

FORUM ON IMPORT CUTS

A public forum on import restrictions was held at the Henry George League rooms at 18 George Parade, on Friday, 10th May.

The discussion was introduced by Mr. Max Collens, a Flinders Lane importer, who gave many first-hand illustrations of how arbitrary restrictions were imposed by bureaucrats with no knowledge of the commercial field for which they were devising regulations. Not only do importers suffer serious and unfair harm, but also the public is afflicted with inflated prices and unnecessary delays in delivery of goods. Often the restrictions are merely a cloak behind which a manufacturer establishes himself in a uneconomical industry; sometimes the shielded manufacturer, for whose benefit overseas contacts with importers have been disrupted, abandons his project. The alarming nature of the transfer of power to bureaucrats from whose decisions there is no court of appeal was stressed.

Interesting contributions were then made by Messrs. Young and Rourke, officials of the Waterside Workers' Federation. They emphasised the serious decline in employment on the waterfront owing to the restrictions, and the consequent hardship to workers' families. Early in May a stop-work meeting was held on the Sydney waterfront to protest at the effects of the restrictions. The position in Melbourne is so bad that men who passed their medical examination in October, have not yet been admitted to employment. Messrs. Young and Rourke stated that it was the policy of their federation that there should be two-way, free trade with any country Australians might wish to transact business with.

Among members of the audience who contributed to the discussion were Mr. A. R. Hutchinson, who quoted Commonwealth Year Book data to show that Australia had survived with an excess of imports over exports in previous years, especially before World War II; and Mr W. Tindall, who pointed out that import restrictions do precisely what an enemy seeks to accomplish in a war-time blockade, viz., prevent goods entering a country.

During the discussion reference was made to the myth of London balances, to the fact that imports and exports tend to equal each other over a long period, and to the fact that Year Book statistics show that employment levels rise and fall with volume of imports.

The next forum will be held on Friday, June 14, at 8 p.m., and will be on the subject of world peace and means to attain it. Speakers will be: Rev. Robert Green, Vice-President of the Victorian Pacifist Movement; and Mr. G. A. Forster, B.Sc.

Readers are urged to publicise the forum and do their utmost to attend. Previous forums have been most stimulating.

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