

Hon. N. Keenan: No plus?

The MINISTER FOR WORKS: There is no plus in our case.

Progress reported.

House adjourned at 6.10 p.m.

Legislative Council.

Wednesday, 28th October, 1942.

	PAGE
Motion: Butter industry, to inquire by Select Committee	1051
Bills: Main Roads Act (Funds Appropriation), 3R., passed	1044
Administration Act Amendment, report	1044
Industrial Arbitration Act Amendment, 2R.	1044
Adjournment, special	1051

The PRESIDENT took the Chair at 2.15 p.m., and read prayers.

BILL—MAIN ROADS ACT (FUNDS APPROPRIATION).

Read a third time and *passed*.

BILL—ADMINISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Report of Committee adopted.

BILL—INDUSTRIAL ARBITRATION ACT AMENDMENT.

Second Reading.

Debate resumed from the previous day.

HON. E. M. HEENAN. (North-East) [2.23]: This is the shortest Bill that has been before the House this year and has been described as a very important measure. It simply proposes to amend Section 124A of the Industrial Arbitration Act by replacing the word "may," in a very material part of the Act, by the word "shall." The effect is to remove the discretion now given to the Arbitration Court and to make it mandatory on the court to alter the basic wage in accordance with the Government Statistician's quarterly cost of living figures. Members were given by the Chief Secretary a very full outline of the history of the Act, and I do not propose to recapitulate anything he said in that regard.

The immediate events that led up to the introduction of this measure are well within the memory of members. In February last the President of the Arbitration Court, for

the first time, exercised his discretion by refusing to increase the basic wage in accordance with the figures supplied by the Government Statistician. That brought about conditions that had tremendous consequences and I think the House will agree with me that they were so serious that members themselves were deeply interested in the position. The Government felt that something had to be done, and it was eventually done. The unions representing the workers affected by the President's decision first of all questioned it by appealing to a higher tribunal. They should be commended for adopting that course. They were unsuccessful in their application and eventually the promulgation of a National Security Regulation solved the problem by vesting power in the Premier to effect the desired alteration himself.

Hon. J. Cornell: Why not leave it at that?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I will deal with that phase as I go along. The situation was most serious and it is no exaggeration to say that an industrial upheaval of the first magnitude was imminent. We can all be grateful that it was avoided. Members may criticise the Government regarding the means it employed to avert the industrial trouble, but all will agree, I think, that the means almost justified the end. The situation apparently was that over a period of about 11 years all parties concerned had been lulled into the belief, or perhaps had held that belief from the beginning, that the rise or fall in the basic wage was automatic. At any rate, that is how it worked out over the period I have mentioned.

When the quarterly cost of living figures were presented by the Government Statistician and they showed a decline, the court considered the position and reduced the basic wage. That was done on a number of occasions. Then over a sequence of years when the Statistician's figures showed an increase the court granted additions to the basic wage. Thus it was generally understood, and believed, that the increase or decrease in the basic wage was automatic. I think most members will agree that that was how it should have been, and if the Bill be agreed to that will be the position.

Hon. J. Cornell: That was not the argument in 1930.

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Mr. Cornell has cast his mind back to 1930 and tells mem-

bers now that that was not the argument submitted at that time. I have not read the debates he refers to in order to refresh my memory, and I do not remember what actually took place then. Some members can cast their minds back to the time when Mr. Cornell said things he would not like to repeat now. I believe that some years ago when Mr. Cornell spoke the atmosphere was tinged with red. Nowadays when he speaks I find the atmosphere is a sombre grey.

Hon. J. Cornell: The hon. member has a long way to go before he is as red as I am now.

Hon. T. Moore: He once wore a red tie!

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: Good luck to him! As time goes on, most of us modify our views or intensify them. The argument suggested in Mr. Cornell's interjection is rather dangerous for use in debate. If the Bill be agreed to, the practice that has been followed for 11 years will be continued. I agree that we must be very careful in tampering with courts, but the Bill will not have the effect of interfering with any judgment of the Arbitration Court. We are surely entitled to improve statutes or alter them as we think fit.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: You would not describe this Bill as an improvement, would you?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: That is a matter of opinion. It has worked out satisfactorily over a period of years.

Hon. A. Thomson: Then why not leave the Act as it is?

Hon. E. M. HEENAN: I think members will agree that the basic wage should rise or fall in keeping with the variations in the cost of living. If the basic wage was fixed at £4 11s. for the current year and there was a rise in the cost of living to the extent of 5s. and the Government Statistician's figures afforded the necessary proof, is it not right that the wages of the workers should be increased in order to cover the rise in the cost of living? I do not think anyone would be prepared to assert that if the cost of living increased, wages should remain stationary. I do not think opponents of the Bill will adopt that attitude. If they agree with my argument, there can be no harm in passing the Bill. The workers and employers alike will know where they stand, and the court will not be under the necessity of investigating aspects that do not concern it. There is not very much more that

I can say in support of the Bill which should be agreed to, seeing that it will remove any doubt that may exist as a result of the recent decision of the Arbitration Court and will clarify future relations between the employers and employees. I hope, therefore, that this short measure will be accepted by the House.

HON. A. THOMSON (South-East): I have listened with interest to the Chief Secretary's arguments as well as those of Mr. Heenan. In effect, the Minister said that for a considerable period the Act had been employed entirely in accordance with the principle which this amending Bill declares, the substitution of "shall" for "may." Back goes my mind over many years when similar legislation was before another Chamber and we were told that Western Australia's Industrial Arbitration Act was the finest measure of its kind in the southern hemisphere or, in fact, in the world, and that this applied also to the administration of the statute. On this occasion the President of the Arbitration Court decided to consider the position of Western Australia and of the workers as a whole by ruling that the court required further time for consideration of the position. It astounds me to hear that we were faced with a serious industrial upheaval. Here we are confronting a war and being told, and told repeatedly, both in this Chamber and elsewhere, that nothing should be done to interfere with or hamper the war effort, but that all our efforts should be combined towards the winning of the war. Yet now we have it said that a serious industrial upheaval was threatened, and the hon. member in question declared that the unions were to be commended for their action in approaching the Supreme Court, and also for appealing to Canberra, where a sympathetic Commonwealth Minister found that a National Security Regulation could be promulgated—involving a considerable increase in the cost of administration of Western Australia as a whole!

Let me draw attention to the biased attitude of the present Government. In this Chamber on three different occasions I have moved the disallowance of regulations dealing with drought relief conditions. I urged that the Government should give to the settlers affected not a donation, not an increase in pay, but merely an advance in accordance with the terms and conditions upon which the money had been lent to this State

by the Commonwealth Government. The Chief Secretary, in his reply, said that it was the duty of Parliament and the Government to safeguard the finances of the State. That was the position as far as the primary producers were concerned. Actually no money whatever was given, but definite loans were made. Therefore, the Government's attitude in regard to the £400,000 or £500,000 made available through the action of Cabinet amounted to an over-riding of the Arbitration Court, a tribunal which has always been looked upon as the workers' safeguard. That, indeed, has been the slogan and the reason for the existence of the Industrial Arbitration Act—to protect employees from unscrupulous employers and to provide the means of avoiding disputes. On the whole this legislation has worked very satisfactorily in Western Australia. Still, on the one hand the Government felt it to be their bounden duty to safeguard the State in regard to loans for farmers, and therefore refused to allow the money to be used as suggested by the Commonwealth Government, and on the other hand at one fell swoop increased the burden upon the Western Australian people to the extent of some £400,000. The Government would have been wise not to adopt that attitude. They could have brought down the present Bill. Had they adopted the latter course, I would have felt more disposed to extend consideration to the measure. However, I do not believe the proposed amendment will advantage the worker.

Are we to take away discretion from three free men, the President of the Arbitration Court and his co-members, to give their decision after hearing the evidence, and are we to say to them, "This is what you must do"? In that case, what is the use of having a judge and his two colleagues to adjudicate? There is much logic in Sir Hal Colebatch's statement that the country districts, lacking necessary facilities, viewed as a whole—and nobody knows this better than the Chief Secretary, who administers the Education Department—the provision of many sorely needed schools is awaited, and it is not possible to provide even technical education for country children. Yet we find that under a National Security Regulation what has been described can be done! Had it been done by Act of Parliament, I would have approved of it; but I must withhold my approval to

anything of the kind done under the cloak of a National Security Regulation, which, according to Mr. Heenan, the unions were able to induce the Commonwealth Government to promulgate. If there is one thing we have to safeguard strenuously it is the rights and privileges of this Parliament.

Hon. J. Cornell: It is to be hoped that the rule will work both ways and that the Government will extend consideration to the blackfellows!

Hon. A. THOMSON: Yes. It appears to me that the Government's action in using a National Security Regulation to over-ride the Industrial Arbitration Court, of which we have been so proud, was highly improper. That action has added materially to the financial burden of Western Australia. Like some other speakers on the Bill, I wonder whether the Commonwealth Grants Commissioners will give consideration to this action of our State Government when making their next recommendations. That is anticipating what may happen. There is one thing I like about the Bill, and it is the portion which states that no one in receipt of a salary in excess of £699 per annum shall receive the benefit of any increase in the basic wage.

Hon. J. Cornell: And that would bristle with anomalies.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And that is only a red herring drawn across the trail.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That provision was not in the original Bill but was inserted in the Committee stage. I oppose the measure for the reasons I have stated. The Government is biased in this matter. We have only to remember what took place in this House not long ago when we were told the Government's duty is to safeguard the finances of the State. Did the Government safeguard the finances when it utilised the National Security Regulations in the direction I have indicated? The Industrial Arbitration Act has worked harmoniously up till now. At one stage it appeared that the President of the court had a definite leaning towards the workers, but apparently this is the first time, so far as I know, when he has definitely refused to increase the basic wage.

Hon. J. Cornell: He only tentatively refused, not definitely.

Hon. A. THOMSON: That is correct. The chances are that on securing further evidence he may feel inclined to reconsider his

decision. The Minister for Industrial Development has devoted a great deal of his time and attention to the establishment of secondary industries, and I do not think anyone is more sincere in that direction than is he. By his own act, however, he is nullifying all his efforts. I hope members will for the future remember the difference between the sympathies of the Government for the producers and its sympathies for another section of the community. When it considers it necessary to safeguard the finances of the State, it does so in connection with one section of the community only. I have for many years said that wages should follow the cost of living. My statements to that effect appear in "Hansard."

Hon. T. Moore: Quite right, too, but why not move in that direction now?

Hon. A. THOMSON: I am dealing with the Bill. I prefer that the President should have some latitude, and I give him credit for some commonsense. We know that very often magistrates, after hearing the evidence, will say, "I am sorry I have to impose a fine of £20 or £30 upon you, but the Act says I must do so, and you have pleaded guilty." They have no discretion in such matters. We know that on this occasion the President of the Arbitration Court did not please. The Government immediately said, "We will bring down a Bill to over-ride the decision of the President." It was wrong to introduce a measure of this kind which will shake the confidence of the public in the Arbitration Court. I oppose the second reading of the Bill.

HON. T. MOORE (Central): I support the Bill. Mr. Thomson is not quite correct in saying that the Bill, which is now known as the Industrial Arbitration Act, was considered the best piece of legislation of the kind in any part of the world.

Hon. A. Thomson: Mr. McCallum said it was, and I was in the House at the time he made the statement.

Hon. T. MOORE: That measure was amended, and Mr. Thomson forgets that. It is the amended legislation we are dealing with, the amendment that spoilt the original Act. The hon. member is wrong, and should admit it.

The PRESIDENT: The hon. member should address the Chair.

Hon. T. MOORE: In endeavouring to influence members Mr. Thomson has not stated the facts. He dealt with the original meas-

ure that became an Act in either 1922 or 1925. What we are dealing with now is an amendment to the amended measure.

Hon. A. Thomson: The Act was working satisfactorily until recently.

Hon. T. MOORE: The Act was amended for an important reason. Under the original measure, the court had the right once a year to declare a rise or fall in wages according to fluctuations in the cost of living.

Hon. A. Thomson: I know that.

Hon. T. MOORE: That worked very well until we experienced deflation. The employers then got busy, and wanted legislation enacted that would bring about a repudiation of the contract that had been entered into. The workers had their wages fixed from June to June. This House in the second portion of the year put through a Bill that gave the President of the court discretion. By that time, as we know, the cost of living was down. Mr. Cornell cannot deny this. In the next six months the workers had that privilege taken from them, notwithstanding that a contract was made for 12 months, for the reason that we had encountered the deflationary period. It was said, "We will now make quarterly adjustments."

Hon. J. Cornell: Why not abolish the Act altogether?

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member has had his say, and put up a very poor show.

Hon. G. W. Miles: That is a matter of opinion.

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member will stick to any Tory system that suits his side.

The PRESIDENT: I ask the hon. member to address the Chair.

Hon. T. MOORE: Mr. Miles is one of those who believe in sticking to the old order. No-one can deny that in the ensuing six months the workers had their wages reduced, despite the fact that an honourable agreement had been entered into.

Hon. G. W. Miles: There was no increase during the ensuing quarter.

Hon. T. MOORE: I want the new members to have the facts of the case. No-one will deny that my statement is correct. Instead of the basic wage being influenced by the cost of living only once a year—bear in mind that the cost of living was then going down—the President was given the right to follow the cost of living and reduce wages once a quarter.

Hon. G. W. Miles: And the right to put wages up again.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. A. Thomson: The hon. member does not want to put that view.

Hon. T. MOORE: I will always state facts; I have nothing to hide. Members must agree that I am making myself clear on this point. No one can say that the workers did not have a contract, and that for six months of the year they were not robbed of a portion of their wages. Mr. Bolton cannot deny that, although he put up a fine case yesterday from his point of view. He knows that the quarterly adjustments were brought in for one purpose, namely, to reduce the wages of the workers because the cost of living had declined. Those concerned could not wait until the expiration of the contract period of 12 months to make a reduction in wages.

Hon. J. Cornell: Exactly the same thing happened under the Federal arbitration laws.

Hon. T. MOORE: I do not want a red herring drawn across the trail. We must deal with the Bill before us. I want new members to know what brought all this about, and I do not want them to be misled by statements that have been made, statements that are not in accordance with the facts. During that period the cost of living was decreasing. There was a repudiation of a contract with the workers. This House did not say, "Let the quarterly adjustments come in at the end of the following year." It said, "Let us get to it now; let us break this contract that was entered into with the workers, and reduce wages straight away."

Hon. C. F. Baxter: Parliament did that.

Hon. T. MOORE: It was done in this House, which, however, takes a different viewpoint today. During the next quarter the wages of workers were clipped consequent upon the reduced cost of living.

Hon. J. Cornell: And following that the basic wage was cut.

Hon. T. MOORE: That has nothing to do with the question. The workers were unjustly deprived of a portion of their wages for six months.

Hon. W. J. Mann: Everyone else was affected during that period.

Hon. T. MOORE: I claim that there was repudiation.

Hon. W. J. Mann: You know that everyone else had a cut in income.

Hon. T. MOORE: Members are not being fair; they will not give me a hearing.

The PRESIDENT: I ask members to allow Mr. Moore to proceed.

Hon. T. MOORE: Members want it to be all on the one side. No-one will get away with anything that is not correct while I am a member of this House. Members cannot deny that instead of the workers receiving the increase for two quarters, they had a cut in their wages. During the inflationary period they were continually being cut, whether through the basic wage or otherwise. Mr. Cornell's interjection means nothing. The cost of living was the guide at the time. When the inflationary period arrived, the opponents of this legislation said, "We will not go on with that. We are going to have discretion used." In my opinion the President of the court, having consistently followed a certain course for a period, should have continued his consistency and stuck to his guns. Even though we are at war, there is no specific reason why the worker should have any less butter on his bread.

Hon. G. W. Miles: There is no specific reason.

Hon. T. MOORE: The worker is entitled to the benefits due to the cost of living every quarter, and to the privileges that were thought to have been accorded him by our legislation. According to the report in "The West Australian," Mr. Cornell endeavoured to show that Labour had been inconsistent because it voted against a measure which repudiated an honourable agreement. Of course Labour would vote against such legislation. He would have done the correct thing if he had followed Labour and adopted a policy of consistency, because Labour has been consistent all down the line.

Hon. J. Cornell: Members of Mr. Moore's party are consistent when wages are going up, but not when they are coming down.

Hon. T. MOORE: Mr. Cornell interjected that the President of the court had tentatively refused to increase the basic wage. What did he mean by that?

Hon. J. Cornell: For the time being!

Hon. T. MOORE: What does that mean? Two quarterly adjustments were made in the cost of living. All that time was taken to consider the matter. Nothing happened when the first 1s. 10d. was granted, and those concerned even went on until the

second increase was given without any change being made. Is it any wonder the workers became restless? They had every right to be concerned. They would not be fit to be fathers of their families if they had not been restless.

Hon. L. B. Bolton: Had not the employers the right to be restless when the 5s. was put on their shoulders?

Hon. T. MOORE: The employers were doing well at the time. Mr. Bolton himself made that point. There was no reason why they should not have paid the extra 5s. What does the term "basic wage" mean? It means that the workers shall have a certain amount of bread and butter for their families. They have nothing left. Every father of a family in this country knows that. If members of this House had endeavoured to rear their families on the basic wage this would be a better House for that very fact. They would be more considerate for the workers. The basic wage merely means that the workers shall have a certain amount of money to enable them to provide for their families. Is there any objection to that? Is there any objection to this House making that provision permanent instead of all this backing and filling and tinkering with the question? That is all this Bill does. Through it we shall get consistency instead of the inconsistency we have had in the past. The workers had their wages cut back in 1932 by Act of Parliament. That is a lamentable fact. The Labour Party passed an amendment to that Act, and rightly so, and it has operated ever since. Now the reverse position operates and the Labour Party has consistently endeavoured to right the wrong. It is consistent today as it was when it passed the Act, despite what Mr. Cornell said.

Hon. A. Thomson: Why did it not do this by Act of Parliament?

Hon. T. MOORE: Because there was no certainty that this House would pass it.

Hon. A. Thomson: It did not try.

Hon. T. MOORE: I would not have taken that action, because this House has stood as a baulk against any decent legislation introduced in another place.

Hon. J. Cornell: It passed this measure.

Hon. T. MOORE: It passed it against the workers' interests. It repudiated the yearly agreement, and made it a quarterly one.

Hon. J. Cornell: It passed the Arbitration Act.

Hon. T. MOORE: Yes, and mutilated it. It was not the parent Act that was brought down. There was a conference lasting, I think, 19 hours to get the Bill through the House and that was possible only after the managers had dealt with it. It was one of the longest conferences ever held during the history of the State Parliament. I remember it well. It was during my first term in this House.

Hon. A. Thomson: The then Minister in charge of the Bill said it was the best one.

Hon. T. MOORE: It provided, unfortunately, for only two children—which made it a rotten Bill.

Hon. A. Thomson: How many should it provide for?

Hon. T. MOORE: For as many children as a man has.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Rot!

Hon. T. MOORE: The hon. member says it is wrong to provide for as many children as the parents have.

Several members interjected.

The PRESIDENT: Order!

Hon. T. MOORE: The Queensland Act was a better one because it provided for three children. Sir Hal Colebatch tried yesterday, by straining a point, to make us believe that the 5s. we are getting by way of child endowment makes a difference. Having reared children I can assure him that 5s. a week is not sufficient; it helps, but it does not do the job, or anything like it. Mr. Cornish has reared a family.

Hon. J. Cornell: Mr. Cornish is not on the basic wage.

Hon. T. MOORE: He was at the time I speak of. If this House wants to do the fair thing and give the workers the basic wage, which means the inclusion of the variations each quarter, let it pass this Bill and the workers will then know where they are, and so will the employers.

Hon. A. Thomson: Cannot we leave the matter to the President of the Court?

Hon. L. B. Bolton: It was only on the one occasion.

Hon. T. MOORE: There were two adjustments, not one. The point is this: Does Mr. Bolton believe that the workers are entitled all the time to the basic wage, or what it will purchase in commodities? If he believes that, he must vote for this measure because that is what it will do. It does

not give the workers one penny extra. Mr. Thomson said the Government had thrown £400,000 to the workers.

Hon. A. Thomson: I did not say "thrown."

Hon. T. MOORE: I made a note of the remark, and I think that was the word used by the hon. member. If the Government had not taken the action it did, the workers of this country would be minus £400,000.

Hon. J. Cornell: Not all of them.

Hon. T. MOORE: My friend used to believe that at one time, and I still believe it—because they have nothing left.

Hon. J. Cornell: The single man does.

Hon. T. MOORE: I am not worrying about him, but about the married man with a family. This red-herring of the single man does not enter into the matter.

Hon. C. F. Baxter: This is a fish story of yours; it is all red herrings!

Hon. T. MOORE: The basic wage is supposed to represent enough money to maintain a man, his wife and two children, whereas we need ten children instead of two in every house. If we had that number we would not be where we are today. Members do not want the workers to get the proper basic wage, or its equivalent, and by holding up this Bill they will do something else. They will make the workers of this country understand that they have got the relief from Canberra.

Hon. G. W. Miles: Yes; you got it for them!

Hon. T. MOORE: It does not matter who got it; they will say, "Canberra will do us!"

Hon. L. B. Bolton: The employers have no objection to the employees getting the basic wage; but they want it to come through the right channel.

Hon. T. MOORE: Mr. Bolton was one of those in this House in 1932 who voted for the repudiation so that the workers would get it through the right channels in the wrong way—by reducing it every quarter instead of every year.

Hon. J. Cornell: Mr. Bolton was not here then.

Hon. T. MOORE: I do not know about that, but this House did it all right. If it throws this measure out now, it will just go on building up scores against itself for which I shall feel thankful, because it may bring about its end.

HON. H. L. ROCHE (South-East): I must confess I have not been able to make up my mind definitely as to whether I shall vote against this measure or support it. There are several features connected with the Bill which do not commend themselves to me. The fact that by passing this legislation we are interfering with a decision of the court—a tribunal set up to determine these matters—does not seem to me to be wise either from the point of view of the State or, perhaps, in the long run, from that of the workers.

Hon. A. Thomson: That is the most important part of it.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: I appreciate that possibly a precedent was created in 1930. An amendment to the arbitration laws was then passed by this Parliament—not only by this House. I doubt very much whether that precedent is a good one for the sponsors of this measure to follow. Like the other members whom I have heard express themselves on this Bill, I have every sympathy with the man on the basic wage. It has always been a matter of wonderment to me how a man on the basic wage of £4 14s. 10d. a week, as it is now, could keep a wife and two children, and bring the children up decently and educate them to a reasonable standard. That man has my sympathy, and will receive any assistance I am in a position to give.

But that does not necessarily mean that I have the same sympathy for all the people affected by this Bill. I refer now to those covered by the very wide range up to £699 per annum. Certainly they are workers, but we are rather straining our sympathies when we make a plea here, or anywhere else, on behalf of a worker whose remuneration is in the neighbourhood of £14 a week. I cannot help contrasting the attitude of the Government and its supporters on a measure of this kind with their attitude as displayed by the vote taken here the other week in connection with the drought relief regulations, which this House, to its credit, disallowed. The worker, at least, has a steady wage and reasonably decent working conditions. That wage for the man on the actual basic wage, is not as high as we would like it to be.

Hon. J. Cornell: It goes up to £1,400 a year.

Hon. H. L. ROCHE: In this Bill it is limited to £699, but I am referring to the men on the actual basic wage. The conditions under which they labour are reasonably decent. Those workers can be contrasted with the people I represent—the people who work the clock round year after year and whose sustenance, not their wage, is £78 a year. We see in this House very tame, well-behaved and disciplined followers of the Cabinet, who willingly voted against a motion for the disallowance of regulations that amounted to the repudiation of a contract that was entered into with the very people of whom I speak.

The Government takes delight, on behalf of the people it claims to represent, in continually introducing in Parliament these refinements to industrial legislation, and then it expects only unqualified support. Now we have had an impassioned plea on behalf of the man on the basic wage of £4 14s. 10d. That plea would, to my mind, carry more conviction were it confined, or were the legislation confined, to those people and not, as I have already stated, extended to cover men who are receiving the handsome remuneration of something like £14 per week. I feel that I should support anything that may be done for the man on the actual basic wage, but I must confess that I am not enamoured of this measure as it is.

On motion by Hon. H. V. Piesse, debate adjourned.

MOTION—BUTTER INDUSTRY.

To Inquire by Select Committee.

Debate resumed from the 20th October on the following motion by Hon. H. L. Roche:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into and report upon the butter industry in Western Australia, with particular reference to—

- (a) the circumstances and conditions that make it more profitable for producers to send their cream past their nearest factory to factories hundreds of miles away;
- (b) the conditions under which cream and butter are graded and check-graded;
- (c) the price being paid for second-grade cream and the present demand and price for the product thereof; and
- (d) any practical means whereby the transport of cream to factories could be expedited.

HON. H. V. PIESSE (South-East) [3.14]: I listened with great interest to Mr. Roche when he moved the motion. During my tours of the country districts I have attended meetings of dairy farmers and others interested in butter manufacturing. There is no doubt that a definite request has been placed before the members of the South-West Province that an inquiry should be held into matters affecting the manufacture of butter in Western Australia. The Chief Secretary informed us that the Minister for Agriculture is prepared to permit Mr. Roche to examine the files and papers bearing on the matter. I am always prepared to congratulate the Department of Agriculture on its readiness to hand over information to any member of Parliament who desires to take advantage of the inquiries made by the department. I have at all times found the officials willing to assist in every possible way. But there is one thing that is worrying the people I represent. They feel that when cream is taken past one factory and delivered to another factory, they should not have to lose the extra 1½d. being paid by the more distant factory.

An inquiry should be held, not with a view to criticising the proprietary factory that is able to pay a higher price, but in order to ascertain whether the zoning system, which has been considered by this House, should be carried into effect, particularly as a war measure. An inquiry might reveal that the adoption of the zoning system would operate very detrimentally to the interests of producers of cream. Therefore I shall support the motion, feeling sure that the information gathered by the Select Committee would be very helpful in informing members of the exact position. The low price which second-grade cream has brought has really amounted to a tax on producers because, to get only 6d. per lb. for it entails an absolute loss to producers.

On motion by Hon. H. Tuckey, debate adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT—SPECIAL.

THE CHIEF SECRETARY [3.17]: I move—

That the House at its rising adjourn till Tuesday, the 10th November.

Question put and passed.

House adjourned at 3.18 p.m.