

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.**

Thursday, October 4, 1951.

The House met at 2 o'clock.

The CLERK—I have to inform the House that the Speaker, owing to a family bereavement, will be unable to attend the House this day.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Dunks) took the Chair and read prayers.

**HUNDRED OF GOODE WATER SUPPLY.**

The DEPUTY SPEAKER laid on the table the final report of the Public Works Committee on the hundred of Goode water supply, together with minutes of evidence.

Report ordered to be printed.

**APPOINTMENT OF AGENT-GENERAL.**

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Have any steps been taken by the Government to fill the office of Agent-General in London left vacant by the death of Sir Charles McCann? If not, can the Premier indicate when such steps are likely to be taken?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No decision has yet been made by the Government on this matter, and I am unable to indicate when one will be made.

**PORT PIRIE BRICK SUPPLY.**

Mr. DAVIS—Last week I asked the Premier whether he would make further investigations into the brick position in Port Pirie. Has he anything to report?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have not brought down a report on the matter.

**LAND FOR SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.**

Mr. TEUSNER—Some time ago I directed the attention of the Minister of Lands and Repatriation to the fact that about 6,300 acres of land situated in the Eden Valley district, about 12 miles south of Angaston, was likely to be offered for sale in the near future, and suggested that it would be suitable for soldier settlement. Has the Minister given any further consideration to this matter? The land will come up for sale by public auction at Angaston on October 22. Does the Minister propose to send officers of his department to the sale with a view to acquiring the holding?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The honourable member has on two or three occasions approached me in with reference to the possible purchase of this property, which would be suitable for soldier settlement. Yesterday I

asked the chairman of the Land Board for a report on the matter. He supplied the following information:—

I contacted Mr. J. Murray some months ago following information that he was preparing to dispose, by auction, of certain lands he held in the Eden Valley district. Mr. Murray stated that he had given consideration to the offer of the land to the Government, but, in view of certain tentative arrangements which he had made with neighbours that the land would be offered at public auction, and arrangements that had been made with his agents in the same direction, he felt that he could not depart from such arrangements. He referred me to Mr. Ardill, of Goldsbrough Mort & Co. Ltd., who was handling the matter. Mr. Ardill pointed out that he saw no reason why the Government should not bid at auction if it so desired, but, as far as he was concerned, arrangements have progressed too far for anything to be done in the matter. In any case he felt that the price which would most likely be secured at auction would be far beyond what the Government would be prepared to pay, having in mind his knowledge of Government standards of value and the high prices which had previously been paid for similar land in the locality. At the time of the interview Mr. Murray was proceeding interstate and stated that he would further consider the matter and if he felt that anything could be done towards meeting Government requirements he would let the department know.

We have not heard anything further in that regard, but I have given instructions for a member of the Land Board to be present at the sale.

**BULK HANDLING OF WHEAT.**

Mr. STOTT—Can the Chairman of the Public Works Committee amplify a recent statement he made on the present stage of the inquiry by the committee concerning the bulk handling of wheat?

Mr. CHRISTIAN (Chairman, Public Works Standing Committee)—I do not think I would be entitled to trespass on the goodwill of the House by making a lengthy statement on this subject. However, I can give information regarding one or two points of the inquiry. There seems to be some insistence by certain people for an interim report by the committee, but I doubt whether any value could possibly attach to such a report. I assume it is hoped that in any report the committee would be able to say whether a bulk handling scheme for South Australia is feasible or desirable. The committee can make no such pronouncement until it has fully examined the economics of the question. As the honourable member is undoubtedly aware, there are a number of difficulties which have not yet been solved. The

committee has applied itself strenuously and continuously to their solution, and, although on occasions it followed up promising clues, some of them have proved to be quite disappointing. On the general question of a bin or storage system for this State there are no difficulties. Western Australia has developed a very satisfactory and economic bin system, one which I think South Australia could adopt. However, that is not the problem. For terminal storage, a type is now being developed at Ardrossan which may prove eminently suitable even for our main shipping ports. That bin has been developed as a result of collaboration between the committee, the Broken Hill Proprietary Company and the Australian Wheat Board. That may be a prototype of the bin which may eventually be established at all our main shipping ports. The real problem, as I have always indicated at conferences and meetings with farmers on the matter, is the shipping of the wheat at terminal ports. We have at least five of these ports, and the small volume of wheat going to any of them does not warrant the installation of anything very costly in the way of silos or handling equipment. If we were in the fortunate position of other States where the bulk of the wheat gravitates to one main shipping port we would be able to afford a similar installation to theirs, namely, orthodox shipping galleries with belts to handle the wheat, a very simple matter, and where the volume is large enough that kind of installation is warranted. For the information of members I will give the export figures for the shipping ports in South Australia. They were compiled by the Wheat Board and are the average for a 10-year period. The average quantity now shipped at Port Adelaide is 4,639,000bush. At one time it was between 10,000,000 and 12,000,000. The figure for Wallaroo is only 3,897,000bush., Port Pirie 2,514,000bush., Port Lincoln 3,118,000bush., and Thevenard 1,187,000bush. With the acceptance of Ardrossan as an overseas shipping port the quantities available at Port Adelaide and Wallaroo may be appreciably diminished. Wallaroo, Port Lincoln and Thevenard, moreover, are jetty ports which, of course, accentuates the difficulty of providing shipping and handling equipment. Where we have a wharf, as at Port Adelaide and Port Pirie, and eastern State ports and Fremantle, the matter of shipping galleries becomes relatively simple. The Public Works Committee is not prepared to bring in any half-baked report that would not completely solve, if it is possible to solve, the problem of handling at these

ports and an interim report could not do any more than that. It could only traverse the history of the investigation and leave entirely undecided the problem I have mentioned. The present situation is that two overseas concerns, with wide experience in the manufacture of equipment are investigating on the committee's behalf the manufacture and supply of suitable equipment for these ports under the conditions I have outlined. One is a United Kingdom company and the other a German firm whose representative was here only last week. With him I investigated at first hand the problems associated with the port of Wallaroo. Until the reports of these two firms are to hand the committee will not be in a position to solve this problem. When they do come to hand the committee hopes to be able to say whether it would be economic and feasible to establish bulk handling in this State.

#### SETTLEMENT OF EX-SERVICEMEN.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Last Tuesday in reply to a question the Minister of Lands gave the number of qualified ex-servicemen who had applied for land and the number who had been provided with it. At the end of his reply he quoted clause 3 (a) of the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act, as follows:—

Settlement shall be undertaken only where economic prospects for the production concerned are reasonably sound and the number of eligible persons to be settled shall be determined primarily by opportunities for settlement and not by the number of applicants.

Can the Minister explain what he had in mind in making that addendum to his reply, because it seems to me that the prospects in South Australia of producing lines such as wheat, wool, dried fruits, and citrus are exceptionally good?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The clause was part of an agreement accepted by this Parliament and I think members will agree that at that time there appeared to be throughout the Commonwealth and the rest of the world a very great surplus of wheat. The clause may have been inserted because of a tremendous number of applicants for land for cereal growing, particularly wheat.

Mr. Macgillivray—Why did you quote it?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I felt that the honourable member was seeking information, not only in his own interests, but in the interests of settlers, some of whom he knows are applicants for cereal-growing blocks. There

are many applicants for land for cereal growing, but it is most unfortunate that we have not a great deal of land offering which is suitable for it. That is the reason for the information being given.

#### POLIOMYELITIS TREATMENT.

Mr. QUIRKE—Can the Premier say whether the report by Dr. Crosby on poliomyelitis is yet available?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have not got the report with me. I told the honourable member that I believed it had been received some time ago, but it will be necessary for me to find out where it is in order to get a copy.

#### LIVING WAGE ADJUSTMENTS.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Has the Premier anything further to add to the reply he gave to my question last week about the publication of awards and wages board determinations following variations in the living wage?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have two reports, but as they are rather long I ask leave to have them inserted in *Hansard* without reading them.

Leave granted.

The reports were as follows:—

Two distinct types of adjustments of determinations of industrial boards are provided for in the Industrial Code, 1920-1950, consequent upon—(1) the alteration of the living wage by the Board of Industry, under section 194; and (2) the automatic increase or decrease in the Commonwealth basic wage (cost of living adjustment) under section 269A. In the former case, section 195A provides that the Minister shall publish as soon as practicable a copy of every determination affected by such alteration, showing the rates as altered by the operation of the Industrial Code, but, in the latter case, there is no such mandatory provision. In such latter case, the quarterly cost of living adjustments are substantially uniform with the adjustments of the Federal awards which are also not reprinted. Should it be decided to publish the altered determinations in every case, the net result in the total amount of work involved by this department would not be any greater than is now involved in a cost of living adjustment, although the nature of the work would be somewhat varied. The publication of the determinations following each alteration, irrespective of its nature, would tend to facilitate policing of determinations by the department, and would be a definite advantage to the small employer whose educational standard is frequently unequal to arriving at the correct wage payable to an employee after several cost of living adjustments have been made since the determination was last published. Against this, however, it is realized that an enormous strain would be placed upon the resources of the Government Printer and his staff to reprint all the determinations each

quarter when there is an adjustment, particularly as, in addition, there is a similar number of awards of the court involved. (Sgd.) J. R. McColl, Chief Inspector of Factories.

The Industrial Code provides for automatic adjustment of rates of pay prescribed by awards and determinations in the following circumstances:—(1) When a living wage is declared by the Board of Industry; (2) when a living wage is declared by proclamation to avoid unjustifiable differences between State and Federal basic wages; and (3) on the occasion of a quarterly adjustment in the living wage. In the case of (1) and (2) above, it is provided that the Minister shall publish as soon as practicable a copy of every determination and award affected by the alteration showing the rates as altered. This was last done in December, 1950. In the case of a quarterly adjustment the provision is not mandatory. It has not been the practice to republish determinations on the occasion of quarterly cost of living adjustments, for the following reasons:—(1) The principle of quarterly adjustment follows the provisions of Federal awards, which are not republished quarterly; (2) the staff and equipment of the Government Printer are fully extended coping with current work. The necessity to issue supplementary *Gazettes* totalling 360 pages each quarter and to complete reprints for sale would seriously delay other important work. It will be seen from this that the cost involved is not the main factor; (3) the practice would aggravate the present shortage of paper; (4) many industrial boards meet at frequent intervals and when any alterations is made to wages or conditions a complete determination is invariably published showing current rates of pay; (5) many determinations show marginal rates of pay above the living wage, and it is a simple matter to determine the total wage at any time. The present arrangement of supplying the last print of an award or determination, and issuing prints showing cost of living adjustments, appears to be working satisfactorily. (Sgd.) C. A. Pounsett, Acting Secretary, Minister of Industry and Employment.

#### SOLDIER SETTLERS' IMPLEMENT ALLOWANCE.

Mr. STOTT—Soldier settlers in the Loxton area have what is known as an implement allowance of about £300 a year, whereas in the other States the allowance for this purpose is about £1,000. Will the Minister consider increasing the allowance in this State and bring it somewhere near the allowance in other States, because the £300 is scarcely sufficient to meet present day requirements?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The matter was considered recently and it was decided to increase the allowance to £400.

#### RAILWAY LINES ON PORT PIRIE WHARVES.

Mr. DAVIS—Following my question some time ago, can the Minister of Lands say

whether anything has been done to rectify a dangerous condition of the railway lines on Barrier Wharf and those leading to Baltic Wharf, Port Pirie?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I will take up the question with my colleague, the Minister of Railways, on his return.

#### COUNTRY AMBULANCE SERVICES.

Mr. RICHES—The Port Augusta Ambulance Committee operates two motor ambulances covering all cases requiring transport to hospital at Port Augusta or to Adelaide, or from certain other towns to Adelaide and it is faced with a difficulty, which I imagine also faces other country committees, in financing the service owing to rising costs and the necessity for making some provision for replacement of vehicles. It would materially help these committees if the Government could make a clear statement of policy regarding future control of ambulance services. If there is any possibility, as has been suggested, that ambulance services are to be controlled or taken over by the Government they would know what lines to follow in budgeting for future operations. If, however, the Government does not propose to take over control they will immediately have to set about raising funds for replacement and depreciation. It is some years, I understand, since the suggestion that the Government should take over ambulances and co-ordinate the services was first mooted, but no approach has been made to the Port Augusta committee, nor any intimation of the Government's policy given it. Is the Premier in a position to give a statement of policy this afternoon? If not, will he obtain the necessary information to enable the committee to budget for the future?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It is not usual at question time to make statements of policy, but I think I can assist the honourable member to this extent. The Government some time ago appointed a committee to go into the question of co-ordinating or establishing better ambulance services. The committee made a recommendation, but there were difficulties in connection with it by virtue of the fact that there are a number of completely unco-ordinated authorities with ambulances working under entirely different conditions. Some South Australian ambulances charge for services rendered, some charge on the basis of what a patient can afford to pay, their services being available to necessitous cases, and some give entirely free service. The position is very complicated because of the different types of work being attempted. Quite recently

a conference was held in my office between the three principal authorities on ambulance services in this State—the St. John Ambulance Association, the South Australian Ambulance Transport, and the Police Commissioner. Substantial progress was made and it was agreed that the St. John Ambulance authority would be a co-ordinating authority for the whole of South Australia and not only for Adelaide as was reported over the radio. It was decided that those bodies prepared to work in with that authority could do so and the Government would provide a fairly substantial grant to assist in providing ambulance services, which will be very much on the basis of that provided by the police ambulance at present. It is not intended that all ambulance cases shall be conveyed free of charge from anywhere to anywhere; but provision will be made to meet necessitous cases.

Mr. RICHES—Will the country ambulance services receive a communication from the St. John Ambulance authority, or is the onus on them to make overtures?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I regret that I cannot give the honourable member that information now. The conference held in my room dealt with general principles, and it was agreed that the details would be worked out by the associations and the Police Commissioner at further discussions. I will find out and let the honourable member know what steps a country ambulance service should take if it desires to become attached to this co-ordinated service.

#### PETROL AND OIL SUPPLIES.

Mr. STOTT—In view of the decision which has now been reached in Persia that no more petrol from Abadan or the Persian Gulf will be made available to British countries, can the Premier say whether South Australia depends on supplies from the Persian Gulf and Abadan or whether most of our supplies now come from Balikpapan in Borneo? If we depend on supplies from the Persian Gulf and Abadan, has the Government received any communication from the Federal Government as to whether adequate petrol supplies will be available to this State in the near future?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—About six or eight weeks ago this Government became very disturbed because it found that certain of its contracts for heavy oil had been terminated. A large percentage of the petrol and oil supplies of Australia did come from Abadan, our chief supplier. I then inquired and found that the position with regard to both

petrol and oil was such as to cause very grave anxiety. I have no fresh official information beyond that point. I believe the position is being met by some adjustment by American authorities of the international quotas in an effort to meet the serious position which arises from the fact that the biggest refinery and producing field are now out of production. That in itself must obviously cause tremendous difficulty and concern.

#### TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATION.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Government given any further consideration to the recommendation made by the Royal Commission on State Transport Services in regard to co-ordinating transport under one authority, and has it reached a decision in regard to co-ordinating transport as recommended?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government has given much consideration to the Commission's recommendations, some of which will be brought before the House in due course. It does not, however, propose to introduce this session any legislation dealing with the question of controlling all transport under a Government department. That is a far-reaching recommendation and it means that all private operators would become subject to a centralized control. I would have to be well satisfied about the desirability of such action before recommending legislation to the House. At present we are having considerable difficulty with heavy freight vehicles on roads which are not designed for their use, and as a result we are faced with costly road repairs. This arises chiefly because shipping on the Australian coast is unable to cope with the traffic offering, thus forcing more goods into road transport. The Government does not propose to introduce legislation this session for the purpose of co-ordinating all transport in this State.

#### BUILDING MATERIALS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Committee's report adopted.

Bill read a third time and passed.

#### URANIUM MINING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 27. Page 716.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Frome—Leader of the Opposition)—I was pleased to learn of the Premier's optimism as disclosed by his second reading speech regarding the future of uranium

mining in South Australia, particularly at Radium Hill. Although we knew that the exploratory work had been successful, we could not gauge future prospects. We also learnt from the Premier's remarks that the commercial use of the ore for industrial purposes may become an established fact within a measurable period. This justifies the State's policy of exploring areas where uranium may be found. In other words, this Government, which the Premier told us last night did not believe in Socialism, has gone into the mining business in a big way. This policy has always had the support of the Opposition, because it is in conformity with its principles. It believes that such valuable deposits should be exploited for the benefit of the community rather than become an avenue of private speculation. It is incumbent for other reasons that the mining of this mineral should be kept under the control of the Government rather than pass into the hands of those who might not always be inclined or prepared to see that the public interest is served.

I am happy to know that the Government proposes to prosecute the development of this field as speedily as possible, because if the Premier's optimism expressed in recent statements is justified, and I believe it is, it will probably open a new era in South Australian industrial development. Instead of being dependent on coal from New South Wales, we will be able to produce our own power for industrial purposes and probably be able to establish irrigation schemes because of the lowered cost of industrial power brought about by the use of this type of energy, which will revolutionize rural development in many parts of the State. Following the successful development of this type of mining, I see a great future for it. For that reason I am prepared to support the second reading and most of the provisions. The Bill provides that the search for and development of this type of mineral and its treatment should be exempted from the law which renders necessary investigations by the Public Works Committee in projects costing more than £30,000. Under clause 3 it is proposed:—

The Public Works Standing Committee Act shall not apply to—

- (a) the opening and working of mines for the mining of uranium; or
- (b) the treatment of ore won in the course of such mining; or
- (c) experimental work to be done in connection with the mining, production and use of uranium; or

(d) the erection and provision of buildings, machinery, plant and equipment for use in or in connection with any such work as mentioned in paragraphs (a), (b) or (c) of this section.

I support those provisions entirely. It is obvious to any member who considers the subject that it would be impossible to carry out the development of this project effectively or efficiently if such questions as the sinking of a shaft or providing a fairly large unit of machinery for the treatment of the ore mined had to be referred to the Public Works Committee. There would be difficulties of investigation by the committee because, as far as I know, there would be no measure which could be applied by it to test the wisdom of the expenditure. I am not unmindful of the fact that something of this nature is being carried out in other parts of the world, and the committee by visits to such countries might be able to acquire a great deal of useful information. I hate to have to deny my former colleagues on the committee the pleasure of the opportunity to gain this knowledge as I am afraid that, in view of the urgency of the development of this field, we cannot agree to such a visit. The Bill also provides in paragraph (e) of clause 3 as follows:—

The Public Works Standing Committee Act shall not apply to any other public work which the Minister of Mines certifies to be a public work required solely or mainly for the purpose of or in connection with any such work as mentioned in paragraphs (a), (b) or (c) of this section.

In my opinion paragraphs (a) to (d) cover all matters which should be exempted from inquiry by the committee, but paragraph (e) relates to matters of a more orthodox nature, such as the provision of a water supply, roads or rail transport, and I do not think that such factors should be exempted from inquiry by the committee. In this regard I consider Parliament has already made a mistake in vesting such huge powers in the Electricity Trust to engage in similar works without an inquiry by the committee. I well remember when the Engineering and Water Supply Department was responsible for developing the Leigh Creek coalfield and the Public Works Committee had referred to it the question of a more adequate water supply to the field. The Premier visited the field and, having borrowed a square-mouthed shovel, walked up Leigh Creek and discovered what he considered a wonderful potential site for a reservoir. He had his photograph taken holding this shovel and having on his face a look of pleasure and anticipation as though the problem of provid-

ing Leigh Creek with a permanent and adequate water supply had been solved. The matter was referred to the Public Works Committee as an urgent investigation. I will say in justice to the Engineering and Water Supply Department and the Mines Department that they did not give the proposal their complete benediction in the preliminary evidence submitted to the committee, raising some doubts as to the holding capacity of the country and suggesting that it was the responsibility of the committee to resolve those doubts. The committee visited the site and, I think, promptly reached the conclusion that it was dangerous, because at that point and for some distance the creek runs through two entirely different types of country. The bank on one side is of dolomite formation, subject to various cracks, and it was obvious to any practical man that it would be extremely difficult, even by grouting it with cement, to secure a holding site for a dam. As a result of local evidence from a practical man, the late Mr. Victor Hirsch, of Leigh Creek station, the committee asked the Mines Department to make a complete and detailed survey. The result was that the site was condemned entirely and no further effort was made to construct a reservoir there. In that regard the Public Works Committee saved the State about £70,000 which, I have not the slightest doubt, would have been spent but for the fact that the work was the subject of inquiry by the committee. Now we find that, because works of the Electricity Trust of South Australia have been excluded from inquiry by the committee, a project to cost about £750,000 is to be undertaken at Aroona Gorge, on the other side of Flinders Range, without investigation by the committee. I do not know anything about this site except that I visited it once under extreme difficulties. I do not think that these more or less orthodox types of public works, whether associated with the development of the Electricity Trust's undertaking or with the development of the radium mining undertaking, should be exempted from inquiry and report by the Public Works Committee. I read in the press this week that the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Dridan, and one of his officers, are proceeding to Radium Hill to investigate certain potential schemes or sites for a water supply. I have the greatest confidence in the officers of the Engineering and Water Supply Department, from the Engineer-in-Chief downwards, but I still think that important matters of this nature should not be exempted from the committee's inquiry. The site near Radium Hill, about six miles distant, might

appear fairly good to the layman, but only an engineer can properly determine its capacity. The over-riding consideration in that type of country is the fact that the average rainfall is less than 8in. a year, and a most scattered rainfall at that. Although the last two years have not been bad as regards rainfall, and the country is comparatively well stocked for feed, following on good rains last year and some that has fallen in a patchy way over a considerable area this year, nearly all the station dams—and there are some large ones in the area—are dry at the moment. There has been no run-off for two years, except in one or two isolated places due to thunderstorms which covered a limited area. With an average rainfall of a little less than 8in. a year and in a country that is not precipitous, there can be long periods when there would be no rainfall at all and where the evaporation ratio is between 6ft. and 7ft. a year. If we get useful rains for the next three or four years, which is about the best that can be hoped for, the fact remains that, from evaporation alone, the country will dry up probably before the next replenishment comes.

That fact should receive serious consideration, and in view of the possibilities of this field in future and the fact that it will have some degree of permanency about it, with every prospect of a fair sized town being established, it will require about 50,000,000gall. of water yearly, and even if it might cost a little more in the initial stages, we should look for some source from which we could derive a permanent water supply. There are two possibilities in this regard, one being an arrangement with the New South Wales Government for the speedy completion of the Menindee-Broken Hill pipeline and its continuation to the field, and the other the exploitation or our own scheme from the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline to Spalding, to serve Jamestown, Peterborough, and thence on to Radium Hill. Parliament has already authorized a scheme as far as Jamestown and has made provision for the pipes to be sufficiently large to enable the water to be taken to Terowie and Peterborough later. The adoption of that scheme would not only permanently solve the problem, providing an adequate supply of good water to Radium Hill, but would also assist materially the South Australian Railways in obtaining locomotive water between Peterborough and McDonalds Hill, the nearest point to the field. The Railways Department experiences considerable difficulty and is subject to large expense in providing locomotives with water on this

heavy traffic line. At present the department is carting from Peterborough to one or two points between Peterborough and Olary. Most of the railway dams in the area are not in a good position because the winter rains are over and we are facing the summer, and do not know whether it will be dry or wet. In view of past experience and because of the low average rainfall in that country the summer is more likely to be dry than wet.

These are problems which the Public Works Committee is better able to investigate and take an overall picture of than departmental officers. The question of providing water or any other useful amenities for ordinary public works that are required to develop the field should not be excluded from inquiry by the committee. When the Bill is in Committee I intend to move for the deletion of paragraph (e) of clause 3. With that reservation I support the principle that is sought to be established because I believe that the measure is necessary for the proper development of the field which, in my opinion, will mark a most important milestone in the future development of South Australia.

Mr. SHANNON (Onkaparinga)—It was with a deep sense of gratification that we heard the Premier explain on his return from America that South Australia has a valuable deposit of ore containing uranium at Radium Hill, and that it should be developed. It must have been a shock to some people to hear that the Premier had set out on a new line of investigation regarding a project which might outdo the Leigh Creek coalfield as a valuable source of fuel supply. The Premier can take full credit for vigorously pursuing, in the face of strong opposition from some people, the task of developing the coalfield, which has in the last few years proved itself to be an absolute winner for South Australia. I do not agree with the Leader of the Opposition that reference to the Public Works Standing Committee on the development of the deposit at Radium Hill would unnecessarily delay the project. From my experience inquiries by that committee have never unnecessarily held up important work. I do not think much would be gained by side-tracking the committee, but another factor has to be considered. It is obvious that if the committee inquired into the project, important evidence, some of it perhaps from outside the Commonwealth, would have to be obtained from well-informed quarters, and the results of the committee's inquiries would have to be published to the

world. It would be an unhappy state of affairs if valuable information reached certain people. There is sufficient reason for the safeguard desired, and that is why it has been decided to have a departmental inquiry. As to whether the deposit is of any commercial value to the State, we must rely upon the judgment of the Premier, and I do rely upon it. He has sought information and advice from America where the generation of atomic energy is well advanced. He obtained sufficient information to prove to him that the Radium Hill deposit should be developed, and it would not have been politic for him to have given any more information than he did on this important subject. A water supply will be needed for the people who work and live at Radium Hill, and I think that would have to be investigated by the Public Works Committee. Paragraphs (a) (b) and (c) of new section 5a in clause 3 do not refer to a water supply, but paragraph (e) states:—

Any other public work which the Minister of Mines certifies to be a public work required solely or mainly for the purpose of or in connection with any such work as mentioned in paragraphs (a) (b) or (c) of this section.

That would cover any public work associated with mining and treatment work at the field.

Mr. Christian—A water supply would be covered by paragraph (c).

Mr. SHANNON—I do not agree. Perhaps the Premier could say whether the three paragraphs cover a water supply for the field.

The Hon. T. Playford—I hope they do. The field could not be worked without a water supply.

Mr. SHANNON—If the Premier is right, the Leader of the Opposition is also right, and I am wrong. As I understand it the clause is designed to exclude certain matters from investigation by the Public Works Committee.

The Hon. T. Playford—Yes.

Mr. SHANNON—Is it intended that a supply of water for the field should be excluded?

The Hon. T. Playford—Yes.

Mr. SHANNON—If that is intended I do not think that the clause is very well worded.

The Hon. T. Playford—Has the honourable member looked at paragraph (e)?

Mr. SHANNON—I have, and it is tied up with paragraphs (a), (b) or (c). My interpretation was that such matters as, for example, a water supply for the miners on the field, or such water as would be required for operation of the field might not be regarded as a matter

of experiment in the production or use of uranium. The Leader of the Opposition was a member of the Public Works Committee when it inquired into the Leigh Creek coalfield development and I have a vivid recollection of the evidence tendered by Mr. Victor Hirsch, which was really the crux of the committee's suggestion to the Mines Department that a thorough investigation ought to be made, and if the Premier is suggesting that the Public Works Committee be denied the right to investigate all things whatsoever in connection with the field the Leader of the Opposition has taken a well-merited point. If it is intended to side-step the committee entirely I want to draw the Government's attention to one or two things which have relation not so much to this matter as to the larger project of the Leigh Creek field plus the Electricity Trust, both of which activities are excluded from the Public Works Committee Act. Prior to that exclusion one reference in connection with the field was made to the committee, namely, a steam drying plant for the Leigh Creek coal. The case then put forward by the departmental officers in all good faith disclosed that the considerable savings in freight would more than offset the cost of the steam drying of coal. Although the committee made an interim report and gave the Government the right to go ahead with eight autoclaves instead of the 16 sought, the first of such autoclaves has still to be installed. Whether the Government would have gone on with the steam drying of Leigh Creek coal, irrespective of its merits or demerits, if the Public Works Committee had at that stage been side-stepped I shall not conjecture, but what I do point out is that at that stage the project was put before the committee and it gave the Government the right to go half-way as an experiment. That is an obvious example of the need for the inquiries made by Parliamentary committees in various parts of the Empire to safeguard the expenditure of public funds. There are certain aspects of uranium mining in which I am prepared to forgo that safeguard for national safety reasons, but there are other matters—and in this I am entirely in sympathy with the Leader of the Opposition if his interpretation is correct—in which we should not give the go-ahead signal for all public works irrespective of their strategic or defence value. I would exclude from inquiry only those factors which have those two aspects. Having had the experience of giving a free hand in the expenditure of public money to what is becoming the biggest public undertaking in the State, the

South Australian Electricity Trust, I am becoming somewhat chary of repeating the performance. In our last Loan Estimates we have seen £11,500,000 voted by Parliament without any concrete statement of what that money will produce for the State when it is spent. Such a sum could never be spent if referred to the Public Works Committee without a complete investigation as to the economic impact on the State's finances, for that is the committee's major obligation under the Act. It is a very important safeguard for members of Parliament who are not members of the Government, and that applies to members on both sides. They have a responsibility to those who sent them here to know whether or not the State is wisely spending the money taken from them for the purpose, and each and every one of us should be called to account if we had not seen to it that we know the answers. If the Premier is right and this Bill intends to exclude from inquiries usually held by the Public Works Committee all works in relation to the mining of uranium whether or not they have any strategic or defence value I do not feel too happy about it. I admit that the Treasurer has two precedents in the Leigh Creek coalfield and the Electricity Trust, but having been twice bitten I am three times shy and I am prepared to go only so far as will preserve any aspect of safety of the Commonwealth and Empire.

Mr. RICHES (Stuart)—As is the case with legislation introduced into this House when the Premier sought endorsement from Parliament to proceed with the establishment and extension of portions of the Leigh Creek coalfield by the Electricity Trust, I, as a member of the Opposition, on this occasion as on that, believing that these things are in the interests of the people as a whole and that the Government is actuated by the motive of service to the people, even to the extent of providing services and taking complete control of them—in other words, socialization—have the greatest pleasure in indicating my whole-hearted co-operation and support. If I were asked to indicate on a map of the world the part where during the ensuing two decades I expect to find the greatest development, the expansion of communities and establishment of industries, and one which will attract people from all over the world, I would point to the northern part of South Australia. That area has mineral resources as yet untouched and the development already in sight is such as to make it a thrilling experience for young men and women

to live there. Development is taking place at Woomera; another industry is to be established at Whyalla; and now the Premier reports known deposits of uranium at Radium Hill and the possibility of the eventual establishment of industries there. There are other mineral resources as yet untouched, and we may view with great optimism the transformation which should take place in these areas. This Bill envisages one of the most important steps to be taken in that regard, and credit must be given where it is due. I am glad that the Director of Mines has continued assiduously in his search for this valuable mineral and that he has had the support and encouragement of the Premier throughout. The appointment of the present Director and his concentration on research for deposits of valuable minerals have been amongst the best things that have happened to South Australia in recent years. He has not concentrated on small pockets of rich ore but has demonstrated to South Australians the value of deposits of low grade ore where those deposits are large enough to warrant exploitation. South Australia is rich in deposits of minerals. They are not necessarily high grade, but there are large quantities of lower grade minerals.

I hope the same programme which has led to the successful development of the Leigh Creek coalfield and which is now to develop mining at Radium Hill will be followed in other directions. Some men in the north who have given their lifetime in the search for minerals are confident that there are large deposits of copper there which should be receiving the attention of the mining authorities. They should not be left to the whim of speculators or company directors to be developed; there should be some concerted research into these resources. Early mining reports contained glowing accounts of operations in the copper mines in the northern part of the State, particularly around Blinman. Those operations ceased only because in those days copper was in fairly plentiful supply and its price fell. Now that it is in short supply surely people are justified in asking the Government to take the same interest in the development of these resources as has been shown with regard to the Leigh Creek coalfield and the search for uranium. The Mines Department has rendered signal service in these directions. I was thrilled to hear the optimistic remarks of the Premier regarding the possible development of uranium fields. They should be thoroughly examined and, where possible, developed in the interests of the people instead

of being left to the whims of private enterprise. The Director of Mines has drawn the attention of Parliament to the absolute necessity of doing something in the immediate future to establish a steel industry at Whyalla. Unfortunately there is no indication that Parliament has taken any notice of his report. Later this session I propose to bring to the notice of the House the Director's strong recommendation in this regard. He has done his duty by drawing members' attention to the position in three or four successive reports. This year he has stressed the matter in a special bulletin and has forecast the position in which this country may find itself if his recommendations are not implemented. The Government cannot leave this question wholly to private enterprise. As it has developed Leigh Creek and intends to develop Radium Hill, the Government must by socialization see that our minerals are used to the best possible advantage so that the interests of our people will be safeguarded.

I am grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for his contribution to this debate; but I do not share his optimism regarding the number of connections which may be added to the present Morgan-Whyalla pipeline. He said that, by arrangement with the New South Wales Government, water may be supplied to Radium Hill by a connection with Broken Hill. Alternatively he suggested a connection with the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline; but I think another pipeline from the Murray will be necessary in the near future. The Morgan-Whyalla pipeline will be severely taxed in the near future and those already drawing supplies from it remember that last summer it was unable to supply the quantities required. Consumers along the route were asked to cut down consumption by 20 per cent. People had not only used the water they had stored during the winter, but also used the maximum that the pipeline could supply. The Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited took hardly any water for the Whyalla dairy. Restrictions were not imposed, but a warning was given to residents. Other districts have now been connected to the line and there have been substantial increases in the population being served as well as in the demand for water at Port Pirie, Whyalla, Port Augusta, and Woomera, all of which will require more water during the coming summer. Fortunately all the storages are full, but the industrial development of the north will be so great that another pipeline

will be warranted, preferably on a different route, to serve districts not now connected. A shortage of water could prove a major obstacle to establishing steel works at Whyalla. I do not suggest that some places should be given a supply from the Murray while other places are not, but I sound this warning that the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline may not be able to satisfy future demands.

Primary producers' connections to the pipeline from Port Augusta to Woomera have been reduced. Stations have not been disconnected altogether, but they now have fewer supply points than they had 12 months ago, yet the pipeline to Woomera has not been down much more than 12 months. Woomera has only been supplied for one summer and rapid expansion there will make great demands on the pipeline. If the sewerage schemes for Port Pirie and Port Augusta are carried out further heavy demands will be made on it. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that any question of a water supply to Radium Hill should be referred to the Public Works Committee. The provision of a water supply to that centre could be a big problem and in the interests of the State it should be carefully examined. I endorse everything the Leader of the Opposition said, except that I do not think the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline will be able to cope with the demand. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading and look forward with eager anticipation to the growth and development which will undoubtedly take place in outback areas of South Australia.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY (Chaffey)—The member for Stuart suggested that the Bill will expedite the search for uranium in the area he represents.

Mr. Riches—I do not represent that area, and the Mines Department has already carried out the exploratory work.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I was not quite sure whether the honourable member was talking about the search for copper or uranium or a water supply. This Bill has little to do with the search for or mining of uranium. Actually, its title should be, "An Act to amend the Public Works Standing Committee Act." The Uranium Mining Act, 1949, gives all the powers asked for in this measure, which provides that any work carried out under that Act should not be any longer subject to the scrutiny of the Public Works Standing Committee. The Government seeks to throw a cloak of

secrecy over uranium mining and future development, but the question of secrecy was also dealt with in 1949 because the Act states:—

A person shall not either directly or indirectly divulge any information which relates to uranium and has been acquired by him by reason of or in the course of any employment . . . .

I do not know that Parliament should blandly submit to the removal of powers and responsibilities from the Public Works Standing Committee. The committee could be sworn to secrecy in any investigations into uranium mining. It could also report to Parliament if it thought it desirable. We have heard much cheap talk about uranium, especially from the American yellow press. We have often read that all our power problems would be solved by its use, but we were also told that ample cheap power could be provided by harnessing the tides.

Mr. O'Halloran—Years ago there was talk of a horseless carriage, and there are many today.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Yes, and I do not say we shall never use atomic power, but the world is looking for something cheap to solve its power problems. Recently I read an article in a magazine by a professor who said that he was doubtful whether atomic power would do all the things that popular imagination thought. He thought that solar energy would be the means of supplying cheap power within the next 50 years. We know that atomic power has blasted cities to pieces, but what proof can be advanced that it can be used in the way suggested by the Premier? It may be wishful thinking to suggest that it will solve South Australia's power problems. If Parliament passes the Bill it should at least have an annual report on uranium mining. I am not happy about the reduction in the powers of Parliamentary committees. A Land Settlement Committee was appointed but many schemes which should have been investigated by it were not even referred to it. We are now asked to restrict the powers of the Public Works Standing Committee in one direction so as not to embarrass the Government. Where are we going? Is that what a democratic Parliament means? Less and less responsibility is given to the ordinary members and more and more power to the Executive. Although I supported the Government on the development of the Leigh Creek coalfield, this is something entirely different, because in the former case we knew what we were doing and that we would get results, but about the pro-

spects of using uranium we know nothing. If a Treasurer should get a bee in his bonnet and want to spend millions on the field there would be little to stop him, because we would not have the considered opinion of a politically impartial committee, which is absolutely essential if we are to come to a fair conclusion on such an undertaking. I ask the Treasurer to consider whether it would not be advisable to have embodied in this legislation a similar provision to that in certain other legislation—that an annual report shall be submitted so that Parliament will know how the money had been expended on developing uranium deposits.

Mr. CHRISTIAN (Eyre)—In supporting the Bill I congratulate the Treasurer on what he has done in his usual energetic manner in developing uranium mining in South Australia, and commend him particularly for his farsightedness in going to the U.S.A. to get first-hand information on this important subject. As usual, he has done a great job for South Australia and we are very pleased with his efforts. I have no objection to the proposal in the Bill so far as it relates to the mining of uranium and any experimental work associated with the treatment or processing of the ore, but because of the secrecy generally attaching to uranium and its uses we cannot have limelight focused on this enterprise at this stage. One of these days we may get over this nightmare period when the world is in constant fear of what the other fellow is going to do, and again have free intercourse between the peoples of the world. I hope the time is not far distant when we shall see sanity prevailing once more in the counsels of the nations, the atom bomb will be relegated where it rightly belongs and the use of uranium will be purely for peaceful purposes. Doubts have been voiced by other members concerning what could be done under paragraph (e) of clause 3. It seems to give a fairly wide power to the Minister or the Government to indulge in any works which might be associated in some way with the mining of uranium. Undoubtedly, as has been suggested, a water supply for the field will be necessary and under paragraph (e) I think the expenditure could be undertaken without any inquiry. A water scheme would be an essential and necessary part of the set-up on the field itself. There might be other ancillary works which we cannot envisage at the moment, but which ultimately might become necessary in connection with the experimental work. I understand it could cost some millions of pounds to set up a laboratory for the complete treatment of

uranium and for experimental work in connection with its application to industry. I am not prepared to go so far as to permit the Government to embark upon such enterprises. Before we come to the practical application of this source of energy we should have another look at it. Up to a point I think we are in order in agreeing to the development of the field, the experimental work and the processing and treatment of the ore in its raw state without the usual inquiries by the Public Works Committee. However, I should like the Government to give further consideration to paragraph (e) to see where it will lead. The Treasurer may be able to clarify any doubts we have. As I read it, I think it might embody powers which go very much farther than the development of the field and the experimental work which is envisaged in the other part of the clause. I support the second reading.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Gumeracha—Premier and Treasurer)—At the outset I draw the attention of the House to one thing which appears to have been completely overlooked. It became quite obvious that it had been overlooked when Mr. Macgillivray was speaking. He said that under the Uranium Mining Act the Government had already been given power to go ahead with the mining of this ore. That is not a fact. That legislation gives the Government power to spend money voted by Parliament upon the development of uranium mining, but the money must first be voted by Parliament, otherwise the Auditor-General will not give a certificate and the money will not be available to the Government for expenditure in that direction. If this legislation is passed in its present form it will not mean that Parliament will be unable to exercise an oversight on the expenditure of the money, but that the Government will have power to bring a Bill before Parliament to get the money. At present under the Public Works Standing Committee Act the Government cannot introduce a Bill providing for the expenditure of more than £30,000 on a public work unless it has first received a report from the committee. Next Thursday the Government desires to bring down the Budget providing, *inter alia*, for a certain amount of money to enable this mining project to proceed. The Crown Solicitor has presented an opinion which almost, if not completely, goes so far as to say that uranium mining may not be considered a public work under the Public Works

Standing Committee Act. Possibly if I had been less sensitive on the matter I might have said, having this certificate in my pocket, that I would go right ahead, but as there are all kinds of attendant things associated with it, it is much better to bring the matter forward in a Bill to show precisely what the Government has in mind and enable a debate upon it. The Government has not power today either to introduce a Bill to provide for the money to be voted or to go ahead with uranium mining.

Mr. Macgillivray—Under the original Act you have power to mine, but not authority to get the finance.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—You cannot mine without finance. The Government has not the power to get the money unless in the first place there is a protracted inquiry by the Public Works Committee. We were confronted with almost entirely the same position when the Government had an investigation in connection with the Leigh Creek coalfield, and on that occasion the Leader of the Opposition said that there should be an inquiry by the Public Works Committee. I venture to suggest that if an inquiry had been held upon the matter at that time it would have taken an extraordinarily long time to get a report, and I doubt whether the Leigh Creek field would ever have been developed. This afternoon the honourable member was very eloquent in his discussion on the matter of the water supply for that project. He pictured me with a shovel and said in effect, "Here the Premier proceeded to find a site for a dam and got his photograph taken, and it was only when the Public Works Committee investigated the proposal thoroughly that the real facts were revealed." Unfortunately, that does not bear examination. The position was that the committee did investigate this reservoir site and take evidence from Mr. Hirsch, a local man, who said that the site was no good, and after some weeks the committee made a report which showed the usual methodical way that it gets the Engineering and Water Supply Department to prove its case. The department had to drill the site to demonstrate that it was good holding ground. Eight diamond drill holes were put down to a depth of 55ft. to test the bed of the rock which the Leader of the Opposition said was so obviously fractured that it would leak. A series of diamond drill holes were put down and the bores filled with water. They proved satisfactory and did not leak, as the Leader of

the Opposition suggested. The Director of Mines reported to the Public Works Standing Committee as follows:—

A series of eight-diamond drill holes have been completed in the southern abutment of the proposed dam site. The work was commenced on July 29, 1947, and completed on August 18, 1947. The total footage bored amounted to 389ft. 8in. and the core recovered 383ft. 6in. Details of each bore are given in the table of boring results and the accompanying diagrams show the location of the bores in plan and section. Except for the No. 1 borehole which intersected a small open fracture in the massive dolomite at a depth of 40ft. 6in. all boreholes proved to be watertight and the results of the boring show that the dolomite at the dam site is free from solution cavities and should form a very satisfactory abutment for an earth fill dam.

Mr. O'Halloran—Quote the second and subsequent reports first.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I shall deal with the committee's recommendations directly. The Director continued:—

Minor fractures will probably need to be grouted but deep excavation will not be necessary as massive unaltered dolomite is exposed at the surface. No further testing is deemed necessary. Conclusions—The geology and testing of the bedrock of the proposed dam site does not disclose any outstanding weakness for the construction of a dam. Small joints and fractures will probably require grouting to make the site watertight.

Mr. O'Halloran—That completely proves my case. The report was subsequently proved to be entirely wrong.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Leader of the Opposition should have more patience.

Mr. O'Halloran—I do not want you to involve yourself.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I am not involving myself. I think the honourable member will be satisfied, after I have finished, about some of the problems associated with the project. The committee stated:—

The committee is satisfied that from the point of view of location and quantity of water that could be impounded the proposed site is suitable for the construction of a reservoir.

Mr. O'Halloran—Hear, hear!

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The committee continued:—

Mr. Hirsch, the proprietor of Leigh Creek station, stated that he knew of no other place on the creek where the possibilities of holding water would be as good, although he was aware of the existence of deep holes in this vicinity. The report of the Director of Mines on the results of drilling carried out is reassuring as regards the site for the retaining wall, but the committee is of opinion that more conclusive proof of the holding properties of the basin is necessary. The uncertainty in this respect

should be resolved, by such tests as the geologists recommend, as far as is reasonably possible, and the uniform suitability of the material of which the earth bank is to be built should be confirmed, before the work of construction is commenced. -

Its finding was:—

The committee finds that it is desirable that surface storage of water should be available for the full development of the Leigh Creek coalfields.

The committee recommended:—

1. The construction of a reservoir on the upper reaches of Leigh Creek and the laying of a pipeline therefrom to join the existing pipeline from Sliding Rock to the Leigh Creek coalfields.

2. That before proceeding with the construction of the reservoir, further investigation be conducted to prove the holding properties of the basin.

Mr. O'Halloran—It was those investigations that condemned the site.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No. With all due deference to the Leader of the Opposition no investigations could condemn the site. They are only expressions of opinion on the question of site. Experience has proved that often where a geologist has given the "right away" and stated that the site was extremely good, the reverse has been found to be the case. Upon receipt of the report the Director of Mines found that he had to guarantee the site, but he said quite frankly that he could not do so. That has been the position ever since. A similar thing could occur with every other site.

Mr. O'Halloran—Quote the report we received.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I do not think I have it with me. A number of reports were received from the Director of Mines and he has certified that the site will not hold water.

Mr. Macgillivray—What point are you trying to make?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It is an important point, which the Leader of the Opposition is using as an example of how the Government is rushing ahead with things.

Mr. O'Halloran—And it entirely proves my case.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No. The scheme was estimated to cost £57,000. We are now investigating another site which will cost approximately £750,000 for the same work.

Mr. Macgillivray—Is that why you are proposing to take this matter away from the Public Works Committee?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No.

Mr. O'Halloran—Why don't you proceed with it?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Because of the doubts raised by the Director of Mines who said it would not be completely water-tight. It was the subsequent investigations that condemned the site. If it was left to my decision I would still say that a small dam across the site, at relatively low cost, would provide all the water required at one-fiftieth of the ultimate cost. With regard to the claim that the report on steam drying of coal was adverse, and prevented the Government from proceeding, the committee's recommendation was:—

Leigh Creek coalfield was established pursuant to an Act of Parliament and is already in operation. It is the opinion of the committee that drying the coal is necessary to ensure development and permanence of the field and for this reason it recommends installation of the plant. That is not an adverse recommendation.

Mr. Shannon—I did not say it was; it is a half-way house.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—There is no half-way house with the committee. All the Government is obliged to do under the Act is to obtain a report, which need not be favourable. Once a report is received the Government can legally introduce a Bill to give effect to anything it likes. We did not go ahead with the steam drying plant for two reasons, the first being that the two big boilers the Government purchased were urgently needed to maintain power supplies for the city and metropolitan area and were diverted here. But for that our electricity supply would have undoubtedly broken down.

Mr. McAlees—Are they the boilers you got from Wallaroo?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No, the boilers which were purchased for the purpose. The next thing was that the contractor for the autoclaves fell down on his contract and did not deliver them. The two essential things required by us were not available and many of the fears expressed about the burning of Leigh Creek coal were found to be groundless. The quantity of water which will probably be required at Radium Hill for opening up the mine on a scale which would appear necessary at present applies to the plant required there for developmental purposes and would probably mean 50,000 million gallons of water a year. If it came to the worst a large quantity of water that is saltier than bore water could be used. Bores have been found and will produce a sufficient quantity of brackish water for use in the treatment plant. It is desirable, if possible, to obtain a better supply. We are desirous of overcoming difficulties connected

with corrosion. It is also necessary to provide a limited quantity of good water for working the field. If we have to wait for a pipeline to be brought a long distance, with the shortage of present steel supplies we could close down the show for the next three years and forget all about it.

Mr. O'Halloran—You have no guarantee of water at the present site for three years.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have already told the Leader of the Opposition that if it is possible to improve the brackish water we have got we should do so.

Mr. O'Halloran—Am I right in assuming that brackish water contains more salts than sea water?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I think, from memory, that it is about 300 grains. I am also informed that, with the exception of the corrosion problem, it might be used but it is desirable to have a better quality water. I have not the slightest objection to the Public Works Committee investigating the position if it is a question of piping water. It is something which affects many matters outside uranium mining. The Bill covers only expenditure at the field, or within 10 miles of it. If we can prevent water having to be taken to the field it will be helpful. It will be only a local investigation, and not one covering a large area and involving expenditure on the laying of a pipeline. The large expenditure envisaged by the Leader of the Opposition is not intended. The amounts expended will be covered each year in the Budget, although later some Loan money may have to be spent on plant. Next week the Budget will be introduced and it will include a sum of money to enable the mining proposition to commence, but it cannot commence unless this Bill is passed because of the provisions in the Public Works Standing Committee Act. The project is important, and Parliament should take a risk. I said the same thing in connection with the proposal to develop the Leigh Creek coalfield. It is done in other directions where scientific investigations are undertaken, and where satisfactory results are not always achieved. The power in the Bill will not be abused. Each time money is required it will have to be approved by Parliament.

Mr. Macgillivray—What about having an annual report on the matter?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It is a difficult matter to present a report on the development of a uranium deposit. That difficulty has been found in America. No country is prepared to

disclose how far it has progressed with its uranium mining. When convenient, I shall arrange for a visit of members to the Radium Hill field, and later provide an opportunity for members to hear a report on the project and to ask questions.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3—"Exemption of certain works from Public Works Standing Committee Act."

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I move—

To delete "or" at the end of paragraph (d) of new section 5a, and to delete paragraph (e).

A road, railway, water supply and sewerage scheme in connection with the field are ordinary public works and should be investigated by the Public Works Committee. I do not think an inquiry on any of these matters would hold up the project. It was the haste of the committee to comply with the Government's desire for a quick report on the Leigh Creek reservoir site to be presented which led the Premier into error in quoting from a committee report and suggesting that the first report by Mr. Dickinson indicated that the site was a good one. An investigation by the committee on the spot, and evidence by Mr. Hirsch, shook the committee's confidence in Mr. Dickinson's first report. I do not suggest that he was directly responsible for it, because I believe it was made by one of his officers and as the head of the department he took the responsibility. The committee recommended that the dam be constructed, subject to a further investigation by the Mines Department. The committee had sufficient confidence in the department to realize that if the later investigation proved that the earlier one was wrong the department would admit the mistake. I have a copy of a report from the Mines Department, dated December 23, 1947, and it was on that report that the first site was abandoned. Some of the conclusions in it were:—

(1) A considerable area of the reservoir basin is underlain by porous dolomite which will rapidly lead impounded floor water away underground.

(2) The watertightness of the dam site is due to the resealing of the cavities in the dolomite and the cementing of brecciated fragments in the fault zone by secondary calcareous and siliceous material deposited from percolating water, but this condition is purely local in occurrence and may possibly have been due to the evaporation of the spring water now causing the formation of a "sheet rock" consisting of heavily cemented creek gravel overlying the bed rock.

(3) The presence of a major fault zone in the reservoir basin provides large open channelways for serious seepages.

(4) The extremely porous character of the reservoir basin makes it entirely unsuited as a site for a dam, as the loss through percolation is likely to empty the dam before any really worthwhile advantage is gained. A prominent visiting geologist was taken to the site and his conclusions, though not available officially, agreed with our own.

I do not think there could be anything more definite. No evidence could more strongly support my view that an inquiry by the Public Works Committee is desirable in matters of this kind.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—I was not aware that that report had been forwarded to the Public Works Committee, but it was completely contrary to every report the Government had received up to that stage on the matter from the Mines Department. I went to the field with the visiting geologist and Mr. Dickinson, and I heard what the visitor had to say. He came from South Africa and he said that if the field were in South Africa they would not consider the country suitable for a reservoir. He did not express any view having regard to Australian conditions, and he did not examine the matter closely. I believe that a very long delay occurred, not through any fault on the part of the Public Works Committee, but because it is not possible in a matter like this to give a definite conclusion that a site will or will not hold water. If a geologist were asked to say immediately whether or not a site would hold water he could not say definitely. Holes were bored in the most uncertain parts of the field. The amendment would make it virtually impossible for this project to go ahead. It is not possible to proceed with any mining project unless there is an assurance that the ancillary works can be carried out. It would be possible in the meantime to vote part of the expenditure through the Estimates, but is it possible to work out a scheme of development unless it is co-ordinated? Is it possible to order the plant from America unless we know the conditions under which the water supply will be available, and when? If this paragraph is struck out it means that before the project can go forward it will be necessary to have a report from the Public Works Standing Committee, but I point out that every time the Government desires to spend money it will have to come to Parliament for it. If the amendment is carried Parliament will be

giving us everything but water to drink, and a mine cannot be run without a water supply.

Mr. O'Halloran—You have been running it for three years without.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—We have not started to run it. We have been making investigations and spending money under a certificate given by the Crown Solicitor, but if Parliament expresses the view that we are not to spend money on a water supply until we have a report from the Public Works Standing Committee, I shall not spend anything in that direction. The whole project will have to be delayed until we have that report, and I think that is not a desirable proposition. When this money is voted through the Estimates it will be before Parliament and the Government will be quite happy to discuss the question of the water supply with members. The project is a minor dam across an adjacent creek, and Mr. Dridan hopes to be able to divert water from that into another catchment basin, but these are local matters and associated only with uranium mining.

Mr. O'Halloran—In those circumstances it would not cost £30,000.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Today £30,000 is not equal in spending power to £10,000 when the Public Works Standing Committee Act was passed. I hope this Committee will not accept the amendment and that the Leader of the Opposition, when he sees its implications, will not press it.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The Premier very adroitly seeks to put me on the spot by conveying to the Committee that if I press my amendment and it is carried, I may be responsible for holding up the development of this mine for a long time—even three years. He also said that there were long delays associated with the investigation of the Leigh Creek proposition by the Public Works Committee. I can tell him there was no delay, for the whole investigation by the committee was concluded in six or seven weeks. It was the geological investigation which the committee found to be necessary which caused the delay of four to five months. Is the Premier going to spend more than £30,000 on this gorge six miles from Radium Hill without a proper geological investigation? Is he going to throw money down the sink without making sure that the ground will hold water? In the bottom of this gorge there is a considerable volume of salt water. Is there to be no investigation as to whether this salt water will foul the rain-water proposed to be impounded? The field has

been carried on for more than 12 months with water supplied from Galls Well, close to the field. I do not say there is an unlimited supply but it has so far met every demand upon it and I suggest that it will continue to supply drinking water to keep the field going until the question of a better and more permanent supply can be investigated by the Public Works Committee. A principle is involved in this debate. Unfortunately, when the transfer of the Leigh Creek coalfield was before Parliament, on the advice of my then Leader I sacrificed this principle. I do not intend to sacrifice it in future, even if I am charged with holding up the development of something in my own electorate. I have a duty to perform in this State. With those behind me I represent more than half the electors, and it is our duty, just as it is the Government's duty, to protect the taxpayers' money, of which we are all the custodians. The Public Works Committee was established in 1928, and it has a long and honourable record. It has saved the State many millions of pounds and I see no reason why these ordinary works, which would be excluded from the provisions of the Bill if my amendment is carried, should not be investigated by the committee, leaving the Government entirely free to spend money without investigation on those things which, for security reasons, cannot be subject to investigation or report. I intend to press my amendment.

Mr. SHANNON—As intimated in the second reading debate, when I was under a misapprehension in the early stages of my statement, I had in mind supporting the Bill, but, as has been disclosed by the Premier's interjection, this is a blanket Bill covering all public works in connection with Radium Hill, I find myself in entire sympathy with the Leader of the Opposition. We are well aware that the Budget will give every member an opportunity to discuss the project, but we are also well aware that to vote for the reduction of one item by as little as £1 is always accepted as a vote of no-confidence in the Government of the day. Though I may be opposed to something which I regard as venturesome expenditure on the part of the Government, and would like to have it investigated by a competent body, my only alternative is to kick the Government out of office—if I am successful—by moving for a reduction of the vote. Obviously that is not possible for a supporter of the Government whose policy he believes in broadly. Therefore, the Premier's suggestion that we have the means

of dealing with the problem is null and void. He is quite right in saying that any report presented by the Public Works Standing Committee does not tie the hands of the Government, but the committee has very definite instructions to present to Parliament a report on the impact upon the State's finances of any project put before it. What Parliament does after that it does with its eyes open. I was amazed that the Premier should suggest that the evidence in that report which the Leader of the Opposition read was news to him.

The Hon. T. Playford—No. I said I was surprised that the report had been forwarded to the committee.

Mr. SHANNON—The committee asked for it because it was its suggestion that such an investigation should be made. The Premier says that the bore holes did not disclose the faults, which that report suggested existed, which would cause the water to seep away almost as fast as it ran in. We knew that that was the case when we asked for the further report. Mr. Victor Hirsch, in giving evidence, said that at some little distance—I think about half a mile—from the site of the dam there existed a limestone cave. The fact that he knew of its existence scared members of the committee. The Director of Mines immediately saw the implication of such a formation in that locality and the possible risk of putting a dam there. For the Premier now to say that in his opinion it would be all right to construct a dam on that site, in view of the expressed opinion of the Mines Department, more than warrants this House taking steps to see that such further projects are investigated so that Parliament may know the implication of any public expenditure on them. He said he would put it there because of its paltry cost compared with what it would cost to put it at Aroona. The Leigh Creek site had many advantages, but it would not hold the water. I support the amendment. I disagree with the Premier's statement that, if it is passed, developmental work on the field will be held up. Already there is a party of men on the field doing investigational work. More men and probably overseas machinery will be required; but all those things will not be the subject of any report of the Public Works Standing Committee because they are covered by the preceding paragraphs of the section. From my knowledge of the activities of the committee its report will probably be laid on the

table before the first machine is landed from America. Thereby Parliament will be properly informed on any projected water supply referred to the committee before the money is voted for it.

Mr. BROOKMAN—The security aspect is important; but it is doubtful whether it would be endangered in any way by an inquiry by the Public Works Standing Committee into such a matter as a water supply. How could such an inquiry do a disservice to the State? Unless the Premier can point out how security would be endangered by such an inquiry I shall support the amendment.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I agree with Mr. Brookman's statement that inquiries into such matters as water supply, roads, railways, or any ancillary services may not have much security danger; but they may to an intelligent observer have some security significance. For instance, if the Public Works Standing Committee's report disclosed that the quantity of water required for the undertaking were 10,000,000 gallons a year it would denote an engineering undertaking of a certain size. The justification for any ancillary service rests upon the success of the uranium mining project. If that is justified, a scheme to supply water is justified. The Public Works Standing Committee could report on whether the Engineer-in-Chief's recommendations were, in their opinion, wise; but the justification for the expenditure of any money rests only on the assessment of the value of the mining. If the mine is any good the ancillaries to be connected with it are of secondary importance.

Mr. Shannon—They may be big ancillaries.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes; but of the total cost of such a project their cost may represent only a very small portion. The main expenditure would be connected with opening up the mine and the purchase of plant. The Government is always reasonable in its attitude to suggested amendments; but I foresee a very big problem if this scheme cannot go ahead as a co-ordinated whole. A certain sum for this project has been provided on the Estimates and if this amendment is carried it will be necessary to revise that sum and strike out the amount involved in the provision of a water supply.

Mr. Moir—What about the electricity supply?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That would not be involved in this amendment. It would be an integral part of the plant and we would be able to go ahead with the electricity supply for the field but it will be necessary to strike out the amount involved in the provision of a water

supply if it had to be the subject of an inquiry by the Public Works Standing Committee. It may be that sufficient evidence would be placed before the committee to enable it to go ahead reasonably soon. I doubt that very much, because at present the Engineer-in-Chief and the geologists are only drawing up preliminary proposals.

Mr. Shannon—How do you know how much to include in your Estimates?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have included a reasonable amount. If the money is not required it will not be spent. By placing a sum on the Estimates the Government will be in a position to go ahead with its plans. The member for Onkaparinga said the plant would not be available before a water supply was provided, but the plant will probably be here by the end of the year.

Mr. Shannon—The committee's report would be ready before that.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I doubt it.

Mr. O'Halloran—Surely you would not go ahead with a water supply without proper testing?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No, but I am asking for the right to have money available so that when the testing has been carried out the Government can go ahead. I hope the Committee will not accept the amendment because it will slow down one side of the activities at Radium Hill.

Mr. WHITTLE—This debate reminds me of the time when the development of Leigh Creek was first suggested. The Opposition then submitted a motion that would have held up the work. South Australia would have suffered the industrial disruption that occurred in other States through lack of electricity. The Opposition's attitude towards this Bill is analogous to its attitude towards the Leigh Creek project. If this project does not turn out satisfactorily it will be able to say to the electors, "We were not entirely in favour of it and wanted to refer some aspects to the Public Works Committee." This is a political red herring. The Premier has said there will be expert evidence about the site for a reservoir. What further assurance do we want? I oppose the amendment.

Mr. SHANNON—I deplore Mr. Whittle's remarks that this Bill might be used for political purposes. It could not be used that way by either Party.

Mr. O'Halloran—Of course it couldn't.

Mr. SHANNON—The Bill gives a blanket approval to any Government to spend untold

sums on works associated with uranium mining. Public works for the Leigh Creek coalfield and the Electricity Trust were not referred to the Public Works Committee. The Government proposes to side-track the committee again, but I will not be bitten a third time. It is as necessary as ever to conserve public funds. The policy has been discussed many times as to the soundness of setting up the Public Works Committee, and our example has been followed by the other States. I hope the Committee will not think that the development of the uranium field would be prevented by the carrying of the amendment. I am prepared to stand up to my responsibility as a member of the Public Works Committee, which would not hold up the development of the field.

Mr. MCGILLIVRAY—It is pleasing to notice from the debate that some Government supporters are aware of their responsibility of protecting themselves against the powers of the Executive. Why all the reference to the Leigh Creek coalfield and why should it be taken as an example of what should be done under this Bill? Mr. Whittle twitted the Labor Party with having tried to hold up the development of the Leigh Creek coalfield, but many Government supporters were just as vigorous in their opposition. I ask members to read the speech of Mr. Duncan, in which he twitted the Treasurer and said he was dependent on the support of the four Independent members to get the measure through. Certain work will have to be done at Radium Hill and it is assumed that a water supply will be one. The Treasurer says that if we do not agree to the Bill he cannot include an amount in the Budget. I cannot understand that argument. Whether the money is provided or not, an investigation must take place, either by the Public Works Committee or departmentally, before any money is expended. The Treasurer says that even if the committee or the department said that the work should be undertaken he had no money for it, but he could do it out of the £28,000,000 of Loan money. I regard this debate as a fight by Parliament to protect itself against the ever-growing power of the Executive.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have a suggestion which I should like the Leader of the Opposition to consider. It is obvious that we must develop the field quickly with such means as we have at our command and provide a local water supply to meet the demands of the large number of men on the field. I believe the mining plant is ready for shipment from

America. I suggest that paragraph (e) be recast by striking out all the words after "any" in line 4 and inserting in lieu thereof words which would convey reference to any local water supply which the Minister certifies as necessary for the development of the mine. I intend to have an amendment drawn up by the Parliamentary Draftsman on those lines. I want money placed on the Estimates next week to enable a local water supply to be developed sufficient to maintain the field. We are already in difficulties there in this regard.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—An amendment along the lines suggested would meet my objection. There is a possibility that a local scheme will be sufficient to supply water for the next year or so; in fact, a dam is already being constructed near the site. I have no objection to money being placed on the Estimates for that purpose.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.22 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, October 9, at 2 p.m.