

election of Australia's Government. He can exercise in a reasonable measure the cherished principle that permits freedom of speech. He can practise what religion he desires without being molested by any fellow citizen. I do not doubt that the people recognise the great heritage they enjoy, and I am convinced that they will do all they possibly can to achieve victory, whether it be soon or late. The Commonwealth Government has been given unlimited powers with which to carry on the war. All political parties, including the Labour Party, recognise the necessity in times of crisis for vesting the national Government with the extra powers that are deemed necessary, powers far exceeding those required in times of peace. On the score of authority, therefore, the Federal Government cannot in any way enter a plea that it is shorn of necessary power. The people generally have demonstrated that they are prepared to give the Commonwealth Government all the power it wishes, but in our fight against dictatorship we must be zealous in safeguarding the rights of democracy so that the powers conferred upon the Federal authorities shall be used with discretion and not for the purpose of restricting any more than is necessary the liberties of the people. We must ensure that when eventually hostilities cease, legislation and regulations passed to restrict the liberties of the people during war time are promptly repealed.

The people of Australia are prepared to help in any way they possibly can, and I am pleased to know that the State Government intends to introduce legislation to deal with civil defence. While there are faults in our system of democracy, I feel sure I voice the opinions of this House and of the people generally when I say that the worst faults of democracy are far preferable to the best system of dictatorship. Although, owing to the apathy displayed by many folk, the State and Federal legislatures have found it necessary at different times to pass legislation making it obligatory upon the people of Australia to exercise the franchise, yet when a crucial test is applied, citizens realise the stark alternative to the present form of government. On the result of this conflict depends whether we are going to be ruled as hitherto or by a dictatorship. Indicative of the unanimity of opinion that permeates the minds of the people of Australia, is the fact that the Federal Labour

Leader, backed by the whole Australian Labour movement, has co-operated and will continue to co-operate to the greatest possible degree with the Commonwealth Government. There is no doubt that tremendous responsibilities will devolve upon whoever holds the reins of office. Realising the justice of our cause, the people generally will do all they possibly can to bring about victory for democracy, which will be in their own interests and those of generations to come. Thus they will be able to face the future with complete confidence.

MR. HOLMAN (Forrest) [3.42]: I formally second the motion.

On motion by Hon. C. G. Latham, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE PREMIER (Hon. J. C. Willcock—Geraldton) [3.43]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday next at 4.30 p.m.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 3.41 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Tuesday, 30th July, 1940.

| | PAGE |
|--|------|
| Swearing in of Member | 9 |
| Chairmen (temporary) of Committees | 10 |
| Question: Profiteering prevention, price of meat | 10 |
| Address-in-reply, second day | 10 |
| Bill: Supply (No. 1), £2,500,000, 1s. | 21 |

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

SWEARING-IN OF MEMBER.

Hon. E. H. H. Hall (Central) took and subscribed the oath and signed the roll.

CHAIRMEN (TEMPORARY) OF COMMITTEES.

The PRESIDENT: I desire to announce that in accordance with the Standing Orders I have appointed Hon. J. Nicholson, Hon. V. Hamersley and Hon. G. Fraser to act as temporary Chairmen of Committees during the current session.

QUESTION—PROFITEERING PREVENTION.

Price of Meat.

Hon. G. B. WOOD asked the Chief Secretary:—1, Was it with the Government's approval that the Prices Commissioner recently fixed the price of meat from the wholesale butcher to the retailer? 2, Is the Government aware that the producers and not the wholesalers suffered from the action of the Commissioner? 3, Does the Government approve of the Prevention of Profiteering Act being used to the detriment of the producers, who cannot in any sense of the word be termed profiteers?

The CHIEF SECRETARY replied: 1, 2, and 3, Regarding these questions the Commissioner of Prices has reported as under:—The price of meat from wholesaler to retailer has not been fixed. Maximum prices have been negotiated with the wholesalers. That action was taken only after careful consideration had been given to the interests of all parties concerned, including the consumers of meat. I received a deputation representative of the producers recently and its members are to discuss the whole matter further with me in the near future.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.

Second Day.

Debate resumed from the 25th July.

HON. C. F. BAXTER (East) [4.49]: Since last we met, there has been an election for this Chamber; and I congratulate the eight members who have been returned to re-occupy seats which they have held for some years. Two hon. members have fallen by the wayside—Mr. Franklin and Mr. Wittenoom. These gentlemen have been succeeded by Sir Hal Colebatch and Mr. Roche. During the 12 years Mr. Franklin occupied a seat in this Chamber he en-

deared himself to all members. Before that he spent a very useful life in the community not only in the conduct of his business, but also from the standpoint of his public career. He never stinted his time for public work and used all his ability for a long period in an honorary capacity for the people of the metropolitan area. While Mr. Franklin was not an orator, he was always listened to with keen interest in this Chamber, and his speeches, although short, were of great value. In the circumstances, his attendance was wonderful. He certainly rendered great service to the people of the metropolitan area whom he represented. Mr. Wittenoom was a member of this Chamber for twelve years. He entered the Chamber while his father, Sir Edward Wittenoom, was still occupying a seat. Whilst Mr. Wittenoom did not exhibit the exceptional ability of his father, he certainly was a useful member for the Province he represented. He was very attentive to the wants and requirements of his electors.

Hon. G. W. Miles: What about Mr. Angelo?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am afraid I was forgetting Mr. Angelo for the moment. He served in Parliament in a dual capacity. For a number of years he was a member of the Legislative Assembly, and subsequently he was returned to this Chamber, where he served for a number of years. He always had warmly at heart the interests of the province he represented, the North. He was diligent and exact in the discharge of his duties and certainly rendered good service to the people who returned him. In the place of the two members who were defeated and of Mr. Angelo, who retired on account of ill-health, firstly Sir Hal Colebatch has returned to grace this Chamber, where he previously served for a long period of years as a representative of the East Province. I would have liked again to welcome Sir Hal in this Chamber as a member for the East Province instead of as a member for a metropolitan province. I have no need to say anything in praise of Sir Hal. Not only is he distinguished for the ability he displayed in this Chamber, but for his services in the Federal sphere and in his position of Agent General for Western Australia. I feel sure I am right in saying that Western Australia never had a more suitable person to represent it in

England, in the heart of the Empire, than Sir Hal. He did wonderful service and his office was extended for a further term. I am not in any way decriing Mr. Troy's ability to serve the State, but I think it was foolish not to have allowed Sir Hal to continue in the position of Agent General, more especially in view of the crisis through which we are now passing. Mr. Troy has stepped into something quite new to him, and naturally cannot fill the position so well as Sir Hal could have done. It is unnecessary to speak in this House about Sir Hal's ability; the debating strength of the Chamber will be improved greatly by his presence. Mr. Welsh has taken the place of Mr. Angelo. Mr. Welsh also is known to us because of the ability he displayed when he represented Pilbara in the Legislative Assembly. Those people in the North-West who returned Mr. Welsh know there is no man better qualified to represent that part of the State. He is well able to put up a strong case for the North-West, both inside and outside Parliament. The pastoral section of the community is fortunate in having his services, especially in view of the crisis through which the pastoral industry has been passing. When a rehabilitation scheme for the industry is placed before us, Mr. Welsh will prove of great assistance to this Chamber and to the country generally. I am looking forward to great assistance from Mr. Welsh in that direction. Mr. Roche, although he may come as a stranger to some members of this House, is certainly no stranger to me. I have known him for a long period of years, and he blames me, Mr. President, for having put him on a property where he is now enjoying reasonable prosperity, notwithstanding the dry season. Mr. Roche's career is a varied one. He has had wide experience, which should stand him in good stead both in representing his province and in dealing with the business of this House. He is fearless; he will fight his battles, but will not fight unless he is sure of his facts. In the long period of years during which I have been acquainted with him I have not known him to fight for a cause of which he was not absolutely sure, and that is the class of member well able to assist us in our deliberations. As a member of this Chamber I welcome these three new members, and trust they will be long spared to discharge with benefit to the State the duties upon which they have entered.

When moving the Address-in-reply, Mr. Moore voiced some sentiments which rather surprised me, coming as they did from a public man. I would not touch upon them were it not for one reason, namely, that I do not want the people of Western Australia to think it is the opinion of the Legislative Council that it is the German war machine alone that has made such wonderful progress in Europe and that the fifth column was in no way responsible for the success achieved by the enemy.

Hon. J. Cornell: I thought that Mr. Moore made an excellent speech.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I do not think so, for the simple reason that his statements were wrong. The most important happening in Europe, and the worst, was that the smaller countries of Europe, which stood firmly on their neutrality and held fast in their travail, were over-run. Their stand was the cause of their downfall. How could one of those small countries hope to fight the big German war machine? Notwithstanding what Mr. Moore said about the fifth column, that column did play an important part in Norway, Holland, Denmark, Belgium and France. In Norway the German soldiers landed and marched through Oslo while the Norwegians were standing by wondering what was the matter, never dreaming that the Germans were forcing an entrance. They thought the Germans were coming as friends. So well had the fifth column extended its activities that even the batteries were silent; not a shot was fired. It would not have been such an easy matter for Germany to take Norway had it not been for the fifth column. The same thing happened in Holland; in fact the position there was worse, because the fifth column was so strong, that parachutists were enabled to land among their friends, who had signalled them where to land. Belgium found itself in the same position. The King, of all people, capitulated. It was very evident that he never had his heart in the fight so far as his own country was concerned. What was the position that he created? The British and the Belgians were fighting side by side to protect his country and he left the British to carry on by themselves. What would have happened but for the might of Great Britain? Was there not evidence of fifth column work there? Then we come to France. The French generals and officers whom we had always regarded

as being amongst the finest soldiers in the world, failed us completely and allowed the Germans to break through. Again, we had evidence there of fifth column work. We do not want it to go out to the world that the German army was so mighty that, by that night, they were able to break through all those countries. It has plainly been made evident that Hitler could never have advanced as he did but for the treachery within the countries that he over-ran.

Thoughts of the war transcend everything else. Our difficulties, our problems, our differences are as nothing compared with the death struggle in which we as a nation are engaged. This is no time for pessimism, but it is a time when realities should be faced. We must not be smug and self-satisfied; nor should we be fearful of the future. We must think right and above all work right. I have no doubt as to the ultimate issue of the war, but I hesitate to project my mind into the future and attempt to say how and when this war will be won. It is not right that we should be too optimistic. Foolish optimism was the root cause of our unpreparedness. We thought that none would dare to challenge us. We thought that all the preparation of other nations, no matter how methodically undertaken, would be as nothing compared with our national prestige. But preparation has won from prestige. It has been proved that we cannot fight this war on our reputation of having won many previous wars. The battle ground is the present and the future. If we were caught unprepared for the present we must bend all our energies to filling the breach and then, having arrested Hitler's attack, build up our means of offence and defence until we cannot be denied. I have not the slightest doubt that such a position can be achieved, but to achieve it all of us must work; all must be prepared to put aside petty things and think and act nationally.

This brings me to the political aspect of the present overseas position and in my belief the kernel of all politics now is the maintaining of the faith of the people in our political form which we call democracy, and in our leaders. To know that we can trust our leaders, both in England and in the Dominions, and that they will call on everything we can give and that we are prepared to give to the extreme limit, makes Hitler's defeat certain. As far as the Homeland's position is concerned, we can have every

faith. A Government in the hands of men of the calibre of Churchill, Morrison, Bevan and others establishes confidence. There have been signs that this Government is determined. Further, this Government represents the best in England, the united best. None is standing aside for any personal or purely political motives. A National Government heads the national effort. There is something of a challenge to the Dominions in that state of affairs. Our sister Dominion, New Zealand, has heard the challenge, and members of the Opposition in the New Zealand National Parliament have accepted executive responsibility.

Hon. J. Cornell: Curtin offered Menzies that.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: He offered nothing of the sort. Australia lags behind. In Australia Labour is still trying to make up its many minds regarding its war policy. Labour, under its several leaders, seems to be constantly running for shelter. First, it will not co-operate, then it will join a War Council which would have to be created to give it this questionable opportunity to co-operate. In none of its excuses is there any semblance of readiness to accept real responsibility. Labour is vacillating where it should be joined in leadership. Instead of throwing all its weight behind Australia's effort, Labour is jockeying for any political advantage that might arise from these extraordinarily trying times. This talk about the necessity for maintaining a virile Opposition is cheap and unconvincing. If Labour has any of the virility about which it boasts, Australia can harness it in the leadership of the Commonwealth's energies.

Hitler calls this a total war. Only in Australia is there any half-heartedness, and that half-heartedness is shown only in Labour's leadership. I refuse to believe that the average Labour supporter thinks that way. The type I know are in this war up to the hilt. They despise their leaders for their vacillation. These are the people who think that to strike in war time is almost an enemy act. I will go so far as to say that those persons who create strikes to gain advantage in such a crisis should receive drastic treatment. The people of Australia demand that every section of the community should shoulder its share of the work and responsibilities this war has brought us and should join unitedly in the efforts to produce and best add the most to protect the country which provides us with the privileges of

freedom, privileges that are being swept away by those who are our enemies.

Labour talks about the industrial victories she has won. Those victories are worthless unless we gain an Empire victory in this war. If Labour prizes this industrial freedom, it must work wholeheartedly for our continued national freedom. The crying demand of the nation and Australia as an integral part of the nation is unity.

Hon. G. Fraser: Why make political capital out of the war?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am using my voice in protest against what is going on at the present time. Every country in the world except Australia is united. What is preventing Australia from becoming united? We have heard what Mr. Curtin has said in Adelaide and Melbourne, that there will not be a National Government. With him it is party before country. I am not referring to this, as the hon. member suggests, for political reasons. I want to see a National Government formed and it is not right that anyone should stand out.

On the cessation of hostilities at the end of the last war, all countries were in a desperate plight and the conditions generally were unsettled and unsatisfactory. I venture to state that when this war ends, the position will not only be very much worse, but will be very desperate, and, whilst the fullest effort is required to carry this war to a successful issue, preparation should be made and serious consideration given to that phase. No country can carry on its activities as previously. A start must be made immediately to conserve all our resources, and I warn this Government that unless action is taken to meet the all too certain future position, drastic consequences will follow. The Premier's mere figure of speech that "rigid economy has been enforced" is meaningless. The State demands action, not empty words. I have failed to find, even in a small way, that there has been the slightest economy effected during the war period, but it is quite plain that, to an extent, a certain amount of economy will be forced on the Government by the Federal Government and the Loan Council. However, the position demands very much more than this. The question is, will this Government be solid enough to take the necessary action?

Another year of Labour administration has passed and the results reflect the complete indifference of the Treasurer and his

Government to the vital need for economy in the State's finances. And this despite the Treasurer's now hackneyed assurance that "the results are satisfactory and have been achieved only by the exercise of rigid control over all expenditure." I challenge the Treasurer to show where rigid economy has been practised. At no time has there existed greater need than now for the exercise of strictest economy in public finance, yet it was not until the end of June—nine months after the outbreak of hostilities—that the Government appeared to realise that a state of war really existed. This is clearly indicated by the recent assignment to Ministers of special wartime duties. Previous to these appointments, Ministers were frequently absent from their posts on extended country trips that were in no way associated with the war effort. The Treasurer referred apologetically to his inability to live up to last year's Budget estimate, and attributed his failure in this connection to the refusal of Parliament to transfer to revenue the £120,000 received from traffic fees. Parliament rightly rejected the Government's back-door method of securing funds collected from motorists for the purpose of constructing and maintaining roads for their use. Let me quote a recent statement by the Premier:—

"One matter which I am sure must be tackled is an adjustment of the financial relationship existing between local authorities and the Central Government, particularly those local authorities in the metropolitan area. As I stated earlier, the Government's desire to amend the Traffic Act to enable the transfer to revenue of motor license fees in the metropolitan area was not successful. I am sure this was a great mistake, because a survey of the severity of local government taxation in this State compared with what exists in the Eastern States, shows up to the disadvantage of local governing bodies in Western Australia. It is not right that taxpayers to local authorities in the metropolitan area should be relieved of their burdens by subsidies paid to the local authorities by the users of motor vehicles. The Government intends to reintroduce the necessary legislation to have this position remedied, and I am hopeful that on this occasion the amending Bill will be passed."

What a remarkable observation on the part of the head of a Government that has added more than a million in taxation during the past seven years!

Hon. J. J. Holmes: A million a year.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Yes. On what premises does the Premier take upon himself to say that the local governing bodies in this State are not taxed as heavily as are kindred bodies in the other States? It is strange that he should accept the advice of departmental officials on a matter of this kind, when he only has to look up the reports of the Disabilities Commission to find it stated there definitely that it was not possible to make any comparison between the taxation of local governing bodies in the different States of the Commonwealth because they all had so many different systems that it was impossible to arrive at a decision. And yet we find the Premier putting himself up as a genius and saying, "Those people are all wrong; they do not know what they are talking about."

If it is on account of its own extravagance that the Government requires more money, the proper method by which to procure it is to ask Parliament to agree to further taxation, and not by transferring to revenue the proceeds of a special tax imposed for a special purpose. When the present Government took office the expenditure was a little over £9,000,000. Let us see where the rigid economy the Government talks about comes in. During the intervening seven years the expenditure has increased progressively, and for the last financial year reached the colossal figure of £11,267,000, an increase of over £2,000,000 in seven years. Notwithstanding this, the Government talks about rigid economy.

The Chief Secretary: I want you to point out where rigid economy has not taken place.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I will tell the Chief Secretary about that later. It would take me several weeks to deal with all the ramifications bearing on that subject. I ask the Premier to let the public know what rigid economies have been carried out. Compared with the previous year the figure I have quoted represents an increase of £97,000, and this at a time when we are asked to believe that rigid economy is being practised. Does this not show clearly that the Government has made no determined attempt to control expenditure? Despite continued heavy borrowings, increased taxation, and higher revenue receipts generally, substantial deficits are still the order of the day.

Hon. G. Fraser interjected.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I welcome Mr. Fraser's interjections at any time when I can hear them, but I have not yet heard any interjection from him that is of any value. The serious drift in the State's expenditure of public moneys during the past five years was referred to in a warning issued by the Assistant Federal Treasurer in May last. Mr. Fadden said there was no room for extravagance in any shape or form in Australia's economy, and that there would have to be closer co-operation between the Commonwealth and the States to arrest any drift that might react to the detriment of the Nation. He declared that the State Governments were setting the worst possible example to the community by their thriftlessness. Mr. Fadden continued—

The Federal Government has to keep before it the position of the States in framing its tax programme. The States have a very limited field of direct taxation, and the Commonwealth could not take from that field anything that would be detrimental to the States. The Commonwealth is faced, not only with the war, but also with the problem of providing a properly balanced economy in Australia itself.

There had been, Mr. Fadden continued, an increase of 47 per cent. in State taxation in the last five years, and the State's expenditure of public moneys over the same period had shown an increase which had not given service commensurate with the increased taxes.

The Lieut.-Governor's Speech was not very inspiring and made no reference to the State's industrial problems. I would like to read one statement contained in it:—

The Minister for Industry has been appointed to co-relate the functions of the committee and the Government in connection with this work. In the meantime the department is actively according its encouragement and assistance to secondary industry.

I would point to something that the Minister and the Government can do for secondary industries. Prior to war conditions being set up the State's industries were so heavily burdened with conditions more burdensome than those enjoyed by Eastern States competitors that any appreciable expansion could not be expected, and since the war began the position in this regard has become worse. Some 20,000 of Australia's best engineering workers will be taken for war purposes, and the question arises, how can they be replaced? Labour in England has met this position, while the conditions of industry are such in the Eastern States that for

unskilled work juniors can be employed; though not so in this State. To this in peace times, one cannot object because of the arbitration awards, but it is quite plain that the Labour officials have no desire beyond platitudes to meet the urgent necessity for war efforts and the position of the State's industries. In support of this I would mention two recent instances: A company in this State employing 30 hands has been compelled to give way to the same classes of business in the Eastern States. The trouble was that the local company was restricted in the employment of juniors for the carrying out of unskilled work, and on the other hand had to pay engineers and fitters wages to do work that its more favoured competitors in other States were doing with juniors. The consequence is that the business to which I refer is closing down, 30 hands will be thrown out of work, and a valuable industry will be lost to the State. Another enterprise was fortunate enough to secure half a substantial contract for the supply of articles for defence purposes, this being an entirely new industry in Western Australia.

The Chief Secretary: Can you give me the names of the enterprises concerned?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I will give the names privately to the Minister. The proprietor of this concern unfortunately was of opinion that he could employ unskilled workers, namely juniors, to do the simple unskilled work, thus operating on the same basis as his Eastern State's competitor, who had the balance of the contract. The union took action, and forced him to reduce his juniors to one, and replace those discharged by costly skilled labour. This naturally meant the closing down of the industry, more men being put out of employment, and juniors being prevented from earning a living.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Has not the Commonwealth power to intervene in such instances?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No.

Hon. G. Fraser: Have these facts been reported to the Minister for Industrial Development?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I and several other members of this House have warned the Government that unless a firmer grip is taken of the finances and there is a wiser expenditure of loan funds, the warnings that have already been given will be carried into

effect. Last session I said we were reaching that stage when we were advancing towards unification, repudiation, or the position when the Federal Government and Loan Council would exercise their right of control over all expenditure within this State. The Speech says:—

The Loan Council has appointed a Co-ordinator to examine proposals submitted by each State. Complete information is now in his hands, and a further meeting of the Loan Council will be held shortly to consider his recommendations and make decisions.

My experience as a Minister of the Crown during the last war is that no imposition that is put upon the people is ever taken off. That, at any rate, has been so in the past. Once the Federal Government gets a grip upon something it continues to retain a hold upon it. It seems that the finances of the State will in future be controlled, and that we shall be told what to do.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: The Financial Agreement provided for that, did it not?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: But not to the extent I have indicated. Further on the Speech says:—

In existing conditions, however, it is necessary to regard the stimulation of agriculture in a light far different from the viewpoint of a few months ago.

I quite agree. That is a nice sentiment. I wish now to deal with some aspects where Government assistance will be required. Let me take the wheat position. Farmers in this State have in their usual optimistic way, notwithstanding the worst season (as it has opened) that has yet been experienced in this State, and notwithstanding the black outlook consequent upon the war, have gone on sowing their crops without knowing whether they will be of any value. No lead has been given either by the State or by the Federal Government. I hope the State Government will persist in an endeavour to arrive at some basis with the Federal Government, on which those individuals who are so optimistic—they are the people we want in these times, optimistic people who are prepared to produce what returns revenue—will secure a guarantee that their products will be of some value after the next harvest. Unless some such guarantee is forthcoming, very soon the farmers will not be able to finance their operations.

Hon. G. W. Miles: But the State Government could not give such a guarantee.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am aware of that. All I ask is that the State Government shall continue its efforts. My object is to support the Government in that direction.

The Chief Secretary: Does not that involve expenditure?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I probably will ask for some expenditure before I conclude.

The Chief Secretary: Then where does your plan for economy come in?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: But what I suggest does represent economy. Surely it is economical if the Government spends money as a result of which increased revenue returns are received. Even with the latest advances announced, the net return to the farmer will not exceed 2s. 6d., and certainly that is not a highly satisfactory return. That represents 7s. 6d. a bag—with costs mounting up all the time. In view of all the circumstances, I recognise that the producers must be satisfied with that return for the time being.

Several members interjected.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I may be confusing for the moment the wheat and barley positions.

The Chief Secretary: And the return quoted was for bulk wheat, too.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Dealing with the barley position, I question whether any considerable quantity of barley will be sown in this State. Barley is a very useful product, but unfortunately the grower of that cereal is only receiving a return of 1s. 2d. per bushel, which represents 3s. 6d. per bag. Members will readily appreciate the fact that the barley growers' position must be improved considerably before it can be regarded as satisfactory.

Hon. G. B. Wood: But that return was for low-grade barley only.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: That was the return, after the various deductions had been made.

Hon. G. B. Wood: The return for No. 1 grade barley is 2s. 3d. per bushel.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The hon. member has not deducted the cost of bags and freight. That is the point. I know what return I received for my barley. Then again, barley is most useful in that it helps to build up the soil after it has been impoverished through successive wheat crops. A further difficulty that confronts us is another increase of £1 in the price of superphosphate. That raises an issue of vital

importance to both the State and the Commonwealth, particularly the former. In recent years a large quantity of superphosphate has been used for top-dressing land, quite apart from its use for general agricultural purposes. I am safe in saying that the use of superphosphate to the extent of £275,000 in value in an average year, cannot continue if present-day high prices are to persist. Hundreds of farmers will not be in a position to buy superphosphate for top-dressing to the extent that is practised now, and, in fact, some may cease the use of the fertiliser altogether. The whole situation is most distressing particularly when viewed from the standpoint of the revenue derived by the State from the use of superphosphate throughout the agricultural areas.

Hon. H. Seddon: What is the reason for the increased price?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I have gone into that matter rather fully, and I certainly think there is justification for an increase in the price. Certainly the manufacturers put up a good case in support of the increase.

Hon. V. Hamersley: All monopolists do.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: They were probably right in their contentions.

The Chief Secretary: What constituted the justification for the increased price?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: The big increase in freight charges and in other costs. Professor Copland said that the increase was justifiable.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The Commonwealth Government is in control of increased costs.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: But the Government cannot prevent increased costs arising. I hope I am wrong in my conclusions, but I certainly believe there is an increase in the price of superphosphate to the extent I have indicated. If steps could be taken to decrease that added burden on the producers, the results would be beneficial not only to the State but to the Commonwealth. Particularly would the position of the State be improved if such a result could be achieved. I trust the Government will take this matter up with a view to ascertaining what can be done to relieve the position. Even a reduction of 10s. a ton would be of great assistance. If something is not done, the effect will operate seriously upon the producers of Western Australia. The Government should also consider the position regarding the

phosphatic rock deposits between Fremantle and Geraldton. I know the claim is made that the deposits have been tested, but the test carried out was most unsatisfactory. The rock was left in bags for so long that the bags themselves rotted and when the rock was tested, there was as much sand as rock present. Many difficulties arise in connection with the supply of phosphatic rock, but surely the Government would find it worth while to exploit the caves that are open so as to be sure that a proper test was carried out. If that were done, we would know whether the claims of those who consider value attaches to the phosphatic rock are right or wrong. While there are many caves open, there are others that still remain closed. Such a test would not cost very much. The rock could be landed at Fremantle for 25s. per ton, and I understand that half-a-ton of phosphate is obtained from a ton of phosphatic rock.

The Chief Secretary: Do you suggest that the State Government should work the deposits?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, I do not suggest that the Government itself should work the deposits, but that it should take samples and have them analysed. The Government could also investigate the statement made that the phosphatic belt reaches from Yanchep to Jurien Bay. If the quantity is there and we can be assured regarding the quality, then the State should take steps to see that the deposit is exploited.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Is it not a limestone deposit?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: No, it is phosphatic rock. I have received information from several sources regarding the position, and many people are so sure in their views that the Government would be perfectly justified in investigating the matter, particularly as the earlier test was an exceedingly unsatisfactory one.

What appeals to me as a serious occurrence was brought to my notice during recent weeks. I refer to action taken under the Profiteering Prevention Act, despite which the provisions of that measure have been entirely ignored. That applied to the fixing of the price of meat for wholesale butchers. Members heard the Minister, in answer to a question to-day, say that the price was not fixed. If that be so, why

did the announcement by Mr. White appear in the Press in which he said he would agree to increase the price of mutton by $\frac{1}{2}$ d.? If the Minister's statement is correct, it certainly is amazing that such an announcement could have appeared in the Press.

The Chief Secretary: Go to your own people about it.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am making representations to the Government, which is responsible for the action taken under the Profiteering Prevention Act. Last session we passed that legislation, and Parliament laid down what was to be carried out. Section 8 of the Act reads—

In the administration of this Act the Commissioner shall be subject to the direction and control of the Minister.

So members see from that, that the Minister controls the position!

Hon. J. Cornell: That is only theoretically.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I construe definite statements in an Act of Parliament as meaning what they say and do not regard them as merely theoretical.

Hon. J. Cornell: The hon. member has been a Minister of the Crown and knows the position.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: As a Minister of the Crown I accepted responsibility for whatever action was taken.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: At any rate the House passed the legislation and at the time we were told it was loaded.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: This provision was inserted; it was not loaded.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Loaded only theoretically!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Section 11 sets out—

The Commissioner may at his own discretion, or at the request of any member of the public, upon good cause shown, and shall, when required so to do by the Minister, investigate and report to the Minister upon all or any of the following matters:—

Then the various matters are set out, so that the duties of a Commissioner are clearly laid down.

Hon. G. B. Wood: Anyhow they are implied.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: They are not implied, because the Act says he must do

these things that are set out. Then there is Section 13 which reads—

The Governor may from time to time, on the report and advice of the Commissioner under Section 11 of this Act, by proclamation:—

- (1) Fix and declare for any commodity—
 - (a) The maximum price;
 - (b) different maximum prices according to differences in quality or description or in the quantity sold, or in respect of different conditions, terms, or localities of trade, commerce or sale; or
 - (c) different maximum prices for different parts of the State;
 - (d) maximum prices on a sliding scale;
 - (e) maximum prices on a condition or conditions;
 - (g) maximum prices on a percentage basis on landed or other costs.

Subsection (3) reads—

Every such proclamation shall take effect upon the publication thereof in the *Gazette*, or upon a later date, to be thereby fixed.

The Act sets out clearly and distinctly that the Commissioner must investigate the whole position. Can the Commissioner say that, in discussing this matter with the wholesale and retail distributors, he could possibly know the condition and costs of stock? Let members consider the position last August when sheep were worth about 14s. per head. Since then the value of those sheep has doubled. On what basis can that stock be replaced on a farm?

Hon. J. Cornell: The sheep are there to-day, but they are carrying no condition.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: If the sheep are carrying no condition, how can the butchers secure their meat supplies?

The Chief Secretary: Are you expressing the view of the producers?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I am expressing my views on the position. The sheep to which Mr. Cornell referred have had to be fed at a high cost. Not only has the cost of the feed itself been high but also the cost entailed in the work of feeding. The Commissioner should have observed the Act. He should have called together the people concerned, the producers, and obtained from them evidence as to the actual position compared with that of last August when the declared price was acted upon.

The Chief Secretary: He did not fix the price.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I know he did not, but he influenced the wholesale butchers to fix the price.

Member: He threatened them.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: They fixed the price under his direction. They dared not have done it otherwise. What is the result? It might be said that the price fixed was to the benefit of the consumers, but it was nothing of the sort. The Commissioner had conferences with the wholesale and retail butchers. From the former he received an assurance that the price of beef was 5½d. and the price of mutton was 6d., which has since been increased to 6½d. He did not, however, receive any assurance from the retail butchers as to what the consumers would be charged. Consequently, neither the producer nor consumer was given any consideration at all, and I do not hesitate to say that the whole situation has been brought about by the wholesale butchers who raised an agitation to have the meat market lowered. Consumers on the basic wage receive increases according to the value of the increased prices of commodities, of which meat is one of the most important. Consequently, no injury is inflicted on them. Both Federal and State officers of the civil service also receive increases on the basic wage. In this State, the amount received as increase on the basic wage is £30 per year, and the amount received by Federal civil servants is £20 a year. If, as might be the case, the fixing of the price of meat is necessary, that fixation should be carried out in the proper manner. It has, however, been done in the wrong way. The Act provides that the Commissioner must inquire into the matter and fix the price, and it is no use either he or the Minister or anybody else trying to tell me that that arrangement between the department and the wholesale butchers did not have an effect.

Hon. J. Cornell: Surely the hon. member does not say that Mr. White fixed the price unfairly?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Mr. White is very conscientious, and I do not accuse him of having wittingly done anything wrong. He has, however, made a tremendous blunder in doing something I have never known him do before, namely, depart from an Act under which he operates.

The Chief Secretary: I have already told you that he did not fix the price.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I know. But what right had he to call together two bodies of

distributors? He is not there for that purpose; his duty is to say what is a just price. He has to inquire into the position, arrive at a decision, secure the Minister's approval and declare a price by proclamation in the "Government Gazette." That is his duty and it has not been done. The position is very unsatisfactory and absolutely wrong.

The Chief Secretary: Is that the view of the producers?

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: Judging from that question, the Minister appears to come here to carry out the directions of the trade unions. Surely I have a mind of my own and can use it. I am not directed by the producers, if that is what the Minister wants to know. I am directed by a sense of duty, which I am perfectly right in following.

Regarding the wheat position, I am sorry that I overlooked one matter. I am sure that every member of this Chamber acquainted with the position and also the farmers of Western Australia stood aghast when they heard that Mr. Abey was enlisting. If ever there was a man who might be regarded as performing an essential service, that man is the head of the Agricultural Bank in this State. There never was a better appointment made than that of Mr. Abey to that post. He is a competent man who was doing a wonderful service, and I am sorry that the Government agreed to liberate him in order that he might enlist. His services to the nation in war time as head of the most important institution in the State, from the producers' point of view, are far more valuable than they could be in a military capacity. I am sorry he has enlisted, but the matter is beyond remedy now and there is no use in discussing it. However, his loss will be keenly felt, and we can only hope that when the war is over he will return in his usual good health and be able to continue the work he has been doing so well for a considerable time.

We are commencing another session, and we are doing so on this occasion with no information as to what legislation is likely to be introduced by the Government. Surely the Government could have found time to prepare some Bills or at least announce them. Surely a decision has been arrived at regarding some of the Bills it is intended to bring down. We should have been given some idea of the work awaiting us this ses-

sion, but we are in the position of having not the slightest indication of what we are to be given to discuss.

The Chief Secretary: There is some indication in the Lieut.-Governor's Speech.

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: There is an indication in the Speech that the Government intends to introduce legislation, but there is no statement about any particular legislation. That is what I am referring to. I hope that we shall not have to consider legislation similar to certain measures that were before us last session. This is no time for bickering and quarrelling over Bills in this Chamber.

The Honorary Minister: Hear, hear!

Hon. C. F. BAXTER: I hope that the Honorary Minister's "Hear, hear" represents the feelings of the Ministry and that it was genuine. I am afraid, however, that it was sarcasm on his part and that he is not sincere. Nevertheless, I trust the Government will recognise that this is not the time for the introduction of contentious legislation. The Government will be well advised, so far as I am concerned, to refrain from bringing down such measures until the air is much clearer, that is, until the war situation has improved. There will be plenty of legislation to discuss in addition to war measures. For my part, I shall do all I possibly can to facilitate the passage of any necessary legislation, and hope that my plea regarding contentious Bills will not fall on deaf ears. I support the motion.

HON. J. CORNELL (South) [5.51]: I join Mr. Baxter in extending a welcome to the new members of this Chamber. We cannot really say that Sir Hal Colebatch is a new member: he is more or less a brand plucked from the burning and returned to us, and I am sure he will strengthen the debates in a section of this House. I am pleased also to welcome Mr. Welsh, whose broad knowledge of the North-West, breadth of vision and wealth of tolerance will go a long way to raise the prestige of this Chamber. I want also to welcome Mr. Roche. Many are the times that Mr. Roche and I have crossed swords at returned soldiers' conferences. I am not giving away any secrets when I say that Mr. Roche's presence there was most helpful. I also add my commiserations to those who have fallen by the wayside, particularly to Mr. Franklin,

a grand old patriarch of the Legislative Council. It would be superfluous for me to deal with the excellent services he has rendered almost for half a century in this State in both a civic and legislative capacity. I also regret, in a way, the departure of Mr. Wittenoom. Whatever his shortcomings might have been, one thing we can say of him is that he was a good chap and a good pal; and, after all, those two attributes cover a multitude of omissions. I further regret that the avoirdupois of the North Province has been reduced by the absence of Mr. Angelo. However, Mr. Welsh, I am sure, will adequately represent the interests of that province.

Since last session wonderful changes have taken place in this old world of ours. I deplore that my early anticipations and pessimistic views as to how far and to what extent the enemy might progress have been more than fulfilled. I would join issue with Mr. Baxter regarding Mr. Moore's observations about the fifth column. Mr. Moore is a soldier who got a good strafing in the last war, and he spoke with a full knowledge, as far as Germanic power was concerned, of the war of 1914-18. Knowing Mr. Moore as I do, I think he took into consideration the progress that Germany has made in the last ten years, and I agree with what he had to say about over-rating the fifth column. For Denmark, Holland and Belgium to stand up to the forces arrayed against them was humanly impossible. Anyone who has followed international developments in recent years must come to that conclusion. The people of Denmark had a full realisation of the chap next door and what he could do if they attempted to resist him. I think Mr. Moore was correct when he expressed the view—and in doing so he did a good service to the community generally—that it was the greatness of the forces arrayed against them that led to the downfall of those small countries more than treachery in the countries that were overrun.

On another point I join issue with Mr. Baxter, namely, his references to the part that the trade unions have played in our war effort. I will not allude to the Labour Party in this connection though, in using the term "trade unions," I practically include the Labour Party. The part played by the trade unions has been highly commendable. If there is any one member of this House

who has had occasion to entertain a little ill-feeling towards the forces of Labour, I am he. Ever since I parted from the Labour Party on the conscription issue in 1916, every effort has been made to drive me out of politics, and it is certainly not the fault of the Labour Party that I stand here to-day as a member of this House. That, however, is by the way. We should always be prepared to give credit where credit is due. I recently visited three of the Eastern States and made inquiries there, and found that regardless of what the Press might say as to what the Labour Party is doing and what it ought to do, no charge can be laid against the trade unions of failure to pull their full weight in the war effort. When Sir Donald Cameron came here on the recruiting drive for the Royal Australian Air Force, which is the essential force, I told him that if men were required capable of putting pilots in the air and keeping them afloat, they could be obtained only through the great trade union movement of Australia. Everywhere we find the trade unionists—fitters, turners and all other classes of mechanics—pulling their weight in the major task that confronts Australia, not only to assist the effort overseas but to put our own house in order. This is being done, of course, by the production of munitions.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That is, when the factories were able to get a bit of coal.

Hon. J. CORNELL: A very good course to adopt, I suggest, is to forget the past and deal only with the immediate future. If we consider what happened during the coal dispute, we will find that when the British Empire was confronted by trouble as never before since the time of the Conqueror, the coal strike collapsed, and that is something to remember, seeing that the most militant section of Australian trade-unionism was involved.

Hon. W. J. Mann: That was not the fault of the miners. They would have been on strike yet if they had had their way.

Hon. J. CORNELL: The hon. member cannot tell me that the coal strike would have been brought to an end except by the action of the miners themselves. The attitude they took was that the very existence of the Empire was jeopardised. These recriminations will get us nowhere.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You are mentioning them.

Hon. G. Fraser: They certainly do not make for unity.

Hon. J. CORNELL: I have made careful inquiry and I say that the trade union movement has not failed to put its full weight behind Australia's war effort. I was fortunate enough to be able to attend two sittings of the Commonwealth Parliament at which legislation was passed that six months ago would have been thought impossible. This legislation invested the Commonwealth Cabinet with every power under the sun short of conscripting men for service overseas. For all practical purposes we may say there are two parties in the Federal Parliament, the one led by Mr. Menzies and the other by Mr. Curtin, and both parties were unanimous in handing over those powers to the Cabinet. Consequently, the Federal Government now has practically the power of life and death over every person in the Commonwealth, and has also the power to conscript wealth and all the resources of the country. In the conferring of those powers, the Labour Party played a full part. The only way in which Labour has not pulled its full weight is in the matter of forming a National Government. While Mr. Baxter was speaking, I interjected that Mr. Curtin had offered Mr. Menzies the equivalent of what is operating in New Zealand—a War Cabinet. I repeat that statement.

Hon. G. Fraser: Which is much better than a National Government.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Labour in New Zealand refused to form a National Government but did form a War Cabinet and included in it two members of the Opposition. That was Mr. Curtin's offer to Mr. Menzies, but Mr. Menzies refused to have anything short of a National Government. When we consider this matter in proper perspective, we must acknowledge that there is no National Government in four of the great countries of the British Empire, namely, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia, but there is a War Cabinet in New Zealand and a War Council in Canada. Personally I would not favour the formation of a National Government at this stage. I do not think the exigencies of the situation call for it. There is no comparison between the position of Australia and that of Great Britain.

Whatever party might be in power in Australia, now or in the future, it will have to pull its full weight and work to the limit of its capacity to further the war effort.

Otherwise the electors of the Commonwealth will say, "A plague on your house; out you go." All said and done, what really matters is the backing behind the Government, not the Government itself, and I have yet to realise that the people of Australia are not behind the Menzies Government. In support of this statement I have merely to mention the call for recruits for all arms of the service; the response has exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the authorities. So long as the war continues, I think the best policy will be to meet the situation that presents itself day by day, because the situation must change almost daily. There is one certain way in which we can pull our full weight, and that is by backing to the utmost extent the fighting forces of the Empire. If we do not back them to the fullest possible extent, how can we expect them to do their part? Therefore, I say that the obligation rests upon us to back our fighting forces to the utmost extent of our powers. Any attempt to theorise upon or visualise the condition of the Empire or the world a few months hence would be ridiculous, but I am satisfied that whether we win—

Hon. G. W. Miles: There is no "whether" about it.

Hon. J. CORNELL: —or make a draw of this great struggle, we can rest assured that the old order and the old shibboleths will be swept away. When victory is ours, the statesmen of the world will have some hard thinking to do in order to bring about reconstruction. However, our sole duty is to win through to victory, and we can best do that by disregarding the past, dropping party criticism and supporting to the utmost of our powers those of our men who are actively engaged in the struggle.

On motion by Hon. G. B. Wood, debate adjourned.

BILL—SUPPLY (No. 1), £2,500,000.

Received from the Assembly and read a first time.

House adjourned at 6.17 p.m.