Council of Western Australia?

Hon. G. E. JEFFERY: This company operates in this State. To continue—

The total now standing to the credit of general revenue reserve is £75,000,000.

Another interesting fact is that this company which makes out it cannot make a great deal of money in Australia is doing more business here and less in England. The annual report says—

In Great Britain, the total throughput of our Kent, Llandarcy and Grangemouth refineries decreased by some 2,000,000 tons to 8,500,000 tons; this being due to the major increase in offtake from Aden, Kwinana and Abadan.

So I suggest that Australia generally—and Western Australia in particular—is not a bad place in which to do business. I feel that some of the figures supplied to us are not as accurate as they should be.

By interjection I asked one speaker whether he thought wages had increased. I do not think they have. They have increased as regards the number of pound notes in the pay packet, but I believe that the basic wage today is not as good—on the figures I read out—as it was in 1939, although I do not claim to be an economist. The quarterly survey of the A.N.Z. Bank, at page 14 says—

It can be reasonably maintained that each Australian is enjoying the same real volume of food consumption as in the boom year of 1950-51, while he has failed to keep up quite the same rate of acquisition of new clothing, drapery and footwear, the purchase of which can be deferred for a time without much deterioration in living standards. The decline has probably been offset by an expansion of spending on consumer durables, especially where stimulated by hire purchase finance.

I suggest that the only thing wrong with this Bill is that it was not introduced six or seven years ago. There has been a lot of noise made about it, but I do not think it means anything to the honest businessman. It is just like the Criminal Code, which means nothing to the person who has no criminal tendencies; and I believe that some of the people who are screaming about the measure in this State have much to hide. I believe that 99.9 per cent. or more of the business people in this State are honest; but that is no reason why any rogues that may be amongst them should not be made to suffer under this Bill.

HON. F. D. WILLMOTT (South-West) [6.8]: We have heard a number of speeches on this Bill, but as yet no very convincing explanation as to how it will work. The Chief Secretary spoke at some length, when introducing the measure, but to my mind he told us very little.

During the debate there have been a number of loose statements made and one of them was made by Mr. Teahan. I do

not for a moment suggest that he intended to mislead anyone, but he was not very well informed. He was dealing with hire purchase and the wage-earner; and in reply to an interjection by Mr. MacKinnon, he said that about 50 per cent. of the wage-earners in this State were on the basic wage. But, of course, that is very far from the true position in regard to the total wage force.

Disregarding apprentices and under-age workers, approximately 3 per cent. are on the basic wage, and not more than 25 per cent. of the State's labour force receives less than £1 margin over the basic wage, so the figure quoted by Mr. Teahan was not exactly correct. The figures I have given do not take into account any overtime, which in some industries amounts to a great deal—especially in the railways.

It is easy to make general statements with regard to unfair profit-taking and unfair trading methods, but it is much harder to define those things; and I have not heard any member who supports the Bill attempt to do that. If I were to ask individual members who are supporting this Bill to state what they consider to be unfair profit or unfair trading methods, I believe I would get many different answers. Yet under this legislation it is proposed that the commissioner—one man—will give the answer to that question in regard to each and every type of business throughout the State, and all types of professions.

I submit he would have to have the wisdom of 100 Solomons; and if the Government could find such a man, I say, as Dr. Hislop said, that it would not hold him long. He would be far too valuable to other business to remain long employed by the Government.

The Chief Secretary: Do you think he would be bought out?

HON. F. D. WILLMOTT: Yes; but he has to be found first, and I do not think he exists on this earth. Clause 9 proposes to give complete dictatorial powers to the Minister, and that is absolutely contrary to my concept of British justice. As Mr. Griffith pointed out, Mr. Heenan had a good deal to say about British justice as applied to another measure discussed in this House but seems to think the position is different in regard to this Bill. It was just such a thing which caused the citizens of Great Britain at one stage to chase King John on to the island of Runnymede and make him sign away those same powers; and Britain has been fighting to retain that balance of justice ever since. Yet this legislation cuts right across it.

What constitutes unfair profit? Mr. Jeffery had something to say about the wage-earners. Earlier this year a great deal was said and written about unemployment in this State and one of the industries which suffered in that way more than

many others was the timber industry. If members were to make inquiries around the mills they would find that where men have been sacked from the mills, for some extraordinary reason production has gone up, with fewer men. Would the reason, perhaps, be that those wage-earners were making an unfair profit? I think they must have done so; otherwise, why that sudden lift in production?

The same thing applies to the woollen mills at Albany. The management there decided to reduce production by a certain amount and worked out the fact that by putting off so many employees the desired reduction would be brought about. However, when that was done the production of the mill rose by exactly the amount that it had been calculated to be lowered.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: Before tea, I made reference to the fact that dismissals in the timber industry, in the timber mills and at the woollen mills at Albany resulted in increased output. I think that demonstrates that it is not necessarily always those persons in business, or the bosses in industry, who make an unfair profit. I ask myself: What is an unfair trading method? What is its definition?

I have heard members make reference to the fact that in their opinion the farmer has been taken out from under with this Bill. I do not agree with that at all. They have been taken out only in so far as the matter of auctions is concerned. I would like to deal for a moment with auctions and unfair trading methods. From what they have said, it seems that many members think that only a seller can engage in unfair trading methods. But those persons who have attended auction sales, and farmers who have attended livestock sales, realise that it is quite possible to engage in unfair trading methods as buyers.

Many men who have attended stock sales have, at times, seen a dearth of buyers, and a few of them there have got their heads together, the result being that only one man operates, thereby depressing the market and buying the stock at reduced prices. At the end of the sale they get together and cut up the spoils among themselves. That can very easily be described as an unfair trading method.

Again, what is the position of a farmer who, having attended an auction, and perhaps operated as I have just indicated, buys cheap stock, and subsequently sells that stock privately to a butcher and gets 100 per cent. profit? There is nothing extraordinary about that. I have seen men do it; and, to be quite honest, I have done it myself. How would they be affected by this legislation? Would not that be construed as an unfair profit? Accordingly I contend that the farmer is not

right out from under the provisions of this Bill. I would like to know the yardstick that is to be used in the matter of assessing undue profits.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: The big stick you mean.

Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: That could be right. No one has yet explained to me just what is to be used as a yardstick. What is going to be the position of farmers who buy stock and sell it privately? This legislation could very easily be used to force every such farmer to put his stock into the agents' saleyards because of his fear of subsequent repercussions under this measure if he were to deal privately.

I contend that that is interfering with the farmer's freedom; it is telling him how he should dispose of his stock. It will force him into the hands of agents; and some farmers, as a rule, prefer to deal privately. I admit that I am not one of those who prefer to deal privately; I prefer to put my stock through the agent and pay the commission rather than to have to chase my money. But many farmers do not do that, and they will not be in the clear if this legislation becomes law.

To revert for a moment to the matter of the yardstick that is to be used, I would like to ask: What is an undue profit? On that issue the Government has been extremely vague; indeed it has been most delightfully quiet about it altogether. If this House is foolish enough to pass this legislation and allow it to reach the statute book —

The Chief Secretary: You should not comment on the actions of this House.

Hon. F. D. WILLMOTT: I thank the Chief Secretary for reminding me. There could be a very large and costly department built up at the expense of the taxpayer who, no doubt, the Chief Secretary thinks will be benefited by this legislation. To my mind, however, the benefits which the citizens of the country will get under this measure are extremely doubtful. A department will be built up at great cost under what I might call the dictatorship of the Minister and the commissioner. This Bill creates nothing but a dictatorship. There is still a good deal of truth in the saying that power corrupts, and that absolute power corrupts absolutely; and I think we will find that to be the case.

Previous speakers have pointed out that this legislation can do nothing to control the Eastern States or overseas firms, which means that the only people on which it will have any effect will be the companies in this State. After all is said and done, that will be a very small effect on the overall position; I do not see how it can be anything else. It seems that the purpose is to put this legislation on the statute book, even though it will prove to be of no benefit to the citizens of this State.

We have heard a good deal of talk about unfair profits; but, after all, the Taxation Department has a good deal to say about what happens to one's profits. A considerable amount goes back into the revenue of the nation; it is not all put into the pocket of the person who makes the profit. If his profit is excessive, so is his tax.

Another objection I have to the measure is that, to my mind, it is a conglomerate mass endeavouring to combine a Bill to deal with restrictive trade practices and one to deal with price control. It is attempting to cover both these aspects. Some members of this House have said, perhaps rightly—I do not know, because no specific case has been presented—that restrictive trade practices are being engaged in. If that is so let the Government bring down a Bill to deal with that aspect and leave the rest of it alone. If the Government did that, I think the measure might get a better viewing from the House.

We ought to view the specific cases put to us; although up to date we have not had one such case mentioned. Before this debate is completed, I hope that we might have a few cases cited. I feel that under the dictatorial power conferred upon the Minister and the commissioner, it is quite possible that those traders who are willing to adopt perhaps the actions of a gastropod, will be all right with the Minister and the commissioner. Those who do not might be all wrong.

Some members have said that they intend to lick the Bill into shape by means of amendments. To my mind any attempt to amend the measure would be like trying to drink soup out of a colander—there would be a mess no matter what was done! With those few words, I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. J. MURRAY (South-West) [7.43]: In rising to speak to this Bill, I have not very much to say; but I would hate to let legislation of this nature pass the second reading stage, and have a vote taken, without passing some comment on it.

When the measure was introduced in another place, I was interested to read in the Press and other places the various comments on it. We knew what the title was going to be. It was introduced in another place with the same title as we have here, namely, "An Act to Prevent Undue Profit Taking; Unfair Methods of Trading; and Unfair Trade Competition; and for other and incidental purposes." That is the title.

When I read that, I visualised legislation being introduced in another place by Mr. Dave Grayden when he was a member there, the title of which was "A Bill for an Act to Make Provision for the Protection of Trade and Commerce against Unlawful Restraint and Monopolies; and to Ensure Fair Practice in Trade and Commerce; and for other purposes." Again, there was another Bill introduced by Hon. A. F. Watts,

the title of which was "A Bill for an Act to Protect Free Enterprise; and for other purposes incidental thereto."

Having considered that fact, I thought "Well, here is another Bill"—after two had been introduced and gone by the board. They reached a certain stage in another place and eventually got down to the bottom of the notice paper and stayed there until, with the effluxion of time, they went into the wastepaper basket. I thought it pertinent to read the contents of this Bill to see if it could be said there was any real relationship between its contents and those previously introduced.

Having spent some time considering the Bill as it was first introduced and subsequently brought into this Chamber, I have reached the view that the first amendment that should be made to this measure, if we are going to review it, is that the title should be altered. I suggest, with due respect to the Chief Secretary and the Government, that this Bill should have been entitled "A Bill for an Act to Expedite the Restriction and Complete Socialisation of Commerce and Industry in Western Australia."

Had the Government given the Bill that title, it would have been true to label and we could have considered it as such. Had it had a title similar to that, many members here and elsewhere who have felt that there is some slight merit in the measure, and that it might be amended to make it workable, would have had a second thought and probably would not have gone on as far as they have now. They have confused the picture altogether.

There is one place this Bill should have gone, and much more quickly than the other two I referred to, and that is into the wastepaper basket. It can do no real good; and as I said in the suggestion of a title, it will restrict—there is no doubt about it—commerce and industry in Western Australia.

In my view, when this Bill was considered in its original form and duly amended to come here, the Government did accept certain amendments, knowing full well that the amendments it was accepting were not materially affecting its bad features so far as industry and commerce are concerned. It accepted these amendments for one purpose, and one purpose only. By accepting them, it thought it could dress up a very bad piece of legislation, as one might say, "A wolf in sheep's clothing".

The sheep's clothing may deceive some people, but it does not deceive me. It certainly has deceived some people to a degree from what we have heard so far. Certain members of this House, apart from what was said elsewhere, have said they are prepared to vote for the second reading of this Bill. I was interested to hear

them take that stand and let the Minister in charge of the Bill rest a little bit easier. I notice there are amendments on our notice paper to further dress this wolf in sheep's clothing. If those members who said they intend to support the second reading of the Bill were just as forceful in saying that if certain of these amendments were not acceptable, they would take a different line at a later stage, my mind like that of the Chief Secretary would be a little bit easier.

At this stage I am seriously concerned with the fact that a Bill has been conceived—I do not really know what made the Government proceed with it in the first place, both in another place and here, but it completely refuses to say. It says the Bill will alter the position as far as the "C" series index figures are concerned and bring down costs in the basic wage regimen. There is very little chance of that, as various members have pointed out. This Bill can have very little effect in relation to the items in the "C" series index, and I venture to suggest that the department to be set up under this Bill will cost the Government far more than the savings to the people—much more.

I would like to see a statement from the Government as to what it expects to achieve in the way of savings to the people. If this legislation goes through, and even if £500,000 were saved in items affecting the "C" series index, it would make very little difference to the cost of living per head of population. The figure would need to be astronomical to achieve anything in this direction. That being so, there can only be one thought: that it is designed to get at some vicious groups conducting unfair practices which must be stopped.

It must be a very large concern and it must be affecting the economy of the State to a large degree when a Government would contemplate not only bringing down legislation of this nature, which it knows is offensive, but also setting up a department which will cost thousands of pounds to operate, at a time when the Treasurer says he is hard pushed to find a few bob to carry on the affairs of Government.

On reading the measure I find very little excuse for it, and no explanation as to what it is meant to do. We might assume that it is a form of finding employment for an already overstaffed public service. If the Government wants to find ways and means of finding employment for people, there are others which would be much more beneficial to the country than introducing legislation of this type.

Some members have said here, and in another place, that this legislation is most necessary to bring down or stabilise the cost of living, because workers' wages had been pegged for a short period. I fail to see how this legislation is going to effect it. We have heard in this chamber, and it was said in another place—not only on

this measure, but on price fixing—that someone is charging an extra penny on some article; and all sorts of tiddly-winking cases have been raised.

One of our Ministers in another place, when discussing price fixing, quoted a case where his wife went down the street and saw some bananas for 1s. 9d. She decided to buy some and went back half an hour later and the price had gone up to 2s. She wanted to know the reason, and the storekeeper told her they were going too fast, so he put the price up. When people quote cases like that in support of this legislation it shows the mentality of those who introduced it.

It is well known that in the case of perishable commodities—and it was a perishable item quoted by the Minister—a storekeeper has to unload them quickly. He may not be getting a reasonable profit, and at a later stage he increases the cost a little. I only quote the case to show it is like the Peters Ice Cream business: it does not have much bearing on the cost of living so far as the State generally is concerned; and the Government, as well as the Minister here, failed to show us how this legislation could be beneficial from that angle.

There is another item which concerns me to a certain degree. Mr. Heenan took exception in regard to the Crown and asked us to read Clause 7. So far as I am concerned I cannot visualise any Minister controlling this Act, or the commissioner under this Act, taking action against another Minister of the Crown or any other department in regard to excess profits or unfair trading. The Crown is provided for under Clause 7; but who would ever visualise its being put into operation in regard to activities of the Crown? It would be difficult to assess exactly what could be classed as unfair trading.

But let me get back to one item I have referred to many times—the sawmilling industry. Of the sawn timber in this State, one-fifth is produced by the State Saw Mills. Whilst that organisation works under the same arbitration award and pays the same royalty figures—that is only a book entry—as the private sawmillers, there are many other items such as taxation and the like which it does not pay.

At the present price of timber, marketed according to a price list issued by the Associated Sawmillers, to which the State Saw Mills subscribe, the State Saw Mills in their returns show little or no profit. Is the commissioner going to prosecute the State Saw Mills for unfair trading through using the benefits conferred on them by being free of tax and so on, and subscribing to the price list for timber; or is the commissioner going to assume that because the State Saw Mills cannot make a profit at this price and with these benefits, the private sawmiller who is showing—I have said this in the House before—a handsome profit, is an unfair trader

making undue profits and so should be prosecuted; or is the yardstick going to be the State Saw Mills?

Only recently there was another item—I am not going to state the exact item; the Minister will probably know what it is—over-produced by a State instrumentality in conjunction with free enterprise. Free enterprise says it can produce the commodity and be satisfied with the price. The State instrumentality cannot make a profit. The suggestion is that because of over-production the State should, for a time, cease to produce. What does the State suggest?

The State does not suggest any such thing, but it does suggest an increase in the price of the article so that it shall show some small margin of profit and, at the same time, free enterprise will show an increased profit. Who is going to be charged under legislation of this nature; and who is the guilty person? So far we have had no explanation of whom the Government is trying to get at, or what it is trying to get at.

The Minister for Railways: What industry is that?

Hon. J. MURRAY: I am not going to quote it, but the Minister can find out from his own department.

The Minister for Railways: You know a lot of things that you will not tell us.

Hon. J. MURRAY: Some members have spoken for and some against the Bill; and until a vote is taken, we might be more or less beating the air. But in conclusion, I would say that if legislation of this nature is to be put on the statute book, there should be no exceptions. Everyone should come within it and be judged by the same yardstick. In that event there need be no unfair dealing with certain people, firms or instrumentalities. The Jury Act grants exemption to certain people; and when we bring in legislation of this nature which in like manner grants large exemptions, it is undesirable legislation. I would say that any measure is undesirable as long as it remains vague of its purpose and does not state whom it is out to control.

This legislation, if it is passed—I make no bones about it; I hope it will not be passed—will give an absolute blank cheque to someone that we do not know. If we were giving a blank cheque to the Chief Justice, one of the other judges, or a magistrate, I would still be doubtful; but here we are to give it to someone that we do not even know. Anything that is considered to be excess profits, or unfair trade practices, shall be investigated by the person appointed. When we examine the measure we find there are no holds barred. These are not the Marquis of Queensbury or any other rules; no holds are barred, and a blank cheque is given to the commissioner.

THE MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS (Hon. H. C. Strickland—North) [8.8]: There seem to be quite a number of red herrings and goodness knows what put up in opposition to the measure, and one would not have much trouble to net quite a good haul of them. It appears that some speakers opposed to the measure are quite prepared to let things jog along, believing sincerely in the principle of the survival of the fittest.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: It breeds a strong race.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is right; and it also creates a lot of weak individuals. It makes people weak, and eventually the greatest number of the people become weak and so the race quickly deteriorates. The principle of the survival of the fittest has been practised in many countries and has failed. It still exists in some countries.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: In England, for instance.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It does not exist in England. It still exists in some countries, but it is only a matter of time before human nature itself will alter the position. We have heard that supply and demand will control the economy. In recent years we have heard of free enterprise, where previously it was called private enterprise. In my opinion that is the correct name, because much enterprise is strictly private.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: They are two utterly different things.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is confined to a few who, by virtue of their power or by virtue of their control over the commodities that the general public require, are able to restrain prices from falling by withholding goods; and they are also, strangely enough, able to sell to some retailers at a much lower price than they sell to others.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Should not that more properly come under a restrictive practices Bill?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It can come under this one.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: Everything can come under this Bill.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is right; and anybody who is prepared to trade fairly will not come within its provisions. Much has been said here about a commissioner. Well, there has to be a commissioner. Much, too, has been said about the commissioner being responsible to the Minister.

Hon. F. D. Willmott: That is true.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is so. Nearly every Act comes under a Minister; and what better can members want? The Minister is responsible to the people if he wants to remain a member of

Parliament. He has to stand up and be judged by the people, particularly when he is a Minister who is a member of the Legislative Assembly. It is not so, of course, in the Legislative Council, because not all the people are allowed to vote for this Chamber. So one half of our Parliamentary system is democratic, while the other half is not so democratic.

Hon. A. R. Jones: What Bill are you discussing now?

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: This is the red herring.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am talking about the objections raised against the commissioner being responsible to the Minister. These objections have been voiced on more than one occasion tonight. The Minister will most certainly see that the commissioner does not abuse his authority, because the Minister will be held responsible, and he would not remain a Minister for very long if he did not watch the position. That is why I referred to red herrings in the first instance. That is one of them. I imagine that red herring is well and truly meshed by now.

I was interested in some of the remarks passed by Mr. Mattiske when he, along with most other members, of course, accused the workers of being profiteers. Well, he did not actually accuse them of being profiteers, but he spoke on those lines. He said that the tradesmen in the building industry exploited the industry.

Whether they did or not, I do not know, but I do know of a firm in one section of the building industry, anyway, that was certainly exploiting the tradesman, because it would not sell bricks to anybody unless it, the firm, put them into the walls—built the house in other words. So whether or not the tradesman was getting anything in excess of what he should have been getting, the supplier of the bricks was insisting that the purchaser could not buy 1,000 bricks from him but that he would build for the purchaser a wall containing 1,000 bricks.

Hon. R. C. Mattiske: To make sure that they went into the proper channels as requested by the Minister for Housing.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is right; but in what way were the tradesmen exploiting the industry, if they were?

Hon. R. C. Mattiske: They were made by tradesmen.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The firm would put them in the house in any case. If there was any exploitation by the bricklayers, I would say it was exploitation upon exploitation. That occurred while price control was in existence, and that was one way round it.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: That is the sort of thing that goes on when there is price control.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That was when commodities were in short supply and labour was not available to produce commodities. But it is a different situation now, and it has been for some considerable time.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Because controls have been lifted.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There are now ample commodities, but that has not brought about a fall in prices or costs.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Does the Minister suggest that there has not been a drop in the cost of building houses since that time?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: We have only to read the papers, even in the last two or three days. When the basic wage was increased they were talking of increasing prices.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: The cost of building houses has dropped.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Previously, when materials were in short supply, prices were well and truly up. Since the basic wage has been increased they want to increase the price of bricks, timber and so on. The price of timber has certainly not dropped.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: But do you agree that the price of houses has dropped?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In some cases.

Hon. R. C. Mattiske: How much have bricks gone up since price control was lifted and how much has the basic wage gone up since that time? Bricks have not altered in price.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I could not tell the hon. member off hand. But they want to put up the cost by 7s. 6d a 1,000.

Hon. R. C. Mattiske: But there is a reason for that.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Because they are asked to pay 10s. a yard for something which they got for nothing before.

Hon. C. H. Simpson: That is a good reason.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Mr Griffith told us that thousands of brick cannot be sold, so one would expect the price to drop.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I did not say that thousands could not be sold. I said that the State Brick Works had 1,000,000 brick classed as "seconds."

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But they are on hand; they have not been sold.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: I did not say that they could not be sold.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That was in reply to a question asked by the hon. member. It is fallacious for members opposing this Bill to say that they do not believe in price control. They do believe in it; they support it, provided that private enterprise controls the prices of commodities. They do not believe that there should be a law which enables abuses of that control to be restricted or curbed.

Two speakers who opposed the measure gave us instances of why we should have some law to be able to catch up with improper practices or unfair trading practices. Mr. Cunningham told us about the chap who bought a tin of paint and a windscreen. Mr. Logan told us that he knows that certain wholesalers have increased the cost of their goods in anticipation that this Bill will become an Act.

Hon. L. A. Logan: And justifiably so.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: What is justifiable about that? Why should those wholesalers put up their prices in anticipation that this Bill will become law? If it becomes law that will be their standard.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Because of the control.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are opportunists. After all, this legislation is still only in the Bill stage; it may never become an Act. But they are prepared to hop in and exploit the position.

Hon. L. A. Logan: If it does not become an Act their prices will come down.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Mr. Logan should tell us who they are. Apparently he knows these people.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Did he advise you to introduce the Bill?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This Bill is not aimed at anybody in particular. It is a general measure to cover the State and to endeavour to have some control over the economy.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: It sounds like an Irishman's argument to me.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Another speaker, who only recently sat down, told us that he knew all about it, and I suggest that the case he put forward concerned a transport service and not a commodity. I thought I might get a nod from him to tell me that that was so; but no.

We have three members opposing this measure; they know these things are happening, and have happened; but they are not prepared to take any action or assist in putting an Act on to the statute book that will prevent that sort of thing happening in the future. However, I am

pleased to say that there are some members of this House who are not afraid of being intimidated by newspaper propaganda and threats.

It was said by Mr. Cunningham that there was a hue and cry throughout the country against this measure; but it was in the Press. I have with me a copy of a weekly paper which I read. It is an unbiassed journal, but there is no hue and cry in it against this Bill.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is it the "Worker"?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In this paper is an article headed, "Profiteering at Home and Abroad." Sir Charles Latham knows that the "Worker" went out of existence years ago.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It came back at election time, because I saw it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is "Labour" and not the "Worker." It is a very good paper.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But the other one was not?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: This one is a good paper, too.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: What is that paper?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is not this week's edition, and it does not refer to any legislation in this Chamber.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It was used in the Chamber; or perhaps it ought to be.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It says—

It is pathetic to observe small groups who profess to fight for civil liberties, by dint of their opposition virtually lending aid and comfort to monopolies, trusts and unhealthy concentrations of capital.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: That sounds like a very unbiassed view!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is an unbiassed paper.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What do the Standing Orders have to say about that?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They do not say anything about it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You are reading a paper which deals with the subject under discussion.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It does not say anything about the Bill.

Hon. L. A. Logan: You are speaking on the Bill.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: Are you sure it is not an English paper speaking about an English Act?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It could be. It goes on—

They have, of course, fallen into the error of believing that it is possible to preserve and even extend political

liberties without first assuring widespread economic freedom. Without that as a ground and base all talk of political liberty is an illusion. What is really remarkable is the feebleness of the case put before the Premier for the suppression of the Bill.

or words to that effect.

The PRESIDENT: Is that newspaper commenting on legislation now before the Chamber?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is mixed up in the comments.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister must not quote from the paper.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Very well. I am now forced into a different position.

The Chief Secretary: Is that paper referring to the debate in the Legislative Assembly?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No. The Chief Secretary: Then you are all right.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The paper is a weekly one called "The Record." It is published in Perth and is a completely unbiassed paper. The views expressed in it are completely impartial and they do not hesitate to belabour one Government or another. In this case it says that there is justification for this legislation and it tells its readers that the Bill before Parliament is something which should be placed on the statute book.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: Does that paper receive articles from contributors?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It could do. I have read from the leading article which was headed, "Profiteering at Home and Abroad." In the following fortnight's issue it gave Sir Frank Richardson's views on the question; those views did not get much publicity elsewhere, or not as much as they deserved. His views were that in order to preserve our economy it is necessary to control prices as well as wages.

The Chief Secretary: You are entitled to read the article.

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: I quoted from it last night.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I have been ordered not to read it.

The Chief Secretary: But this is another one.

The PRESIDENT: The Minister for Railways has the floor and I must ask the Chief Secretary not to interject.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I am afraid that it would be outside the Standing Orders. However, the article contains some pertinent remarks. It does not have very much to say about those who oppose

this type of legislation, as individuals, but it says that there should not be any opposition to legislation of this type.

Hon. A. R. Jones: Yet "The West Australian" says differently.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: But that paper is controlled. I do not know whether "The West Australian" writes for the Liberal Party or to the Liberal Party; it does both, in any case.

The Chief Secretary: "The West Australian" might be afraid that it will come under this legislation if it is passed.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Are you sure that that is not intended?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: That is hardly likely.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: If that were the idea you might get some more support.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The articles in this paper went on to say that the Premier, Mr. Hawke, was due for much credit for introducing a measure of this type and for attempting to do something to curb unfair trading practices. I say that because Mr. Cunningham was so sure that the Press not only here but also throughout Australia—

Hon. J. M. A. Cunningham: I said throughout the world.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: — and even overseas were very hostile to this measure.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You could easily get one paper that would be in favour of it.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: There are three papers in this city, so that makes 33½ per cent. of them in favour of it.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: It may have a very small circulation.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It has a very big circulation. I would also like to have something to say about the remarks of Mr. Watson. He told us about the type of individual we may get on the commission to investigate businesses and so on. He mentioned some particular person who had been sent from an institution and the next job that he obtained was to investigate a firm's affairs. I think the hon. member said that he had been an inmate of Heathcote.

Hon. H. K. Watson: That was another officer.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: In any event the hon. member quoted two instances of undesirable persons. In New South Wales an extensive inquiry has been held to make investigations into the hire-purchase system in connection with used-car sales. When the "Truth" newspaper in that State conducted some investigations of its own it suggested that the hire-purchase financial corporations should have a look at the type of people to whom

they extended credit. Without mentioning names, these are the types of persons that those financial bodies have been dealing with—

- (1) —, villain with 13 aliases, 32 criminal convictions and a four-year sentence currently under way, at present wanted in Queensland, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia over car frauds.

He would set up as a dealer, act as financiers' agent, and defraud customers of many thousands.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Is he one of the city councillors over there?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; but it would not be the first time a civic father had fallen by the wayside. Continuing to quote—

- (2) —, habitual criminal who has been on 34 criminal charges since 1929, is now in Pentridge and is wanted by N.S.W. police.

His speciality: Buying up wrecks, transferring their identities to stolen cars, then using H.P. laxity to unload the "hot" vehicles on customers who eventually do their cash cold.

- (3) —, habitual criminal now in gaol on 20 false pretence raps, many of them over cars.

His record goes back 18 years.

His speciality: Buying car after car on H.P. and trading in for a better one without paying any money, so that the subsequent buyers of each car lost them on repossession.

It wouldn't have worked if the financiers had bothered to check, but they didn't care.

Only the innocent buyers suffered.

Here is another one—

- (4) —, now in Fanny Bay Gaol, Darwin, over car frauds, and previously on 26 charges all over Australia.

Hon. L. A. Logan: What has that to do with this Bill?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It has some relation to the speech made by Mr. Watson. If what I am quoting has nothing to do with the Bill, then his speech has nothing to do with it either. These financial insitutions will deal with anybody and those are some of the practices that are indulged in in that State. I continue to quote from this Press article as follows:—

Exorbitant interest rates—sometimes up to 50 per cent.

Excessive insurance charges.

Inexplicable "office charges" which are nothing more than another way of fleecing hirers.

I remember Mr. Cunningham saying that his idea of unfair practices was the State Insurance Office offering insurance

at premiums lower than that charged by private insurance companies. That was his opinion of the insurance business.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: What about selling State bricks at a loss? That is unfair.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It would probably be cheaper to give them away.

Hon. R. C. Mattiske: What about the increases in the railway charges? They are unfair, too.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Continuing—

An iniquitous system of whittling down rebates on insurance and interest in repossession cases—and often complete failure to give any rebate.

Failure of financiers to check their agents, inspect the cars involved, or investigate the bona fides of hirers, so that when crooks work rackets the hire purchase company invariably grinds down on the innocent to recover what the crook has stolen from it.

I know that that has very little relation to the Bill—

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But it fills in time.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS:—but as I said before, I wanted to show that there are still those types of people about. I have heard it said here that the oil companies have brought a great deal of money into this State. Of course they have! But they have also taken out a great deal. Nobody objects to that, provided that it is taken out fairly.

However, I take objection to what I term private control of commodities—that is, monopolies, where there is absolutely no competition whatsoever. All petroleum products now come from Kwinana. Admittedly different firms have different ways of treating the product; but nevertheless all petrol is distributed from Kwinana, and it is no cheaper than it was when it was brought from overseas.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: You have to take into consideration the interest on the capital expenditure.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; but the community is entitled to something, too, by way of a fair price, because it put some millions into the establishment of that industry.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: They want interest on those millions that are invested.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: They are entitled to some return by selling the product at a reasonable price. I do not know what is a reasonable price; but I have heard it said here that because control is imposed in the Eastern States, the people in this State have to pay more for their petrol to make up for

the loss made by the oil companies in the other States. This is very hard to believe.

Hon. L. A. Logan: Why?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: It is hard to believe that that would be the case.

Hon. A. F. Griffith: Does this Bill mean that the oil companies are going to get the big stick?

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: No; but I would like to see them placed in the position where they could not say, "We will turn the tap off and hold up the country."

Hon. H. K. Watson: You stand a good chance of having the tap turned off under this Bill.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Of course we do; but there is provision to have it turned on again under this Bill. I have had experience in that respect when our State ships could not carry sufficient oil to the North. I asked the oil companies who were trading in the North if they would stand up to the pledge that they made in a full-page advertisement which appeared in the "Sunday Times". This was when they were fighting with the Prices Minister in New South Wales. I hold up this advertisement which appeared in the "Sunday Times" for every member to see. It is headed "Fair Play" and this is what is printed underneath it—

The oil industry has always endeavoured to meet its obligations to consumers scattered throughout this vast country. Costs involved in deliveries to the outback are much greater than costs involved in the metropolitan trade. At the present time therefore a lot of money could be saved and the industry's loss would be so much less if deliveries to the country were curtailed. Such action would be justified, but this will never happen as the industry is pledged to serve the Australian public to the best of its ability.

When I asked the oil companies to deliver some petrol on our behalf to the North—the quantity was 500 drums—they replied, "Yes, at a price." I subsequently discovered that they acted in a similar manner with the previous Government; but I did not know that then. When this reply was given to me, I referred them to the pledge which they had made in the full-page advertisement; and I was told, "We cannot do that in the North."

It is generally known that the State Government subsidises the freight charges on oil to the North-West to the extent of £30,000 or £40,000 a year. In other words, we are subsidising the transport of petrol to Wapet. When I told them that I would do something about it, I was asked what would happen if there were no aeroplanes or other forms of transport

operating in the North as a result of no oil being transported to that area. That is the position. Could such a position be tolerated for ever?

I remember that, during the war years, when doctors and patients and everybody else were working under strain, the State Government—or it may have been the City Council—published a regulation stating that no taxis were to operate after midnight. However, that regulation did not operate for very long because the authority in question was told that the tap would be turned off if the taxis did not operate because the boys could not get back to their ships and so on.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: But such a position would be controlled by the amount of petrol available.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; there was petrol rationing in force at the time, of course. However, that actually happened, and the hon. member will probably recall the incident. Those are the sort of practices that can go on unless there is a Bill such as this on the statute book.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Tell me how you would get that petrol to the North if this legislation were proclaimed.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: I cannot do that at the moment; but what I have said is no red herring. It is quite true. If the hon. member is prepared to condone that sort of thing, he will condone anything. That is an instance of where a company can hold up the whole State.

Hon. G. C. MacKinnon: The Metal Trades Union held up the whole country.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Every car salesman and every worker gets what he can, but the workers are under price control.

Hon. A. R. Jones: They are controlled all right!

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: Yes; and the hon. member would like to see them controlled all the time. Members should not forget this: Without the worker there would be no production. He is the actual producer.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: That is why so many machines are in use today.

The MINISTER FOR RAILWAYS: The operatives are still required to man the machines, but they have to be more highly skilled. A robot has not yet been invented that can do everything. The human factor will always be required. I cannot understand why members should object to this Bill. A complaint has been raised against the commissioner. I have pointed out that the commissioner is to be responsible to the Minister, and the Minister is responsible to the people. If there is anything better than to have public control, I do not know it.

HON. A. R. JONES (Midland) [8.46]: I have been very interested indeed in the debate which has taken place in the House, and particularly in the arguments raised against the Bill. In my opinion the arguments of members opposing the Bill are very sound, but I have yet to hear a good reason why this Bill should be passed.

The Chief Secretary: Can you give us a good reason for opposing it?

HON. A. R. JONES: In his introduction, the Minister might just as well have read the Bill in full, because that was all he told us. He did not give one inkling why the measure was necessary. As that point has been raised by other members, I shall not labour it. I asked Mr. Diver to give some good reason why it should be passed. Not that I wanted to put him on the spot; I asked him because nobody else could give a reason.

The Bill sets out to do certain things—to prevent unfair profit-taking, to prevent unfair methods of trading, to prevent unfair methods of trade competition. Nobody has been able to define those things. They are left to somebody's judgement. That aspect has been outlined by many speakers so again I shall not labour it. I am merely going to criticise some of the points that were supposed to have been made by other speakers.

The question of huge profits under hire purchase was raised by Mrs Hutchison. As far as I can gather, this Bill will not deal with that problem any more effectively than a small Bill which should have been introduced by the Government two or three years ago to restrict, or limit the percentage which could be charged by hire-purchase companies.

HON. F. R. H. Lavery: The Prime Minister tried it but could not succeed.

HON. A. R. JONES: It is no use trying to pass the buck on to Mr. Menzies, because he told the States that they had complete control.

HON. F. R. H. Lavery: I did not pass the buck. I merely said he could not control the hire-purchase companies.

HON. A. R. JONES: I cannot understand why a Labour Government, after getting into office, did not make this one of its first objectives. It is useless for Mrs. Hutchison or any other Labour member here to sit smugly and declare that huge profits are made under hire purchase; because if they wanted to, they could have coped with this problem by introducing one small Bill, and we would have supported it. I agree that to take profits of between 15 and 20 per cent., as is charged by some hire-purchase companies, is too exorbitant altogether.

HON. SIR CHARLES LATHAM: There is already an Act on the statute book which will cope with this situation by one slight amendment to it.

HON. A. R. JONES: The attempt to lead us to believe that this Bill is necessary to restrict hire-purchase companies is too ridiculous altogether. If this Bill was ever necessary, it was necessary some three or four years ago. If excessive profits had been made and the workers had been robbed, they were robbed by their own fellow workers. From my experience, the workers were the biggest robbers of all.

HON. R. F. HUTCHISON: How would you know?

HON. A. R. JONES: I would know because I had plenty of work done at that time, and the gun was held at my head. I was told by the workmen, "We have the wherewithal and the ability to do the job. You pay our price or else." My friend alongside me, who is a bus driver and a conscientious worker in the community, had the gun levelled at his head also when he wanted a job around his house done. One of his fellow-workers, a bricklayer, asked for £8 a day for his labour. If that is not robbery what is?

If we are to protect the people, and if it is the object of the Bill to do that, it has been introduced too late by many years, because the robbery has already been perpetrated. I am not saying that there were no businessmen taking advantage of the situation also. But the business people who took advantage when things were bad will not be able to regain their customers in normal times. The customers will deal with the decent traders.

I venture to say that 99 per cent. of the business people are decent. Surely we should not introduce a Bill to make it possible to deal with the remaining 1 per cent. of businessmen and traders who took advantage of the situation, and by so doing to inconvenience a great number of the honest traders in the business world!

Let us look at another aspect. This Bill is to deal with the things I have mentioned—to prevent unfair methods of trading, to prevent unfair methods of trade competition, and to stop restrictive trade practices and production if they affect the public generally. I challenge anyone to say that the trade unions do not restrict production. By their restricting production the public are charged more for goods than if the workers were permitted to do the work which they were capable of.

It is well-known that when a worker goes into an industry and carries out his duties at his own pace, a pace he has been used to in the job previously, and turns out three or four more articles a day than the others in doing what he considers an honest day's work, he will be told by the union to slow down.

HON. G. E. JEFFERY: Where does this occur?

HON. A. R. JONES: The hon. member would know that better than I.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: I have been engaged in industry for 21 years and I have not seen it.

Hon. R. C. Mattiske: We all know that bricklayers knock off at 3 p.m. when they have done their quota.

Hon. A. R. JONES: As was demonstrated previously, when a number of men were put off in an industry, production rose. That was because the remaining men were jittery about their position, and they concentrated on their work more than before. Let none of us be led astray into the belief that there is only one side to this question.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: There are several.

Hon. A. R. JONES: One party offends as much as the other. The Bill deals with monopolies and unfair methods of trading. I wonder how the Government Railways will be placed; how the timber mills, the brickyards, the Government buses, the electricity, gas and water supplies will be placed? Are they not monopolies belonging to the Government. Would not the Minister for Railways be riding the gun if the commissioner under this Bill were to inquire into any of these monopolies and unfair trading practices? They have everything in the world to protect them, although they may be acting adversely against a private trader or private transport organisation. I would suggest that the Minister would be the first to ride the gun.

The Minister for Railways: The railways have subsidised the farmers.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That is nice coming from the Minister! He knows as well as I that the board on top of the hill restricts people from transporting goods from place to place. It is a protection for the railways. A farmer can bring down stock from the country and take goods back for his own use or goods needed on the farm; but can a contractor from Wyalkatchem coming down with a load of stock take back anything he desires? Of course not!

The Minister says the farmers are subsidised in this regard; but I would point out that recently I had a full truckload of timber, iron, pipes, etc., carted from Perth. The freight was £46, and it cost £10 to load from the railway trucks to the farm. Road transport could have carted that freight for £30 right to my back door. That is how the Minister is subsidising the farmer.

The Minister for Railways: Do you prefer road transport to the railways?

Hon. A. R. JONES: If the commissioner were to inquire into monopolies he would be on the Minister's tracks. The commissioner cannot overlook the fact that the railways are protected and taking an unfair advantage because of the protection given by the Transport Board. The railways have every protection that it is possible to

give, yet private transport operators are expected to trade in competition, but not equal competition.

Hon. W. F. Willesee: How would you make him refund his loss?

Hon. A. R. JONES: I suggest that the Minister should do the same in the railways as he did at the mill company in Albany. Put off 1,000 men, and he will get more efficiency in the railways.

Hon. G. Bennetts: From where would you start—the top?

Hon. A. R. JONES: Alternatively he could lift all restrictions and so bring about a little competition from private enterprise. Only then will we see the railways giving a better service. We do not get it today. A person may rail goods to the country, but the goods arrive at their destination at no set time; on the other hand, if goods are needed from Perth they can be despatched to the farms by road transport within a few hours.

The Minister for Railways: Which would you barrack for—road or rail service?

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am not barracking for anybody. I am suggesting that the same approach to the railway question is to make them measure up to their responsibility, so that instead of losing £5,000,000 a year they will only lose £3,000,000. We should introduce more competition so that if the railway staff do not meet it they will be put off. The railways, as a monopoly, have everything in their favour.

Hon. E. M. Davies: It would not be much of a State without the railways.

Hon. G. Bennetts: They are necessary to develop the country.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Then there are the timber companies. There are Bunnings Bros., Millars' Timber & Trading Co. and the State Saw Mills all in the ring. Does the State trading concern reduce prices? Not at all! It is happy to put them up with the rest, so as to cut its losses.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: We are talking about excess profits, not losses.

Hon. A. R. JONES: The hon. member would not know what we are talking about.

Hon. R. F. Hutchison: I know more than you do.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Government buses are another monopoly and their operation constitute an unfair trading practice against private enterprise. They enjoy all sorts of concessions—cheap petrol, cheap diesel, no licence to pay, no 6 per cent to put in, but only 1 per cent.—

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They pay the same price for petrol as anybody else. I ought to know.

Hon. A. R. JONES: —and they have no income tax to pay. Yet they operate against private buses. They have a monopoly and enjoy very great privilege. Jus

where does the Minister think he would be, or where would some of his fellow-Ministers be if the commissioner were asked to do his duty?

The Minister for Railways: You believe there should be no public transport at all? There is no answer!

Hon. A. R. JONES: One of the offences set out in this Bill is the—

controlling or influencing the supply of, demand for or price of any goods or services contrary to the interest of the public.

I suggest that the union representatives, the union bosses, could well come under this Bill for doing something restrictive in the way of influencing or condoning strikes. If it is not meant in that way, I am certain that I would not have a bar of it.

The Minister for Railways: Don't tell me you are protecting the workers!

Hon. A. R. JONES: Under this Bill, a person can be suspect and can be investigated by the commissioner, who can do all sorts of things to his books, freeze all his supplies, put him through the hoop and find him guilty. Then that person has the right of appeal. If he wins the appeal, what does he get? There is nothing in the Bill to say that he shall be compensated. Yet his character would have been absolutely defamed and he might just as well go out of business.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: He would be in the same position as the man acquitted of a criminal charge. What compensation does that man get?

Hon. A. R. JONES: We are not talking about criminal charges.

Hon. G. E. Jeffery: You were talking about compensation.

Hon. Sir Charles Latham: Such a man would be tried by a jury.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I wonder how we would get over this one: We know that through the resumption board a certain amount of land has been resumed under Governments Acts for a number of years. Some of the land which has been resumed for housing purposes has not been built upon, and the blocks have been sold—sometimes for three or four times the amount which was paid for them only 12 months, two years, or three years previously. Would that department come under this Bill? I am asking these questions because I want to know from the Minister why the devil the measure was ever introduced!

Under this Bill, if it became an Act, a farmer or somebody carrying on a business could be investigated because he had made a profit in one year in excess of what the commissioner thought he should have made. I would point out that up to 1950 very few farmers had made very

much profit. In fact, quite a number had not paid taxation for years. In 1950 and 1951 there were rising wool prices and the farmer's profits rose and he was an excess profit-maker during that period. The same has happened in businesses.

Hon. F. D. Willmott: The Taxation Department looks after excess profits.

Hon. A. R. JONES: I am not going to avoid mentioning names. One has only to look at the balance sheets of big firms of the year before last to find that companies like Winterbottoms, Wigmores and other concerns made big profits and issued debentures shares. But what did they do this year and three or four years ago? They may have made losses. For one year, or for two years, a person could be making excess profits and be liable under this Bill. But there is nothing in the world to say that a farmer who made an excess profit on account of a rise in wool prices might not in the following years sustain losses to the extent of hundreds of pounds on account of depressed prices over which he would have no control. Again the same applies to many businesses.

This legislation is something that we should not condone. Even if the amendments on the notice paper were all agreed to, I still think that the measure would be iniquitous, and I would not have a bar of it. In view of what has been said already, there is little that one can add. Mr. Jeffery attacked everybody opposing the measure, and said we wanted to put the burden back on to the worker. He quoted a lot of figures, but I could not remember half of them or even a third of them.

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: They will be in Hansard, and you will be able to read them.

Hon. A. R. JONES: That will be too late, perhaps. If I remember correctly, Mr. Jeffery said that the basic wage was a certain figure in 1939 and rose to certain other figures in following years. He said also that the prices of commodities went a little ahead of the increases in the basic wage. What brought about the steep rises, he never said. Was it not the fact that when the country was prosperous, prosperity loadings of £1 and 10s. were awarded to employees? Did that not happen somewhere?

Hon. F. R. H. Lavery: Yes; and it was all taken off again.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Of course it happened! And from that time the prices of commodities started to rise in conformity with increases in the basic wage. I am not saying that the workers should not have enjoyed those increases; but, as I said two years ago on the Address-in-reply, those good times have gone. Surely if we are going to come down to earth we must look to the future! I said two

years ago, and this year, that the answer to the problem is that we should no longer go on pushing wages up or allowing them to increase, and we should no longer permit prices to rise. I would not ask any one section of the community to carry the whole burden.

Hon. E. M. Davies: Your Government had an opportunity to do something about it.

Hon. A. R. JONES: Not in this State. It would have to be Commonwealth-wide. It would be no good doing it in this State. I think our Premier said that we must cut down our imports from the Eastern States from £60,000,000-worth to something more reasonable. At least 75 per cent. of those commodities are controlled in price from the Eastern States. We could do little if we pegged prices and wages here. It would not be reasonable or fair to do so. Such a movement must be Commonwealth-wide.

At this juncture I think the reasonable thing to do is to wait and see what comes of the approaching Premiers' Conference. We do not know what will be the outcome of that gathering. I agree with the Labour Premiers that it is quite right that the Prime Minister should listen to reasonable argument with regard to the pegging of prices, if necessary, at their present level and reducing them after a period, if wages are going to be controlled and pegged. That is only reasonable. With this conference about to be held, let us wait and see whether the Premiers and the Prime Minister and the Commonwealth Treasurer cannot hammer out something which will have an overall good effect on the economy, rather than deal with the matter piecemeal and try to restrict a few people who might do the wrong thing.

We should be ashamed of legislation such as this. Two previous measures to deal with this problem were introduced into Parliament and I do not know why they were allowed to lapse. I remember that the Leader of the Country Party brought down one measure last year, and Mr. Grayden introduced legislation previously.

Hon. E. M. Davies: And what happened to him!

Hon. A. R. JONES: To my mind that was better legislation than we have before us because it was specific as to what was required, whereas this is not so at all. I remember very vividly that on the last occasion the Labour Party submitted amendments which made the measure unworkable and unthinkable. I intend definitely to oppose this measure.

On motion by Hon. F. J. S. Wise, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.12 p.m.

Legislative Assembly

Thursday, 25th October, 1956.

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The SPEAKER took the Chair at 2.1 p.m., and read prayers.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION.

Mr. I. W. Manning and Harvey Potato Growers' Petition.

Mr. I. W. MANNING: With your permission, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make personal explanation regarding the vitriolic attack made upon me, my character and my good faith as a member of the Chamber by the Minister for Agriculture when he replied to a "Dorothy Dix" asked by the member for South Fremantle yesterday.

The Minister for Transport: That is reflecting on the member for South Fremantle.

Mr. I. W. MANNING: I presented a petition from the potato growers in my electorate and I should like to refer to it