

Queensland



Parliamentary Debates  
[Hansard]

**Legislative Assembly**

**WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER 1957**

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Limited and asking him to discuss the matter urgently with Senator Paltridge with a view to their being given a reasonable allocation of future shipping orders with as little delay as possible in order that they may be able to maintain the present level of employment at their works. I desire to inform the Honourable Member also that some little time ago I discussed this matter with Sir Arthur Fadden and from this discussion I know that Sir Arthur is fully aware of the position in the Maryborough Shipyards. I have no doubt it will receive his close attention."

#### PAPERS.

The following papers were laid on the table, and ordered to be printed:—

Report of the Commissioner of Police for the year 1956-1957.

Report of the State Government Insurance Office for the year 1956-1957.

The following papers were laid on the table:—

Order in Council under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1957.

Regulation under the Primary Producers' Organisation and Marketing Acts, 1926 to 1957.

### WEDNESDAY, 30 OCTOBER, 1957.

Mr. SPEAKER (Hon. A. R. Fletcher, Cunningham) took the chair at 11 a.m.

#### QUESTION.

#### ORDERS FOR SHIP-BUILDING, WALKERS LTD., MARYBOROUGH.

Mr. DAVIES (Maryborough) asked the Premier—

"In view of the definite statement by Sir Arthur Fadden in Maryborough on July 11, when commenting on work for Walkers Ltd. Shipyards, as reported in 'The Maryborough Chronicle' of 12 July, namely 'We will see that they get more orders . . . Walkers are a pioneer ship-building yard in Australia; we must look after them,' will he confer with the Federal Treasurer and Deputy Prime Minister and urge him to give speedy proof that he intends keeping his promise, as Walkers Ltd. have no orders apart from the ship being built, and many dismissals will take place in the very near future?'"

Hon. G. F. R. NICKLIN (Landsborough) replied—

"I refer the Honourable Member to my answer to his question of yesterday on the same subject wherein I informed him that I would take steps to see that the claims of Walkers Limited for ship-building orders were brought to the notice of the Commonwealth Minister for Shipping and Transport. The established practice is for matters of this nature to be dealt with on a Premier-Prime Minister level and I have already written the Prime Minister pointing out the position as it now exists at Walkers

#### POLICE ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Morris, read a third time.

#### ANIMALS PROTECTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Morris, read a third time.

#### GOVERNOR'S PENSION BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Nicklin, read a third time.

#### ROYAL NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL AND INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION OF QUEENSLAND BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Nicklin, read a third time.

#### CONSTITUTION ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

##### THIRD READING.

Bill, on motion of Mr. Nicklin, read a third time.

PROFITEERING PREVENTION ACTS  
AMENDMENT BILL.

INITIATION IN COMMITTEE—RESUMPTION OF  
DEBATE.

(The Chairman of Committees, Mr. Taylor, Clayfield, in the chair.)

Debate resumed from 29 October (see p. 724) on Mr. Munro's motion—

“That it is desirable that a Bill be introduced to amend the Profiteering Prevention Acts, 1948 to 1954, in certain particulars.”

**Mr. WALSH** (Bundaberg) (11.13 a.m.): On the Minister's outline of the Bill, it appears that there is to be no radical change in price control. However, I draw his attention to what I consider an inconsistency following statements that have been made by various Ministers about departmental officials serving on public bodies. Apart from Mr. Fullagar, it appears that the Under Secretary of the Department of Labour and Industry, who occupies a very important position in a department with very wide ramifications, is to serve on the proposed Advisory Board. The Director of Marketing, too, is to be a member of the Board. Apparently the Government propose to constitute numerous boards by the appointment of public officials regardless of whether they are fully occupied with their present official duties.

Some of the remarks of the Minister and his Government imply that there will be a gradual sabotaging of the price-control structure that has operated in Queensland for many years. Let it be recorded that the Labour Party, very early in its activities to achieve the reins of government, laid it down that price control was very important and should go hand in hand with arbitration and conciliation for the fixation of wages and industrial conditions.

Queensland pioneered price control and rent control in Australia. Before World War II no other State had instituted price control or indeed rent control as it was known in Queensland. It is significant that it was not a Labour Government that introduced it on an Australia-wide basis, for in 1939 the Menzies Government introduced it under the National Security Act and regulations.

It might be argued that it was justified in war-time. I contend that many things justified in war are equally justified in times of peace. As people are asked to give their lives or to offer their services generally in war-time, they should be given some protection in peace-time.

The Commonwealth Government having brought in price control, it was subsequently retained by all the States. True, all the other States have since abolished it, except South Australia, which has a very limited form of price control. In Tasmania and

Western Australia, immediately rent control was relinquished the basic wage increased by something like 9s. or 10s. a week. If the Minister wants to join in the inflationary race he had better tell the community that that is the policy of his Government. If they desire to join with other States in bringing about instability in the nation's economy they had better announce their policy early so that the great body of consumers will know where they stand.

**Mr. Munro:** We have announced our policy. I told you last night.

**Mr. WALSH:** As I see it, the Government's policy so far has been to release from price control certain items important to the family budget, such as fruit and fish. I suppose eventually only meat prices will be controlled.

Much has been said about the primary producers and price control. I agree that it is important to the producer, but let us remember that of the 1,500,000 people in Queensland only about 50,000 are primary producers and many of them are engaged in rural industry in which price control does not affect the product. If the sugar industry, with its 7,000 to 8,000 farmers, were allowed to run riot with the price of its commodity and if the miller and the grower fixed the price of sugar for the Australian consumer, as other bodies want to fix the price of their commodity every three months or six months as the case may be, one could readily understand what would happen to the economy of the industry. However, if every primary industry organised itself on the same basis as the sugar industry we should have some stability. After all, the sugar-grower has to contend with droughts, industrial disturbances and everything else that can bring about disorganisation in industry.

Two or three years ago I read some figures which highlighted the position of the sugar industry in comparison with all the other primary industries because of price control. The price of sugar is fixed for five years by agreement between governments. Of course, the overseas price is taken into account. It is true that it has been favourable in recent years. Increases in the price of sugar have been proportionately nearer to increases in the basic wage than price increases in any other commodity produced from the land. The price of wheat today is fixed by agreement between the Australian Wheat Board and the State Wheat Board. It is not a determination in the first place by the Commissioner of Prices because the formula is already laid down. The same applies to butter. In effect they are under a form of Commonwealth control.

**Mr. Gaven:** Just as well.

**Mr. WALSH:** I am glad the hon. member for Southport gave me that little lead. I remember the raw deal that the wheat-growers and the dairy-farmers got from Commonwealth anti-Labour Governments for years until Curtin and Chifley came on the scene and put them on a proper basis. They got a very good deal under Federal Labour Governments. It was Labour in the Federal sphere just as it was Labour in the State sphere that laid down the basis of the formulae of these industries with subsidies and organisation.

**Mr. Gilmore:** The Chifley Government broke its back.

**Mr. WALSH:** I have only 25 minutes in which to speak, but if the hon. member for Tablelands wants to take me back to 1937 when Joe Lyons was the leader of the anti-Labour Government I will tell him a few things. All the tobacco farmers walked off their farms around Mareeba because of that Government's tariff policy. Tobacco was imported at a greatly reduced rate and excise was increased on the locally grown product.

**Mr. Gilmore:** And the Chifley Government added fuel to the fire and kept them off longer still.

**Mr. WALSH:** The hon member knows full well—

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! I trust the hon. member will come back to the Bill.

**Mr. WALSH:** Yes. They are all very interesting sidelights pertinent to the general matter of price control.

Last night the Minister quoted a statement by the President of the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce in which he suggested that because of price control in Queensland the standard of food and dress was lower here. I hope the Minister is not adopting that statement as his own line of thought. Any Queenslander who goes south finds himself faced with much higher hotel bills. The various articles of food so important to the diet, bread, milk, cheese and so on, are almost double the Queensland prices. When I have been in Canberra representatives of the Press have complained to me about milk being 4d. more a bottle and steak about 3s. more a lb. The point is not whether the basic wage is £4 10s. or £12 10s. in Brisbane but what the average family can buy for £1. It is to the credit of Labour legislation over the years that there has been a more stabilised economy in Queensland because of price control.

The hon. member for South Brisbane mentioned the statement by Sir Thomas Playford, Premier of South Australia. I heard Sir Thomas say at a Premiers' Conference that the only effective price control in Australia was in Queensland. That was a compliment from a Liberal Premier who had been in office longer than any other Premier

in Australia—that price control in Queensland under a Labour Government was more effective than price control in any other State in Australia. Mr. Playford mentioned that blankets manufactured in Victoria were transported to South Australia and sold there for 25 per cent. less than the price charged in Victoria. The Minister may say that is good business, it is competition. Where you lift governmental price control, you hand it over to vested interests to do what they like with charges for the necessaries of life.

Reference has been made to Mr. Fullagar. Quite frequently I disagreed strongly with Mr. Fullagar. I suppose it is to his credit that at least he was not prepared to sell out to any Government, whether the present Government or the previous one. He had his job to do. When I made representations to him in connection with matters concerning my electorate I found him to be a pretty tough man. He worked on the principles and the formula as he interpreted them as Commissioner of Prices. The oil companies could not produce an executive officer who was a match for Mr. Fullagar in working out the different calculations.

**Mr. Nicholson:** It would not have made any difference if he had beaten him; he would not have got anywhere with it.

**Mr. WALSH:** He was giving his honest and just opinion. His advice to the Government at the time was subsequently supported by the Tariff Board report. None of us know why it was withheld for 12 months. It was there from June, 1956. There was evidence in it that justified every action of the Queensland Government against the oil companies. It is a pity that there should be any suggestion that Mr. Fullagar at any time was subject to dictation. Those who get to know him in their administration will find that he has an opinion of his own. If the hon. member for Murrumba thinks that any member of the Government laid down a formula I am sure the present Minister will tell him something contrary to that.

**Mr. Madsen:** Do you think his decision should have been subject to appeal?

**Mr. WALSH:** Why should the hon. member raise that question when he sat over there yesterday and voted for something that took away the right of appeal. Why bring the right of appeal up now. The Government may decide that they will set up a body of their own to direct and override the Prices Advisory Board which the Minister proposes to constitute.

**Mr. Madsen:** He should not have the powers of a dictator.

**Mr. WALSH:** I would sooner trust him than put it in the hands of any Minister who might be prejudiced or biased in regard to any industry.

**Mr. Madsen:** I do not think it should be placed in the hands of one man either.

**Mr. WALSH:** We will see how it works out. It may be that there will be some changes in administration. With other executive officers he has to accept responsibility for the actions of his staff. Prices inspectors caused trouble in many instances between the public and the Commissioner. None of us could tolerate the actions of some of those officers, but the Commissioner had to be guided by reports of his officers and consequently he got into disfavour with the public and primary producers at different times.

I trust that there will be no drastic change in price control. The Minister quoted the statement of the President of the Chamber of Commerce that Queensland was a low-wage State. The Minister is associated with companies. The balance sheets presented by him show on one side the liabilities and on the other the assets of those companies. If Queensland's balance sheet shows low wages as a liability, the assets on the other side would include low costs.

**Mr. Munro:** Both of them must be considered. I mentioned that fact last evening only because one aspect was quoted and not the other.

**Mr. WALSH:** Prior to the war this State was able to boast that it had the lowest cost of living, the highest industrial standards, the shortest working-week and the highest basic wage. What better assets could be built by any State, and those were built in Queensland under price control and the taxation policy of that Government.

If the Government desire to maintain the stabilised economy brought about by Labour Governments over many years, they must not relinquish price control of commodities that affect the basic wage considerably.

If control is relinquished, the Treasurer will have to impose all sorts of additional taxation to meet the adjustments in the wages of public servants, railway officers and the staff of other public bodies. Apart from anything else, it is important from the Government's point of view that price control should go hand in hand with wage fixation.

**Mr. BURROWS** (Port Curtis) (11.32 a.m.): No legislation is regarded as more important or guarded more jealously by the Australian Labour Party than price control. I ask the Minister to bear that in mind if in his opinion we express undue concern about the future of this very useful and advanced piece of legislation.

**Mr. Munro:** Is there anything in the Bill to which you are opposed?

**Mr. BURROWS:** I shall deal with that question in a moment. I think the Minister will be satisfied by the time I finish.

Price control is condemned by certain people, but I compare those statements with a condemnation of a particular make of car because a bad driver smashes it against a telephone pole. There have been weaknesses in administration and I shall give specific instances. At one stage there was a shortage of timber in this State. I approached the Minister in charge of prices—in fairness I state that the hon. member for Baroona did not at the time hold the portfolio—and pointed out that the sawmiller in Gladstone because of the fixed price of timber could send the timber to Rockhampton and after paying freight get 5s. a 100 feet more for it than the price he could get in Gladstone. In consequence, contractors in Gladstone could not get timber. The mill was sending its timber to Rockhampton.

Conversely it brought about a better supply of timber in Rockhampton at the expense of the locality. I had a rather lengthy argument over it and to be honest I do not know whether I won or not. I had a file ever so thick dealing with the matter. That is one instance where price control was badly administered. The hon. member for Baroona will remember the arguments I had with him a few months before the 1956 election when the price of meat was reduced in Bundaberg and not at Gladstone. The abattoirs were not in operation then but the butchers in Bundaberg were drawing most of their supplies from the Gladstone meatworks.

**Mr. Power:** You got a reduction.

**Mr. BURROWS:** Not until after the election, but it was not as good as the previous one. I do not intend to take advantage of the privileges of this Chamber to attack Mr. Fullagar or any other public servant who has not the same right of reply as I have but in my association with him particularly in latter years he gave me the impression that he was not operating with the freedom that is so necessary for a man in his position. Nobody can convince me that it was right to reduce the price of meat 2½d. a lb. in Bundaberg and not reduce it at places in the country from where the cattle were drawn. I should say that the nearer the source of supply the cheaper the meat should have been. I was not able to get a reduction until after the election when I brought the matter up in a place other than this Chamber. That is an example of where the car was badly driven. The whole principle of price control can be undermined and sabotaged in that way. I hope that the appointment of this board is not the thin end of the wedge or a scientific way of abolishing price control. Only the other day we opposed an Order in Council to decontrol certain items. It is no good the Government's denying that inherently they are opposed to price control. Inherently they have a specific purpose and it is to protect the profiteer and the speculator, the only ones who will benefit by the abolition of price control. The genuine retailer has nothing to fear from

price control any more than the genuine and honest worker has anything to fear from arbitration or wage control. It is no good saying that we believe in wage control unless we are prepared to stop exploitation in the prices of necessities. Price control is just as important to the wage-earner as is the system of industrial arbitration which fixes wages. The absence of one neutralises the benefits of the other.

It is regrettable that we have not price control on an Australia-wide basis. If the Liberal-Country Party were in favour of it we would have it. Then we would not have the curse of inflation which is doing more damage to the country's economy, and to the living standards and happiness of the people, than anything else. Next to war, inflation is the most terrible thing that can happen to a country.

**Mr. Munro:** Do you advocate wage control on the same basis as price control?

**Mr. BURROWS:** Yes. I am quite prepared to agree to that proposal, particularly if it is on a Commonwealth-wide basis. If the Minister canvasses the country advocating Commonwealth price control coupled with wage control, I shall be happy to support him and pay my own expenses. I do not believe in letting cartels and monopolies fix prices. I instance timber. Today, every sawmill in the country has a yard full of timber but the sawmillers dare not sell it at less than the price fixed by their Association. The timber is deteriorating in their yards. Hundreds of people want it to build homes, but they cannot get it because of its high price. That applies equally to many other items. Another example is oxygen, which is essential both in trade and for medical purposes. Its control lies in the hands of one company. A buyer has to pay its price and wait his turn to get it. One company has control of it throughout Australia and it is able to corner supplies. In a civilisation such as we now have, when it is possible to make a satellite travel round the world, it is remarkable that we cannot overcome the cornering of supplies. It makes us wonder whether we are really advancing when that can happen. However, many people, particularly members of the Liberal Country Party, defend monopolies. When they were in opposition I reminded one of them of it and I remember his interjection. It was, "Well, business is business." What an unhappy and un-Christian attitude! I cannot believe any man could honestly think along those lines. But they have certainly supported and protected the speculator.

I rose today to re-affirm our belief and faith in price control. It is reasonable, fair and equitable. Those who preach wage control are only hypocrites if they will not accept price control of commodities essential to the wage-earner. Notwithstanding pledges the Government may have made in the course

of their campaign and the wild and reckless statements some of their candidates may have made, I trust that wise counsel will prevail and that if price control is attacked, either directly or indirectly, they will do their best to preserve it. If they do that, they will be much happier at the end of their term than they are now.

There may be anomalies, but as long as they are fair and honest, they will find it easy to correct them. It is not fair to ask the farmer to supply the man in Brisbane with his product at the same price as that paid on the farm any more than it is fair to ask the Brisbane merchant to supply the farmer with goods delivered to the farm at the same price as that paid in his warehouse. Anomalies like that arise from time to time. I found that fish had to be sent from Gladstone and sold in Brisbane at the same price as in Gladstone. The fisherman had to pay the freight down. But when he wanted an anchor from Brisbane for his boat he had to pay the Brisbane price plus the freight to Gladstone. In all those things, if it is good enough for Peter it is good enough for Paul.

There may be some difficulties, but let us not condemn price control because of maladministration, past mistakes or wrong interpretations. It is a grand principle. It is just as important and just as fair as wage control. The Government owe it to the workers and to the masses generally to abandon any idea of favouring the speculator and the profiteer. Tears should not be wasted on them because they do not toil or spin. If the Government support the genuine producer and the genuine worker they will not go far wrong.

**Mr. DAVIES** (Maryborough) (11.50 a.m.): Several years ago a committee was appointed to advise on price-fixing, but for various reasons it did not function and we fear that the proposed committee will meet with a similar fate for various reasons that may arise. It may not function as the Minister now tells us it will.

**Mr. Munro:** Are you opposed to the Bill?

**Mr. DAVIES:** We have no reason to be opposed to the Bill but we have fears because of the attitude adopted by hon. members opposite when in Opposition. They viciously opposed all forms of price fixing. We have fears because of the opinions expressed by several hon. members opposite in recent days. For instance, the hon. member for Aubigny, a vicious opponent of price fixing, referred to it as a premium on inefficiency. We fear that gradually and quietly the Government will endeavour to remove all forms of price control. It is for the purpose of emphasising to the Government the necessity of some form of control that we are speaking on the Bill today. We find that the Commissioner of Prices is not to be the chairman of the committee—no doubt as time goes on we will know the reasons. Possibly no-one in the

Public Service would be more fitted for the position of chairman than Mr. Hoare. He is a man for whom we have the highest respect but a man who I should think would have had his time fully occupied in the Department of Labour and Industry. After all, the Deputy Premier is trying to induce a greater flow of capital into Queensland. With 230 new industries a year coming into the State for the last several years it will be very difficult to increase the rate of flow. Indeed I should have thought that Mr. Hoare had his time fully occupied in the department. It makes one think that the committee will meet very rarely, that the Government will be the real price fixer and the arbiter of what is going to be controlled and decontrolled. I was very dissatisfied with the Minister's answer. I thought he was being evasive when he endeavoured to explain why the Government rushed in so speedily to decontrol fruit, vegetables, and fish, three very important items that comprise a very big proportion of the family budget. It is beyond my comprehension why the Government did not wait until the committee had been appointed, to give advice. It makes us all the more suspicious that the Government are insincere and giving but lip-service to price control. It is well to remember the statements in this Chamber about the attitude of the Premier of South Australia towards price control. It has been said that he has referred in words of high praise to the work of the Queensland Government over a number of years in controlling prices successfully in Queensland. Let me quote his words on 28 June, 1956. Mr. Playford said—

“I agree that for a very long time Queensland has had the lowest basic wage of any State and I believe that that has been due to the fact that Queensland has maintained a fairly strong hold over the economy.”

I do not think that Mr. Playford has been as successful in South Australia with his price fixing control as we have been in Queensland. Nevertheless, that is an indication of what is thought by the Premiers of other States when they speak at conferences, when they are not electioneering and not trying to capture the popular vote by talk in Parliament, but say just what they really think. It is our purpose to remind the Government of the success of the control of the Chifley Government.

There is no doubt that during the years after the war the Chifley Government maintained stability of prices in the Commonwealth much more successfully than any other Government in the British Commonwealth of Nations or in the world. Full credit should be given to them. No member of the Government spoke along those lines. I wish to draw the attention of the Government to a statement by the President of the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures. Last night the Minister referred to a statement by the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in this

State. I was wondering whether I interpreted his remarks correctly when I gathered that he said that being the Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce he possibly might be prejudiced against the Labour Movement. If that is so I am surprised. I thought that Chambers of Commerce were non-political. The President of the Victorian Chamber of Manufactures, Mr. Vine, speaking in 1955 on the inflationary trends in Australia, said—

“The dangerous degree of inflation existing today is making Australia one of the world's most expensive countries to live in. The retail price index rise since before the war was only 96 per cent. in Britain, 90 per cent. in the United States, 85 per cent. in Canada, 103 per cent. in South Africa and 163 per cent. in Australia. These figures showed other countries had controlled inflation to some degree. But in Australia the cost of living was rising rapidly. Allowing that the Australian £1 bought 20s. real value of goods in 1939, the same £1 was worth only 16s. in 1946 and now was worth only 7s. 8d.”

Now it is about 6s. He went on to say—

“The combined cost of food, rent, clothing and miscellaneous goods had risen roughly 2½ times since 1939. The cost of food and groceries alone had risen more than three times.”

That is an indication of his opinion of lack of control by the Commonwealth Government. We remember the promises of that Government and the statement of Robert Gordon Menzies to put value back into the £1. Another indication of the success of the Chifley Government is to be found in the statement by Sir Norman Brookes, ex-President of the Lawn Tennis Association, and a wealthy investor in Melbourne whose wife was a Liberal candidate for Toorak. After his return from a world trip several years ago, he said—

“No country had controlled the cost of living figures as well as the Chifley Labour Government in Australia.”

Those statements were not made by Labour men. They were made by people who were fearless in expressing their honest views.

Mr. Warwick Fairfax of the “Sydney Morning Herald” said—

“Unfortunately the financial policy of the Federal Government has been anything but helpful. In my view, the Federal Government's diagnosis has been faulty and the treatment, in many cases, worse than the disease.”

Members of the Government have said that an increase in price is the result of an increase in wages. As a matter of fact wage increases are generally three to four months behind increases in the cost of living, and private enterprise always seizes the opportunity to raise prices higher than the increase in the basic wage. The Government should realise that. I propose to quote some figures that were placed before the Premiers' Conference by representatives of this State which were

not questioned by the Prime Minister or by any other representatives. They are most interesting. They should be kept in mind by the State Government who might succumb to pressure from their Party and submit to outside influences.

These are the figures for the period, September, 1955, to June, 1956—

Capital City.	Wage Increase.	Price Increase.
Sydney .. ..	4.56 per cent.	2.87 per cent.
Melbourne .. ..	2.41 per cent.	5.59 per cent.
Brisbane .. ..	2.15 per cent.	3.75 per cent.
Adelaide .. ..	Wages fixed	3.42 per cent.
Perth .. ..	1.6 per cent.	2.87 per cent.
Hobart .. ..	5.1 per cent.	3.58 per cent.

Tasmania was the only State where the increase in prices was less than the increase in wages.

These are the figures for the period, September, 1953, to June, 1956, nearly three years—

Capital City.	Wage Increase.	Price Increase.
Sydney .. ..	2.78 per cent.	7.25 per cent.
Melbourne .. ..	3.21 per cent.	9.95 per cent.
Brisbane .. ..	5.06 per cent.	7.41 per cent.
Adelaide .. ..	Wages fixed	7.37 per cent.
Perth .. ..	3.65 per cent.	7.02 per cent.
Hobart .. ..	5.1 per cent.	4.41 per cent.

**Mr. Muller:** Whom do you blame for that?

**Mr. DAVIES:** The Federal Government because of their lack of interest and co-operation with the States in Commonwealth-wide price control, people like the hon. gentleman and members of his Government who are not sincere in their desire to keep down prices but rather want to give private enterprise an open go, except, of course, margarine manufacturers. They do not believe in fair competition between that commodity and butter, or a price for margarine fixed on the law of supply and demand.

The figures for Adelaide indicate clearly that Mr. Playford was not very successful in keeping down prices, despite price control there.

**Mr. Harrison** interjected.

**Mr. DAVIES:** I advise the hon. member to read the table in "Hansard" and study it.

This is a statement made on 16 August, 1956, by Mr. Playford, the Prince Charming of the Country and Liberal Parties, the man represented during election campaigns as the ideal Premier of a State with ideal legislation—

"South Australia has continued to maintain price control since the end of the war and, although we acknowledge that there are a number of limitations in this connection, we propose to continue to exercise control over prices in my State."

This further statement by him is important—

"The fact that quarterly adjustments have been discontinued does not mean that we can have a Roman holiday and let prices control go haywire."

Hon. members will know that the Commonwealth Arbitration Court suspended Commonwealth cost of living adjustments in 1953.

Evidently Mr. Playford suspected that private enterprise would embark on a Roman holiday if there was not some control, otherwise he would not have mentioned it.

His statement continues—

"Increases in C Series Index that have taken place since the system of quarterly adjustments was discontinued by the Commonwealth reveal the increase of prices has tended to be lower in those States where price control has been maintained. When it is said that we have no confidence in any form of direct control, I point out that that is contrary to statistical evidence in connection with this matter."

That is a very plain and fair statement.

I remind the hon. member for Darlington who claims that the previous Government were not sincere in their policy of price control of Mr. Playford's statement about the willingness of private enterprise to embark on a Roman holiday and let price control go haywire. He implied that a big section of private enterprise would seize every opportunity to increase prices of commodities if they could evade price control.

It is very difficult for any Government to control prices absolutely, and that is instanced in the case of potatoes and onions. It is difficult for one State to maintain efficient price control without such control being uniform throughout the Commonwealth, and hon. members should remember that. I warn the Minister against the influence of his back-benchers, members of his Party who are eager to have a Roman holiday at the expense of the consumer. Primary producers in this State have done well under the administration of an A.L.P. Government. When we discuss the Estimates for the Department of Agriculture and Stock we will draw the attention of the Government to the magnificent legislation on the Statute Book in the interests of the farmer and we will remind them of the statement made by the former member for Darlington who said that he recognised that our butter and sugarcane legislation laid the foundation for all worthwhile primary-producer legislation in the Commonwealth. However, I am afraid that I have digressed a little in my replies to irrelevant interjections.

I hope the Minister will pay attention to the statements of hon. members on this side about rent control, that it will not be lifted completely. If it is necessary to make an adjustment in the 1942 basis of values we hope the Minister will keep in mind the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition on price fixation



generally and his emphasis on rectifying the present position by the removal of anomalies from the structure. If he does not heed the suggestion he will reap a vicious harvest very quickly. Look at what has happened in the South. There will be an increase in the basic wage very quickly. The hon. member for Aubigny said that there should be an increase of 10s. in the basic wage. He has not enlarged on his remark and I am waiting for him to explain it fully.

I have no objection to the appointment of the three gentlemen so long as the board works well. Speaking generally I think the opinion of a collective body is of more value than the opinion of one individual. Collective wisdom means wiser judgments. I hope the board will be a success and that the Minister is sincere. But I am sure he will see his folly in lifting control of items that affect the everyday life of the worker. I am sure too, he will realise he has done wrong in lifting control of the prices of fruit, fish and vegetables. No doubt he will reconsider his decision and that he will ask for a withdrawal of the Order in Council.

**Mr. MANN (Brisbane) (12.9 p.m.):** I listened attentively to the statements by the Minister in introducing the Bill. On a number of occasions he asked hon. members whether we opposed the measure. I want to tell him that we do not oppose the measure as it is, but after hearing the hon. members for Darlington, Somerset and Aubigny and the Minister for Agriculture and Stock we have our doubts. The Minister apparently is a very strong man in the new Government with great influence in the Cabinet. He is very determined and dogmatic in regard to this matter. We know quite well from his utterances that he is not in favour of price control; at least he conveys that impression. If he puts pressure on the Government, we are afraid that eventually they will lift price control altogether.

The Labour Party is very proud of its administration of price control. The Minister has assured us that he does not intend to lift it, and we have always found him honest and reliable; his word is his bond. However, we are afraid that pressure will be brought to bear on him to lift it by the Minister for Agriculture and Stock, the hon. member for Darlington, and the hon. member for Aubigny. The formation of the proposed committee is the means by which the Government hope to get round their hesitancy to lift price control.

**Mr. Hiley:** You are getting confused with the Q.C.E.

**Mr. MANN:** I am not getting confused at all. I know the influence that the hon. member for Somerset had over his party at its pre-election meetings. He must have more influence with the present Cabinet than he had on that occasion. The Labour

Party believes that the only way the consumer can be protected from the exploiters and other rapacious people is by rigid price control.

**Mr. Hiley:** You would not think there was much protection for the consumer when you consider the consumer's representatives on some of the boards.

**Mr. MANN:** That is another matter. I am dealing now with the Government's intention on price control. If they consider carefully what has happened in other States and countries they will realise that immediately price control has been lifted, prices have risen considerably.

**Mr. Madsen:** Do you believe that shortages cause higher prices?

**Mr. MANN:** The Minister for Agriculture and Stock is trying to draw a red herring across the trail by saying that shortages conduce to higher prices. In the main, the lifting of price control results in the manufacturers and the distributors having an open go. If they increase prices by, say, 2½ per cent., the retailers have to increase their prices proportionately.

With the control exercised by a Labour Government, prices to the consumer have been kept within reasonable bounds. When I speak of the consumer, I refer to the man on the basic wage or very little more than it. The Minister for Agriculture and Stock could not realise the worries of the man on the basic wage; he has always enjoyed an income much greater than the basic wage. For many years I was getting only the basic wage, or less than it, and I had to rear seven children. I had to stow away on a boat and ride under railway carriages to get to a place where I could find employment. I did not have the money to pay my fare. Hon. members opposite would not know anything about that; they are men of affluence. They know nothing about the worries of a man on the basic wage who is trying to rear a family.

**Mr. Heading:** Surely you do not believe that.

**Mr. MANN:** The Minister for Public Works is associated with the bacon industry and is an employer of labour. I can assure him that if one of his employees was employed fully for 12 months but was then unemployed for two months, he would be on the breadline and looking for help.

**Mr. Heading:** I have been in that position many times myself.

**Mr. MANN:** That is very hard to believe.

The Labour Party has to consider the effect on the worker, and especially the man on the basic wage. It has to watch the Government's actions carefully. If there

is no intention to abolish price fixing, the Bill is all right. As my Leader has said, we have already seen what happened when price control on fish, vegetables and fruit was abolished. Hon. members opposite, particularly the hon. member for Somerset and the hon. member for Aubigny, all very honest in their advocacy, say there should be no control, but that there should be individual effort.

**Mr. Harrison:** I only want to see a fair manner of control.

**Mr. MANN:** The hon. member is concerned only about his own property and his own production and what he can get out of it.

**Mr. Harrison:** There the wages went up 22½ per cent. in the last 5½ years and the price of the product went up only 8.5 per cent. in the same period.

**Mr. MANN:** If I had the opportunity I could show that firms like Allan & Stark, Appleton's, and Finney Isles—bought up by a southern firm—have all made huge profits since 1955.

**Mr. Heading:** Under your price-fixing.

**Mr. MANN:** If the hon. gentleman looks at Rydge's Journal or Jobson's Digest he will find the balance sheets of the companies and they will nullify the arguments put forward by the hon. member for Darlington. All those firms made huge profits. If price control is abolished they will make exorbitant profits at the expense of the man on the basic wage.

**Mr. Hiley:** In some case they have made higher profits on finer margins.

**Mr. MANN:** The hon. gentleman is splitting straws and saying they have made higher profits on finer margins.

**Mr. Hiley:** They do a much bigger business on finer margins.

**Mr. MANN:** They have made huge profits despite the calamity howling from hon. members opposite that price control has prevented progress in the State. I know that the Treasurer studies Rydge's Journal because it is one of the publications that accountants like him always read. He will have seen that all the firms I mentioned, together with many others that I could mention, have made huge profits. I do not say exorbitant profits but huge profits. If price control is lifted they will make higher profits at the expense of the worker on the basic wage or near the basic wage.

**Mr. Hiley:** You do not know what you are talking about. You mentioned Appleton's, a company I was connected with. If Appleton's were selling only in Queensland

with price control, the consumer would pay twice as much as he does. They sell to every country in the world, and the Queensland consumer gets the product at half the price that he would otherwise pay.

**Mr. MANN:** The balance sheet shows that they have made a considerable amount of money.

**Mr. Hiley:** Of course they have, by selling to every country in the world.

**Mr. MANN:** Allan & Stark, David Jones—who have taken over Finneys—and all those firms have made considerable profits. That is the answer to the calamity howlers of the day who condemn price control.

Consider the effect of the abolition of price control on people on fixed incomes. Their income will remain static while prices will rise. The hon. gentleman cannot get away from that.

Let me refer the Treasurer to a pamphlet setting out what happened in America about 10 years ago under President Truman when he decided to lift price control. This is what it says—

“An article appeared in the ‘Daily Telegraph’ of 11 November, 1946, which reads as follows:—

‘On 16 October, Truman relaxed price control on meat and other commodities, and living costs rose 30 per cent. The New York Stock Exchange responded sensationally and added \$625 million to the value of listed stock.’

This article speaks for itself. With price controls lifted, commercial enterprise and financial interests not only made enormous profits out of the people, but added hundreds of millions to the value of their shares, and the ordinary person had to pay 25 per cent. and more for his goods.

President Truman in a warning to the people said—

‘Profits are breaking all records. Co-operative profits in 1946 after tax deductions, were 33 per cent. higher than in 1945. In the first quarter of this year they were even higher.’

These two statements show who benefit and who suffer—More profits for commercial and financial interests. Less of the necessities of life for the average working man and woman.’

I was hoping that the hon. member for Aubigny would be here because I intended to deal with a matter he raised when meat prices were being discussed. I hope, Mr. Taylor, you will bear with me if I quote meat prices because I think it is relevant to the lifting of price control. “Country Life”

of 12 September reports the hon. member as having said, "I am not a supporter of control." Of course he is not a supporter of control, he is a wealthy grazier who sells his meat on the open market. According to this article he said that he was going to invite the Minister in charge of prices, Mr. Munro, and the Commissioner, Mr. Fullagar, to attend a sale of three truckloads of bullocks, heifers, and steers from his property at the Cannon Hill meatworks. The sale took place on 19 September. The hon. member will say that the prices received are according to supply and demand. I say that they are exorbitant prices. They demonstrate the inability of the average person to pay for meat unless prices are controlled by the Commissioner. The hon. member sold six steers at £65 17s. 6d. a head, 11 at £53 15s. a head, 16 at £49 12s. 6d. a head, 17 at £45 17s. 6d. a head, 1 at £36, 2 at £47 2s. 6d., a head and 2 others at £39 5s. a head. He sold 55 steers for a total of £2,769, an average of £50 7s. a head. Just imagine such an exorbitant price for bullocks! The hon. member would say that they were good cattle that should bring good prices. But they should not be sold for that price. Their sale price should be controlled to bring the purchasing price of the meat through the retailer down to a reasonable level to the consuming public.

**Mr. Madsen:** You display your ignorance of the whole thing.

**Mr. MANN:** I understand the attitude of the Minister for Agriculture and Stock. He wants to get as much as he can when there is a shortage and when there is a glut he wants to get the right average price.

**Mr. Heading:** What about the stock sold off Peak Downs? You got every bob you could for them.

**Mr. MANN:** They were good cattle. It has been said that retail butchers were losing because of the price they had to pay for cattle.

**Mr. Harrison:** That is what we are complaining about.

**Mr. MANN:** I will show that they are not losing. I am putting up a case for the retention of price control on commodities essential for the working men and women in the community.

All hon. members opposite want to do is put up a case for the exploiters. They want the high prices when a commodity is scarce and the average price when it is in full supply. These commodities should be kept under control. I wish to expose the fallacy of the statements of the hon. member for Aubigny in regard to the sale of his cattle. The type of beast sold by the hon. member weighs about 800 lb. The following table of

figures is based on the Meat and Allied Trades Federation's breakdown of a beast weighing 800 lb.:—

Class of Meat.	Weight.	Fixed Retail Price Per lb.	Gross Return to Retail Butcher.
	Lb.	s. d.	£ s. d.
Fillet .. ..	10-24	4 1	2 1 10
Rump .. ..	39-36	3 9	7 7 7
Sirloin .. ..	20-80	3 3	3 6 7
Sirloin roast ..	40-08	3 0	6 0 2
Thick flank ..	29-44	2 9	4 1 0
Topside .. ..	47-28	2 9	6 10 0
Silverside .. ..	48-40	2 9	6 13 1
Leg .. ..	13-84	1 8	1 3 1
Shin .. ..	11-20	1 6	0 17 8
Brisket .. ..	66-40	1 9	5 16 2
Rib .. ..	72-16	2 0	7 4 3
Blade .. ..	48-64	2 9	6 13 9
Chuck .. ..	56-16	1 8	4 13 7
	504-00		62 8 9
Fat .. ..	75-12	0 2-56	0 16 0
Bones .. ..	145-20	0 0-33	0 4 0
Kidney .. ..	2-16	1 9	0 3 9
Trimming .. ..	67-36	0 6	1 13 7
Loss .. ..	6-16	..	..
	800-00		65 6 1

That is the answer to the hon. member who said the retailers who sell these cattle are losing money. The prices were fixed by the Commissioner of Prices at a level to keep them within the reach of the people. The hon. member for Aubigny also said that there should be an extra 10s. a week added to the basic wage. I think if the basic wage was computed on the cost of commodities it should be somewhere about £14 5s. 6d. There has been no Royal Commission into the basic wage since 1920. At that time the Piddington Commission said that there should be such things as rice, sago, cornflour, jam, treacle, fish, bacon, raisins, currants, coffee and condiments taken into account when the basic wage was computed. Hon. members opposite do not think these things should be taken into account. They are satisfied to leave the price of commodities rise but keep the basic wage stationary. It is only the Commonwealth Government who can effectively control prices. Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution has a big bearing on the question of prices.

Hon. members should know that. The State Government are bound by Section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution, and have power to deal with marketing only within the State boundaries. Some people have the mistaken belief that the State Government have the power to fix minimum and maximum prices, but that power can be challenged under Section 92. The Minister for Agriculture and Stock would know the position. The power under the Profiteering Prevention Act to declare maximum prices was declared null and void by the High Court, in a majority judgment, on the ground that a State had not the power to fix the price of any goods if there was any possibility of their being sent interstate.

Price control in Queensland has stabilised the economy. The Menzies-Fadden Government promised to put value back into the £1, and every housewife in Australia was lulled into the belief that they would do so. There is no value in the £1 received by basic wage-earners. It is all right for hon. members on high salaries, with huge incomes and properties such as those owned by the hon. member for Aubigny who can sell 50 steers for £2,700, to say that prices should be fixed by the law of supply and demand, but I advise the Minister that, if the Government yield to pressure from the hon. members for Somerset, Aubigny and Darlington, the Minister for Agriculture and Stock and others of the same view, they will be doing not only an injustice to the working people of the community but an injustice to the economy of the State.

**Mr. GILMORE** (Tablelands) (12.32 p.m.): Under the Bill the board is to be reconstituted. The men to be appointed have great experience and ability and no doubt will render great assistance and so enable decisions to be arrived at as expeditiously as possible. Government members have spoken of the integrity and ability of the Commissioner of Prices but the public have some doubt as to his qualities and ability.

The hon. member for Maryborough was asked if he opposed the Bill. He said, "No, we do not oppose it. We have no reason to oppose it but we do oppose it." That is a remarkable statement, but it is in keeping with the wanderings of other hon. members on that side of the Chamber.

They have expressed concern about the future price of commodities. I have considerable experience in vegetable marketing. Prices were controlled strictly during times of shortages but I have seen thousands and thousands of cases of excellent tomatoes, beans, cabbages and other vegetables wasted in times of glut. Price control does not help producers in those circumstances. We must ensure that the producer is adequately rewarded for his effort.

Hon. members of the official Opposition have spoken of the great job done by the Chifley Government with price fixing. The people were the most competent judges of the policy of that Government, and that was one reason why they threw the Chifley Government out.

I have a good knowledge of the tobacco industry. In 1942 the Commonwealth Commissioner of Prices fixed the price of tobacco under the Australian Tobacco Board introduced by the Chifley Government but the growers did not get an increase commensurate with the increase in the prices of other commodities, and that state of affairs went on until 1948 when the growers revolted. Under the National Security Regulations they did it at their peril. They actually went on strike and refused to market their commodity. The Chifley Government were compelled to surrender price control. The

price then was 34d. a lb. There was one sale left and all conversant with the tobacco industry know that the last sale of the year is the sweep-up sale. The price at auction at that sale went to 60d. a lb. Over the years, under auction, it has risen to 168d. and now stands at 134d. That is an example of Federal price control under the Chifley Government. It meant absolute disaster at the producing end.

**Mr. Graham:** Are you happy with price control in the tobacco industry?

**Mr. GILMORE:** I am afraid the Chairman will not permit me to discuss that.

**The CHAIRMAN:** Order! The hon. member would be getting a long way from the Bill.

**Mr. GILMORE:** There is no such thing as price control of tobacco.

**Mr. Graham:** Not even monopolistic price control?

**Mr. GILMORE:** That is outside the scope of the Bill and should I deal with it I am sure the Chairman would call me to order. I commend the Bill because I think the Board will be of great benefit to the people.

**Hon. A. W. MUNRO** (Toowong—Attorney-General) (12.38 p.m.): After a somewhat stormy debate last night, I think we might regard this morning as the calm after the storm. After hearing the hon. member for Bundaberg, I was interested to know whether any hon. members of the Committee were opposed to the Bill and by interjection I asked the next two speakers whether they were opposed to it and I was not successful in getting any hon. member opposite to say that he was. The members then went on and gave interesting general observations on the subject of price control and I can only assume that since last evening they have been thinking over my remarks, looking for the nigger in the woodpile and have not been able to find him.

**Mr. Wood:** We never found the woodpile.

**Mr. MUNRO:** I thought the eyesight of the Leader of the Opposition would have been better than that. I should have thought he at least would have been able to see the woodpile. However, I accept his correction.

This measure is such a simple one and my intention was made so abundantly clear that I think quite a good deal of the debate today was unnecessary. I have looked for points to reply to, but I have not been able to find many. However, there are some that should be cleared up. I shall begin with the hon. member for Bundaberg, who made one or two points that require an answer, although they do not relate directly to the subject matter of the Bill. He said that in

appointing the under secretary of a department—in this case the Department of Labour and Industry—as a member of the Board, the Government were acting inconsistently with a statement that I made previously that I did not think it was a good thing that the Under Secretary of the Department of Justice should be a member of a particular commission. I went even further at that time and said I did not think it was a good thing for the Solicitor-General to be a member of a commission. The point that the hon. member for Bundaberg has missed is that my statement did not refer generally to under secretaries; it related only to officers of the Department of Justice. That department, through its Under Secretary and the Solicitor-General, is responsible for advising the Government on any questions of law that might arise in the conduct of any board or commission. Quite obviously, that does not apply to the under secretary of any other department.

The hon. member for Bundaberg said also that price control would be more effective on an Australia-wide basis or with a uniform policy in all States than on only a State basis. I agree. That is one reason why we are giving careful thought to the administration of price control in Queensland. In this matter Queensland is, to a considerable extent, out of step with the other States of Australia.

**Mr. Gair:** They are out of step with us.

**Mr. MUNRO:** We have all heard the story of the little boy who, when he saw some soldiers marching by, said, "Every man is out of step except my father."

**Mr. Gair:** We have had price control for many years—since long before the war.

**Mr. MUNRO:** That is so, but broadly speaking we are out of step with the other States. What is more important, we are out of step with our neighbouring State of New South Wales.

**Mr. Gair:** With the exception of South Australia, all the other States have virtually abandoned controls. That is why they have such a high basic wage.

**Mr. MUNRO:** That is one of the reasons why price control in Queensland is so ineffective. The previous Government sought to apply low prices to commodities in Queensland, which resulted only in those commodities being sent over the border to New South Wales. The result was that scarcities were created here. Surely we are realistic enough to recognise that difficulty and not to persist in the application of some doctrinaire theory if we find that in practice it is not working for the benefit of the people of Queensland. Earlier I made it clear that we think prices can best be controlled by healthy business competition. If that does not obtain we will rely on other methods.

**Mr. Gair:** If you had proper competition I might agree with you, but you do not have it. You get organisations of retailers and wholesalers making arrangements.

**Mr. MUNRO:** For the information of the hon. member for South Brisbane I might say that I usually consider matters very thoroughly before I make decisions and present them to the Committee. I have made inquiries from every State to learn their experience and reactions. Within the last few days I have received a reply from the Minister for Labour and Industry in New South Wales, the Minister responsible for price control, and to my surprise he quoted a phrase almost identical with the one I have been using. He said—

"Free and open competition is considered to be the best regulator of prices where goods are in free supply."

**Mr. Lloyd:** ". . . where goods are in free supply." That is very important.

**Mr. MUNRO:** Yes. I have used the same term except that I have said "in full supply." The purpose of the Bill is to provide adequate machinery to make distinctions. We want to consider the economics of the various trades and the conditions under which they are being carried on.

The hon. member for Port Curtis spoke at some length but only one or two points he made are worthy of a reply. I was rather surprised that, in reply to a question I asked him while he was speaking, he said he advocated wage control on the same basis as price control. I do not know whether he spoke for the Australian Labour Party.

**Mr. Wood:** That was his personal opinion.

**Mr. Burrows:** On a Commonwealth basis.

**Mr. MUNRO:** That is just as well, because it was a completely illogical statement. It is very easy to stand up in the Chamber and say glibly that the same principles should apply to price control as to wage control, but what is very often overlooked—and this is the most essential point and I ask hon. members opposite to consider it very carefully—is that the basic idea of having tribunals to determine wage standards is to protect the worker by prescribing minimum rates of wages whereas the basic idea of price control is to prescribe maximum prices. It is true that wages are in a way merely the price for which the worker sells his services but, in view of the difference I have indicated, wages and prices cannot be put on exactly the same basis.

**Mr. Power:** That is the most ridiculous argument ever advanced by any responsible person.

**Mr. MUNRO:** I take it that the hon. member for Baroona, who has not been listening very carefully, is referring to the remarks of the hon. member for Port Curtis. He cannot be referring to mine.

**Mr. Power:** No, I am talking about you.

**Mr. MUNRO:** The hon. member for Maryborough, when I asked him that question, indicated that he was not opposed to the Bill. He rather took exception to the advisory board because he said it was not likely to meet frequently, therefore, notwithstanding the board, it was likely that decisions would be made by the Government. Even if we assume that it will not meet quite as frequently as it should, surely because of the Bill we are going to be in a very much better position than we have been during the last seven years when we had a board which had become defunct by reason of alterations in certain laws and the death of people. The Act referred to a board but it has not met for seven years. Even if the new board does not meet as frequently as we would like it to, it will be able to perform some very useful functions.

The hon. member for Maryborough referred to what I said yesterday about the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce. When I quoted from a speech by the President I endeavoured to be completely fair. I more or less cautioned hon. members. I said that I would not regard the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce as a completely impartial organisation. Arising from this the hon. member for Maryborough more or less suggested that the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce would have a political slant on it. I know the workings of the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce extremely well. I was President about 13 years ago. There are very few institutions in Queensland that take such an impartial and detached view of problems of this kind. I will always have a very high regard for their opinions. Nevertheless, on a matter of this kind, where people may be divided into groups, I must concede that the Brisbane Chamber of Commerce is an organisation comprised mainly of people engaged in commerce and industry. It was quite right and proper for me to make the observation that I could not regard the Chamber as being completely impartial, although by reason of the weight of knowledge and experience behind them, their views were worthy of very serious consideration.

In reply to my interjection the hon. member for Brisbane indicated that he was not opposed to the Bill but he said in effect that he would have been opposed to a completely different kind of Bill which might be introduced at a completely different time by some other Minister. In other words, it was the type of thing I referred to last night—more shadow-sparring with ghosts and a tilting at windmills that do not exist. The hon. member did bring forward a rather interesting point. He said, "We must have price control because look at what you see in Rydge's Business Journal about these big companies making

huge profits." Do you not think the reasoning of the hon. member for Brisbane might have been a little superficial? Do you not think he might have been speaking about something he did not know much about? What kind of information about the set-up of big business organisations do we get from the few comments in Rydge's Business Journal? The real position is this: there is nothing wrong in having huge business undertakings. There is nothing wrong in having large profits.

**Mr. Lloyd:** Large profits?

**Mr. MUNRO:** There is nothing wrong with having large profits. There is nothing wrong in the volume of profits. All that is wrong is that if the rate of profit is unfair—if an organisation large or small is making a great profit which is unfair. What does it convey to you if the profit of an organisation, as distinct from an individual, is £10,000 or £100,000 or £1,000,000? There is no difference at all.

**Mr. Davies:** I suppose you would admit the rate is unduly high.

**Mr. MUNRO:** What does the hon. member refer to as the rate?

**Mr. Davies:** What the hon. gentleman was saying—the rate of profit.

**Mr. MUNRO:** There is no information in Rydge's Business Journal as to the rate of profit if you take it as a percentage on turnover. The information published in the Press on rates of profits on paid-up capital is quite misleading. Only an experienced accountant fully recognises this. The figures shown as paid-up capital are something historical; sometimes they are about as valuable as the 10 February, 1942, basis on which we fixed rents.

Those points put up by the hon. member for Brisbane were superficial and fallacious in their reasoning. I listened to the speeches this morning with considerable interest because I think this problem is a very difficult one. I am prepared to concede that it is a very difficult one, but in this Bill we are providing better machinery for a correct determination of the difficult problems than was the case under the previous Government. Furthermore, we are providing this machinery with goodwill, with the desire to do the very best we can, not only in assisting in the development of the State, but what will in the long run be in the very best interests of all the people in this State.

**Mr. Lloyd:** You would be tying the hands of the Commissioner of Prices, Mr. Fullagar, in this Bill, too.

**Mr. MUNRO:** No, quite definitely not. I explained that last night.

Progress reported.

The House adjourned at 1 p.m.