

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, October 1, 1964.

The SPEAKER (Hon. T. C. Stott) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.**HOUSING LOANS.**

Mr. FRANK WALSH: In replying to a question this week concerning housing loans and temporary finance the Premier said:

However, it would seem preferable that these savings banks extend their activities more particularly to long-term housing loans on the same lines as the Savings Bank of South Australia and the Commonwealth Savings Bank. Can the Premier say whether efforts have been made to ascertain whether it is possible to obtain more from the private banks by way of loan, or would that be a matter of representation to the Commonwealth Treasurer?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: This matter is, rightly, under the control of the Commonwealth Treasurer. The Leader will remember that, when trading banks received licences to establish savings banks, one condition was that a certain percentage of savings deposits be applied to housing loans. This matter would come specifically under the terms of licences granted by the Commonwealth Treasurer, but I can take it up with him, if the Leader wishes. I personally believe that a housing loan on a short-term basis would only lead many borrowers into trouble in the future. A housing loan, by its very nature, should cover a long repayment period. That has always been the policy of the State Bank and the Savings Bank of South Australia, namely to make a loan over a 30 or 40-year term. I can refer the Leader's question to the Commonwealth Treasurer but I point out that it is desirable that housing loans made under licence to savings banks be on a long-term basis.

DISCLOSURE OF EVIDENCE.

Mr. SHANNON: It has always been the practice of the Public Works Committee to release to the press the prepared evidence of any witness who has not intimated his desire for this not to be done. In the ordinary course of the committee's inquiry into a project, the fact that the press mentions the matter alerts possible interested parties. This occasionally leads to useful evidence being tendered by witnesses of whom the committee could have no knowledge. In order to clear up any misunderstanding that may exist either in the

minds of members or of the public, will you, Mr. Speaker, explain to the House the effect of Standing Order No. 393 in relation to statutory committees such as the Land Settlement Committee and the Public Works Committee?

The SPEAKER: In reply to the member for Onkaparinga, who represents this House on the Public Works Committee and is its Chairman, I point out that Standing Order No. 393, which provides that the evidence taken by any Select Committee of the House, and documents presented to such committee which have not been reported to the House, shall not be disclosed or published by any member of such committee or by any other person, applies only to Select Committees appointed by the House of Assembly. The Legislative Council has a similar provision in its Standing Order No. 398. The procedure of a joint committee comprising members appointed by both Houses would be regulated by the Standing Orders of the Legislative Council relating to Select Committees, including, of course, the Legislative Council Standing Order No. 398 relating to the prohibition of the disclosure of evidence before its report to the House.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, consisting of two members of the Legislative Council and five members of the House of Assembly, is appointed by the Governor, pursuant to Statute, and in my view the Standing Orders of either House in relation to disclosure of evidence do not apply to this committee. A proposed public work can be referred to the committee either by the Governor or upon resolution of either House of Parliament, and thereupon the committee, in terms of its Act, is required with all convenient despatch to deal with the matter referred and as soon as conveniently practicable report to the Governor and to both Houses of Parliament the results of its inquiry. As far as I can ascertain there is no provision in the Public Works Standing Committee Act which expressly prohibits or authorizes the disclosure of evidence submitted to the committee before the committee reports to Parliament. However, as the committee is denominated by Statute to be a Parliamentary committee, and this Parliamentary committee is required to report to both Houses of Parliament and to the Governor, an outsider might reasonably expect that the same rules that apply to Parliamentary committees appointed by Parliament would apply to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, which consists exclusively of members of Parliament appointed by the Governor.

I do not presume to interpret the Public Works Standing Committee Act, but I would suggest that the committee might well consider the adoption of the principle of non-disclosure of evidence before report to Parliament, a principle which is followed by both Houses of the Parliament of South Australia and by the House of Commons at Westminster. I draw members' attention to section 24 of the Public Works Standing Committee Act, which states:

(1) The committee shall, subject to the provisions of this Act, consider and report upon all public works which are referred to it under this Act.

(2) In considering and reporting on any such work, the committee shall have regard—

(a) to the stated purpose thereof;

(b) to the necessity or advisability of constructing it;

(c) where the work purports to be of a reproductive or revenue-producing character, to the amount of revenue which such work may reasonably be expected to produce; and

(d) to the present and prospective public value of the work;

and generally the committee shall, in all cases, take such measures and procure such information as may enable them to inform or satisfy the House of Assembly or Legislative Council (according to the circumstances of the case) as to the expediency of constructing the public work in question.

Section 28 states:

The committee shall, on or before the thirty-first day of August in each year, make a general report to the Governor of its proceedings under this Act, and may in such report also call attention to any matter connected with the public works or proposed public works of the State on which, in its opinion, Parliament should be informed.

MONASH AND GLOSSOP WATER SUPPLIES.

Mr. CURREN: On several occasions I have asked the Minister of Lands questions regarding the installations of the town water supplies at Monash and Glossop in my district. Has the Minister a report on the proposed installation of chlorination plants at these two towns?

The Hon. P. H. QUIRKE: Information obtained from the engineers is that specifications for chlorination units for Monash and Glossop town water supplies are nearing completion and tenders should be called within three or four weeks. Building material for the Monash unit has been ordered and that for the Glossop building will be ordered shortly. It is expected that the Monash unit will operate early in 1965 and the Glossop unit a little later.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE.

Mr. JENNINGS: Yesterday I asked the Minister of Education, representing the Attorney-General, a question that was one of a series of questions regarding the appointment of justices of the peace and the way in which members of Parliament who nominate them are informed of the appointments. In his reply the Minister suggested that I should put forward something constructive on this matter and I now intend to do so. I have had consultations with as many members on both sides of the House as possible since I asked my question, and two suggestions have emerged from these talks: first, that the Attorney-General should inform members of Parliament direct, both of appointments and—

The SPEAKER: Order! If the honourable member intends to express an opinion or make a statement he must obtain leave of the House.

Mr. JENNINGS: I ask leave of the House to make a brief explanatory statement.

Leave granted.

Mr. JENNINGS: The first proposal was that the Attorney-General should inform members of Parliament of the names of those people who have been appointed to the commission of the peace, and that the member should then inform the persons appointed and those not appointed. I assure the House that I discarded that suggestion completely: it is not within the province of a private member to do that. The Attorney-General has to inform the person appointed to the commission of the peace of his obligations and of arrangements for swearing-in and for taking the oath of office. Also, although the Attorney-General's office goes on for ever, the private member might be away, or sick, or might even forget or not bother about it.

The next suggestion was agreed on almost unanimously by those to whom I spoke. It is that the Attorney-General should inform the candidates who are successful and those who for some reason or other (and the reason is never given) are not successful, and simultaneously inform the member who nominated them, so that he in turn at his discretion might send letters of congratulation to those appointed and suggest to those not appointed that subsequently they might apply again. That is left to the member's discretion. As the Minister, quite properly, asked me to submit a constructive proposal, it is on that basis that this suggestion is submitted. Will the Minister refer this suggestion to his colleague, the Attorney-General?

The Hon. Sir BADEN PATTINSON: Yes. On my behalf and, with confidence, on behalf of my colleague, the Attorney-General, I can say I am indebted to the honourable member for his constructive suggestion. The procedure concerning the nomination of appointments for justices of the peace and the notification of their rejection was not created by the honourable Mr. Rowe: it was inherited by him. I have had experience now of four or five of his predecessors and, with the greatest respect, I think that Mr. Rowe is the most co-operative Attorney-General with whom I have been associated. I am sure he will be pleased to reconsider any suggestion. I can endorse, as member for Glenelg and as the member representing the second largest electoral district in this State, that it is embarrassing when one has to convey bad news to those nominated and not have the pleasure of conveying the good news. The suggestion would regularize the position, although I do not want to prejudge it, as it is for my colleague to decide. I shall convey the honourable member's suggestion to the Attorney-General and submit my own to him as well.

BAROSSA VALLEY RAIL SERVICE.

The Hon. B. H. TEUSNER: Will the Minister of Works ask the Minister of Railways whether it is intended, during the present financial year, to improve the rather antiquated railcar passenger service to the Barossa Valley by speeding up the service generally and providing more modern railcars than are used at present?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: I will ask the Minister of Railways for a report.

PORT AUGUSTA ADULT CENTRE.

Mr. RICHES: Has the Minister of Education a report on the progress of negotiations for the building of the Port Augusta Adult Education Centre?

The Hon. Sir BADEN PATTINSON: I have an interim report. The Education Department's schedule of requirements was drawn up by the Deputy Director of Education and the Superintendent of Technical Schools, was submitted to me, and I approved it. It has been submitted to the Director of the Public Buildings Department to draw up plans and specifications. I do not know how long that will take, but as soon as I have further information I shall be pleased to inform the honourable member. I will give it my personal attention, as I am anxious that as early a start as possible be made on this much needed work.

POLLUTED MILK.

Mr. FRED WALSH: Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to the question I asked last Thursday on the possible pollution of milk when unclean milk bottles are filled?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I have a report from the Chairman of the Metropolitan Milk Board, who states:

The article in question appeared in the *Advertiser* on Saturday, September 19 last. The same morning an officer of this board visited the premises of Mr. A. R. Hawke and obtained particulars of the incident and also the bottle concerned. The bottle had been used for paint (of a cream or off-white colour) or for the washing of a paint brush before being returned to the treatment plant. The residue which showed on the bottom of the bottle, could on appearance be readily mistaken for milk and as a consequence the bottle was included in the bottle washing line. Whilst this fact does not relieve the company concerned of its responsibilities in connection with the complaint, it does emphasize the problem brought about by the misuse of milk bottles. The company, whose factory is equipped with modern bottle-washing equipment, uses about 126,000 bottles a day at its works where every endeavour is made by inspection at various stages to eliminate the possibility of any unsatisfactory bottle being used.

In order to ascertain if any improvements could be made in the washing, etc., of used milk bottles this board's Chief Supervisor some short time ago visited several of the factories engaged in bottling various drinks. Measures adopted by the aerated water factories are basically the same as those used in the milk treatment plants, where the bottles are examined at three points, namely, before entering the washer, after leaving the washer and again after being filled. Despite these precautions, bottles escape detection owing to the human factors involved. In an endeavour to overcome this problem one aerated water company has recently installed an electronic empty bottle inspector which is designed to automatically exclude from the bottling line any bottle containing foreign matter. The performance of this automatic device is being closely watched to assess its efficiency and suitability for adoption in the milk bottling plants.

PARILLA WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. NANKIVELL: Will the Minister of Works obtain from the Engineering and Water Supply Department the latest report on the feasibility or otherwise of the extension of the water scheme in the township of Parilla to provide the local football club with a 1½ in. water service?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: I know that this matter is being examined and I shall ask the Engineer-in-Chief for a report.

PRESSURE CHAMBER.

Mr. CASEY: I was rather alarmed last night when I heard that a diver in the Port Stanvac area had suffered from the "bends", as the result of deep-sea diving in that area. Fortunately, a survey ship in port, with a pressure chamber on board, was able to provide immediate treatment for this man. In view of the necessity for such a pressure chamber to be made available for divers in South Australia, will the Premier take this matter up with his colleague, the Minister of Health, to see whether one could be installed in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, which apparently would be the most central hospital for such a device?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: I shall have the honourable member's question examined.

RESERVOIRS.

Mr. FREEBAIRN: Can the Minister of Works report on the present state of the reservoirs following the good general rains last weekend?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: Prior to last weekend's rains metropolitan storages were full, with the exception of Myponga. The most recent rains have caused most of the metropolitan reservoirs to overflow. The Warren reservoir, which is near the honourable member's district, is overflowing and excess water is being taken downstream to the South Para reservoir which is not filled to capacity and which is still able to take a considerable quantity of water. Until yesterday I had the precise figures but I do not have them with me in the House today. However, generally speaking, all reservoirs in the Adelaide Hills are full with the exception of the South Para and Myponga reservoirs. Unfortunately, reservoirs in the northern areas are not so well placed.

PAPER TARIFF.

Mr. LAUCKE: I understand that a major problem encountered by publishers and printers of books in Australia is that there is a tariff on imported paper but not on imported books. As a result, Australian printers lack the variety of paper at acceptable prices and are placed at a big disadvantage compared with oversea publishing houses. We have the important industry of the making of books in Adelaide, and this industry will, I consider, be called upon increasingly to provide more fiction, non-fiction, and reference books with the passing of time and population growth. Will the Premier consider an approach

to the Commonwealth authorities in the matter of decreased import duty on paper which is necessary for the manufacture of books and which is not now procurable from local industry?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: I appreciate the problem outlined by the honourable member. I point out that the tariffs on paper are recommended by the Tariff Board, and unless there is some special emergency duty they are subject to a full-scale inquiry at which publishers, along with the industry which is making paper in this country, could submit evidence. In those circumstances it appears to me that the official inquiry should govern the matter. However, I am willing to have the matter examined and, if necessary, to take appropriate action.

WATERVALE WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. FREEBAIRN: Will the Minister of Works obtain a report from the Minister of Mines on progress in the boring operation for the township water supply at Watervale?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: Yes, I shall be pleased to do so. The Department of Mines is endeavouring to find a suitable supply of water in that area and I am interested in the result.

MOORLANDS-PINNAROO ROAD.

Mr. NANKIVELL: Will the Minister of Works ask his colleague, the Minister of Roads, whether it is intended to reconstruct any sections of highway No. 12 between Moorlands and Pinnaroo and, if it is, when it is intended to carry out this work? Secondly, if it is intended to re-seal the section between Moorlands and Chandos, when will this work be undertaken?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON: I will ask my colleague, the Minister of Roads, for that information.

POULTRY INDUSTRY (COMMONWEALTH LEVIES) BILL.

His Excellency the Governor's Deputy, by message, recommended to the House of Assembly the appropriation of such amounts of money as might be required for the purposes mentioned in the Bill.

FAUNA CONSERVATION BILL.

In Committee.

(Continued from September 30. Page 1171.)

Clauses 15 to 25 passed.

Clause 26—"Abolition or alteration of fauna sanctuaries or game reserves."

Mr. CURREN: Is it intended that a land-owner can have an area declared a sanctuary and after a short period ask for the declaration to be revoked, merely to suit his own convenience?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN (Minister of Agriculture): Any request by a land-owner to have a sanctuary declared will be closely examined and will not be assented to lightly; we will make sure that the application is genuine and that the owner intends to retain the land as a sanctuary. The owner will be bound by the laws relating to this type of sanctuary, and in no circumstances will he be allowed to depart from the provisions of the Act. We realize that with freehold land we will be placing a restriction on that land, and it could bring about a reluctance of land-owners to ask for a sanctuary to be declared, because they might feel that such a sanctuary would affect the value of the property if they wished to sell at any time. It is believed that with this safeguard land-owners will feel freer to offer their properties for use as sanctuaries, which will mean a greater range of properties to choose from. I suggest that without the safeguard few places will be offered.

Mr. LOVEDAY: In the situation the Minister has just described does the land-owner have to give an undertaking that he will permit the sanctuary to remain on his property for a specific period? The Government may have to incur some expenditure on a sanctuary or reserve and, as I understand this clause, on saying that he does not wish his property to be a sanctuary or reserve any longer, a land-owner is immediately relieved of it. Would any time elapse between when he is asked to be relieved and when he is relieved, or would he be relieved immediately?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I believe that to keep faith with the land-owner it would have to be removed as soon as possible. However, I do not think any director would recommend that a property should be made a sanctuary if there were any doubt about its remaining so for as far ahead as could be seen.

Clause passed.

Clause 27—“Erection of notices.”

Mr. CURREN: Can penalties be imposed for the erection of unauthorized signs on a sanctuary that has not been so declared?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: No. It is impossible to draft a law that would effectively prevent this.

Clause passed.

Clauses 28 to 34 passed.

Clause 35—“Unprotected animals and birds.”

Mr. HALL: 1 move:

In subclause (2) to strike out “proclamation” and insert “regulation”.

I have the same desire here as I had when I moved my earlier amendment concerning controlled species and the proclamation of definitions. In this case I believe that the type of animal to be protected or unprotected should be varied by regulation.

Amendment carried.

Mr. RICHES: Why are budgerygahs and rosellas unprotected?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I do not think I can give a really authoritative statement on the species of birds that are unprotected. However, rosellas are a pest to fruitgrowers in certain areas and they would be widespread if they were protected, to the disadvantage, in particular, of apple-growing areas. I do not know what is the position as regards budgerygahs. However, I assure the honourable member that the list of unprotected species has been prepared by the Flora and Fauna Advisory Committee and it has examined in great detail every type of animal or bird in the schedules. If the committee were asked to give reasons they could do so. I will raise this question with the Director of Fisheries and Game and see whether any regulation should be brought in by way of amendment.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: The last in the list in the second schedule of unprotected species is:

All species of animals and birds not native to South Australia.

Since last evening I have been approached by a man who, I believe, is an expert on this subject. He has given me notes on the importance of exotics in the Australian economy. I understand exotics to be animals and birds not native to South Australia. He says in the notes that the lesson to be learned from experience in Australia is that exotic crops need exotic birds to protect them. He believes that the blanket ban on exotics contained in this schedule is illogical. Why are all species of animals and birds not native to South Australia included in the schedule?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: This is a technical matter that has been considered by the Flora and Fauna Advisory Committee. In general, one can say exotics are thought to have disturbed the balance of nature in this State, in some cases extremely seriously. Where farm animals are concerned, they are the property of individual people and protected in that sense. Whether it is possible for an exotic

animal or bird to be beneficial and whether it would be undesirable to have it unprotected, I cannot say. I can think of no instances, but I shall raise the matter with the advisory committee and ask for a comment.

Clause passed.

Clauses 36 to 39 passed.

Clause 40—"Reports by grantees of certain permits."

Mr. MILLHOUSE: It has been pointed out to me that clause 39 gives the Minister power to grant permits, and that there are four purposes for which permits may be granted. This clause provides for a report to be given by a permit holder in only the first three cases set out in clause 39 and not in the case of a permit under clause 39 (1) (d). Why is it necessary for a report to be furnished within 14 days after the expiration of the licence in the case of permits under clause 39 (1) (a), (b) and (c) and not under (d)? I would have thought that a report was desirable in each case.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I understand that permits that would be granted under clause 39 (1) (d) may be numerous but of little importance. If a report was required the permit would not be issued without it. A tremendous amount of administration work is involved in this matter, and one problem in this department is the clerical administration needed in the issue of permits. The main purpose of the report is to cover the instances of different people who will be collecting a greater quantity of animals, or bird fanciers who take them and then release them. They are important reports and that is the reason for the omission from this clause. They will increase the administrative problem. I will inquire of the Director of the Fisheries and Game Department, and if it is considered that an improvement could be made, I have no objection to asking that this point be reconsidered in another place.

Clause passed.

Clause 41 passed.

Clause 42—"Australian Magpie."

Mr. BYWATERS: There are times, particularly during the nesting season, when a magpie can be injurious to small children, but I wonder whether this clause is not too wide. Some people love to shoot birds. The magpie is one of the cleanest birds in Australia, and it would be a pity if excessive shooting of magpies was allowed. Magpies keep people away from their nests to protect their young. Police officers can be approached to destroy a

bird that could be dangerous, and no-one should be allowed to shoot a magpie merely because they think it may cause injury. Who will decide when the magpie "appears likely to cause injury"?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: Magpies are numerous and the proportion of birds that attack persons is relatively small. However, numerous attacks have been reported, particularly during the nesting season. These attacks generally worry small children going to or from school, rather than adult persons. The committee that drew up the Bill, and the Flora and Fauna Advisory Committee, which considered the Bill, discussed this point, and considered that this was a wise provision. Only under certain conditions can one shoot a magpie, and this seemed to be the best way to deal with this problem. I have no objection to asking for further consideration of this, but I urge the Committee to accept the clause as it is.

Mr. Bywaters: How is it decided whether the magpie is likely to cause injury?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: It is for a court to decide. Many similar matters are decided by a court. Obviously, anyone caught shooting a magpie from a motor car would have no defence if prosecuted but, on the other hand, people with children may have a good defence. This question is decided by the court every day.

Mr. BYWATERS: This is something of which I have much knowledge. Magpies nest in the gum trees opposite my house at Murray Bridge and frequently they swoop down upon us. Great care will have to be taken in the administration of this provision. I shall not vote against it but I again draw the Minister's attention to the policing of this legislation so that magpies will not be shot willy-nilly.

Mr. RICHES: I stand with the member for Murray on this matter and I should like to see the wording eventually altered to provide that it shall be an offence to shoot a magpie unless it is shown that the bird is likely to cause injury to any person.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I shall examine that clause and discuss it with the officers concerned. Magpies, for the most part, are left alone despite periodical attacks and menacing. I point out that I should not like to have this legislation obstructed because of this clause, which is far removed from being the Bill's most important feature.

Clause passed.

Clauses 43 and 44 passed.

Clause 45—"Gun licences."

Mr. CURREN: Field sportsmen in the Upper Murray district consider that the revenue from gun licence fees should be used solely to improve facilities in game reserves and sanctuaries as is being done in Victoria with marked success.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: This matter has been raised previously. The Treasury has to finance the Fisheries and Game Department at times by a sum far in excess of what it receives from gun licence fees. At other times it might spend less than the amount of gun licence revenue, but the activities of the department have greatly increased in the last few years. As the honourable member knows, a game reserve is intended for the Upper Murray, which will involve the Government in considerable expense, and it would be hardly satisfactory for sportsmen to say, "We will have all our gun licence fees spent on wild life reserves and nothing else."

Clause passed.

Clauses 46 and 47 passed.

Clause 48—"Restriction on use of devices for taking animals and birds."

Mr. HALL: I move:

In subclause (1) to strike out "proclamation" and insert "regulation".

I take it that this clause could specify the type of gun to be used in relation to a specific type of animal or bird and that it could also specify such types of device as a rabbit trap to catch animals. This should be done only by regulation.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I could not accept that amendment. This is clearly a matter that should come under administrative control. The types of device that might be used are a constant worry to the authorities; even the publicity given the taking of a wild bird for research purposes and the releasing of it subsequently gives certain people wrong ideas on how to catch birds. The department badly needs a strong hand in such matters.

Amendment negatived; clause passed.

Clause 49—"Duck traps."

Mr. CURREN: I suggest that the words "and destroy" be inserted after "dismantle".

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I do not think the amendment would be a good one; the authorities are faced with certain difficulties in regard to seizing things if they also have the authority to dispose of them. I have noticed in other Acts that restrictions as to disposal are severe: otherwise an inspector is often likely to be accused of disposing

of things improperly. I urge the Committee to leave the provision as it stands.

Mr. CURREN: The material used in many duck traps would be of little value. These traps can be constructed out of a quantity of wire netting and a few saplings, and I do not think an inspector would get any buyers for that material.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: By the time the trap was dismantled it would not be worth very much.

Clause passed.

Clause 50—"Use of poison."

Mr. CURREN: Yesterday I referred to the poison 1080, which has a cumulative effect and a long toxic life. Is it intended to prohibit the use of this poison on a fauna reserve or fauna sanctuary?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: This poison is used in vermin destruction. In framing the Act a very delicate balance has been achieved to provide for vermin destruction with the minimum of danger to animals and birds. Mostly the use of 1080 in this State is authorized only with oats, which germinate with the first rain, so the poison is not everlasting in that respect. Very few birds are destroyed by picking up oats even in areas where this poison is used.

Clause passed.

Clause 51 passed.

Clause 52—"Shooting from boats."

Mr. CURREN: I move:

To strike out "a protected" and insert "an".

I can see no useful purpose in the provision as it stands.

Mr. BYWATERS: Shooting from boats is far too prevalent. Frequently speed boats cruise silently along the River Murray and stir up the ducks in the willows. As these ducks emerge the boats speed up and the occupants carry out what amounts almost to a massacre of the birds. Some of these people use not guns but high-powered rifles, the use of which, as we know, is prohibited under another Act. However, these people still seem to get away with it. Only a year or so ago a cow grazing on the swamps at Mypolonga was killed by a bullet from a high-powered rifle. This sort of thing causes much concern to people living adjacent to the River Murray. These offences are becoming far too prevalent, and there seems little opportunity of apprehending the offenders. Many people seem to have no idea of the danger that can be caused by shooting adjacent to the river, or that this is a punishable offence. Bullets are a danger both to

animals and to human beings. When I was speaking on this topic some little time ago the Minister of Lands asked whether I would favour patrols by water police to control this sort of thing, and I assured him that I would favour that. If the river was visited occasionally by a high-powered patrol boat, the offenders would know there was a possibility of their being apprehended and convicted, and perhaps then the offences would not be so prevalent.

Mr. Freebairn: Do you think that even five miles an hour is too fast?

Mr. BYWATERS: Yes, damage is done even when a boat is cruising along at a lower speed than that. Many birds are maimed and left to die as a result of this shooting.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 53 passed.

Clause 54—"Prohibited species."

Mr. HALL: I move:

In subclause (1) to strike out "proclamation" and insert "regulation".

This clause provides that any species of animals or birds may be declared by proclamation to be prohibited species. I believe this matter should also be controlled by regulation.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 55—"Controlled species."

Mr. HALL: I move:

In subclause (1) to strike out "proclamation" and insert "regulation".

My reasons for doing this are the same as I have stated previously.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 56 passed.

Clause 57—"Species not to be sold."

Mr. HALL moved:

In subclauses (1) and (2) to strike out "proclamation" and insert "regulation".

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 58 to 78 passed.

First Schedule.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I move:

To strike out "5314" and insert "1534".

My attention was drawn to certain clerical errors last evening.

Amendment carried.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN moved:

After "1922" to insert "Animals and Birds Protection Act Amendment Act 1927 . . . No. 1833 of 1927"; after "Law" to strike out "Pension" and insert "revision"; after "1934" to insert "(so much of the Second Schedule thereto as affects the Animals

and Birds Protection Act 1919, the Animals and Birds Protection Act Amendment Act 1927 and the Animals and Birds Protection Act Amendment Act 1932)".

Amendments carried; schedule as amended passed.

Second Schedule passed.

Third Schedule.

Mr. CURREN: Are the birds protected in South Australia protected in adjoining States?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I do not think so. I imagine some animals and birds mentioned do not tally with those in other States, but I will have the question examined particularly in relation to rare species, some of which are listed but appear to be extinct.

Schedule passed.

Title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

BUILDING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL (TYRES).

Returned from the Legislative Council with amendments.

PULP AND PAPER MILL (HUNDREDS OF MAYURRA AND HINDMARSH) BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 25. Page 566.)

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Leader of the Opposition): The recent decision of the Arbitration Court granting an increase of £1 a week in the basic wage has made the necessity for continuing price control in South Australia greater than ever before. Although we have price control legislation on the Statute Book, the ineffectiveness of the present Government is fully illustrated when one considers the price increases that have occurred in the last twelve months. When I moved an amendment to the Address in Reply earlier this year to provide for a thorough investigation into price control measures, the Government members in their wisdom decided that no such investigation was necessary. Within two days of my amendment's being rejected by this House on the casting vote of the Speaker, publicity was given to the fact that the Prices Commissioner was to conduct an investigation

into all recent price increases to ensure that unjustified increases were not taking place.

Without price control, it is obvious that suppliers could be using the court's decision to hold the consumers to ransom for many essential goods and services, irrespective of the ability or otherwise of industry to absorb or even partially absorb the increased costs resulting from increased wages. This is a matter that always causes me some concern, because the Arbitration Commissioners always consider the ability of industry to pay when they grant adjustments to money wages in order to maintain the wage-earner's real wage, and yet employers immediately turn around and use the argument of increased money wages as the reason why it is necessary to increase prices. Under price control, however, members of the public, including primary producers, are assured of not having to pay more for essential services unless the increase is fully warranted. Members on this side have continually sought the continuation of price control, and even go further and maintain that it should be permanent legislation.

Although the Government is not prepared to accept our recommendation for permanent legislation, at least it is some consolation to know that this Bill is before the House to renew the present legislation for a further period of twelve months, and, in addition, contains several clauses dealing with restrictive trade practices. These latter provisions are contained in clauses 3 to 6 and, although they are desirable, they should be provided for by completely separate legislation in the form of restrictive trade practices legislation—

Mr. Millhouse: You and I agree on that.

Mr. FRANK WALSH: At least we have agreed on something.

The SPEAKER: You had better stop there.

Mr. FRANK WALSH: The provisions dealing with restrictive trade practices should be covered by separate legislation drafted in consultation with the other States, rather than by prices legislation. Some members in this House still argue the classical theory of supply and demand, but they adopt this argument only because wages tend to be fixed by the arbitration system, and it is subsequent to this operation that these members believe that there should be complete freedom for the employers of wage earners to determine what prices shall be charged for the output of the labour. I am sure that members will not be swayed by this plausible and groundless argument when they are considering the extension of price control for a further period of twelve

months. In America in 1961, major anti-trust suits against large electrical corporations, which are wellknown throughout Australia, involved fines totalling nearly 1,000,000 dollars. I believe this forcibly brings home the ramifications that may occur when large manufacturers or contractors combine in order to form monopolistic price rings. The companies concerned, and their officers, admitted to the systematic rigging of Government tenders on turbines, switchgear controls, and other items of heavy electrical equipment. In legal terms, their crime was conspiracy to divide markets, suppress competition and charge artificially high prices. Only this year in England, the electronics firm of Ferranti Limited had offered to repay to the Government £4,250,000 from its profits on developing the Bloodhound ground-to-air missile. An official report said that the firm had made an excessive profit of £5,772,964 or 82 per cent on costs on its contract. The Bloodhound has been exported to Australia as well as to Sweden and Switzerland, and no doubt when the full ramifications become known, it may have considerable effect on the expenditure at Woomera by the counterpart of this Government in Canberra.

Let us not delude ourselves that the same practices are not occurring in Adelaide at the present time; the sooner this Government gets down to the task of effectively dealing with restrictive trade practices the better. Instead of throwing out odd crumbs similar to those contained in clauses 3 and 6 of the Bill which deal with the offer and sale of catch lines and price tickets, respectively, it should have grappled with some of the major problems of restrictive trade practices, of which I have given some examples. Members will have gathered that I am not happy that restrictive trade practices legislation is becoming interwoven with prices legislation, but apparently it is the Government's wish to introduce the legislation in this way, and therefore we on this side are obliged to fit in with these arrangements, if we are to attain our objective of having suitable restrictive trade practices legislation introduced. Consequently, during the Committee stages, I shall be seeking amendments relating to resale price maintenance, restrictive trade associations, misleading advertising, and unfair trade practices.

I intend to seek permission to amend certain amendments that I have on file, as a result of information I have received from the Premier contained in a report from the Prices Commissioner. One often wonders at the signs in

some grocery stores, "7d. off" or "10d. off". It would be interesting to know just what the real price of some of these articles happened to be. An attempt has been made by the Government to control the sale of a limited number of commodities. My attention was drawn recently to the fact that a combined television and record-player set appeared to be advertised at £100, but the small print disclosed that was only the deposit. I suppose people who went into the shop to inquire about it found great difficulty in getting out again without buying anything. These gimmicks are unfair, and this legislation has some merit in that regard. We would have done better by being stricter on the prices of many commodities in the past. I turn my attention now to the subject of price control, because as I said earlier that is what this Bill should be about and, although I agree that the continuance of price control is essential, I believe the Premier made some statements that are rather open to doubt in the arguments he put forward for the retention of price control for another 12 months, and those require some further clarification. For example he said:

The increase of £1 a week in the basic wage following in the wake of a number of earlier awards has created some problems that are of concern to my Government.

I repeat briefly that the commissioners, in arriving at the £1 a week increase, took into account price increases that had already occurred, together with the ability of industry to pay, but since that time the Government has increased numerous taxes and charges, and it intends to increase others still further. Surely it is senseless for the Government to give such a boost to the upward spiral of prices that must inevitably follow this action and do harm to the economy of the State. This brings me to another statement made by the Premier, namely:

The Government's policy has always been to ensure that the consumer gets a fair deal.

I have already answered this statement when discussing the Premier's earlier comment, but the Government did not keep these sentiments very strongly to the forefront when it was considering what taxes and charges were to be increased as a result of the Budget. In addition, I would point out that the figures issued by the Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics cannot be reconciled with the Premier's statement, because the figures for the June quarter of this year show that the consumer price index in this State increased by 1.3 per cent whereas the increase for the

whole of Australia was only 1 per cent. I might mention that over the past 15 months the price increases in this State have been the most severe, and this trend certainly does not reconcile with a Government policy that is doing its utmost for the consumer, but I believe the increases would have been greater had it not been for the Prices Department.

I believe one of the major advantages derived from the present system of price control is the psychological one, that although numerous goods and services are not subject to price control at present, any of these items could be quickly brought under control should evidence indicate exploitation, and I do not think that I would be making an unfair claim if I pointed out that in recent years members on this side have played a major part in prodding a reluctant Government into action on many occasions as regards price control legislation. Therefore, our efforts have been more than incidental in ensuring the retention of fair prices as far as possible, which has been beneficial for primary producers, industry, commerce and private consumers.

There does not seem to me to be much value in the Government's considering prices legislation when at the same time it is announcing increases in taxation and service charges. Any increases that take place must eventually be reflected in the cost of living. The increases in hospital charges will be severe, and in many instances the £5 5s. increase will account for more than one-third of the basic wage. I believe in price control, but I also believe that restrictive trade practices should be further considered. Undoubtedly the trend of business today is away from the little businessman. This person was once considered most essential (I still think he is most essential), but he is unable to compete today with the large chain grocers and emporiums. Terrific sums are being spent on advertising such things as washing machines, and the emporiums are offering large discounts that the little man has no hope of offering. I support the second reading.

Mr. MILLHOUSE (Mitcham): After the events of about 10 days ago members will perhaps not be surprised that I should speak in this debate to voice my opposition to the general principles of price control. It has been suggested recently in this House that Parliament must take the responsibility for price control because this legislation is passed year after year, and that, of course, is correct. I, as a member of Parliament, must therefore be prepared to take my share of responsibility

for it. However, this debate gives me an opportunity to show, I hope in no uncertain terms, that I take that share of responsibility very unwillingly indeed. I do not intend to go through the reasons I have given on seven or eight occasions now in opposing a continuation of price control. The reasons I have given in the past still stand, and they have not been impeached at all.

Mr. Coumbe: Honourable members will know the reasons you have given before.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Yes. I point out that, in contrast, the reasons given by the Premier in his second reading explanation differed again on this occasion, as they have differed in the past. This time seven reasons are given why price control should be continued. One wonders whether, if any one or other of them dropped out, price control would still be introduced. In particular, I am thinking of the seventh reason the Premier gave on this occasion when he referred to the new legislation on unfair trading practices. I do not think for one moment that if this legislation were not included in the Prices Act we would not get this Bill. It is obvious—and I think it is conceded—that the Government intends that this legislation should be retained permanently, and I think it is a pretty poor compliment to the House (if I may say so, with respect, to the Premier) that the reasons he dishes up to us every year vary. If there are reasons that are valid in one year, I suggest they are just as valid in the next year; but here we find that the reasons are varied time and time again. I will not go through those reasons this afternoon. I point out to members that to test out some of them I asked a question on notice recently, and especially I am dealing now with the third and fourth reasons. They are all very vague, and the answers I got to my questions were just as vague; in fact, that to me shows that the reasons set out here just cannot be supported: they are vague generalizations that the Government is not prepared, apparently, to support with facts or figures.

What does sadden me is that the general tenor of all these reasons is that the traders and merchants and manufacturers in this State cannot be trusted to do the right thing and will do the wrong thing, the unfair thing, if they are given half a chance to do so. I do not agree with that outlook. I believe that the people who are under price control and the general run of industrialists and traders in this State are just as honourable as any other

section of the community or of their colleagues in other States where there is no price control. I have said "other sections of the community" advisedly, because in this legislation as it is at present being operated we are penalizing some sections of the community, as only some industries and some lines are under price control. That, Sir, is, I believe, completely unfair and completely unjust. It is a matter which, apparently, most members on both sides of the House prefer to ignore. But I do ask the question in all seriousness and in all sincerity, and I should be grateful for an answer from any other honourable member: why are some items and some services to be controlled and not others? Why should some trades be controlled and not all trades? To me it is one of the most unfair parts of the whole thing that some people should be subject to control and not others. If we are going to have price control (which I do not, of course, think we should) and if it is to be fair, there should be control on all goods and services.

In the last few weeks and again today (we see from the *News* this afternoon) some items and some services have been put back under control. I point out to honourable members—as is obvious, and is known to honourable members—that many other lines and many other services have risen in price in the last few weeks and few months, but there is no suggestion that they should be brought under control. I mention only one instance, and I mention it now because on another occasion a few weeks ago the member for Norwood (Mr. Dunstan) mentioned this: both the morning and the evening newspapers raised their prices from 4d. to 5d. on the same day. That was an increase of 25 per cent.

Mr. Lawn: And they are 3d. interstate.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Please don't get me wrong: I am not suggesting that they should be under control, but what I am saying is that, so far as I am aware, no action at all was taken to investigate whether those rises in prices were fair or unfair.

Mr. Jennings: You were told very clearly in the House that an investigation was made. It's in *Hansard*.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Well, if that is in *Hansard* I take it back, but I certainly do not remember it in *Hansard*. There we have, as I say, a rise of 25 per cent, and that is only an example. I also point out that on the Notice Paper, under the heading "Parliamentary Papers", there are a number of regulations that increase various fees from time to time.

It is perfectly proper that this should be done, but it is the sort of thing that is happening all the time. Fees, costs and charges are rising in the community and I do not believe it right that we should single out some industries, trades and services and not others for control. Having said that, I say again that I am amazed that members on both sides of the House can sit by complacently session after session and not make any protest about this. All members, including myself, would like to see prices lower than they are now. Everybody would like that (nobody likes rising prices) and it is very popular, of course, to try to reduce prices; but I do not think we should allow our quest for popularity to out-run our sense of what is fair and right.

The recent price rises have been blamed by many people on the recent basic wage rise. I do not know how many members have studied the judgments given by the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commissioners in this matter, but I remind members that there was a complete split of opinion between the four members of the bench. Two of them thought that the community had a capacity to stand an increase of 20s. in the basic wage and the other two members of the commission believed that the community could stand a rise of only 10s. If honourable members would like to examine the judgments, as I have done, they will find in two of the judgments (I have not read the judgment of Mr. Justice Nimmo) warnings of rises in prices as a result of too large an increase in the basic wage. I refer particularly to the judgment of Mr. Justice Gallagher, one of the judges, who believed that the increase should be only 10s. On page 18 of the judgment he refers to a number of documents that were tabled and states:

The economists leave these impressions:—

- (a) The Australian economy is developing and productivity will increase.
- (b) There is a lag in award wages as compared with average weekly earnings.
- (c) The position of the lower wage groups cannot be alleviated more than temporarily by a wage rise which accrues indiscriminately to all wage earners.

That, perhaps, is something we might note. The judgment continues:

- (d) Smaller adjustments made with greater frequency are preferable to substantial adjustments made after lengthy intervals.
- (e) A low rate of increase of wages is unlikely to have much impact on the rate of technical progress.
- (f) A rate of increase which is too high could cause economic dislocation.

On page 23, he continues:

Some increase is warranted but the important thing for the wage earner is that the amount be of real value. A substantial increase could seriously upset price stability. A moderate increase should be much less likely to do so. A middle-course approach seems to be in the best interest of the employees.

Of course, then he went on to say why, in his opinion, the increase should be only 10s.

Mr. Fred Walsh: The Chamber of Manufacturers claimed that there should not be any increase.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I do not think that is quite right from my reading of the judgment, but it is not a relevant consideration at the moment. Mr. Justice Gallagher concluded his judgment as follows:

I repeat my conclusion stated earlier in these reasons that some increase of the basic wage is warranted but the important thing for the wage earner is that the amount should prove to be of real value. A substantial increase could seriously upset price stability.

I believe that that is a grave risk we are running in Australia at present—that a basic wage increase of 20s. (given because the Chief Judge happened to be in favour of a 20s. increase even though he had only one colleague to agree with him and two against) was too great for the economy to stand at present and that that is why there is such an enormous pressure in the community now for a general increase of prices. In South Australia, following the increase, and apparently because of it, we have had an attempt to dampen down prices and some goods and services have been controlled. Up to the present soft drinks and meat pies and pasties have been controlled and now other articles have been controlled. As I am against price control, I do not agree with those items being controlled.

Mr. Coumbe: Don't you like your children to get their drinks a penny cheaper?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Yes, because I am human, but I want to make sure a fair thing is done to the manufacturer. It does not matter whether he is in business to supply children or adults, or what his business is. That does not affect the principles on which all businessmen act and on which I suggest the member for Torrens (Mr. Coumbe), in his line of business acts. I point to the extraordinary way in which the prices orders have been set out. I do not know how many members have bothered to look at the *Government Gazette* of September 17, which sets out the orders on soft drinks and on meat pies and pasties. Of course, the reconrol of soft drinks is effective only in

certain areas around the city of Adelaide and the suburbs, but it takes over half a page of the *Gazette* to describe that area and then a map is included to show it. However, in a frenzy of caution the order says the map is only a guide that is not to be taken in any way as authoritative. It is even more extraordinary when we look at the order regarding meat pies and pasties. In this instance I cannot help mentioning the Prices Commissioner because this is done in his name and by him. In paragraph (2) of the order, under the heading "Maximum Prices", he states:

I fix and declare the maximum prices at which meat pies and pasties may be sold by wholesale within the State of South Australia to be the prices specified in the first schedule to this order.

The first schedule shows that the maximum wholesale price of meat pies is 8s. a dozen. The price of pasties is the same, but it does not say what the size, content or weight of the pie or pasty should be.

Mr. Fred Walsh: You probably won't find any meat in some of them.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: It seems to me that the simple way for manufacturers to get around this order is to reduce the size of a pie or pasty.

Mr. Corcoran: They would not do that if they had the principles you say they have.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I do not know about that. I do not think this is a matter of principle at all: it is simply a meaningless order. I cannot see the answer for this. Other members seem to be amused by it but I should be glad if they would tell me.

Mr. Loveday: Do you think that we should control the size of pies?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: If we are going to lay down a maximum price for a pie or pasty, it can only be effectively done in relation to its size or weight.

Mr. Loveday: Under the law of supply and demand the customer should decide.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: The contents are controlled by regulation but the size is nowhere controlled. It doesn't matter whether they are round or square. That is obviously a way around the order and makes the rest of the order meaningless. However, it is all qualified by clause 4, which states:

Notwithstanding the foregoing provisions of this order I fix and declare the maximum prices at which meat pies and pasties specified in an order in writing in pursuance of this paragraph may be sold by any person to whom such order is given to be such prices as are fixed by the South Australian Prices Commissioner by order to that person.

The only way it can be done is by an individual order by the Prices Commissioner to the particular manufacturer and there is provision for that. That in itself is an objectionable way to do it. It only points up (and I hope this will not cause offence) to the absurdity of the rest of the order. Previously I have persistently asked another question, and other members have just as persistently refused to answer it. If price control has the many advantages that members churn out in this House year after year when supporting it, why is it not operating in any other State? Session after session the Premier makes a second reading explanation from which one would imagine the Prices Department was the protector of the State's economy.

Mr. Clark: Surely you know we are better than other States.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: In this respect we are not better. Other States remain entirely unimpressed by what we do in South Australia.

Mr. McKee: This is a low-wage State.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: If the advantages are so obvious why isn't price control re-introduced in, say New South Wales, which has a Socialist Government, or in Tasmania, which has a Labor Government? That question has never been answered nor has any attempt been made by any other member of this House to answer it.

Mr. McKee: Workers in this State receive the lowest wages of those in any State.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I think the member for Port Pirie is attempting to draw a red herring across the trail when he says that. The answer is obvious. Price control is not effective in keeping down the general level of prices in the community, and prices in South Australia rise at about the same rate as those everywhere else. I wish to refer to a debate that took place on the initiation of the Leader of the Opposition in the House of Representatives last week. It makes interesting reading. Mr. Calwell, the Leader of the Opposition in that place, spoke on a matter of urgency, a matter of public importance. This is what he said, amongst other things:

The States cannot effectively control prices. There was no qualification that gallant little South Australia was trying to control its prices, and no pat on the back for this State. He did not mention South Australia.

Mr. Loveday: Half a loaf is better than no bread.

Mr. Corcoran: The Premier has pointed out that, with price control in this State alone, it cannot be effective.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: The Commonwealth Leader of the Party to which the member for Millicent belongs considers this State so unimportant that he did not mention it.

Mr. Clark: Are you agreeing with what he said?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: No.

Mr. Clark: You are using something with which you disagree to further your argument.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I happen to agree with the sentence, but I do not agree with the general tenor of what he said. He made this unqualified statement.

Mr. Frank Walsh: And how true!

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Then the sooner we stop trying the better. Members opposite belong to the Australian Labor Party, a Party monolithic in its structure, and, as I understand it, the policy of one is the policy of all. It is an extraordinary thing that the Commonwealth Leader of the Party can say that, yet in South Australia the Opposition is merely the echo of the Government on this matter. The member for Adelaide is Little Sir Echo to the Premier in this regard.

Mr. Lawn: Wait until Little Sir Echo starts on you.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: That is the position with regard to Mr. Calwell. Mr. McMahon (Minister for Labor and National Service) replied.

The Hon. P. H. Quirke: That is not worth reading.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Yes it is. He said:

I come back to the main argument of the Leader of the Opposition. I do not believe in tying up the economy with all forms of control. With great respect to the Minister, I agree with that argument. Even in South Australia I am not alone in this matter. The honourable member for Sturt (Mr. K. C. Wilson) took part in this debate and what he said about price control is apposite. I quote a short extract from his speech and I could not have put it better myself. I am sure the member for Adelaide will be interested in this. Mr. Wilson said:

The only suggestion made by Labor members as to how price stability may be achieved is the establishment of price control, although they know perfectly well that the Commonwealth has no constitutional power to establish price control. Even if it did have such power, honourable members know that price control has failed everywhere it has been tried. Price control does not reduce prices, it tends to increase them because the maximum price becomes the minimum. People who have been selling below the price fixed by the price-fixing authority naturally bring their prices up. All competition ceases and we then have a

fixed price. The Labor Government of New South Wales, realizing that price control was hopeless and did not effectively control prices, abandoned the system a number of years ago.

Those are my sentiments too.

Mr. Clark: You have one mate.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I have many more. I have another who is not a member of Parliament but is perhaps a more detached observer.

Mr. Clark: It is not Mr. Murphy?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: No, we do not talk about him. This person is a more detached observer than anyone else I have quoted. I quote the Editor of the *Australian Financial Review*, and this is what he said as late as last Monday. The editorial deals with Labor's proposals for price control. Let me read a couple of paragraphs to show that I have some friends or, to be more accurate, that there are some, at least, who agree with me. The editorial states:

Even if Mr. Calwell's proposed price control were to be accompanied by a parallel system of effective regulation of maximum employee earning levels, the threat to a dynamic rate of increase in private investment would remain. And, in any event, blanket price control as a means of suppressing inflation is a negative proposition in peace time in a free-market economy which must depend on the pricing mechanism to signal its wants and allocate its resources according to its preferences. Uniform price control's distortion of demand and supply forces must be expected to lead to chaotic situations of over-supply in some sectors and black market demand in others. Surely Australia is not yet so bankrupt of policies to contain inflation on a basis equitable to both capital and labour that it must contemplate such a defeatist departure from the market system.

I do not suppose that all honourable members will agree with me simply because I quote that, but it is of some comfort to me in this House to know there are others outside, anyway, who agree with the arguments I am putting forward.

Mr. Clark: You realize you could quote just as many authorities who disagree?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: No; I have not found any—but again I am subject to correction, and honourable members are quick to correct me in this matter when I err. I have not found any reputable economist who supports the system of price control we have here. If the member for Gawler can point out one to me, I shall be interested to read what he says.

Mr. Clark: We appreciate the honourable member's earnestness in this matter!

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I am always earnest. The Australian Labor Party has made much of rising prices. We had an amendment to the Address in Reply in that regard in this House some time ago. The Labor Party even went to the length of calling a public meeting of protest on this. I was not invited to that meeting.

Mr. Lawn: You are wrong there. The Party didn't call it.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: To get the record right, who called it?

Mr. Lawn: Some trade union.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition was there and many of the moguls of the Labor Party, and candidates, economists and others attended and spoke. I was not invited to attend but an acquaintance of mine who did attend told me that the meeting was a flop; there were only about 100 in the Australia Hall, which seats about 700 or 800. That shows the over-optimism of the promoters: they obviously thought there was more to it than there really was. I am told on good authority that the only enthusiasm shown at that meeting was when a proposal was made from the floor of the meeting that Labor Party politicians should take a lead in this matter and refuse any increases in their salaries. That evoked the only real enthusiasm at the meeting. As soon as the suggestion was made, the motion was put and the meeting was closed. That may or may not be so.

Mr. Fred Walsh: You must have got your information from a Young Liberal.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: No. It was from a man of some maturity. He confirmed it. I know that honourable members opposite will hasten to correct me if I am wrong in any of my facts.

Mr. Fred Walsh: I did not attend the meeting.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: The honourable member would have been the 101st person present.

Mr. Fred Walsh: I am taking the figures in the press, not the figures that the honourable member cites.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: That is my information on the matter.

Mr. Fred Walsh: You are wrong, as you are with much of your information.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Well, that may be so. Price control is an unfair waste of money. It is effective only in harassing some traders and tradesmen in the community. There is one other great objection to it that I have—and I hope that, even if honourable members

do not agree with what I have said so far on this, they will agree with me in what I am about to say now. This is a matter that the Premier raised in the House only about a week ago. I refer to the secrecy with which all this is done. If honourable members care to look at and study the original Prices Act of 1948, they will see that some sections in that Act give enormous power and authority to the Prices Commissioner and his officers.

Mr. Loveday: Thank goodness!

Mr. MILLHOUSE: That comes strangely from the member for Whyalla in view of what I have heard him say about the rights of the individual in such matters.

Mr. Loveday: My constituents appreciate what he has done for them.

Mr. Coreoran: Have you ever taken advantage of the facilities offered by the Prices Commissioner?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Yes, I have.

Mr. Lawn: Have you interviewed the Prices Commissioner, too?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Yes. On one occasion I saw the Prices Commissioner. That is so—but do not let me be diverted from my argument. Under this Act we are giving one officer tremendous power of inquisition and search, and there is no redress for what he does. If honourable members like to look at section 8 (a section that on one occasion I attempted to have struck out of the Act during such a debate as this, but without success) and sections 9, 10 and so on, they will see that the Prices Commissioner has enormous and (one can almost say) irresponsible powers. I am not blaming any individual when I say that the Prices Commissioner has them. That is the way Parliament is, apparently, content to let this legislation stand. But that is altogether wrong. In fact, it means that the Prices Commissioner or the Prices Minister (if we like to refer to Ministerial control) is above Parliament; he is not answerable to Parliament, because we are never permitted to know the facts. Whenever one asks a question that concerns matters of detail, one is met with the same answer that, because of the oath of secrecy, the information cannot be disclosed.

I have for three years now asked a question on notice each year about the prices orders in force, and each year I have had an answer in identical terms: "Even if it were permissible to give a complete answer, it would involve the difficult task of extracting the information from the files", and so on. For instance, we are told, "We just cannot do it". In other

words, there is a refusal to furnish information and, under the Act, that is a proper refusal.

Mr. Loveday: You wouldn't be trying to bog the department down with questions, would you?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I don't think so.

Mr. Lawn: How many questions on notice have you asked this year?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I believe that all my questions on notice have been proper and that I was entitled to an answer.

Mr. Clark: You got an answer.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: If the honourable member likes to study the answers, he will see the position. In fact, on many occasions I have not got the information I sought.

Mr. Clark: You got the answer you deserved.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Maybe, but that is different; it is a matter of opinion. I do not believe I have. I remind the member for Whyalla, who seems to be enjoying himself, of the saying "And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind".

Mr. Jennings: Empty vessels make the loudest sound.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I have started something that may get out of hand, so we will not pursue that. But it is an important matter of principle that there is an officer of the Government, pursuant to legislation passed by this Parliament, who is not answerable to this Parliament because he cannot and will not disclose the information upon which he acts. In fact, I know that industry after industry under price control submits its figures to him; he makes a determination and then when the industry asks, "How did you arrive at that figure?", he will not say. He says that his figures are confidential; in other words, there is no way in which they can discuss with him the basis upon which he has arrived at his findings. It is strange that the Party opposite, which we have heard time and time again in this House ask for a public accounts committee to scrutinize public expenditure, should sit by complacently and allow this to happen, not only without protest but willingly and gladly, apparently. I certainly do not. What it means (and this is a particularly unpleasant experience I have had several times over the years) is that one story is given by people in industry and another by the Minister in charge of the Prices Department. I am completely unwilling to disbelieve anything that the Premier tells me about these matters, and I am also completely unwilling to believe that the people who speak to me about these things are

rogues who are not telling the truth. I find it impossible to reconcile the two accounts I get, and I never have the opportunity, of course, to do so. I believe that is a completely unsatisfactory state of affairs. I remind members that in our courts of law it is competent for anybody to fight not only for his liberty but for his property and his rights. No matter if it concerns only 10 bob, anyone can go to law and get a hearing in open court, where all the facts on both sides are put.

Mr. Fred Walsh: There should be price control there!

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I think members are trying to divert me from my point, which has occurred to me because the suggestion has been made that the Prices Commissioner is a judicial officer. With the greatest respect, I cannot agree with that. Anyone in our community can go to a court and fight for either 10s. or £10,000, but he will get a fair go and know what is going on.

Mr. Loveday: Provided that he has the money to do it.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: The honourable member knows there is a system to assist those who cannot afford it.

Mr. Loveday: Tell us another story!

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I shall on another occasion. My point is that the Prices Commissioner and the Minister in charge of his department determine the fortunes of businesses and undertakings in this State to the tune of many thousands of pounds. We have heard the claim made before that price control in some ways saves this State many thousands of pounds, yet this is the way it is done—not openly, but privately. It is not possible for those who are affected to discuss the matter and know the basis upon which the determinations have been made.

Mr. Loveday: Don't the people who put up the prices do so privately?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I think what I have said happens is entirely wrong and unfair. I was perturbed and alarmed at the answer given on Tuesday to a question on price control that I believed to be perfectly proper. I asked how many officers there were in the department and how many had qualifications in accountancy—which seemed to me to be absolutely essential for people considering and examining businesses, business problems, balance sheets, and so on. I remind members that the Public Service List, which is published and on honourable members' files, contains much more information than I sought, but because

officers in the Prices Department are not members of the Public Service they are not listed in the Public Service List. The reply I got was that 40 officers were employed (36 males and four females), and that only eight had qualifications in accountancy. Only one of the eight had cost accounting and secretarial qualifications, and two of the eight had secretarial qualifications. It seems to me obvious that in such a department there should be highly qualified personnel. Cost accounting should surely be the basis of all fixations made by it.

Mr. McKee: Those were not the only qualifications mentioned.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: No, and I shall come to that in a moment. It seems to me fundamental that in a department such as this there should be people with qualifications in accounting and many people qualified as cost accountants. How else can people be qualified to delve into other peoples' businesses and make decisions about them? I do not know; there may be an answer to it. It seems to me to be a most perturbing thing that this is so. If we are going to have price control operated by the Prices Department in this State, the department should be staffed by people qualified to do the job they are assigned to do. I refer members to the Auditor-General's Department and to how many officers in that department have qualifications in accountancy. Nearly every officer in that department has, yet in the Prices Department there is only one cost accountant among 40 officers.

Mr. McKee: You should not complain about price control, because you have just said that it does not control prices.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: The honourable member is getting jesuitical, and I shall not follow him into that tortuous line of argument. I am sure the Government realizes this, because, as a supplement to the answer, the Premier said:

The Prices Commissioner informs me that eight officers are satisfactorily qualified to work in the fields of plumbing, interior decorating, engineering trades, timber products, footwear, grocery, clothing, and primary produce.

The fact that that information was added gratuitously at the end of the reply and it was not information I sought showed, I think, that the Government was conscious of the lack of academic qualifications among the staff in the Prices Department.

Mr. Jennings: I think you asked for qualifications, didn't you? These things may be classed as qualifications, you know!

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I asked how many officers there were, how many had qualifications in accountancy, how many had other qualifications, and what those qualifications were.

Mr. Jennings: You got that information.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: I used the word "qualifications" because that is the word used at the beginning of the Public Service List to define people with academic qualifications. I suppose I could have said "academic qualifications", but I used the terminology in the Public Service List. Quite seriously I say that I am not criticizing or blaming any of those officers individually for their lack of qualifications, but I think it is a very perturbing thing that in the Prices Department there is only one cost accountant. For the reasons I have given, I do not intend to support the second reading; in fact, I intend to oppose it as vigorously as I can.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide): I support the Bill. First, let me deal with the last statement of the member for Mitcham (Mr. Millhouse), who criticized the qualifications of the officers of the Prices Department. I do not know, and he has not told the House, what qualifications he thinks they should have, although he may think they should all be cost accountants. The honourable member is a barrister who appears in the court and examines and cross-examines witnesses. Surely he has had experts (doctors or experts in particular fields) in the witness box. The effect of what he has said is that he is admitting that he is not competent to examine or cross-examine those witnesses, as he has said that unless an officer is a cost accountant he is not an expert on prices. Despite this, the honourable member as a barrister takes money to call evidence from expert witnesses and to cross-examine them. If the honourable member is competent to examine or cross-examine an expert in the field of medicine or in some other profession, then surely officers in the Prices Department can work efficiently and in the best interests of the community.

Previously we have had trouble with chemists in this State, for during a period when they were decontrolled they increased their prices and we read in the press that they wanted to make 53 per cent profit. I raised the matter in the House and the Premier subsequently asked the Prices Department to conduct an inquiry, with the result that chemists were recontrolled. On that occasion the member for Mitcham emerged as the champion of the chemists. A circular was distributed by chemists in an effort to justify their actions, but

during the Prices Department's inquiry I interviewed a qualified chemist in this building and he gave me much information about the activities of his colleagues. I passed that information on to officers of the Prices Department. They did not tell me they were short of cost accountants, but said, "This is the information we want; only chemists have this information, but we do not know how to go about getting it from them. When we do go to them to seek information they will not give it to us. We do not even know what questions to ask."

I point out that it would have been advantageous to the Prices Department if it had had a chemist on its staff at the time. An officer of the department handed me a list of questions about the information required of chemists, and I was asked to interview this chemist and to try to get the information from him. He told me that he would answer any questions that I put to him but that he would not approach the Prices Department officially. However, the answers he gave me were passed on to the Prices Department and the way was open for its officers to go into chemists' shops and to obtain the information required, with the result that chemists once again came under the control of the Prices Department. It is not all cost accountants that the Prices Department should have in its employ, but a mixture of officers from qualified tradesmen to professional men. I think that satisfactorily answers the latter remarks of the member for Mitcham. When he rose this afternoon he referred to the controversy between himself and the Prices Commissioner 10 days ago. The following is an extract from page 1297 of 1961 *Hansard*, in which the member for Mitcham said:

I have had some recent experience of price control, and some individual cases which I have followed up to the best of my ability have been instances of anomalies and injustices under this legislation. One case culminated in

my visiting the Prices Commissioner at his office. Mr. Murphy was kind enough to give me one hour and 20 minutes of his valuable time to discuss these detailed questions of price control with me. Even that did not change my outlook on this matter, although I much appreciated his giving up his time to discuss it with me. Within a few minutes of my arrival there, he had established effectively what could only be termed a pupil-teacher relationship between us.

Mr. Riches: Who was the pupil?

Mr. MILLHOUSE: Definitely I. As I was leaving, he told me to telephone him if I was ever going off at a tangent again.

Mr. Quirke: To put you back on the track?

Mr. Clark: That would have been the most difficult one hour and 20 minutes that Mr. Murphy ever put in.

Mr. LAWN: The honourable member 10 days ago criticized the Prices Commissioner and once again went off at a tangent. The Prices Commissioner said, "Don't go off at a tangent again. Give us a call and let's have a discussion and see what we can iron out." But his having listened to the member for Mitcham for 80 minutes would surely indicate that he was kindly disposed towards the honourable member and was not lecturing him. The honourable member apparently did not see fit to telephone the Prices Commissioner 10 days ago, despite what the Commissioner had suggested in 1961. I have never met the Prices Commissioner personally, although I have met certain of his officers, but I know that honourable members on both sides of the House who have met him have been impressed by his capabilities and helpful manner. Indeed, the member for Mitcham bears this out by what he said here in 1961. I ask leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.48 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, October 6, at 2 p.m.