

Legislative Assembly,*Tuesday, 25th September, 1298.*

	PAGE
Questions: Factories and Shops Act	895
Waterside Workers' strike	895
Bills: Industries Assistance Act Continuance, 2A. ...	895
Railways Discontinuance, 2A., Com. report ...	895
Feeding Stuffs, Com.	898
Education, 1A.	901
Navigation Act Amendment, 1A.	901
Profiteering, Prevention, 2A.	901

The SPEAKER took the Chair at 4.30 p.m., and read prayers.

QUESTION—FACTORIES AND SHOPS ACT.

Mr. BARNARD asked the Minister for Works: Is it his intention this session to fulfil the promise made in answer to the request of shopkeepers and many deputations of both employers' and employees' representatives with regard to providing for the uniform closing of shops at 6 p.m., by an amendment of the Factories and Shops Act?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS replied: I have no knowledge of any such promise having been made.

QUESTION—WATERSIDE WORKERS' STRIKE.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: asked the Premier: Is it his intention to lay upon the Table of the House all correspondence between the Federal Government and his Government in regard to the waterside workers' strike?

The PREMIER replied: I have no objection.

BILL—INDUSTRIES ASSISTANCE ACT CONTINUANCE.

Read a third time and transmitted to the Council.

BILL—RAILWAYS DISCONTINUANCE.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th September.

HON. G. TAYLOR (Mt. Margaret) [4.36]: This is a very small and simple measure. It passed through this Chamber last session, but met its fate in another

place. The Bill before us is not exactly on all fours with that of last session, for it differs in two particulars. There is not included in this measure the Bunbury racecourse railway. Then there is another feature of difference, which I hope the Minister will be able to explain. Under our Standing Orders I am not permitted to read a clause of the Bill, but I may say that one of the clauses provides that when the Bill is passed these lines will no longer be a charge on the capital account of the Railways. That is what the clause really means. The Bill of last year in its corresponding section provided that the doomed lines should cease to be Government railways and that the material might be used in the construction of any other authorised lines. As I say, the Bill before us merely sets forth that the railways mentioned in the schedule will no longer be charged up to capital account. I should like to know why the Bunbury racecourse line has been omitted this time.

The Premier: Due to the bright prospect of revival around Bunbury.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: On that interjection, the Premier must be going to bring down a racing Bill, and give Bunbury a few more meetings each year.

The Premier: It is in the industry affected by the railway that the revival is likely.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Well, that is the racing industry.

The Premier: I was thinking of the Bunbury show.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: There is only one agricultural show at Bunbury during the year. Does the Premier propose to provide two or more shows per annum at Bunbury? I really should like to know why the Bunbury racecourse line is not included in the Bill. I have a very good idea as to the reason.

The Premier: It is out of deference to the attitude of members of this House last session and to a vote taken in another place.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: No, rather is it out of deference to a strong feeling expressed somewhere else. Had that line not been included in last year's Bill, that Bill might have had a better fate. It is a pity these goldfields lines should have to be removed. Still, I understand they have not been used for 12 months, have indeed been lying idle all that time. So another place, by its action last session, succeeded in locking up £30,000

or £40,000 worth of railway lines that might well be used as sidings in agricultural areas. It is difficult to say how long it will be before there is a revival in the goldfields areas mentioned in the schedule. It is regrettable that you, Sir, are not on the floor of the House to give us some idea as to the prospects in a portion of your electorate materially affected by the Bill. I myself have some knowledge of that district. Although the gold yield has fallen and practically all the prospectors have left, yet it only requires somebody to find a little gold, and there would be a great revival there. For many years there was practically nobody doing anything at Lake Way; yet see how that place has improved during the last four or five years. Unless something unforeseen should happen, that goldfield must go on improving. There is no reason why other places, that have been just as much depressed as Lake Way or Wiluna, should not revive. I hope the Minister will give us some tangible reason why the Bunbury racecourse line has been omitted from the Bill. I do not wish to give my assumed reason why it is, but when in Committee I will move to add the Bunbury racecourse line to those other lines which it is desired to close up and remove.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You will not get my support on that.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Let me make myself clear. I do not intend to include the Bunbury line merely because Bunbury is not a mining centre, but because it was realised by the authorities last year that the Bunbury line should be closed. It was generally understood that it was the inclusion of that line that wrecked the Bill, and probably it has been felt that by omitting the Bunbury line this year, the chances of getting the Bill through another place would be improved. I am not taking up that attitude. The goldfields deserve as much consideration from Parliament as does any other part of the State. No part of the State should have any preference whatever in that respect; but unfortunately one cannot say that is so and feel he is speaking the truth, for we know there are favoured places and, judging from the voices on this side, it seems to me Bunbury comes into that category. However, less than two miles of railway at Bunbury will not make much difference. I believe the line has never been used, and that a large amount of money will be required to put it into order before

the Working Railways attempt to carry passengers or traffic upon it.

Mr. E. B. Johnston: If the line was necessary a score of years ago, it ought to be required to-day.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Apparently, time does not prove that. The Minister for Railways said last year there had been no traffic upon it to speak of for years. He gave figures to justify the Bill of last year. We know pretty well why this railway has been omitted from the present Bill. In the one mile and 36 chains comprising the Bunbury section there must be between £30,000 and £40,000 worth of rails, which have been rusting and depreciating for 12 months. The same thing has been going on at Lakeside and Kanowna. These rails could well be used elsewhere, when the State would no longer be paying interest and sinking fund on the amount represented by the value of those rails. It is regrettable that we have to pass these Bills. It is more regrettable in this case because we have not the advantage of the knowledge of the member for Bunbury, speaking on the floor of the House on this Bill. I shall not oppose the Bill, but I intend to move the amendment I have referred to.

Question put and passed.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Premier (for the Minister for Railways) in charge of the Bill.

Clause 1—agreed to.

Clause 2—Power to discontinue certain railways:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: In last year's Bill it was stated that "the railways mentioned in the schedule of this Act shall, at the commencement of this Act, cease to be Government railways, and the material thereof may be used in the construction of any other authorised railway." Will this Bill give the Government power to utilise the rails and fastenings and other equipment comprised in these lines, as would have been the case under the Bill of last year?

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: You are a wrecker.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I am not. My object is to have this material used for other purposes.

The PREMIER: There is no doubt that the rails and material will be available for other purposes. I can only account for the discrepancy between this Bill and the previous one by the desire of the Parliamentary Draftsman to vary the language by a word or two. There is, however, this difference, that the cost of these railways will not be a charge against the capital account of the Railway Department. Last year that would have been otherwise if the Bill had been carried. It is not fair that we should take up railways and deprive the department of any earnings from those lines, and still have the cost of the lines charged against its capital account.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The rails are pretty well equal to the cost of the line.

The PREMIER: The rails will certainly be used elsewhere. We propose now to relieve the Railway Department of the cost as a charge against its capital account.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: That is only fair. It would then be a loss against the public and not against the users of the lines.

The PREMIER: Otherwise the railway results would be affected. If no charge is made against the capital account of the railways, the loss will fall upon the whole community, and not the department or the users of the railway.

Mr. LATHAM: If the clause is left as it is, the rails and fastenings will go to the Railway Department. I want to see that they are handed over to the Public Works Department for new railways.

The Premier: That is what will be done.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: The debt will be a common debt, and the rails will also be common property.

Mr. LATHAM: It is very difficult to induce one department to hand to another any stores it may have.

The Premier: These stores will go to the Public Works Department.

Clause put and passed.

Schedule:

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I move an amendment—

That in line 4, after the words "Lakeside railway," the following be inserted "Bunbury racecourse line (one mile 36 chains, constructed under the Act No. 16 of 1897)."

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am surprised that a private member should try to take an important matter like this out of the hands of the Government.

The Premier: I think the amendment is out of order. We would be making a charge upon revenue if we pulled up this line.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Government made a mistake when they included this railway in the Bill of last year. There was an outcry in the South-West. The Government found they had made a mistake, and have admitted it by bringing the Bill down this year without referring to the Bunbury racecourse line.

The Premier: That is not quite the reason why it was omitted.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I remember when the late Lord Forrest brought down a Bill for the construction of this line. I have seen trains running out to the Bunbury racecourse, and now there is a showground in the same locality.

The Premier: We did not know that. We have now decided to leave that line as a memorial to the late Lord Forrest.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: The Government should lift from the capital of the South-West the stigma of losing a very necessary railway.

The Premier: You ought to be careful about making distinctions between towns in the South-West at this stage.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: I am surprised at the little faith shown by the Government in the future of the goldfields. They will make a great mistake if they pull up the line between Kalgoorlie and Kanowna.

The Premier: Why should you worry? There are not many votes there.

Mr. E. B. JOHNSTON: A goldfields member now wants to carry this policy of wreckage into the South-West. I object to his attitude, and hope the amendment will not be accepted by the Government.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: His idea is to defeat the Bill.

Mr. LATHAM: I understand this railway has not been used since the Bill of last year was brought down. I also believe that a lot of money will be required to put it in order. It is a pity that these rails and sleepers should be lying idle when we want every mile of line we can get for the development of the agricultural areas.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I am amazed at the parting speech of the member for Williams-Narrogin.

The Premier: The hon. member's swan song here!

Hon. G. TAYLOR: As regards the goldfields line which is to be pulled up, the Government have assuredly given the mat-

ter careful consideration. If the pulling up of the Bunbury racecourse line was justifiable last year, it is justifiable this year. The omission of the Bunbury racecourse line conciliates what would otherwise be three adverse votes in another place. That line cannot be used without heavy expenditure for repairs.

Amendment put and negatived.

Schedule put and passed.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported without amendment, and the report adopted.

BILL—FEEDING STUFFS.

In Committee.

Mr. Lutey in the Chair; the Minister for Agriculture in charge of the Bill.

Clauses 1, 2, 3—agreed to.

Clause 4—Bran, pollard, and other stock foods:

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Under Subclause 2—

The Governor may by regulations (a) require impurities to be removed from bran, pollard and other food for stock by cleaning, scouring or other process . . .

How is bran to be scoured?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: There are impurities where wheat is shof. I am assured that the millers themselves do not object to this requirement. If flour is to be pure, the wheat must be scrubbed; and then the bran and pollard will necessarily be clean.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That reason does not fit, because it is impossible to reverse the process and restore the bran and pollard in the form of grain. We ought to remember that there is a buyer in the case. "Let the buyer beware" is an old maxim. People who demand value for their money are much more useful in the world than people who take anything that is given them. The Minister seeks, by this Bill and other measures, to persuade the buyer that Acts of Parliament will protect him, which they will not do. Flour and bran and pollard are made together and run into bags, and if there are impurities in bran and pollard, they must have been put in, and so the buyer will have his remedy at law. The Minister says the flour

millers do not object to this provision. If we are told first that the Bill is to protect the buyer against the miller, and then that the miller, having been consulted, does not object, what sort of legislation is it? It is not business legislation. If there are two parties to a transaction and one of them is unscrupulous, and if we are to set down in an Act of Parliament what each of those parties wants, how can any benefit result?

The Minister for Agriculture: The millers did not ask for this Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Probably some inferior bran has been sold, imported bran.

The Minister for Agriculture: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There may have been some impurities in the bags.

The Minister for Agriculture: No. The impurities were ground up with the bran.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I doubt that. If it was so, there could have been mighty little of the impurities; and in such an event the buyer would have a case against the person selling the bran. We are fiddling with legislation while men starve, fiddling with rotten stuff.

The CHAIRMAN: Order!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: How is pollard to be scoured? This kind of legislation is quite unnecessary if the buyer will beware, as every buyer should. I do not know that the flour millers will ever know that this measure is on the statute book, and if they do, it will not make the slightest difference. I venture to say that the Minister does not know many of our laws. Certainly I do not. It is wonderful how we get along without being locked up three times a day. We would be, if all laws enacted were administered. It is most unwise to pass legislation which will not be administered, because then people learn to disregard and disrespect the laws of the land, and nothing could be worse. This Bill will merely satisfy two or three people who have asked for it. If they will not protect themselves, the measure will not help them at all.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member is discussing the Bill instead of the clause.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The scouring of bran will not help buyers. It is bad enough having to go to the expense of paying for the printing of this wretched clause, and it is a rotten waste of money.

Mr. LATHAM: When I was in England, I visited some of the mills, and I found the millers had nothing to complain about regarding the bran and pollard made from Australian wheat. I was told there that the only complaint to be made was in respect of other wheat that had been lying there for some considerable time, and wheat that had been thrashed. We know that wheat has to be scoured, and it has to go through a drying process, but if it is intended to enforce the provisions of the clause in its entirety, dairymen will have to pay 2s. 6d. a bushel for their bran and pollard, instead of 1s. 9d. a bushel. Australian wheat did not require scouring at all in England. I think the intention of the Minister was to secure the removal of husks and so on that are sometimes found in bran. If that is so, it should be easy to provide for that by some other means.

The Minister for Agriculture: That is dealt with in the second schedule of the Bill.

Mr. LATHAM: As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, many of the laws that we pass become dead letters, because no one knows anything about them. In my opinion, such legislation is merely harassing. We could strike out the whole clause.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I was amazed by the Minister's reply to the Leader of the Opposition when he first spoke about the scouring of bran and pollard. The Minister said that it was intended to scour them.

The Minister for Agriculture: Yes, if necessary.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I presume the scouring would be done by a dry process.

Hon. Sir James Mitchell: Dry cleaning!

Hon. G. TAYLOR: Bread is sufficiently dear now, and if we are to put millers to additional inconvenience unnecessarily, the public will have to pay more. Australian wheat is supposed to be the best on the English market, and I am told that it is used for mixing with inferior wheats from other countries.

The Premier: Those wheats are of a different quality.

Mr. Pantou: Our wheat is drier.

The Minister for Agriculture: And harder.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: From the standpoint of wheat, there is no necessity for the Bill at all. If the wheat is clean, bran and pollard should be clean. If the bran

and pollard are not clean, something must be added apart from the wheat itself. Surely we can get over that difficulty without allowing it to go forth that, in our opinion, Western Australian wheat requires to be cleaned before it is converted into bran and pollard. It seems absurd to me and I hope the Minister will explain the clause more clearly.

Mr. LINDSAY: I do not know that much is wrong with the clause. It does not deal with bran and pollard only, but with foods used for stock. In these days sharps are not sold at all; that is the refuse from the cleaning of wheat. I believe the sharps are now mixed with the bran and pollard and sold in due course. The Bill will provide the Minister with power to see that those impurities are not included. It is not possible to scour bran and pollard, but the clause deals with other foodstuffs, some of which may require to be scoured. I do not know what they would be. I realise that the department require power to control the food that the producers purchase for their stock. Hon. members must realise that each year bags of wheat are damaged by rain, and frequently wheat can be seen growing through the bags.

Mr. Latham: That is not sent overseas as f.a.q.

Mr. LINDSAY: That is another argument, with which I shall not deal just now. A certain quantity of damaged wheat is sent to the mills, and has to be cleaned before being converted into flour. It may be that when some of those bags are shaken out, impurities get into the bran and pollard. It may also be that some of the dark, discoloured wheat must be scoured and therefore I do not see much objection to the use of the word "scoured."

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I do not know that all the criticism has been in earnest, and I do not know that the member for Mt. Margaret, if he has read the clause, really understands it. It is necessary that regulations shall be made setting out that impurities must be removed from bran and pollard and other stock food. The removal can be made by means of processes. The clause does not mean that bran and pollard shall be scoured. When we consider the large quantities of bran and pollard that are bought annually, it must be realised that the present standard had to be prescribed, but that method has not been satisfactory.

It is not fair to put the responsibility on the department to prescribe the standard for bran and pollard: it is sufficiently important to be provided for in legislation, hence the inclusion of the standard in the second schedule of the Bill. Therefore, instead of leaving it to chance, the standard has been set out. Millers do not object to the standard because they have no intention of resorting to objectionable practices.

Mr. Latham: Where does that bran and pollard come from?

Mr. Lindsay: I think it is imported sawdust.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I have been informed that the rubbish which formerly was blown out of the wheat and sold as cocky chaff at £4 a ton is now ground up finely, mixed with bran and pollard, and sold at £8 10s. per ton. I do not know whether that is correct. A majority of millers in this State do sell the standard product, but some do not.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The clause seeks to empower the Governor to do certain things by regulation. I object to too much power being given to legislate by regulation. Why not set out in the Bill what is required?

The Minister for Agriculture: It is in the Bill.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The power is given to go even further. I object to a Bill being drafted in a slipshod manner, with provision that what is not contained in it may be achieved by regulation. We cannot get away from the language of the clause. At times, it is necessary to frame regulations, but wholesale authority for them should not be given.

Mr. LATHAM: Surely the provision in the second schedule affords sufficient protection without stipulating what process shall be adopted. The Minister might well agree to strike out the clause.

The Minister for Agriculture: The clause deals with any stock food.

Mr. LINDSAY: I have prepared a lot of stock food and sold it, and it is quite possible it contained some impurities. Numbers of foods are bought for stock, and I think the clause applies to all foods.

Miss HOLMAN: Will the clause prevent stock foods being sold in superphosphate bags? I had a complaint that such bags were used without being shaken or turned, and that horses suffered in consequence.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: The only objection raised to the clause is

to the power for making regulations to ensure that pure stock food is sold. I move an amendment—

That after "stock" in paragraph (c), the words "and methods for determining the same" be added.

That will permit of the methods being prescribed by regulation.

Mr. Latham: That is adding insult to injury.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: I oppose the amendment. We have already provided in the schedule a standard for bran and pollard. Now the Minister wishes to go further by providing a power that has not previously been suggested. His amendment would have the dragnet effect of bringing in all and sundry stock foods, simply because of the clumsy manner in which the measure has been drafted and the loose language employed.

The Minister for Agriculture: You would save time if you read the Bill, because other foods than bran and pollard are mentioned.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: But not in the schedule, which deals with bran and pollard only. Now the Minister desires power by regulation to scoop in any other stock food. We are entitled to have a thorough explanation of these small irritating Bills. The clause should be struck out.

Amendment put and passed; the clause, as amended, agreed to.

Clauses 5 to 22—agreed to.

First Schedule—agreed to.

Second Schedule:

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

That in lines 3 and 12 the word "impurities" be struck out and "foreign ingredients" inserted in lieu.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

That in line 8 "No. O" be struck out and the words "silk-cloth, or" be inserted, and after the words "gauze sieve" the word "with" be inserted.

The reason for the amendment is to provide for a standard method of testing bran and pollard; it is necessary to use always the same kind of silk.

Hon. G. TAYLOR: The amendment moved by the Minister enables me to repeat what I said at an earlier stage, that the

Bill has been drafted in a slipshod manner. Apparently, very little care has been taken in the drafting of the Bill. Why were not all these things found out before the Bill was introduced?

Mr. LATHAM: I consider that silk cloth is altogether too fine. If the Minister knows anything at all about it, he will realise that when flour is being sifted it is known that what comes through will be flour. It would be far better not to alter the wording. It might be possible to get a coarser mesh silk cloth than that used.

Mr. THOMSON: The Minister should give some reason for the alteration. Members are entitled to more information because those concerned are quite satisfied with what has been done in the past.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: We are providing now that pollard shall pass through a silk cloth or grit gauze sieve 36 meshes to the inch, which is the standard adopted by the millers. The amendment is being inserted at the suggestion of the analysts. In the case of prescribing the standard, there must be a definite method.

Mr. Latham: You have an indefinite method now.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: This will be more satisfactory from the analyst's point of view. When it comes to a question of arriving at a standard, it is essential that there should be a uniform method. That is the reason for putting the schedule in the Bill instead of leaving it to the department to prescribe the standard.

Mr. Latham: Will you get the same result from both silk and gauze?

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: Provided it is 36 meshes to the inch. It must be silk cloth or gauze sieve.

Mr. Lindsay: In other words, you are providing two ways of getting it.

Mr. Thomson: We merely wish to know the reason for inserting "silk cloth."

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: It is the modern method of testing.

Amendment put and passed.

The MINISTER FOR AGRICULTURE: I move an amendment—

That after "a" in line 9 the words "silk cloth or grit" be inserted.

Amendment put and passed; the schedule, as amended, agreed to.

Title—agreed to.

Bill reported with amendments

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

1, Education.

2, Navigation Act Amendment.

Received from the Council.

BILL—PROFITEERING PREVENTION.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the 20th September.

HON. SIR JAMES MITCHELL (Northam) [6.5]: This is another of those Bills to which I object very strongly.

Mr. Pantou: It won't do any harm.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: While we are tinkering about with this Bill large numbers of people are going hungry for want of work. If the Bill were going to do any good, it would be quite another matter. But the Minister, in moving the second reading of the Bill, put up no case at all for it. He told us there had been a report by a Commission appointed by the Government and that the report, while admitting that all was well, suggested that in case something should go wrong in the future, it would be as well to have some authority for drastic action. There was nothing wrong then, and as we are not told there is anything wrong now, I do not know why we are considering the Bill. And it must be remembered that the measure, if agreed to, will remain on the statute-book and might have an influence altogether bad, while never doing anything beyond very little good. This sort of legislation ought to be avoided. With every credit for an attempt to help people, we have still to remember that it is unwise to pass legislation that is not to be acted upon. We know that enterprise is not particularly active in our midst to-day; in fact, trade is stagnant because so many people are out of work. Nobody for a moment wants to endorse the tactics of the profiteers. We do not want profiteering, and if there be trade combinations to the hurt of the people, we should deal with them. From time to time we have had price-fixing measures. I do not know that they did very much good. In any event, they were emergency measures to deal with an extraordinary situation. Who are the profiteers? Surely every person who is not prepared to give reasonable value for money and to do a fair thing by the public, is a profiteer. The man who supplies goods

is not the only man who can extract from the public more than he gives in return. The man who works and sells his labour and does not give value, profiteers as much as does anybody else.

Mr. Panton: But they have an axe with which to fix him—they sack him.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No, we do not sack the man selling goods, neither can we ask the man who, having a job, does not give a fair return for the money he gets. Anybody who takes money from the public for any purpose and does not give value for it, is taking something he is not entitled to get. There are many ways in which the public can be victimised. We say "Buy British goods." I think we are right in that. When we buy British goods, as a rule we buy value. But there are many other classes of goods sold that are not anything approaching value. One can get an article that looks up to standard. Only today I had in my hand some artificial silk made from wood pulp. It looks very good, and I believe it is very useful. But it is not the real thing, nor anything approaching the real thing. I understand it neither wears nor washes as well as the real thing. But it can be sold as the real thing to an unsuspecting public, and at the price of the real thing. In respect of many other articles, tweed, cloth, calico, one can get a thing that looks the same as the real thing and is not the correct weight. Then, although an extra inch may be taken off a lady's dress, the same price may be charged for it, while on the other hand, if an inch is added to the length of that dress, something extra is charged for it.

Mr. Griffiths: The shorter they get the dearer they seem to be.

The Minister for Health: You mean the ladies?

Mr. Griffiths: No, their dresses.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I thought for a moment the hon. member meant the shorter the ladies were, the dearer they were to him. Apparently what he meant was that the dress is short, but the bill is long. That is the better way of expressing it; the other way might be misunderstood. Frequently we get a good imitation of the real thing, and at the price of the real thing. Of course that is quite wrong, but no law will ever prevent it. Certainly this proposed law will not go far in that direction. Our

system of doing business is as old as the hills. Merchants and storekeepers know what our requirements will be, and we trust them to have what we want when we want it. The wonder is that we do get our wants supplied as conveniently as we do. For instance, we are now facing the harvest time, when bags will be required. If we get good rains, we shall have in some parts of the country twice as much wheat as there will be if we do not get good rains. If we get a bounteous harvest of 40 million bushels, the merchants will be expected to provide bags for it all, whereas if the harvest be not more than 30 million bushels, the merchants will be expected to hold over the surplus bags until next year. If we want a suit of clothes we go into a tailor's shop, and all we have to do is to select the tweed, whereupon the suit is made for us. If we were to nationalise all our industries, I dare swear we should not be as well served as we are. Very often we should then find ourselves short supplied. But if our merchants deliberately were to import short in order that they might have an excuse for charging over and above the normal price, it would be quite wrong. But it does seem to me that a man who takes full advantage of our protective tariff to the extent that he puts an unnecessary amount of profit on to the goods, does something that is entirely wrong.

The Minister for Mines: If the duty is 10 per cent., they make it 25 per cent.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: You mean the importers?

The Minister for Mines: Yes.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But I am thinking of the manufacturers.

The Minister for Mines: The manufacturer does it as well.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The manufacturer who has a protection equal to 50 per cent. on the imported article and who adds the 50 per cent. thereby securing an undue profit, does a thing that is wrong and immoral. But he takes advantage of the tariff, which is the law of the land, and no action of ours can alter that.

Sitting suspended from 6.15 to 7.30 p.m.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Minister for Justice in his speech referred to bread and meat.

The Premier: Only as illustrations.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. He said that generally there was nothing at the moment we need worry much about. I believe that the wheat was bought by the millers some months ago at a price something like 5s. 9d. a bushel. The wheat was bought from the pool at a time when the price was higher than it is to-day. In any circumstances millers have to store their wheat for the year's gristing. If they did not make provision for the year's supply when the harvest was being reaped between December and January they would not be able to get all their requirements. Under the pool system they can get their wheat as far on as April or May. I understand that flour in this State costs about £14 15s. a ton, whereas in Victoria it is about £12 5s. a ton. In connection with deliveries, there must always be a good many people employed, and, where the purchases are small, the cost of delivery is considerable. In the case of meat the price has been due largely to the bad season. I venture to say that none of those who have had lambs this year will be nearly as well paid for their work, no matter what the price may be, as they would be in an ordinary year. It is fairly safe to say that 50 per cent. of the lambs have been lost this season, and the farmers will have to wait another year before they get another drop. It is unfortunate that the season has been bad, and, if meat has been dearer, it is due to that fact. With few exceptions the growers of meat would not make any more than they would in an ordinary season. There is plenty of feed in the North, but the difficulty is to get shipping space for cattle from that part of the State. No doubt the Minister in charge of the State Shipping Service will tell us something about the sea transport. Shipping along the North coast is not a profitable venture. We know that ourselves, because we are running boats. If other boats are to be sent on special cattle trips, I suppose there will be a still greater loss. Very few cattle are sent down, with the result that those which come down bring fairly big prices. The grower, however, requires to keep a great many cattle which ought to be sold but cannot be sold because of the lack of space. It would be better for him if he could sell more. If we could get cold storage space at Wyndham, we could bring down chilled meat, which would be better

than bringing down live cattle. It would be a more humanitarian way of handling a beast, and the meat would be of better quality. At the moment we cannot do that, so that meat has been unusually high in price. One naturally sympathises with people who have to buy meat. We must also sympathise with the man who has lost so much stock, not only lambs but full grown sheep. We must remember that we are putting up the cost of everything when we impose the tariff rates we do. Every working man must have higher wages in order to maintain the old standard of living. We cannot impose a tariff against everything that the family uses, and take it from the wages the man used to get a few years ago. A man must have more wages in order to live. That means increasing the cost of living to himself as well as to other people. That is unavoidable. It is no good squaking about it. I do not think the worker is any better off than he used to be. He is worse off when he is out of work, because the high cost of commodities remains and he is not getting anything with which to buy them. In connection with all work there is undoubtedly a falling-off in effort. There are some who go slow. This does not apply alone to the man who receives a daily wage, but it can apply to others in authority as well, to everyone. If the effort is not the same in a business from the top to the bottom costs must go up, and again the worker suffers. Of a truth the worker suffers to the tune of 80 per cent., I should imagine, on everything that is added unnecessarily to the cost of commodities. For foodstuffs and clothing, 80 per cent. of the money in circulation is paid through the workers, and in the end they suffer more than anyone else. If we look into the increased cost of all commodities, including everything that we buy, I suppose of all the people in the State, the farmers suffer most. The tariff certainly hits them, for they cannot increase their prices.

The Premier: No section of the people of Australia is hit by the tariff so much as the farming section.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is so, and they cannot increase their own wages accordingly.

The Premier: They cannot pass on the cost.

Mr. Lindsay: You say that with a good deal of feeling.

The Premier: The world would not live but for the farmer. He feeds the world.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: All they can do is to sell their wheat at export prices. I think it was Caesar who said, when asked by a section of his people to do something for them, "Very well, if I benefit you it must be at the expense of some other section of the community." In the building of cities we impose unnecessarily heavy costs upon the primary producers. It would be impossible to have a tariff to benefit everyone. I do not know whom it does benefit in the end. A few people may grow richer because of the high protective tariff, but since it puts up the cost of everything a man uses, wears and eats, I wonder how much benefit it is after all to the workers of the cities.

Mr. Clydesdale: How can he compete with outside countries?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am not a free-trader, for I think we want moderate protection, but if we have it we must pay for it. We cannot say that one section of the people alone, the farmers, shall be imposed upon, or that all those engaged in primary production shall be imposed upon. By the tariff and other legislation we have deliberately put up the cost of living. We have done this with our eyes open, knowing what the effect would be. Many of those who rejoiced in the higher wages find that in actual fact their earnings are no greater than they were before. I doubt if their wages are as good as they were. Naturally the bachelor benefits, but most people suffer. Under this Bill everything is covered. It contains a little bit of New South Wales, and a little bit of Queensland.

The Premier: It is a little of the best of each, making a perfect whole.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I could easily agree with the Premier. The Acts from which the clauses were taken are all bad, every line of them, and are not designed to help the worker. They are only designed to do harm. Because of that I believe they have not been put into operation in either of the other States mentioned. We can take a piece of something that is really bad, and still have a very bad whole. This Bill is bad from cover to cover. It is another of those Bills which no doubt are sent here with good intentions. When people ask for some protection, we say, "We will give you a little Bill." That is just about as useful as the bill the grocer presents every month. Members will find that this Bill is inquisitorial. Books and documents have to be produced and can be examined. The Government take power to

investigate, through a Commissioner, the business of any person, or any number of persons. They can look right into an industry. Unless there is very certain evidence of profiteering, that is entirely wrong. In the case of foodstuffs and other essential commodities, it is very easy to tell if there be any profiteering. I do not think we should give all these powers to make inquiries of this sort. This Bill cannot be intended to do more than protect the great body of people. There are no people so well able to protect themselves as business people.

Mr. Thomson: The definition of "commodity" must be very broad.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is nothing the Bill does not cover.

The Premier: That is necessary.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think it is necessary. By this Bill the Government take power to direct the working of every business if they please. This House ought not to consider what the Government will do, but what we are giving them power to do. It is bad law. It is bad to place upon the statute-book a law it is not intended to put into effect. It may be suggested that the intention of the Government is to keep people up to scratch, so that they may do what they ought to do. In connection with transport owned by private individuals the Government will be able, under the Bill, to cause preference to be given to certain goods. To-day the railways lose a great deal because of high-priced goods being carried by road. I have no sympathy with the motor proprietor who runs parallel with a railway and competing with it; but it is wrong to say to a man, "You shall not carry tea or kerosene, but you shall carry wood or wheat." The Commissioner, or really the Government, might take possession of goods held by a merchant for his regular customers, if the stock were found to be more than ordinary needs. In such a case the Government could seize the goods and have them sold, or compel the merchant to sell them. In my opinion that is entirely wrong.

The Premier: Those are extreme powers, to be used only in case of defiance of the law. It is necessary to take strong powers in order to enforce Acts.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then the Government should bring down a one-clause Bill saying that the Government may do

anything they please anywhere at any time in connection with anything. There is no reason why that should not be done. I think the Premier, if he were sitting on this side of the Chamber, would agree with me that it is wrong to take powers that are not needed and never can be put into operation. People will not embark on a business unless they are allowed to conduct it in their own way for the benefit of their customers. Under the Bill the Government take power to prevent export. Now, we do want money. To-day our wool sales are held up owing to the unfortunate waterside strike. It may be that three or four hundred thousand pounds that would have come to us now from the wool will be withheld until the strike is over and the wool can be sold. It may be that before the strike is over, a million or so that ought to be in circulation within the State will not be here. If we give the Government power to say that apples shall not be exported because they are needed by the people of the State, then, if the apples are not exported and are not needed here, the money will be lost. When we get a couple of hundred thousand pounds for apples exported, that is useful for everybody in the State, and particularly the wage earner. Consequently no authority should be given to the Government to prevent exports. If it could be shown that there was a conspiracy to export more than should be exported, leaving the local market short-supplied, I would support such a provision. If it could be shown that Western Australia was not likely to hold enough wheat for the requirements of the people, I should say it was the duty of the Government to hold wheat, even if they had to buy it. But there never has been an over-export of food stuffs. Therefore we should not give the Government powers obviously not needed. We should trust our merchants to meet the claims of the local market, as they have always done. Under the Bill the Government take power to seize goods, if necessary.

The Premier: Do you remember the Act of 1919?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That was a temporary measure. This is a measure to control all trade.

The Premier: That Act was introduced by the hon. member.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The measure was needed at the time.

The Premier: Why should it be needed in 1919, 1920, and 1921, and be unnecessary now?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier knows the circumstances which existed then. He knows that those circumstances justified the passing of the Act, which was a temporary measure. We are told that this is to be an all-time measure.

The Premier: The other measure was a three-years measure.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: It was a temporary measure to meet a temporary emergency. I have no sympathy with the monopolist, or with the man who charges more than he should, but the Government say, "We have brought down this measure after having had a Royal Commission inquiry which shows the measure not to be necessary."

The Premier: Is it not possible for circumstances to arise making the Bill necessary? The hon. member's Act was much more drastic than this Bill.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I did not come to the House saying, "I ask hon. members to pass the Bill. I assure you there is no need for it. We have had a Royal Commission of inquiry into the subject, and they have reported that there is no need for it; but we are afraid someone may some day charge a bit more for his goods than he should."

The Premier: Your Act would have been in existence to-day but for its rejection by the Council. You tried to carry it on continuously, but the Council threw it out.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier has been in office for four and a half years, and during that time did not consider such a Bill necessary. He has not considered it necessary until now.

The Premier: This measure is necessary now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the measure were necessary to-day, I would support it. I never oppose the Premier's measures because he brings them here. I support them when I consider they are right. But we have been told by the Government that this measure is unnecessary, that they have had a Royal Commission who have said that the Bill is unnecessary.

The Premier: Oh, no!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That is what the Minister for Justice said. I refer the Premier to the report of the Minister's

speech. I know that the Bill was brought down because of pressure from outside.

The Premier: No.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Premier could show that there is a sweater in this country, or an exploiter, or a profiteer, I would support a measure for putting down such persons.

The Premier: Do you think we have all become perfect since 1921?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I know that the Government side of the House is much less perfect than it used to be.

The Premier: I refer to traders. I am astonished at the drastic provisions in the Act of 1919 or 1920. I would not have dared to bring down anything like that.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Going back to 1921, one finds an altogether different set of conditions existing. We are dealing with 1928. It is a pretty poor argument in favour of the Bill to cite an Act passed in 1919 or 1920 as supporting a Bill proposed in 1928. Such action shows the weakness of the Government's case. It would be exceedingly weak and foolish of the Premier to rely upon an argument seven years old.

The Premier: The Bill defines the powers of the Commission.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: What the Premier has to do is to show that the Bill is necessary now. It would be childish to assert that conditions to-day are the same as they were when the Act was passed.

The Premier: They are not, and that is why our Bill is such a modification of the Act of 1921.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: That Act was brought down because it was necessary then. To-day we are told that this Bill is not necessary. I have not compared the two measures, because I have enough to do to deal with the work of the moment.

The Premier: You would be astonished if you looked at your Act now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I dare say I would, but I would also be astonished to find that the conditions of 1920 were the conditions of 1928. The Government, under the Bill, take power to estimate the requirements of the people in all things. That is the business of the merchants, and they have done it fairly well. Under the Bill the Government may prevent speculative dealing. A miller would assuredly be foolish to

lay in a stock of wheat this year if he knew the price of wheat was going to be lower next year. But it often happens that the reverse is the case, that wheat goes up in price, and that thus foresight is rewarded.

Mr. Sleeman: And then bread goes up, and when wheat comes down bread forgets to come down.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: According to the hon. member, the man who grows the wheat is a swindler, the man who bakes the bread is a swindler, and the man who delivers it is a swindler. Everybody is a swindler, according to the hon. member. If we remember that wheat is bought by the miller at 5s. 9d. and that bread is sold on that basis, we will recognise that bread cannot be very cheap. I should have no objection at all, if I knew the price of bread was too high, to agreeing with the hon. member; but I should have to go into every detail of the work first. At any rate, the Minister for Justice made it quite clear that in his opinion price fixing was not needed at the moment in regard to bread.

Mr. Sleeman: I cannot agree with the Minister if he said that.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: At any rate, if there is to be no speculation, a miller naturally will not lay in a stock of wheat. We know, too, that if we are to have a decent supply of meat, people who are experts in the business must buy store stock and fatten them. The passing of the Bill will have the effect of stopping a good many people from performing that useful function, which we ought to encourage. The appointment of the Commissioner under the Bill is to be left to the Government, and he is not to be an all-time Commissioner, but is to be appointed from time to time as required. He is to be moved to inquire by the Minister who, in turn, will be moved by people outside. And this sort of thing is not for to-day, but for all time. I would like the House to remember appointments made by the Government, and to ask themselves if they are willing to trust the Government to make such appointments from time to time in the future.

Mr. Lambert: With what appointments are you finding fault?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I think the hon. member knows of the appointments I have in mind.

Mr. Lambert: I do not.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am loth to mention the names of individuals, and I do not propose to do it.

Mr. Lambert: The worst is conveyed by innuendo.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There are some appointments with which I entirely disagree, and so does the hon. member.

Mr. Sleeman: Does not that apply more to the appointments of the previous Government?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: No. All Governments should regard the making of appointments as a sacred duty, because so much harm can be done through officers being placed in senior positions for which they are not qualified. While Ministers come and go, such officers continue for the rest of their lives.

Mr. Sleeman: Some such officers have been put in their positions by the previous Government.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: And it was a jolly good thing for this country that they were!

Mr. Sleeman: Do you think so?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, By God, those positions would have been filled by all sorts of people had we not made those appointments!

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Mr. Lambert: You would not like to be confronted with the photographs of some of those you appointed!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We can all agree that monopolies are bad, and if we find them, we should deal with them as we dealt with them in 1920. We all agree that excessive charges are wrong, but we all believe that speculation is the life of trade. I am sure the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) knows that the man who takes business risks is the man to be encouraged. We discourage enterprise in Western Australia enough already, and we do not want to put a greater load on enterprise than it has to shoulder to-day. It is the enterprising man who is wanted here in these days, the man who creates work and wealth, who sets up new industries, who turns the raw material into manufactured goods, and makes something of our raw products. We do not want to deter such a man. All this is speculation. The risk is considerable, and I hope the profit at times is considerable, too. Without these people who are willing to take the risk and speculate—I do

not refer to people who back horses or take tickets in sweeps, but to people who take legitimate risks in trade—where would we be?

Mr. Lambert: But individuals should not be allowed to speculate regarding the people's foodstuffs.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I do not think they do, because we do not find people pushing such sales. We find that the sale of manufactured goods is pushed every day of the week. If we buy a motor car to-day, we are told to-morrow that there is a better car, and that we should dispose of the one we have and get the latest model. So it is that people start with the cheapest car and go on till they have a Rolls-Royce. So it is with razors and all sorts of manufactured articles. On the other hand, there is no one who is out pushing the sale of foodstuffs.

Mr. Lambert: There are basic food supplies, such as meat and bread, that should not be allowed to form the subject of speculation. Meat and bread represent the substances mainly upon which people live, and individuals should not be allowed to speculate with those supplies. You know it is wrong!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Had he lived in the days of Joseph, the hon. member would probably have bought his six bushels of wheat for each member of his household and provided a mill with which the wheat could be ground, and so he and his household would have lived on brown bread. We have progressed a long way from those days, and now the member for Coolgardie would not propose to hold his six bushels of wheat for each member of his family, but is content to trust the miller to do that for him. That is speculation in the ordinary course of business. We must meet the situation as it is.

Mr. Lambert: But the miller has to buy wheat at a fixed price.

Mr. Thomson: But the producer has to grow the wheat at a greater cost to himself.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The miller buys his wheat supplies for the year, and he buys at what he believes will be the lowest price at which he will be able to get it for that period. As a rule, it is the lowest price for the year.

Mr. Chesson: And he must secure a fair return, when we consider the price of bread.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: But the baker does not buy the wheat.

Mr. Chesson: The miller grists it.

Mr. Lambert: The miller is protected.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order!

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If a man has money to invest, and another man has wheat to sell, there is no harm in the man with money buying the wheat and holding it. He takes the risk of loss or gain. It does not make an atom of difference to the consumer whether the one man or the other holds the wheat, because the price charged must be London parity.

Mr. Lambert: But London parity is more or less controlled by a trust.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If the Minister thought we ought to have an inquiry into the baking trade, he would have said so. We had an inquiry by a Commission and the Commission reported that there was no need for anything to be done. The Minister did not think there was any necessity either. If we are to say, by legislation, that the risk shall be the buyer's alone, and that if there is to be any profit he is not to have the advantage of it, and if it is a question regarding something the farmer produces, the member for Coolgardie will say it is quite right, and the same would apply to everyone who produces anything in this State. If it applies to one commodity, it should apply to all. If it comes to a speculation, we could apply the provisions of the Bill to the farmer who produces wheat this year at, say, 3s. 3d., and therefore we would say that he ought to make a reasonable profit at that price. But next year it may cost the farmer 5s. to produce his wheat and, according to the member for Coolgardie, if London parity is 4s. a bushel, we should say that the farmer must sell his commodity at 4s.! Of course, that is speculation! The man who is fighting the elements all the time, takes the risk all the time. If it were not for the fact that the farmer does take the risk, we would not be as well off as we are to-day. Are we to stop people taking risks? If they do take risks, are they not to get anything out of it? Of course they are. In Western Australia we eat one-sixteenth of the wheat we grow, and it is good for everyone that London prices for wheat have been satisfactory. Are we to have no speculation here at all? Is that to apply to the wool grower and the man who buys stock? Is the manufacturer who buys raw material not to lay in a stock? Of course he must do so. Under the provisions of the Bill,

we would prevent a person from making a contract in the future in respect of food supplies or of anything else. We could step in and say to him that it did not matter what price had been agreed to under the contract, and that he must sell at whatever price we chose to fix. I do not know why we should give the Government all these powers. In fact, I think the Bill will kill enterprise. I am sure the member for Coolgardie is cognisant of that fact. Then, again, under the Bill we would place all traders on the same level and there could be no question of competition. By doing that, we would increase prices to the consumers rather than lower them. I repeat that if an unscrupulous supplier is found and if competition does not keep prices at a reasonable and proper figure, if the worker is not giving an adequate return for the wage he gets—

Mr. Thomson: That is not provided for in the Bill, is it?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: If any of our people are not doing their job in the interests of the community, then of course we shall have found someone with whom we should deal. On the other hand, we have been told that the time has come when we should agree to give the powers asked for in the Bill. If the Government were misguided enough to put any portion of the Bill into operation, except where fully justified, it would do harm.

Mr. Sleeman: You may depend upon it the Government will be fully justified when they put it into operation.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: I am not so sure of that. The hon. member himself has shown quite clearly how unreasonable he would be. I suppose that if the hon. member moved in a certain place and secured sufficient support, he could insist on the Bill being put into operation and these inquiries being set on foot. He could do that and the business of an individual might be turned inside out without doing a scrap of good to the consumer.

Mr. Sleeman: Not at all.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes. It will be sufficient for us to give the Government power to do these things when there is need for it.

Mr. Sleeman: There is need for it now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is need for work now, and the Bill will reduce employment, not increase it! I do not think

we should take all the zest from business or quash incentive to excel. I would like to see the member for Coolgardie (Mr. Lambert) lagging behind competition! I venture to say there are members on the Government side of the House who can show that competition has done more to bring down prices to a proper level than anything that the 1920 Prices Regulation Act did. We want people to be served at reasonable rates, but we do not want to stifle competition.

Mr. Sleeman: There is not much competition amongst the bakers.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Then the hon. member should set up a bakery.

Mr. Latham: It is very easy to bake your own bread.

Mr. Sleeman: Damper?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We recently dealt with the Dried Fruits Bill which provided that an unfortunate vine grower should be fined £500 if he failed to send in a return, and under this measure of far greater consequence there is to be a fine of half that amount and imprisonment for a most serious offence. The strange fact is that while an individual can be fined or imprisoned, a company can only be fined. So it would be well if this Bill goes through, for all people engaged in trading to form themselves into companies as quickly as possible. It is ridiculous to suppose that we can protect people to any great extent by Act of Parliament. We should deal with the man who is swindling the public, but we should not say to the public, "There is no need for you to be careful." We should say to the buyer, "Beware! Take care in your purchases. Deal with the man who deals fairly by you and shun the man who cheats you." After all, the buyer can go to this store or to that store to make his purchases; he is at liberty to go where he can get the best deal. I venture to say we shall not be serving him well if he refrains from protecting himself and depends upon an Act of Parliament to protect him. To get behind Acts of Parliament is as easy as shelling peas; statutes certainly cannot afford protection to the buyer. Competition regulates prices, and fortunately for us we can make a choice of the people with whom we deal. It is of no use the Premier sitting there studying "Hansard" of seven years ago.

Mr. Thomson: You will find a few ghosts there.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Members would be surprised if I told them the prices of meat and bread and cigars in 1920, and the odds on certain horses that started in that year.

Mr. Clydesdale: How much did you lose?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Not a single member present can tell the prices of commodities in that year or what he paid for a suit of clothes. He cannot say what the conditions of 1920 were.

Mr. Lambert: You are indulging in wild speculation now.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The Premier has to justify the passing of this Bill in the year 1928. We are not entitled to pass such a measure unless it be necessary. We are not entitled to pass a Bill that interferes to the extent this Bill does. Notwithstanding the Premier, never has a Bill been introduced in this Parliament that has made such provision as is proposed in this measure or has interfered as it is proposed to do here. Fancy being able to say in this country, "You are not to speculate" when everybody does so! Very few people do not gamble in some degree or other. Speculation is the life of trade. The Government have brought this Bill down because pressure has been brought to bear upon them from outside. Probably the member for Fremantle has exercised some pressure. If we want to cheapen living, let us try to get a reduction of the tariff.

Mr. Lambert: Hear, hear!

Mr. Sleeman: What have we to do with the tariff?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: The hon. member has a vote; he is an elector of this State. He has as much to do with the tariff as has any other elector, and he can exercise his influence to have the tariff reduced to reasonable proportions. If wages are increased, the cost of living must increase.

Mr. Sleeman: It increases more than the wages.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: We act against the mother of ten all the time. The more children people have, the harder it hits them, and so they cry out for an Act of Parliament. They get an Act of Parliament, but they get nothing else; there is no further relief.

Mr. Sleeman: Why make all the fuss if there is no harm in it?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: There is much harm in it. I can picture the hon. member saying, "You must have a little inquiry into this chap. I do not like the look of his hair. He used to charge me 1s. for a tin of tobacco, and now he charges 1s. 1d. I want an inquiry." Probably Mr. Tom Walsh would be appointed Commissioner; an inquiry would be held; the Commissioner would look into the man's books and stocks and every detail of his business, and no further good would come of it. I do not know that very much good has ever come of price fixing. At any rate as reasonable people, before we give the Government any power at all, we should insist upon their making out a case for such legislation. If they want such power, let them say, "There is something wrong; this man is doing wrong, overcharging the public, swindling the public." Then we can say, "Very well, we will give you power to fix the price of that commodity if you think it right to do so." To say that we should pass this Bill and provide for all time a statute capable as it is of doing very little good but a great deal of harm, probably reducing employment and stifling trade to some extent—well, even members on the Government side should hesitate before voting for it. This Bill covers everybody and everything.

Mr. Sleeman: Not everything.

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: Yes, it does. It must be remembered we have been told that at present it cannot do any good and it may do a considerable amount of harm. If the Premier can show there is wrong-doing and will put up a Bill to deal with that wrong-doing and not attack traders who are doing right, I shall be bound to support it.

Mr. Lambert: If it is fair to protect the farmer and his wheat, is it not fair to protect the wage-earner?

Mr. Lindsay: How do you protect the farmer and his wheat?

Hon. Sir JAMES MITCHELL: This House apparently thinks it should have no regard for the man who does right, but that it should include everybody and make unnecessary inquiry into various businesses and trades. We ought not to agree to that; members opposite ought not to agree to it, and I hope when the vote is taken they will be found opposing the Bill.

MR. THOMSON (Katanning) [8.25]: When the Minister moved the second reading of the Bill I listened with great interest and a keen desire to find some genuine reason why the Government had introduced it. I must confess, after having listened carefully and read his speech closely, I have failed to find that he made out a case for the Bill. In the course of his remarks he said that in the distribution of necessities, there were unscrupulous traders who took advantage of unsuspecting persons. I am afraid that as long as the world lasts there will be unscrupulous persons who will endeavour to take advantage of the unsuspecting. That, however, is no justification for the introduction of such a Bill. The Minister said he considered the measure would afford some protection against traders who set out to rob the people. When a Minister makes a statement of that kind, he should give tangible evidence by submitting actual cases to show there were traders who were robbing the public. So far as I can find from his speech, he dealt merely with generalities and did not give any definite illustration of profiteering. When the Bill was mentioned in the Governor's Speech I believe every member wondered what sort of a measure it would be, and what particular class of profiteering had developed into such a glaring robbery of the public as to impel the Government to introduce legislation. As the Minister has given no definite evidence of the necessity for these powers, I am disposed to vote against the Bill. The Minister said the desire of the Government was that fair and ordinary prices should be charged. How does the Minister hope to bring that about? He is going to appoint a Commissioner who may have a secretary and such other employees as may be necessary to assist in the administration of the Act.

Mr. Griffiths: Another department.

MR. THOMSON: Instead of lowering the cost of commodities to the public, it will mean, in the end, an increase, because it will necessitate the establishment of an additional department. We have the evidence of the Royal Commission appointed some years ago to inquire whether there was any profiteering. The finding of the Commission was that there was no evidence that any undue profits were being extracted from the public by the traders generally in Western Australia. Some gentlemen on that Commission set out with a firm conviction that there was profiteering and they were going to justify the appoint-

ment of the Commission, but they were unable to find any evidence of undue profiteering. It seems to me that in the desire to secure the levying of fair and reasonable charges, we are going to create another department at considerable expense to the public. As I do not wish to place any additional burden on the people by way of increased taxation, I am not disposed to support the Bill. The powers that the Government are seeking are very full. They propose to give the Commissioner unlimited power to an extent that is positively amazing. We find provided in the Bill that no action or claim or demand whatsoever shall lie, or be made or allowed by or in favour of any person against His Majesty or the Minister or the Commissioner, or any officer or person acting in the execution of the Act, for, or in respect of, any damage or injury sustained by reason of the passing of the Act or of its operation. Did anyone ever hear of such extreme power being placed in the hands of a Commissioner? Not only are we giving him extensive powers, but it is also provided that his acts or proceedings shall not be questioned or reviewed or be restrained or removed by prohibition, injunction or otherwise.

Mr. Davy: Star chamber, absolutely.

Mr. THOMSON: It is one of the most amazing pieces of legislation I ever heard of.

Mr. Davy: The Commissioner will not be able to boil you in oil, but he will make you give evidence and he can do almost anything else.

Mr. THOMSON: It has never been my lot to peruse anything like this since I have been a member of this House.

The Premier: There are Acts on the statute-book containing greater powers, and they have been passed since you have been a member of this House.

Mr. THOMSON: Not such drastic powers.

The Premier: More drastic; you have not read the Acts on the statute-book.

Mr. THOMSON: I have read this one.

The Premier: You have not read the others.

Mr. THOMSON: Here we propose to give the Commissioner drastic powers.

The Premier: I have one before me which was supported by you.

Mr. THOMSON: Will the Premier read what I said with regard to it?

The Premier: It was passed in 1920-21.

Mr. THOMSON: That was in war time.

The Premier: War time in 1920-21! You have forgotten all about it.

Mr. THOMSON: Is the Premier anticipating that we are going to be faced with another war and consequently considers it necessary to introduce a Bill of this character? Otherwise I can see no necessity for the Bill.

Mr. Marshall: Were you anticipating another war in 1921 when you assisted to pass the Act the Premier referred to?

Mr. THOMSON: In 1920 there was a totally different set of circumstances. I am pointing out that it is one of my duties and privileges to voice my opinions on a matter of this description, just as the member for Murchison considers it his duty to voice his, and I claim that a Bill of this nature is not necessary, and certainly powers such as those it is proposed to give the Commissioner should not be given to any man. Just imagine anyone having the power to say, "You are not to sell that product; you must hold it until such time as I give you permission to dispose of it." The holder of the article may then miss the market and he will have to carry the commodity until such time as he can dispose of it to the best advantage. He may then lose some hundreds of pounds and he will have no redress. Neither will he have the right of appeal, simply because the Commissioner, appointed under the provisions of this measure, if it becomes law, has stated that the commodity must not be sold. If power of this description was given at any time, it must have been given in the case of an emergency. At any rate I hope it is not in existence to-day. We should not in any case give such power to any individual.

The Premier: This House passed a Bill three years in succession giving greater powers. The reason it is not law to-day is that it was objected to in another place.

Mr. THOMSON: If the Government desire to get this Bill through, I hope they will make provision for the right to appeal. If a man's personal liberty is at stake, he is entitled to appeal; if he is dissatisfied with the decision of a magistrate, he has the right to appeal to a higher court. Where it is a case of a man's goods being taken from him or determining the price at which he shall sell his commodity, he should be in a position, if he has suffered loss, to have recourse to some tribunal. It is not right to pass legislation of this description. The powers

it is proposed to give the Commissioner are, in my opinion, too great.

Hon. W. J. George: Mussolini is not in it.

Mr. THOMSON: We find that the definition of "commodity" is any article of food or drink or for any domesticated animal, coal, firewood, coke, kerosene, petrol or other fuel, any article of clothing or apparel for man, any article which enters into or is used in the composition or preparation of any of the previously mentioned commodities, agricultural implements, fertilisers and seeds for sowing—the Commissioner can interfere in respect of any thing at all in use in the State and he will be entitled to fix the price at which the commodity shall be sold. Even will he be able to deal with the prices of agricultural implements and fertilisers. Just a passing thought—I wonder, in the event of the Commissioner being appointed, whether he will be able to declare who is responsible for the increase of 15 per cent. which the farmers have to pay for their agricultural machinery over the price of similar articles in Victoria, an increase which we contend was brought about by the action of the unions in Western Australia in refusing to agree to piece-work conditions.

Mr. Ferguson: He would not inquire into that.

Mr. THOMSON: Probably not, but there we have a case in point. I wonder how he would arrange the prices of those commodities. Next he will deal with any public utility and in particular, without limiting the generality of the expression, the supply of light, heat, and power. That means that the Government through the Commissioner, will be able to say to a small company or a municipality, "You are charging too much for your current and the price must be reduced." I am not going to say that will happen, but many things are possible. We are aware that the Government have a large generating plant in Perth and we know that they are supplying current to the City Council at a very low rate. It is quite possible that within other areas a municipality or road board or even a private person may have obtained a lease or concession for a certain period to provide current within a specified radius and it might be possible under the Bill, in the event of a report having been lodged on the score of the charges being considered excessive, for the Commis-

sioner to step in to declare that the current would have to be sold at a lower rate. Under the Bill it would be possible to say, "Never mind what your manufacturing costs are, this is the price at which you must sell the current." Then it is proposed to control freights and transport charges. What a wonderful thing that will be for the Commissioner of Railways! There is a great deal of dissatisfaction existing at the present time over the power that already exists in the way of controlling the fares and routes adopted by motor vehicles. It is still fresh in the memory what happened last session in respect of taxi routes and the action that was taken in this House. The member for Claremont (Mr. North) dealt with the matter fully and the action of the Routes Advisory Committee was severely criticised in this Chamber. The Commissioner of Railways was out to do all he could to stop motor transport. It may be desirable to prevent competition with the railways as far as possible, but we have no right to give the Commissioner power to say to a motor driver or any other individual, "You shall only charge so much per ton for carting a commodity to Goomalling or Katanning and you shall take only a particular class of goods" I cannot see how that can be brought within the purview of profiteering. It seems to me to be grossly unfair to attempt to impose such conditions on the people of the State. It is set out distinctly in the Bill that the Governor may—

In the case of carriage or transport services, fix and declare different maximum prices according to the nature of the carriage or service, and give priority of transport to any special commodity.

That is asking for power which no Government should have except in the event of dire necessity, in the event of some great crisis when the life blood of the country might be at stake. We know that when there was trouble at Home a committee was appointed to deal with essential services and that committee saw to it that the people were not put in a position that they had to go without the necessities of life. If Western Australia should ever reach such a stage, which God forbid, then this House would be justified in giving the Government any power it was thought fit that the Government should have to see that essential services were maintained and the requirements of the people attended to.

But to bring it in under drag-net clauses such as are to be found in the Bill, seems to me to be too drastic altogether. It is also provided that if an employer dismisses any employee, or prejudices any employee in his employment because of such employee having appeared before the Commissioner, he shall be guilty of an offence against the Act. Let us try to see what, possibly, this may mean. No doubt it was framed with a desire to protect the employee from an unjust employer; but there is no protection for an employer against a dishonest employee. It may be that out of pure spite an employee reports to the Commissioner that, in his opinion, his employer is making undue profits. Possibly the employee is in a position to know that his employer may have made a little above the usual profit on some particular line, due, perhaps, to the fact that the employer was able to buy very favourably.

Mr. Mann: And he may be losing money on other lines.

Mr. THOMSON: That is so. As was demonstrated before the Royal Commission, the profits derived by business men were, on an average, only fair and reasonable. This employee, let us imagine, reports his employer and gives evidence against him. Then, although the employee is so disloyal as to put his employer to the expense of going before the Commissioner, and shows in every way that he is not worthy to be retained in his employment, yet his employer is not permitted to dismiss him, under a penalty of £200, or in default six months' imprisonment. When the Bill was forecasted, I really thought the Government would put up a much better case than they have submitted to us. I know the Government have sufficient numbers to put the Bill through. Yet I intend to vote against it. When, having done my duty by speaking and voting against the Bill, I find it being considered in Committee, I will endeavour to so amend some of the clauses as to render the Bill a little fairer than it is at present. The Minister gave no reasons why we should pass such a Bill, and so I will vote against the second reading.

MR. LINDSAY (Toodyay) [8.50]: I also will speak and vote against the Bill. The Minister himself said the Bill was not required at present, although it might be required in the future. The Royal Commission of 1925, after collecting voluminous evidence, showed that there was no necessity

for the Bill. The member for Menzies (Mr. Panton) was a member of that Commission.

Mr. Panton: We had to find on the evidence before us.

Mr. LINDSAY: Probably over 100 witnesses were examined. I compliment the Commissioners on their thoroughness in collecting evidence, and I agree with the conclusions they arrived at. On page 6 of their report the Commissioners said—

Your Commissioners find that in the main there is no evidence of excessive profits made during the past few years on the part of those whose function it is to bring the producers' commodities before the consumers.

I do not know that anything has occurred since to alter that finding. On page 8 of their report the Commissioners said—

One of the factors contributing to the high prices of ordinary household commodities is the apparently general disposition on the part of the consumers to trade on credit.

The Commissioners showed that one of the reasons for high retail costs was that from 50 to 80 per cent. of the trade was done on credit. So, as the Commissioners said, those who buy for cash have to bear a proportion of the losses. Again, they deal with interest on borrowed money, and on page 9 of their report this is their finding—

As the result of their investigations, your Commissioners find there is no evidence of generally excessive prices made on the part of the merchants and retailers engaged in the distribution of ordinary household commodities of such a nature 'as to warrant the introduction of price-fixing by the State, but that in view of the almost general existence of price-fixing associations amongst merchants and traders, some protection should be afforded to the producer and consumer from the possibly detrimental actions of such associations.

There is nothing very practical in that. It means that some day in the future there might possibly be some action by these associations. What did the Commissioners recommend to overcome that action? The appointment of a prices commissioner whose function it would be to investigate conditions affecting prices where there appeared to be grounds for believing those prices were excessive. The only reason they could give for that was that certain information is collected by the Government Statistician, but they thought it would be done better by a commissioner appointed, not for the purpose of fixing prices, but to give certain information to the public. That may be necessary, but I do not think so. Only three years ago that Royal Commis-

sion went to a great deal of trouble to collect this evidence in order that members of Parliament might have the benefit of it. The Commissioners made no recommendations; in fact, they said there was no profiteering, and therefore no necessity for a Bill like this.

Miss Holman: They were not right.

Mr. LINDSAY: I think the three Commissioners knew best. I do not often agree with the member for Menzies, but on this occasion I must confess that he carried out his duties well. There are in this report certain reasons given for the excessive prices of commodities. It is only right that I should give the House some of the evidence adduced on that question.

Miss Holman: Have a look at my evidence.

Mr. LINDSAY: I am afraid the hundreds of pages I have here are too long to wade through just now. Since I have heard members talk about the price of wheat and connect it with the price of bread, I may remark that part of the evidence given in this report shows that the cost of the delivery of bread is $1\frac{1}{2}$ d. per loaf, presumably a 2-lb. loaf. Also it gives the various costs of making a loaf. In that respect there are submitted certain tables, which I have been trying to work out, but I am inclined to think there is some mistake in the figures.

Mr. Panton: The Government Statistician worked them out.

Mr. LINDSAY: I am alluding to the 48 bushels of wheat. The amount does not work out exactly. The fact remains that after the merchants have bought their wheat and added the cost of living and their ordinary profit, the price of flour works out at about $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per loaf, yet the price of the loaf in this instance was 6d.

Mr. Panton: The cost of distribution is one of the big items in the cost of a loaf.

Mr. LINDSAY: Yes. I want to stress that, because members so often talk about the price of wheat, overlooking the fact that the price of wheat has but little to do with the price of bread. When we take the cost of baking and distribution, rent, lighting and other factors, it may be we can find some means of reducing the cost of bread, but not, I think, through a Bill like this, which I do not think will do anything at all to reduce the price of bread or of

meat. For the price of bread is governed principally by the Arbitration Court and by the restrictions continually imposed, in some instances by this House, but chiefly by the unions themselves, all adding to the price of the commodity. The Commissioners dealt also with the price of meat. From a return submitted by a fairly large suburban retail butcher, it was shown that the grower's share was 2.55d. per lb., out of a total retail cost of 11d. per lb. It is often suggested in the Press that something should be done to reduce the high price of meat, which is annually attributed to the grower. This statement shows that the return to the grower was 2.55d. per lb.

Mr. Panton: The wastage on the cattle steamers is an important factor in the price of meat.

Mr. LINDSAY: Yes. Freight and charges amounted to 2.30d., or practically the same as the grower's share. The wholesale butcher's profit was .15d., and the retail butcher's cost of handling and delivery was 4.10d. In other words the cost of selling the meat in the shops is almost twice as much as the grower in the Kimberleys gets for it. Yet we are told that the growers are charging too much for the meat. Here is another return submitted by a suburban butcher having a smaller turnover than the one first examined. It shows the average selling price of beef as 8.63d. per lb., of which the return to the grower was 1.51d. If there is anything to be done in the way of reducing the prices of commodities, it cannot be done by controlling prices because at the prices shown—I assume they are correct—the various costs of handling are so great that it is almost impossible to sell either meat or bread at lower rates than they are sold to-day. If anything would make me oppose the second reading of the Bill, it is that report. It has been shown clearly in the report that there is no necessity for a profiteering Bill, because no profiteering exists. We members have not had an opportunity, such as the members of the Royal Commission had, to collect and study the evidence. On that evidence they have advised us, and it is up to us to be guided by their advice. I should be sorry to see passed any measure containing such provisions as are to be found in this Bill, because it is the most drastic measure I have seen brought before the House.

MR. LATHAM (York) [9.2]: I propose to vote against the second reading of the Bill. I cannot see any necessity at all for it. I wonder whether the Government are anxious to have it passed.

The Premier: That is not a very fair thing to say.

Mr. LATHAM: I have some doubt whether there is any anxiety to have it passed.

The Premier: Try us.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! The hon. member is not in order in imputing motives.

Mr. LATHAM: Very well, I withdraw the remark. What I mean is I believe Ministers know as well as I do that there is no unfair dealing taking place to-day, and if they know that, I wonder why the Bill has been brought down.

The Premier: I do not know any such thing.

The Minister for Mines: If we knew that, the Bill would not be here.

Mr. LATHAM: I dare say Ministers know as much about prices in this State as they do about those in any other State or any other part of the world. So far as I can judge, prices here are as cheap as they are anywhere. If there is any additional cost, it is caused by the industrial unrest that from time to time interferes with the coastal shipping. Very often a shortage of supplies results, and the people are put to much additional expense to get their commodities here. That is probably why the additional cost, if any, occurs here. The Premier interjected that this Bill was no more drastic than the measure passed in 1919 and amended later on. There are no provisions in the Act comparable with those of the present Bill. I do not suppose that in the laws of any country of the world are to be found such drastic provisions as appear in this Bill.

The Premier: Nonsense!

Mr. LATHAM: Well, I have not seen them. Why, there is no appeal under this measure.

The Premier: Neither was there an appeal under the Act of 1919.

Mr. LATHAM: That Act did not contain the drastic provisions that appear in this Bill.

The Premier: Yes. They were quite as drastic.

Mr. LATHAM: When we get into Committee, I shall have an opportunity to point

out how much more drastic the clauses are. Some of them are shockingly drastic, and it is quite unfair to put legislation of the kind on the statute-book. There was a reason or necessity for legislation in 1919. If members read the report of the Prices Regulation Commission appointed at that time, they will realise the necessity that then existed. The report says—

Owing to the unsettled state of the world's markets, due to many factors such as the shortage of necessary commodities in Europe and other parts of the world, the keen demand for our products and the unfavourable rates of exchange, etc.

What would have happened had there been no price fixing was that as new goods, purchased for a lower price than such goods were selling for at the time, were brought into the State, it would have been possible to dispose of them at a price that was unfair and unreasonable.

Mr. Griffiths: That occurred with wire and wire netting.

Mr. LATHAM: No doubt the Government had that in view when the Commission was appointed. The appointment of a Commission was not confined to Western Australia; I believe the Federal Government also appointed one.

Mr. Davy: Did any one of them achieve anything?

Mr. LATHAM: So far as I know, nothing was achieved by any of them. One may find where bakers or other traders approached the Commission, asked for an increased price, and almost invariably got an increase, not always what they asked for, but probably more than they expected. If one was going to a Commission he would surely ask for more than he expected to get, and would probably be well satisfied if he got half of what he asked. There is no need for this legislation; it will only hamper and harass business. If a law of this kind is to be passed, it will have the effect of discouraging people coming here and starting in business. Western Australia wants people, and we do not want legislation that will discourage them from coming here. For the life of me I cannot understand why the Bill has been introduced. It will not achieve any great purpose. If we want to achieve anything, the proper thing is to get amongst the trade unionists and exhort them to adopt saner counsels. If industrial unrest could be eliminated, there

would be a reduction in the cost of living, but if we are perpetually to be confronted with difficulties in the transport services, prices will continue to rise. When we bring about a better feeling between employer and employee in this country and put an end to industrial unrest, traders will be able to get down to proper business methods and sell at the cheapest possible rate. There is plenty of competition in this country and nothing will protect the consumer better than honest competition.

The Premier: In many instances there is no competition.

Mr. LATHAM: I do not know of any of them. Many people are labouring under misapprehensions. I heard a man in the street the other day make the statement that the wheat pool was keeping up the price of bread in the State. All I can say is that that man knows very little of what the wheat pool is doing. It is actually assisting the millers. It is enabling them to buy their wheat, have it stacked at the mills and pay for it as they use it from day to day.

Mr. Mann: It has not been an advantage to the millers this year.

Mr. LATHAM: It has not been a disadvantage. The millers pay the world's parity from day to day as they use the wheat.

Mr. Mann: It was not to their advantage in April.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not conversant with all that has happened in the last few months.

The Premier: A lot has happened since you were in Malta.

Mr. LATHAM: I am not permitted to discuss Malta at this stage.

Mr. Mann: But you will tell them all about it.

Mr. LATHAM: Yes, and enlighten members of the House, much to their benefit. Anything I said in Malta, or in any other part of the world, I am prepared to stand to. When I am permitted, I shall take an opportunity to refer to the matter. I sincerely hope the Government will not proceed with this measure. If they do, there is no hope of its becoming law in its present form. No law that I have ever read, outside of Italy and perhaps in Russia, contains such drastic provisions as are embodied in this measure.

The Minister for Mines: Then there are a lot of laws you have not read.

Mr. LATHAM: If the Minister will quote one in which such wide powers are given as in Clauses 16 and 27, I shall be prepared to apologise. Those provisions are scandalous, unreasonable and unwarranted, and I hope that not only members on this side of the House, but that some members on the Government side, will, in the interests of the State, vote against the second reading.

MR. ANGELO (Gascoyne) [9.11]: Though I listened carefully to the Minister for Justice when he introduced the Bill, he failed to impress me with the necessity for it. During the course of his speech I asked, by way of interjection, whether he could give some specific instances of profiteering, and his reply was that I must have been out of the State, otherwise I could not have failed to hear about the high prices of bread and meat. The member for Toodyay (Mr. Lindsay) has answered the suggestion about the high price of bread to the satisfaction of members of the House. I know that excellent bread can be obtained for 5d. per 2-lb. loaf.

The Minister for Mines: Where?

Mr. ANGELO: In Perth; I pay that for it. I admit that an extra 1d. per loaf is charged for delivering it.

The Minister for Mines: Let me have the name of your baker. I shall have some of it.

Mr. ANGELO: The trouble is that people want the bread delivered, and it costs a baker at least 1d. per loaf to deliver it. In addition, the baker has to carry considerable amounts by way of bad debts.

Mr. Latham: You do not run a credit account.

Mr. ANGELO: By paying cash I get it for 5d.

The Minister for Mines: I pay 6d. for mine.

Mr. ANGELO: But that is delivered at the door.

The Minister for Mines: Yes. That is where it comes in. It is an instance of profiteering if they are charging 1d. per loaf for delivering it.

Mr. Latham: But the Commission found that it cost 1d. a loaf to deliver it.

The Minister for Mines: Then the Commission was dotty.

Mr. ANGELO: If the people thought they were being imposed upon, they could easily bake their own bread. Regarding the

price of meat, I have heard it suggested that the producers are receiving too high a price.

The Minister for Mines: I have not heard that yet.

Mr. ANGELO: Let me remind members that all stock is sold by auction. How then can there be any profiteering? The cause of the high price of mutton has been the shortage of fat sheep throughout the State, and the high price of beef has been caused largely through there being insufficient ships to bring cattle from the North. I have been informed on the best of authority that if the shipping space had been provided at least one-third more cattle would have been brought down from the Kimberleys this year. I should like to inform members that it costs £7 to bring a beast down from the Kimberleys, as against £2 14s. 8d. to bring a beast by the Trans train from Port Augusta to Midland Junction. Surely if there was any profiteering and if our growers were obtaining too much for their cattle, Eastern States producers would be sending their stock over here!

Mr. Mann: What boats have been bringing cattle down from the Kimberleys?

Mr. ANGELO: The three Singapore boats and the State boats.

Mr. A. Wansbrough: What do you say is the railway charge?

Mr. ANGELO: The cost of bringing stock from Port Augusta to Midland Junction saleyards is £2 14s. 8d. per head, as against £7 via ships from Derby to Fremantle. I have seen cattle on the Trans train nearly every time I have come across.

The Premier: They cannot come at all because there is an embargo against the trucking of cattle from South Australia.

Mr. ANGELO: But I have seen them.

The Premier: You have been dreaming.

Mr. ANGELO: No fear!

The Premier: We have only lately had a request to lift the embargo.

Mr. Davy: It is not suggested that the Kimberley cattle producer is getting too much for his cattle?

The Minister for Mines: Certainly not.

Mr. ANGELO: I have here the evidence placed before the Meat Commission, as reported in the Press. It says, with regard to the Eastern States cattle, the position is that Queensland and South Australian cattle can be railed from Port Augusta to Midland Junction in special train lots at a cost of approximately £2 14s. 8d. per head railage only, the duration of transit being

about 4 to 4½ days. That evidence was given before the Commission last month.

The Premier: That was when they were permitted to come.

Mr. ANGELO: I see no necessity for the Bill. If the Minister for Justice had given specific instances of profiteering, some convincing evidence that the measure was necessary, I might have held a different opinion. Another objectionable feature of the Bill is the power that it gives to the Government to place in one man's hands, a man who can be picked up at any time the necessity arises. As the Leader of the Opposition pointed out, the present Ministry may not be in power for all time. We may have in charge of this legislation another Minister who may not be as jealous of his honour as I feel sure every member of the present Cabinet is.

Mr. Mann: Do not pat them too much on the back.

Mr. ANGELO: The Premier must vote for an amendment. In 1919, when the Prices Regulation Bill was before the House, the Premier, when Leader of the Opposition, moved the following amendment: "That in Subclause 1 the words 'may appoint a Commissioner' be struck out, and 'shall appoint three Commissioners' be inserted in lieu thereof." He made a very effective speech on that amendment.

The Premier: I think it was carried.

Mr. ANGELO: He showed how necessary it was to have three Commissioners. The Attorney General quite agreed with him, and the amendment was passed.

The Minister for Mines: Quite right, too.

Mr. ANGELO: If we must have the Bill, I feel sure provision will be made for the appointment of three Commissioners, and that this will have the heartiest support of the Premier.

The Premier: I am not seriously opposed to that.

On motion by Mr. Davy, debate adjourned.

House adjourned at 9.20 p.m.