

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Thursday 6 October 1983

ESTIMATES COMMITTEE B

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

Mr P.D. Blacker
 The Hon. W.E. Chapman
 The Hon. Peter Duncan
 Mr R.J. Gregory
 Mr G.M. Gunn
 Ms S.M. Lenehan
 Mr I.P. Lewis
 Mr K.H. Plunkett

The Committee met at 11 a.m.

The CHAIRMAN: I advise the Committee that the required notice of discharge and substitution of members is as follows: Mr Gregory in place of Mr Klunder, Ms Lenehan in place of Mr Hamilton, Mr Plunkett in place of Mr Mayes, Mr Blacker in place of the Hon. Michael Wilson, the Hon. Mr Chapman in place of Mr Ingerson, Mr Gunn in place of Mr Oswald, and Mr Lewis in place of Mr Evans. Any changes or substitution of members of the Committee will take place at 1 p.m. or 6 p.m. or at the change of a vote. All questions will be directed to the Minister and not to his officers. Of course, the Minister may refer any question to one of his officers or request an officer to supplement a reply to a question.

All questions should relate to the vote and not to matters of policy. I do not want any second reading speeches or a grievance debate to take place. I suggest that an agreement should be reached between the lead speakers from both sides and the Minister in relation to the allocation of times to enable the Minister to specify a time for his officers to be present. A quorum will be four members at all times. Members who are not members of the Committee may be recognised. I will be maintaining a call list and I ask members to indicate when they wish to ask a question.

I will allow the lead speaker for the Opposition to speak for up to 15 minutes by way of an opening statement. In that statement he can refer to any matter that he may wish to raise and the Minister can respond, if he so wishes, for a similar time. The lead speaker from the Opposition will then ask the first question. Questions will alternate from both sides. Each member will be permitted to ask a maximum of three questions. Supplementary questions will be allowed to a reasonable degree.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I have noted the outline of the procedures that are to be adopted and I acknowledge the flexibility with which the Committee may proceed today. In relation to the sittings of the Committee, I gather that the Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries lines will follow in that order. With respect to the Agriculture and Forest lines I anticipate that they could be well canvassed and indeed disposed of before the dinner adjournment tonight.

Without the authority of the spokesman for fisheries on this side, I would indicate that it would seem to me to be desirable that, following some consultation with Mr Arnold, we may be able to conclude the fisheries lines before the dinner break this evening. I will take up the offer to discuss

this aspect at 1 p.m. today: that offer is most welcome. I do not propose to use the 15 minute period that the Chairman is prepared to make available to the Opposition for the purposes of canvassing our policies and other matters. I would rather proceed straight to the lines.

The CHAIRMAN: The Minister has the opportunity to respond before that takes place.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I thank the honourable member for his opening remarks: my remarks too will be mercifully brief. Regarding the suggested timetable, I will ensure that my officers and I work towards the objectives stated by the member for Alexandra. I wish to point out that agriculture in South Australia in the past 18 months has experienced severe drought conditions and disastrous bushfires. This has placed a great deal of pressure on the Department of Agriculture resources, particularly in the rural assistance area. Fortunately, prospects for the 1983-84 season are exceptionally good and the Government does not anticipate the same level of rural assistance spending as occurred in 1982-83. In South Australia the real net value of rural production is expected to be more than double the 1982-83 level, which will provide a much needed boost to the South Australian economy.

The Estimates before us have been prepared in line with the framework of a standstill State Budget. The Budget goals provided in the programme performance papers have been developed from the Department's corporate plan for 1984 to 1987, which will be released later this month. The structure of the corporate plan is also based on the programme performance budgeting format so that the short-term and long-term goals developed from any reviews of the principal agricultural industries can be translated into programme performance budgeting terms. The plan takes account of Government initiatives to increase farm mechanisation services, develop additional horticulture and marketing opportunities, conduct a feasibility study into the prospects of expanding sales of fruit and vegetables in South-East Asia and develop additional services to ornamental horticulture.

The estimated amount to be spent in 1983-84 is \$76.6 million, and a total of \$29.5 million will be provided from the Consolidated Account, details of which are given in the line estimates. The remaining \$46.7 million will come from the Commonwealth Government and rural industry. The provision for the Department of \$29.9 million allows only 4 per cent inflation on operating costs and does not include expected salary and wage increases. Additional funds in this regard will be made available by Treasury from the round-sum allowances as they occur. In the event that the Department is unable to contain operating costs within the 4 per cent inflation allowance, a separate submission will be made to the Treasurer for additional sums from the round-sum allowances later in the year.

The 1982-83 financial year was the first year of operation of the Veterinary Sciences Division, which was recently transferred from the I.M.V.S. The Division has undertaken a major review, resulting in the transfer of 8.5 staff of the evolutionary biologics section at the Gilles Plains field station to the Department for the Arts museum division. This change is reflected in the Estimates for 1983-84 and is described in the programme performance budgeting papers. In the interests of expediting matters, I will leave my opening remarks there.

Agriculture, \$29 501 000

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Agriculture.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J.C. McColl, Director-General, Department of Agriculture.

Mr J.C. Potter, Director of Regions, Department of Agriculture.

Mr R.B. Wickes, Acting Leader, Policy and Planning Unit, Department of Agriculture.

Mr J.G. Thornton, Chief Accountant, Department of Agriculture.

Mr L.C. Johns, Director, South Australian Country Fire Services Board.

Mr G. Inns, Chairman, Samcor Board.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: This line, linked with the Miscellaneous line associated with administration costs in agriculture amounts to a proposed \$45 967 000 for the year 1983-84. I note the Minister's remarks in relation to unidentified expenditure that will be on call, in effect, from Treasury as need for it arises in the specific areas mentioned and that past records indicate the amount required by those on-call areas is minimal. Will the Minister explain which areas in the Department's service role it is anticipated will be run down in order to account for the \$28 million, difference between the figure proposed for agriculture this year and that spent last year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My understanding is that a great percentage of the difference relates to rural assistance money that came into the Department during the very severe drought period about which the honourable member is very well aware. It will take a little time to find precise figures to account for the bulk of the difference, so I will answer the rest of the honourable member's question first. It is not intended to contract severely any services supplied by the Department, which is well aware of the financial position of the State and which is endeavouring to make savings where it can whilst maintaining the services that it delivers. This means, in effect, a greater efficiency within the Department. However, there is only so far the Department can go in such circumstances before it runs into problems in being able to deliver its services. There is no question of services previously provided by the Department being significantly reduced in any way.

The CHAIRMAN: Perhaps the figures that the member for Alexandra requires can be obtained later during this questioning.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: The precise difference between actual payments for last year and proposed payments for this year is \$27 978 597, hence my reference to a round figure of \$28 million. The Minister, in his response to my question, indicated that the large difference between the two figures may be associated with rural assistance. Bearing in mind the drought and the extensive rural assistance required from the Department during the previous financial year in comparison to what might be anticipated in the current financial year, I note the Minister's comments.

However, under the Department of Agriculture lines (No. 18), reference is made to rural assistance where for the period 1982-83 \$311 000 was provided for by the Department, and even in that year \$512 328 was expended. However, it is proposed under that line to provide for some \$413 000 in the Budget, which really accounts for a shortfall of approximately \$100 000—a hell of a long way from the \$28 million about which we are talking.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not disagree that it is a hell of a long way from it; it certainly is. I have undertaken to come back to that query as soon as it is practicable so that the difference can be more clearly explained. I can assure the member for Alexandra that the special drought relief measures that were undertaken and the financial costs relating to fires and floods have a significant impact on that discrepancy in the figures. As I say, I will come back to that as soon as it is practicable to do so.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I thank the Minister for his undertaking to bring forward the detail to explain the initial question. I will proceed now with the actual lines and ask the Minister whether, in view of the Veterinary Science Division's being transferred to the Department of Agriculture and a line (19) identifying the expenditure for that function (on page 133 of the Estimates of Payments under 'Department of Agriculture, Veterinary Science Division') for the purposes of salary expenditure being separate from that of all other divisions in the Department, and noting that there is a reduction in the amount proposed this year as against the amount of some \$200 000 that was required to fund that section last year, can I assume that there is a run-down in the personnel in that Division following its take-over by the Department of Agriculture?

In asking that question, I refer the Minister to a question that I placed on notice to him via the House of Assembly some weeks ago, wherein the very specific matter was raised as to whether, as a result of operating veterinary science activities for a full year, it was anticipated that the personnel and activities of that Division would be maintained, increased, or reduced. Incorporated in the answer from the Minister was an assurance that it was to be at least maintained. Now I find a reduction in the salary payments identified specifically for that Division, which indicates that there will be less salaries paid. Does that mean fewer personnel employed for this financial year, or will they all be employed and each paid less?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I understand it, the reduction in the 1983-84 estimated amount results from the transfer of 8.5 full-time equivalents from the Evolution Biologist Section to the Department of the Arts, Museum Division. That is why the line has been reduced.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Are those personnel not considered to be relevant or useful to the Department?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is not a question of their not being relevant or useful but relates to Government policy that they should be transferred to the Department of the Arts, Museum Division. It was considered more appropriate for them to be transferred there than to remain in agriculture.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Is the Minister saying that in previous years the Department of Agriculture employed people who were not appropriately placed with the Department and that it has been subsequently realised that they should be transferred, resulting in the reduction in this line?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can only repeat my previous answer: the Government decided that the most appropriate place for this classification, given the work that these people are doing, is the Museum Division, Department of the Arts. In relation to whether that is a reflection on previous decisions that the Government has taken to retain them in agriculture, I do not think it is appropriate to look at it as a reflection. As the member suggested, perhaps they were inappropriately placed in agriculture. That may or may not have been the case, but certainly this Government believes that those positions should be in the Department of the Arts, Museum Division, where the work that they are doing relates more to that area than it does to agriculture. As I understand it, the work that they are doing still goes on, and I suppose it is a matter of supreme indifference to them whether they are under the Department of Agriculture or

the Department of the Arts. For administrative purposes it was felt to be a more appropriate place.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: In the early part of the 1982 financial year, a careful study was done of the capacity of officers of the Department of Health, in particular, in regard to those officers associated with the Veterinary Sciences Division in readiness for their pending transfer to agriculture. I would appreciate it if later the Minister could provide more specific information about the work done by these officers, who apparently during the current financial year will be transferred to another Division.

The CHAIRMAN: Is the Minister able to supply those figures, as requested by the Committee.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It may be helpful to the Committee if the Director-General, Mr McColl, fills out the answer, as it will save coming back to this point later and will expedite the Committee's work.

Mr McColl: Shortly after the Veterinary Sciences Division was transferred to the Department of Agriculture, a full review of the organisation and activities of that Department was instigated under Dr John Radcliffe. Part of the outcome of the review was the recommendation that the type of scientific work done by this group was associated more with similar scientists in the Department of the Arts, Museum Division.

The recommendation in Dr Radcliffe's report was accepted by the Department of Agriculture, the Public Service Board, the Government and the Minister. It was felt that the group was most appropriately placed with similar scientific colleagues in the Department of the Arts. As such, it was decided to transfer the group.

Mr GUNN: I refer to a recent report dealing with proposals to dispose of or relocate certain research centres in South Australia. My question is based on the response that I have received from people involved with the Minnipa Research Centre in my district. Their response to me indicates that they would be most unhappy if the Minnipa Research Centre was discontinued or its operation altered in any way without a great deal of consultation. I refer to today's edition of the *Stock Journal* and a notice under the signature of the Director-General of the Department of Agriculture, as follows:

GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA
MINNIPA RESEARCH CENTRE FIELD DAYS

Wednesday 12 October

Thursday 13 October

Programme identical both days 10.00 a.m.

Applied research—displays

- new seeding technique
- new herbicides
- variety trials—cereals
- grain legumes
- herbicide trials—cereals
- medics
- sheep management
- worm control—sheep
- pasture manipulation—spray topping

I have read that out because it shows the wide spread of agricultural activities that occur at the Minnipa Research Centre. I am also advised that the Department conducts trials at the Minnipa Research Centre on properties within the area to get a variation of soils over as wide an area as possible.

I understand that the Minnipa Research Centre and the accompanying property is quite valuable. In the past 18 months, a great deal of money has been spent upgrading the shearing shed and putting in modern bulk grain handling equipment, which was long overdue. It appears that it has been set up as a research station and not as a farm, even though farming activities are pursued. If the centre is to be shifted some kilometres east, as was suggested in the report, a great deal of extra expense would be incurred and it would take some time to develop a new property as a research

centre. Will the Minister undertake that any action taken in relation to the Minnipa Research Centre has the general concurrence of the rural community (other members may have questions about research centres in their areas)?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot give the honourable member the assurance that he seeks. I cannot say that no decision will be taken to move the Minnipa Research Centre or any other research centre without the full concurrence of the rural community. If such a commitment was given in any area, nothing would be done. To give a blanket commitment of that nature would unnecessarily tie the Government's hands when very important and difficult decisions had to be taken. Whatever decision is taken, some people will feel disadvantaged and, therefore, there will still not be full concurrence. That would not mean that the change was not highly desirable.

I assure the honourable member for Eyre and all members of the Committee that no precipitate action will be taken in relation to any of the report's recommendations. I have asked that members of the rural community and elsewhere, whether affected or not, respond to the report. I have stated in Parliament and outside that the report is only one opinion. It is a very well-informed opinion, but it is still only one opinion. There are in the community other opinions that I want to know about and discuss before I make a recommendation to the Government in relation to the action that should be taken in relation to any of the research centres. I have visited the Minnipa Research Centre. It is a first-class facility, and there is no argument about that. I hope to attend the field day on Wednesday, but I cannot guarantee to be there because of a prior domestic commitment.

I do not have the report with me and I cannot remember all its detail. From memory, a couple of options were put forward about what should be done on Eyre Peninsula. The report suggests that perhaps the Minnipa Research Centre is not located as well as it could be and that the type of soil in the area of the station is not particularly representative of soils on Eyre Peninsula. If that is not the case, I am sure many people around Minnipa will let me know. As I have said, I look forward to hearing the views of the people. I stress that the report came as a package.

I think that some people believe that the Government is trying to make some money by selling some of these properties. That is certainly not the case—other than to purchase other properties in more appropriate locations. Some of these research centres were commenced decades ago. Their location and the work they do may not be as relevant today as it was when they began. I think it would be remiss of any Government to state that because they have been in one location for, say, 50 years or whatever it is necessarily appropriate that they remain. I assure all members of the Committee that no precipitate action will be taken. The whole community will be involved in any decision. Finally, there is no question of downgrading any of the research conducted by the Department on behalf of the rural community.

Mr GUNN: Will the Minister make copies of the report available to the Committee? It would be of great assistance if members who have research centres in their districts could be given a copy of the report.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will certainly ensure that members of both Houses who have an interest in this area receive a copy of the report. In fact, I can give the member for Eyre a copy now.

Mr GUNN: I thank the Minister and his officers for the efficient manner in which they handled that question. I note from the yellow book (page 2) that the Minister has the dubious honour of administering 57 Acts of Parliament, involving hundreds of regulations, and no doubt he must approve numerous licences and other permits. Under the

previous Administration, the member for Alexandra was responsible for abolishing a number of committees and boards and repealing a number of Acts of Parliament. Are the Minister and his officers carrying out a programme of deregulation or getting rid of unnecessary Acts of Parliament? It would appear that there is no point in keeping on the Statute Book Acts of Parliament that are not serving any useful purpose. I contacted the Premier, but I understand that he did away with the deregulation unit in the Premier's Department. He advised me that each Minister would be carrying out his own programme of deregulation. Has the Minister or his Department anything in mind?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I congratulate the member for Alexandra for his diligence in this area during the period in which he was Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Forests. One of my first acts as Minister was to put through a Bill—

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: That was my Bill.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, that is right. I was happy to concur with the Hon. Mr Dunn, who handled the Bill in the Council. That Bill was to repeal unnecessary Acts. I am not sure that the member for Alexandra has not almost tidied up this area. However, I have instructed my officers that, wherever they find it, to draw to my attention redundant legislation. I will have great pleasure in ensuring that that legislation no longer remains on the Statute Book. As the member for Eyre stated, there is not much point in keeping on the Statute Book unnecessary Acts that are no longer relevant. However, as I stated previously, the member for Alexandra, when he was Minister, was very efficient in this area and I am not sure that there are not many Acts left which are unused and which are not relevant.

Mr GUNN: I thank the Minister for that answer. I am one of those people who believes that every Act of Parliament or unnecessary regulation places control on people, and my aim is to see that as many controls as possible are lifted. Last year a programme was organised by the Department whereby officers based at Cleve carried out soil testing for farmers who wished to construct dams. From my own experience, the unit was very efficient in giving valuable advice to farmers in regard to sites for drilling and testing soil on site. Will that programme continue this year and, if so, will the Minister or his officers provide information in that regard? I believe that that programme is one of a number of valuable programmes that the Department carries out.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My information is that the programme will continue. I am pleased that the member for Eyre agrees that the Department is doing an excellent job in this area and that the service is welcomed by primary producers in this State. We certainly have no intention of downgrading the programme at all. I point out that there is an element of cost recovery in this area which I think is particularly good. Certainly, the farmers whom I have met over the past few months and, indeed, over the past few years have never quibbled about paying appropriate charges. I point out that the charges have not been increased since 1981 but, now that the member for Eyre has drawn this service to my attention, I may consider whether it is appropriate to upgrade the charge.

Mr BLACKER: I refer to meat inspection fees. I note that the proposed allocation for 1983-84 is about \$700 000, whereas last year \$541 386 was actually expended. There was a three-fold increase in the Federal Budget for inspection fees at export abattoirs. I understand that the bulk of pig industry products is processed through export abattoirs, but I am further given to understand that abattoirs such as Samcor at Gepps Cross and Port Lincoln and other licensed export abattoirs have to pay those charges even though, in fact, about 80 per cent of pig meat is consumed in Australia.

I am further given to understand that the revised costs to the producer for meat inspection fees, bearing in mind that nearly all pig meats are processed through export abattoirs, will exceed the total revenue from pig meat exports. I note that it is about \$100 000 more than the sum received from exports. Has the Minister taken up this matter with the Federal Minister? If not, will he do so? Can the State do anything to exempt pig meats that are consumed locally, and by that I mean within Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As the member for Flinders would be aware, these charges are levied entirely by the Commonwealth under a formula for recovering about 50 per cent of the cost of these services. I understand that that was also the policy of the previous Federal Government, which entered into an agreement and started down the track some time before the recent Federal election. I have had brief personal discussions with the Federal Minister for Primary Industry, and it is perfectly clear to me that it is very unlikely that these charges will be reduced. The indication was that the charges would remain the same and that there would be the same degree of cost recovery for that service—and that pretty much was that.

Of course, I will raise again with the Minister for Primary Industry the difficulty that this action is creating in the rural industry. As a primary producer at one stage, the honourable member would be well aware of the problems involved. Everyone has his own particular financial difficulties, and the Commonwealth also faces financial difficulties. I am not overly hopeful that there will be any relief in this area.

Regarding the suggestion that we could consider the charges that relate to pig meat, there is a problem in that, if an abattoir is licensed as an export abattoir, inevitably, because by its very nature the Federal Government will be involved, charges will apply, as the honourable member stated. The only real option is not to designate abattoirs as export abattoirs, but again this creates an enormous problem. I suppose that the abattoir that is close to the heart of the member for Flinders is the operation at Port Lincoln, which is causing a problem for me as the Minister and for the Government as a whole.

The Port Lincoln abattoir is an export abattoir, so its charges are, accordingly, high to maintain a particular standard. One alternative that I have been considering is that the Port Lincoln abattoir perhaps no longer be an export abattoir. If that were so, that part of the charge relating to inspection for export would no longer apply. However, such an action would create other problems for primary producers on Eyre Peninsula. It is an option that would solve the problem of one group of primary producers but create problems for another group of primary producers. This is the difficulty that the Government is facing here. I am certainly aware of this problem.

I do not believe that there is a great deal that the State Government can do about this matter because it involves a Federal Government charge. However, I will ascertain what can be done with regard to exemption, if that is possible, for products that do not go to export markets. However, as somebody very involved in primary production, the member for Flinders would realise that it is probable that it is an all or nothing situation and that the abattoirs will have to be an export abattoir or not be an export abattoir. If it is an export abattoir and pigs are slaughtered there, then the charges mentioned would apply. I ask the honourable member to consider this matter as I would be pleased to hear his views on the possibility of the Port Lincoln abattoir no longer being an export abattoir and on the consequences of that happening.

Mr BLACKER: My initial response to the Minister is that people have battled for many years to get an export standard works established at Port Lincoln in order that it

could capitalise on the processing of mutton, in particular. To that end the abattoir has gained much and reduced its annual loss considerably, although it still runs at a loss. I believe that that loss was reduced purely because Port Lincoln abattoir became an export standard abattoir from which a larger quantity of meat could be processed. It is ironic that one meat industry can benefit while another meat industry suffers, mainly because of the percentage of local consumption stock that goes through that works. The point I make is that if a works has to be downgraded in order to reduce costs that seems to be very much a retrograde step. Therefore, I hope that some arrangement can be come to in negotiations with the Federal Minister about this matter. I believe that similar circumstances apply at Samcor at Gepps Cross, but there may be an opportunity there to use local stock through the old works rather than using the new works.

I take up a matter mentioned by the member for Eyre about research stations. My interest in this matter relates to Sims Farm, which was mentioned in the report. The report proposes that this farm be sold, but there is a degree of difference of opinion as to whether or not it is within the province of the Department of Agriculture to sell that farm. I understand that the terms of the will were that the property was left to the Government for research and education purposes. It has suggested that if the Department of Agriculture, which I understand has control of the farm at the moment, is unable to comply with the terms of the will then it should be made available to another Government department, if that can be done.

The local community is very supportive of the idea of a live-in, agricultural-type college to be worked in conjunction with the Cleve Area School. Sims Farm covers slightly more than 200 hectares of land, which is used for the agricultural studies course run by the school. It appears to local people, in particular, and to many other people throughout the State, that because the farm was left to the Government for research and education it would be an appropriate place for an agricultural-type college to be established. Will the Minister say whether, if the Department of Agriculture cannot use the property in terms of the conditions of the will, it has a right to dispose of the property and capitalise on that sale, or whether the property should be transferred to another Government department which may be able to make use of the property in terms of the conditions of the will?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member's statement was correct to the extent that the report on research centres mentioned the possibility of Sims Farm being sold and the money being used to buy an additional property. However, as I said earlier, no decision has been taken by the Government about that report, nor will a decision be taken for some months yet. Again, I would welcome submissions from people in the honourable member's district. The question of the legality of the Department of Agriculture being able to sell Sims Farm was referred to the Crown Law Department and my information is that Crown Law said that the Department of Agriculture has the authority, under the terms of the bequest, to dispose of the property. I can probably get a copy of that opinion for the honourable member so that he can consider it and so that, perhaps, somebody else can have a look at it. As the honourable member knows, when one gets into the area of legal opinion there can be variations, but our understanding is that the Crown Law Department believes that it can be done. Whether it will be done is something for the future and I will be happy to receive representations about this matter, as I already have from people in the Cleve area.

I point out that I have already discussed with the Minister of Education whether Sims Farm and Cleve are appropriate places for a school of the type mentioned by the honourable member. The Minister of Education is referring this matter

to the Agricultural Education Advisory Committee, which I understand will consider the matter, take submissions and eventually make a recommendation to the Minister of Education. I would not be making any decision about Sims Farm until the Minister of Education advises me what that committee has recommended.

Mr BLACKER: I am heartened to hear the Minister's assurance that full discussions will take place with the Minister of Education about this matter. I believe that the Department of Further Education and the Federal Department of Education could also be involved in this matter. Perhaps the matters I have mentioned can be taken into account. The Minister has mentioned that the Crown Law Department advises that the Department of Agriculture can, under the terms of the will, sell the property. The bulk of the people around Cleve, many of whom are distant relatives of the Sims family, do not believe that such a sale would encompass the spirit of the will, whatever the legal or moral interpretation of it may be. Certainly, the Cleve community believe that it was there for that purpose.

The other point that has come up in recent times relates to the property being used for an agricultural-type college. I know the argument has been put up that it is not a representative soil type for that area, but the principal defence for that is that for an agricultural college it is the practices that need to be taught equally as much as the type of soil on which the crops being researched have been grown. There are two arguments there: if it is to be used as a research farm maybe there is an argument for the relocation; if it is to be used for educational purposes perhaps there is no argument. That point needs to be made quite clearly. I note that the Minister has acknowledged that there has been representation from the Cleve area, and I am aware that he will probably get a lot more before 11 November. I thank the Minister for that.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I suppose that it also depends on how broadly one defines education. To define it narrowly in the classroom sense is one way, but I prefer to define it much more broadly. I can quite easily within my parameters bring research centres into the area of education. Just to mention Minnipa Research Centre, that is a tremendous educational facility for people in that section of Eyre Peninsula; so, I do not totally agree with the definition of education that most people use in this area. I go so far as to say that people define education far too narrowly, and this may be a case that highlights that: that some people imagine that education is classrooms and a residential college, whereas no-one could convince me that Minnipa College, for example, is not a good educational facility.

The CHAIRMAN: I accept that last question as supplementary. Does the member for Flinders have another question?

Mr BLACKER: I have another question that is basically supplementary to that which the Minister has raised about Minnipa. The same argument could be put that because Minnipa is in a good soil-type area and perhaps not representative of the broad acres of Eyre Peninsula it nevertheless serves a very useful purpose in plant breeding and, in that sense, a better soil type may be better for the development of plants and their propagation.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: This could develop into a very interesting and lengthy debate, but the point is that the debate will go on, not in this forum but outside this forum, for some months to come. It will be a very useful and informative debate.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: The Minister has indicated to the member for Eyre that he as the Minister in charge of research centres in South Australia will not act in any precipitous way in relation to the report that is being dis-

cussed, and that he has invited and will await response from the communities that are involved—they being, for the purposes of the record, the Eyre Peninsula region as it applies to the centres identified in that area; in the South-East, where Kybybolite appears to be one subject to relocation: the Adelaide Hills north of Adelaide; Northfield Research Centre at Turretfield; and on Kangaroo Island with respect to Parndana.

However, despite that assurance, I take up the invitation that the Minister gave us wherein he said that he would welcome a response. It is appropriate in this forum for me to make my position clear on a couple of matters; in order to do that and comply with the requirements of this Committee I ask the Minister, in view of his recent visit to Minnipa Research Station, whether he can tell us why in the proposed option No. 2 (that is, to market that centre) the liquid assets associated with Minnipa Research Station were not cited as items for market as were the fixed assets.

On page 58 of the report the land (some 1 200 hectares) involved in the property is identified as the basis for the parcel sale. So, too, are the buildings, both residential and farming, and a couple of items of equipment such as weigh-bridge and fuel tanks, which are apparently subject to transfer if the sale takes place. But there is no reference at all to the 2 500 sheep that are on the property; nor is there any reference to other items that are movable and would automatically be movable, if not for sale on the site at the time of the master sale. Is there some reason for leaving out all of those very expensive liquid assets?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I say, I do not have the report with me, but it seems to be that if one is talking about stock on the property and other movable assets, as I stated earlier, the sale of a property goes hand in hand with buying another one, not with saving money. I am sure that the stock, etc., is capable of being transferred to the property that was purchased. However, as I say, I did not really come prepared to debate the fine details of that report. I will undertake to get a full and comprehensive answer on the point that was raised by the member for Alexandra and respond to him either later today or some time next week.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: In relation to the Minnipa Research Centre, and still on that subject, trials are currently being undertaken there which involve the trial plotting and experimental work associated with Aroona, Condor, Kite, Warrigal and Millewa wheat varieties. I wonder about the Minister's initial remark when he talked about the soil type perhaps being unique to that region and not consistent with the rest of the Eyre Peninsula area because the varieties of wheat that are subject to trial are apparently the varieties that are ultimately subject to planting throughout Eyre Peninsula. I therefore question his reference to a soil type on the particular farm location as being different from the rest of the Eyre Peninsula region that it services; whether that is relevant at all in view of the trial plots that I have cited as an example and the 2 500 merino sheep which are consistent with the breed that is used throughout Eyre Peninsula; and whether that is an argument which he as Minister thinks could reasonably sustain support for recommendations in the report.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: This is an example of the type of response to the report that has been requested. It may well be that not everything that is stated in the report is above argument. As I said earlier, the report is somebody's opinion; it is a very well informed opinion, but I am equally as certain that there will be other opinions regarding the location and the type of research that is done on the Department of Agriculture research centres.

I would expect that the response from people who use and benefit from services at Minnipa will prepare a submission to me which perhaps sees the Minnipa Research

Centre in a different perspective to that offered in the report. That is a perfectly legitimate exercise. When all those submissions come in they will be collated and I will go through them. Whatever decision I recommend the Government should make will be one that will be fully debated with the local communities concerned and in Parliament, I am sure. I know the interest that the honourable member has, and I know the interest of other members whose districts may be affected. I have no intention of the honourable member or any of the community at large waking up one morning to find wholesale changes undertaken by Government fiat. That will not occur. I can assure the honourable member that the points he raised regarding Minnipa or any of the other recommendations will be taken into consideration by me and the Government, as well as points raised by any individual or association in the community who feel they will be affected by the report's proposals.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I ask the Minister to note the comments made about stock figures at Minnipa, because they are equally if not more relevant to the situation at Parndana. I refer to page 55 of the report and the details of land and buildings. Again, there is absence of reference to 2 900 sheep and 77 cattle presently on the research centre, and there is absence of reference to a number of other liquid assets associated with that research establishment which would obviously be subject to either marketing or transfer if the property and fixed assets were sold.

I raise this point again more especially as a result of the Minister's implied remark that livestock may be transferred. I suggest that about 3 500 or 4 000 sheep equivalents are presently at Parndana Research Centre (that is about its annual stocking rate, anyway) and they would be hardly subject to transfer to a property in the mid-Fleurieu Peninsula if a property was acquired there to service the southern hills or Kangaroo Island for research purposes. Clearly, this is a classic example of where the report omits to refer to a significant asset (or group of assets, in this instance) to a current value of about \$1 million on just one research centre.

It is on matters of that kind that I hope the Minister and his staff will take note before making recommendations to the Government about the disposal of any, let alone all, those identified for marketing. I appreciate the subject being raised today, because it is obviously a matter of concern to those communities where their respective research centres are identified in the report as being the subject of recommendation for disposal and, indeed, in regard to the latter, Parndana Research Centre servicing the Kangaroo Island community, the soil types on which the Centre is sited are a matter of relevance in some areas to a greater degree than in others.

For example, at Parndana the whole area involves an acidic ironstone soil, and the Centre has appropriately serviced the whole of the community in its research and findings, even those parts of the community with a limestone base and, thus, an alkaline soil base. To suggest that that Centre and its facilities be closed to immediate access from the community is geographic nonsense, if not a reflection on those people who have used or who are using it and will need to use the Centre in the relatively new development in the western half of Kangaroo Island. People will continue to need to use the Centre if we are to obtain maximum use of the land that is so far subject to primary production in that community. I say 'so far', because as recent events have indicated, that area of the State appears to be under constant glare if not threat from the greens of the community seeking to take it over for other than primary producing purposes.

My second question relates to the line referred to by the member for Flinders, who cited \$700 000 as being identified

as being required by the Department in regard to the item 'Meat Inspectors, reimbursement of costs from the Commonwealth Inspectors'. I cannot understand why the line is described in that way, particularly as the Minister said that meat inspection is a Commonwealth function and requirement. That being the case, does the \$700 000 referred to indicate a sum that is irrecoverable by the State and expenditure to the Department which it is unable to receive from either the meat industry, which is receiving the service, or the Commonwealth inspectorate? If that is the case why is not the \$700 000 or whatever annual figure the Government is required to put into this exercise identified under the respective meat industry lines?

For example, Samcor may well be involved in part of the expenditure. If that is so, why is it not cited as an expenditure applicable to Samcor, whether it be Samcor Gepps Cross or Samcor Port Lincoln? If that is not the case, can the Minister explain why the Department is up for \$700 000 which is not identified as being subject to reimbursement in another line in the income papers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The short answer is that I do not know. I am not sure how the reimbursement is expressed in these figures, but I can assure the honourable member that the \$700 000 is the amount which we have to reimburse to the Commonwealth. I draw the honourable member's attention to page 9 of the Estimates of Receipts on Consolidated Account, 'Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Forests, Department of Agriculture' line, because within that \$2.732 million is the reimbursement for that \$700 000. My accountant advises me that that is the cross reference.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Therefore, it is an accounting figure. Is that money expended by the Department on behalf of the Commonwealth and is it recoverable from the Commonwealth and identified as such in the income figures?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is my understanding. I have a fair bit of information about the \$700 000. Does the honourable member want me to provide that information now that I have explained the principle and the whys and wherefores?

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Am I to understand from the Minister that the Department is subject to a proposed expenditure of \$700 000 this financial year to engage meat inspectors, which cost is recoverable from the Commonwealth? If that is so, why is the cost associated with the contingencies of the Department and not with the meat industry groups which, after all, are the recipients of the service?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The procedure is that we pay out \$700 000 and we recover that money from the meat companies and not through the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth physically does the work, for which it is expected to charge us \$700 000. In turn, we charge the meat companies \$700 000 to recoup the amount that we pay to the Commonwealth.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Is it charged to the private meat companies rather than the Government Samcor operations at Gepps Cross and Port Lincoln? Are the Government operations included or are they quite divorced from any expenditure in that area?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Gepps Cross is included. I can supply the honourable member with a breakdown of the costs.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: When providing a breakdown of the inspection costs and the ultimate recovery balancing that account, will the Minister cite whether or not there are any bad debts and, if so, will he identify them? In other words, does the Department recover all of the costs incurred by meat companies across the board in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have that information with me, but I will certainly forward it to the honourable member.

Mr BLACKER: I refer to page 133 of the Estimates of Payments, 'Bovine Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Eradication Scheme' and the proposed expenditure of \$1.457 million. Can the Minister advise how that scheme is progressing? Does the Department have a projected overall State programme that will ultimately rid the State of those diseases?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member would be aware that this is a significant and important programme and one that I have taken a good deal of interest in since becoming Minister. Producers in South Australia particularly should be congratulated on the amount of co-operation that they have given the Department and the Commonwealth in attempting to eradicate these diseases. Certainly, there have been some hiccups in the programme. There are some difficulties and as Minister I recognise the difficulties that occur on some properties in the Far North.

It is very easy for those of us who live in the metropolitan area to suggest that properties can be destocked and cleaned up over night. It is extraordinarily difficult for some producers to do that. I have a degree of sympathy for producers in the north of the State who have found it perhaps a little more difficult to clean up their properties than others who are better located. A short time ago I received a briefing on this matter, details of which can possibly be made available to the member for Flinders. I was shown, quite graphically, the degree of change that has occurred on a year-by-year basis. Maps were superimposed on other maps of the State and various areas were shaded to represent different degrees of cleanliness or otherwise.

As I have said, I think the Department and primary producers should be congratulated on the progress that has been achieved so far. I can provide an expanded answer if the honourable member requires specific details in relation to the degree of infection left in the herds. Perhaps the Committee is also interested in that information. The programme is known as the B.T.E.C. programme on northern pastoral properties.

There are 42 cattle properties in South Australia north of the Dog Fence. These properties are run by 37 separate organisations or individuals. Cattle on all these properties were infected with T.B. or brucellosis or both at commencement of the B.T.B. eradication campaign. Mustering cattle for testing in this country is difficult and costly. Due to seasonal conditions (hot, dry summers) cattle can only be mustered for testing during the cooler months. The recent drought has delayed testing in some areas, for example along the Birdsville Track. Eradication of disease in this environment is a difficult and expensive task for both government agencies and the cattle grower.

The impact of B.T.E.C. on traditional management methods in this remote area has been major. Successful response to the requirements of the eradication programme demanded better cattle control. This has been achieved by the erection of hundreds of kilometres of new fencing and new holding yards and watering points on each property. These improvements have been made at the producer's own expense. In excess of \$5 million has been spent by producers on fences and yards on these properties during the past two years. Disease eradication in this extensive area has been facilitated by destocking a total of approximately 200 000 head of cattle from various properties. This was necessary to bring herds down to a manageable size for testing.

Eradication strategies established and implemented on properties over the past three years are producing excellent results. Twenty out of the 42 properties will be released from disease restrictions (quarantine) by December 1983. Producer co-operation with B.T.E.C. has been excellent,

albeit occasionally slow. Ninety-seven per cent of properties have already completed their planned destocking and cattle remaining are undergoing regular testing towards disease freedom. The new assistance measures proposed for B.T.E.C. in 1983-84 are aimed at assisting pastoral producers through the closing phases of the eradication programme and ensuring the present rate of progress is maintained.

These measures will also assist cattle properties in the North to restock without reintroducing disease and return to full production as soon as possible after T.B. and brucellosis have been eliminated. The provision of financial assistance in the form of a freight subsidy for restocking cattle of suitable disease status is the favoured measure for South Australian pastoral properties. The Federal Government has offered South Australia \$320 000 during 1983-84 to be matched dollar for dollar by the State to meet our needs in additional aid.

That gives the Committee a very comprehensive outline of the programme, and I want to stress that the Government and the Federal Government, and almost everyone involved in agriculture and cattle production in this State, support it totally.

Mr BLACKER: I thank the Minister for that report. I believe that most producers are very pleased that this programme is progressing as well as it is. A few weeks ago a Bill came before the House in relation to foot and mouth disease, and at that time I sought information from the Minister representing the Minister of Agriculture in the House of Assembly. Has the Government any contingency plans that could be implemented in the event of an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in South Australia, particularly as this disease could affect (and it is possible that it will affect) the northern areas of the State, where there is a wild pig and a wild goat problem?

It is my contention that, if foot and mouth disease got into those areas, eradication might be nigh impossible, but perhaps because of the climatic conditions foot and mouth disease would not propagate in those areas. I do not know. I would like further information in this regard. I sought information from the Minister when the Bill was before the House, but so far that information has not been forthcoming.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: First, I apologise to the honourable member that that information has not been forthcoming, as this occurred some weeks ago. I will ensure that that information is delivered promptly. Foot and mouth disease is a very serious problem indeed, and the Bill in the main brought some of the provisions of the South Australian legislation into line with those in other States. Foot and mouth disease, if it occurred in Australia (and it does not matter in which State it occurred), would present a very major national problem, which would be attacked on a national basis.

A few months ago there was a scare in the Northern Territory, where there was a possibility that foot and mouth disease had been found on a property. Fortunately, as it turned out, it was not foot and mouth disease and therefore the threat that hung over Australia for those few weeks abated. I was particularly impressed by the way in which all States handled that problem. The national programme that was already in place was activated immediately on the mere hint that the problem might have been foot and mouth disease. The property was immediately quarantined, suspect animals were destroyed, and samples were taken and sent overseas for accurate analysis. I was very impressed with the measures that were available within Australia for dealing with outbreaks of that kind.

If the honourable member requires more detail of precisely what the Department is doing and its programme of action when an alarm is raised, the replies to the questions asked when the Bill was before the House (and those questions

will be answered very soon) will provide more detail that is perhaps more appropriate to the honourable member's question. If the honourable member wishes me to answer any specific points now, I would be happy to attempt to do so.

Mr BLACKER: I thank the Minister for his explanation. I do not know that specific points are necessary on this occasion. We all appreciate that, if there was an outbreak, it would be a national disaster. I was concerned that, should an outbreak get into the Flinders Ranges, for example, considering the number of wild pigs and wild goats in that area, the likelihood of total eradication of infected or potentially infected animals would be nigh impossible. We all know that, should Australia gain a reputation in regard to this type of exotic disease, the export of meats would disappear overnight.

Is any progress being made in regard to the rye grass toxicity problem? Is it intended to upgrade research in that regard?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As the member for Flinders would be aware, there is a programme in regard to annual rye grass toxicity. The honourable member may be interested to know of the following developments that have taken place over the past 12 months. A new unit sited at the Waite Agricultural Research Institute is being developed to allow the staff of the Department to conduct the research programme and examine farmer-submitted material in safety from breathing in spores.

A substantial programme is also being conducted at Murray Bridge to examine different pasture management methods, such as topping the rye grass and controlling it with sprays. We have also appointed a bacteriologist to examine the relationship between the nematode and bacteria which form the toxic that causes sheep losses. This is being funded from a grant from ETSA and from the South Australian Merino Stud Breeders. I hope that that advice supplements the information of which the honourable member will already be aware.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: This matter is covered in this week's edition of the *Australian Stock Journal*.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Indeed, but all members of the Committee may not read that journal.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Regarding stock diseases, is the Minister aware of the C.S.I.R.O. establishment and facility at Geelong, and does he agree with the principle of importing live viruses for the purpose of speedy identification of diseases should they occur on the national scene?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That area comes entirely under the Federal Government. However, in spite of that, I am happy to tell the member for Alexandra that I have followed the whole matter with some interest. The differing opinions that come from scientists quite surprised me, but after thinking about it I was quite satisfied, because it is not only politicians or even lawyers who disagree on occasions: scientists also can consider a problem and come up with completely opposite views. That has occurred on this occasion. One group of scientists suggests that it is to the advantage of Australia that such a facility keep live viruses, because they claim that it would make identification quicker and that an outbreak of, for example, foot and mouth disease would be detected more quickly, which would be to our benefit. On the other hand, some scientists say that it is far too dangerous, and that flying task forces with mobile laboratories should undertake testing on the spot.

I do not know how we would cope in the Flinders Ranges with a mobile task force moving around in one of these mobile laboratories. It would be interesting. However, I do not believe that it is incumbent upon me at the moment to buy any further into this argument.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: You haven't got in at all yet.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is not in my area.

The Hon. W.E. Chapman interjecting:

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would be happy to continue debating this matter with the honourable member, but I am having some difficulty in identifying a line before me to which it relates. I am a bit apprehensive that Madam Acting Chairman will rule me out of order if I do so even though she has not done so thus far. The Federal Minister in charge of the C.S.I.R.O. and Minister for Science and Technology, Barry Jones, has initiated yet another inquiry into the Geelong facility. Whether that will sort out the differing opinions among scientists, I am not sure. All I know is that I rely completely on the Federal Minister's judgment.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Not on your own officers?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Just a moment. I would rely on his judgment completely. I know the real fear that everybody in Australia has about the infiltration of some of these exotic diseases into Australia. I am sure that decisions taken are taken after the most searching inquiry and certainly in the best interests of the animal industry in this State.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I accept the comments made by the Minister and acknowledge them as being in relation to an area about which he does not wish to commit himself or his Department at this stage. Line 26, dealing with the eradication of bovine brucellosis and tuberculosis, provides an amount of \$1.9 million this year for that purpose. The Minister has indicated by way of a progress report to the Committee the programme being undertaken in South Australia. I note his favourable comments about the co-operation by the parties involved with that programme. The Minister did not indicate to the Committee when he expects this programme to be concluded. What does the Minister see as being the most significant or greatest difficulty in drawing this programme to a conclusion in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot give an accurate estimate of when this programme is expected to conclude. It will be as soon as is humanly possible in the interests, particularly, of our export market. None of my officers has an estimated completion date. I will endeavour to find out what predictions regarding a conclusion date are available in the Department. It would be extraordinarily difficult to give anything other than the roughest estimate of this date. I did point out that over 97 per cent of the State is clean of these diseases at the moment, so we are very close to having the State totally free of this disease.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: It is unreasonable to seek this estimated date.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No, it is quite reasonable. I would like to know it myself.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I remind the Minister that I specifically asked that he identify the greatest difficulty that he sees with this clean-up programme between now and its conclusion.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will add the answer to that question to the answer giving the estimated date of completion that I am to get for the honourable member.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Is the Minister aware of the extreme financial and physical difficulty that some growers are experiencing after they have entered into a clean-up campaign, disposed of (or agreed to the disposal) all of their cattle, allowed their property the stock-free period required under such a campaign and then sought to restock from a proclaimed clean herd only to find themselves subjected to a test (and, indeed, a positive test) on those so-called proclaimed 'clean' cattle within the first year of restocking their property? Is the Minister aware of such a situation occurring?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: First, the anticipated date on which the State could be declared clean is in the late 1980s, possibly between 1988 and 1990. I am aware of the problem that some property owners are having in the circumstances outlined by the honourable member. The argument is, alas, a very technical one. On occasion, properties react positively to a test for no apparent reason and it is extremely difficult to track down why an animal has acted in the way that it has. This applies not just in the North of the State but throughout the State, on occasion. I cannot answer the honourable member's question in any greater detail.

I am aware of this problem, and certainly, the first-class officers in the Department who are involved in the B.T.B. programme are aware of the problem and are doing everything they can to assist cattle producers throughout this programme. This assistance involves such matters as advice on destocking and restocking, and so on. The Department has a significant personnel commitment to this problem and also to the matter of quality of technical advice that it is able to give. I am not sure that we have a complete, total and absolute solution to this problem. If the honourable member has any thoughts with which he can assist us, they would be welcome.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: To conclude on this subject, it is true that a number of properties have been identified in recent times where, as co-operative parties in the programme of clean-up of the cited diseases, the owners have agreed to and participated in a total destocking campaign. One does not have to spell it out in large print to signal the enormous expense that some of these property owners have incurred as a result of their participation.

Following the clean-up campaign in those cases a diligent effort has been extended by the property owners, in consultation and, as I understand it, in co-operation with the departmental officers, to try and identify a clean herd from which to purchase cattle and restock. It is clearly as a result of identifying proclaimed clean herds from clean areas that stock for restocking purposes have been acquired and that, on bringing them on to the properties after the prescribed stock-free period has expired, those cattle upon test have proved to be positive reactors; again the whole process rolls over, as the Director has undoubtedly indicated to the Minister is the case. Of course, those property owners again incur a whole round of enormous expense.

The question that needs to be faced now is whether the Minister believes that some period of amnesty to those property owners (that is, a period without further test, enabling property owners to get at least a calf drop and some return from their capital outlay before retest) is a feasible or reasonable approach to this subject during its latter stages of clean-up. I raise this because I am very acutely aware of the enormous expense, running into many hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not in some cases millions of dollars, that companies and property owners have been involved in during this campaign, particularly during recent months.

The amnesty period that I suggest might be considered could, as indicated, give the owner an opportunity to at least get a round of calves and therefore some income to offset his enormous losses associated with destocking and his enormous expenditure in relation to restocking of clean cattle and resetting up his herd, before he might be subject to the test and therefore subject to the possibility of positive test and re-involvement in the whole damned thing over again.

The question is really whether the Minister thinks that an amnesty period for those specific people to whom I have referred might put the programme and its concluding clean-up stage in any sort of jeopardy. I would think not, but I wonder whether the Minister (if not now) could address himself to that subject on behalf of those people who have

put enormous moneys in this direction to come up with some attitude (indeed, policy) in relation to the subject.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is the first time that it has been put to me that perhaps there should be an amnesty; so, my response is an initial one and certainly not necessarily a well-thought out position. But, the proposal does not initially appeal to me at all. I feel that, given the importance of the project for reasons which all members of the Committee are aware of, as I am—so I will not go through them—and the necessity to bring it to a close as soon as possible, anything that would tend to delay that I certainly would not be too happy to agree to.

I point out that not only has this cost various State and Federal Governments an enormous amount of money, but also it has cost producers vast amounts of money. I saw the figure at one stage and it staggered me. It is the cattle producers themselves who, from memory, have spent a vast majority of the money that has been involved in this programme. I do not think that, once one embarks on a programme of this nature, 90 per cent through the programme one can say that it is getting to be a problem and that in some areas we could have an amnesty which could create all kinds of problems and possibly more extensive breakouts of the diseases, as a result of which all the time, effort and not inconsiderable amounts of money could be wasted and the programme set back.

However, as I said, this is the first time that I have heard the proposal; so, my response is very much an initial one. I would like to ask the Director-General of Agriculture whether he has heard the proposal before and whether he would have some comments on the proposition that the member for Alexandra put up.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I am aware that your officer, Mr John Holmden, is abreast of the subject and that he has had one meeting, if not two meetings, with growers and organisations representing growers on the matter. Unfortunately, I was unable to attend the last meeting of that group, to which I was invited by Mr Holmden. I appreciate the depth of the subject and the importance that it holds for a number of people in the cattle industry who have spent their money, participated in the programme, and co-operated with the Department and then found themselves locked into another system that will really send a few cattlemen in this country broke, drive them out of the industry or prevent them from coming back effectively into the industry if some rational approach to their circumstances is not applied, as I have outlined.

Mr GUNN: I want to add briefly to what the member for Alexandra had to say. People have approached me in the Far North expressing the same kind of concern: they really cannot run enough cattle on their properties to make them economically viable. I would appreciate it if the Minister and his officers had a look at it. I could privately give him the names; I do not want to put them on the record.

The other matter that I want to raise with the Minister is that it has appeared to me ever since the fruit fly block was shifted from Olary to Oodlawirra that they must be peculiar fruit flies that come in from New South Wales because they must travel only certain times of the day or year. I went through there one day last week and it was closed. My understanding is that when it is fully operational the fruit fly block does not operate at night. I engaged in considerable correspondence with the Minister's predecessor on this matter. I was not convinced at all that it was necessary to shift it from Olary. However, we have a nice new establishment down at Oodlawirra. We have big flash lights all shining brightly day and night.

It appears to be a great hive of activity until one stops there. The fruit fly blockade at Ceduna operates on a continuing basis, and the officers do a good job there, although

there have been some problems. I understand that the incinerator at Ceduna is far from perfect and, if that problem has not been overcome, I hope action will be taken. I would appreciate comment from the officers, because probably the Minister has not yet been up there, why the operation is not on a continuous basis. I am advised that not only does it have a role in preventing fruit fly but the officers also inspect stock coming through and check them for Noogoora burr and other noxious weeds. I would appreciate a response from the Minister or his officers.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is a vexed question in regard to fruit fly road blocks. As the member knows, the Ceduna facility is staffed on a continuous basis. My understanding is that the Mediterranean fruit fly, which is prevalent in Western Australia, presents much more of a problem to us should it become established in South Australia rather than the Queensland fruit fly, which is the one we are attempting to prevent through the facility at Oodlawirra. However, it has been found over the years that it is not necessary to have a 24-hour-a-day manning of that facility. As has been the practice over the years, we work on the balance of probabilities as to when people are likely to be travelling and at what time of the year it is when there is highest danger from the Queensland fruit fly. I read not long ago that there was even a question of whether the Queensland fruit fly, if it did come to South Australia, could survive our winter. It is for reasons such as that that the Oodlawirra facility is not staffed around the clock or around the year. We work on the balance of probabilities of being in the right place at the right time.

Mr GUNN: Are Department of Agriculture officers, particularly those involved in soil conservation, requested to have input with the Department for Environment and Planning in regard to vegetation clearance programmes? In the past if there were any doubts about clearing, officers of the Department of Agriculture had their views sought. They had a good record, as far as I am aware from my own experience. Perhaps the Department of Environment and Planning officers have academic qualifications, but in terms of practical experience their decisions seem to leave much to be desired in this area. As the Minister's officers have long been involved in this area, has their advice been sought?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My information is that there is much co-operation between the two departments. Our advice is sought frequently, particularly if there have been any previous inspections of the area. We provide a consultancy service to the Department of Environment and Planning on any restrictions that may be required under the Soil Conservation Act, which I believe is the reference point for the question.

[Sitting suspended from 1 to 2 p.m.]

The CHAIRMAN: I advise the Committee of the required notice of discharge and substitution of members as follows: the Hon. Peter Arnold in place of Mr Gunn.

I advise members of the Committee that it is necessary to adopt a report to the House towards the end of today's proceedings. That report will advise the House of the items of proposed expenditures which this Committee has examined and will also contain any resolutions the Committee has passed.

A draft report will be circulated and I will seek a motion for its adoption a few minutes before the close of proceedings. Any disagreement with the report should be raised with the Chair prior to the seeking of a motion for adoption to ensure that time for debate, if necessary, is available. I hope and expect that that will not be necessary.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I refer to page 133 of the Estimates of Payments and the line 'Overseas visits of

Minister, Minister's wife (where approved) and officers'. In 1982-83 the sum of \$1 000 was voted and actual payments for that year amounted to \$45 535. Will the Minister provide details of the costs incurred, because the actual expenditure was significantly more than was voted? That information can be provided at a later date, at the Minister's convenience. Will the Minister explain why \$5 000 has been proposed under that line for 1983-84? Is part or all of that amount intended to fund an overseas visit by the Minister and his wife?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Alexandra would be aware that the \$1 000 voted in 1982-83 was a notional amount to ensure that the line remained open. Overseas trips by Ministers and their wives are taken, certainly under this Government, at the discretion of Cabinet. Should a Minister wish to take an overseas trip he must make a submission to Cabinet. If Cabinet agrees, the necessary allocation is made. I understand that a notional amount is voted for this line to keep the line open. Therefore, it is not surprising that there is a significant difference between the proposed expenditure and the actual payment.

An overseas trip was taken under the terms and conditions I have described by my predecessor, his wife and a departmental officer; that accounts for the difference between the \$1 000 proposed and the actual payment of \$45 535. I understand that the amount also includes a carry-over amount of \$1 000 from 1981-82. The Minister's trip cost \$29 000 and expenditure for departmental officers amounted to \$15 000. I have no plans to take an overseas trip this year. If I were to take an overseas trip I would submit details to Cabinet in the normal manner and seek its approval. I am not sure why \$5 000 is proposed this year and only \$1 000 was voted last year. However, neither sum would be sufficient for any overseas trip that I would choose to take. It is fairly irrelevant whether \$1 000 or \$5 000 is proposed. The procedure followed would be as it was with my predecessor and with all Ministers of this Government: moneys are allocated through the system of a Cabinet submission.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: The \$5 000 is a notional amount?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes. It appears that it has been increased to allow for inflation.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I take it from the Minister's response that his interest in overseas projects is such that he does not consider it desirable to become personally acquainted with South Australia's involvement in such projects?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I cannot help how the honourable member interprets my remarks, but that is certainly not the case. The Government and I are vitally interested in overseas projects. Regarding my visiting overseas projects and Ministers in countries where we have interests or would like to have interests, I will do that by way of a Cabinet submission and gain approval in that way.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: At this stage the Minister has no plans to travel overseas?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have no immediate plans to travel overseas at all.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Does the Minister believe that it is desirable in the current financial year that he should travel overseas and become abreast of South Australia's involvement and seek to promote at Ministerial level the projects that are in train?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I certainly anticipate that I will visit overseas projects during my period as Minister of Agriculture.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Not this financial year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It may well be this financial year; it may well be that an opportunity might present itself

by way of an invitation. If I deem it appropriate and the Government deems it appropriate that I should accept an invitation to travel overseas, I will do so. However, I have no short-term plans to travel overseas.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Other than the State's involvement in Iraq, Algeria and Jordan on behalf of the Commonwealth, is the Minister aware of any other overseas project in which his Department or the departments of his colleagues in Government are currently involved or have a positive interest in becoming involved?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As the honourable member would be aware, we have a project in Algeria, which is nearing completion. In fact, I delivered the final report to the Algerian Minister for Agriculture some time in May, I think. The loose ends of that project have almost been tidied up. The Iraq project as the honourable member would be aware, is proceeding extremely well, and I met officials from Iraq in South Australia during the past two or three weeks. They expressed great pleasure with the way in which the project was proceeding. The honourable member would also be aware that we have a project in Jordan, and I believe that we are managing that project on behalf of the Australian Development Assistance Bureau. Again, that project is successful. We also have minor involvement in Saudi Arabia, but I believe that that is limited to our carrying out certain feasibility studies and to plan design studies on a fee-for-service basis.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: There are no other contracts in Saudi Arabia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My information is that our involvement in Saudi Arabia is limited to feasibility and to plan design studies for a private enterprise firm in South Australia, which requested us to undertake that work on its behalf. We have attempted to make inroads into China as opportunities have presented themselves or have appeared to present themselves. I know that people from SAGRIC International have been very vigorous in pursuing projects in China, and discussions are continuing. I cannot state for sure that any contracts will be signed, because by the very nature of this type of operation there always seems to be a lot of opportunities and a lot of leads are followed. However, the signing of contracts is something else again.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Is the Government keen to enter into contractual arrangements in China?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is very keen indeed. There would be few regions in the world in which the Government is not keen to enter into contracts. There is no lack of keenness on the part of the Government, but it is a very competitive market. The other States are competing and the Commonwealth has a corporation that engages in this type of operation and, of course, private enterprise organisations are also competing. There is no lack of keenness—rather the contrary. The officers who work for SAGRIC International are extremely keen, and there is no lack of effort or will. The Government certainly would promote SAGRIC International as hard as it could in overseas markets. Anything that we can do to assist the development of South Australia, while assisting the countries concerned, is highly desirable and should certainly be fostered.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Would the Minister say that the Government was vigorous in its attempts to enter into contractual arrangements with China and Libya?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, I would certainly say all of those kinds of things, but first I will answer the honourable member's first question. I still have not completed my reply. The honourable member asked in what projects, apart from those in Iraq and Algeria, we were involved, and I was referring to China. If I may continue, I will further indicate areas in which we are trying to have some influence. We have undertaken short-term consultancies during the year,

including a pre-feasibility study for a plant nursery complex in Kuwait and a pre-feasibility cum agricultural development project in the Yemen Arab Republic.

Further, a number of possibilities for overseas projects are being explored in the Middle East and North African regions. Among the most promising are dry land farming demonstration projects in Tunisia and a forestry project in Algeria. It is proposed that the latter be administered by SAGRIC International, with the Woods and Forests Department being responsible for technical input. That demonstrates to the Committee the strength of the Government's commitment to overseas projects, although I hasten to add that it is certainly not at the expense of South Australian agriculture. In regard to finance, the two things are completely separate, although obviously the spin-off for South Australian agriculture could be quite considerable, as the honourable member would know, because of South Australia's involvement in overseas projects.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I appreciate the Minister's remarks in relation to the Government's attitude towards overseas projects and in particular the identification of the Government's interest, indeed as he submitted, its vigorous interest, in becoming contractually involved in China and Libya, or, as the Minister put it, in any direction around the world where any contractual arrangements might be secured by the State, or words to that effect. I am somewhat concerned that the Minister should be so open and vocal about committing his Government in that wide, all-embracing direction, and I say that with respect to the fact that my colleagues in the previous Government were extremely cautious about South Australia's contractual involvement in other parts of the world. If I may say, we were extremely selective, hence the selection of the Iraq project in particular, which the Minister has conceded is most successful.

I raise this subject because, along with its cautious approach to contractual arrangements overseas, the previous Tonkin Government was also adamant (and I supported it in this policy) that such overseas projects should at least recover investment costs. While the State had a lot to sell and indeed a lot to offer, we believed that South Australia should not be seen to be, and should not be, a charitable organisation that had been set up for the purpose of assisting other countries but indeed that we should set ourselves up to accept contractual arrangements in regard to which we could sell what we had to offer and recover the costs so incurred.

At the same time we could lay a platform for South Australian industry, both secondary and primary, from which to pursue expanded activities and trade. In conclusion, will the Minister say whether it is his Government's policy to make each of its current and potential overseas contractual arrangements cost recovery for the State or whether he proposes that his Government should use a charity policy approach to such ventures?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am sure that the honourable member will be pleased to know that the Government of which I am a member (in the same way as the former Government) is not in the business of charity, at least regarding overseas countries. When I say that we are vigorous in pursuing projects we are not vigorous in buying business. We compete for projects on the basis that they will at least recover cost and, hopefully, return a small profit. I caution the honourable member that when one talks about cost recovery one has to look at the overall operation. It may well be very good commercial practice (although it has not happened since I have been Minister, or since the change of Government) to invest in a feasibility study that is possibly not on a cost recovery basis with the expectation that one can build into a contract, and recoup, the costs of that feasibility study.

I think that, to run a business in a simplistic way and say that everything one does has to be done on a cost recovery basis because that can be clearly identified, would perhaps be inappropriate in this area, but in general I agree completely with what the honourable member has said. My understanding is that SAGRIC International has been in operation on overseas projects and that overall there has been cost recovery plus and that, in fact, the State has benefited directly within the bookkeeping arrangements of SAGRIC International from these overseas contracts and, also, from the spin-off, for example, from seed sold and to the manufacturing operators and fencing contractors who in turn have made a profit. Therefore, I do not think we should look at this matter in a terribly simplistic way. The member's proposition is basically the Government's, that foreign aid is not the province of the State Government but of the Federal Government.

Mr LEWIS: Is the line 'Land use and Protection Division' the one under which the Minister proposes to obtain funds to engage in a training programme for officers from other Government departments so that they can assess whether or not there is a risk of soil erosion because land has or has not been cleared?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I ask the honourable member to expand on his question.

Mr LEWIS: On page 133 of the Estimates of Payments under the heading 'Land use and Protection Division' there is a proposed allocation for this year of \$1.298 million. I understand that the Department of Agriculture is to provide a training course for officers of other Government departments to ensure that they understand how to assess whether or not soil erosion is likely to result in a locality because of the way in which native or other vegetation has been managed.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have no detailed knowledge of that matter. I will have it investigated and bring back a detailed reply for the honourable member. My understanding is that this matter will be taken care of under that line and under the line 'Contingencies, administration expenses, minor equipment and sundries'. I will ask the Director-General if he has anything further to add that might help the Committee.

Mr McColl: As the Minister said earlier during these proceedings, the Department of Agriculture is acting in a consultant capacity to officers of the Department of Environment and Planning with respect to carrying out investigations regarding possible land clearance. I know of no formal arrangements being made regarding training programmes for such officers. My understanding is that it is more in the sense of an in-the-field personal communication type training programme rather than a formal training programme. I am interpreting the honourable member's question in terms of a formal arrangement. I know of no such formal arrangement for a training programme to be undertaken by the Department of Agriculture.

Mr LEWIS: I do not know whether this question is in order but when I was attending Committee A and the Minister of Lands and Minister for Environment and Planning was giving evidence on these two portfolios, he assured that Committee that arrangements had been made for a formal training programme for officers of his department or departments to be trained in the assessment of soil erosion control and the way in which native vegetation clearance affects erosion or can prevent erosion by not clearing land. He assured the Committee, while officers of his Department were present, that he recognised the complexity of the technology involved. He said that there would only be decisions made by officers of his Department in relation to circumstances where a decision to clear or not to clear native vegetation was involved. I need to know

whether the Minister of Environment and Planning misled that Committee or whether there is a training programme such as the one to which he referred and we are considering the appropriation of funds in this Committee for the purpose as he explained it. If so, how much money is allocated, which officers of the Department of Agriculture are involved, from which division do they come and when will these training programmes be undertaken?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It may help the Committee if I repeat some information I gave this morning. It is the only light I can throw on this matter. It may be of interest to the member for Mallee, who may not have been here at the time this information was given. I am advised that since 12 May when the new development control regulations were introduced in which vegetation clearance was prescribed as a form of development which required consent of the South Australian Planning Commission, by mutual arrangement between the Departments of Agriculture and Environment and Planning all field inspections of native vegetation have been carried out by officers of the Department of Environment and Planning.

Applications are being referred to the Department of Agriculture for comment on any previous inspections, and the Department is providing a consultancy service to the Department of Environment and Planning on any restrictions which may be required under the Soil Conservation Act. I am not sure whether that clears up this point for the member for Mallee, but I am advised that we are acting merely as consultants to the Department of Environment and Planning rather than formally training their officers.

Mr LEWIS: Then that is a clear indication that the Minister for Environment and Planning misled the Committee in that it was not under a consultancy arrangement at all. He assured the Committee that the Department of Environment and Planning was going to take complete control of the assessment of stands of native vegetation, in particular, where they related not only to the other matters in which his Department and his departmental officers were competent to address themselves but also in relation to the assessment of risk of erosion. When I asked him whether he felt that the officers in his Department had been given adequate training to make such assessments of soil structure and texture and the related risks of soil erosion that might result in given circumstances, his reply was that the Department of Agriculture was providing a specific training course for officers of his Department in the assessment of the risk of erosion occurring as a consequence of the removal of native vegetation from that locality. He further assured the Committee that that was necessary so that there would not be any duplication of effort between the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Environment and Planning.

The Minister for Environment and Planning having made that statement, I was concerned to learn where and when that training programme was to be undertaken. I now understand from the Minister that no such formal training programme has been planned and negotiated or, for that matter, will be undertaken. I ask the Minister, since that is the way that I have understood his answer today, whether he regards the necessity to assess accurately the risk or otherwise of erosion occurring in any given locality to be one which entails some training and skill of the kind to which I have referred, and whether he would be happy to have officers of another department making those assessments rather than officers of his Department, and the way in which that might then impact on the rural community that would be affected.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I ask the Minister to reply, the Committee should realise, as will the member for Mallee, that the Minister of Agriculture cannot be made responsible

for any replies that may have come from another Minister. I have listened fairly closely to what the Minister has had to say, and he said that he was not aware of it; I do not think that there was any categorical denial. I ask the member for Mallee to bear in mind that the Minister of Agriculture cannot be held responsible if, to use the member's words, the Minister for Environment and Planning had misled the Committee.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The member for Mallee implied that the only conclusion that could be drawn from my answer was that the Minister for Environment and Planning had misled the other Committee. Of course, there could be lots of other reasons, one of which might well be that we are using different terms for the same procedure. When do 'some extensive consultations' turn into 'training'? It may well be that it is this area of the use of different words for the same thing where the misunderstanding that has obviously occurred comes in.

We in Agriculture have complete responsibility for certain areas. We have no intention at all (nor could we) of giving away those responsibilities that we have in the area of soil conservation. The vegetation clearance regulations to which the honourable member refers are wholly within the province of the Minister for Environment and Planning, and I do not think that it would be appropriate for me to comment on that, but my Department is vitally interested and has a responsibility for soil conservation. We will discharge that responsibility and will not hand it over to anybody else, but where we can assist any other Government department in any way at all to make its regulations more effective and at the same time to look after the interests of agriculture in this State, I expect my officers to give their time and resources freely to that other department. Whether that comes under the terms which the member for Mallee called 'training' or 'consultancy' does not bother me one iota as long as the assistance is given and the best possible result applies, particularly in the very important area of soil conservation.

Mr LEWIS: I appreciate the attempts the Minister has made to be frank with the Committee. I would be even more grateful if he could address one other point that I raised with him, and that was the likely cost of whatever euphemism he wishes to use—training, consultancy or whatever—with respect to the necessity to make inputs on the assessment of risk of erosion where native vegetation clearance is involved.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There may well have been some extensive discussions at officer level between officers who are engaged in this area of activity in my Department with officers of the Department of Environment and Planning of which I am not aware and could not be expected to be aware. However, I will have that investigated. What I can say categorically to the member for Mallee is that any costs that arise would be contained within the normal operating costs of the Department of Agriculture. We have a responsibility for soil conservation which we take very seriously indeed. The honourable member would be aware of some of the soil conservation projects with which we are involved—and tremendous projects they are too!

The degree of liaison, consultation, training, call it what you will, with the Department of Environment and Planning officers will certainly be contained in the normal operating budget of the Department for the officers concerned. We are not engaging additional officers to go on with this consultancy to the Department of Environment and Planning. Our expertise is there and available to everyone in South Australia to the limits of our resources to deliver it, and that applies equally to the Department of Environment and Planning as it does to working farmers, for example, engaged in the Wakefield River scheme.

Mr BLACKER: I seek information—

Mr LEWIS: On a point of order, Mr Chairman. Do I understand that you regard my questions as being contiguous rather than in any way supplementary to the first, even though in two instances it was for the purpose of explanation that I restated my questions?

The CHAIRMAN: Yes, I put the member down for three questions and a supplementary question. If he wants to ask another supplementary question or seek information, I am sure the member for Flinders will not object. The member will certainly get no argument from the Committee on such a minor matter.

Mr LEWIS: First, may I beg your indulgence to have my name added to the list again, in spite of the fact that I thought I had it there this morning; it apparently was not listed. I am frustrated in the whole of the Budget Estimates Committees debates by the treatment that I have been given by various Acting Chairmen and the Chairmen throughout the fortnight, and I am fed up at being cut off at the ankles wherein the numbers of questions that I have been allowed have always fallen short.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! The member is now casting a reflection on the Chair. You are as much as saying that the Chairmen of the Committees in which you have been involved have given unfair treatment to you as the member for Mallee. I certainly object to that sort of accusation and I remind the honourable member that this morning he was on the list to follow the member for Flinders and at that time the member for Mawson took the Chair and I distinctly recall when I returned that the honourable member was not in the Chamber. The member for Mawson advised me that the member for Mallee's turn came but at the time of the call the member was not in the Chamber. I notice that his name is scratched out because he was not here to take the call. I am willing to allow the honourable member one more question at this time. I do not want such reflections on the Chair in future.

Mr GREGORY: If members opposite start playing that game, we will start asking questions. The member for Mallee will not get any questions then.

The CHAIRMAN: Order! That is not necessary. I will call the member for Mallee and I expect him not to make further reflections.

Mr LEWIS: Can the Minister furnish the Committee with a list of the manning levels of each of the fruit fly road blocks operated in South Australia over the past three years and give reasons why there is any variation in those manning levels over that period.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have those figures with me, but I will certainly make them available to the honourable member. It may help the Committee if I reiterate—

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: It would help if you kept your answers short, and allowed more questions.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I think I have kept them short. This is a topic that was raised this morning when the member for Mallee was obviously not here. If the Committee wishes, I am happy to repeat that answer—otherwise I can supply figures at a later date and the member can read *Hansard* to see what I said on this topic earlier today.

Mr LEWIS: To put it another way: why is there a reduction in the level of manning at Pinnaroo?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: When I supply the honourable member with the figures I will also provide an explanation of those figures.

Mr BLACKER: I seek information about the Samcor Port Lincoln operation. There are strong rumours within the industry from the processing side, producers and employees that the future of Samcor at Port Lincoln is in doubt. Can an assurance be given about its future? I ask this question not just on behalf of the 120 Samcor employees but in view of the importance to the total Port Lincoln and

lower Eyre Peninsula economy. The works have proved to be immensely valuable in recent years. Obviously, in this coming year when there is a shortage of stock and a surplus of feed the numbers coming through the works will be down (and the deficit will be up), but there are strong rumours, even as far away as Murray Bridge, that the works at Port Lincoln will be closed. Can the Minister say whether that is fact? Whether or not that is so, what discussions are taking place?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The question of Samcor at Port Lincoln is very vexed. I cannot give the assurance that the honourable member requested, that the works will remain open. I can assure him that the Government will be doing all it can to ensure that the works remain open. I would think that any operation, whether it be Samcor at Port Lincoln or any operation, be it a Government or a private enterprise, that is losing the amount of money that Samcor Port Lincoln is losing would have to consider itself under some kind of threat.

We live in a commercial world and any organisation making those kinds of losses that are being made at Port Lincoln by Samcor must properly feel somewhat doubtful about the long-term future. From the assessment that I have made so far, I cannot ever see the Port Lincoln works ever recovering costs. Given that that is the position, and probably it is getting worse, I can understand why people are concerned about their long-term future. I will state this: if they were in private enterprise the works would have been closed down years ago. It is only that successive Governments (and not just this Government) have decided from time to time that the service given to the lower Eyre Peninsula was worth the substantial loss that they have not been closed, but whether Governments for evermore will come out on that side of the equation I am not sure.

In regard to the position of the Government of which I am a member, in my first sentence in this reply I said that I could not guarantee that the Samcor Port Lincoln works would remain open. I did say that the Government will do all it can to ensure that it does. When an organisation has accumulated losses of tens of millions of dollars (and there are no signs at all of those losses ever coming to an end but in fact increasing) then if I was an employee at Port Lincoln I would be concerned.

Mr BLACKER: Will the Minister furnish more accurate figures in terms of the losses at Port Lincoln? The Minister has referred to tens of millions of dollars in accumulated losses. I understood that the actual deficit had reduced on an annual basis over recent years. I am concerned because I believed that considerable improvement had been made.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: At this stage I will provide the figures for Samcor losses at Port Lincoln over the past three years, although the member for Flinders would be aware that the losses go back further than that. In 1981, the deficit amounted to \$600 000, in 1982 it was \$934 000, and in 1983 it was \$537 000. The anticipated loss next year will probably be double that.

Mr BLACKER: I can understand that the anticipated loss would be double, bearing in mind the climatic and seasonal conditions that we have experienced this year.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I concede completely that the anticipated loss is relatively easy to understand, given the seasonal conditions that have applied. However, my information is that farmers on Eyre Peninsula do not support the Samcor works at Port Lincoln to the extent that they could. That in turn increases the threat that hangs over Port Lincoln. Much more stock could go through the Port Lincoln works than is actually the case. If the farmers of Port Lincoln themselves will not support the Port Lincoln works to the degree that they could, I do not know how long they

can expect the community to pick up deficits of the size that it is incurring.

Mr BLACKER: Is it not correct that in recent times Samcor, in conjunction with other processors, has purchased live sheep out of the Port Lincoln market and surrounding markets of Cummins, Ungarra and up to Cleve and transported them live to Adelaide for processing through the Samcor works at Gepps Cross? In other words, they are taking the very stock that would normally be killed at Port Lincoln out of the stockyards on Eyre Peninsula and bringing them to Adelaide.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My information is that Samcor has never done that.

Mr BLACKER: I challenge that, but I do not have the details with me. I believe that that fact has been stated in Parliament in the past.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I personally have no information about that.

Mr BLACKER: When was it decided that the Samcor operation would no longer be a service works in South Australia and instead would become a commercial operation? The Government Produce Department was first established as a service works for the producers of South Australia. As such, it was over-capitalised to the extent that was necessary to cater for exceptional seasonal conditions; in other words, the flush of a season in a good year and for drought killing and the disposal of stock in poor years.

Samcor always operated as a service works until recently. As such it has always been over-serviced to that extent. That undertaking has been made by Governments over the past 50 years or so. If that is no longer the case, how does the meat industry throughout the State overcome periods when we have flushes of seasons and droughts where the killing of stock is required on humanitarian grounds? If all works are made to operate on a commercial basis, they will be scaled down to a degree where they operate on a full-time basis and, therefore, they can be made to pay.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My information is that Samcor was placed on a commercial footing in January 1981. Overall, I believe that the results of that decision by the previous Government have been very good. Inevitably, it has some side effects that are perhaps not quite so good. That is one of the problems that the Government is trying to wrestle with.

The decision in 1981 spelt out very clearly that, if the Samcor works at Gepps Cross and Port Lincoln were to survive, they had to compete with the private abattoirs. That meant that they could no longer operate as service abattoirs for the rural industry irrespective of the cost. The management of Samcor and its workforce have responded in an exemplary fashion to the challenge provided by the previous Government in 1981.

I think the balance sheets will be available quite soon, and the report will be tabled in Parliament. The report will show quite starkly the actual position. I think it is good that we know precisely what the operations are costing us. I congratulate the management and the workforce of Samcor for the way in which they have responded to the decision that was taken in 1981. The Chairman of the Samcor Board will provide the technical information pertaining to the honourable member's question.

Mr Inns: I understand that the honourable member asked how Samcor reconciles its role as a commercial undertaking and at the same time provides a service responsibility at times when excess stock is available for slaughter. I wish that situation applied at Samcor at the present time. Over the past three years the Government agreed that it would pay to Samcor a sum of \$250 000 per annum in what is described as an excess capacity grant in order to keep the northern Samcor works of Gepps Cross open so that a

service facility could be provided during times of surplus stock. That three-year agreement expired as at 30 June this year and is currently being renegotiated with Treasury.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I refer to page 134 of the Estimates of Payments and the 'Meat Hygiene Authority' line and, directly below it, the 'Poultry meat industry' line. I am aware that, when the Meat Hygiene Authority was established in South Australia for the purpose identified under its legislation, the poultry industry was not embraced within the inspectorial and other facilities required under the legislation, although that might occur somewhere down the track. Will the Minister indicate whether the \$14 000 proposed for the Meat Hygiene Authority this year is to be used to incorporate the poultry industry under the legislation this financial year? If not, if and when does the Government intend to embrace the poultry meat processing industry under the legislation?

Secondly, regarding natural disaster relief, in 1982-83 the Government of the day did not provide an allocation in that regard, as the practice over a number of years had been that Governments drew on the Treasury when required. During the past financial year \$39 million was expended in that area. Why has \$7 million been provided for natural disaster relief this year? Is it to clean up the overflow impact of the last drought, or is it in anticipation of yet another disaster in South Australia?

I refer now to the shift in identification of funding for the Country Fire Services. Funding is required generally for the Board and for operating and capital expenditure, and I understand that there has been a shift in funding sources for this year into new categories. What additional sum will be made available from State resources to the C.F.S. this year that was not available last year, and how does that additional sum line up with the information that was carefully prepared and submitted to the Government regarding the essential requirement of the C.F.S. for this year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There has been an increase of more than 30 per cent in funding for the C.F.S. this year. Mr Johns may be able to respond to the precise points outlined by the honourable member.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: A 30 per cent increase may not be enough.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That is a fair point. The only problem is that, when one is trying to frame a budget, obviously a huge number of areas must be considered, all competing for a limited amount of taxpayers' money. Where one stops for any sector is always a difficult choice. I believe that a 30 per cent increase in this area is very generous, but it is no more generous than it ought to be. I point out that in no other area in the State Budget was there a 30 per cent increase of funds this year. That indicates the Government's commitment to attempting to increase funds for the C.F.S. to the maximum amount possible.

Mr Johns: Is the honourable member referring to subsidies alone?

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I was referring to the total sum. Last year a single line covered the State's commitment to the C.F.S., and that was matched by the insurance companies on a \$1 for \$1 basis, or thereabouts. A sum of \$1.2 million in round figures was provided by the State in 1982-83, and it would appear from the scattered recordings of payments in the Budget papers that a significantly higher sum has been allocated this year. What is the total allocation for this year compared with the situation last year, and how does the allocation for this year line up with that which was expressly required by the C.F.S.?

Mr Johns: The sum allocated by the State Government in 1982-83 was \$1.198 million, and this year the allocation is \$1.876 million.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: How does the \$1.876 million line up with the sum requested by the C.F.S. as its researched and identified requirements for 1983-84? Was the allocation more than or less than the sum requested?

Mr Johns: It was a lesser amount than we had asked for.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: If the figures are not readily available, I would be happy if the Minister could provide figures relating to salaries, subsidies to councils, capital expenditure for plant, and other normal book-keeping figures.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: That type of detail will be provided, although I believe that it has already been supplied in the press.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I refer to rural industry assistance funding. Among the many Acts that the Minister administers (and there are still a few too many) are the Primary Producers' Debts Act, 1935, the Rural Industry Assistance Act, 1977, the Primary Producers Emergency Assistance Act, 1967, and the Rural Industry Assistance (Special Provisions Act), 1971. Those Acts all, in part, if not extensively, provide the guidelines for rural industry assistance in one field or another, both for long-term farm build-up, debt reconstruction, disaster emergency assistance, and so on. As well as those Acts that have effect in the general rural funding purpose arena, from time to time the Minister acts as agent for the Commonwealth with respect to the administration of its primary producers assistance legislation.

If I recall correctly, the administration costs incurred whilst acting as agents for the Commonwealth are sometimes recoverable and sometimes not recoverable. It is clear that the Department of Agriculture in South Australia is saddled with the responsibility of administering a host of inherited Acts that have grown in number like Topsy, as well as having the responsibility for administering a number of Acts on behalf of the Commonwealth from time to time. During the time that the previous Government was in office, the Department of Agriculture put in train work by officers in an attempt to consolidate, rationalise or at least reduce the number of Acts applying in this area with a view to cleaning up the administration of rural finance. This was done, also, for the purpose of clarifying a fairly clumsy collection of financial Acts, Commonwealth-State agreements, and so on, associated with this area of finance.

This was done not only for the benefit of the Government of the day and the Department but also for the purpose of easier access and understanding for persons in the rural community who might from time to time require financial assistance. Is the Minister aware of his officers' involvement in this effort to consolidate the Acts associated with rural finance? If not, has the Minister any objection to his officers continuing to consolidate the Acts related to rural finance that are under his administration?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would have no objection to my officers going through this exercise. However, I point out to the Committee that there is at the moment an I.A.C. inquiry into rural assistance in an attempt to get the plethora of rural assistance measures considered by the I.A.C. in a rational matter in order to ascertain whether or not that assistance can be delivered in a far more efficient and simplified way. It seems to me that we should be waiting until we get that I.A.C. report and then going through the process of analysing it and getting responses to it from rural industry. We can then come to a Government position and hopefully, through that Council, an Australia-wide position. That is the way to go rather than South Australian's trying to go it alone.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Has the Minister made a submission to the I.A.C.?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Government made a significant submission to that Commission which was very

well received. I am sure that the Committee would not like me to read into the record that entire submission. However, I can certainly state that this Government took the view that a comprehensive rural assistance scheme is justified as a permanent component of agricultural credit in Australia. However, it was believed that the delivery of rural assistance could be made more effective if the different needs and wants of rural producers with respect to rural assistance were embodied within a single, comprehensive rural assistance net. I think that that summarises the State Government's position on this matter. I would not be at all surprised if we arrived at an all Party position on rural assistance because it does seem a sensible and logical way to go. I have heard little or no opposition to the State Government's proposal from anybody who knows the slightest thing about rural assistance.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: What is the document from which the Minister read?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is one issued by my Department titled 'State of Agriculture' and is dated 5 August 1983. I commend it to members of the Committee or to anybody else in South Australia who is interested. We would be delighted to disseminate this information more widely throughout the State.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Directly under the reference to the Samcor deficit fund is the line 'Vertebrate Pests Authority—Operating expenses, Subsidies to local government and work on Crown lands, Dingo Control Fund, subsidy', and the relevant amounts are listed indicating what the Department seeks for administration expenses in these areas. Will the Minister say whether, in relation to the administration of vertebrate pest control, there are any dingoes south of the dog fence and, if so, how many, where they are located and what action is the Government taking to dispose of them?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have that information with me. I must admit I did not anticipate a question on the number and location of dingoes south of the dog fence. I will get that information for the honourable member as soon as possible.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Will the Minister say whether, since he has taken office, he has had drawn to his attention by an officer of his Department the location of a dingo or dingo-cross dog south of the dog fence in South Australia?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: From memory, the only matter concerning an alleged dingo brought to my attention by an officer involved a rather extraordinary incident with somebody who claimed that his wife had left him and was living with a *de facto* husband who had a dingo. I think that I was expected to go out there and destroy that dog. This matter continued for some time, much to my amusement and resulted in the gentleman concerned coming to my office. The story is much longer, and gets much more interesting. Suffice to say that the officer did not think the dog was a dingo, and the whole matter ended up in the Family Court. Apart from that extraordinary experience, I have had little to do with dingoes in the past few weeks. I think that our policy on dingoes has not changed since the previous Government's day, and before that.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: That is, if they come to your attention or to the attention of the Vertebrate Pest Authority and are identified as of that breed or part-breed, they are disposed of?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes. Dingoes are not permitted below the dog fence other than those that were identified as being there prior to 1979 (I think it was). I will get the full details of the policy for the honourable member; I am astonished that I have remembered so much about it.

Mr LEWIS: What are the titles in terms of Public Service Board job specification reference of those officers of his Department who have been required in the past to do section 12a inspections under the Soil Conservation Act?

Mr McColl: The officers performing the inspections under the Soil Conservation Act are within the Land Use and Protection Division in the Soil Conservation Branch, and the general title for them is Soils Officer, either principal, senior or what have you, depending on the level of classification.

Mr LEWIS: And academic qualifications?

Mr McColl: Academic qualifications would be either a degree in agricultural science or appropriate diploma of agriculture.

Mr LEWIS: Is the specific training that those officers have had relevant and important to the work that they have done in connection with inspections under section 12a of the Soil Conservation Act, or is it relevant not to that duty but to other duties that they perform?

Mr McColl: The two qualifications that I mentioned—the degree in agricultural science and a diploma in agriculture—are very wide in their training and within the areas in which people qualify. Soils officers naturally develop specific expertise in that area over the years. The skills and training that are appropriate to the task to which I think the honourable member is referring are only a relatively small part of the total qualification that those officers hold.

Mr LEWIS: The question that I now ask is related, although it may not appear to be, to the question that I have already asked. Does the Minister or the expert advisers available to him hold the view that the most suitable soils on which horticultural root crops such as potatoes can be grown in winter and, out of season, spring and early summer are sandy soils and preferably on an elevated sloping site with a northerly aspect, so that they are most easily cultivated during the growth of the crop for the control of weeds and for the covering of the tubers to prevent greening in the tubers and to simplify and minimise the cost of harvesting?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: On 14 September the Federal Minister for Primary Industry despatched a media release which indicated his efforts to proceed with an inquiry into the dried fruit industry. I asked question No. 37 of the Minister at or about the time he took office on this subject. I asked whether he supported a dried fruit industry request to the Federal Government to assist in curtailing the import of low priced, poor quality fruit to Australia and, if so, when was that support extended and, if not, would he do so in the interest of State-based dried fruit packers. On 30 August the Minister, via the system, indicated:

The matter is being canvassed with all sectors of industry, and the Minister is awaiting industry's advice as to the nature of any support that might be desired.

On that subject, whilst it is important, its importance was confined to the dried fruit industry (the packing and marketing of those products), and it appears to have been around for some time. As the Commonwealth has set up an Industries Assistance Commission inquiry into the dried vine fruit industry, has the Minister or his Department provided a submission to the I.A.C.? If so, can a copy of the submission be made available to the Opposition? If it has not done so, does the Minister intend to provide a submission?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I saw the press release from the Federal Minister for Primary Industry and I was delighted that the Federal Government had referred the problem to the I.A.C. for a report. Also, from memory, I was appreciative of the date when the interim report had to be brought down for comment on whether urgent assistance was required. That date was reasonably close and it heartened me that

the matter would not drag on for 12 months. Certainly, I will be making a submission to the I.A.C.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: You will or you have?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will be making a submission and I can assure the honourable member that the submission will be of a nature that will protect the South Australian dried fruit industry as much as that can be done. I will be happy to have the submission made available to the Opposition and to the community as a whole possibly by way of the journal from which I read an extract earlier this afternoon and which has a wide coverage and is well respected throughout rural industry in South Australia.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I have no further questions at this time, but I support the motion covering the agriculture lines being put.

Mr LEWIS: Can the Minister provide the Committee, either now or later, with information as to the area of crop growing in South Australia which is horticultural and divide up that information in respect of stone fruit, pome fruit and other fruits, excluding vines, and divide vine fruits into two groups, grapes for spirit and those for drying; in regard to vegetables, giving details under the heading of vegetable subtiles in regard to tomatoes, potatoes, onions and, where possible, indicate the annual value of those crops last year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will assemble those figures for the member and let him have them at a later date.

Mr LEWIS: As I understand it at present, the area under horticultural production is about 45 000 hectares or more. Is the Minister aware that underlying the Murray Mallee is the Murray Mallee Basin, which is said to contain excellent water of irrigation quality with an annual recharge rate of about 45 000 megalitres. From my calculations before I came into Parliament it means that it will be possible to irrigate about 4 000 hectares (about 10 000 acres) anywhere in that area as long as the people who decide, if ever, to develop it select a site where the water is suitable and they can obtain an irrigation licence to withdraw water. Is the Minister in favour of the development of irrigation/agriculture in general in that location, according to the response of market forces for it to develop, and the development of an irrigated horticultural industry in that locality?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The short answer is 'Yes'. There is tremendous potential for South Australian horticulture. About three or four months ago I did a trip through that area to which the member refers and had some discussions with farmers there who themselves were contemplating more intensive agriculture in that area. Some doubts were expressed in regard to concern about not wanting to damage the underground water resource. Some of the older and perhaps wiser farmers had some serious reservations. Certainly, there was much enthusiasm. If there is, as the member said, a suitable rate of water replenishment so that no damage is done to the underground resource, and in response to market forces, I would be strongly in support of more intensified agriculture there or in any other part of the State.

Mr LEWIS: I am coming now to the gist of my question in regard to the specific context that I want to put to the Minister. The best soils that could be developed for horticultural purposes in that area would be located on slopes that were free draining of cold air and heavy downpours of rain and, therefore, would be free of frost and the risk of severe damage and root rot in the event that there were unseasonal conditions and unusually heavy downpours. In view of the fact that sandy soils are preferable, will the Minister undertake to ensure that officers of the Department of Environment and Planning are trained by his Department in how to judge whether or not land should be cleared under section 12a of the Soil Conservation Act? That should ensure that we do not preclude the development of the most suitable sites for horticultural production in a locality by

saying that it is unsuitable for broadacre farming and, therefore, unsuitable for any horticulture, preventing the development of an industry in a locality.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The honourable member's question relates to another Minister's portfolio. The Department of Environment and Planning is responsible for vegetation clearance legislation. As I understand it (and I am speaking outside my portfolio), it is not the intention of the legislation to apply a blanket prohibition in relation to vegetation clearance. I expect that a number of factors are considered when applications are assessed. I also expect that the suitability of an area for a particular agricultural pursuit will form part of the criteria when an application is assessed.

I know that the Government does not wish to inhibit any agricultural production in South Australia unnecessarily. However, as a citizen of South Australia I readily concede that any further clearance of vegetation must be done on a carefully controlled basis. I do not necessarily see the two things as being incompatible. I appreciate the honourable member's point from an agricultural point of view. I stress that the responsibility for this area lies within the province of another Minister, and it is not for me to speak for him.

Mr LEWIS: I agree with the sentiments expressed by the Minister about the necessity to be judicious as to how we proceed with the further clearance of native vegetation. I refer specifically to section 12a of the Soil Conservation Act. The only valid reason for refusing native vegetation clearance applications might be the belief that the land in question was likely to erode. If the land were to be used for broadacre farming after being cleared, I would agree with any individual assessment made by a professional officer or anyone else that such land is at greatest risk in relation to erosion. However, given that the land in question is to be irrigated or otherwise sown for cover crop, it denies the people of South Australia and prospective developers an opportunity to obtain produce that can be grown there when it can be grown nowhere else in similar quantities.

At the present time premium grade potatoes in South Australia are fetching about \$620 a tonne, which means that the grower is receiving 62 cents a kilo. However, expenses in relation to packaging and to the Potato Board have to be added to the wholesale price paid to the grower before the wholesale price to the merchant is determined. On top of that, the retailer's margin and the merchant's margin will put the market price at well over \$1 a kilogram for the immediate future. The area in question could be growing premium grade potatoes on thousands of acres at this time of the year for South Australia and Australia. It would be a viable industry for the people in the area and in my opinion it would be a desirable industry and activity for housewives because an increase in the supply of potatoes would automatically result in a probable price reduction.

The only likely impediment to the development of soil in the location is ignorance on the part of the inspecting officers, who have said that the soil is unsuitable for dry land agricultural production and very prone to erosion and, further, that the prospective developer should be refused the right to clear. If there were no other constraints to prevent the clearance of vegetation, will the Minister ensure that officers of the Department of Environment and Planning (and we are informed that they will take over inspections under section 12a of the Soil Conservation Act) understand for the purposes of intensive horticultural cropping that such soils will not be at risk through erosion and are invaluable to the development of the prospective industry?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I regret that I am unable to provide the assurance sought by the honourable member. I cannot ensure that officers from the Department of Environment and Planning do anything. The honourable member

asked me to ensure that they understand the situation; I am not in a position to ensure that they understand anything. It has been a somewhat circuitous route to reach the point of the honourable member's question. I would like the member for Mallee to inform me of any specific instances, not necessarily now, where he feels that people have been disadvantaged and where South Australia has lost some responsible development because of a misunderstanding by inspectors, whether from my Department or elsewhere. I assure the member for Mallee that I will have any instances of that nature investigated to see whether the decisions taken were in accordance with Government policy, which would be in line with the preservation of our soils and our native vegetation.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

Works and Services—Department of Agriculture,
\$350 000—Examination declared completed.

Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Forests, Miscellaneous, \$16 466 000

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

The Hon. P.B. Arnold
Mr P.D. Blacker
The Hon. W.E. Chapman
The Hon. Peter Duncan
Mr R.J. Gregory
Ms S.M. Lenehan
Mr I.P. Lewis
Mr K.H. Plunkett

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Forests.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr J.C. McColl, Director-General, Department of Agriculture.
Mr J.C. Potter, Director of Regions, Department of Agriculture.
Mr R.B. Wickes, Acting Leader, Policy and Planning Unit, Department of Agriculture.
Mr R.F. White, Assistant Director, Commercial Division, Woods and Forests Department.
Mr D.M. Curtis, Assistant Director, Finance and Support Services Division, Woods and Forests Department.
Mr A.H. Cole, Assistant Director, Forest Operations Division, Woods and Forests Department.
Mr R.M. Cowan, Assistant Director, Research and Development Division, Woods and Forests Department.
Mr J.G. Thornton, Chief Accountant, Department of Agriculture.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Will the Minister identify the staffing structure and the costs for the current financial year relating to his Ministerial office as against the costs that were incurred last financial year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not quite sure what the honourable member is referring to. There has been a proposed increase of \$1 600 over actual payments for last year in the office of the Minister.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Will the Minister identify the staffing in his Ministerial office and the costs associated with that office for the current year as compared to the costs for last year? How many personnel are in the Minister's office and what are the costs?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would be happy to supply that information. I believe that the number of staff is exactly the same as it has been for a number of years. I certainly have not made any additions or deletions. However, I will provide more precise details.

Mr LEWIS: The sum of \$17 000 is proposed for grants to country agricultural and horticultural and field trial societies. Will the Minister provide a list of those societies and the sums that they will receive?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would be happy to supply that information at a later date.

Mr LEWIS: I note that \$16 000 has been proposed for fees and expenses of soil conservation boards, local committees and the advisory board. Is there any duplication between the Minister's Department and the Department of Environment and Planning?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am not aware that any duplication will occur.

Mr LEWIS: Even under section 12a?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I stated, I am not aware of any duplication in relation to that section. However, I will consider the matter most carefully and bring back a reply.

Mr LEWIS: The sum of \$196 000 is proposed for transfers to the pest plants commission fund. At present, private landholders, through no fault or lack of judgment of their own, are required to furnish substantial, in fact, in some instances, enormous sums to control weeds on restricted access, dual-lane highways similar to the Princes Highway after the freeway ends at White Hill, Murray Bridge. The Act presently requires that landholders adjacent to the freeway do not have to meet the cost of controlling weeds to the centre line of the road reserve, regardless of whether that line is on the median strip or on the other side of the road. In any case, private landholders whose properties abut the freeway are not responsible for such costs, whereas private landholders whose properties abut the restricted access highway between Swanport Bridge and Tailem Bend must meet the cost of controlling weeds on an area of land which in some places is up to 100 metres wide.

Does the Minister believe that it is fair and just that private landholders, who historically were required to undertake that work on ordinary local roads and highways before the advent of these enormous expanses that are set aside for such a highway, should be burdened with that substantial and disproportionate responsibility in regard to the control of weeds, the seeds of which clearly find their way into that road reserve from the back of vehicles and in the mud carried on vehicle tyres?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would be very surprised if anything that was done by any of the departments for which I have responsibility was not fair and just.

Mr LEWIS: It is the Act.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: All of my Acts are just. Details of the problem raised by the honourable member are not known to me, but I will undertake an investigation and furnish a considered response.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: The Minister will recall the burdens that have been placed on the wine industry in South Australia in recent times, and I do not propose to canvass all the Commonwealth taxes and spirits taxes that have been the subject of recent media coverage. However, I

understand that the Ghan service between Port Augusta and Alice Springs has a catering facility and liquor is provided during restricted hours. On a recent run between those two points in the North, the train canteen provided wine but not one container of South Australian produced wine was available. All of the wine was of Western Australian origin.

A tourist campaign is being conducted now, and in view of the difficulties that the State wine industry has experienced and is still experiencing, will the Minister or his officers make inquiries about that claim and seek to ensure that the products of the South Australian industry are made available to the tourist community and to those who take that train journey so that the canteen will supply South Australian wine and not Western Australian wine only.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will contact Australian National about this matter and ask what they are playing at.

The CHAIRMAN: Before I call on the member for Mallee, I remind the Committee that agreement was reached that we would complete the Agriculture lines by 4 p.m. and then proceed to the Fisheries lines.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I think, to the Forestry lines.

The CHAIRMAN: We are on 'Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Forests, Miscellaneous' at present.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: With respect, Mr Chairman, there is a separate forestry section about which I have only a couple of questions. I note the enormous contingent of officers from the Woods and Forests Department who are present.

The CHAIRMAN: Under the programme agreed to by the House, Thursday 6 October was to proceed at 11 a.m. with Minister of Agriculture, Minister of Fisheries and Minister of Forests. There are six lines on the programme supplied to the Chairman: Department of Agriculture; Minister of Agriculture; Minister of Forests, Miscellaneous; Fisheries; Department of Fisheries; and Minister of Fisheries.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: That is true, Mr Chairman, but the Minister of Agriculture, Forests and Fisheries is located in the one centre and all the office and administrative costs associated with those three portfolios are included in the papers before us. However, on page 151 of the Estimates of Payments from Consolidated Account, there is a specific area covering the Woods and Forests Department which is located away from the Grenfell Centre. This is an important Division in its own right and it would be disastrous if the Minister and these officers did not have a chance to have their Department acknowledged. I agree with you, Mr Chairman, that an undertaking was given that the officers of the Department of Agriculture could leave at 4 p.m. I have certainly finished with them.

Mr LEWIS: I was not consulted about this.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: The honourable member was not here when this arrangement was reached and I am sorry about that. This situation was set out to give everybody a reasonable opportunity to ask questions but also so that the Committee could conclude its deliberations at 6 p.m. The breakdown of the time table for this afternoon allowed 4 p.m. for the conclusion of Minister of Agriculture and Forests and all of the Department of Agriculture lines. The portion unidentified, but hopefully short, involved forestry and we were then to move into Fisheries, which Mr Arnold would be in charge of.

The CHAIRMAN: I advise the Committee that the only opportunity they have to deal with Forests comes under the line 'Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Forests, Miscellaneous, \$16 466 000', the line we are presently discussing.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Will the Minister say why we have previously identified requirements for capital expenditure for general purposes within the Department of Forests; for instance in 1982-83, \$3.5 million was provided

and expended, yet this year there is no provision for this line?

Mr LEWIS: I take a point of order, Mr Chairman. You were going to give me the call about seven minutes ago and you were going to advise the Committee what its priorities were. I now see the Minister's officers changing at the table from officers of the Department of Agriculture to officers from the Forests Department.

The CHAIRMAN: There is no point of order. We are dealing with the line presently under discussion. If the member is complaining again about not getting fair treatment, I point out that he was allowed to ask four questions on the last occasion he spoke instead of three. The honourable member can deal with his questions under the line 'Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Forests, Miscellaneous, \$16 466 000'.

Mr LEWIS: I will consult the record about that.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Alexandra.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: In view of what has occurred it might be appropriate for the Minister to detain the officers from the Department of Agriculture while the Forestry officers are answering questions. I will conclude with a question about capital expenditure provided to the tune of \$3.5 million last year, an amount which was expended, yet there is no provision at all under that line this year. In fact, only \$350 000 is provided for under 'Capital expenditure', that amount being listed as required to purchase plant and equipment specifically for agriculture.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I advise the Committee that Mr Tony Cole, Assistant Director of Forest Operations, Mr Malcolm Curtis, Assistant Director, Finance and Support Services and Mr Roger White, Assistant Director of the Commercial Division of the Woods and Forests Department have now joined me at the table. Mr Bob Cowan, Assistant Director, Research and Development, is seated behind me. The question asked by the honourable member falls squarely within Mr Curtis's sphere as Assistant Director of Finance and Support Services and with the Committee's permission I ask Mr Curtis to answer the question.

Mr Curtis: The provision in the Estimates of \$3.5 million last year related to Loan funds made available to the Department from Loan Account. That money is not provided this year because \$1.8 million is provided under the semi-government borrowing programme. The remainder of the expenditures incurred by the Department during last year and expected for 1983-84 will be met from funds the Department generates from sales of its products.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I take it, then, that this will be the last year that the Department will be calling on Loan Funds?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will ask Mr Curtis to answer that question, which follows on from his previous answer.

Mr Curtis: The situation is not as clear as saying that this will be the last year in which we will be borrowing Loan Funds because of the nature and capital costs of tree planting to be met over the next several years. However, there is no provision for Loan Funds required in the immediate future.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Does that mean that there is no anticipated call on capital funds for replanting and that there is no call for capital funds for any other purpose anticipated during this financial year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: This question, also, is supplementary and I ask Mr Curtis to answer it.

Mr Curtis: I just add to my earlier answer the point that during 1982-83, \$11 million was provided by the Commonwealth under a special arrangement—a loan which was interest free for three years from April 1983.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: For bushfires?

Mr Curtis: That is right. In the 1983-84 financial year a further \$22 million will be available to the Department under a special allocation from Loan Council for capital works associated with recovery and replanting projects. The 1983-84 Estimates include, however, a capital expenditure programme of some \$6.1 million, which will be funded either from those two sources that I have just mentioned or from internally generated funds, or from the \$1.8 million which will be available under the semi-government borrowing programme. We do not separate the capital expenditures out and identify the source of funds necessarily. All of these funds are used for the operations of the Department. Whereas under the old line basis of funding there was a distinction between Loan Funds and Revenue Funds, that no longer exists.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Why did the Department consider it necessary to incorporate in the payments from Consolidated Account reference to the \$11 million from the Commonwealth for 1982-83 which, as explained, is an interest free loan for identified purposes associated with the fire, and not see fit to incorporate in the 1983-84 figures reference to the \$22 million that it anticipates receiving during the forthcoming period for virtually the same purpose?

Mr Curtis: The \$11 million was a special allocation of funds for a specific purpose, whereas the \$22 million—and this may need to be confirmed with Treasury officers—was just an addition to the State's total allocation of loan funds under the semi-government borrowing programme this year by the Loan Council. Although it is identified for Forestry purposes, at this stage it is not incorporated in our Estimates.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: To follow that up, in view of the fact that it is not identified under Forestry lines in the papers provided to Parliament, on what basis can you at this stage assume that that \$22 million currently held by Treasury will be available to your Department?

Mr Curtis: The arrangement has been confirmed in writing with Treasury officers. I am not aware whether Treasury holds the funds as yet, but it has the authority to raise the funds during the financial year for departmental purposes.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Finally, can you explain why they have not identified it in any of the papers provided to Parliament as a part of the financial procedure within the current financial year?

Mr Curtis: I am unable to answer specifically why it has not been identified as part of our expenditure, but I assume that it is incorporated in Treasury's total fund-raising expectations this year.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: And, therefore, it is recorded somewhere else?

Mr Curtis: Yes, within the Treasury Estimates.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Will the Minister have his officers search the papers of the Parliament for the purposes of identifying precisely where that \$22 million is identified, and furnish that information to me with some tangible evidence that demonstrates that it will finish up in the realms of the Department of Forestry?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, that is a fair enough question and one which I will have investigated, and I will be interested in the answer.

The CHAIRMAN: The member for Mallee.

Mr LEWIS: It will probably take quite a while.

The CHAIRMAN: I remind the Committee that an agreement was made that these lines would be completed by 4 o'clock. The agreement surrounded various commitments that were made. I ask the honourable member to endeavour to deal with these lines expeditiously because the spokesman for Fisheries was also part of that agreement and he must have the time to ask his questions.

Mr LEWIS: Thank you for pointing that out to me. I was not aware that an agreement was made; nor was I a

party to it. I did not understand that such agreements could be made outside the provisions laid down by the House of Assembly when it decided to give the Standing Orders their marching instructions. I had the impression when I joined this Committee this morning that it would sit until 10 p.m.

The CHAIRMAN: The Committee has been reminded at various stages of the time table that would be maintained. I advised those who were here at the beginning that there would be a discussion between the Minister, the lead speakers and me prior to the allocation of times. We have done that in this Committee every day; it has worked very satisfactorily. It is unfortunate that the honourable member was not here at the various times when that has been mentioned.

Mr LEWIS: I dispute that, Mr Chairman.

The CHAIRMAN: I do not intend to allow the honourable member to dispute anything.

Mr LEWIS: Where in Standing Orders and the sessional orders of this Committee is it laid down that the Committee would conclude by 6 o'clock?

Mr Evans: That was by agreement.

The CHAIRMAN: That is not what we were talking about at all. I advised the Committee, and I accepted the arrangements as have been accepted in the other Committee, that there would be an allocation of time today and that a programme would be adhered to by which we would finish the Agriculture and Forestry lines at 4 o'clock to enable the Fisheries lines to proceed, but I am not having the honourable member dispute what I have had to say.

Mr LEWIS: Who were the recipients of the \$960 allocated under the 'noxious insects, reimbursement to district councils and other expenses' in the 1982-83 Budget, and what are the intended purposes to which the \$1 000 on that line will be applied this year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I do not have the detailed breakdown of that \$960, but I will certainly get the information for the member for Mallee and give him the complete list.

Mr LEWIS: By what yardsticks are the payments of those funds determined under the line on noxious insects? What are the criteria?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will get a detailed breakdown of the criteria and supply that to the honourable member when I supply him with the detailed breakdown of where the \$960 was allocated.

Mr LEWIS: Still referring to that line, my question relates specifically to complaints that have been made to me by local residents around Tailem Bend about the stagnant water in the highways reserve between the two carriageways, which is breeding mosquitoes.

It is said that it is not the responsibility of the district council, and I want to know who is responsible and whether or not steps will be taken to have those breeding grounds properly disinfected.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will try and find out who is responsible for that problem and let the member know.

Mr LEWIS: I refer to the item 'Payment to the University of Adelaide, cereal breeding'. The allocation last year was \$45 000 and \$43 026 was spent. What is the source of those funds, what is the reason for the shortfall in the budgeted allocation, and why is there an anticipated increase in expenditure this year?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will respond to that question in detail at a later date.

Mr LEWIS: Under what programme similar to the one to which I have just referred is Roseworthy Agricultural College furnished with the funds which it needs and which it has always used so effectively in the past for cereal breeding programmes? Will the Minister ensure that the same proportionate increase is available to that college as is available to Adelaide University?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I understand that this is done through an arrangement with the Minister of Education. I will have the whole area checked out extensively for the member and bring back a comprehensive response for him.

Mr LEWIS: The last line refers to the Dingo Control Fund subsidy, and I seek information from the Minister about the continued availability of funds. Can he assure the Committee that the Box Flat Dingo Control Committee will continue to be financed at its previous level so that dingos in the Ngarkat National Park which have been a continuing problem to adjacent landholders can continue to be controlled?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can assure the member that funds for this use will be made available as appropriate. I see nothing before me to suggest that they should be reduced. However, if it turns out that the programme is no longer warranted to be maintained at that level, it will be reduced.

Mr LEWIS: In regard to the forestry expenditure proposals, will the Minister consider the provision of extension services to encourage the establishment of agrarian wood lots and extension services similar to those provided to farmers who farm cereal crops, vegetables, fruit, and the like, so that the increasing shortage of timber for firewood, which is likely to be experienced in the immediate future as a consequence of the reduction in native vegetation clearance control regulations, can be met by people who can engage in viable agrarian wood lot firewood production?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: A programme within the Department already has this information available. It is not appropriate to set up an extension service on the scale that occurs in agriculture. However, we are at present capable of answering any inquiries and providing assistance to anyone who requires information about this proposal. The provision is already there.

Mr LEWIS: Finally, is it possible for the Minister to provide an extension service to encourage the commercial production of brush (melaleuca species), which is presently sold for fencing not only in South Australia but also in considerable quantities interstate? It is no longer available from natural stands as a consequence of the introduction of the native vegetation control regulations? It could be of great assistance to establish where and in what ways it would be possible to engage in that industry profitably.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am advised that the Woods and Forests Department already does research in that area but that it has not yet found a solution to the problem raised by the member. However, the research does go on and I hope it will come to a successful conclusion.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

Fisheries, \$3 278 000

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

The Hon. P.B. Arnold
Mr P.D. Blacker
The Hon. W.E. Chapman
The Hon. Peter Duncan
Mr R.J. Gregory
Ms S.M. Lenehan
Mr I.P. Lewis
Mr K.H. Plunkett

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Fisheries.

consider establishing campuses of the main research institute at Port Lincoln and in the South-East specifically? I ask that question from two perspectives. First, a campus at Port Lincoln, which has the largest tonnage of fishing in South Australia, would provide tremendous on-the-spot support for the prawn and tuna industries. If a campus was established in the South-East, where there is a very large lobster fishing industry, that sort of support would be provided in that area.

However, there is a second aspect, and that is the tourism industry. It was announced recently that a very large tourist attraction is proposed for Porter Bay, outside Port Lincoln, and it would seem to me that this is an obvious opportunity to integrate a research facility into a tourism package. Quite an amount of representation has been made to me along those lines from both the fishing industry and from tourist interests in both those areas. Therefore, will the Minister investigate the possibility of establishing those two campuses of the main institute?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I would be happy to investigate the suggestion made by the member for Mawson, but I point out that at present the research facilities that are available to the Department are very ordinary, to say the least. The first priority is to establish an effective and efficient research facility. The most immediate and efficient way of doing that is to go ahead with the facility at West Beach, and that is what we are doing. Once that facility is up and running, we can consider, if further finance is available, spreading our wings to Mount Gambier and Port Lincoln. I believe that members of the Committee would agree that the priority must be in relation to the facility at West Beach, and, from memory, we have allocated \$800 000 for that facility. It will take a couple of years to complete the West Beach facility, and that will give us plenty of time to conduct the investigation requested by the member for Mawson.

Mr LEWIS: I will not cut across the overall responsibility of the Party spokesman, but I will refer to areas of specific interest to me. Will the Minister assure the Committee and the Parliament that the Department of Fisheries will use its good offices to encourage the establishment of an aquaculture industry in South Australia, whether for the production of fresh-water or salt-water species, whether scale fish or crustaceans, in a way that will minimise the detrimental impact on the establishment of that industry of the misunderstandings that may arise in the regulatory functions of other departments?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I can assure the honourable member that the Government is interested in assisting the aquaculture or any other industry within the limit of its resources. In fact, we make a substantial contribution, and I can assure the Committee that anything further that we can do in this area will certainly be done as well as we are able. The Director of Fisheries will give details of the work that is presently being undertaken.

Mr Stevens: The Department currently assists a number of aquaculture projects mainly in relation to oysters. As members of the Committee may know, we have been involved for many years with I.C.I. and, while I.C.I. is phasing out its operation, we are attempting to encourage the involvement of local producers in the spat produced by the I.C.I. hatchery.

We are assisting a number of abalone divers, and we are commencing abalone aquaculture projects. Indeed, we have given a lot of assistance to Don Morrison in Port Lincoln, and we are also attempting to assist Trevor Castle to establish an aquaculture abalone project at Waterloo Bay. We are encountering some resistance to those proposals in regard to land and water use for recreational activity, but we are

persisting in providing assistance in the hope that these projects will develop.

Mr LEWIS: I am also concerned about the development of aquaculture in fresh-water species such as yabbies, as well as fresh-water species that can be fattened in salt-water, such as rainbow trout. The Minister may be aware that an article in the current publication of *Australian Fisheries*, which is put out by the Department of Primary Industry, outlines the prospect of fattening rainbow trout in salt-water. South Australia is ideally placed in this regard, with its very substantial amounts of fresh water running to the sea at Eight Mile Creek in the South-East, to engage not only in the hatchery operation of rainbow trout but also, having hatched them, to get them into the waters adjacent to the coastline where there are high levels of oxygen and a greater velocity of movement of water in those sheltered coves that are suitable to fatten growing fingerlings to marketable pan-sized rainbow trout, in the sea, in cages, in just over three months.

The industry of aquaculture involves production of yabbies in fresh water, or catfish, production of rainbow trout in the manner I have suggested, or the production of oysters or abalone referred to by the Director. An oyster industry alone could be worth \$26 million a year in substitution for imports and is capable of employing many hundreds of people running into tens of hundreds of people in a short time, if only these industries can get the same kinds of assistance and encouragement given to the fledgling agriculture industry in this colony just over 100 years ago through the Department of Agriculture that was established then. I believe that if the Department of Fisheries cannot do this then we are sunk and, as a State, are passing over enormous opportunities for young people to become self employed. For these reasons, I ask the Minister to pay particular attention to the development of policies within his Department that will ensure and enhance the rate at which aquaculture is established in all its forms in South Australia where it is a viable proposition to do so.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am pleased to advise the honourable member that, apart from the I.C.I. oyster project mentioned by the Director, we also give advice to the oyster industry in Coffin Bay when it is asked for. The Department's resources are available to help this industry and whenever we can assist we are only too happy to do so. We have a very good relationship with people in this industry (which certainly grows good oysters). I point out to the honourable member, in regard to the providing of resources for the fattening of trout, that whilst we do not do that directly we do provide \$2 000 a year to the South Australian Fly Fishers Association which, using voluntary labour (which I think is a tremendous programme), stocks streams around Adelaide with trout. It also provides a hatchery. This is a case of the Government working with the community. The member for Mallee mentioned Eight Mile Creek, which they also assist in stocking with trout, so we may, on this occasion, be ahead of the member for Mallee.

I point out that we have an extensive research programme involving yabbies. In fact, that programme cost the Department, from memory, about \$56 000 during the last financial year. I agree completely with the member for Mallee that there is great potential in the area of aquaculture to increase the development of fisheries in this State. I think that the only limit on this development is financial constraints. If I were able to get more money to enable people to engage in this type of activity then I can assure the honourable member that I would be delighted to take up more of these opportunities. I know that the expertise and good will is available within the Department to do this. Hopefully, in future, when the budgetary situation is not so bad, we will be able to expand on our not inconsiderable present activities.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R.A. Stevens, Director of Fisheries, Department of Fisheries.

Mr R.J. Green, Chief Administrative Officer, Department of Fisheries.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: I do not intend to make an opening address at this stage, but I would like to ask the Minister about the recent confrontation between the Minister and the fishing industry, particularly in regard to the increase in licence fees. During that confrontation the Minister made several statements along the lines that he would, if the industry did not virtually agree to the proposed increase in licence fees, increase the number of boats in the industry.

I believe that is a fairly serious statement, because the industry is finely balanced as far as the resource is concerned and the Department is struggling to balance the effort devoted to the resource. Was the statement made to force the industry to accept the new fees proposed by the Government or did the Minister seriously contemplate increasing the fishing effort?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The statement was not made in those terms at all. It was stated that further boats could be introduced to the fisheries with a restriction on effort. The member for Chaffey will agree that that is a completely different situation. There was no suggestion at all that any additional effort would be placed on any fishery in South Australia, unless it was demonstrated by biologists in the Department that the resource could withstand that additional effort. I suggest that the honourable member read the letter again, because it clearly refers to a restriction on effort.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: Will the Minister explain how he would restrict the effort and at the same time increase the number of boats?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: There is no great difficulty in that. At the moment, if the Minister or the Government wants to place a quota on a vessel, that can be done. We restrict the effort of amateur fishermen in relation to size and bag limits. There would be no difficulty in doing that if the Government decided that the abalone quota, for example, was to be set at a certain amount. The tonnage would be divided by the number of boats involved in the industry to arrive at the restriction. I cannot see how it would present any great problem.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: It would certainly present an enormous problem to the industry. It comes back to the fact that the Minister's statement was a threat or standover tactic. In other words, the industry had to pay the fees determined by the Government or else. Was the Government seriously contemplating applying quotas to the commercial fishing fleet?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am a strong supporter of managed fisheries, but that would create a problem in that area. It would restrict community access to the resource. I suppose where a restriction begins and ends is a matter for debate. It is Government policy that the maximum number of people be employed in a fishery consistent with the degree of exploitation that the fishery can bear. By restricting access to the fishery to the extreme degree, which is occurring in many cases at the moment, we have a relatively small number of fishermen operating in certain fisheries making exceedingly high profits.

That is occurring simply because the Government has restricted people's rights to fish in the fishery. I refer to the abalone fishery as an example. It costs an individual about \$200 000 to buy into that industry. The price of equipment for that industry amounts to about \$30 000 and a licence costs \$180 000 or \$190 000. The licence has any value at all merely because we restrict the number of people who

can operate in that fishery. Obviously, if it was an open fishery the licences would be worthless.

Also, fishery management costs the taxpayer a considerable amount of money. When a fishery is as demonstrably profitable as is the abalone industry, with licence fees in the order of \$185 000, the Government and I asked ourselves why we should subsidise the management costs of the industry. The abalone fishery provides extremely high profits, as demonstrated by the money that people are prepared to pay to enter that fishery. If the Government doubled the number of divers in the abalone fishery and set a restriction of a certain number of tonnes and we applied a quota to each diver at half the catch obtained on average, it would still be a highly profitable industry, even though it would be supporting double the number of divers.

The Government is not prepared to allow general taxpayers to subsidise fishermen to that degree. A significant subsidy is still going to abalone divers from ordinary taxpayers who have no access to the resource. The amount paid by abalone divers to the Government is eminently reasonable. I would be interested to see what happened to the premium on abalone licences if the licence fee was decreased. I hope that occurs and that young people do not have to pay over \$200 000 to become abalone divers in South Australia.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: I find it curious that the Minister has concentrated on the abalone fishery but has not mentioned the tuna or prawn industries which both have massive capital investment in boats and gear. I point out that the abalone industry is a high risk industry for those involved, certainly in relation to their health. It is an industry with a comparatively short working life because of the nature of the work, particularly in South Australia, where we have cold water and the divers are being forced to dive to greater depths.

The Minister has based his reply purely on the abalone fishery. There is massive capital investment in all the fisheries, particularly when one realises that the fishing industry as a whole does not provide any security. Does the Department have figures in relation to the annual catch? What are the figures in relation to the processing and export areas of the industry? Also, what is the estimated capital value of fishing vessels and gear involved in the fishing industry?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Department makes an educated guess about the value of the landed catch in South Australia. We estimate that the industry is worth about \$50 million. The member said that I confined my earlier remarks to the abalone fishery and did not mention the tuna and prawn fisheries. I confined my remarks to the abalone fishery for brevity. The tuna fishery is a Commonwealth fishery, anyway. It is not a fishery in which I can have a great deal of influence. It involves a very large capital investment, as does the prawn industry.

The prawn industry also has a very large premium on licences. It is difficult to estimate because, unlike the abalone industry, there is not a system of statutory declarations in the prawn industry as to how much fishermen pay for the pieces of paper as opposed to the boat. However, that applies to the abalone industry. The significant difference between those two industries is that the prawn industry provides the entire cost of management, so the subsidy from the taxpayer is nowhere near as high in the prawn industry as it is in the abalone industry. While I agree that the abalone industry is a high-risk industry, I am still waiting for someone to tell me how one can justify ordinary taxpayers subsidising abalone fishermen who pay \$220 000, \$190 000 of which is for a piece of paper. That is not a bad indication of the profitability of the industry.

Ms LENEHAN: I note that the establishment of a fishery research centre is proposed, and I believe that the site will be somewhere in the West Beach area. Will the Minister

Mr LEWIS: Given that the Minister acknowledges the value of an aquiculture industry in expanding the economy of South Australia and thereby expanding employment opportunities (particularly for the self employed) is the Minister prepared, first, to encourage irrigators who use fresh water suitable for producing aquiculture species to give consideration to establishing a small aquiculture unit on their properties? This could be done by the Department publishing a pamphlet advising them what options are available in this area, thereby getting people to try things out at that level before expanding. Secondly (and this would go some distance toward saving the enormous costs young men and women might meet, whether sons and daughters of Ministers of the Crown, in getting into the abalone industry) could the Minister encourage the State Government to make funds available through the new banking corporation to be formed by the amalgamation of the State Bank and the Savings Bank to assist producers, as the State Bank does now, at those privileged interest rates now available? After all, aquiculture is nothing more or less than farming beneath the waves instead of above the waves. If the Minister can get this favourable consideration for such people, the rate at which real jobs are created in South Australia might be greater than at present and more permanent and enduring than some of the Mickey Mouse job creation schemes operating at the moment.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In response to the first part of the member's question, the short answer is 'Yes', I think that that is a very good idea. I will ask the Department to prepare a document that, hopefully, will be appropriate and useful to people who have an availability of water in certain areas that may be suitable for aquiculture. I think that there have been yabbies in dams on farms for 100 years, but in some cases they are considered to be a nuisance. I think that the honourable member has raised a good point, one worth pursuing. With regard to the second part of the honourable member's question, I think, in essence, that what he is suggesting is that the range of assistance available to primary producers should be extended to the fishing industry. This matter was discussed at a recent meeting of the Fisheries Council in Sydney a couple of weeks ago. I believe, again from memory, that there was an I.A.C. report on assistance to the fishing industry and whether or not it should come under the lower interest rates (and I did not like the use of the word 'privilege' in this respect) and those arrangements made for rural industry. I think that further work is being done in this area. Given that the I.A.C. suggested that this was not the way to go, I am not very hopeful about this matter. I am not sure that that is the way to go. However, on the question of aquiculture, again from memory, my impression is that the I.A.C., or at least the Fisheries Council, suggested that we should pursue that area because it was not strictly a fishing industry and was more a primary industry and that the analogy with rural industry was more clearly identifiable. I am hopeful that the type of assistance available to rural industry can be extended to the types of enterprises that the honourable member has mentioned.

Mr BLACKER: I pursue the line on 'Research law enforcement, administrative and clerical staff'. Can the Minister give some information on what is being done in terms of research in the prawn industry in Spencer Gulf, Investigator Strait, St Vincent Gulf and the Far West Coast?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As the member for Flinders would know, St Vincent Gulf and Spencer Gulf are our two main prawn areas, and there are also two other smaller ones. They are our prime prawn grounds. We have extensive surveys taken in Spencer Gulf. In St Vincent Gulf, unfortunately, we do not have the same degree of co-operation with the prawn fishermen as we have in Spencer Gulf. In

Spencer Gulf, usually we have four synoptic surveys conducted each year, which are aimed at providing data for the ongoing prawn research programme as well as for the development of next season's harvesting strategy, determined in collaboration with the industry. They take place in February in Spencer Gulf, in April in upper Spencer Gulf, in June in the Cowell region, and in October the total Spencer Gulf area. These surveys are conducted on charter commercial vessels, with a significant input by commercial fishermen.

I express my thanks to the Spencer Gulf prawn fishermen for the degree of co-operation that they give us in determining just what is occurring with the resource in Spencer Gulf. Unfortunately, the results in St Vincent Gulf have not been as good. There have been three attempts to develop a survey programme in St Vincent Gulf. However, the commercial fishermen have not responded to any of the tender calls or requests to plan such a programme. That, of course, is their right and I do not for one moment suggest that they should be compelled to do so, but when we have such excellent results in Spencer Gulf with the programmes that we have developed in collaboration with the Spencer Gulf fishermen, not to be able to duplicate that programme in St Vincent Gulf is a matter of regret.

I will again initiate some contact with the St Vincent Gulf prawn fishermen to see whether we can get around this problem. In the other two smaller prawn fisheries we also have excellent co-operation in our prawn surveys. Surveying is the main area of research that we do, but other laboratory-based research takes place—extensive tagging and things of that nature. If the member for Flinders wishes an even more expanded answer to his question, I will ask the Director of Fisheries, Mr Stevens, whether he can give him any additional information or make it available to him later.

Mr BLACKER: I would appreciate it if the Director through the Minister could make that information available.

The ACTING CHAIRPERSON (Ms Lenehan): Do you want that information to be incorporated into *Hansard*?

Mr BLACKER: I would be happy with that.

Mr Stevens: I can give the honourable member a copy of the *SAFIC* magazine on the Spencer Gulf prawn fishery, which details extensively the research work in which we are engaged in Spencer Gulf. We have not yet developed a programme with the St Vincent Gulf prawn fishermen, but we held a meeting with them last Monday, and I am hopeful that we can make some progress towards developing a programme with them.

Mr BLACKER: Supplementary to the question on the prawn industry on the Far West Coast, is it correct that there has been a massive rejuvenation of that industry? A few years back it looked as though the prawn industry on the Far West Coast was just about wiped out. I have heard rumours—and I am asking whether you can confirm that—that there has been a dramatic revival of that industry. Is it a fact that the three operators there are still operating under permit, and is it expected that that arrangement will continue?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I am delighted to say that the rumours that the member for Flinders heard are substantially correct. There was quite a dramatic fall in that resource on the Far West Coast over two or three years. It went from being a very substantial prawn fishery to one that was virtually wiped out. With very careful management, a significant reduction in the number of boats fishing on the Far West Coast has meant that there has been a dramatic turn-around in that fishery. Of course, we are all absolutely delighted at that.

I point out that, because of our experience over the past three or four years when we have seen the fishery fluctuate so widely, we are really treating that fishery with kid gloves.

Until we are absolutely confident that the resource has stabilised, I much prefer the fishermen there to be on permits that can be varied or cancelled at any time to ensure that what happened with the fishery for the previous two or three years does not occur again.

Again, a significant research programme is going on mainly through our research officer in Ceduna. We will monitor the whole fishery very carefully and as soon as we are in a position to make some firm decisions—as firm as they can ever be in fisheries, given that one does not have total control over the resource—we will be able to establish how many boats should be in there, what size boats and what degree of effort that fishery can sustain. The policy of this Government is to have the maximum amount of effort in a fishery consistent with the protection of the resource. If the fishery's resource could stand twice as much effort overnight, this Government would certainly do it. There is no suggestion at all of having a resource under-exploited. Unfortunately, at the moment in many areas the reverse is the case and they are over-exploited. If any are found to be under-exploited they will be fully exploited; people will be allowed to fish them.

Mr BLACKER: In regard to the same line, but moving from prawns and back to abalone, can the Minister indicate whether any research has been done on roei and whether the Government believes that roei has potential for an industry to be developed around it? Should it be part of the abalone industry?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Raw abalone does present something of a problem. We believe that we now need more answers. I am flagging that we will be issuing some Ministerial permits for roei to be taken. The decision has been taken but not yet announced (it is hot news). We are considering doing that on the basis that there may be a resource. If there is a resource, our feeling is that it will be a small resource and a fragile one, and not one that will ever provide a substantial living for anyone. We have some information, but not as much as we would like.

I am considering (and am close to deciding) whether a Ministerial permit should be issued so that we can test in commercial conditions just what the resource can stand. However, I must confess that I am nervous about it. I am not totally convinced that the resource can stand any significant pressure. It would be a shame, if there was a resource there to be exploited, if it went to waste. It is a difficult and delicate area but it is one with which we are wrestling, and I hope to come to some decision about it soon.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: The only way to find out is to test it.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes. I agree with the excellent comment of the member: the only real way to find out is to test it. That is true. We want to ensure that the test is so gentle that in testing we do not spoil it. That is a fine balance indeed.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: In view of the time, I will ask several minor questions that the Minister can answer later. Does an officer, Scoresby Shepherd, still work in the Department and, if so, what is his role?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: Yes, he is Senior Research Officer, Abalone.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: In answer to a question from the member for Mawson this afternoon, the Minister indicated that research in fisheries is modest, meagre (or words to that effect). According to reports from the fishing industry about the research vessel being at the bottom of the river for an extended period, and the absence of research in areas where it has been sought from time to time, I can accept the Minister's description today in regard to research in the industry generally. However, will the Minister advise

the Committee how the claim of extensive subsidy to the abalone industry is sustained? In answer to a question from the member for Chaffey, the Minister commented on the abalone industry and referred to an incredible subsidy applying to persons in that industry, saying that it was his policy that they should in effect pay for the research, or whatever it is that is attracting that public subsidy, and that the community at large should be relieved of such payments in lieu of increased licence fees. Will the Minister explain the situation in the abalone industry which is causing him to home in on the licence fee structure for those people?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I refer to my earlier statement about the research facilities of the Department. I am sure that the *Hansard* record will show that, when I was speaking about the new West Beach research facility, I said that currently the research facilities we have in the Department are ordinary. I did not say that the quality of research was in any way substandard but, rather, that the facilities were very ordinary. I would correct the member for Alexandra in that respect.

In regard to the abalone industry, I can certainly supply figures for the honourable member. Those figures are quite stark and clear. The costs to the abalone industry are fairly allocated in order to identify the amount the Government spends on that managed fishery.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: Is that for policing or research?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: It is for everything other than capital equipment. We do not suggest that they should have to pay for the research boat or for the new facility at West Beach. It is possible to allocate, amongst the various fisheries, the degree of research, policing, etc., that is done for those fisheries. In some fisheries one finds that the income from licence fees is very close to the outgoings for research. In others a very wide gap exists. In some areas the gap will always be wide—for example, in the scale fishery, which is not a prosperous fishery, and therefore cannot afford the cost of management of a widely scattered fishery with many problems. We are not suggesting that the scale fishermen can afford to pay all the costs of managing that fishery.

The abalone industry is different, as it is a high profit (albeit a high risk) fishery. Given that it is a high profit fishery, I wish to see the incomings to the taxpayer measure up more and come closer to the outgoings. The prawn fishermen are already doing it, the figures are available, and we will supply them to the members of the Committee.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: A report has been lodged with the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation seeking to clearly reidentify the boundary line between the St Vincent Gulf prawn fisheries and the area to the south. The redefined wording of the proposal is that all waters of St Vincent Gulf north of the geodesic joining Troubridge Point, Yorke Peninsula, Cape Jervis, and Fleurieu Peninsula be included in the regulations under the Fisheries Act, 1971-1982, in lieu of what was previously a fairly clumsy description of that line. According to those in the industry with whom I have consulted, the proposal is welcomed.

In view of good management, easier policing and careful identification of precisely where people are fishing in future, does the Minister intend that that now redefined line on the southern boundary of St Vincent Gulf becomes the northern boundary line for the fishermen of Investigator Strait who are fishing in that region? In other words, is it a common boundary line? If it is, that is a welcome good management measure.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: My understanding of the position is that at present there is a three-mile buffer zone between the two fisheries. I also understand that the permits that

are issued to the Investigator Strait prawn fishermen provide for that buffer zone. It is my intention that that buffer zone remain. However, I will look at the regulations again and check that what I am stating as my intentions will in fact occur when the new line is gazetted.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: I raise the subject with the Minister as a matter of importance because regulation No. 100 of 1983, which cites the new redefined line as being the southern boundary of St Vincent Gulf, is quite clear. However, it makes no reference whatsoever to any buffer zone, nor should it necessarily do so, I suggest. It would seem to me that ultimately there should be a single gulf zone in St Vincent Gulf as indeed there is in Spencer Gulf, and that the fishermen collectively fishing south of this line referred to, and north of it, should be in the one paddock, so to speak. However, until that ultimate and desirable measure can be adopted, a single boundary line between the two would seem to make good sense.

The CHAIRMAN: Does the Minister wish to comment?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: No.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: I have received a letter dated 15 September 1983, which states:

It is approaching two years that I have noticed at least four new Fisheries Department vessels kept unused at the Churchill Road depot. I believe these 'shark cats' were purchased to replace fisheries inspectors' boats after a drowning off Kangaroo Island, but that no provision was made for vehicles to tow these new vessels, and so they cannot be used.

Is there any validity in that statement?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: The Director of Fisheries will respond to that question.

Mr Stevens: There is some validity to the question. The patrol vessels were commissioned by the previous Government in, I think, August or September last year. However, the problem that we have had is getting suitable towing vehicles for those vessels. We had a contract for the supply of the vehicles to tow those vessels, and the supplier not so much reneged but was unable to supply vehicles to specification. We then had to tender again to get vehicles for the towing of those vessels, and that is the basic reason why there has been such a long delay. However, I would say that the four vessels have not been there all the time: they have been used where we have been able to get vehicles to tow them.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: Does the fact that these vehicles have not been able to be properly used mean that some of the fisheries inspectors have been forced to continue to use vessels that might be classified as not being as safe as, say, the shark cats?

Mr Stevens: No, that is not correct. The three cape class vessels have been discarded. Fisheries officers have continued to use vessels of greatly decreased capacity compared to that of new vessels. Fisheries officers continue to use vessels surveyed by the Department of Marine and Harbors. Obviously, their sphere of operation has been restricted.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: I refer to a letter forwarded to the Minister by the District Clerk of the District Council of Streaky Bay. The letter refers to a proposal being considered by the Fisheries Department to grant two licences in the area for the taking of blue crabs. The operators would be permitted to operate 100 pots each and it involves the Blanche Port and Streaky Bay areas. This matter appears to be of great concern to the council. The letter states:

Council alleges that the blue crab, which was relatively plentiful in this area until some 8-10 years ago, virtually disappeared for a period of about five years, and has, in fact, only reappeared during the last 2-3 summers. Council suggests that the disappearance of the blue crab was the result of intensive netting, at that time.

Obviously, the council is concerned that, if the commercial fishing of crabs takes place, the situation outlined by the

council will occur again and, as a result, will have an adverse effect on the tourist industry in the area.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have received a letter from the Streaky Bay council and I am in the process of replying. I point out that at the moment we are testing the blue swimming crab resource through the issue of six permits. We are trying to determine whether the resource is sufficient to allow commercial fishing. I assure the people of Streaky Bay and those in other areas where this activity will take place that the permits are tightly written. They can be revoked at any time, and conditions on them can be altered at any time. At this stage we do not intend to establish a blue crab fishing industry. We are attempting to determine whether a viable industry exists.

I will certainly not permit the industry to exist if it must do so at the expense of other people. If there is any significant interference with the resource in the Streaky Bay region, the district council is free to approach me and let me know. I will monitor what is occurring in relation to the experimental permits. I point out that permits for the taking of sand crabs have been issued in the Coffin Bay area for some time. I think that those permits allow 150 pots to be operated for sand crabs. That fishery has been successful so far. Whilst 150 pots sounds like an enormous number, there has been no apparent impact on the resource. Someone is making a living out of that fishery, and that is good. Certainly, there is no suggestion that tourists or anyone else are being interfered with. I hope that the same situation applies in relation to the other five Ministerial permits.

If that is not the case then at any time they can be altered or revoked. It is certainly not the Government's intention to interfere significantly with tourist or recreational fishermen in the areas where we have issued crab permits.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: Once again a very delicate situation exists there and it will have to be watched very carefully. A situation could occur where, to provide a livelihood for three or four people, we could be destroying the livelihood of many other people. At the last meeting of the Murray River professional fishermen, a requirement of the Department was spelt out, namely, that the Department of Marine and Harbors had considered that professional fishermen on the river would be required to have a coxswain's certificate. This struck me as being absolutely absurd. I know why the requirement for a coxswain's certificate was brought in to cover the situation that existed in the prawn fishery, in particular with the trawlers, and so forth, but to expect a Murray River fisherman in a 12ft or 14ft dinghy to have a coxswain's certificate (if this provision is persisted with) would be bureaucracy at its absolute best.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I have not heard of the proposal. This is probably because the matter is really within the province of the Minister of Marine.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: Supplementary to that question, I can assure the Minister that it was his departmental officers who attended the meeting and who spelt out to the professional fishermen that they would be required to have (and would be required to pay \$20 or whatever it is) a coxswain's certificate in order to handle a dinghy.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: In the spirit of the instant responses to these queries, I ask the Director of Fisheries to explain the matter.

Mr Stevens: Our officers would have informed fishermen at that meeting that they were required to have a coxswain's certificate. We have been asked particularly by the Director-General of the Department of Marine and Harbors that when we advise fishermen as to their eligibility to take up a licence we remind them of the requirements of the Department of Marine and Harbors. I am sure that my officers would not have made any comments as to whether it was

necessary or not, but I am sure that they have their own personal views.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: Anyone with any common sense would have to agree that that is absolutely absurd. I would hope that the Minister of Fisheries will take up this matter with his colleague the Minister of Marine to sort the matter out, because I think that this is bureaucracy at its absolute best.

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I give an undertaking that I will take up this matter with the Minister of Marine, and I will let the member for Chaffey know how I get on.

Mr PETERSON: In regard to research, I notice that it states in the yellow book that research will commence in Investigator Strait. I am interested in that comment, because the fishery in Investigator Strait has decreased since 1976 when an estimated 350 tonnes of prawns were caught there. That amount declined to 187 tonnes in 1978, and to 50 tonnes in 1982. At that stage the number of boats in the area was reduced from eight to two. Those two boats caught only 34 tonnes of prawns in 1982-83.

The fishermen operating in that area have previously advised the Department of Marine and Harbors that they require a catch rate of 31½ kg an hour to create a viable operation. Yet, in 1982-83 the rate was at only 15.5 kg an hour. The Minister of Fisheries in the former Labor Government announced that it was his intention to close Investigator Strait for two years to allow an unhindered research programme to take place. That was in accord with the Department of Fisheries recommendation made in 1981 that the area should be closed for two years.

Indeed, in 1980 the Investigator Strait fishermen themselves suggested that the Investigator Strait fishery should be closed for six months of the year when small prawns were in abundance. The Commonwealth Minister has advised since 1980 that research by the South Australian Department was taking place in Investigator Strait. I understood from the Minister's comments that the Minister believes that an independent fishery can be maintained in Investigator Strait. In view of all the previous investigation and research that has been done there and the findings in regard to the decreasing catch, what is hoped to be achieved by the proposed further research project to be undertaken in Investigator Strait?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: As I stated previously, it is our intention that, if there is a resource to be responsibly exploited, it will be exploited. The information that I have received from a whole range of sources has demonstrated to my satisfaction that, provided that there are some very careful controls, there is a small fishery in Investigator Strait. Experience on the Far West Coast shows that there can be very broad fluctuations in the prawn resource: the resource can reduce most alarmingly in certain years, but it can recover.

Information in regard to Investigator Strait is conflicting. Some people are quite adamant that the resource cannot stand two boats, but other information and advice indicates that it can. I decided, on the best information that was available to me, that certainly no harm would be done to the prawn stocks if two boats were permitted to fish in Investigator Strait under very carefully controlled conditions. I have issued two permits, as did previous Ministers, with strict conditions attached, including a condition that the fishermen co-operate with the Department in its research programmes. Obviously, by accepting the permit, those fishermen have undertaken to co-operate.

The object of the research, as is the object of all research, is to ascertain what is there and what is happening. The information that we will obtain through our research programme in Investigator Strait will be very helpful. I would prefer that we could broaden the information available by

receiving the same degree of co-operation from fishermen in the Gulf of St Vincent.

The only other thing is that I am prepared to issue special Ministerial permits for the two boats in Investigator Strait, involving a requirement that, if those fishermen want to fish in that area, they must co-operate in regard to research. That is a safeguard, and, judging by their attitude, those fishermen would have co-operated in any case, as the Spencer Gulf fishermen co-operate. However, I judged the matter to be sufficiently important to make this co-operation a condition of the permit. We know that those fishermen will assist us in assessing the resource, what will happen to it, and what degree of exploitation it can or cannot stand.

Again, I point out that the permits can be revoked at any time and can be altered in any way I choose, as they are Ministerial permits and, as in regard to any other Ministerial permits, if at any time I feel that there is undue pressure on that resource in Investigator Strait, those Ministerial permits will be altered or revoked to protect the resource. All my decisions are based on protection of the resource: that is the only base from which a responsible Government can work.

The CHAIRMAN: Before we proceed, I would like a direction from the Committee. Does the Committee intend to complete its examination at 6 p.m.?

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: It depends on what questions are forthcoming from the other side.

The CHAIRMAN: There have been only two questions from that side.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: But will they continue?

The CHAIRMAN: That is what I want to know. I remind the Committee that there are still two more lines to be considered, and a resolution must still be carried if we are to finish at 6 p.m.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: Can we proceed for a further 15 minutes?

The CHAIRMAN: No, I am advised that we cannot do that. Can the Committee advise the Chair whether there are any further further questions on this line?

Mr BLACKER: I note that, in regard to administration expenses, minor equipment and sundries, last year \$474 000 was expended and this year there is a proposed expenditure of \$600 000, plus \$259 000 under the line 'Accommodation and service costs'. Is there an explanation for what appears to be an excessive increase?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I apologise that we did not catch the first part of the question. If it is agreeable to the honourable member, we will pick it up in *Hansard* and respond in writing.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

Works and Services—Department of Fisheries, \$1 165 000

Chairman:

Mr G.T. Whitten

Members:

The Hon. P.B. Arnold
 Mr P.D. Blacker
 The Hon. W.E. Chapman
 The Hon. Peter Duncan
 Mr R.J. Gregory
 Ms S.M. Lenehan
 Mr I.P. Lewis
 Mr K.H. Plunkett

Witness:

The Hon. Frank Blevins, Minister of Fisheries.

Departmental Advisers:

Mr R.A. Stevens, Director of Fisheries, Department of Fisheries.

Mr R.J. Green, Chief Administrative Officer, Department of Fisheries.

The CHAIRMAN: I declare the proposed expenditure open for examination.

The Hon. P.B. ARNOLD: In relation to the replacement of the *Joseph Verco*, \$350 000, can the Minister provide the information in writing as to when that vessel was purchased by the Department, who was responsible for the purchase, and whether a marine survey was obtained by the Department and the Government at that time before the Government of the day purchased that vessel, in light of the knowledge we now have of it?

The Hon. Frank Blevins: I will obtain that information for the honourable member.

The CHAIRMAN: There being no further questions, I declare the examination of the vote completed.

Minister of Fisheries, Miscellaneous, \$101 000—Examination declared completed.

Ms LENEHAN: I move:

That the draft report, as circulated, be the report of the Committee.

Motion carried.

The CHAIRMAN: I thank the Committee and the officers for their assistance today. That concludes the business of the Estimates Committee.

Ms LENEHAN: Mr Chairman, on behalf of the Committee I would like to offer our congratulations on the competent and fair way in which you have chaired the Committee meetings for the past fortnight and also to thank the staff for the very long hours they have put in over the past two weeks.

The Hon. W.E. CHAPMAN: We on this side endorse the remarks.

At 6 p.m. the Committee concluded.