

take tributing agreements and pay a big percentage merely for the sake of getting work, hoping that the tribute will develop. By giving the warden the right to revise the tributing agreement, the Minister is making provision for the adjusting of the conditions by the warden. The warden in our district has always made a point of seeing that the worker gets a fair deal. One or two little amendments are required in the Bill, which with those amendments will be a really good Bill.

On motion by Mr. Teesdale, debate adjourned.

House adjourned 10.57 p.m.

Legislative Council,

Thursday, 25th November, 1920.

	Page
Bills: Prices Regulation Act Amendment and Continuance, Assembly's amendments	1874
Sale of Liquor Regulation Act, Continuance, &c.	1880
Licensing Act Amendment, Continuance, &c.	1880
Motion: Returned Soldiers and railway passes...	1881

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

BILL—PRICES REGULATION ACT AMENDMENT AND CONTINUANCE.

Assembly's Amendments.

Schedule of two amendments made by the Assembly now considered.

In Committee.

Hon. J. Ewing in the Chair; the Minister for Education in charge of the Bill.

No. 1, Clause 6.—Insert after the word "of," in the sixth line, the word "producing":

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I move—

That the Assembly's amendment be agreed to.

The clause provides that the Governor may determine the maximum prices which may be charged for commodities, on the basis of manufacturing, landed, delivery or other cost. I do not see how the word "produc-

ing" can make any difference because "other cost" would cover it. If anything it widens the range of things which the Commission shall take into consideration, and the intention is that the Commission shall take all things into consideration.

Question put and passed; the Assembly's amendment agreed to.

No. 2.—Insert a new clause, to stand as Clause 2, as follows:—The sittings of the Commissioners at which witnesses are examined shall be held at such time and place as may be fixed by the Chairman, and except so far as the Commissioners, in their discretion, may think fit to sit in camera, shall be open to the public, and the evidence shall be taken on oath.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: When the Bill was before another place an effort was made to compel the Commission to take all evidence on oath and in public. This proposed new clause is a compromise, leaving it to the discretion of the Commission whether they take the evidence on oath or in public. At present the Commission have power to take evidence on oath.

Hon. J. Duffell: Is not that sufficient?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: They have done so, and have had the evidence reported in all cases where it was thought that prosecution might result. In cases of minor importance the evidence could be taken on oath or otherwise as the Commission thought fit, but there is nothing in the Act bearing on the question of taking the evidence in public. The Commission have not taken any evidence in public; in fact, the Act requires a declaration of secrecy from everyone connected with the Commission. The New South Wales Act provides that the Commission may in their discretion sit in camera. That is practically what the Assembly's amendment suggests.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: What does it say about taking evidence on oath?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: All of the Commissions take evidence on oath.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: In public?

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: All of them take evidence on oath and the other point is whether they shall sit in public. In Queensland there is one commissioner who may take evidence in public or private; it is left entirely to his discretion. In Victoria the Commission may in their discretion sit in camera. There is the suggestion that ordinarily the Commission there would sit in public.

Hon. J. Cornell: They do sit in public.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: That is so. In South Australia the Commission may take evidence in public or in private. In face of this and as the matter will be still left to the discretion of our Commission, I see no other course than to accept the compromise agreed to in another place. I consider that the Commission in Western Australia sitting in camera have done work as good or, if not better than the Commissions in other States.

Hon. J. Duffell: They have done better work in camera than have the others.

The MINISTER FOR EDUCATION: I do not know that the new clause will materially alter their method of procedure, but I must point out that the passing of this clause will set up the idea that the Commission should sit in public, and that they may sit in camera. When the Commission started their labours requests were made that they should sit in public, but they refused on the ground that the Act did not permit them to take evidence in public. If this clause is passed and requests are made that they should sit in public, they will not be able to shelter themselves behind the Act as before. They will have to decide whether, in the special circumstances, they should sit in public or in private. Personally, I question whether the administration of the Act will be improved by the new clause, but in the other States the Commissions may sit in public or private or are directed to sit in public with the right of sitting in camera if they think fit. I move—

That the Assembly's amendment be agreed to.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The leader of the House failed to give any reason why the amendment should be accepted and I intend to vote against it. Notwithstanding that the commissions in the Eastern States are permitted to take evidence in public, the Commission in Western Australia who have sat in camera, have succeeded in bringing prices down below those ruling in the other States. Generally speaking the articles controlled by the Commission are lower in price here than in other parts of the Commonwealth. Certain inquisitive people desire to know the landed cost of commodities, and if the evidence before the Commission were taken in public, they would be able to obtain that information and learn what profit the merchant was making.

Hon. T. Moore: What is wrong with that?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: A great deal, but some people know very little about commercial morality. The hon. member might think he was justified in getting goods at landed cost without consideration for the capital invested and the rent, wages, and other expenses which the merchant has to meet.

Hon. T. Moore: All those things are taken into account.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: If the proceedings of the Trades Hall were open to the public—

Hon. A. H. Panton: They are.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: Their special conferences are not.

Hon. T. Moore: The Arbitration Court is open to the public.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: A certain amount of secrecy veils the affairs of the Trades Hall, and it is only fair that people engaged in business and providing employment for others should not be compelled to make their costs known to casual people who merely

wish to pry into things which do not concern them.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: I am in accord with the Assembly's new clause. The annoyance of Mr. Duffell and his friends, as soon as publicity is proposed in connection with commercialism, is remarkable. The Prices Regulation Commission are a tribunal in the same way as the Arbitration Court, which regulates the price of the worker's only commodity, namely labour; and no one has ever suggested that the proceedings of the Arbitration Court should be held in camera. Subsection 2 of Section 70 of the Arbitration Act provides that at the discretion of the court parties may be allowed to inspect books, papers, and documents produced.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: But here the proposal is that everything shall be open to the public.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: The information obtained from such books, papers, and documents, however, is not to be made public. Yet all the evidence given in the Arbitration Court can be and is printed, including the worker's household details. What is good enough for the worker is good enough for the commercial man. Mr. Duffell has failed to give any reason whatever why the amendment should not be agreed to.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: If I thought any good would result from publication of the evidence given before the Prices Regulation Commission I would not object to this new clause. But it is not the public who fix prices; and therefore what good is the evidence to the public, except to satisfy mere inquisitiveness?

Hon. J. Cornell: What harm can result?

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: It is the Prices Regulation Commission who fix the prices, on evidence which is given on oath. Idle curiosity should not be catered for.

Hon. J. CUNNINGHAM: I am not very anxious to support the new clause as it stands. I should prefer that the discretion given by it to the Prices Regulation Commissioners were deleted. Why should they be permitted to discriminate as to whether they will hear a certain matter in public or in camera? Who will guide them in their discrimination? The Minister in charge of the Act? Or will they decide entirely on their own responsibility? The workers when seeking an increase in wages have to lay all their cards on the table, for public inspection. The wives of workers have been and are being forced in the Arbitration Court to describe even the articles of food and clothing that go into the home. The employer fights the worker every inch of the road, and the court wants to know on what the worker's claim for increased wages is based. The wives of workers are forced every week in the year to tell the Arbitration Court and the public what they and their children eat and wear. The entire expenditure of the worker's household is laid bare. Now, in this instance the methods of the big trading firms are concerned. The people have de-

manded that steps be taken to suppress profiteering; and the best way of achieving that end is considered to be publicity as regards the methods of trade and commerce. If there is nothing to be ashamed of in those methods, why are our friends so anxious to stifle even this new clause? The past three years have convinced the people that they are being exploited, and it is for that reason they demand publicity in the proceedings of the Prices Regulation Commission. I would prefer that the discretionary power should be eliminated from this new clause, and I hope the Committee will amend it in that direction. No doubt certain hon. members will tell us again, as they have told us before, that there is no exploitation going on, and that there is no need to check increase of prices. However, they have still to convince the people on that point. Let the public hear the evidence given before the Commission.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I am opposed to the new clause, though not altogether on the grounds stated by the last speaker. The proposal to establish a sort of educational system in the details of business through the medium of the Prices Regulation Commission will mean the destruction, to some extent, of the commercialism of to-day.

Hon. A. Sanderson: Exactly what they want to do.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: If publicity could in any way affect the fixing of prices, I should support the amendment. But the Commissioners have full power to investigate everything relative to the landed cost of any commodity, and since they are the only persons who can fix prices, what difference could publicity make to them? The only effect publicity would have would be to let one's competitors know everything connected with his business.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Only at the discretion of the Commissioners.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: I am not inclined to give the Commissioners that discretion. Surely it is sufficient to give them power to collect all evidence relative to the transaction. From time to time we have had in the city conferences dealing with matters much more important than price-fixing, conferences at which utterances opposed to the interests of the people and of the Empire are likely to be made; and when a motion is moved that the Press be admitted to report the proceedings, what happens? Why, the motion is lost, and it is decided to hand to the Press a resume of the proceedings. I will support the amendment for publicity if my hon. friends will support a Bill to provide that full publicity shall be given to the proceedings of every meeting held, not only in Western Australia but in the Commonwealth.

Hon. A. H. Panton: Make it a verbatim report, and I will.

Hon. R. J. LYNN: From the profiteering point of view there is nothing at the back of the opposition to the amendment. I

could tell hon. members a great deal about profiteering in walks of life other than the commercial. There is just as much profiteering amongst those who are in a position to sell their labour for the highest price as there is in connection with the sale of goods.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Both warring factions which have so forcibly expressed themselves to-day agree in their hearts that the Prices Regulation Commission has been of little or no utility. All that it has done has been to keep a lot of people quiet. The two warring factions would compromise on a harmless amendment such as this if it were thought the Bill was to be wiped off the statute-book. Mr. Duffell, in an impassioned address devoid of relevancy, advanced as a reason why the amendment should be negated that the proceedings at the Trades Hall are held in camera. For a long time I had the entre to that hall; to-day I have it not. Throughout my 25 years' experience of that institution, I always thought the proceedings were open to the Press. Moreover, never during that quarter of a century did I hear at the Trades Hall anything likely to disrupt the Empire, or indeed anything to which exception could be taken. I will support the leader of the House. Whether or not the amendment is agreed to, does not matter much. The Minister, quoting Eastern States legislation, said that all inquiries are held in public unless the Commissioners decide otherwise. In the amendment the reverse obtains. I view the Prices Regulation Commission as a court of law. The practice in all our courts of law is that they shall sit in public except when it is not in the interests of public morality that the court should be open to the public. If there is any objection on the grounds that the evidence submitted to the Prices Regulation Commission is not in the interests of public morality, then hon. members are justified in opposing the amendment. What has the commercial man to hide? Is there anything suspicious in his business? If not, he can have no objection to the court sitting in public. On the other hand, if his business is not above suspicion, it is the greater reason why it should be exposed to the public gaze. I take exception to the remarks of Mr. Holmes, who said that the court, if it sat in public, would provide a meeting place for Paul Prys. If it did no more than that, there could be but little objection to it. The three members who opposed the amendment have advanced no reason why we should not adopt the procedure of the Eastern States. They are in a better position than I to advance good and valid reasons, because they are all business men. If they could advance such reasons I should be prepared to reconsider my decision. The most momentous report ever presented to a Government of Australia is that of the Basic Wage Commis-

sion. The evidence taken before that Commission was taken in public.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: They made a nice mess of it too.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Hon. members now have "the wind up." They are afraid of what may happen. A properly constituted tribunal has arrived at a basic wage and the people of Australia will have it. Whether hon. members agree to this amendment or not, is immaterial. The main reason why I support it is that the public purse pays for this court, and there should be no differentiation between this court and any other.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: There is some misapprehension with regard to the functions of this Commission. It is not a court, as has been said. The duties are of an inquisitorial nature and very rightly so. If there is any profiteering going on, it is the duty of the Commission to overcome that difficulty and fix a price so that the public may get their goods at a reasonable figure and that merchants will not make undue profits out of them. The present Act is silent as to whether the inquiries made by the Commission shall be open to the public or not.

The Minister for Education: I do not think there is anything to stop it, but the Commission have interpreted the Act in this particular way.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: In an ordinary court of law one party prefers a claim against another. He has to establish that claim in the same way as the workers in the Arbitration Court have to establish their claim for a higher wage.

Hon. A. H. Panton: In this case the merchant claims a higher price for his goods and he has to establish his claim.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The Commission fixes the prices. If they have reason to think that the price is exorbitant they have power to make an inquiry and call for the production of the merchant's books. The merchant or manufacturer is not in the position of an ordinary claimant. The Commission take into account the cost of manufacture, production, landed costs and other costs. If there is anything in any business which one merchant must protect from another, it is his landed cost. The cost of the article is the very thing which enables him to tender for orders from time to time. If this landed cost was made public by the Commission, it would be open to all to know exactly what this man was paying for the importation of his goods, and to beat him in any tender that he might put in.

Hon. A. H. Panton: But it need not be made public.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: The man who would spy at these inquiries would be this other man's competitor in trade.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: And a brainless competitor, too.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: He would be there examining every detail of the evidence

and trying to get all the information he could of the mainspring of his rival's business.

Hon. J. Cornell: That would be a good argument if the Commission allowed different merchants to charge different prices.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: A trader might be brought before the Commission and an examination made of his books, because of the Commission having received word that he had been charging excessive prices. Evidence is then called to show how the costs are made up. He has to produce all his secret documents, which he would not be called upon to produce in an ordinary court of law. If the inquiry was held in public and the charge was found to be groundless, hon. members can see that great damage would be done to this man's trade, and he would probably be ruined. That is unfair. I am free to take up any attitude I please on a matter of this kind.

Hon. J. Mills: It is a good point.

Hon. J. NICHOLSON: I do not think it is right in the interests of our merchants that these disclosures should be made, and competitors given a mean advantage over another trader. In the circumstances I must vote against the motion.

Hon. J. E. DODD: We are only beating the air, because I feel that the amendment will be agreed to. The logical conclusion of compulsory arbitration is price fixing. If we have compulsory arbitration, we must have price fixing. If we have price fixing, why not apply the same test to price fixing as is applied to arbitration? To my mind there is very little difference. I am prepared to concede that there is something in the points which have been raised regarding trade competitor. Mr. Nicholson particularly referred to the danger arising from revealing such information on the part of one business man to his business competitors. I am rather surprised to hear him speak in that strain. Let me read to members a clause from a Bill which that hon. gentleman introduced only the other day. The Bill provided for the appointment of a board to deal with opticians, and in one clause it says—

The Chairman or Registrar of the board may by writing under his hand summon any person to attend before the board for the purpose of being examined with respect to any matter within the jurisdiction of the board. . . .

What that jurisdiction was we were not told, and to produce for the inspection of the board any documents in his possession, custody, or power relative to any such matter, and every person duly summoned as aforesaid who, without reasonable excuse, fails to attend after reasonable expenses have been paid or tendered to him, or attending refuses to be sworn or examined, or to produce any such documents when required so to do, shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £10.

Hon. J. Nicholson: That was a private inquiry.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: By business competitors.

Hon. J. E. DODD: Yes, by competitors who would have desired perhaps to wipe out some of these people.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I said I was prepared to accept an amendment to that provision.

Hon. J. E. DODD: In view of that clause, I am surprised that the hon. member should argue against the amendment suggested by the Legislative Assembly.

Hon. J. Nicholson: I did not quinciate that principle altogether.

Hon. J. E. DODD: The amendment is a logical sequence to price fixing. We find people very concerned regarding different items contributing to the cost of living, and sometimes in the Arbitration Court going a little bit too far, in my opinion, to get hold of little bits which are rather spicy. I have felt sorry at times when I have read evidence which girls have given in the court when dealing with the application for an award in the clothing trade.

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Who sent them there?

Hon. A. H. Pantou: They had to give evidence to save themselves from starvation.

Hon. J. E. DODD: There is not much harm to be done under the proposed amendment. It requires the Prices Regulation Commission to exercise a certain amount of discretion, but as the chairman is a representative business man, and the employers are also represented, surely the House can trust them to decide matters like this under discussion.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: What is the amendment? Are we discussing the new clause from the Legislative Assembly, or an amendment?

The CHAIRMAN: The new clause is the amendment we are discussing.

Hon. A. SANDERSON: I understand that an hon. member indicated that he proposed to strike certain lines out of the new clause.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member did not move in that direction.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The amendment is not of very much consequence, but I would like to put forward a phase of the question which has not been touched upon yet, for the purpose of showing why it is not necessary for this amendment to be inserted. It is generally known that merchants in the city purchase their goods for periods in advance. Orders are placed now for next winter's supplies. Merchants always try to secure sufficient to carry them through the season. Often something transpires which limits the sale of certain goods. Hence the necessity for the yearly or half-yearly sales so as to dispose of surplus goods.

Hon. J. Cornell: They do not forget their margin of profit.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The hon. member does not know what he is talking about. When the seasons open for certain classes of goods, the importer has to protect himself with a reasonable amount of profit. By way of

illustration let me suggest that he adds 25 per cent. to his out-of-pocket expenses.

Hon. A. H. Pantou: You are a bit on the light side.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: I will make it 100 per cent. if you like. It is only by way of illustration. Probably before he disposes of the whole of his goods, the business man will be selling some of them at 25 per cent. less than cost in order to turn the goods into cash. A good deal of that goes on to-day. If the amendment from another place were agreed to, and the traders' business percentages were made public, it might be stated that only 12½ per cent. was a reasonable margin and it would be fixed at that. What chance would that merchant have of averaging his expenses?

Hon. A. H. Pantou: Are there not other costs than landed costs? What are overhead charges?

Hon. J. DUFFELL: These include rent, wages, and all such charges. They have to be averaged out before a merchant can arrive at the actual cost of goods. There are some people in Perth who have travelled to the Old Country and to other parts of the world in order to get into touch with the manufacturer.

Hon. J. Cornell: Some of them want to trade with Germany now.

Hon. J. DUFFELL: The result is that those people have their goods landed at a lower cost than those who have to purchase through a London buyer who receives his commission. A man who has taken the former step is able to sell his goods at more favourable prices than his trade competitors are able to do. Under the conditions set up in the Bill if the amendment be carried, the man who has sent a representative home and made direct purchases from the manufacturer, has to reveal to all and sundry what his actual landed cost is. Taking that into consideration, in conjunction with the other point I have made regarding sales of surplus stocks, members will agree that it is unnecessary, unfair, and unreasonable to compel such merchants to disclose their business methods to the public in the manner suggested by the amendment.

Hon. T. MOORE: The speech of Mr. Duffell is against price fixing altogether. I have listened to the speeches of those who are opposed to the amendment, and I think their arguments are very poor.

Hon. J. Duffell: Give us something better then. You are incapable.

Hon. T. MOORE: That is just what some swelled-headed people would say.

Hon. J. Cornell: On a point of order.

Hon. J. Duffell: You are one of the worst yourself.

Hon. J. Cornell: I think the interjection of Mr. Duffell is hardly a fair one. It is not fair to say that a member of this House is incapable.

Hon. J. Duffell: He knows I did not mean any harm.

Hon. T. MOORE: Some members who are swelled-headed think they know everything and really know nothing. They have advanced arguments which had nothing whatever to do with this matter. One hon. member alleged that men who travelled to some conference where a certain set of individuals met together—

Hon. J. Duffell: I was not referring to Sinn Fein meetings in the Eastern States.

Hon. T. MOORE: Reference was made to conferences at the Trades Hall. If the hon. member knew anything whatever about the Trades Hall—

Hon. J. J. Holmes: Let us get down to the clause.

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member when he was hard up for an argument trotted out the flag and dragged in the British Empire. What has the British Empire got to do with this clause? One hon. member said that a certain conference was held for the purpose of disrupting the British Empire.

Hon. R. J. Lynn: On a point of order. No such statement was ever made. What I said was this: "If publicity was to be given to all commercial transactions, and if we were so anxious and desirous of publicity for conferences where the British Empire might be affected, members should also be in favour of giving publicity to any meetings held where statements might be made that would disrupt the Empire or State." I never said they were made, but I said that it was possible that meetings could be held at which such statements might be made.

Hon. T. MOORE: In answer to that unfounded charge, I would invite Mr. Lynn to look in at the Trades Hall and inspect the honour board there. When such charges as those are made, regarding the organisation I belong to, I think it is only right that I should answer them. I invite the hon. member to inspect those honour boards, which adorn the walls of the Trades Hall. The men whose names are on those boards were the bosses of the men who sat in conference and if those men were not patriotic, I do not know who are. The arguments were ridiculous, and I am surprised that they should be brought in here. Mr. Duffell referred to the effect on the public, and he spoke scathingly of the public.

Hon. J. Duffell: On a point of order. The hon. member accuses me of having spoken scathingly of the public. I deny that, and I ask for a withdrawal of the statement.

Hon. T. MOORE: I withdraw it, and I will say that he spoke of the public in a sneering tone.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must not cast reflections on other hon. members.

Hon. J. Duffell: I will ask for a withdrawal and an apology as well this time.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member must withdraw the remark.

Hon. T. MOORE: I withdraw it.

Hon. J. Duffell: And an apology.

Hon. T. MOORE: I tender the hon. member an apology.

Hon. J. Cornell: On a point of order, I claim that no individual hon. member is entitled to an apology. If a member apologises he must apologise to the House.

The CHAIRMAN: The hon. member apologised to the House.

Hon. J. Cornell: That is all right so long as it is understood. You rule that the hon. member must apologise to the House and not to Mr. Duffell?

The CHAIRMAN: I have already said so.

Hon. T. MOORE: I am not too well versed with the Standing Orders, and I am not worried about Mr. Duffell's quibbling. If I say things that hurt his feelings I can recall the fact that he at times has tried to hurt mine.

Hon. J. Duffell: Never.

Hon. T. MOORE: It is the public who really are to be considered in this matter. We are here to look after the interests of the general public and of no one else. When we have finished with the Bill we may bring the public back to that stage where they will have confidence in the Prices Regulation Commission. At the present time they have no confidence in that body. We hear on every side talk about profiteering; therefore, if witnesses can be examined in public the desired effect will be attained, and public confidence will be restored. I believe that most of the business men in the city know pretty nearly what the other fellow is paying for his goods. It is known what is being paid for the goods on the boat, and after all that is the real cost. My friend shakes his head, but he knows that what I say is a fact.

Hon. J. Duffell: No.

Hon. T. MOORE: We know that there are commission agents on the other side of the world who do much of the business and do it for several firms. Those people buy from the same man, and therefore they know what the prices are. The interests of the importers are really safeguarded provided those importers are satisfied with a fair profit. Mr. Duffell has suggested that the trader should not be asked to lay the whole of his cards on the table. We maintain that he should do that. If that is done, and if the public can be made to believe that the man who imports and who is doing business for the public generally is only asking what is a fair thing, we shall get away from a lot of the existing discord.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: There is in this community a set of trained business men, and it is a good thing for the community that we have them in our midst. When Western Australia came into prominence 25 years ago the business people of the Eastern States sent some of their best men here because they saw the development that was likely to take place. We have keen business men in this State, and some of them are to be found amongst the old proper crowd. It is a good thing for the community that we have had those people

here. We have also a set of parasites who have never served an apprenticeship and have never been in business. Therefore they cannot understand how the other man has succeeded. The other man makes a profit because he knows his business. He watches the markets of the world, he buys well, and is able to sell well. We have in this State the cheapest priced goods in Australia. This is due also to the fact that the public of Western Australia are over-catered for. The Prices Regulation Commission have nothing to do with that. The parasitical crowd want to know how the other man conducts his business, and they want to see where he buys. If we are going to force the keen business men to lay their cards on the table, they are likely to rebel. In carpentering and blacksmithing and other trades, it is insisted that youths shall serve an apprenticeship before they can come into competition with the skilled worker, and it is insisted that there shall be only a limited number of apprentices.

Hon. A. H. Panton: The Arbitration Court insists on that.

Hon. J. J. HOLMES: When it comes to competition in trade, our friends want those men who have served a lifetime in learning their business to lay their cards on the table. The Prices Regulation Commission have power at the present time to compel a merchant to produce his books, and they can fix the price of a commodity without the inquisitive public knowing the details.

Hon. E. M. CLARKE: What I want to know is whether the Prices Regulation Commission want all the information they can get in order to disclose it to the public, or whether they merely require it in order to enable them to fix the price. It appears to me that we have not much confidence in the Commissioners, and we are going to use them to secure the information in order to make it public. If I were on the Commission I would quickly get off it, because I would consider that Parliament no longer had any confidence in me. To my mind this is a slur on the Prices Regulation Commissioners.

Hon. J. MILLS: The whole discussion hinges upon whether the Prices Regulation Commission shall take evidence in camera or in public. The amendment is a compromise, and the Committee should accept it.

Hon. J. CORNELL: Mr. Holmes referred to the excellent business men we have in Western Australia and the long training that they have had. Had he stopped there his argument would have been sound, and he would have done himself justice. Then he stated that as a result of their sound business training, prices here were lower than they were in the Eastern States. There is another large section of the community who come into direct contact with the highly trained business men, and that may be one of the reasons why the worker renders better service here than does the worker in the East. If there is any credit to be given for the present low prices of commodities in West-

ern Australia, I think all parties should be included.

Hon. A. H. PANTON: What the amendment proposes is embodied in the Arbitration Act, and as one who has had a good deal to do with the Arbitration Court, I may inform members that on many occasions the court has called for employers' books. In no instance have the employees' representatives had the opportunity of inspecting those books. They have always been inspected by the court, and the court only. That is all that we ask in the amendment. If Mr. Holmes is not aware of that, I am very much surprised. There is hardly a commodity with which the Commission have dealt that is not controlled by a combination. The retail grocers have the finest organisation I know of. Their executive meet monthly and fix prices. If they fix the price of tinned milk at a certain figure, there are only two black-legging shops at which milk can be bought more cheaply. Let anyone try to buy a ton of galvanised iron from Bateman & Sons, and then try elsewhere. It is absurd to say that competition will have any effect. The organisations are so complete that they are able to fix prices and show the Commission what they can do. If the Commission are given discretion to take evidence in public, they will exercise it as does the Arbitration Court, and nothing will be divulged to the parasites of whom the hon. member spoke.

Question put and a division taken with the following result:—

Ayes	..	..	..	10
Noes	..	..	..	8
				—
Majority for	..	..	..	2
				—

AYES.

Hon. C. F. Baxter	Hon. J. Mills
Hon. H. P. Colebatch	Hon. T. Moore
Hon. J. Cornell	Hon. A. H. Panton
Hon. J. Cunningham	Hon. A. J. H. Saw
Hon. J. E. Dodd	Hon. H. Stewart
	(Teller.)

NOES.

Hon. E. M. Clarke	Hon. J. Nicholson
Hon. V. Hamersley	Hon. E. Rose
Hon. J. J. Holmes	Hon. A. Sanderson
Hon. R. J. Lynn	Hon. J. Duffell
	(Teller.)

Question thus passed; the Assembly's amendment agreed to.

Resolutions reported, the report adopted, and a message accordingly returned to the Assembly.

BILLS (2)—FIRST READING.

- 1, Sale of Liquor Regulation Act Continuation.
- 2, Licensing Act Amendment Continuation.

Received from the Assembly.

MOTION—RETURNED SOLDIERS AND RAILWAY PASSES.

Order of the Day read for the resumption from the 16th November of the debate on the following motion by the Hon. A. H. Pantou:—

That in the opinion of this House returned soldiers who are attending the Base Hospital, Fremantle, or the vocational training schools in Perth, should be carried free of charge.

And on the amendment by the Hon. J. Cornell—

That all the words after "House" be struck out and the following inserted in lieu: "the Government should (1) grant free transit over the State tramways to ex-members of the A.I.F. who are blinded or totally and permanently incapacitated, or eligible for full membership in the Maimed and Limbless Men's Association; (2) and in the event of the request made by the Federal Executive of the Returned Soldiers' League to the Federal Government being definitely refused, grant to ex-members of the A.I.F. free railway transit provided that they are (a) blinded or totally and permanently incapacitated; (b) inmates of or attending for treatment at military hospitals, sanatoria, convalescent homes, and hostels; (c) eligible for full membership in the Maimed and Limbless Men's Association.

Amendment put and passed; the question as amended agreed to.

On motion by Hon. J. Cornell, resolution transmitted by message to the Assembly and its concurrence desired therein.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

QUESTION—REPATRIATION, LAND CLEARING AT PIESSE'S BROOK.

Hon. P. COLLIER asked the Premier: 1, How many acres have been cleared with the aid of the Government tractor on Location 784, owned by one Harold Raphael under the Soldier Settlement Scheme at Piesse's Brook? 2, What is the total cost to date of clearing such acreage?

The PREMIER replied: 1, Six acres cleared and about four acres in course of completion. 2, It is not possible to arrive at the actual cost of clearing operations on this particular block until the whole of the clearing in the Piesse's Brook area has been completed. The settlers will be charged at a flat rate, which, it is estimated, will not exceed £25 per acre.

QUESTION—STOCK INSPECTION, VICTORIA DISTRICT.

Mr. M. J. Logue's Appointment.

Mr. WILCOCK asked the Honorary Minister: 1, What was the date of the cancellation of Mr. M. J. Logue's appointment as honorary inspector of stock for the Victoria District? 2, What was the reason for the cancellation of the appointment? 3, Did this honorary inspector during his term of office do any wrong action in connection with his duties? 4, If so, when? 5, Have any defaulters for non-compliance with the provisions of the Stock Diseases Act, or the regulations made thereunder, been prosecuted in the Victoria or any other district? 6, If so, what are their names and the dates and places of their prosecution? 7, Are the police merely collecting declarations or performing other duties under the Stock Diseases Act? 8, If so, what other duties are they performing under that Act? 9, What is the object of the Department of Agriculture in appointing the police of the district to administer the Stock Diseases Act and the regulations thereunder when the honorary inspector was doing the work gratis? 10, Are stock being sent into clean districts without being dipped within the preceding seven days? 11, If so, what is the reason of the alteration of the previous practice? 12, Has the term been extended to six months? 13, If so, does the Minister think the owners of stock in clean districts are sufficiently safeguarded? 14, Who watches and superintends the dipping of sheep north of Geraldton? 15, What are the numbers of declarations and of sheep dipped during the last year of Mr. Logue's appointment and during the year previous to his appointment in the district? 16, Is the Minister aware that Mr. Logue, with a view to keeping the sheep of the district clean, has dipped over 10,000 sheep, in addition to finding the labour to do so, free of cost? 17, If the foregoing facts are correct, will the Minister consider the advisability of re-appointing Mr. Logue as

Legislative Assembly,

Thursday, 25th November, 1920.

	Page
Questions: Repatriation, Land clearing at Piesse's Brook	1881
Stock Inspection—Mr. Logue's appointment	1891
Sandalwood, exempted areas	1882
Porter Oake's case	1882
Leave of absence	1882
Bills: Licensing Act Amendment, continuance, 3r.	1882
Sale of Liquor Regulation Act, continuance, 3r.	1882
Railway Classification Board, report	1882
Herdsmen's Lake Drainage, 2r.	1882
Narrogin Recreation Reserve, 2r.	1883
Grain Elevators, 2r.	1884
Rottnest Island, 2r.	1885
Innkeepers, 2r., Com. report	1893
Divorce Act Amendment, 2r.	1894
Workers Compensation Act Amendment, 2r.	1895
Nurses Registration, withdrawn	1890
Mining Act Amendment, 2r., Com.	1896

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