

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, October 29, 1953.

The SPEAKER (Hon. Sir Robert Nicholls) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

PETERBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL GROUNDS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Last year I asked the Minister of Works, representing the Minister of Education, a question regarding the fencing of the Peterborough High School sports ground and he said this work would be undertaken when funds were available. The parents and friends have done a great deal of work in developing the area, so the question of fencing becomes somewhat urgent. Will the Minister have the matter investigated and ascertain when the fence is likely to be erected?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—As far as I know the work was given some priority. Now that the parents and friends have interested themselves in the matter I shall be glad to expedite the work. If the honourable member remembers, when we were both at Peterborough we examined the project and I was impressed with the possibilities of the ground. I am sure the Education Department will be happy to meet the parents in doing their part to improve the area.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION LEGISLATION.

Mr. PATTINSON—Can the Minister of Lands say whether the Workmen's Compensation Act Advisory Committee, appointed by the Government in conformity with the promise in the Premier's policy speech, has submitted a report to the Government containing recommendations for several amendments to the Act and the schedule thereto, and, if so, is it the Government's intention to introduce legislation this session to give effect to the recommendations?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The report has been received by the Government and it is intended to introduce a Bill this session.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—So that members may be familiar with its contents, will the Minister of Lands have copies of the report of the advisory committee made available to them before the Bill is introduced?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I shall be happy to take the question up with the Premier.

AMORTIZATION OF TRUST HOMES.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—The *Quarterly Notes* issued by the South Australian Housing Trust on October 1, 1953, states:—

Rental houses (metropolitan area):—Houses let—double-unit (brick), 5,313; single-unit (brick), 35; single-unit (timber), 695.

Can the Acting Leader of the Government say what are the amortization periods on the three types of homes mentioned?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I will obtain the information and make it available to the honourable member.

NEW UNLEY HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. DUNKS—Has the Minister of Works a reply to my recent inquiry regarding the construction of the new Unley High School?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Sketch plans have been prepared for a new high school, apparently in Mitcham, but to be known as the Unley High School. It is a majestic scheme, running into several hundreds of thousands of pounds, to give effect to what might be regarded as the ideal set-up. Those sketch plans are before Cabinet with a view to further investigations as to the scope and requirements of the district and in due course submission to the Public Works Committee.

KADINA PRIMARY SCHOOL TANK.

Mr. McALEES—Recently the water tank at the Kadina Primary School was sealed because the water from it was unfit to drink. Because of this and the fact that they are not provided with free milk as are children at some other schools, Kadina children must carry their water to school in bottles. There is a tank maker in Wallaroo who supplies tanks to homes on Yorke Peninsula and in districts as far north as Port Pirie, and he could satisfactorily construct a galvanized iron tank for use at the school. Will the Minister of Works ask the Minister of Education to have this matter investigated with a view to providing a galvanized iron tank at the school so that the water running off the school roof could be used as drinking water by the children?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I will take up the matter immediately with my colleague. I should hate to think that the people of Kadina were suffering more than any other consumers along the same line of supply and will do my utmost to see that any disabilities occurring there are rectified.

KANGAROO ISLAND STOCK.

Mr. BROOKMAN—Has the Minister of Lands a reply to my question of Tuesday last regarding the condition of stock on Kangaroo Island due to the present dry conditions?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I have a rather lengthy report which I shall be quite happy to make available to the honourable member and any other member. On Friday last the Superintendent of War Service Settlement returned from the island and reported that the pastures on soldier settlement blocks were in excellent heart. Following on the honourable member's representations on Tuesday I had further investigations made, and the supervisor there, Mr. Dodds, has also advised that the pastures are in really good condition, although, like the rest of the island, they wanted rain. He said buyers are at present purchasing sucker lambs at 60s. in the paddock. The question also related to the removal of stock from the island. At this time of the year normal removals are made after off-shear sales but small consignments are also going to Kangaroo Island. There is a great variation in the rainfall on the island and one particular area is dry but at the moment we are not particularly concerned about pastures in the soldier settlement.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE.

Mr. LAWN—I wish to ask the honourable member for Torrens a question. Is he correctly reported in the *Adelaide News* of December 9, 1937, as having joined with other high legal authorities in Adelaide in expressing the hope that something would be done to take the administration of justice out of the hands of justices of the peace, and also as having said—

Some very extraordinary things occur when justices of the peace are on the bench, and it brings the administration of justice into ill repute.

He is also reported as having said:—

That a justice's lack of knowledge of essential things in the administration of justice made it a farce to go before them at all; that he personally tried to avoid appearing before a justice of the peace because everything was so uncertain. It was like tossing a coin. He and other counsel felt that when justices of the peace were on the bench the game would be played under different rules from what they expected when magistrates and judges presided.

Is the honourable member still of the same mind, and, if so, what does he intend to do about "taking the administration of justice out of the hands of justices of the peace" now that he is a member of the Government Party

in this House? Has he made any recommendations to the Government for further appointments of justices of the peace since becoming a member of Parliament?

Mr. TRAVERS—I do not recall all the questions asked but I shall give replies to those that I can remember. In the first place I do not recall the incident in 1937, but my attitude on the question of jurisdiction being exercised by justices of the peace has always been the same, and is this: Justices of the peace are not learned in law and are therefore not qualified to try cases which involve difficult questions of law. They are, in the main, men of business, and accordingly are well qualified to try questions which are purely factual. They were being used extensively in the city and suburbs a few years ago. In all court lists in the city and suburbs there are always many cases which involve difficult questions of law and it is not a satisfactory system to entrust the whole list to trial by justices of the peace. There are, however, occasions on which a limited number of cases can be set aside advantageously for trial by justices; for instance, those involving questions of fact as to whether a speed limit has been exceeded and the like. Cases of that nature are well within the competence of justices and frequently such cases are set aside in a separate list for their attention. That seems to coincide substantially with the ancient history the honourable member quoted from the *News* of 1937. That is my opinion now, and was then, and if I have missed anything perhaps the member for Adelaide will let me know and I will make a further reply.

VICTOR HARBOUR SEWERAGE SCHEME.

Mr. WILLIAM JENKINS—Can the chairman of the Public Works Committee say whether his committee has completed its investigation and report into the proposed sewerage scheme for Victor Harbour?

Mr. CHRISTIAN—The committee has completed its investigation and has come to a decision, but the report has yet to be written, and until it is written and placed before Parliament I cannot say when the scheme will become operative.

LOW WATER PRESSURES.

Mr. TAPPING—The following is an extract from this morning's *Advertiser*:—

The State Council of the Australian Government Workers' Association last night condemned the Government's administration of the Engineering and Water Supply Department. The union's secretary (Mr. F. K. Nieass),

said that defects causing low water pressures should have been rectified years ago. It was strange that the Government's pipe-making plant at Glanville was about 66 per cent idle, when much of the trouble was through the mains being in a disgraceful condition. The union was concerned about the effect of low water pressures on its fire brigades and hospital sections.

Will the Minister of Works ask the department to investigate the matters mentioned by Mr. Nieass?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I think Mr. Nieass has unwittingly overlooked the fact that the disability, if we can call it such, from which we are suffering is the natural growth of prosperity. We are not short of reticulation pipes, but of steel for arterial pipes, and therefore it would be of no benefit whatever to lay miles of larger reticulation pipes until such time as we get more water into the mains to feed them. The programme which has been carried out by the Government over a long period was set out by the department and endorsed by Parliament after full investigations by the Public Works Committee, and it is a great tribute to the wisdom and foresight of our engineers and the department. Any departure from the comprehensive plan would only retard progress. The first objective is to get water to Adelaide and simultaneously make the arterial mains large enough to fill the smaller mains. Immediately we have been short of reticulation pipes we have manufactured additional supplies at Glanville. We are not short of them now, but the larger dimension steel pipes represent the bottleneck.

WHEAT FOR UNITED KINGDOM.

Mr. HAWKER—The following is an extract from this morning's *Advertiser*:—

Britain is negotiating with U.S. officials to buy surplus U.S. food and other agricultural commodities . . . Under article 550 of the Mutual Security Act which covers U.S. aid to Europe, the U.S. Congress has authorized their administration to sell American surplus agricultural commodities—of over \$100m.—not for dollars, but for pounds sterling or francs, as the case may be.

As the United Kingdom is not a party to the International Wheat Agreement, can the Minister of Agriculture say whether the large surplus of wheat held in the United States of America will affect the price that Australia is likely to get for wheat overseas?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—The United Kingdom has not ratified the International Wheat Agreement. I am not able to inform the honourable member of the possibility of wheat being released by the United

States to the United Kingdom, but I am sure that the Australian Wheat Board has that in mind.

USE OF WATER BY INDUSTRY.

Mr. STEPHENS—It has been suggested to me that during times of peak water consumption in the Port Adelaide district the two large companies using such a lot of water there, the Imperial Chemical Industries and the Electricity Trust may, if requested, refrain from using so much reservoir water and use condensed water from the Port River so that other people can get sufficient. Will the Minister of Works inform the House whether this would be possible?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I have endeavoured to keep in touch with big users of water to bring about the ends the honourable member has mentioned; some are making greater use of water reticulated back after use, and others are drawing upon supplies otherwise available to them. Not only does industry use much water, but owing to the cheapness of reservoir water it is also freely used for irrigation purposes. Although we do not wish to retard industry, full use should be made of any alternative schemes available. I will take up the matter to see if something more can be done even in the case of the two companies mentioned.

EGG PRICES.

Mr. TEUSNER—I have been approached by a poultry farmer in my district who is concerned about the high cost of poultry feed and the recent fall of 6d. dozen in the price of eggs. In a letter he said, among other things:—

Although no official statement has been issued it appears that the English market has slumped. We were guaranteed a minimum of 4s. 6d. f.o.b. according to a recent egg board publication. If this be the case the Minister concerned should issue a statement stating all aspects of the case enabling we poultry producers to reduce our flocks accordingly, so as to supply the Australian market only. Incidentally, we were requested by the British and Australian Governments to increase production by some 12 per cent."

Will the Minister of Agriculture make a statement on this matter?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—Bulk selling of eggs overseas has been abandoned, and today direct sales are made on a trader to trader basis. As a result, in the earlier part of this year there was a disappointing fall in the price of eggs. The following week the price

rose by 4d. a dozen, and those responsible for the export of eggs were hoping there would be further rises. I have no information other than that provided in the statement made by the Minister for Commerce and Agriculture in the daily press a few days ago, but point out that barley prices are considerably lower than they were, and there is now an excellent opportunity for those engaged in poultry raising to use this cheaper food, and consequently reduce their costs of production. However, I will get further information and bring it down for the honourable member.

STORM DAMAGE IN MURRAY IRRIGATION AREAS.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—As the Minister of Irrigation is probably aware, there have been some alarming reports about damage done to fruitgrowing areas on the Murray by a storm last night. Has the Minister any information to give to the House?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—Having heard of the reports broadcast last night about considerable damage in the river areas and expecting a question would be asked, I obtained information from various district officers. They report:—

Berri.—Little or no damage. Thunder storm and heavy rain, but no hail.

Loxton.—No reports of any damage. Fierce electrical disturbances had the effect of cutting out electrically-operated block motors which were running an irrigation. No hail fell, nor was there much wind. Twenty-two points of rain.

Barmera.—No reports of any damage. Not much hail or wind. Thunder storm brought in. of rain.

Cooltong.—Thunderstorm and 35 points of rain, no damage whatsoever reported. Mr. Stead of Berri phoned and obtained that message personally.

The report from Waikerie was not from a district officer, but from one of the clerks in the office. He stated:—

No reports of any damage. Rain amounted to 42 points, but there was not much hail or strong wind.

COUNTRY SEWERAGE SCHEMES.

Mr. RICHES—Sewerage schemes have been prepared for many country centres. They have been inquired into by the Public Works Committee and accepted by the people, but many are anxious to know how long it will be before the work is commenced. It would be of considerable advantage to councils if they could be given some authoritative statement indicating when they could reasonably expect schemes to be undertaken. For instance, if they knew it would be at least 10 years, as has been

suggested by some, they could arrange an alternative scheme or review their present systems. If there was a reasonable chance of the hopes expressed over the years being fulfilled and country sewerage becoming an accomplished fact within a reasonable time it would be a distinct advantage to councils to know that. Will the Minister of Works have a considered statement prepared on the situation?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I am glad to have the opportunity of making a brief preliminary reply, and I will bring down a considered statement later. The public works we can carry out each year are regulated not by the desire of the Government or the House but by funds and materials available. From time to time one of these factors causes the bottleneck. Since the war the shortage of materials has been the main factor, but now the cost of materials is holding up public works, as loan funds are insufficient to carry out schemes as comprehensive as we desire. The Government places a very high priority on country sewerage. I realize the implications the honourable member has in mind, and that whether the probability of proceeding with the work in the near future is such that country areas would be justified in considering alternative schemes is a matter of paramount importance to the councils. I will do my best to bring down some general idea of what can be expected under ordinary circumstances within the next year or two.

CLOSE SEASON FOR SCHOOL SHARKS.

Mr. BROOKMAN—A statement appeared in the *Advertiser* last Wednesday regarding the school or schnapper shark, and it said that owing to the decline in the number of edible school sharks a C.S.I.R.O. officer had recommended that a closure be ordered. South Australia had opposed the idea, but agreed to give effect to the recommendation, to secure uniformity with the other States. Subsequently, it was found that no other State had carried out the recommendation and that the Commonwealth had also fallen down on the job. Has the Minister of Agriculture any comment to offer on the charge that the other States and the Commonwealth had failed to give effect to the agreement, and can he say what research is being carried out to overcome our abysmal ignorance of the habits of all our edible fish?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—I will have to get some information before I can answer the question fully. The C.S.I.R.O. did call a conference of interstate fishery officers and a resolution regarding a close season for

sharks was carried against the wishes and advice of the South Australian representative, Mr. Moorhouse. However, as all the other States had agreed, we came into line, but South Australia was the only State to issue a proclamation. Something similar has happened before, and there was considerable perturbation here. I believe some good catches are being brought in from outside the three-mile limit and there is no reason why fishermen should not sell them. Much research work has been done here by the Fisheries Department and C.S.I.R.O. officers, and I will get a report for the honourable member dealing with the matter, which I am sure he will find of interest.

NORTHERN FLORA AND FAUNA RESERVES.

Mr. RICHES—I draw attention to a letter which appeared in the *Advertiser* this week from the Field Naturalists' Section of the Royal Society in which it was advocated that the Mount Remarkable and Alligator Gorge reserves should be set aside as fauna and flora reserves. During the holiday week-end, in addition to the field naturalists, the Youth Hostels Association and the Bush Walkers' Club a number of people picnicked in the Alligator Gorge. The roads were in a deplorable state. I believe everybody present agreed that everything possible should be done to preserve for the people the undoubted beauty of these areas and surroundings, and that the fauna as well as the flora should be protected. Will the Minister of Lands take up with the Government the question of having a proclamation issued, and will he see if the roads can receive attention, because at present they are dangerous? With a little work the area could be made accessible to the people of the State generally.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I will get a report for the honourable member.

TEXTILE PRODUCTS DESCRIPTION BILL.

The Hon. C. S. Hincks, for the Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to provide that textile products shall bear trade descriptions showing their fibre contents, and for purposes incidental thereto, and to repeal the Textile Products Description Act, 1944. Read a first time.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 27. Page 1187.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The object of the Bill is to enable persons over the statutory retiring age to be employed temporarily in the Public Service after December 31, 1953. This legislation was originally introduced to meet some of the exigencies of the war situation. The first Bill, passed in 1941, related only to officers of the Education Department. Subsequently the legislation was broadened to include the Public Service and Government employment generally with the exception of the Police Department, and later it was broadened still further to provide that, in addition to continuing the services of former Government employees who had reached the retiring age, the opportunity might be taken to employ persons who had not formerly been engaged in the service. It was accepted by the House that this was necessary to meet difficulties that had arisen in some departments, particularly in relation to skilled tradesmen, the Engineering and Water Supply and the Railways departments being mentioned in that respect. At present 55 over-age persons are temporarily employed in the Public Service generally, 78 over-age school teachers in the Education Department and a small number of tradesmen in the Railways Department.

Having been introduced to meet an emergency this legislation has been continued because, apparently, that emergency still exists, but I think the Government is taking rather an extreme step in making it a permanent feature of our legislation, or as permanent as any legislation can be, for nothing which this Parliament can do could be expected to be permanent because what it does this session may be subsequently undone. I hope that, although the Minister did not say so in his second reading explanation, those organizations which may be concerned, such as the Public Service Association and the South Australian Institute of Teachers, have been consulted. At any rate those bodies must know that this legislation is before the House, and, as generally speaking anybody having any violent objection to legislation communicates with the Leader of the Opposition, and as I have had no representations in this regard, I take it there is no violent objection to the Bill. It would be more in keeping with the policy of the Government on emergency legislation to

set a time limit rather than provide that it will continue during the pleasure of Parliament.

When this legislation was under discussion two years ago I moved an amendment to restrict the time of application of the Bill, and eventually a compromise was reached on the basis of a three instead of a four years' extension. I do not think any real harm can accrue from the Bill. Of course, there is always a danger that emergency legislation may interrupt the normal practices of employment, and this legislation does that. If not properly administered it could result in ex-public servants who are of a pensionable age and entitled to superannuation benefits continuing in employment while the rising generation were denied employment. However, if that arises the Government will soon hear vigorous objections from the Leader of the Opposition of the day. At the moment I see no real danger in the Bill and consequently I do not oppose it.

Mr. CHRISTIAN (Eyre)—I thoroughly disagree with the objections raised to this legislation, which is a proper move in connection with our public service, as members may have gathered from my remarks on previous occasions when the Public Service Act was before Parliament for amendment along the lines indicated in this Bill. I now go further, for I contend that the time has arrived when we should consider an extension of the present retiring age of 65 years. I am now fortified in that contention by no less an authority than Mr. Kym Beasley, the member for Fremantle in the House of Representatives. He is one of the young, up-and-coming Federal Labor members and a man of great intelligence who has made a strong plea that we should review our retiring age provisions. He tackled the subject along different lines from those along which I tackled it in the past. Whereas I have always contended that we should not throw on the scrapheap people who have many years of active and efficient service left, his line of attack was that we should not burden the rest of the community with the maintenance of people who still have many years of active service left, but his reasons were just as valid as those which I have given in the past for the reconsideration of the retiring age. Mr. Beasley said that with the lengthening of man's life span the rest of the community is being saddled with the heavy burden of the maintenance of ever-growing numbers of people who retire from active work and must be then maintained by the rest of

the community by means of pensions and other social service benefits. The time may well arrive when the number of people so maintained will outnumber those who remain at work and have to provide for themselves as well as for the ever-growing army of retired persons. That is a new consideration which not only the Federal Parliament but this Parliament should examine.

I do not know why we are afraid of tackling the question of extending the retiring age. Most people who are compulsorily retired have many years of vigorous and active life ahead of them and are capable of continuing in the positions they held on reaching the age of 65. If that is not desired they could be retired from their present positions but re-employed in other capacities. That would not then interfere with the view that older people should make room for the rising generation and afford them opportunities of attaining higher positions. If we extended the retiring age everybody would be in the same position as they are today: those lower down the scale would be promoted until eventually they reached the position vacated by those having to retire and from that aspect it does not matter whether the retiring age is 65, 68 or 70.

Since 65 was established as the retiring age about 30 years ago the span of life has lengthened considerably. According to the latest *Pocket Year Book* it has increased by 11 years for males and 12 years for females, which confirms my contention that we might well consider extending the retiring age. We cannot afford to scrap the good material in our Public Service. Many of us have personal experience of the knowledge and vigour of some of the top-ranking public servants who would be capable of active service for some years after the retiring age. If it is insisted that after 65 they should step down from their high administrative posts they could still provide valuable service in some other capacity. The questions of whether the retiring age should be extended or officers demoted on reaching the age both merit serious consideration. The Leader of the Opposition said he had received no protests from the Public Service about this legislation and that is perhaps an indication that it is prepared to accept an alteration of the present retiring age. If not, is it necessary that the Public Service should be consulted? Parliament must exercise its own judgment on such an important subject as this and Parliament is sufficiently well-informed of the facts to which I have referred.

Mr. O'Halloran—Parliament should consult those concerned before it makes sweeping changes.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I do not suggest that their opinions should not be sought, but they should not be the final and determining factor. It is Parliament's responsibility and it is surely a waste to force valuable public servants to retire on reaching the age of 65. When many of these people are thrown on the scrap heap they lose all interest because their life's work has been everything to them. They have brought all their talents, time and energies to bear on their jobs and have performed them with credit to themselves and to the advantage of the State. Severance from their positions must, in many instances, spell disaster to them apart from causing grief. We should take our courage in both hands and not only insist on this legislation remaining a permanent feature but consider the general question of extending the retiring age. I support the Bill.

Mr. STOTT (Ridley)—This Bill represents a departure from a principle which has been in vogue for many years in South Australia. I believe it is time Parliament examined the question of extending the retiring age, but such legislation would be rather premature at this stage and Parliament should consider the position in its proper perspective before introducing it. Sometimes a high-ranking public servant has made mistakes in administration which have cost the State thousands of pounds and for which he should have been disrated. There have been times when a matter of this sort has been taken to the Minister, who has pointed out that nothing could be done because of the provisions of the Act. It may be that the public servant concerned was 63 years of age and the Minister, being sympathetic, has allowed him to carry on until 65. If the retiring age is increased what will be the position of public servants of this kind? I understand that in England a public servant who has made mistakes costing the country thousands of pounds is not disrated, but transferred to another position where he can do no harm. That has not to my knowledge been done in South Australia. Mistakes have been made at the Loxton Settlement by responsible public servants and they have been pointed out to the Minister, but he has been unable to do anything because of the Act. It seems to me that it will not be long before the Commonwealth Parliament abolishes the means test and then if we increase the retiring age the

burden on the general taxpayer will not be so great, but before we take the step proposed in the Bill we should get things into their proper perspective. It is true that in some departments experienced high-ranking officers are active and alert at 65, and when they are retired there is a great loss to the State. I do not object to the principle in the Bill, but all phases of the matter should be examined by the Government. Particular attention should be paid to the point I raised about mistakes being made by high-ranking public servants and their being allowed to carry on until 65.

Mr. SHANNON (Onkaparinga)—I hold public servants in high regard, as do most members. They render a service of which we can be justly proud. It should not be an injustice to a public servant to be retired at 65, because when he enters the service he knows he must be retired at that age. As to whether there is an economic loss to the State by the retirement of a valuable officer who is still able to be useful administratively, there have been occasions when the department concerned has a promising young man with possibly new ideas which he could not put into practice because he did not direct the policy of the department; he has had to wait until the senior officer retired. A man's active and virile period is prior to his reaching 60 years of age. He is said to be then in his prime. From the point of view of administrative work he is never better than between the ages of 50 and 60, because by that time he has had much experience and still has the full vigor of manhood and the driving force required to direct programmes of his department. Everyone will agree that some of that driving force is lost as the years pass, and there is not quite the same enthusiasm in dealing with major problems of State policy. For these reasons we should be wary. I do not favour making any drastic alterations to the retiring age, although I admit that the expectation of life is now longer. However, we have no statistical information on whether mental vigour is retained as well as physical ability in those who live longer than was the case 15, 20 or 30 years ago. We have extended the expectation of life by about 10 years, but has there been any increase in brain power? This, I think, is a vital question. Of course, there are infrequent cases of people who live to become centenarians and whose active life has been concluded many years before reaching this age, and there are rare examples of men and women in the late 70's or early 80's who still retain vigorous minds, although they are the

exception rather than the rule. We have had a long experience of the retiring age being 65, and there has been no public outcry for an increase, and if public servants were consulted, I doubt very much whether they would vote for it. We must not forget that if a high ranking officer continues his duties after reaching 65 his superannuation is affected, because he is still drawing his salary. The actuarial basis upon which the present superannuation payments are calculated would have to be varied if the retiring age were extended. Although I am prepared to accept this measure, I hope the Government will use it sparingly, and consider the future of some of our up and coming young men so as not to deny them the right to make progress to which their abilities entitle them.

Mr. RICHES (Stuart)—Had it not been for the case made out by the Minister when introducing the Bill, that this amendment is for the express purpose of allowing men in executive positions who cannot be replaced to be retained, and that an emergency would be created if they had to retire, I would not have considered this legislation for one minute. I regret that an emergency does exist, and look forward to the day when this will not be the position. It is not to the credit of the State that there is no-one capable of carrying on the work of the doctor named by the Minister, because we should have someone ready to step into his position. This statement comes at the very time when the B.M.A. has said that there is not sufficient work in this State for young doctors, and a suggestion has been made in the public press that some restriction should be placed on the admission of medical students to the university, which I hope will never take place. Any prolonging of the retiring age will accentuate the position that is being rapidly reached here. In all these positions someone should have been ready to take over. I do not attach the blame to anyone in particular, because this situation has been brought about by the war and other circumstances. I was very disturbed that the member for Eyre took this measure as an indication that there would be general approval of an increase in the retiring age, because that is not so. I cannot agree with him that there would be a hardship in the public service for those covered by superannuation who retire at 65, because there is a provision in the Act whereby the Commissioner can re-employ them. A case can be made out for that provision, but it is desirable that we should have someone ready to step up to important positions in the different departments

and institutions instead of retaining the services of people who have given a lifetime of service to the State and look for the time when they can enjoy the retirement for which they have provided by means of superannuation. Medical science has lengthened the normal expectation of life, which is a good thing, but surely we should see that this works to the advantage of mankind, not to cause a lengthening of the time in which they will have their noses down to the grindstone. We should not expect to get a few extra years' service out of them as a farmer would out of a beast in the field. Surely we can lift human values above that and allow people to enjoy the few years' extra life that medical science can give them in this more advanced age. I should not have risen except to explain that I support the Bill only as a matter of emergency, and my vote must not be construed as supporting the contention of the member for Eyre.

Mr. HEASLIP (Rocky River)—I support the Bill, for I think it is a desirable measure. Undoubtedly, there is no excess labour available today, and we shall not put anyone out of a job by passing the Bill. I am afraid we do not usually appreciate that one of the most valuable assets of this country is its man-power. As the member for Eyre stated, to throw people on the scrap heap just because they have reached the age of 65 is an economic wastage that we should avoid. The member for Stuart said that no-one should be expected to keep his nose to the grindstone when he reaches 65, but there is no compulsion under the Bill on anyone to continue working at that age. Many people would sooner go on working than retire, and if they desire to continue working they will remain an asset to the country. I cannot imagine the position of the Education Department if it had not been able to employ people beyond the retiring age. Further, many women teachers, after marriage, have returned to the profession to render valuable service. I cannot see that anyone will be penalized by the Bill, but the State will get much benefit from it.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 27. Page 1187.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This short Bill was introduced to the accompaniment of a brief explanation by the

Minister. Probably that was because there is a long historical background associated with price control, some of which had better be forgotten, or at least that is what certain people close to the Government think. During the war and for some time after we had an effective system of price control administered by a Federal Labour Government and, as a result, the cost of living was kept within measurable bounds. It was the proud boast of Australia that the cost of living had been more efficiently controlled than in any other country. We would sometimes see figures in reliable overseas publications showing how the value of our money had not depreciated to the same extent as the value of money in other parts of the world. Unfortunately, because of some doubt about the validity of Federal price control, it became necessary to consult the people. At that time they were prepared to believe any bedtime story told them by leaders of the Liberal and Country Party. The Premier led the band in South Australia and told the people to vote "No" on the prices referendum, giving them his personal assurance that prices would be effectively controlled by State Parliaments if they accepted his advice. They did accept his advice and then negotiations were opened between the State and Federal authorities. It was decided that the States would administer price control under their respective Acts and that the Commonwealth would meet the cost of administration. We are all familiar with the difficulties which arose in the effort to administer price control under those conditions, especially having in mind the implications of section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution. We have had a choice example of this in recent months in the handling of potatoes. Those grown in South Australia were difficult to find, but one was told that they could be found in New South Wales and Queensland, where they were much prized and worth a lot of money. South Australia had to import potatoes from Western Australia. These were part of the general movement from west to east—and brought more on the local market than the well-known and highly respected South Australian spud. These Western Australian potatoes had no means of announcing the fact that they were sand goppers and not crow eaters, the result being that the South Australian article went completely off the market. That is one of the difficulties of State control.

Not long ago the present Commonwealth Liberal Government decided it would have nothing further to do with price control and

that in future the States would be responsible for financing control. That indicates clearly the trend of Liberal thought on the subject and that its supporters are prepared to abandon price control. The only difference of opinion is as to when it should be abandoned. Some say it should have been done last year, and others that it should be done now, but according to the Bill South Australia is prepared to carry on price control for a further 12 months. I see no reason why we should limit the duration of this legislation to 12 months, two years or other specified period. Last night we heard the Treasurer say that the reduction in the cost of price control could be attributed to the fact that the number of items under price control had been appreciably reduced. This legislation should not be limited as proposed, but should become a permanent feature—as permanent as any other part of our legislation can be, for it is all subject to the will of Parliament. It should be placed on the Statute Book without any time limitation, and then it could be used by the Government of the day to meet any emergency that arose; if no emergency arose it would not be used, and so no harm would be done. This is emergency legislation in exactly the same respect as a Bill we passed this afternoon, and because we had no hesitation in making it a permanent measure why should we hesitate to make this legislation permanent? I had it in mind to move an amendment to strike out the time limit, but it would involve such extensive alterations to the Bill structure that I decided to content myself with making this protest. I suggest that during the next 12 months the Government should consider making the measure a permanent feature of our Statute Book.

Mr. Dunks—If the honourable member moved to make it expire on June 30 next he would get a lot of support.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I dare say I would, but I do not desire to shorten the term, but to extend it. I believe it is Parliament's duty to protect the people from exploitation, and despite what has been said to the contrary, I say emphatically that there was exploitation prior to the war, probably more than there is today. It is all very well to say that when goods are in plentiful supply competition will adjust the price level to protect the consumer, but there are such things as cartels and trade agreements. They existed before the war, although probably not to the same extent as today. However, they will be established again, and this

type of legislation is essential to prevent exploitation of the public by those means. I support the Bill because it extends the period of price control for a further 12 months, but I hope that the next time we are considering this legislation it will be made permanent.

Mr. DUNKS (Miteham)—I am surprised that the Bill has come forward for consideration so soon after the Minister's second reading on Tuesday. It does not give people outside an opportunity to indicate to their representatives in this House their views on the question. For a number of years I have been definitely opposed to this type of legislation, which evidently is becoming somewhat permanent. The Leader of the Opposition has expressed the viewpoint of his Party by saying that price control should continue as long as we like.

Mr. Riches—As long as there is a need for it.

Mr. DUNKS—Mr. O'Halloran referred to this as emergency legislation, and I agree that it was, but because it was emergency legislation immediately after the war should it be considered emergency legislation today when goods are in plentiful supply and competition prevails in 99 cases out of 100? I can point to hundreds of lines in plentiful supply, the prices of which are still controlled. I refer particularly to bread, which I do not produce today, because I found that, even if I produced a better article than somebody else I still had to sell it at the price fixed for the inferior product. Before the war 139 bakers operated in the metropolitan area, but I understand that today fewer than 39 operate, and that reduction is due largely to the continuation of the present system of price fixation. The man who was prepared to make a better and more acceptable loaf by means of hand moulding has been forced out of the business, and today customers are supplied with only two or three varieties of mass-produced bread.

Mr. Fred Walsh—That applies to many other articles, and price control cannot be blamed.

Mr. DUNKS—When free competition prevailed people could pay more for a better type of article, but under the present system a price is fixed for a category, no account being taken of the standard of production.

Mr. Fred Walsh—Would you suggest that cartels and combines were controlled before price control was introduced?

Mr. DUNKS—If it can be proved that a cartel or a monopoly is operating to the detriment of the public, I refer the honourable member to a statement which I will not quote

because I do not wish to take away the credit from the member for Burra for his research into this matter and I feel sure that he will refer to it during this debate. Firms may band together for their own protection.

Mr. Fred Walsh—And profit.

Mr. DUNKS—The trades union movement to which the honourable member belongs consists of persons who have banded themselves together.

Mr. Fred Walsh—For mutual protection.

Mr. DUNKS—Yes, and does the honourable member think that the people manufacturing and distributing goods are not banded together for mutual protection?

Mr. Fred Walsh—No, for profit.

Mr. Jennings—For mutual enrichment.

Mr. DUNKS—Only yesterday a Bill was passed in the Legislative Council the special purpose of which was to protect a section of the community. Cartels and groups of people band together in these times to protect themselves, and many operate without any protection by Act of Parliament. If such bodies operate for their own protection and do not exploit the public they are harming no-one. If price control were abolished there would be more competition between firms than there is today. Mr. O'Halloran went to some trouble to go back into history, but it is always a little misleading just to say the High Court ruled that Commonwealth price control was illegal. It did, but the Leader said that the Commonwealth was forced to go out of the price control field when a Labor Government was in power, whereas I point out that the Commonwealth legislation had a certain period to run when the Labor Government suddenly threw it overboard and held a referendum on the matter. The people refused to support Commonwealth retention of price control because they felt it was not in the best interests of the country, and that should be taken as an indication that Australians do not believe in price fixing of any sort. Although the Commonwealth was prepared to hold a referendum on the subject, South Australians have had no opportunity of saying whether they want State price control, for as soon as the Commonwealth threw it overboard this Government introduced a Bill giving it power to control prices. Because of the large majority in this House which is prepared to accept this principle, which to me savours of socialism, the Bill passed, although it did not meet with my approval. The Opposition to a man voted for it, and, although some Government members who were not on the Treasury Benches had

independent views on the matter and were prepared to vote against it, it passed because of the support it received from Opposition members. Price control should have been discontinued a year or two after the war. Controls and restrictions were necessary in war-time when private profits had to be restricted. We were engaged in an all out effort and if individuals were not prepared to play their part they had to be compelled to do so. Wage fixation also operated during that period and with price control conditions were maintained on an even keel. Since price control has been under State jurisdiction prices have not remained stable nor has the cost of living remained on an even keel. It has been proved beyond doubt that artificial means cannot adjust the economy of a country in peace-time. As the cost of living has risen so has the basic wage increased under the C series index, causing a vicious circle. The basic wage today is £7 or £8 higher than in pre-war years and the artificial system of trying to sweep back the tide has not been successful. Not long ago I referred to King Canute who sat on the seashore and said to the tide, "Go back." From the early days of colonization this nation has been built up by the laws of supply and demand; people were prepared to give service and did not require Acts of Parliament to control their wages or prices. It is rather significant that in the stop press of today's *News* under the heading "Tasmanian Price Control" the following report appears:—

Hobart: Price controls probably be abolished in Tasmania from next week. Present legislation expires on Saturday, and doubtful if Legislative Council will re-enact Control Bill.

I am pleased that this Parliament is composed of two Chambers and I hope that, if this House is not sufficiently far-seeing and is foolish enough to support this legislation, members in another place will have the wisdom of their counterparts in Tasmania and say that the time is long overdue for it to be abolished. To my surprise the Leader of the Opposition suggested that it should be retained in our statutes for all time. That was advocated by the Federal Labor Party when it sought public opinion on a referendum. It said, in effect, "We want your authority to continue price fixation for ever." The Menzies Government, when in power, only suggested an extension for a specified term. I realize that the policy of the Labor Party is to get control, as far as possible, of all things.

Mr. Corcoran—What happened when potatoes were released from control?

Mr. DUNKS—If we had been prepared to pay producers a legitimate price potatoes would not have left the State.

Mr. Lawn—What would you have charged for your pies and pasties then?

Mr. DUNKS—They are not controlled.

Mr. Lawn—What would you have charged if you had to pay £100 a ton for potatoes?

Mr. DUNKS—If the potato grower is entitled to a higher price does the honourable member suggest that he should not get it because it would increase the price of pies and pasties? That argument is fallacious. When the price was £80 a ton in New South Wales, if our Prices Commissioner had fixed that price our potatoes would not have left the State. That was not done and our growers were told, in effect, to do the best they could and we imported rubbish from Western Australia which was sold at 7½d. a pound. Many South Australian potatoes were bought and sold on the black market in South Australia. Customers said, "I know you are charging too much but I would rather pay 1s. a pound for South Australian potatoes than buy rubbish from Western Australia at 7½d. a pound." It is not possible to make all people honest all the time. We cannot control everybody from the time they get out of bed in the morning until they go to bed at night. There are schemers in the community who say that legislation is not just and that they will not abide by it. In every walk of life the more we try to bring people into the net and make them do the things we think they should do the more we will be in difficulties, the more black marketing we will have, and the less we will have of products that should be available to the people for the good of their health.

I could quote what Great Britain has done to deal with the price-fixing mania. In the United States of America they found that after price control went prices did increase for a while but then the manufacturers saw that they could make profits at lower prices and they came back into the field. Because of the competition prices dropped. Now the purchaser is satisfied and the manufacturer gets a margin of profit. Everybody is happy. If price control goes here it will not be long before conditions will get back to normal, as they were before 1939. We had a desperate war from 1914 to 1918 and the same things happened as happened after World War II., but after the first war there was no price-fixing legislation. People were allowed to continue their normal activities. The manufacturer was allowed to charge enough to cover costs and make a

small margin of profit, and the consumers were not exploited. After World War II. the Commonwealth Government adopted price control and we know what has happened. If the restriction had been abolished two years after the war there would now be more prosperity, and everybody would be happy and satisfied. I intend to vote against this Bill unless it is amended to shorten the time of its operation. The legislation has outgrown its usefulness and should be taken off the Statute Book as soon as possible.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide)—I support the Bill. Mr. Dunks said that if price control had been abolished two years after the war people would be more prosperous today. I remind him that under price control only the ceiling price is fixed, and if a manufacturer or retailer wants to sell at a lower price he is free to do so.

Mr. Fletcher—How many do it?

Mr. LAWN—None. The seller of cakes, pies and pasties and other things would sell at a higher price if he could. Mr. Dunks also said that after World War I. the manufacturer was allowed to sell at a price to return him a small profit. In other words, the manufacturers were allowed to sell at prices to give them an advantage. It should be the people who fix prices to their advantage and not industry fixing them to its advantage. The maximum price fixed under price control should not be exceeded. Mr. Dunks also said that the people voted against the 1948 referendum. I think he pointed out that they voted against price control, but they did not, particularly in this State, because the electors here favoured the proposal to transfer from the State to the Commonwealth the power to fix prices. The overall majority in the Commonwealth supported the referendum proposal, but there was not a majority in four States. To succeed there had to be an over-all majority of all people and of all the States in its favour. Although it obtained an over-all majority of the people only three States, of which South Australia was one, had a majority in favour. I have previously referred to advertisements inserted in the daily press by the Liberal and Country League and by the Premier stating, "The Government can and will fix prices," but despite that assurance the people of South Australia indicated by their votes that they preferred to allow the Commonwealth to do so. They knew how the electorates had been gerrymandered. The member for Mitcham said that the Labor Party in power in Tasmania intends

to discontinue price control. His statement contained many inaccuracies, one of which is that the Labor Government is in power there. As we have been reminded by the Premier on numerous occasions it is only kept in office in the House of Assembly on the vote of an Independent member, and the Liberal Party undoubtedly controls the Legislative Council. It would have been fairer to say that the House of Assembly in Tasmania has passed the Prices Bill for a further period, and the Liberal Legislative Council seems likely to reject it. Mr. Dunks also said that people purchased potatoes and other things on the black market, but they will buy their goods on the cheapest market possible, and only buy on the black market at the lowest possible price. In last night's *News* there is a cartoon showing an empty shop, bearing the name "Australia" and advertising articles at boom prices, whereas next door there is a huge crowd extending right out on to the roadway trying to get into a shop selling Japanese goods. This emphasizes that unless the retailer and the manufacturer in this country sell their goods at fair and reasonable prices the public will purchase wherever it can, Japan or anywhere, at a cheaper price.

A very timely leading article appeared in the *News* last night. This paper does not condemn the Arbitration Court's recent decision to freeze wages; I believe it supports the court. I will not refer to the decision except to say that this is the most inopportune time for a State to discontinue price control, because, although adjustments were not made to the wage until three months after prices increased, the wage-earner did at least receive some compensation for increased prices. Although the court has stated that the wages will be frozen for only 12 months we know that any decision of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court carries on until altered by another decision. Already a Bill has been introduced in this House which will increase the cost of living by more than 1s. per week; I refer to the Wheat Stabilization Act Amendment Bill. Because of this, it is important that prices legislation should be continued for at least 12 months to ensure that the expressed desire of the Arbitration Court, which is the stabilization of prices, is given effect. The leading article in the *News*, referring to some of the reasons for the court's decision, says:—

The Australian price structure has been getting too high for industries to compete in overseas markets. The court hopes and expects its decision will keep prices stable.

The court's desire can come about only if the State Prices Ministers take action to prevent increases. Probably the court did not know that immediately after its decision the price of bread would rise. To ensure that prices remain stable it is necessary that some action be taken to prevent increases. The article continues:—

This puts the onus squarely on industry, given a breathing space from constant wage rises, to also hold the lid firmly down on prices. They must absorb any other cost increases in their profit structure.

This afternoon the member for Mitcham said that industry should be given an open go; that we should take the lid off price control. This is an opposite view to that of the writer of this article, and his opinion, I am sure, is shared by the people of this State. The only way to ensure that increases will be absorbed into the price structure is by taxation and price control. By its Budget the Commonwealth Government has given back to industry millions of pounds. Two companies will receive a reduction of nearly £1,000,000 in income taxation, and this on last year's returns, for company taxation is not subject to pay-as-you-go like the taxation on wage earners. Companies pay their taxation after the end of the financial year, so the Federal Budget gave a rebate of millions of pounds to industry for the year ended June last.

Mr. Jennings—And companies fix their prices with taxation in mind.

Mr. LAWN—Yes, the public has already paid prices that were fixed after making allowances for taxation. Now the companies are getting a huge hand-back. That in itself is sufficient for Prices Ministers to reduce prices but there has been little attempt by them to do so. I realize they reduced the prices of petrol, oil and kerosene slightly, but many people do not use those commodities. The article continues:—

If they do not, and prices keep going up while wages stay put, the whole aim of the court's action will be frustrated and fail. If industry does not voluntarily rise to the situation, and to the chance offered it to halt production cost rises, the public will wait to see what Federal and State Governments are prepared to do about keeping prices and profit margins from swelling.

Despite that view, we have the assurance of the member for Mitcham that industry does not desire to rise to the situation. The article states that unless industry sees that prices do not increase the State and Federal Governments must do something about it. Why should

we take the lid off price control now and put it back again when the House meets next year? The public could be fleeced of millions of pounds. We should retain this legislation for a further 12 months and see that prices are fixed to the people's advantage, not to the advantage of private enterprise and industry. I support the Bill.

Mr. HAWKER (Burra)—The House is well aware of my views on price control, for I have stated them on several occasions. I still believe that price control can, and does, act to the detriment of the people generally. It does not encourage good service or good quality. It is definitely a profit control, not a price control, and I say that advisedly, because I have investigated complaints from storekeepers in my district, and I have quoted them before. The cost of getting goods to their stores is taken into consideration, and on top of that they get their margin of profit. Many profit margins are high—66 per cent. on some items—and we get the most absurd situation of profit control. We had one recent glaring case of the price of inferior Western Australian potatoes being fixed at a higher sum than for good South Australian potatoes. Further, price control encourages the manufacture and production of goods not subject to control and outside the C series index. People therefore cannot always get goods in quantities and at prices that they require. Psychologically, price control is a bad thing. I am sure some storekeepers desire control to continue because they do not have to worry whether their prices are competitive and because we have educated the people to believe that the price is right if it has been fixed by the Government. People are therefore not as discriminating in their purchases as they were before price control. Before the war petrol and superphosphate, for instance, were free of control and the people got them at reasonable prices.

I admit it would be possible to have this legislation on the Statute Book and have not one item controlled. Many people are trying to evade control, and as soon as it is lifted they do not give the public a fair go, but that would not have happened before the war. Two years ago I said that price control had the same effect on business as splints on an injured joint. When the joint has healed the splints are taken off, and to get the joint working again hurts intensely. Either the joint must be worked, and the pain endured, or it will remain stiff for ever. Sooner or later we must take the splints of price control off or we shall

be in splints for all time. When we take them off someone will get hurt, but in the end we shall be far better off. The member for Mitcham referred to the Fair Prices Act, which I quoted extensively before the referendum held to determine whether price control would be a permanent feature of Australian legislation. The Act stated:—

Where six or more persons, or the Minister, are of opinion that a combine exists they may make application to the Board of Industry for an investigation. Section 2 of the Act defines a combine as follows:—

“Combine” means any contract, agreement, or arrangement, by or between two or more persons carrying on separate businesses which exists for the purpose of, or has, or is designed or likely to have, whether directly or indirectly, the effect of increasing or fixing the price of any article or trade or commerce to the extent of enabling them to determine or control the market price of such article, and includes what are known as trusts and monopolies.

It is a wide definition. A complaint having been made to the Board of Industry, it can then make inquiries to see if an investigation is warranted, make an investigation, and then publish a declaration in the local press and the *Government Gazette* fixing a different maximum price for different quality goods, or different maximum prices in different parts of the State. I have been told it is hard to prove that there has been an arrangement between two people. It would be possible in South Australia for only one firm to be selling something and therefore it could not come under the definition of “two or more firms.” Consequently, I have been told it would be almost impossible to apply this Act, although I do not think it would be very difficult to alter it and make it cover such a case. I was surprised to find that a number of members did not know that the Act was on the Statute Book. So long as we have price control in its present form we shall have people who are not as energetic as those before the war to see where they can buy the cheapest; and as soon as it is lifted we shall have them saying, “We have been controlled all these years, so now we are going to get what we can.” I am certain that if price control is lifted we shall, after a short period, get back to a much more stable economy and away from the danger of production tending toward the manufacture of things which are not so important, but uncontrolled.

Mr. JENNINGS (Prospect)—I am anxious to see the Bill passed. I had not intended to speak until I heard the member for Mitcham

make a couple of erroneous statements. I am certain they were accidental, because I know he would not deliberately mislead the House. His first statement to which I object was that when the Federal Labor Government saw its powers disappearing under the National Security Regulations, although it had some time to go in which it could still have continued price control, the Government threw price control overboard and had a referendum. That is not true. The price control structure and administration were kept intact until after the defeat of the referendum, and when the Commonwealth Government no longer had power to control prices, the administration was handed over intact to the States. We were expected to infer from the honourable member's statement that in the intervening period prices got out of hand. That is not true. Another of his statements was that the people of South Australia did not have an opportunity to express their opinion as to whether or not they wanted price control. Apparently, he did not bother to ascertain the result of the referendum in South Australia. The fact is that the majority of South Australians voted for the referendum and thus supported the policy sponsored by the Federal Labor Government to transfer permanently to the Commonwealth power to control prices and services. South Australia voted not only for the continuance of price control, but a continuance of Commonwealth price control. Even if the majority of people in South Australia had not supported the referendum the honourable member's contention could not have been sustained. If a majority of South Australians had voted against the referendum do not let us forget that it would have been on the assurance the Premier and other Liberal leaders in this State had given that price control would and could be more effectively administered by the State Parliament. By no stretch of imagination can it be said that South Australians did not want price control. They wanted it then and they want it now, and their vote on that occasion showed that they wanted control by the Commonwealth Parliament. If another referendum were held now, even a greater majority would indicate their support both in South Australia and in other parts of the Commonwealth. The members for Burra and Mitcham mentioned potatoes and said that our present rather regrettable position in this regard was an argument for the complete abolition of price control, and that because of the action of one or more States

control had been ineffective. Instead of that being an argument for the abolition of price control, it is a very good argument for the transference of control from the States to the Commonwealth so that the price not only of potatoes, but of other commodities, could be controlled right throughout Australia, and thus the States would not be frustrated by section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution. I support the remark of the Leader of the Opposition that this Act should not be extended for only one year but that it should be permanent. We should have the power on our Statute Book, even if only reserve power, to police prices and protect the people. For many years there has been on the Queensland Statute Book a Price Control Act, and, although for much of that time no items have been controlled because such control was not warranted, the power has been there for the Government to act if necessary. I support the Bill.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee without amendment. Committee's report adopted.

PORT BROUGHTON RAILWAY (DISCONTINUANCE) BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 27. Page 551.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This Bill presents no serious problems and represents the result of those things that

happen in the march of progress. I remember the time when I was quite young and when the Port Broughton-Mundoora railway, operated by horse power, was an important feature in that area, taking produce, particularly wheat, to Port Broughton, but time has marched on and the little shipping port and the railway have been left behind, leaving only a railway track that has not been used for 15 years and an Act, passed in 1873, authorizing the construction of the railway. It is now proposed that the Railways Commissioner shall have the power to pull up the track and dispose of or use the materials to the best advantage. I see no reason to oppose the Bill and consequently support it.

Mr. HEASLIP (Rocky River)—I, too, support the Bill. There is much material in this railway line which could be used to great advantage by the public or the Government. It seems a pity that this Bill was not introduced two years ago when such materials were in short supply for the rails could have been put to good use then. The same thing applies to the rails in Port Germein, which have been there for several years and are now wasting while people would gladly pay money to buy and use them.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.52 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, November 3, at 2 p.m.