

(c) Commonwealth and Selective Price Control.

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Premier:

As far as I understood him, the Premier said that the Acting Prime Minister gave his blessing to the States' request for price control. Am I to infer from that that the Acting Prime Minister accepted the principle of price control or merely agreed to facilitate the operation of a system of price control as requested by the States.

The PREMIER replied:

I said that the Commonwealth Government gave its blessing to price control on a six-State basis or, if not, on a five-State basis to the extent of agreeing to make available the services of a special expert on trade and commerce, to advise the States concerned. I think—in fact, I am sure—I said the system of price control for which the Commonwealth would make that officer available would be what the chairman described as a selective system of price control. Just to what extent he would regard a system as selective, I am not prepared to say.

(d) Government Action to Relieve Situation.

Hon. D. BRAND (without notice) asked the Premier:

Acknowledging that the real issue in the unemployment problem is the relief of human suffering and hardship, what special action has been taken by the State Government to relieve the situation?

The PREMIER replied:

In anticipation of the Commonwealth Government making some special funds available, we organised and put in hand some works for which the men were picked up, I think, a week ago. I believe 140 men were picked up and are now employed on these works. Obviously unless some special funds are received from the Commonwealth Government to continue the financing of these additional works, the State Government will, of necessity, have to close the works down within the next three or four weeks.

NATIVE WELFARE.*Ministerial Investigation of Cruelty Charges.*

Mr. COURT (without notice) asked the Minister for Native Welfare:

When does he expect to be able to give the House the result of his investigations into the statements in the report of the Native Welfare Department following upon my comments, as recorded in Hansard, and his answer to questions in this House on the 8th August last?

The MINISTER replied:

I expect to submit a report to Cabinet in about six weeks' time.

ADDRESS-IN-REPLY.*Seventh Day.*

Debate resumed from the 16th August.

MR. TOMS (Maylands) [5.19]: Let me, Sir, add my congratulations to those you have already received upon your elevation to the Speakership of this House. As an elector for many years and one who now represents portion of the electorate you once held, I have had the opportunity to appreciate your qualities.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! There is too much conversation, and I cannot hear the new member for Maylands.

Mr. TOMS: Justice and impartiality have at all times characterised your actions, and I feel assured you will continue to display them in your new position. I trust that your occupancy of the Speakership will be long, one of satisfaction to yourself and the members of this House.

As a new member, chosen to represent the electorate of Maylands, I realise the great responsibilities that I have undertaken. At this stage I desire to thank members on both sides of the House, together with the parliamentary officers and their staffs, for the manner in which they have assisted me in settling into these new surroundings. The courtesies that have been extended to me here and by heads of Government departments are most gratifying.

As one interested in local government for a number of years, I am indeed pleased that by the production of the metropolitan regional plan, we may be able to ensure the planned development of Perth, having perhaps profited by the early mistakes of other States. To do this, we must, of course, have vision as regards the future, and with that in mind, I do not agree with the criticism that was indulged in respecting the suggested removal of the Swan Portland Cement Works at River-vale.

For many years the road board at Belmont Park was as a voice crying in the wilderness. It has been said that those who built adjoining the works at the time knew what they were doing, but it was never anticipated that others who had bought land and built their homes four and five miles away, would be called upon to share the burden and depreciation of their properties owing to the enlarging of the works, increased production and, latterly, attempted eradication of the dust nuisance. I feel it is fair at this stage that I should pay a tribute to the Swan Portland Cement Works for the particularly good job it did in the postwar years when a great amount of work was performed. However, having in mind the possible development of Perth and the population of the city envisaged by the regional plan, I feel that, before it is too late and we suffer the experience of the Thames,

consideration should be given to the ultimate removal of these works to a more suitable location.

Another problem, which is not peculiar to my electorate, is that of drainage. In the metropolitan area and close to the City of Perth, there are at the present time hundreds of acres needing drainage. When this does take place, the people who will benefit from those works are the owners of what now might be termed "swamp land." The Metropolitan Water Supply, Sewerage and Drainage Department knows these particular areas, and is in the process of preparing plans for their drainage.

There may be legal or other difficulties to be overcome, but I would suggest that the Government give consideration to the prior rating of these areas, particularly in zoned residential parts. Moneys so collected could be paid into a working fund and used in the districts concerned. When these schemes are ultimately put into operation, I feel that prior rating, if it could be arranged, would be advantageous to the owners of the land, because experience has shown me that the majority of people are prepared to accept a sound proposition. I believe that, when it is pointed out to them that such a plan could assist in the hastening of the work, by lessening the amount of money to be allocated and reducing the liability by them for repayments when the works are completed, little, if any, opposition need be anticipated.

Many reasons have been given for the economic state in which the State finds itself today, but I feel that the necessity for closer employer-employee relations has never been more evident than at the present time. Repeated calls have been made for increased production and have been answered. But what of the results? We now find the old cycle appears to be in operation again.

Following the second world war and the settling-down period, shortages of goods and materials, an abundance of money, the urgent need for increased housing, and development were the order of the day. As goods and materials became available, coupled with increased demand, exploitation followed. It is no use laying the blame for this at the feet of the employee. As one engaged in industry at the time, and holding a responsible position, I was, on a number of occasions, approached with offers of a higher wage from other employers. In answer to my question, "Why are you offering me an increased amount without having regard to what I am now getting? Is it because you cannot hold your men?", the answer I invariably received was, "That is a fair and honest question, and the answer is 'Yes'."

In those times, awards and allowances for skill were forgotten, and it is reasonable to assume that for each additional £1 offered and accepted £2 were added to the cost of goods and services and ultimately borne by a fellow-worker. My experience in industry, no doubt, is not an isolated case. I have every reason to believe that this practice operated not only in my industry but in others. Facts such as these, together with the apparent desire of some people to get rich quick through investment at higher rates under the hire purchase system, have withdrawn money from the loan market. Australia, and particularly Western Australia, is screaming for development. As a nation, we cannot afford to have manpower and energy standing idle.

People are the wealth of a country, and I trust that ours will be made a contented people so that in the event of international strife, Australian and migrant may be able to stand shoulder to shoulder having proved that the ideal of the four freedoms is not mere lip service. I have with interest, listened to the various speakers during the debate, and it is evident that a vast amount still remains to be done in this State. Each member has his particular problem in his electorate. Maylands, the electorate which I represent, is not one without problems and needs, and I shall, as it is my duty to do so, bring them before the House from time to time to seek a solution of them.

In conclusion I wish to express my sincere thanks to the electors of Maylands for having elected me to represent them and for the trust they have put in me. What I may now lack in experience, I trust I will make up for in sincerity so that when the time comes, for the completion of my parliamentary duties, I shall hear from my electors those words, "Well done!"

THE MINISTER FOR WORKS (Hon. J. T. Tonkin—Melville) [5.33]: I would like, firstly, to offer my congratulations to you, Mr. Speaker, upon your election to the high office which you now hold, and I join with other members in expressing the belief that you will carry out the various tasks which fall to a Speaker, with efficiency and impartiality. I believe that when the time comes, as come it must some day, for your term to end, members generally will regret it and will agree that, in carrying out the duties of Speaker you fulfilled the promise which you showed as Chairman of Committees.

Australia today is experiencing particularly difficult times; so much so that the Commonwealth Government felt it incumbent upon itself to take steps to get the Premiers together to discuss what might be done to effect some sort of a remedy. We have had various ideas submitted as to what is wrong and what steps ought to be taken. As usual one section of the representatives is taking the line