

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, November 6, 1952.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr. Dunks) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.**YONGALA SCHOOL.**

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Minister of Works any further information to give in regard to the question I asked a few days ago about improvements to the sanitary conveniences at the Yongala school?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I have received a report from the Education Department indicating that, although the installation of septic tanks is desirable, there is no immediate urgency when the situation at Yongala is compared with that at some other schools. The school committee again applied for them in September, and was informed that the financial position would not permit of favourable consideration being given to the request this financial year. The request has been deferred, along with many others for septic tanks, and will be reviewed in July, 1953, in the light of the financial position at that time. The property officer of the department said that he was not aware of any exceptional complaints regarding the present lavatory system other than that the committee considered it left much to be desired. This attitude applies equally to nearly all schools which have pit closets. The enrolment at Yongala school is 46 and there are other schools which have higher enrolments where requests for septic tanks have been deferred because of the shortage of Loan funds. There appear to be no unusual circumstances to justify an exception being made in the case of Yongala.

KITCHENETTES FOR MIGRANT HOSTEL.

Mr. WHITTLE—Has the Premier any further information to give concerning the negotiations which have been proceeding regarding the installation of kitchenettes at the Gepps Cross Hostel, about which the Federal member for Sturt (Mr. Wilson) and I have been in communication with him?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Some time ago the honourable member and Mr. Wilson informed me that the Prime Minister was writing a letter to me on this topic, but it was not received until this morning owing to delay in the post. The Prime Minister has made a proposal to the State Government in

regard to the migrant hostel at Gepps Cross. The Commonwealth is prepared to advance £40,000 to provide kitchenettes at the hostel. The State would undertake to use the hostel as a housing proposition and pay the Commonwealth rent for the flats that were let. They would be let furnished, but without bed-clothes and soft furnishings, and placed under the control of the Housing Trust, which would be responsible for the collection of the rent, maintenance, painting, maintenance of the area itself, the collection of garbage and other necessary control. The Prime Minister requested the State Government to consider the proposal and, if it agreed to it in principle, that the migrants be asked whether they desired the changeover. It was suggested that members for the district should consult the migrants in this regard. One or two small points in the proposals require clarification, but generally they appear to me to be satisfactory and I am prepared to agree to them in principle on behalf of the emergency housing scheme of this State. The rental suggested for a furnished flat with two bedrooms, is £2 a week, and for a furnished flat with three bedrooms, £2 3s. a week. If the migrants accept the proposals one or two remaining details not set out in the Prime Minister's letter will have to be decided. In general principle, the State Government will be prepared, if the hostel migrants favour the changeover, to authorize the Housing Trust to take over the hostel as a normal housing activity. The question arose what would be the position if a number of migrants at Gepps Cross desired to change over and others did not. In such event it was suggested that it would be impossible to maintain it, half as a housing programme and half as a completely serviced hostel; but if only a minority were against the new proposal it was suggested that they should be transferred to some other fully serviced hostel and that a change could be made in the personnel with one of the hostels under Commonwealth control.

Mr. Fred Walsh—Am I to take that as an answer to the question I asked yesterday?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Several members have asked questions on this matter and if the honourable member considers it is an answer to his question he can take it as such, as it is free to everybody. The arrangement would be subject to discontinuance on 12 months' notice by either side.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Can the Premier say if it is intended that the Commonwealth will hand over the buildings at Gepps Cross to the

State, and that they will become State property, or, after the improvements that are proposed with the £40,000 mentioned by the Premier have been made, will they still remain Commonwealth property, and, if so, will any rental be paid by the State to the Commonwealth for their use?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This is one of the details that have not yet been completed. The Commonwealth suggestion is that the State should take over the hostel, which would remain the property of the Commonwealth, and and the Commonwealth would provide the £40,000 for alterations. The State would pay to the Commonwealth a stipulated amount of what is collected each week in rent from the cottages. Subject to a year's notice on either side, the State would control the hostel as a housing estate, collect rents and be responsible for maintenance and the amenities necessary to maintain the hostel, caretaking, lighting, collection of garbage, and such like.

DAMAGE TO OUTER HARBOUR WHARF.

Mr. TAPPING—Has the Minister of Marine a report from the Harbors Board with regard to the damage done to the Outer Harbour wharf by the liner *Strathnaver* on October 30?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Commissioner and General Manager of the Harbors Board (Mr. H. C. Meyer) reports:—

The Harbors Board has requested the Deputy Director of Navigation to inquire into the circumstances connected with the crashing of the r.m.s. *Strathnaver* into the Outer Harbour wharf on the morning of October 30. Without such an inquiry the cause cannot at present be ascertained. The tow line of the tug *Tancred* parted but this was not necessarily the cause of the accident, particularly as there appears to be a difference of opinion in regard to the movements of the *Strathnaver* ahead or astern when the tow line parted, and also before and after that event. Having regard to the engine movements of the *Strathnaver* it could be that the parting of the tow line had little or no bearing on the accident and that it could have been caused by some happening after the parting of the tow line. For the reasons outlined it will be obvious that the cause of the accident cannot be determined without the inquiry decided on by the Harbors Board. The total estimated cost of repairing the portion of the wharf damaged is £10,000. This includes replacements estimated to cost about £1,500 that were about to be effected by the board in the course of its normal maintenance of the structure.

An inquiry will be held with a view to eliciting the cause of the accident and finding a remedy.

Mr. STEPHENS—A number of shipping concerns blame our wharves, or our tugs, which they suggest are not strong enough, or the general lay-out of the Outer Harbour, but it seems to me that in the previous accident the tugs were too strong because the rope was broken, and that the same applied on this occasion. The Minister has said that may not be the cause of the accident. Does he know who owned the tow rope—was it supplied by the *Strathnaver* or by the tug *Tancred*?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I understand that it belonged to the *Tancred*. I do not propose to take the matter any further now because there is to be an inquiry into all the circumstances.

HOUSEKEEPER SERVICE.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—From 1941 to 1945 under the civil defence law a service was set up which provided housekeepers to assist the families of sick mothers and other persons who might have had to go to hospital. Since 1945 that service has been conducted by the South Australian Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department. It still operates and a number of people are employed in giving that service. I know few details of the scheme except that in some cases the people receiving the service pay for it and in others the Children's Welfare Department pays. I understand that in 1945 the Commonwealth Government agreed to allocate £15,000 towards the cost of such service and that South Australia is the only State that has not accepted that offer. Can the Treasurer say why his Government has not done so?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If the honourable member will ask that question again next Tuesday I will have a statement prepared on the matter.

IMMIGRATION POLICY.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Last Friday's *News* contained the following report:—

German migrants numbering 1,119 left Bremerhaven today for Australia, in the specially chartered Swedish ship *Nelly*. They are the first of 2,700 migrants due to leave Germany by the end of the year, under the agreement between West Germany and Australia.

In view of the serious trend in unemployment in this country, the shortage of housing and the restricted migrant accommodation in hostels, can the Treasurer say whether any of the migrants mentioned in the report are to come to this State?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I cannot answer that question directly. I do not know of any substantial number, if any, coming to South Australia because we are never informed of the port of disembarkation of migrants brought out under the Commonwealth scheme. The only instance in which we know beforehand how many are arriving is the scheme under which persons nominate British immigrants for whom they can provide accommodation and to whom they are prepared to give certain assistance, because in that case we make the necessary arrangements.

WALLAROO ELECTRICITY SUPPLY.

Mr. McALEES—I have on several occasions addressed questions to the Premier regarding the supply of electricity to Wallaroo by the Electricity Trust. The period is approaching when a great quantity of power will be used in the elevators for loading and stacking barley and wheat, and a number of other industries also are waiting for it. The Premier has promised from time to time that it will be there by December, but I am doubtful about promises because I have heard quite a number of them. As certain fittings urgently required for Radium Hill were brought out by air, is it possible for the fittings required by the trust to complete the transmission line into Wallaroo to be brought out in the same way in time to fulfil the Premier's promise to the people of my district?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It is true that recently a number of parts for one of the important chemical plants in connection with Radium Hill were brought by air from Great Britain, but the freight was prohibitive and this method of transport could not be customarily used. I appreciate the position at Wallaroo, but it is entirely beyond the powers of the Government to prevent it. Approval has been given for the transmission line and funds made available; indeed, a large part of the line has already been erected, but unfortunately it is held up by the lack of some small amount of equipment. I will find out when it is expected and let the honourable member know next week when the scheme is likely to be finished.

GAWLER RAILWAY STATION.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—My question deals with the state of the roofing on the large shed on the island platform at the Gawler railway

station. Some months ago I pointed out to the Railways Commissioner that the roof, which is of the large canopy type, is half open to the sky. This is mainly due to the blast from the big engines. It has been most uncomfortable for passengers travelling from the platform because, in view of the wet winter, they had difficulty in sitting on the seats because their feet were liable to be in 2in. or 3in. of water. It was also awkward for the men transshipping goods from one platform to another. Now I have been informed there is some difficulty because of soot falling on waiting passengers. I had a reply from the Commissioner in July and he pointed out they were considering removing the large structure and replacing it with a smaller one. Since then I have heard nothing, but the station staff and the residents who use the platform would prefer the large shed to be repaired. Most of the people think a smaller shed would not meet requirements. Will the Minister of Railways inquire into the matter and see what can be done?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Yes. I will bring down a full report, perhaps some time next week.

BUNCHED VEGETABLES.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Can the Premier say whether there is a standard weight for bunched vegetables? Recently I was informed a bunch of beetroot bought from a greengrocer, whom I do not hold responsible, was only about half the normal size. I also noticed that with other bunched vegetables, particularly carrots, there is a tendency to reduce the quantity. I realize that with some vegetables the tops are included in the bunches. Is it possible to guarantee that the consumer will receive not less than a standard weight?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—There is no law governing the sale of bunched vegetables. The custom of the market has long been that they are not sold by weight but by a dozen bunches and there is a well understood convention about what constitutes a bunch of vegetables and that applies particularly to turnips, parsnips, swedes, and carrots. If bunches are not of a reasonable size the purchaser can reject them. During the war the Commonwealth Prices Minister set out to control the weight of vegetables but it was impracticable because of the proportion of tops which could be left attached to a bunch and which has a bearing on the ultimate weight.

HOSPITAL BENEFIT SCHEMES.

Mr. STOTT—Many people have joined societies in South Australia with the object of obtaining benefits from the Commonwealth hospital scheme but some societies apparently do not qualify under the Commonwealth set-up. Will the Premier take this matter up with the Commonwealth Minister for Health to have the position clarified to safeguard South Australians in order that they may know whether they are joining properly qualified societies?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This question has been asked several times by the member for Goodwood. It is a matter he has given much consideration to and made speeches on in this House. Legislation was passed in Victoria to try and protect the interests of insurers from joining societies which were either not reputable, unregistered or unfinancial. I was informed by the Parliamentary Draftsman that the Victorian proposal has not been satisfactory and that further amendments will be made when the political situation becomes sufficiently normal for a Bill to be introduced. I will ask the Minister for Health if he will prominently publicise the names of the actual societies which have been registered in South Australia. The last time I tried to get a list of these societies I was unable to do so. It would be of a great public advantage if the names of the societies which have been accepted by the Commonwealth could be publicised, so that any would-be insurer would know which companies have been registered.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Recently I asked the Premier if he would ascertain whether my remarks concerning one of these companies having changed its name from the Ajax Company to the Atlas Company were correct. I have since ascertained that the name has again been changed back to the Ajax Company. In view of the Premier's statement regarding the publicizing of the name of registered companies under the Commonwealth Act, will he ask the Registrar of Companies whether he could suggest an amendment of the Companies Act which would assist people who contribute towards these hospital benefit schemes to get the full benefit and have full protection?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes.

MOUNT GAMBIER CENTRAL MILL.

The DEPUTY SPEAKER laid on the table the report of the Public Works Committee on Mount Gambier Central Mill.

Report ordered to be printed.

THE ESTIMATES.

In Committee of Supply.

(Continued from November 5. Page 1189.)

MINISTER OF INDUSTRY AND EMPLOYMENT.

Department of Industry, £55,561; Factories and Steam Boilers Department, £43,371; Miscellaneous, £1,743—passed.

MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FORESTS.

Minister of Agriculture Department, £6,744—passed.

Agricultural Department, £436,203.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I want information about a comparatively new department—the Soil Conservation Branch. It is proposed to vote £18,433 for salaries and £12,000 for other items to enable the branch to function. A few years ago the State had a series of drought years and wind erosion was a major problem. At that time this department got a great boost, and rightly so. It did valuable work in controlling soil erosion, particularly in the mallee areas, and later when it advocated contour banking to control water erosion in the heavy rainfall areas; but I am wondering if there is any necessity to carry on this department indefinitely. I believe that good farming methods would practically eliminate the necessity for a soil conservation branch. The taxpayers are now being called upon to contribute £30,000 a year to remedy the mistakes of bad farming. Perhaps farmers should make greater use of the services of our agricultural advisers. If the Minister enforced good farming methods the soil conservation branch could be dispensed with. If an irrigationist adopts practices that the department does not think are in the best interests of the land his lease can be cancelled. The Minister of Agriculture should be able to cancel a lease if the settler maltreats the land. Such a man is a menace to his neighbour's property as well as his own. Freeholders should also be responsible for looking after their land; a freehold does not give the owner the right to abuse the soil.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I agree with some of the honourable member's remarks, but I point out that the Soil Conservation Branch is actually carrying out many of the functions that he says should be carried out. If the branch is to be successful it must of necessity be an advisory department. We have decentralized that service and have placed officers in districts as suggested by the honourable

member, so again we have already adopted what the honourable member proposes. If the Soil Conservation Branch is to be successful the main part of its work must be to concentrate upon encouraging good farming methods. We must retain the highest possible fertility of our soil and see that its humus content is maintained, otherwise it will become subject to soil erosion. Although advice is given on physical influences in preventing water erosion, the large bulk of the work is of an advisory character, designed to stimulate the interest of farmers in better farming methods. District advisers do that work and it is difficult to say whether the work does not overlap in some instances. The effects of soil erosion become much more manifest in times of drought. What happens in drought periods is only the fruit of many things that occur when there is no drought. I have flown over an enormous area in another country which previously was highly productive, but today is designated a dust bowl. The value of the work of the Soil Conservator cannot be assessed in pounds, shillings and pence. We must be conscious of the effects of soil erosion and take whatever steps we possibly can to prevent it. After all, £30,000 is not a large amount if it assists in maintaining the fertility of our agricultural lands. On a number of occasions the Government has been congratulated by overseas experts on the work done here and I think that the legislation passed by Parliament is well worthwhile and should be maintained.

Mr. MICHAEL—I support the Treasurer's remarks and pay a tribute to the fine work that is being done by the Soil Conservation Branch. There is a great necessity for its continuance. Mr. Herriot's work in the early days of soil conservation has been outstanding. He travelled extensively throughout the State impressing upon farmers the necessity for soil conservation, pointing out to them how badly their soil was deteriorating. He pointed out, not only to farmers, but to many others, the wastage that was taking place. I do not agree that the branch should be disbanded. There are several soil conservation districts in the State and others are considering the formation of such districts. People living in some districts have not appreciated the ravages caused by soil erosion. In certain districts not far from Adelaide no farmer has appreciated the work that has been done by the Soil Conservation Branch. Our agricultural advisers have done much good work in advising farmers on their problems. Problems have been created in many country areas

through improved developmental and cultivation methods, the sowing of pastures, and higher stock carrying capacity of the land. In my district farmers have to drench sheep and give injections against diseases and complaints about which nothing was known until the last few years. Our agricultural advisers can assist farmers in soil conservation methods and there is much work still to be done by our officers.

Mr. HAWKER—I support Mr. Michael's remarks. One of the best things our Soil Conservator has done is to make many farmers conscious of what they should do with their soil. Our agricultural advisers and soil conservators are most usefully employed. On many occasions they have been asked by farmers who are about to plough their land for the first time what methods should be adopted to prevent erosion. I pay a great tribute to Mr. Herriot for his work in making farmers conscious of good agricultural practice. It would be a great pity if the Soil Conservation Branch were disbanded. Last year the Minister of Agriculture told me that although the Treasurer had budgeted for the salaries of a number of officers in this section difficulty was being experienced in finding suitable men for appointment. Can the Treasurer indicate the position in that regard today?

Mr. PEARSON—I have had experience on my property on the valuable work done by the Soil Conservation Branch. If there is any section of the Department that should not be pruned it is this one. Soil conservation is basic to the whole structure of agriculture, for the inherent fertility of the soil must be preserved and improved. The member for Chaffey may think that the Agricultural Adviser could do the work of the Soil Conservator, but soil conservation is the work of a specialist. The Agricultural Adviser would have to become a specialist in order to do this work and then he would find he had not the time to devote to it. In order to offset the costs of the Department it has been suggested that after a period farmers should be required to pay something for the services of the officers of the Soil Conservation Branch on survey work, and farmers generally would not quarrel with such a scheme for they realize the value of the work performed. Such a charge might help offset the costs of soil conservation.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Much difficulty has been experienced in staffing the Soil Conservation Branch. About 12 months ago applications were called for appointment to

the staff, but only three persons applied and only one had suitable qualifications. While overseas the Soil Conservator visited Holland where the Dutch people for many years have been very forward in their agricultural practices, and he inspected a soil conservation school from which three students are expected to arrive next week to take up appointment as cadets. Those appointments will bring the staff up to strength.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The staff of the Soil Conservation Branch should not be pruned, for in recent years it has rendered excellent service. If proper farming practices had been carried out possibly the necessity for maintaining a Soil Conservation Section would not have arisen, but the officers of this Branch will do more to introduce better farming practices than the agricultural advisers. I agree with the member for Flinders that the maintenance of the fertility of the soil is basic not only to agriculture but to our survival. Some parts of the earth's surface which were formerly fertile are today deserts of drifting sand which have been created by man's rapacity in centuries gone by, and we have examples of that in this State. Much is heard about the ravages of wind and water erosion, but in many agricultural districts the mortgage did more damage than either, for it was considered necessary to chase after large acreages and maximum yields in an effort to meet interest and principal commitments, so the problem is basically economic. I give a good deal of credit to the Soil Conservation Branch for the steps taken. In my electorate a small farm which was almost ruined in the depression has since been contour-banked and cultivated until today its yield is as good as ever. I have seen other instances of it too, but we must not lose sight of the fact that we have had eight of the best years known within my lifetime, both in the agricultural and the pastoral districts. I remember one of the earlier soil conservators—I think he was gaining experience—going through my electorate, and his articles were featured in one of the week-end papers. He said that the whole of that area was practically lost; that neither man nor God could ever restore it, and there were suggestions that hundreds of miles should be withdrawn from occupation. I remember remarking then that if we got two or three good seasons it would be remarkable how the country recovered. We have had more than two or three and the recovery is more than remarkable. I went through a

considerable portion of that part of my electorate last week-end and saw more saltbush than there has ever been on the country as long as I have known it, and areas where saltbush does not grow were covered with various types of grass, mainly spear grass, which almost entirely obliterated the ground, just as it does in the Adelaide hills. Therefore, whilst we can give full credit to the Soil Conservation Branch we must not be unmindful that the Almighty has taken a hand in restoring our soils. In future, in addition to conserving soil we must have regard to economic factors, so that those conditions responsible for so much of the damage in the late 20's and early 30's will not recur in so far as Parliament can prevent it. That will be a major contribution by this Parliament towards the maintenance of the basic fertility of the soil upon which so much depends.

Mr. JENKINS—There are approximately 420 dairy herds in South Australia with an average of 40 cows, making a total of 16,800, and many dairymen are on the herd testing waiting list. They are probably maintaining unprofitable cows pending their testing, but I find that there are not sufficient herd testing recorders to do the work, or sufficient funds to pay them. Can the Premier indicate what steps are being taken to furnish further recorders to make good the deficiency?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This is a service provided by the State in which the full cost is not charged to the associations receiving the benefits and there is, of course, a limit as to how far we can take that policy. Some examination of the problem has been made recently. Herd testing is being done in two ways, and what I consider the reasonable suggestion has been made that we could give a much larger cover if we merged the two. I understand, however, that the Pure Breeds Association objects and steps are being taken to see what its objection is. Finance is the main control at present.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—It seems that I aroused a hornet's nest with my very moderate remark that I wondered whether there was any necessity for carrying on this department indefinitely; there was no suggestion of pruning or abolishing it. I went on to say that I believed good farming methods would eliminate the necessity for a Soils Conservation Branch, and I still believe that. Mr. Pearson pointed out that this branch had been of wonderful service to him, and I agree that it has rendered good service to dozens of bad

farmers in South Australia. I was brought up in a country which bred good farmers; if they were not good they were put off the land. In a country with heavier rainfall than the honourable member has ever known if any farmer had allowed his land to become subject to water erosion he would have been kicked off, because one of the conditions of his lease is that if he does anything detrimental to good farming it can be terminated immediately. Something like that would do no harm in South Australia, because the land does not belong to one generation or one individual; the only right of the individual is to use the land.

Mr. Pattinson—He is a trustee for future generations.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Exactly. The whole of the life of Australia depends on this one thing. The Treasurer very reasonably saw my point. He said it was difficult to see where the duty of the agricultural adviser terminated and that of the soil conservator commenced, as I admitted, but I have often wondered whether this £30,000, or a major portion of it, would not be better spent on more agricultural advisers in close touch with the farmers. The honourable member rightly said that a lot of work had yet to be done in advising farmers. The Soil Conservation Branch cannot work effectively unless the farmers form soil conservation committees. The farmer who needs the greatest help is the most backward farmer, and he does nothing about forming a committee. If anyone advises him to do so the adviser is regarded as interfering. During my travels between Adelaide and my district over a period of 15 years I have seen paddocks deteriorate year after year. I can remember when there were little marks on the hillside where water ran down; today they are gullies. The farmers are not doing their job. The lowest and most primitive form of farming in the world is cereal growing. I can produce scientific evidence of this fact. Cereal growing is not farming, yet most of the State is farmed under such conditions. I would sooner see £20,000 spent in providing officers to advise on good farming methods than spend it in curing the evils of bad farming. It is better to have prevention than cure.

Mr. QUIRKE—I commend one statement made to Mr. Macgillivray by the Premier. It epitomized the need for the maintenance and regeneration of much of our land. If the few words used were printed and disseminated throughout the State to every farmer, particularly grain growers, who are not farmers, it

would do much good. If the lesson were appreciated by every worker of land, very soon the Soil Conservation Branch would not be necessary.

Mr. Pattinson—Do you agree that grain growing is the lowest form of farming?

Mr. QUIRKE—I do not think Mr. Macgillivray said that. He said that grain growing exclusively on a fallow, wheat, fallow, wheat basis is the most exhaustive and primitive method of agriculture.

Mr. Pearson—No.

Mr. QUIRKE—He meant to say that. The man who continues with that practice in these enlightened days is a man of very low intelligence. The result of his activities must be apparent and even if he were blind, deaf and dumb it would not be an excuse, because he would soon fall into the gullies he made and would want to know why they were there. Yesterday the Minister of Agriculture, in reply to a question by Mr. Fletcher, read a report from the Chief Veterinary Inspector of the Department of Agriculture, Victoria, evidently in response to an inquiry by our department about a disease outbreak in Victoria adjacent to the South Australian border. The report was disquietening. Our Acting Chief Inspector Stock said that we have stock diseases here which are not contagious. There is no explanation why they occur, and they have been the subject of considerable research in various countries, and are being investigated by the Victorian Department of Agriculture. They are diseases such as milk fever, grass tetany, and so on. A friend of mine in New Zealand, Dr. Daniel Smith, a veterinary surgeon of high repute, recently wrote to me and, as the reason for the slight delay in answering correspondence, said "This past winter has been the busiest of all the years I have put in in New Zealand, and I am convinced that the general health of stock is gradually deteriorating, for never before has it taken so much to keep them on their feet." That also applies to South Australia. In recent years there has been considerable development of pasture in the Clare district, but within the last month in a small area between Watervale and Seven Hill at least a dozen dairy stock have died from some obscure complaint which was sudden in its effect. Stock, both young and old, which had been milked the previous night and seemed healthy were dead in the morning, apparently from the same type of disease as is affecting animals on the borders of Victoria. The disease occurs only

where there is pasture development with a dominance of clover. Though a pasture may be succulent in appearance the massive growth of the pasture does not indicate that it is deficient in some vital respect. In recent years it has been proved that dystokia, the infertility disease, is due entirely to feeding and grazing stock in a clover-dominant pasture. Once infected the animal is no longer useful for breeding purposes and is only fit for butcher's meat. The only prevention is to diversify the plants in the pasture. In other words, in addition to the legumes there must be a high percentage of grass. When land is planted with Wimmera and perennial ryegrass and similar grasses, and nothing else, sheep develop ryegrass staggers. Stock fed on natural pastures seem immune to attacks of these complaints but such pastures are not economic, although the stock is healthy.

We have not yet determined what is healthy in a developed pasture. I believe it is necessary to increase investigations, and while searching for the cause of disease we should increase the veterinary staff. When a person is engaged in rearing high priced stud stock and building up a dairy herd of great value it is small satisfaction to have to wait days for veterinary help if his herd becomes afflicted. Recently some stock in a herd in my district became affected and I applied for aid to the Minister on a Sunday. The Minister was very responsive and was prepared to send a man the next day, but three days elapsed before his arrival. Little can be done with stock when it is dead, except perhaps have a *post mortem* examination. There is a shortage of trained veterinary officers, and whilst investigating the obscure origin of many diseases it is vital that skilled men should be available to offset the dire results which occur to stock. From investigations in America and England it is becoming apparent that there are factors which make ground growth actually dangerous for stock, particularly when successive generations are bred on that country. I believe the only veterinary science course in Australia is in New South Wales but we should establish a branch in South Australia particularly as much country is being developed and these problems will continue to arise.

Mr. MICHAEL—I feel I should reply to the statements of the member for Chaffey. If any further argument is required for the continuance of the Soil Conservation Department the member has supplied it by his personal

lack of knowledge of the work that department is doing. If his statements, with which I entirely disagree, about the type of man engaged in cereal growing were even only 10 per cent correct there would be a great need for continuing the work of that department and for a more personal contact between the officers and the cereal growers. The member for Stanley provided further evidence of the inadvisability of making the agricultural advisers do soil conservation work. He went to great lengths to point out the necessity for further veterinary services and the dissemination of more knowledge among farmers, but that would mean more work for the agricultural advisers and other officers of the department, leaving them less time for soil conservation work. As agricultural practices change no doubt soil conservation methods will change. The first contour banking done on South Australia by a progressive farmer proved a failure, and instead of its conserving soil it resulted in an extension of water erosion; but these difficulties have since been overcome. In my lifetime I have seen a complete change in agricultural practices. At one time it was considered good farming to work the land eight or ten times until it was in fine tilth, but now that is considered the last thing which should be done, and good farming practice is to leave the land as rough as possible, provided it is cultivated properly.

Mr. GOLDNEY—I feel it necessary to answer the comments of Mr. Macgillivray regarding the cereal grower. I regard cereal growing as a highly skilled and scientific operation which requires also a great deal of common-sense. Many of the men engaged in this work in South Australia are among the best cereal farmers in the world. In some of our districts the rainfall is light and erratic, and these demand the use of expert cultural methods. If level land is worked to a fine tilth that is all right, but in undulating country this could lead to water erosion. Wind erosion and to some extent water erosion depend on seasonal conditions. About eight years ago in many of our lighter rainfall areas much wind erosion was experienced and some areas became almost like a dust bowl. Much of the success in dealing with wind and water erosion depends on the human element. We must work in with Nature and the more we do that the more effectively can we combat erosion and keep our land fertile.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Some time ago I asked the Premier if he would get a report concerning the conversion of city garbage into

compost for the benefit of agricultural and horticultural areas. Even under the best farming conditions it is difficult to retain the humus content in the soil. Our city areas waste much potential humus. I have been told that one city in New South Wales hopes to clear £30,000 a year by turning garbage into humus for sale to gardeners and vegetable growers. In a report supplied by the Director of Agriculture in reply to a question by me was the following:—

If large scale composting were contemplated in this State it would be very advisable to send an engineer and a microbiologist overseas to study garbage composting units in operation.

New Zealand has already undertaken considerable experiment in this direction, the interesting part of which is that the demand came not from farmers or municipalists but from the New Zealand branch of the British Medical Association. The public is alarmed at the various mysterious diseases, such as poliomyelitis, which are now prevalent. I do not know whether they arise because of something lacking in our food. Some years ago infantile paralysis was rather uncommon. It has often been found that when a race is subject to a certain disease it develops a resistance to it; but I am afraid that we are not building up sufficient resistance to poliomyelitis, which is one of the major scourges of our civilization. The trouble today is that we flog our land with artificial manures, particularly nitrogenous manures, which give quick financial returns but possibly produce food which is not good for the people. In England a number of doctors have banded themselves together to carry out experiments on human beings by feeding families entirely on food produced from compost, without any artificial manures. If it is correct that some branches of science scout my suggestion that the lack of resistance to disease is due to deficiencies in food it is also correct that other scientists say that this is the cause. Will the Treasurer consider the advisability of asking municipal authorities in Adelaide whether joint action between them and the Government could be taken so that the thousands of tons of garbage in the city could be turned into something worthwhile for our vegetable and fruit-growing areas, particularly near the city?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will have the matter examined.

Line passed.

Agricultural College Department, £102,924; Produce Department, £189,638; Fisheries and Game Department, £16,876; Chemistry Department £36,016—passed.

Primary Producers' Assistance Department, £5,342.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Why is it necessary to continue this department? The expenditure is not great, but perhaps it would be better to spend the £5,342 elsewhere.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The department is administering Government assets. Some of the long-range schemes involved considerable sums and the department is now only a nominal one gradually getting those schemes finalized.

Line passed.

Miscellaneous, £70,994.

Mr. JENKINS—Last week I was asked whether a person who lost a vehicle while fighting fires would be able to claim compensation from the Government. Is there any provision for such cases?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I do not think a claim against the Government would be successful for loss of uninsured equipment. People owning motor vehicles should exercise the normal precaution of having them insured.

Line passed.

MINISTER OF IRRIGATION.

Department of Lands, £445,741—passed.

MINISTER OF MINES.

Mines Department, £504,586; Miscellaneous, £2,500—passed.

MINISTER OF MARINE.

Harbors Board, £1,183,356; Miscellaneous, £535—passed.

MINISTER OF RAILWAYS.

Railways Department, £15,019,841.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—When any member comments on the railways the Minister often asks, "Are you in favour of abolishing the railways?" I do not suggest that they be abolished, but that they be more usefully employed on transport suited to them. I believe our railways are doing work that would be better left to private enterprise and road hauliers. Some members often say that the railways are kept functioning for the benefit of our country areas, but that is entirely erroneous. In fact, the country man is the man who pays the major portion of railway revenue. A report on the railways issued in 1938 dealt with the loss of railways goods traffic. It said that the average decrease in annual tonnage for the years 1932 to 1938 compared with the two previous periods occurred mainly

in several items. The tonnage on the Port Adelaide and Outer Harbour line decreased from 138,000 tons for the years 1912 to 1921 to 124,000 tons for the years 1922 to 1931. That decrease occurred during a period when one would expect that the traffic on the Port line would increase because the city was expanding.

We always find that the city is favoured in transport legislation. For instance, the Road and Railway Transport Act does not apply to the metropolitan area. As soon as the city merchants found that they could use road transport more effectively and cheaply they promptly deserted the railways. I do not object to that, because that is what any sensible man would do, but I object to the argument continually put forward by metropolitan members that the country is responsible for railway losses. The transport of coal, shale and coke increased from 145,000 to 155,000 tons. Firewood, which is essentially a commodity transported from the country to the city, increased from 59,000 to 67,000 tons. The tonnage of ores, slimes and tailings increased from 61,000 to 139,000 tons. Unclassified freight increased from 25,000 to 255,000 tons. The railways did not suffer any serious decrease in transport of wheat, wool, livestock and artificial manures. That valuable report has been forgotten by metropolitan members. It shows that railway traffic has fallen off mainly in the metropolitan area. We have had several Commissions inquiring into transport matters, but an inquiry into railway matters is often headed by a tramway executive and an inquiry into tramway matters by a railway official. Hence we find two bureaucrats, both making tremendous losses, sitting in judgment on each other. A Commission of members of Parliament should be established to go into these matters. I recall that on one occasion the Premier said that Parliamentary committees gave more useful information to Parliament than any committee set up outside Parliament. We should inquire whether the roads are being used to the best advantage and where the railways are making losses. Railways administration, in my view, is top-heavy. Frequently head officers are burdened with a multiplicity of jobs. Their work in the department is a full-time job. It is futile to ask one departmental officer to assess the value of another. Railway losses have been multiplying and have become a menace to our financial structure.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I remind Mr. Macgillivray that we have had other Commis-

sions inquiring into transport and railway affairs. One inquired into road and railway transport matters under the chairmanship of Mr. Justice Reed, other members being Mr. J. W. Wainwright (then Auditor-General), Mr. W. M. Fowler, Mr. J. K. Angas, and Mr. H. H. Shillabeer. Another was the Royal Commission on State Transport Services under the chairmanship of Judge Paine. Other members were Mr. W. P. Bishop (Auditor-General), Mr. E. T. Daly, a countryman residing at Jamestown, Mr. S. A. Fisk, manager of an Adelaide company, and Mr. A. B. Thompson, a representative on the industrial side. Each Commission went thoroughly into the matters raised by Mr. Macgillivray and the Government fully considered their reports, its policy being guided by them. The railways carry superphosphate to the South-East, a distance of 340 miles, for 25s. a ton.

Mr. HAWKER—In the Transportation and Traffic Branch an item "Railway Migrant Employees Scheme—Excess and unrecouped fares and other expenses of German migrants," £4,600 appears, a similar line appearing under the Rolling Stock Branch, the proposed expenditure being set down at £3,400. Not long ago the Railways Department was greatly understaffed, which necessitated excessive overtime. This added greatly to the cost of the department. I understand that the present secretary to the Railways Commissioner, Mr. Fidock, visited Germany and selected a number of migrants for work in the railways. Some are still here, but others have had their contracts cancelled. What is the position as regards these German migrants? Does the Minister know if the Railways Department has plenty of staff now and is doing away with excessive overtime?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I doubt whether much overtime is being worked today. Some time ago railway employees were heavily overworked and the department readily acknowledged their efforts. Many men in the transportation branch were regularly working 50 to 56 hours a week. We could not get Australians to take on the work and had to get migrants. The position is gradually rectifying itself. The total expenditure proposed for the two items this year is £8,000, whereas in 1951-52 it was £12,200. Speaking from memory, I think that about 1,500 migrants came to South Australia, but they are not all sufficiently trained. The department is also overcoming that disability.

Mr. RICHES—Can the Minister say what progress is being made with the construction of a second cafeteria car? Considerable confusion exists in the minds of travellers between Adelaide and northern towns over the present cafeteria car. They do not know whether it will be attached to the train or not. It is attached on some days, but not on others. On two occasions I rang the Railways Department and inquired if the car would be attached to the train and was advised that it would be. I waited until the departure of the train, expecting to get lunch, but found that the cafeteria car was not attached. It has not been attached on Fridays for some considerable time. It must be an expensive car to run, as it is apparently only used two days a week. When speaking in the Budget debate I mentioned that there was a tendency in the Railways Department to cater for interstate passengers in preference to local passengers. Many of our local trains are as heavily patronized as the interstate trains, and the journeys are just as long. I think that a cafeteria car would render better service on local trains than on interstate trains, passengers on which have better facilities for meals at railway dining rooms than local travellers. Can the Minister say whether the cafeteria car is in use all the time?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The department regards the cafeteria car as a necessity in modern transport, and it will be provided as finance permits. At present the cafeteria car is in use all the time.

Line passed.

Transport Control Board, £16,019.

Mr. TAPPING—In reply to a question I asked some time ago the Minister said that the board considered applications on their merits but having failed to arrange a permit for an interstate trip by a sporting body I am at a loss to understand the policy of the board, although I commend Mr. Holden, the secretary, and his officers for the job they are doing. I applied for a permit for a football club to travel to Geelong by bus but this was refused although the train trip would have necessitated a change of trains in Melbourne and the arrival back in Adelaide at 9.15 a.m. of men whose starting time for work was 7.30 a.m. I know of another application by a club desiring to travel to Broken Hill by bus which was granted. Can the Minister explain this apparent inconsistency?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Each case is considered on its merits. The Act gives the board wide discretionary power and applications do not come to the Minister. In some cases it is possible after a holiday period interstate to arrive back in time for the men to start work that morning, and the availability of a reasonable train service must be considered, for the board was set up to see that the railways would receive the benefit of profitable traffic as well as the unprofitable traffic which must be carried at less than cost.

Mr. MOIR—Sporting bodies which have given the public entertainment throughout the football season should have their applications for interstate permits favourably considered even though it means a relaxation of the strict and narrow regulations administered by the board. Permits to travel by bus should be granted to school children proceeding on a conducted tour, for it is unfair to ask school teachers to take such groups by train for they are hard to handle. Recently a permit was granted to a group of girls from this State who took part in a musical contest at Ballarat, and these girls brought credit to South Australia by their efforts. Will the Minister take up with the board the question of a more generous policy in the granting of interstate bus permits to sporting and educational groups?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—In September the board granted 714 permits and refused only 14 applications; in October it granted 647 and refused only 12 applications. Some carriers apply for a permit in the hope that if one is granted they will be able to look around for a load, but the board does not issue permits unless the application form is signed by the consignor or party desiring to travel. It is not for the Government or the Minister to say what the board shall do, for it is constituted as an independent body with discretionary power. It may issue orders with regard not only to road services but also to the railways. I will bring members' remarks to the board's notice and it may give a general ruling on policy regarding road transport of sporting bodies and school children.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—The previous speaker brought under the notice of the Minister the needs of various sporting bodies, but as a country member I want to mention a broader aspect because, as I have said previously, this board is one of the biggest handicaps that country people have to suffer. It has been said on many occasions that it is all very well for country members to ask that the roads be used and very often torn up and

destroyed at the expense of the general taxpayer, and I have tried to refute that on every possible occasion because it is entirely untrue. Motorists throughout the Commonwealth pay more money into the general revenue on the Commonwealth Government than would be needed to put all the roads in the Commonwealth, plus bridges, into a good state of repair, as well as meet all the deficits on our railways. The Commonwealth Government quite rightly argues that although it is true that only 50 per cent of the money collected from motorists is paid back directly for road purposes, much more comes to the State in the form of grants, so that when the Treasurer gets a sum of £6,000,000 for the benefit of the State we must not forget that the major part of it comes in the shape of a super tax from one section of the taxpayers, namely, the motorist. I recently culled a very interesting item from the *Advertiser* which quoted a Mr. Barron, who recently visited New Zealand and investigated the position of road transport in that country. It was as follows:—

One thing of interest Mr. Barron had to say was that in New Zealand the 1s. of every 1s. 0.7d. petrol tax on a gallon of petrol went back into the roads. In Australia, all petrol tax goes into Federal revenue and the grant from there for roads is something like 50 per cent of the £24½ million total tax. The visit of the Ford executives was in connection with their company's survey of Australian conditions.

That is the answer to those who say that the road user is not paying for the roads, for actually he paying more than his share. One of the things to which I object strongly is the finality of the board's authority. It does not have to give a judicial decision or any reasons—simply a straight out "No," which is final; even a murderer has the right of appeal. I asked the Treasurer earlier whether he would consider amending the Act, because in Victoria the road haulier at least has a chance to state his case, and no man with a sense of justice would deny a businessman that right. Be it remembered that a huge sum of money is tied up in the transport business. Many of these men came from the ranks of the second A.I.F. because they were accustomed to handling heavy transport, yet today, without warning, they can be put off the roads. Consider the case of the well-known firm of Bonds whose reputation and work has been above suspicion. All that this board has to do to put that firm out of business is to refuse a licence. It has spent thousands of pounds in advertising in South Australia and in bringing tourists here

to spend their money. It has taken thousands around the city to see the sights, but today cannot do it, and it was stopped by this Fascist organization against which there is no appeal; a department, conducted by a Government which does not favour Socialism, but favours private enterprise, is now carrying on the work, for the Tourist Bureau, without any attempt at apology, grabbed the business built up by this firm at considerable expense. If we want to find the real reason I think I can supply it, because this is no longer a control department, but a revenue producing one, because it is stated that for 1952 the excess of receipts over payments amounted to £126,994. What difference does it make if a number of ex-service hauliers are put off the road, if private enterprise is ruined and political principles ignored? Why are we worrying about Communism? Could it be any worse than this? I ask the Government seriously to consider whether this department should not be abolished or at least its powers limited to the extent that any decision limiting the rights of private enterprise, or any other enterprise should be subject to appeal to some independent board.

Line passed.

Miscellaneous, £6,432.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I understand that surveys are being made between Port Pirie and Jamestown to ascertain if easier grades can be found for the new standard gauge line when it is built between Port Pirie and Broken Hill. If it is decided to make substantial deviations will it be necessary for Parliamentary approval to be sought, or will the general approval in the standardization agreement be sufficient to enable the work to proceed?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Several surveys are proceeding from the point of view of the final standardization, but the honourable member may be assured that Parliamentary authority will be sought before any commitment is made involving any considerable expenditure.

Line passed.

MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Highways and Local Government Department, £180,176—passed.

Miscellaneous, £42,760.

Mr. FRED WALSH—I have been complaining for a number of years about the condition of the Hilton Bridge, particularly the lighting which, although it has been improved in the

last few months, is still inadequate. When trains pass beneath and the smoke hangs about it is highly dangerous, and only recently I narrowly avoided a collision with a cyclist. Will the Minister take up the matter with the local council with a view to having the bridge properly lit?

The Hon. McINTOSH—I will see that the honourable member's remarks are brought under the notice of the council with the request that it give them earnest consideration with a view to making the bridge as safe as possible.

Mr. WHITTLE—I have already mentioned the need for some portion of the £25,000 provided for grants to councils pursuant to the Electricity Supplies (Country Areas) Act to be spent in my district at North Modbury which, although rightly in the metropolitan area, in essence is a country district. They can see the light of the city over the tops of the hills, but do not enjoy this amenity.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I have no knowledge of the matter. I will get a report from the Electricity Trust.

Line passed.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2).

The Estimates having been adopted by the House, an Appropriation Bill for £23,469,877 was founded in Committee of Ways and Means, introduced by the Hon. T. Playford, and read a first time.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—I move:—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill is based on the Estimates with which the House has just dealt. Clause 2 provides for the issue of £23,469,877, being the amount required to finance the proposals set out in the Estimates after allowing for an amount of £16,500,000 already appropriated by Parliament in Supply Acts Nos. 1, 2, and 3. Clause

3 sets out the purposes for which the total amount of £39,969,877 can be used, and makes provision for the payment from the Governor's Appropriation Fund of increases in salaries or wages which become payable pursuant to any order of a court or other wage fixing tribunal. This clause also provides that the Governor's Appropriation Fund shall be increased by the amount of money necessary to pay these increases in salaries or wages.

Clause 5 provides that if the general revenue of the State, and the monies paid to it by the Commonwealth of Australia, are insufficient to make the payment authorized by the Act then Loan Fund monies or other public funds may be used to make good the deficiency. Clause 6 gives the Treasurer power to make payments out of money appropriated by this Act, notwithstanding that the amounts are in respect of a period prior to July 1, 1952, or at a rate in excess of the rate which was in force under any return made by the Public Service Board or any regulations of the South Australian Railways Commissioner during the period in respect of which the payments were made. Clause 7 permits any amount to be paid for the purpose for which it is appropriated in addition to any other amount appropriated by law for that purpose.

Clause 8 authorizes increased payments to be made to officers of the Public Service for the hire of motor vehicles used on official business in accordance with the rate prescribed under regulation 67 of the Public Service Act as if regulation 67 had come into force on January 1, 1952. Members will see that this is in accordance with the usual provisions of the Appropriation Act.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, November 11, at 2 p.m.