

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.**

Wednesday, October 21, 1953.

The **SPEAKER** (Hon. Sir Robert Nicholls) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

**QUESTIONS.****WHEAT STABILIZATION.**

Mr. **MICHAEL**—Has the Minister of Agriculture any information from the Federal Minister for Commerce and Agriculture regarding wheat stabilization?

The Hon. Sir **GEORGE JENKINS**—I sent the Minister an urgent telegram some days ago asking him to indicate the Commonwealth Governments' desire respecting wheat stabilization and whether he desired a poll of growers to be taken in this State to ascertain their views. I received a reply that it was intended to ask the States to pass the necessary legislation to enable a poll of growers to be taken regarding stabilization. I am expecting from him any day particulars which will enable us to draft a Bill which will be introduced at a later stage in addition to one now before the House.

**MILK ZONING.**

Mr. **HEASLIP**—Did the Premier notice in this morning's *Advertiser* an article regarding the forced zoning of milk in which the president of the South Australian Housewives' Association (Mrs. M. J. Scott) stated that a milkman in the Edwardstown district told the association yesterday that he had been forbidden by his milk supplier to sell milk on one side of a certain street? Will the Treasurer ascertain whether this association can set itself up to be the law, and dictate whom milk vendors can serve?

The Hon. T. **PLAYFORD**—This matter has been brought officially under the Government's notice by the Metropolitan County Board, which stated that in its opinion the zoning system whereby only one vendor serves a district has not always been in the best interests of the consumer and the trade generally. A number of cases had been brought under the board's notice where very bad and irregular service was being provided. This matter is at present before the Government, and in fact some examination has been made of it to see what type of amending legislation would cure this difficulty. It appears that probably the best way to meet this problem would be to provide for some system of block zoning which would enable the consumer to have a choice of milkmen. That would save the heavy

expenses which became apparent under completely unzoned systems, and where dairymen deliver over large areas it would give the economic advantages of zoning while at the same time giving the consumer an alternative source of supply. It is hoped that legislation to deal with the matter will be introduced this session.

**ALLEGATIONS OF SUBORNATION OF PERJURY.**

Mr. **TRAVERS**—Recently the member for Hindmarsh asked a question which contained certain allegations of the criminal offence of subornation of perjury. As the honourable member said that he was raising the matter to avoid an injustice and so that no innocent person may suffer injustice, I ask him whether he will inform the House: (a) whether anyone made the statement that certain persons were guilty of subornation of perjury; if so, (b) who were those persons, (c) when and where were the statements made, and (d) precisely what were the statements?

The **SPEAKER**—The member for Torrens has asked the member for Hindmarsh a series of questions. Does the honourable member desire to reply?

Mr. **HUTCHENS**—No.

**SUBSTANDARD HOUSING.**

Mr. **DUNKS**—Recently much has been said in this House and in the press with regard to substandard houses, particularly in the metropolitan area. Has the Premier a report on this matter?

The Hon. T. **PLAYFORD**—I have a report from the chairman of the Housing Trust on the question raised yesterday by several members, including the Leader of the Opposition, in connection with the proposed pensioners' houses which it was alleged would be substandard. It is as follows:—

After the South Australian Housing Trust had completed its designs for houses for pensioners and had tentatively fixed sites for a programme of approximately 100 houses, the trust decided, as a matter of courtesy, to inform the three councils in whose areas the sites are situated, of what was proposed and to hear any views which might be expressed by the councils. As regards the municipal councils of Woodville and Enfield, two of the councils concerned, the proposals of the trust were apparently accepted without comment. As regards the third council, namely Marion, the council asked that the matter be discussed with representatives of the council and the trust, and, accordingly, a conference was arranged at which the council was represented by the Mayor (Mr. P. W. Tippins), councillors for the two wards in which it is proposed to erect

groups of houses, namely, Councillor R. Oliver and Councillor R. Keene, the Town Clerk, Mr. C. W. Bradley, and the building inspector (Mr. A. V. Harbrow) and at which the general manager of the trust (Mr. A. M. Ramsay) and the trust's design architect (Mr. G. R. Shedley) were present.

As regards the sites chosen by the trust, Councillor Keene expressed himself as satisfied with that proposed in his ward. As regards the site proposed in Councillor Oliver's ward, however, the councillor was not satisfied although the trust had agreed to change the site first selected for the purpose and had proposed another site a few streets away. However, the general impression given to the trust's representatives was that the weight of the council's opinion approved the sites ultimately selected by the trust. The building inspector, Mr. Harbrow, then raised questions as to the design of the houses in relation to the Building Act. Mr. Harbrow is not the building surveyor in whom, under the Building Act, the duty of considering plans is vested but is a subordinate officer who can act only under the instruction of a building surveyor. Mr. Harbrow stated that the floor areas provided in the plans for the bathroom and the kitchenette did not comply with the Building Act. However, he was in error referring to provisions of the Act dealing with flats and multiple dwellings. The Building Act does not lay down any rules at all about the size of any room in ordinary houses. It was also pointed out by Mr. Harbrow that, as regards ceiling heights, there was some deviation from those provided in the Building Act.

As part of the design of the houses and in order to produce some economy in construction and to improve the appearance of the houses, it is proposed to introduce what is known as coves in the ceilings which have the effect of reducing ceiling heights at the walls. This type of ceiling has been frequently used before by the trust. The deviations from the Act are slight and it was for the very purpose of discussing these matters and the proposed sites that the meeting with the council was arranged. The trust's representatives were left with the strong impression that the council's representatives did not attach any importance to these ceiling deviations, particularly when the system of roof ventilation was pointed out to them. What was said by the trust's representatives has been misquoted at the council meeting. Mr. Ramsay did not say that the plans were 75 per cent within the Act but he did say that the plans substantially complied with the Act. Mr. Shedley did not say that the "trust had ways and means of not complying with the Building Act," but he did say that the difference between compliance and non-compliance in some respects was slight and, in the design in question, could be simply effected by leaving out the door between the living room and the bedroom, thus reducing the comfort in the house.

The building inspector is reported to have stated at the meeting of the Marion Council that the houses in question would be substandard and this term has been repeated in the press. The term substandard imports

houses of a slum and low grade nature and this is a most surprising and completely unjustified statement to come from an official who should know the connotation given to the word "substandard." Unfortunately too many of the people for whom these trust houses are intended now live in substandard slum houses and they know what "substandard" means. It is to be regretted that this term "substandard" has been used in the press with respect to the pensioners' houses and that a responsible journal, without making any inquiry from the trust as to the accuracy or otherwise of criticism offered by a subordinate officer and a few councillors at a council meeting, should accept the absurdity that the trust would even contemplate the building of what has been blazoned forth in the press as substandard houses. Even the writer of a leader in a newspaper should make some attempts to verify his facts.

The houses are of good design and will, the trust is confident, provide extremely comfortable quarters for the class of person for whom they are intended. They will be built to high standards of construction and will provide accommodation for pensioners infinitely better than the housing in which so many of them now have to exist. The designs are not entirely orthodox and, in order to achieve what the trust has set out to do, they would not be expected to be orthodox. However, the trust has had a great deal of experience in designing housing accommodation and the public can be assured that it knows what it is doing. The trust is not legally bound by the Building Act but, as a matter of practice, conforms with the Act. The Act, however, is not inflexible and contemplates deviations from its provisions where justified by the particular design.

I shall be pleased to make a copy available to the Leader of the Opposition who asked several questions on the matter yesterday. Some years ago the Government received from the Commonwealth Government, as the result of a survey made by an institute set up to examine ceiling heights, a recommendation that the heights in this State should be lowered by another foot. The institute, which had examined building practices in South Australia, pointed out that a considerable saving could be made by the reduction. Although it was recommended by the Commonwealth, and I believe has been adopted in some other States, my Government did not think it was desirable to lower the general ceiling standard. In South Australia the standard is higher than has been recommended by the expert and thorough investigation made by the Commonwealth.

Mr. DUNKS—Like other honourable members I was delighted when the Premier indicated that houses would be built for deserving aged pensioners who had borne the heat and burden of the day. Will the report which

appeared in the press concerning some misunderstanding deter the trust from going ahead with the construction of these houses?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—As I have stated, the trust always desires to co-operate with councils. Indeed, I think that every council would admit that wherever the trust has come into its area it has given material assistance, not only in the building of houses but in the provision of roads and other services necessary for successful occupation. It appears that two councils were entirely satisfied with the proposal at the outset. The locality of the houses in the Marion district has already been changed to meet the wishes of that council, and no doubt in due course the trust and the council will be able to reach agreement. In any case, if agreement is not reached with that council, I am certain that plenty of other councils would welcome the trust's erecting the houses in their areas.

#### SOUTH-EAST COASTAL SHIPPING.

Mr. CORCORAN—Has the Premier any further information to give in answer to my previous question regarding the prospects of renewing coastal shipping to South-Eastern ports?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—As promised, I took up the honourable member's question with the Adelaide Steamship Company and have received a letter from the secretary pointing out that prior to the war the *Mulcra* was trading between Adelaide and Melbourne, making a trip between those ports once a week, calling every fortnight at Kingston and/or Beachport to handle any cargo offering. The letter also stated that the cargo offering was not considerable, but that the vessel was still on the Adelaide-Melbourne run and would be available to call at South-Eastern ports provided an assurance were given of sufficient tonnages to warrant it and that the necessary shipping facilities were in good order and available. I will make the letter available to the honourable member, but for this matter to be taken further I think it would be necessary for a canvass of the district to be taken on how much trade would be offering at the two ports.

#### BULK HANDLING COSTS.

Mr. SHANNON—Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to my question of last Tuesday on the policy of the Wheat Board in relation to its instruction to New South Wales growers to provide sacks for storing wheat on their farms because the silos are full and cannot

accommodate the coming harvest? Will South Australian growers be expected to meet any portion of the costs of these sacks?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—I forwarded the honourable member's question to the Wheat Board, asking for information to enable me to reply. The board reports:—

Mr. Shannon refers to the charges debited to the general pool accounts for depreciation and interest on the capital cost of the Ardrossan bulk handling installation. As is well known the Ardrossan bulk bin is owned by the board and each pool contributes what virtually amounts to a rental charge which is calculated at 5 per cent depreciation and  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent per annum interest on the capital cost. This basis is not dissimilar to that applying in other bulk handling States where the board must reimburse the owners of the silos, that is, the bulk handling authorities, an amount which enables them to meet interest and depreciation. As mentioned earlier, the amounts which are debited to the general pool in respect to Ardrossan storage and handling and to bulk handling in the other States are lower, on a per bushel calculation, than the costs which are debited to the general pool on bagged wheat stored and handled in South Australia. For your information, the comparative costs of receiving, handling and storing bulk and bagged wheat respectively in the 1951-52 season (No. 15 pool) were as follows:—bulk 5.623d. per bushel; bagged 9.248d. per bushel. The above average rates are calculated on the respective quantities of bulk and bagged wheat received by the board in that season. Mention is also made by Mr. Shannon of the possibility that growers in the eastern States may have to hold their wheat on the farms pending availability of silo accommodation. Such growers have the alternative of delivering their wheat in bags but any costs incurred prior to delivery to the board, including the cost price of the bags, must be borne by the growers themselves.

#### FRUIT FLY CAMPAIGN.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I extend the thanks of myself and my district to the Horticultural Department for its efforts to control the spread of fruit fly in the metropolitan area, and we are sorry that they have not had the success hoped for. In areas that have been treated there has been no re-infestation; fresh outbreaks seem to come in new parts altogether. In a circular I received from the Fruit Fly Eradication Committee it is suggested that this is because fruit has been removed from an infested area to a clean one. The circular also states that the entry of South Australian fruit to overseas markets has already been denied because of the existence of the pest here, and exports to New Zealand, which is a valuable market, are endangered because of fruit fly. Evidently, if we send fruit into any of these markets we must certify that it

has been grown in an area absolutely free from fruit fly or not grown within a certain distance of an area of infestation. In view of the fact that we have had some new outbreaks, I ask the Minister of Agriculture whether we are taking sufficient care with fruit imported from States which have the fruit fly very badly, for instance bananas and pineapples from Queensland, and whether we obtain certificates that the fruit is not grown in infested areas, because I feel there is a possibility of the fruit fly coming into this State from other parts of Australia?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—There has been some restriction on the free passage of fruit between this State and New Zealand and Tasmania. When we had the first outbreak, which was limited to the metropolitan area, the then Trade Commissioner, Sir Charles McCann, was trying to negotiate with the United States of America and Canada for the sale of apples at a considerably higher price than we were able to obtain from the United Kingdom, but because of the fruit fly in this State he was not able to get anywhere with those negotiations. Regarding the import of bananas and other fruit from Queensland, the departmental officers who inspect such fruit are quite satisfied that there has been no outbreak of fruit fly caused by its importation. A thorough inspection is made of any bananas which come from that State, and also they can only be imported in a green state; any showing signs of colour are immediately destroyed. A complete inspection of the green fruit is made to ensure that there is no distribution of the fruit fly from that source. Whether we can get fruit from a fruit-fly-free area in Queensland I cannot say: I doubt whether there are areas in Queensland growing tropical fruit that are free of this pest; but all such fruit is inspected with the utmost vigilance. There is of course a difficulty in inspecting small parcels of fruit carried over the border by interstate travellers. A search could not possibly be made of every motor car, aeroplane or passenger's luggage to ensure that there was no infested fruit in it. The consensus of opinion among officers who have been engaged in this business is that the sporadic outbreaks occurring in the last year or two are not due to any such source, but rather to a little carry-over of the existing condition of affairs which had either escaped their vigilance or was due to the interchange of fruit within the area. That is why they are particularly anxious to impress upon all people living in the proclaimed area that there

should be no removal of fruit from their premises. Last year I had the misfortune to be in the infested area. In my garden I have a big plum tree which hangs over my neighbour's fence and it has always been my custom to give him some of the plums for his own use. I asked Mr. Strickland if I would be breaking the regulations if I gave the neighbour some of my plums after the area had been proclaimed and he said that I would. That indicates the importance attached by the department to the removal of fruit from one area to another because of the danger of setting up infestation.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Can the Minister indicate precisely the nature of the present outbreak? Was a fly found in a trap or in an infested tree?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—A dead fly was caught in a trap. The trap was loaded with liquid and apparently the fly had been drowned. It was a female fly and the Entomologist knew that it could have laid eggs. Because only one fly was caught it could not be assumed that it was the only one in that district. It was an unusual time of the year to catch a fly, but having caught one it was decided to take all the necessary steps to ensure that there was no distribution in the area. It was caught in a very old and considerably neglected garden which probably encouraged the breeding of flies. Therefore, all steps which had been effectively adopted in the past were taken on this occasion.

Mr. TEUSNER—As the Minister knows, I represent a horticultural and viticultural district and growers there are vitally concerned in the fruit fly outbreak, and are naturally hopeful that the steps taken will be successful in eradicating the fly. I understood from the Minister's reply yesterday to Mr. Shannon that outside authorities were consulted as to effective eradication measures. Can the Minister state whether any entomologist has expressed an opinion as to the efficacy of the measures adopted?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—A number of people resident in other States where fruit fly is rampant have expressed appreciation of our methods, and frequently expressed to the authorities here the opinion that had they only been as vigilant in the first instance as our officers and the Department of Agriculture generally in eradicating the fly they might have been saved much trouble. As an indication of the views held in the other States, particularly in Victoria where there was a considerable outbreak about three years ago, I received a

request from the Victorian Minister of Agriculture to allow Mr. Strickland to visit his State to advise on the best methods to adopt to eradicate and control the fly there. Mr. Strickland visited Victoria and met the Commonwealth representative, who was also asked to advise on that occasion. He was very disturbed at the extent of the outbreak. The result was that Mr. Strickland was able to give the Minister of Agriculture a report of what he considered to be the best methods to adopt to control the outbreak in that State. I do not know to what extent the Victorian Department was successful in its efforts to suppress the fly, which was apparent over a fairly considerable area, more particularly in some of the country districts.

### BUILDING CONTROL BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 7. Page 917.)

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide)—I support the Bill, which has two purposes. It gives the Government the power to direct that certain building materials shall be made available to the owners of dwellinghouses in certain circumstances, and it continues the prohibition on the demolition of dwellinghouses except by order of a local board of health or the Minister. In an enlightened Christian community the people expect their Government to build hospitals before a plague breaks out and makes those hospitals necessary and that they shall be available in an emergency; and they expect their Government to make available the means whereby the community may be adequately housed. Australians do not expect the Commonwealth Government to wait until war is declared before providing the country with an adequate Navy, Army, and Air Force, although at the beginning of World War II. the Commonwealth Government was unprepared for war and could not give every volunteer even a gun. The people do not want their Government to wait for an emergency before acting.

Let us contrast the attitude of the people with that of the present State Government. I can remember that since the early 30's, each year a storm has swept certain metropolitan districts leaving people without a roof over their heads and homes have been so damaged as to be uninhabitable. What is the public's reaction to such occurrences? Those left homeless receive offers of temporary accommodation. This Bill ensures that the Government will have

power to direct suppliers of building materials to make available the supplies necessary to repair the damaged houses as soon as possible. As soon as people hear of others being rendered homeless they immediately offer their sympathy and practical aid, whereas this Government has signified that it will reject this Bill, implying that it does not want to be in a position to direct the flow of building materials in such circumstances. The Government's attitude is that this matter should be left to private enterprise.

Since the introduction of this Bill a freak storm has hit the metropolitan area and people at Salisbury and Fullarton have been rendered homeless. From nearby friends those families had immediate offers of shelter until their homes could be repaired, but the Government offered them only tarpaulins to put over their houses so that their furniture and clothing might be kept dry. Under the Bill it would have power to direct that building materials be made available immediately so that houses might be repaired. For almost four sessions I have listened to city and country members asking the Premier questions about supplies of galvanized iron, cement, timber and water piping, but I have had no need to ask such questions because building in the district of Adelaide is being carried out by big businesses which can get the materials, whereas the ordinary householder hardly knows what a bag of cement looks like. I have heard the Premier assuring members that if particulars of the various cases mentioned are supplied to him he will get some merchant to supply those materials voluntarily, but there is to be no compulsion. The attitude of the people in an emergency should be an indication to this House that they feel that such families should have their houses repaired as soon as possible after a storm so that they can return to their homes and so that damage to their clothing and furniture will be minimized.

Mr. Fletcher—Isn't that what the tarpaulins were for?

Mr. LAWN—The honourable member probably believes that all building materials should be directed to the Mount Gambier district and that city people affected by storms should be forced to cover their homes with tarpaulins. This Bill does not differentiate between the country and the metropolitan area. Anyone under such circumstances can apply for assistance to the Minister in whom power is vested to even purchase supplies of

material for use where necessary. When discussing this measure the Premier said:—

I have always considered the paramount functions of Parliament to be the provision of homes, hospitals and education for our people.

I could possibly mention other functions but the Premier specifically referred to homes. The second purpose of this Bill is to see that houses will not be demolished holus bolus.

Mr. William Jenkins—Have homes ever been demolished unnecessarily?

Mr. LAWN—Section 6 of the Building Materials Act provided that homes could not be demolished without the consent of the Minister or unless an order were obtained from a local board of health. That Act expired last year but the section was inserted in the Building Operations Act which will expire in December. The only thing which has prevented the demolition of houses has been that provision, which this Bill seeks to carry on. A number of homes have been demolished in Adelaide during the last three years and I have frequently endeavoured to ascertain on whose authority. It was not by order of the Local Board of Health because the Minister of Local Government stated that only about 21 houses had been condemned in the last three years. The Premier said no records were kept of the number of permits issued but that nine had been issued this year and that the number issued in previous years would approximate the same ratio—about 12 a year. Scores of homes have been demolished in Adelaide and warehouses, shops and factories erected in their stead. There were over 15,000 people enrolled in Adelaide in 1950, but the number has gone down to about 12,100, which indicates that many houses have been demolished. It also indicates what will happen next year when the controls are removed. It cannot be denied that there is a shortage of houses. In nearly every edition of the daily press there are letters from persons about their housing difficulties. There are several thousand applications for houses before the Housing Trust but it is unable to cope with them. In the *News* of October 19, under the heading "Housing Woes," a letter from a person who describes herself as "Old Australian" reads:—

Since we lost our home two years ago we have had to board our three children out, and have spent part of the time in a stable and part in a tent on the beach. Now I have a job where I can live in but I fear

it is getting my husband and me down. We miss our children. We have been waiting two years for a trust home. Why do new Australians get preference?

That is typical of the letters received by members. During the last three years I have received hundreds of similar letters and personal approaches. The letter commences, "Since we lost our home," but there is no indication of how the home was lost. Some members of the union to which I belong have lost their homes, and not all because of court eviction orders; some through fire or other circumstances. This family has lost its home and the children have had to be boarded elsewhere and the husband and wife are now parted. The family mentioned in the letter has been split in three or more ways. I was taught many years ago that the Australian democratic way of life was for the family to live in a house, rear children and educate them according to the standard provided by the Government, and so on, but unfortunately this does not apply in South Australia. Here we have a bureaucracy or dictatorship. Next January the Government proposes to allow vested interests which buy houses and get rid of tenants by more means than one to be free to demolish them. The Premier said that there was no compulsion to make them let the houses, yet we still have people living in tents. Whilst people are still living in poor accommodation permission is to be given for houses to be demolished so that warehouses, factories, offices, etc., can be built. By abolishing the control and submitting to pressure applied by big business interests the Government shows an absolute disregard for the welfare of our people. I now want to refer to several of the Premier's inconsistencies: I have not time to refer to all of them. On August 27, speaking on the Building Contracts Bill, he said:—

The Bill, in effect, makes permanent a small portion of the legislation enacted to govern building operations immediately after the war. All other sections of the Building Operations Act will cease to have effect. With one or two exceptions, they are out of operation now. One exception is that some oversight is still being observed on the demolition of dwellings. I believe there is still a considerable amount of statute law which provides that special care must be taken of trust funds.

The Leader of the Opposition interjected, "Don't you think it will be necessary to continue controls after January on the demolition of dwellings?" and the Premier replied that it was not proposed to do so. I then said,

"It is eventually intended to demolish 3,000 homes in Adelaide" and the Premier replied:—

Many applications have been received for the demolition of houses. I know the type of house involved and one member opposite last week asked when the Government would start to remove them as a matter of policy. I said that no wholesale removal could be contemplated at present.

To this Mr. O'Halloran interjected, "But you will let private enterprise do it." On August 27 the Premier said that it was necessary to control the demolition of houses and that no wholesale demolition was contemplated. On October 7, about six weeks after he made the above statements, the Premier spoke on the Building Control Bill, introduced by the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and said:—

Only a very small number of approvals have ever been given for demolitions. It has not been the Government's policy, while houses were in short supply, to agree to demolitions, but now increasing pressure, particularly from councils, is being brought to bear on the Government to allow action to be taken concerning sub-standard houses.

He pointed out that few approvals for demolition had been given, although there had been a large number of applications. He said that increased pressure was being applied and mentioned councils, but he might have mentioned the Legislative Council, which I think is applying the greatest pressure on the Government at present. The Premier then said:—

Let me submit a simple illustration. I have a house in which I desire to live, and have placed an order for the iron with a well-known merchant, say, Harris, Scarfe and Coy. Ltd. I have arranged for the builders to complete the house within a certain time, but because of some order from a Minister my galvanized iron is not supplied to me. That means that we divert the iron from one use to another. It certainly does not make more galvanized iron which is in short supply available; indeed, it may result in just as much hardship to the person that loses the iron as benefit to the person who gets it.

The Leader of the Opposition interjected:—

The position of the former would not be as bad as that of the man who had a home but lost it through storm or tempest.

The Premier replied:—

But relative hardship is not envisaged in this Bill. It could be argued that a person who has been living in a house for 10 years is relatively better off than someone who has never had a house but is trying to get one.

Later he said:—

That does not mean it is now necessary to put into operation a system of complete control, for complete control would be necessary if complete justice were to be done. Recently a freak storm unroofed several houses, but

neighbours, merchants and the Government did their best to help the unfortunate occupants. Some were immediately moved into other houses.

The Leader of the Opposition could see the inconsistency in the Premier's arguments, and interjected:—

And as a result others were deprived of those homes.

The Premier had told the House that if the Government directed supplies of materials to one person to enable a new roof to be put on a house those materials could not be used on another house, but in any case one family had been provided with a home. That was a hypothetical case, but the Premier then gave an actual instance concerning storm damage at Salisbury. Instead of the Government making supplies available for roofing a house it accommodated the people in completed Housing Trust homes, thereby depriving other people of obtaining them, so the Premier's own argument fell flat for want of substance. I come back to my opening remarks that all practical help should be given to people in distress. In reply to Mr. O'Halloran's interjection the Premier stated:—

Yes, but only for a few days. In other instances the Government made materials available to assist unfortunate occupants, and I am certain any merchant or contractor would help without any Ministerial directions under formal legislation such as that now before the House.

Mr. Jennings—Wouldn't that deprive some people of materials?

Mr. LAWN—Of course. That shows the inconsistency in the Premier's argument. He was not happy when speaking on the Bill because he knew he had no real arguments against it. If the merchants will supply materials to those needing them, as the Premier optimistically believes, surely there would be no harm in passing the Bill, for it only ensures that supplies will be made available if merchants will not provide them. The Government would have power to direct merchants to supply, or it could purchase stocks itself and make them available without having to direct merchants. The Premier then said:—

It might surprise the honourable member to know that within the last few days a local government authority, which by no stretch of imagination could be regarded as a supporter of my Government, has written to it suggesting action to demolish a considerable number of houses in its area considered not of reasonable standard.

I should like to know what council the Premier was referring to, but I know that the Adelaide Local Board of Health intends to condemn

3,000 homes in the city when it believes the housing shortage has been met. I fear that if the House fails to continue control over demolitions next year that body will consider it to be an indication that Parliament believes such control no longer necessary, and demolitions may take place. What could then stop the Adelaide Local Board of Health condemning those 3,000 homes? Thousands of people would be thrown out on the street. The council to which the Premier referred could not have been Adelaide City Council, for it is an ardent supporter of the Government, so if there is another council that desires to demolish many homes we can assume that thousands of houses in the metropolitan area will be demolished next year if there is no authority to stop it. The Premier continued:—

From the number of such applications received, the circumstances of those applications, and the general position with regard to sub-standard houses, I do not believe the time has yet arrived when we can go in for wholesale demolition of houses which may be sub-standard, as was proposed by one local government authority. However, I think we can now lift the restrictions without causing any hardship.

If that is not an inconsistent statement I do not know what is. Either the Premier is a fool, and I do not think for one moment that he is, or he is making these inconsistent statements because he has no legitimate argument to put forward and is trying to make excuses on behalf of that group which is applying pressure on him and his Government.

Mr. Frank Walsh—Does the honourable member say that the Premier was wrongly advised on that?

Mr. LAWN—I do not think the Premier needs advice; he certainly would not take it, because he is the master. He, and he alone, speaks for his Party and will select his new Ministers. He answers the greater proportion of the questions in this House and makes all the public announcements on behalf of the Government. He is the mouthpiece and the master. I urge sympathetic consideration, should it become necessary, to people who have lost their homes or have suffered damage to them, and ask for materials to carry out repairs. If there is never any necessity to use this legislation, no harm will be done. I also urge this House not to lift the control over demolition of homes, because the time has not arrived for such action; the Premier has stated this on several occasions. In Adelaide today many houses are unoccupied, many are used as

storerooms and others are empty. The owners are waiting for the time when they will not need to obtain a permit to demolish, and this is evident from the Premier's remarks about refusing many applications. These owners will be freed from control after the Act expires at the end of this year and will not then need to obtain a certificate to go ahead with demolition. They will pull down these houses and build factories, workshops, warehouses and shops, or whatever else they desire.

A large number of homes in Franklin Street have been bought by a transport company which obtained an order from the Local Board of Health in January last to condemn four or five of them, and later a further order for a similar number, and gave notice to quit in regard to others because of its desire to extend its garage accommodation. There are many other houses in Adelaide in a similar position. In 1950 I indicated to this House that the whole of the homes on one side of Ranelagh Street are owned by a printing firm which desires to convert them into a factory. The Minister has refused to grant permission for their demolition, but next year that firm will be able to go ahead without a permit. This company will only have to get the present tenants out and refuse to re-let the houses and will then be able to demolish them and erect a factory. Many firms in Adelaide have bought a number of homes, and although they have been unable to demolish them because of the Act, they will be free to do so if the restrictions are lifted, because many are unoccupied.

Recently several families were assisted by a certain firm in the east-end of Adelaide to obtain other accommodation so that their houses could be taken over by the company. They are vacant, but although they cannot now be demolished without a permit, next year they can be pulled down without permission. On behalf of those who are unable to obtain accommodation, or who are being urged and coerced to get out, and those families who have had to live separately, I plead with this House to continue the control next year so that no more homes will be demolished. Although the Government has not done enough in regard to housing, it would be doing still less if it permitted the wholesale demolition of houses in the metropolitan area. Although I support the Bill with pleasure I regret the necessity for its introduction.

Mr. HUTCHENS secured the adjournment of the debate.



ESTABLISHMENT OF STEEL WORKS  
NEAR WHYALLA.

Adjourned debate on the motion of Mr. Riches:—

That a Select Committee be appointed to inquire into the desirability of establishing a steelworks in the vicinity of Whyalla and to report to Parliament on steps to be taken to implement recommendations made by the Director of Mines on such an undertaking.

(Continued from October 7. Page 919.)

Mr. JENNINGS (Prospect)—Despite the impression that certain Government members attempted to create when speaking on this matter, the motion does not commit this Parliament to the establishment of a steel works at Whyalla, or of a deep sea port at Oodnadatta, or anything of that kind. It merely commits it to the appointment of a select committee to investigate the establishment of steel works. Surely that is a reasonable request considering that the Director of Mines, Mr. Dickinson, an acknowledged authority on such matters, has submitted a report setting forth in unequivocal terms the desirability of the project for which a select committee is proposed. I do not know whether, because the Premier has spoken against this matter, there will be a Party vote. I sincerely hope not, because there is no reason why it should be considered a Party political issue. We must admit that when he genuinely believes in a project he can, in his own peculiar way, make out a very strong case for it, just as he can against something in which he does not sincerely believe, but he made very heavy weather of his opposition to this motion. He usually goes to no end of trouble to eulogize his senior departmental officers, that being part of his technique. We do not mind their getting the credit they deserve; in fact, we express our appreciation of their efforts. I am convinced that, because of the way the Premier usually flies to the assistance of these officers and valiantly attempts to protect them from purely imaginary attacks, he is not only concerned that they get credit where credit is due, but also very much concerned in keeping them on his side so that their influential support will be retained. Therefore, we can further appreciate the reluctance he must have felt when he opposed this motion and so summarily dismissed the opinion of one of his most distinguished officers. When speaking of the Director of Mines he said:—

The Government has given this officer every latitude in expressing his views, for we consider it is no good having an officer of his type unless he is allowed to express his views fully.

That is obviously true, but let us take it a step further. What is the use of having such an officer maintained in this position at considerable expense to the State with the fullest freedom to express his expert opinion and offer his expert advice if that advice is not given effect to, or not even considered by Parliament? It is fairly obvious that if the Opposition had not taken this matter up the splendid report submitted by Mr. Dickinson which represented so much hard work and expense would have lain mouldering and wasting on the table of Parliament. It is reasonable to assume that the Government itself should have introduced the motion. As it neglected its responsibility the Opposition, as on many other occasions, took the initiative in the hope that the Government would appreciate the wisdom and desirability of supporting such a move. In his report the Director of Mines urged the establishment of steel works at Whyalla and suggested that to serve Australia's needs another steel works might be established at Bowen, in Queensland. The Queensland Government no doubt has had a report on the matter and is now making the fullest investigation into the establishment of a steel works there. This indeed is a contrast to the attitude of the South Australian Government and is certainly an example that this State could very profitably emulate. In opposing the motion the member for Onkaparinga said:—

I am afraid I have not the enthusiasm of honourable members opposite for select committees. I have had first-hand experience of committee work. It will be remembered that I was responsible for introducing a somewhat similar motion for the appointment of a select committee to inquire into certain health problems, and I remind honourable members that although the ink on that committee's report is starting to fade its recommendations have not been implemented. As chairman of that committee I thought its recommendations were quite good; I could not fault them. However, my experience cured me of my youthful impetuosity to get things done in a hurry.

It is rather surprising that he should have attributed his impetuosity to youthfulness, unless he was talking about something which happened in the distant past. He went on to say:—

From the speeches on the motion today it would appear it is a move in the right direction, but I remind members that it will result in nothing being done during any investigations and thus delay any action being taken. No Government would take any action until the inquiry had ended.

He admitted that the motion was a step in the right direction, and yet he opposed it because of a previous frustrating experience

associated with a Select Committee. There has been a great metamorphosis in the honourable member. He has changed fairly suddenly from youthful impetuosity to aged complacency as a result of one discouragement. It is true, as he said, that the ink on the previous committee's report had faded and still no action had been taken. That is a fact not to the credit of the Government he supports. Surely he does not mean that the same thing must follow any recommendations made by the Select Committee we are now proposing. If it made any recommendations, I am certain the Government would not be allowed to forget them so easily, as apparently it has forgotten the recommendations of the previous committee referred to. The member for Stuart could guarantee that the Government would not be allowed to forget. Mr. Shannon also opposed the motion on the grounds that no Government "would take any action until the inquiry had ended," and suggested that an inquiry would involve tremendous delay. However, there is nothing to be lost from the fact that the Government would not take any action until the inquiry had ended, because obviously no Government would take action until an inquiry had been held. Therefore, we would certainly be no worse off by the appointment of this Select Committee. The real point is that unless a Select Committee is appointed and makes recommendations, the Government will take no action to give effect to the recommendations of the Director of Mines.

Mr. Riches—We are three years late in starting now.

Mr. JENNINGS—Exactly. We are entitled to assume that the Government does not intend to do anything about it, because when the Premier spoke he did not content himself merely with opposing the appointment of a Select Committee, he went further and delivered his own report of a one-man committee. Also, he failed to propose an alternative, and did not suggest that the Government intended doing anything whatsoever about the matter. It is therefore reasonable to assume that if a Select Committee is not appointed to make recommendations to spur the Government, then nothing will be done or attempted, and that mighty monopoly, the Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited, will be allowed to continue its unfettered control over all iron and steel production in Australia with the blessing of this and other similar Governments. It is of very grave concern to members and all those who think about this kind of matter that in this country we have, in complete control of the

steel industry, a private monopoly responsible to nobody but its shareholders, and with no object except the accumulation of profits. It is absolutely supreme in every phase of iron and steel production. This state of affairs is highly dangerous and the Director of Mines mentions it several times in his report. As a public servant he is not concerned about the politics of the question, but stresses the danger to the Australia economy of allowing the B.H.P. to continue to completely control Australian iron and steel production. He cannot be classed as one of those awful Socialists about whom we hear so much, but he honestly appreciates the fact that Australian iron and steel production is too important to be left entirely in the hands of the B.H.P. or any other private monopoly. In his report he states:—

The present monopoly control of the steel industry by the B.H.P. is not in the public interest. It must be overcome, preferably by the establishment of a new company producing steel in Australia on a competitive basis. . . . As a consequence of its unique position the B.H.P. has the power to exercise complete control over production and distribution of Australian steel, and, if it wished to do so, the power to influence price policies.

Steel production in Australia today proceeds according to the whim or the interests of the B.H.P. and not according to the interests of the Australian Government or people, and that is the reason for the Director's recommendation that a Government steel works be established at Whyalla. The Port Pirie Recorder, which expresses public opinion in the important city of Port Pirie on matters of public interest, contained the following editorial under the heading "More Steel for Australia," in its edition of October 14:—

The great ramifications of the iron and steel industry and its employment in many directions are so valuable to a nation that it should concentrate all its efforts on taking advantage of any and every opportunity afforded for expansion of existing plant—if it has any. For we are still in the age of steel, and there is absolutely no sign that there will be any diminution in demand for its use. That argument has been advanced strongly by members of the Labor Opposition in the House of Assembly in their effort to rouse the Playford Government to a pitch of investigating the desirability of establishing steel works at Whyalla. Never has a saner motion been placed before the House in this State, backed as it is by facts, figures, and recommendations framed nearly three years ago by the Director of Mines. As iron and steel are produced more cheaply in Australia than in any other part of the world, it is only reasonable to demand that it should be done at still less expense at the head of the Spencer Gulf, owing to the proximity of immense deposits of the ore.

The building of a fleet of ore-carrying ships and their maintenance in carting the raw material quarter-way round the Australian coast cannot by any stretch of imagination be termed economic. Add to that the published fact (backed by the Director of Mines' report) that the whole industry is merely making time somewhere in the rear of domestic demand and is forced to import, and the overall picture emerges of a country that seems too easily-minded about the future. Cheap metals in plentiful supply are of incalculable importance to the subsidiary industries that work them into machinery, implements, and utensils, to say nothing of their value in building construction, and it is good to know that Australia has everything necessary for their production. It has been said (in the past with some justification) that Australia cannot afford to have her basic industries strewn all over the continent, in event of invasion. But that day is past. Scientific war has progressed so far that attack dangers in any particular spot do not count. So, in view of what the older nations are doing, steel production, full-out, is our paramount need. The Whyalla country offers everything needed, and the Government will be wise if it appoints a select committee, as requested by Mr. Riches, to study the whole thing.

I hope the Premier and his Government are not so obsessed by uranium, nuclear fission, atomic explosions and radio activity, that they have forgotten the importance of steel production to Australia.

Mr. Davis—It is the lifeblood of the nation.

Mr. JENNINGS—I ask Government members to support the motion, which is a reasonable request for a select committee to investigate the establishment of a steel works at Whyalla. To reject it would be to treat with contempt the report of the Director of Mines and would mean the subjugation of the interests of the State and the nation to those of the B.H.P. I support the motion.

Mr. HAWKER secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL (ELECTORAL).

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 14. Page 1034.)

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Goodwood)—This important Bill provides for two vital amendments to the Constitution Act: firstly, a reduction in the number of Legislative Council members from 20 to 18, and, secondly, for nine Assembly districts each returning five members. Many of the statements of Government members in this debate have strongly supported the case for electoral reform. Mr. Travers said:—

Justice and fair play, wherever they may be, are the same and people, whether in the League

of Nations, municipal corporations, Houses of Parliament, or anywhere else, all have the same basic, deep-seated ideas of justice and fair play.

If we are to have justice and fair play we must have a just and fair electoral system so that the composition of this House will reflect the wishes of the people on whose behalf members speak. During his speech Mr. Travers spent much time referring to the district of Newcastle, but I could not make out why he did so, for he represents the district of Torrens, although since he has been a member I have heard so little from him about his district that I am beginning to wonder whether the Torrens electorate still exists. He compared the districts of Newcastle and Adelaide, and his main argument centred around the productive potential, particularly with regard to sheep, in Newcastle. He also referred to the difference in the areas of those two districts, but there was no justice or fair play in any analogy he made. He said:—

Apparently, this question of one vote one value is a brand new idea thought up by the present Opposition for the purpose of endeavouring to re-establish in public esteem a Party which is thoroughly and justly discredited in the eyes of the public.

We need only consider the history of the Australian Labor Party and the South Australian branch to refute that charge. In 1950 the Leader of the Opposition propounded the policy contained in this Bill.

Mr. O'Halloran—We tried to pass similar legislation in 1932.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I am only trying to answer Mr. Travers' suggestion that we are a discredited Party. Only a few years ago the Leader of the Federal Liberal Party, as Prime Minister capitulated in a crisis and asked the Governor-General to permit a Government to be formed led by leaders of the Australian Labor Party. I contend that recent history proves that the Australian Labor Party is not a discredited Party. The results of the last Senate and State elections revealed that more persons voted for the Labor Party than for the Liberal Party, indicating that they desired a change of Government. A system that permits a member to be re-elected without facing the electors cannot be considered fair and just. I was the only sitting member of the Labor Party opposed by a Government nominee at the last election, but I was returned with a majority of over 6,300. I do not think that every person who voted for me was a Labor supporter, but suggest that some voted for me personally and others because they were

disatisfied with the present unfair electoral set-up. Communist candidates opposed the members for Adelaide, Port Adelaide, and Gumeracha, but they only represented a nuisance value. A candidate opposed Mr. Tapping at Semaphore in order that a local option poll might be held. Eventually he asked the electors to vote for Mr. Tapping, which reveals the weakness of the present system. When debating a measure in another place an honourable member said:—

I am not advocating smaller local option districts for that becomes dangerous. We have got into this trouble, I think, since we made the House of Assembly districts single-member electorates, because things seemed to work reasonably well when we had the larger districts with two or three members.

He implied that there was a fairer approach to legislation when there was multiple representation. He apparently firmly believes that there is something wrong with the present electoral system.

Mr. O'Halloran—Who is that member?

Mr. FRANK WALSH—He is the honourable member who introduced a measure to amend the Licensing Act. How long will we continue a system which permits certain members to be returned unopposed? The member for Mitcham, who always reveals fairness in his judgments, has frequently intimated to me that he prefers to be opposed and I think all members would prefer a contest. If ever I am not opposed I shall devote my activities to other districts and that will result in the election of more members to the Opposition. We have been accused of introducing legislation which is not sound. The Bill proposes to reduce the numbers in the Legislative Council to 18 and provides that the House of Assembly shall contain 45 members. Among other things clause 16 contains the following provision:—

In making any proposed distribution of the State into electoral districts the distribution commissioners shall give due consideration to—

- (a) community or diversity of interest;
- (b) means of communication;
- (c) physical features; and
- (d) existing boundaries of subdivisions.

The Bill provides for a fair representation of all interests. The number of persons in the metropolitan area is increasing rapidly. There are 26,400 electors on the Goodwood roll at present. The only district growing more quickly is Glenelg. In view of the number of country people drifting to the city the Government must do something to provide a better representation for the larger number of people in the metropolitan area. Because of the present electoral set-up Labor cannot have the

opportunity to govern and adopt a policy which would induce people to remain in the country. I hope the day is not far distant when we will have a system that will ensure an election in each electorate, which would be in the interests of good government.

Mr. HAWKER (Burra)—I do not support the principles in the Bill, but I do not want to cover the ground already covered by other speakers. Scrapping the present electoral system and replacing it with another has been the corner stone of Labor policy for the last three elections, but no mention has been made to the type of administration we have had as the result of the present electoral system. Few Governments in Australia have governed for the people as a whole better than has the Playford Government. I have heard it said outside that Mr. Playford is one of the best Labor Premiers South Australia has ever had. If that is a fact, why is there a need for any alteration in the present electoral system? The Playford Government has given the greatest consideration to suggestions by Opposition members. In this debate there have been several references to democracy. Plato said, "Democracy is a charming form of government, full of variety and disorder and dispensing a sort of equality to equals and unequals alike." Abraham Lincoln said, "Democracy is government of the people by the people for the people." Lord Byron said that it was "Government by an aristocracy of blackguards." Michael Arlen said, "Democracy is a system which we call government for the people by the people and to hell with the people." There are many interpretations of "democracy." I say it is that form of government which the person using the word "democracy" advocates. Members opposite have shown a complete lack of knowledge of country conditions. They think that a member could travel his district more efficiently if he had a greater travelling allowance. It is difficult in large, sparsely populated areas for a member to get in touch with his constituents and for them to get in touch with him. One member opposite seemed to think that only galahs come from country areas. Opposition members must remember that the country areas, for which they hold some contempt, produce the commodities from which they get their food and clothing. Country people work under conditions which would not be accepted by city workers. We have heard a lot about the unequal value of votes as between the city and the country, but I have not heard of one man not going to the city because his vote would

be of more value in the country. When a man goes to the city it is to find work, and he gives no thought to the value of his vote. The Opposition has been so devoid of good argument in support of the Bill that one member introduced cartoons and wanted them inserted in *Hansard*. Where will we get if we do not use the logic we are supposed to use, and if we accept cartoons as an argument? Is it proper to accept a cartoon as evidence? This would become an absurd place if we did that when there is no sound argument to support legislation. Recently we had a clue as to why the Opposition wants a new electoral system. Mr. Dunstan said that the objective of the Labor Party was one central government. I think that is the reason for the introduction of the Bill, which I oppose.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I am pleased at the interest which has been taken in the debate by all sections of the House, and I am particularly delighted with the magnificent support I have received from members of the official Opposition, every one of whom made a useful contribution to the debate. From the Independent members came worthwhile argument and from Government members came the greatest interest they have shown in an electoral reform Bill during the many years I have been here. Twenty-five members, considerably more than half the total number of members in the Assembly, spoke on my proposal. I had hoped that, as the Bill is almost identical with the one I introduced in 1950, Government supporters at least would have been more familiar with the proposal than they would seem to be. I wonder whether the trend which some of their arguments followed was due to lack of familiarity with the Bill or because they could not resist the temptation—or perhaps it was considered by them good tactics—to steer the debate into channels other than a real consideration of the Bill's proposals. For instance, the Premier referred to the United Nations Organization and said I had introduced it during my second reading speech, but I did not mention it. I had no thought of referring to it, though if I had mentioned it, I could have referred to the splendid work done by the Leader of the Federal Opposition, Dr. Evatt, in the early stages of its establishment. Likewise, there were extensive references to the electoral systems of other States, but we on this side of the House, and the Labor Party in South Australia, take no responsibility for their systems; we are concerned with the injustice inherent in

the electoral system of this State. That is what we seek to change by this Bill.

The question of discrepancies in enrolments has been mentioned. Firstly, it was used to seek to show that the system we propose cannot give a perfect application of the principle of one vote one value. Of course it cannot give completely perfect mathematical application, but it can, and does in the Federal sphere, give a reasonably just measure, which enables votes to be of approximately equal value irrespective of the part of the State in which citizens reside. As the major principle in the Bill is linked with the principles in the Federal system I shall refer to these discrepancies. The Federal system provides for a periodical review of electoral boundaries by an independent body. Any review is subject to population changes as disclosed by the census taken immediately prior to the review. The last review was taken fairly recently, when the redistribution of Federal electorates following on the increase in the numerical strength of the Federal Parliament was instituted. On the 1953 figures the highest enrolment in Australia was 59,841, and the lowest was 29,382, but let us look at the South Australian electoral system. At the last State election the highest enrolment for any district was 30,230, and the lowest was 3,645. Where does the argument that discrepancies are destructive to the principle I am seeking to establish lead those members who have used it when they persist in maintaining the tremendous discrepancies in the figures I have just quoted? We have heard much about the importance of certain parts of the State and of country industries in which people are engaged, but in the final analysis are not human values the things that count? We should consider human values every day, and every session. I defy members that have opposed the Bill to reject the fundamental principle that the people should have the right to elect the Government they want and dismiss the Government they do not want. As has been shown conclusively during the past 10 years, it is impossible for the people of South Australia to do that.

In 1944 we had the greatest swing to Labor Australia has ever known. The Federal Labor Government was returned with the biggest majority in both Houses ever known, and Labor Governments were returned in every State except South Australia. Do members opposite say that the calibre of Labor candidates in this State is inferior to that in others? Do they say that we are inferior, and that that

is a justification for the fact that, although in 1944 the people of South Australia voted solidly for Labor, they did not return a Labor Government to this House? There was no general Federal election this year, but there were elections in five mainland States, and Labor was elected to office in every one except this State. We narrowly failed to occupy the Treasury benches, although we had an aggregate majority of 47,000 votes over the Premier's Party. At the subsequent Senate election in May the accuracy of what had occurred at the State election was abundantly proved, for Labor secured a majority of about 35,000 votes and captured three of the five Senate seats for this State. This shows that a relatively slight swing in the Federal sphere can change the Government, and it should be able to do so, but it is difficult to assess the magnitude of the swing required in this State to bring about a change of Government. Therefore, it is impossible to assess the handicap which is imposed on the people here in determining the kind of Government they want and in rejecting the kind they do not.

We have just listened to the member for Burra. He is an estimable gentleman and a man for whom I have great respect for his many good qualities, but he says the people of South Australia have confidence in the Government because of the policy it has pursued over the years. If that is so, why is not the Government prepared to trust the people and give both the Opposition and the Government an equal break when the starter fires the gun at elections so that the people may determine who are the most worthy contestants? Government supporters have frequently referred to the people during this debate, but when I look at the electoral boundaries and see how little influence large numbers of the people in certain areas have in changing the Government and how great is the influence of small numbers in other parts I wonder in what respect they use the term "people." Perhaps I can be forgiven if I believe they do not mean the people as we understand them. They do not mean all the citizens of South Australia, but only (in their estimation) the very best people, who shall have the undisputed and perpetual right to govern South Australia.

Another subject intruded itself into the debate occasionally, though not often because it was dangerous to mention it. Some members referred to the importance of the people taking an interest in politics. It is indeed necessary that even in a country that calls itself a

democracy the people should take an interest in politics. They should be encouraged to do so, but the only way to do it is to give them the opportunity to translate that interest into effective action. Because we do not permit them to do that in this State, as we have a system which ensures that a substantial number of the members of this Chamber representing both sides shall be elected unopposed, we are gradually creating in those constituencies a feeling of lethargy and lack of interest in the Government. This is one of the most dangerous feelings that could possibly be encouraged in any community.

Mr. Shannon—I cannot see any lethargy appearing in the honourable member. He has one of those nice little pocket boroughs to which he is referring.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes, I have one of those nice little pocket boroughs necessarily drawn at the time when these electorates were created because if it had been made any larger it would have weakened the three Liberal seats in the adjoining electorates. It was better to give the Labor Party one safe seat and create three safe Liberal seats than to make Frome a larger electorate with the probable result that Labor would have won the four seats. A minority of the people elect a majority of the members of this Parliament. Some palpable mistakes in interpretation were made during the course of the debate, so it might be as well to repeat that the present electoral system provides that country districts, irrespective of the number of people who reside there, return 26 members to this House, whereas the metropolitan area returns only 13. At the last elections the total country enrolment was 170,000 entitled to elect 26 members to the House of Assembly; the total metropolitan enrolment was 279,000, entitled to elect only 13 members. Could there be a greater disparity of voting strength? Can any member opposite find a greater electoral injustice anywhere in the world? In the course of my visits overseas and in my reading on this matter I have searched assiduously, but I cannot find a greater injustice. I say deliberately that people other than landowners are being discouraged from living in the country in order to preserve L.C.L. monopoly of country seats. Thirteen of the country enrolments and three of the metropolitan enrolments are outside the 20 per cent margin. Two of the latter, Adelaide and Port Adelaide, are more than 40 per cent out; Port Adelaide is more than 40 per cent above the margin that I would permit, and which is permitted under the Federal system, and Adelaide is more than 40

per cent below. In the country there are 13 electorates which are either above or below, although mainly below, the 20 per cent margin I would permit under my proposal.

In the course of the debate we heard some very heartening remarks from Government supporters who, whilst stating quite unequivocally that they were opposed to the Bill, admitted that something should be done. Surely that is a most peculiar line of reasoning. If I see something about which I honestly believe something should be done, I proceed to the best of my ability to do something about it, but although these honourable gentlemen believe that something should be done about the electoral system, they are not prepared to do anything at this juncture. I believe that in view of what they have said I may, in this final appeal, be able to show them that they can achieve what they consider should be done by voting for the second reading. Mr. Michael is reported on page 674 of *Hansard* as saying:—

Whatever alterations are made in our electoral system, single electorates should be maintained. . . . I am prepared to concede that as the distribution of population has greatly changed, I am not opposed to the matter being considered to come more into line with the 1938 basis.

If he wants a redistribution to bring the position more into line with the 1938 basis, he can accomplish this by voting for the second reading and seeking to amend the Bill in Committee because, although the machinery intended to give effect to this Bill is proportional representation, it is not contained in the Bill itself. If the motion is carried a consequential measure will have to be introduced to establish the principle of proportional representation. Mr. Dunks said (*Hansard*, page 771):—

I think there should be a slight increase in the number of electorates, but I would not depart from the single electorate system. . . . The day has arrived to look at the system and see whether it is not time to again have 45 or 46 districts and remove any anomalies between city and country representation.

This statement supports the two basic arguments in favour of my Bill; firstly, that there should be a readjustment of city and country representation, and, secondly, that the increase in population since the present districts were created warrants an increase in the number of members—Mr. Dunks says 45 or 46. He went on to say:—

Perhaps there should be more districts both in the metropolitan area and in the country and a more equitable drafting of boundaries. I would listen to such a proposal, and, without

making any definite promises, I believe that should be brought forward instead of a Bill such as this. . . .

That is the very basis of the Bill—an equitable and just distribution of electoral boundaries by an independent authority. The honourable member continued:—

It would be far better to bring in a more acceptable proposal than to say, "Here is the Bill; carry the second reading and you can amend it in Committee to bring it into line with your ideas."

I believe that the principles for which we on this side of the House stand are the most acceptable to the people, as the voting at recent elections, both State and Federal, has conclusively proved. That being so, believing as we do in majority rule, what can we do but submit these proposals? If Mr. Dunks can marshal the affairs on his side of the House to bring about an equitable distribution on any other basis, I do not think he will be seriously opposed by members on this side. Mr. Heaslip stated (*Hansard*, page 852):—

I believe there is need for electoral reform, but I cannot support the Bill because I do not agree with its undemocratic principles. I will not have proportional representation. . .

Not having had the opportunity of obtaining from him an interpretation of what he believes to be undemocratic principles in the Bill, I am at a loss to understand what he alluded to. He then said:—

I . . . consider there may be need for electoral reform in South Australia because of the change in the incidence of population since 1938, but I cannot support the Bill because it would give the very opposite to the fair electoral system mentioned by Dr. Finer. . .

He believes there is need for a change, yet he cannot support the Bill! At least he could support the second reading, and if he has the numbers, and I believe he has, who believe in change, the alterations could be made in Committee. In the earlier part of my remarks I stated that there had been a great deal of apparent misconception by members opposite about the principles contained in the Bill, and, deliberately or not, they tried to channel the argument from the real principles. I therefore feel it my final duty today to restore the argument to its proper plane, and to set out again what I said in my first speech, followed by my colleagues in their excellent speeches, on the main principles of the Bill. The principal provision of the Bill is contained in Clause 16, in which we seek to write into the Constitution Act a method of determining electoral districts which will be as far removed from the influence of Party politics as possible.

Is there anything wrong with writing into the Constitution a principle which will prevent any Party from so manipulating the electoral system that it can gain an advantage for itself?

Clause 16 is taken from the Federal Electoral Act. Electoral boundaries in this State are now prescribed in the Constitution Act. Under the Bill merely the method of determining them would be part of the Act, so that, instead of determining them after a debate and a vote being taken in this Parliament, an authority would be created to determine the boundaries. There is no provision for a periodical review of boundaries at present, but under the Bill a redistribution would take place when a third of the districts got out of line or the number of members was altered. The existing boundaries, including the perpetuation of the idea of setting off the metropolitan area against the country, were determined by a committee appointed by the Government and instructed to introduce single electorates, more or less segregating Liberal and Country League supporters from others. There is no justifiable excuse for opposing the metropolitan area and the rest of the State. A redistribution under the Bill could have the effect of combining some city and country districts, or parts thereof. I repeat that, because it is a very important factor. Anything which opposes the interests of the metropolitan area and the interests of the rest of the State is bad politics. It is not only bad for the present, but poses great dangers for the future—the danger of totalitarianism in one form or another, and we on this side are opposed to all forms of totalitarianism, whether it be red, blue or black.

The member for Burra referred to the work being done by country people in producing foodstuffs and textiles to feed and clothe those living in the metropolitan area. On the other hand people in the metropolitan area provide a readily available and good local market for those products, and in their turn supply the machinery and other essentials to enable primary producers to continue their production. We on this side do not believe in a country *versus* city argument, or in one section of the community being encouraged to oppose another section—metaphorically speaking, to be at the throat of another section. We believe that the great destiny of South Australia, and it has a great destiny, can only be achieved by the co-operation of all the

people, giving them electoral justice in the first instance.

There would not be much difference between the proposed commission and the committee appointed by the Government in 1936, the difference being that the commission would merely have to observe the general rules set out in the Bill. Subsection (3) of new section 32a provides for the determination of a quota for purposes of Legislative Council elections, and a quota for purposes of House of Assembly elections. This principle could operate whether it was decided to have three Council districts and nine Assembly districts (as provided in the Bill), or any other suitable number of districts.

New section 32b provides that the commissioners shall take into consideration the following factors in determining electoral boundaries:—(a) Community or diversity of interest of the people; (b) means of communication; (c) physical features of the proposed district; and (d) existing boundaries and subdivisions.

There is nothing wrong with those principles because they have stood the test of the experience of 53 years of Federation, and that should be a sufficiently long test to apply to any set of principles. The commissioners would not be permitted to depart from the quota by more than 20 per cent above or below. This is a reasonable degree of departure from the principle of one-vote-one-value. With a total enrolment of 450,000 for nine districts, one district could contain as many as 60,000 electors or as few as 40,000. This principle was recognized when the committee set up by the Government in 1936 determined the metropolitan and country districts, respectively. Twenty per cent has been considered a reasonable variation, but the figure is not to be considered vital. A 25 per cent variation would result in a maximum enrolment of 62,500 and a minimum enrolment of 37,500. The harm was done when it was insisted that country areas should have twice the representation of the metropolitan area. I would be prepared to consider any proposal on its merits, but believe that the 20 per cent variation, which has been in the Federal system for 53 years, has proved so successful that no-one has sought to change it as the principle we should establish when seeking to implement a just system.

New section 32 (c) provides for the publication of any proposed distribution, and the reception of any objections. After the commissioners have decided on the distribution



their decision must be published and any persons who have legitimate objections shall have the right to state their objections and ask for a redistribution, provided always that the principles I have just mentioned are not violated. Details of the distribution, including map showing boundaries, approximate number of electors in each district, etc., would be laid on the tables of both Houses. New section 32 (d) provides for the acceptance or rejection of any scheme of distribution so submitted by resolution of each House. The final determination is left to the Houses, provided again—and I cannot repeat the point too often—that the first principles set out in the preceding subclauses are not violated. Once the scheme is accepted the necessary details as to districts, names, etc., would be published in the *Government Gazette*—not incorporated and published in the Act as is the case today, so that if it became necessary to change the boundaries in accordance with the formula, it could be done without amending the Act.

The principles contained in clause 16 are fundamental and represent the irreducible minimum. Whatever else the House might seek to delete from the Bill, these principles must remain. (The actual numbers of districts, members, etc., are not to be regarded as vital principles.) The Bill provides for nine Assembly districts (each returning five members), because such an arrangement would provide the closest approximation to one-vote-one-value without making the average enrolment too large or the number of members in each district too great. The greater the number of members in each district, the greater the opportunity for a considerable minority to be represented.

It has been suggested to me that it would have been better had I provided for more three-member districts, using proportional representation. I deliberately provided for five, because I believed this could be implemented without making the districts unduly large; and where a district returns five members there is a better opportunity of substantial minorities obtaining representation under proportional representation than there would be if the districts were returning three members each. It is a cardinal principle of proportional representation that all those sufficiently interested in politics to organize themselves together into groups possessed of similar thoughts and political principles shall have representation in Parliament to which their numbers entitle them. Another argument in favour of the number of districts and the number of members to each district

suggested is that the odd number of districts and the odd number of members avoid the possibility of a deadlock such as has occurred on one or two occasions in Tasmania where they have proportional representation, but where they have districts which return an even number of members.

The Bill proposes three council districts, each returning six members, but only three members would be elected at a time. It is proposed that the Council should not be dissolved, but that other deadlock provisions shall be adopted, rendering a dissolution of the Council unnecessary. Under our ineffective and little used deadlock provisions, if a dispute arises between the two Houses after an election of the Assembly, and if the Assembly persists in its attitude, the Council can be dissolved, and if both Houses still persist in their attitude after the next election, then the position would be "as you were." I propose to abolish that cumbersome and futile arrangement, and provide, as in the Federal Constitution, for the summoning of a joint sitting of the two Houses in order to resolve the deadlock between them, under an arrangement somewhat similar to the conference system which is frequently resorted to when there is a difference of opinion between our two Houses. One provision, not included in the 1950 Bill, is that members of the Legislative Council need be only 21 years of age. Very few people know, and probably some members do not know, that before a candidate can nominate for the Legislative Council he must be more than 30 years old. That is an anomaly in a supposed democracy. Members can be elected to this Chamber provided they are more than 21, and I suggest that the same provision should apply for the election of members of the Legislative Council.

Of course it has been impossible for me to give any idea of the electoral districts which would result from the passing of this Bill. Some members have drawn on their imagination to such effect that I wonder whether they are not wasting their time in this Chamber, and might not be better employed, from a financial aspect, writing crime stories, thrillers or some other form of fiction, which undoubtedly would be best sellers the world over. The distribution would necessarily entail considerable research and study by the commission upon whose judgment Parliament would have to rely. The distribution would not be determined from the point of view of how many seats any particular Party would be likely to win, as it was in 1936, but of making electors' votes as nearly equal as possible. It

is conceivable that most of the districts would embrace some of the metropolitan area and some of the country, and in this regard I am speaking particularly of the Legislative Council districts. Such a scheme would result in a balanced representation. During this debate it has been said that some years ago the Labor Party was responsible for the introduction of proportional representation as a method of electing the Lower House in New South Wales and that subsequently the Party abandoned it, but I find that quite recently the present New South Wales Labor Government introduced a Bill providing for the use of proportional representation in the election of local government bodies, and in the near future the Sydney city council, which controls an area having more than three times the population of South Australia, will be elected on this basis. Therefore, it is realized in New South Wales that, if fundamental justice is to be obtained, proportional representation is the way to obtain it.

This is United Nations week and throughout Australia and other free countries people who believe in the United Nations Organization are celebrating the fact that it still continues to function. In spite of great difficulties and the fact that people have had to be educated to a realization of the benefits accruing from the existence of a body which works to maintain peace throughout the world, it has done a great job. The preamble to its charter contains this phrase:—"To reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights." We are celebrating the continuance of an organization which was created to establish and reaffirm faith in those rights, and I suggest that members show their faith in fundamental human rights by voting for the Bill to establish electoral equality in South Australia.

The House divided on the second reading—

Ayes (17).—Messrs. John Clark, Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan, Hutchens, Jennings, Lawn, Macgillivray, McAlees, O'Halloran (teller), Quirke, Riches, Stephens, Stott, Tapping, Frank Walsh, and Fred Walsh.

Noes (19).—Messrs. Brookman, Christian, Geoffrey Clarke, Dunks, Dunnage, Goldney, Hawker, Heaslip, and Hincks, Sir George Jenkins, Messrs. William Jenkins, Michael, Pattinson, Pearson, Playford (teller), Shannon, Teusner, Travers, and White.

Pair.—Aye—Mr. Fletcher. No—Hon. M. McIntosh.

Majority of 2 for the Noes.

Second reading thus negatived.

## BUDGET DEBATE.

In Committee of Supply.

(Continued from October 20. Page 1103.)

Legislative Council, £8,747.

Mr. FRED WALSH (Thebarton).—The member for Onkaparinga, referring to statements made by the member for Adelaide, criticized the record of the Hill Labor Government between 1930 and 1933. Mr. Shannon's statements are usually accurate, but I feel that in this instance he was entirely at sea. It was noticeable that he referred only to the period from 1930 to 1933—the depression years—in pointing out the deficit created by that Government, but he conveniently overlooked the period from 1924-27 in which the Budget figures reflected great credit on the Labor Government of that time. The Government was not, in effect, a Labor Government. In 1931 the Premiers' plan was introduced as a result of the dictates of the representatives of the Bank of England who came to Australia to direct the Governments to cut down expenditure. The Commonwealth Government accepted those dictates because it feared it would not receive sufficient finance for its undertakings. Because the Hill Government accepted the Premiers' plan the South Australian Branch of the Labor Party expelled all members of that Government from the Party. From that time it could not be claimed to be a Labor Government and until the 1933 elections Mr. Dawes was regarded as Leader of the Labor Party in this House. It is true that most of the expelled members returned to the Labor Party and subsequently rendered valuable services. Mr. Shannon was entirely out of touch with the position when he quoted figures to combat Mr. Lawn's statements; in my opinion, Mr. Lawn cited very sound figures.

During this debate members have referred to roads and I feel bound to mention some of the roads in my district. There are not many main roads in my district but there are plenty of poor roads, some of which would compare unfavourably with poor main roads in country areas. They are in a bad state of repair and the council, like other councils, is finding it difficult to finance maintenance and construction work. West Beach Road, which is used by private and M.T.T. buses, is in a shocking condition. Marion Road, which I believe is the responsibility of the Highways Department, Henley Beach Road and Rowland Road also require attention. The Tramways Trust is responsible for maintaining roads for a certain

width each side of the tram tracks but it has entirely neglected Rowland Road which is almost dangerous to drive on. The trust should be compelled to maintain its portion of the road. I can imagine the outcry from the Burnside Council if the trust had not maintained its tracks in that district when the trams operated there. Lighting on the Henley Beach Road is extinguished at 1 a.m. but I suggest that during the hot summer months—from December to mid-March—when people visit the beach and remain until the early hours of the morning it should not be extinguished so early. There is always a danger in the early hours of the morning when many vehicles are travelling along that unlighted road.

I feel bound to refer to the probable repercussions that may arise from the decision of the Federal Arbitration Court to suspend automatic adjustments to the basic wage, particularly in view of the reply the Premier gave to the member for Mitcham the other day. He implied that it was the Government's intention to fall in line with the decision and suspend adjustments to the South Australian living wage. If that is done I fear that employees in industry will become discontented and it may possibly lead to industrial chaos because workers may feel they are being robbed. There is much uncertainty about the position in South Australia and, indeed, about the position throughout the Commonwealth. In this afternoon's *News* under the heading "Muddle on Wage Change" the following article appears:—

The Commonwealth Department for Labor is trying to compile a concise statement on the confused situation which has developed over decisions of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court on the basic wage adjustment. The Government does not know how a fair wage adjustment based on cost of living variations can be made from the first pay day in November. It is clear that rulings given by the court applied to the unions which were parties to the wages and hours' case or in respect to which the court has later given a ruling. However, it appears equally clear that a large number of people, working under Commonwealth awards, will be entitled to wage increases next month by virtue of the old cost of living clause and other awards.

I am of opinion the Government is legally bound to grant the increase of 2s. a week due under the "C" Series figures. It is true that the court has applied the suspension of the automatic basic wage adjustments to a number of awards but it is equally true that although it will apply to a percentage of workers in South Australia it will not cover the vast majority, including those bound by Federal awards. Between about 50,000 and

55,000 workers in this State are employed under State industrial awards and are affected by variations in the State living wage. Other industrial employees are bound by Federal awards. It is my opinion that those bound by State awards will be entitled to the November adjustment of 2s. How can the Premier in any way influence the Board of Industry against making a declaration? I do not imply that he would intentionally influence the board by saying it cannot do certain things but how can he say that it is not desirable that the living wage should not be adjusted by 2s. a week in view of the fact that there would be a discrepancy only among a minority of industrial employees in South Australia? We should also remember that different basic wages operate in different States. Queensland has decided that its Industrial Court will continue with quarterly adjustments. At present in Western Australia the court has discretionary power to vary the wages but to ensure that there will be no misunderstanding that Government is introducing legislation to make it mandatory for the court to apply adjustments in accordance with the Commonwealth Statistician's figures. We have every reason to believe that the New South Wales court will decide to vary wages according to the "C" index figures, and Victoria, having a Labor Government, is likely to follow the line given by other Labor Governments. The Tasmanian position is uncertain. The desire of the Tasmanian Premier to have an understanding with the Commonwealth on the matter is a worthy one. I do not know what the attitude of our Premier will be on Mr. Cosgrove's proposal for a conference of State Ministers to consider the position. I am hopeful that the Prime Minister will agree to a conference in order to achieve uniformity. I feel that some satisfactory arrangement can be made. I am critical of the action of the Commonwealth Arbitration Court in determining the matter as it has done. After an inquiry lasting about 12 months a decision was reached hastily, so hastily that one can understand why no reasons for the decision were given. The haste was due to the illness of the late Judge McIntyre, who was virtually carried daily between the hospital and court, and this, I think, hastened his death. No man so ill should have been taken to the court.

Before anything serious could happen to him the court desired to make a decision, and it made one without having any reasons for doing so. It said that they would be given later, but it is not compelled to give any. It determined

the matter in a dictatorial way, regardless of the argument adduced. It could not reduce the basic wage or increase working hours, as desired by the employers, so it suspended the system of quarterly adjustments, which was the real reason for the employers' application to the court. Quarterly adjustments have not always existed. Immediately after World War I. wages were adjusted over a period of 12 months following on an application to the court by either side. After a strike in the gas industry, I think in 1923, it was pointed out when the settlement was made that the wages then granted would be of a temporary nature, as before long they would have to be altered through an increase in the cost of living. Judge Powers had charge of the case and he evolved the quarterly adjustment system. It was included in awards, but it was not satisfactory from the union point of view, because of the lag in adjustments, wages at the time being on the increase, and to overcome the difficulty he suggested than an additional 3s. a week be paid. Subsequently this payment became known as the "Powers 3s." It was granted to protect the workers until the figures for the next quarter was issued. We had the Premiers' Plan in 1931, and in that year the Commonwealth basic wage had fallen to £2 18s. a week and the State living wage to £3 3s. a week. The court decreed an all-round cut of 10 per cent. That "Powers 3s." stood until things got behind, when the whole system was reviewed by the court. Then we got the "C" series of index figures and the "Powers 3s." went by the board. Since that time the court has retained the system of quarterly adjustments. Then came the time when we had the prosperity loading, and during the war we had a war loading. When the Commonwealth basic wage was increased by £1 a week these loadings disappeared as they were included in the award rates.

If the Government persists in saying that there is no justifiable difference between the Commonwealth basic wage and the State living wage the workers will continue to be robbed. The court gambled on the continuation of a stabilized national economy. This is a vital matter to the workers. If it were not, perhaps the position would not be so serious. As time goes on the cost of living will increase. I understand the Minister of Agriculture is to introduce legislation providing for a stabilized wheat price. On the figures mentioned that will increase the price of bread by about one

penny a loaf. It will mean, on the average, at least another 1s. a week for bread, and have a big effect on the cost of living. With the increase in the prices of commodities the workers will continue to lose. Yesterday the court said that it did not propose to suggest an alternative method of arriving at the basic wage, which means that there will be a review of the position only after about 12 months have elapsed. In this matter one section of the community is getting unjust treatment. With the lifting of controls on prices employers and business people will benefit.

I do not know how the position will be overcome in this State. I cannot imagine the Government doing anything to unduly interfere with the Industrial Code. At present the employers and the Trades and Labor Council, which are specifically mentioned in the Code, can apply to the Board of Industry for a review of the State living wage. The board then considers whether there has been a sufficient increase or decrease in the cost of living to justify an inquiry. It cannot make a declaration until six months have elapsed since the last declaration, but that does not mean that an inquiry cannot be held. The practice in the past has been for the representatives of the workers to so clutter up the court with vegetables, groceries, and other commodities that it has been difficult to move. Despite the fact that these things had to be purchased by the workers' representatives and then given to charity, the Commonwealth Statistician's figures were the deciding factor. The Premier saw the position when he agreed to amend the Industrial Code in 1949. He knew it was a waste of time and expenditure to carry on with the practice, so he agreed to the Commonwealth basic wage being adopted as the State living wage. There has been little variation, as the following table setting out the position from September, 1931, to August, 1953, shows:—

Date.	Weekly rate.			Hourly rate.
	£	s.	d.	Shillings.
10/9/31—48 h.w. . . . .	3	3	0	1.31
7/11/35 . . . . .	3	6	0	1.37
7/1/37 . . . . .	3	9	6	1.45
25/11/37 . . . . .	3	14	0	1.54
5/1/39—44 h.w. . . . .	3	18	0	1.77
28/11/40 . . . . .	4	4	0	1.91
27/11/41 . . . . .	4	7	0	1.98
15/10/42 . . . . .	4	14	0	2.135
29/9/46 . . . . .	4	18	6	2.24
7/1/47 . . . . .	5	2	0	2.32
21/8/47 . . . . .	5	4	0	2.36
13/11/47 . . . . .	5	6	0	2.41
1/1/48—40 h.w. . . . .	5	6	0	2.65
8/7/48 . . . . .	5	17	0	2.93

Date.	Weekly rate. £ s. d.	Hourly rate. Shillings.
5/5/49 . . . . .	6 5 0	3.13
1/2/50 . . . . .	6 9 0	3.23
1/5/50 . . . . .	6 11 0	3.28
1/8/50 . . . . .	6 14 0	3.35
1/11/50 . . . . .	6 17 0	3.42
1/12/50 . . . . .	7 18 0	3.95
1/2/51 . . . . .	8 6 0	4.15
1/5/51 . . . . .	8 11 0	4.275
2/8/51 . . . . .	9 4 0	4.60
1/11/51 . . . . .	9 15 0	4.875
1/2/52 . . . . .	10 5 0	5.125
1/5/52 . . . . .	10 11 0	5.275
1/8/52 . . . . .	11 4 0	5.60
1/11/52 . . . . .	11 9 0	5.725
1/2/53 . . . . .	11 5 0	5.625
1/5/53 . . . . .	11 8 0	5.70
1/8/53 . . . . .	11 11 0	5.775

[Sitting suspended from 6 till 7.30 p.m.]

Mr. FRED WALSH—Before the tea adjournment I was referring to the application by the Trades and Labor Council to the Board of Industry for a review of the State living wage. I pointed out the procedure that had to be followed and that the council is adopting this method because it can see the possibility, though perhaps not in the immediate future, that if it does not take action under the Industrial Code the people it represents will be the losers. The board can determine the living wage for adult males or females for the whole or any part of the State. Of course, an application can be made for a living wage to be fixed for either adult males or adult females, but an amendment was inserted in the Act in 1950, as follows:—

A proclamation shall not be made unless—  
(a) the Minister is satisfied that the proclamation is desirable in order to avoid unjustifiable differences between rates of wages fixed under Commonwealth and State laws respectively, and  
(b) the President of the Board of Industry has recommended that the proclamation be made.

The Premier probably had that in mind when he replied to a question by the member for Mitcham recently. I hope he will not be influenced by the opinions he expressed then, but will take cognizance of the circumstances that have developed as a result of the confusion created by the Federal Arbitration Court's decision to suspend quarterly adjustments. I urge the Premier to associate himself with the request of the Tasmanian Premier for a conference of Commonwealth and State Ministers for the purpose of arriving at a unanimous decision on the solution of the problem.

Much has been said about the prosperity that South Australia has enjoyed under the Premier's leadership, but we on this side do

not subscribe to those remarks, for prosperity has existed in every State, and even more so than here, under a Labor Government. When a Federal Labor Government was in office between November 27, 1941, and May, 1949, the State basic wage increased from £4 7s. to £6 5s. That clearly shows that price control was effective, although there was more than full employment. The increase in the basic wage during those eight years was £1 18s., but from 1949 it rose from £6 5s. to £11 11s. That shows conclusively that there has been no effective control over prices in the last four years. The nation's economy has been allowed to drift and the value of the money received by the wage-earner is not nearly what it was under Labor's regime. Although much has been said about South Australia's prosperity, in the last few months the States have been more or less directed by the Commonwealth Treasurer to curtail public expenditure and public works. That does not indicate prosperity. I have a copy of the *Labor News Digest* issued by the United States Information Service. It is dated October 12, 1953, and I shall quote a portion of it to show the difference between the policy of wage adjustments in the United States and the policy here. It states:—

Wage increases of substantial amounts were won generally by American trade unions during the first half of 1953. In practically all instances the increases are considerably more than token adjustments and are well in excess of the rise in the cost of living since previous negotiations, the report stated.

I could quote many other statements on wage increases, including rises for steel workers and for makers of radios and phonographs employed by the Hedco Manufacturing Corporation of Chicago, Illinois. Further representatives of employers and employees have signed a contract to provide that employees shall receive a year's paid vacation after 10 years' employment, yet the employers of this country, because of the falling off in business, are opposing the application by trade unions for long service leave. The country is now in a better position than ever to bear an increase in the standard of living. I fear the Premier may fall in line with other States, but he should not amend the Industrial Code to provide for the virtual exclusion of automatic adjustments to the basic wage.

I have asked several questions this session about the Betting Control Board, but I have not been satisfied with the replies from the Premier, though of course they were really the replies of the chairman of the board. I was concerned that a number of bookmakers who have

held licences for some years were not successful in having them renewed. In reply to one question the Premier said that some were rejected for reasons connected with age and capacity, and others for financial reasons. The chairman of the board said it was not desirable to enter further into this matter, but we have a right as members of Parliament to ask any questions concerning any Government or semi-Government body. The chairman was most impolite in making that remark. He also said that in dealing with applications the board had an unfettered discretion to grant or refuse applications without assigning any reason. That is true, but disclosing reasons to an applicant and disclosing them to a member of Parliament are two different things. I know some of the reasons given would not stand examination. It was suggested that some licences were not renewed because the applicants did not offer reasonable prices. Of course, that applies to many bookmakers; some would not bet on the sun rising. They sometimes adopt the practice of asking a friend or relative to lay off bets for them. For instance, they may have accepted a bet of £10 at 5 to 1, but may find another bookmaker offering 6 to 1, so if the horse wins they have made money without taking any risk. Such people have no right to hold a licence.

It was suggested that some applicants for bookmakers' licences were too old. Fancy the Betting Control Board singling out a man on account of his age! One member of the board was a respected member of the Legislative Council some years ago, and he should be the last to suggest a man was too old to hold a licence. The chairman is 59, Mr. Jelley 79, and Mr. Lee 62, so their ages total 200 years. I asked whether it was a fact that applicants were required to lodge £1 ls. with their applications for licences. Although the question was not answered in this House until the week after it was asked, the chairman of the Betting Control Board answered it in the *Advertiser* the Friday after I mentioned the matter. Giving his reply to the public before providing it to the Premier to hand on to me suggests that he was totally ignoring Parliament. The Premier is not acting properly towards members when he permits such things to be done by a board which, although entirely free of Parliament, is more or less under its jurisdiction. When the iniquitous winning bets tax was introduced it was anticipated that it would produce £200,000 annually. The first year it yielded

£232,000, the next year nearly double that amount and in the year 1952-53 it reached £458,715. This tax is really robbery, an exploitation, and should not be permitted. It is not democratic. The Government should consider varying the scale so as to at least eliminate the small silver better, who pays a considerable portion of that tax.

The other day I referred in this House to the attitude at a particular period of a group of members known as Independents. I did not mention any names. I accept the criticism by the member for Mount Gambier, because it was fair, and I should exclude the member for Ridley from my remarks because, on looking at *Hansard*, I find that although he did not vote at all on many occasions, he did not vote against the Labor Party on any vital issue.

Mr. Shannon—That supports my opinion exactly; he is a good Labor man.

Mr. FRED WALSH—The member for Chaffey, however, was almost offensive in his reply to the remarks I made. He read all sorts of inferences into them, and conjured up, in his disordered state of mind, something which was not intended by my remarks, and almost burst a blood vessel in his vindictiveness. If he got any pleasure from inferring what he did from my remarks I would be the last to deprive him of it. I suggest that the amount on the Estimates for mental institutions be increased to cover the possibility of the honourable member's reaching there, because if we can judge by his outburst here, if he does not have early corrective treatment he will before long need the care and attention of that highly reputable medico and psychiatrist, Dr. Birch.

Mr. CHRISTIAN (Eyre)—I would not have spoken but for the story of self-help related yesterday by the honourable member for Murray. This deserves very sincere commendation from this House and indeed by everybody who knows anything about this matter. I am referring to the efforts of the town of which the honourable member is, I believe, the civic head in catering for its own requirements of sanitation. Murray Bridge is one of a number of towns which have been referred to the Public Works Committee under the Act dealing with the provision of country sewerage schemes. It is one of several whose financial showing was by no means encouraging, and I assume that the people in charge of its civic affairs recognized that fact and that it might be a long time before deep drainage could be extended there, so they set to work and elaborated a scheme of septic tanks for all

households under their jurisdiction. Within a couple of years, they had the whole town equipped. This is a remarkable achievement, and deserves our highest praise. It should be an inspiring example to other towns in a similar situation, because even where any country sewerage schemes under this Act can show a good or reasonable financial return it does not appear that any such schemes can be undertaken for a long time. Although the Public Works Committee provided interim reports on four important country towns in this State a considerable time ago, the first sum ever placed on the Loan Estimates for the purpose was an amount of £6,000 this year, and this figure in a total ultimate expenditure of several million pounds will not go very far towards furthering country sewerage schemes; it will do little more than provide necessary plans for one town. Very few country towns have any prospect of immediate attention to sewerage schemes, so I am glad that Murray Bridge has taken this step because, by doing so, it has ensured for its citizens desirable amenities which are enjoyed as a matter of course by people in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Davis—All towns are not as fortunate as Murray Bridge.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I realize that, and the committee recognized Port Pirie's special case by making an early recommendation for sewerage there.

Mr. Corcoran—Has the town of Naracoorte been considered?

Mr. CHRISTIAN—That will possibly be approved later, although the prospects of implementing the approval are somewhat remote. Country towns with ground, lending itself to the installation of septic schemes might well follow the example set by Murray Bridge if they wish to enjoy similar amenities, although I do not suggest that they will never have deep drainage. The time may come when the financial results of a scheme, with possible reduced costs in the future, might brighten their prospects, but I cannot see much hope of their obtaining deep drainage in the immediate future. Although I referred to Murray Bridge particularly, I do not wish to give examples of the financial result in any particular instance. However, to illustrate the point, I will instance one specific case where the total cost would have been about £250,000, the annual cost about £16,500 and the return from rates £3,700, showing that the taxpayers of the State would have to meet a deficit of about £12,800, representing the greater portion of the cost. If

other towns follow the lead of Murray Bridge they will be providing the amenity I referred to at a far less cost to themselves and to the State.

Mr. Davis—Wouldn't it be possible to install septic tanks in, say, the southern part of Port Pirie at first?

Mr. CHRISTIAN—Although I am not speaking for the Government, I know from my own knowledge that the Government has already approved of the sewerage of Port Pirie, and it is now only a matter of when the programme will be commenced. However, I am not dealing with the larger towns at the moment, because many of them cannot be catered for by the methods adopted by some of the smaller towns. The point I wish to raise is the limitation which Parliament places upon the whole scheme by restricting the contribution by ratepayers in country districts to 1s. 9d. in the pound. This provision in the Act definitely rules out many towns for consideration, because the returns from that maximum rate would be so small that the great burden would fall upon the general taxpayer.

On the whole of that tale hangs a moral—that we should definitely encourage self-help wherever it is in evidence. The whole of our administration should be directed toward encouraging that kind of thing, because not only does it maintain and promote the individuality of the people thereby served, but promotes their initiative and resourcefulness. They are attributes in the human make-up we should never do anything to diminish. Our most priceless gift is our own individuality, and all our policy should be directed towards its maintenance and we should not be followers of any will-o-the-wisp which will engulf us in a morass of complete socialization whereby that individuality and all the priceless things that go with it are lost. Rather we should do what Murray Bridge has done and help ourselves, whether it be as individual communities or as private individuals. That applies to all State activities. The less we squander on small schemes here and there the more we will have available for essential public utilities which the State is bound to maintain in the community's interest.

The State already has many and varied duties, such as the maintenance of large public utilities, and the less we intrude upon the responsibilities of the private individual and of the smaller communities, who are doing things for themselves, the better we will be off as a community, and the more money will be available for the essential things to which the

State is committed. Linked up with this is the question raised recently by the member for Norwood, who is a very intelligent young man imbued with all the enthusiasms of youth, which is commendable. We have all passed through that stage, and been strong advocates of many and various types of ideologies. I find no fault with anyone imbued with those enthusiasms, but suggest that in his advocacy of unification and the other twin policy of my friends opposite—the complete socialization of everything—the Siamese twins that are difficult to separate—

Mr. Davis—You are wrong there.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I am more than pleased to have that admission, because on the Labor Partys' platform still stands the old slogan of the complete socialization of the means of production, distribution, and exchange.

Mr. Dunstan—It does not say anything of the kind.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—It is there, and we have read of its being reaffirmed at conference after conference.

Mr. Corcoran—You are misrepresenting the position.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I am not misrepresenting anything. If the Labor Party has retracted from its complete allegiance to that type of Socialism, no one is more pleased than I am, because I have long since realized that it would only lead the people up the garden path. It was an impractical idea which could not work to the advantage of the human race, and I think most people outside Communist-controlled countries recognize that. If that fact is today realized by my friends opposite, then I wish they would alter their platform and make it known.

Mr. Dunstan—It has been altered for ages. You should read it.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I think that complete unification is another false doctrine which will lead the people up the garden path. There was a time some years ago when I was not seriously alarmed at the prospect of unification. In fact, I think that some remarks I made in this House in those days may have led some people to think I could even support unification ultimately; but we grow a little wiser with experience, and has it not been everyone's experience in this place that the more power we give to the Federal authorities the worse is the ultimate result? I am sorry to say that I think that politics in the Federal realm have deteriorated seriously; so much so, that today we witness the prospect of both sides in Federal politics vying with one another as to what

extent they can hand out largess to the people. If that does not ultimately have the effect of destroying that priceless individuality and initiative I have referred to, then I am very much mistaken. I am inclined to think from what I have seen happen in the State sphere, as well as in the Federal sphere, that if the State does everything for the individual it will ultimately sap that sense of responsibility which we should be promoting rather than submerging. That initiative, resource and responsibility for his own destiny which should pervade every individual should be promoted, but I need only quote the example in the Federal realm where we have the disgraceful spectacle of one Party vying with the other as to which can give the most for child endowment. There was the time when the individual was proud of his responsibilities in maintaining his own family without any State help. Our pioneers took a great pride in bringing up their families—and they were large families in those days—without outside help, but today it is becoming the accepted thing for the State to help maintain a man's family. That is subversive of everything which promotes the individuality of every man and woman in this country—subversive of everything which maintains his sense of responsibility and the control of his own destiny. These are the things we should endeavour to maintain, because they are worthwhile; they are the things which built this country and our Empire. If we are to depart from them and make the State responsible for doing everything for us, such as maintaining our children and providing us with all social services—

Mr. Jennings—That is a redistribution of profits.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—My approach to that problem is along a different road altogether. We should provide conditions under which the individual is able to carve out his own fortunes and ensure his own success, and I believe he should have such opportunities whereby he can achieve a decent standard of living and supply his own amenities. We have insistent demands, in which I am afraid we all join to some extent, that the amenities existing in our big cities should be made available to everyone throughout the length and breadth of the State. It is an ideal, but I do not agree that the State should be called upon to provide all those amenities, but rather that the people should be assured of economic conditions under which the individual will be able to ensure his own success and provide himself with these amenities. The man with backbone and grit



has always been able to do that, and he is the man we should encourage. If the worker likes to apply himself to his work today, he can achieve that degree of success which will ensure for him the best standard of living available under our economic set-up.

Mr. Davis—I do not agree.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—Consider the example of some of our New Australian migrants. I do not want to set them up as being superior, but I suggest that many of them are fine examples of what people can do for themselves if they have the will. In coming out here they have had to contend with all the disabilities of a foreign country, including language difficulties and a certain amount of insularity, not always being accepted with good grace by resident Australians.

Mr. Davis—Did not our ancestors come out here as pioneers and go through greater hardships?

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I have already referred to what they have done. All I want is to maintain conditions which will ensure that the stock of those pioneers shall be able to do as well as their forefathers. Many of these New Australians are not only maintaining families without any Government help or help from anyone else, but are building their own homes and establishing a stake in this country, whereas many of our own people are not doing as well. I do not want to decry the efforts of Australians, but let us be realists and look the facts in the face. I want to see every worker as well-off as he can possibly be in accordance with the wealth this country is able to produce and everyone have his own home, but I want the people to help themselves to some extent and not lean entirely on State instrumentalities and expect to have everything done for them. I know that a number of members opposite agree with me, and uphold what has been done by New Australians. However, we want to see that spirit pervading more of our people so that those results can be achieved by them. We want to see them reap the full fruits of their labours, but they will only do so if they are prepared to help themselves to the extent to which their forefathers helped themselves and to which many migrants are helping themselves today.

Mr. Stephens—Yet you expect many of them to live on the basic wage.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—Many workers in industries in which the basic wage applies are today earning much more than that wage, and, if they can do it, surely more workers can. There is room in this country today for more effort,

and the reward is there if only people make that effort. We can never help ourselves out of our difficulties by thinking we can sit down and prosper under a 40-hour week. The people who are prospering are those who are working more than a 40-hour week, and that applies to many avenues of labour. If people employed in primary industry were to work a 40-hour week, the cost of our foodstuffs to the consumer would probably be trebled.

Mr. Davis—We have heard all that before.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—And it is true. If the dairy farmer were to work a 40-hour week butter would be 8s. and not 4s. a pound.

Mr. Corcoran—Dairy farmers do not work much more than a 40-hour week.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I have seen them at work and that is one of the last industries that I would take on because of the hours of slavery involved.

Mr. Stephens—Yet you complain when we try to make their conditions better.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—I am not complaining, but I am giving the outline of a plan of salvation for the whole community if people wish to follow it. The debate on the Road Traffic Act Amendment Bill later this session will give members ample opportunity to discuss the proposed increase in motor registration fees, but, as members will not be able to discuss fully the question of road policy in that debate, I wish to address myself to it now. A new Ministry of Roads is to be set up to take charge of this most important phase of our public undertakings, and I wish to refer to the policy which should be tried in order to make the funds of the Highways Department go a great deal further than we have been able to stretch them hitherto.

Recently the Minister gave figures which indicated the tremendous cost incurred today in road construction. I refer particularly to those obtained by the member for Rocky River with regard to the reconstruction of the Main North Road beyond Clare. I was astonished to hear that it cost more than £17,000 a mile to widen the road a few feet and put on a new surface. Perhaps I was not so surprised, for I saw the work in progress for a number of years. I was almost going to say that I saw it in progress for many years, for I think the work was commenced early in the war years—or even just before the war—and it is not finished yet, so I can well understand how these costs have reached this tremendous figure. The Highway's Commissioner's figures for the cost of a completely new road today is only about £10,000

a mile, which represents the cost of new foundation, laying metal and surface materials required, and sealing the road, whereas £17,000 a mile has been spent on reconditioning part of the Main North Road.

Another outstanding example is the bridge at Penwortham which cost £45,000. I do not suggest that bridge was either undesirable or unnecessary, but road construction costs seem to have run away completely these days. I would have preferred that, before raising motor taxation, we had sought to obtain a better value for our expenditure. That should have been our first line of attack, and to achieve that we might have resorted to better methods of road construction. Recently the member for Onkaparinga referred to a method employed by a southern council, and I have heard of cases where contractors would have been prepared to do a job at half the cost involved in doing it departmentally. If, by doing it by contract, there is a real prospect of reducing road construction costs let us try it immediately, for roads are an urgent problem today. They have deteriorated over the years until today practically every member complains that he has the worst roads in the State. I can go further and say that the Eyre Highway is probably the worst road in the world, an opinion recently confirmed by an overseas traveller who had to use it to come from Western Australia in order to stage a theatrical show.

Mr. Dunnage—He travelled in a Bentley, too.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—Yes, but he noticed the inferior nature of the road. I have travelled on it in a farm truck on a number of occasions, and I felt all the bumps and holes in its surface.

Mr. Quirke—Have you travelled from Hilltown to the Burra?

Mr. CHRISTIAN—Not recently, but I dare say that road has deteriorated like so many other country roads. We should try new methods and the use of new materials. In our country areas are many roads which are not likely to see bituminous sealing for many years—perhaps some never will. In my district a number of enterprising district councils have pioneered new methods of road construction, and the benefit of their work has been enjoyed throughout the State. Mr. W. Jacobs, foreman for the Franklin Harbour district council, was the pioneer of road grading, and full recognition has never been given him for the service he rendered. Later, Mr. Bratten,

the overseer for the Tumby Bay district council, developed a method of dealing with country roads which later became known as brattenising. Both methods of road construction have spread throughout the State to the great advantage of all country districts in which that type of road could be developed. These methods have cheapened the cost of road construction by pounds a chain and hundreds of pounds a mile. Many improvements in road construction methods that are apparent today have been developed by country district councils.

One of the most serious problems on country roads is the corrugation, which is caused by motor vehicular traffic. Corrugated roads are a dreadful abhorrence and a painful thing to have to endure, result in tremendous wear and tear, damage and additional cost to our transportation systems and have caused an increase in the costs of road maintenance. Yet we have done very little in the direction of research to discover the causes of this deterioration. Has anybody applied himself to the problem of what causes this corrugation? No-one seems to have discovered its real cause, therefore no-one has been able to apply a remedy. This is a fertile field of research in which we might well invest a few thousands pounds, because the ultimate result might pay handsome dividends. If we could discover the reason why motor vehicles corrugate these roads, as they do within the course of a few weeks' continuous traffic on a gritty or loose surface, we would be well on the way to the solution of one of the causes of the high costs in connection with our country roads.

Research should also be directed towards ascertaining the most suitable materials to use as top dressings for these types of roads. The road which originally brattenised or graded does not stand up long to the intense traffic which it is called upon to carry, and today it has become the practice of the Highways Department and councils to give those roads a topdressing of rubble or some other material thought to be suitable, but everybody knows that that type of topdressing is almost useless, because after a few weeks' traffic the state of the road is just as bad as it was originally. Recently the member for Victoria dealt with this phase of the problem. It is futile to apply topdressing to these roads and expect them to carry the traffic.

Mr. Davis—The roads need good foundations.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—Arterial roads which carry heavy traffic must have good foundations, but the roads to which I am referring are dirt

roads and are destined to remain such. A great deal could be done to improve them and I suggest that some research should be devoted to discovering the best material or mixture of materials necessary to provide a good surface. The Streaky Bay District Council has engaged in practical research and has discovered a material apparently containing a binding element—probably clay—which holds the surface together. So far as can be ascertained that material does not corrugate and I suggest that our road authorities should investigate that and other materials. If it can discover anything of value the information should be disseminated to all district councils so that they can derive the benefit of better roads and reduced costs of maintenance. That might make it unnecessary to increase motor taxation to the limits proposed. The higher taxation will be harsh on many motor vehicle owners and will react detrimentally on our transport problems. It may be necessary for us to swallow this rather bitter pill, but if we can discover something it will obviate to some extent the imposition of higher taxation.

Mr. CORCORAN (Victoria)—I urge the Government to consider the problems bound up with the development and welfare of the district I represent, but before enumerating those problems I would like to refer to Mr. Christian's statements about the ideals of the Labor Party. He said that although we claimed that we did not stand for complete socialization he believed we did.

Mr. Christian—No.

Mr. CORCORAN—He also said that if we did not stand for complete socialization we had retracted some of our platform. For the benefit of those who may misunderstand our objectives they are officially interpreted as follows:—

The Australian Labor Party proposes socialization or social control of industry and the means of production, distribution and exchange, such socialization or social control to be achieved to the extent necessary to eliminate exploitation and other anti-social features of industry and anti-social features of the processes of production, distribution and exchange, in accordance with the Principles of Action, Methods, and Progressive Reforms set out in the Federal platform of the A.L.P.

Mr. Shannon—Actions speak louder than words.

Mr. CORCORAN—If it can be established beyond doubt that a public utility is not functioning in the best interests of the people, or that there is exploitation, we believe it

should be socialized and we offer no apologies for that belief. The Party to which Mr. Christian belongs has been guilty of socialization and I refer to the Electricity Trust, Leigh Creek coalfield and our uranium deposits. I commend the Government for its actions in those respects. The Electricity Trust of South Australia Act only became law because of the support it received from Labor members in the Legislative Council and the Labor Party claims some credit for the advantages now enjoyed by people as a result of that socialization.

Mr. Shannon—The people are enjoying increased costs for electricity.

Mr. CORCORAN—Can the member tell me what has not increased in cost? Mr. Christian also referred to the manner in which New Australians are adapting themselves to this country. I welcome them because I realize that we must populate or we will not be privileged to retain our country, but I do not like Mr. Christian referring to our own Australian boys in such disparaging terms. One has only to see them engaged at the week-ends, individually or in groups, building their own homes to realize that they can help themselves. I was connected with the cellulose industry which employed a number of New Australians and, although some of them were good people, others were reluctant to adapt themselves to local conditions and eventually left the works. I believe that an Australian will adapt himself more readily to conditions than any other person. New Australians will play a large part in the destiny of this country, but Australians will hold their own in civil life and on the battlefield where the destiny of this country has been decided before today.

Mr. Christian said that child endowment tended to encourage persons to neglect their obligations. I reared my children when there was no child endowment scheme. I would have been relieved of a great financial worry had there been such a scheme but I do not begrudge those who are receiving the benefits. This country must be populated and I do not want the man on the basic wage to suffer financial anxiety and I wholeheartedly support child endowment if it ensures that children will not be neglected and suffer from malnutrition as they did during the depression. Mr. Menzies provided for the payment of 5s. a week for the first child more or less as an electioneering gesture, but it does assist parents.

One of the major problems of my district is the development of land resources. There should be a more vigorous land development

policy. I understand that the purpose of the Land Settlement Committee is to inquire into the advisability of acquiring large estates for settlement if they are not being properly used. We do not want to waste time in considering these matters because time is the essence of the contract and I urge the Government to speed the activities of the Land Settlement Committee. In my district there are a number of estates which are not being worked but which are almost ready for settlement. About 400 returned soldiers are waiting for farms, but land is not available. Development means population and population obviates the danger of invasion.

Coupled with land settlement is the question of providing roads and transport. Recently the Public Works Committee inquired into the possibility of the establishing a deep sea port in the South-East and I believe it also considered the question of developing the land resources of that area. Evidently it thought a port was not necessary and that road and railway transport, if properly developed, would be sufficient to serve the area, and that if shipping were required, Portland could be used. I agree with Mr. Christian about the need for better roads. There are three main roads in my district. Today I received a petition addressed to the Minister of Local Government and signed by over 100 people concerned with the road from Robe to Beachport. I hope when the Minister is appointed to deal with roads something will result, but I notice that the amount of money provided in the Estimates is less than last year; no doubt a satisfactory explanation will be given later. The increase in motor taxation will make more money available for expenditure on roads. I realize that everything cannot be attended to in one year, but the people directly concerned would be satisfied if the Government set out its proposals in regard to the rehabilitation of the roads in my district, even if the programme covered five to seven years. It might not be economic to have plant working on one road but if it could be used on the three roads I refer to something would result. The present method of road construction is more or less a waste of public money. After the material is put on it comes off as mud in winter and dust in summer. This is not getting us anywhere in the matter of rehabilitating roads. The only way to save a road is to seal it, because once water gets under the metal it is the end of the road. I am not worried about the cause of our having poor roads because that will not

remedy the trouble. The Government should see that the new Minister will give attention to the matter. We should be able to rehabilitate the three roads in five or seven years, but the way things are going now it will not happen for another 20 years. People from the far flung parts get a pat on the back when they come to the city and are told they are producing the lifeblood of the State, but they have been taking that for a long time and are now waking up to the fact that they deserve better consideration. Once a road is sealed, even if the initial expense is high, the maintenance costs are light. If we are to have development we must have better roads.

The proposal for a deep sea port in the South-East has been abandoned, and I have questioned the Premier about the possibilities of renewing shipping to south-eastern ports. I understand the shipping people want to be assured of better facilities and patronage before they will go to Beachport or Kingston. I may ask the Premier to appoint a committee to investigate the matter. It has been suggested that I may do it, but I am not anxious, but I will help by taking up the matter with the people concerned. If repairs are necessary to the jetties at Kingston and Beachport I will expect the Government to effect them. A proper shipping service could take produce from the South-East. I was told that the broadening of the railway line from Mount Gambier to Millicent would be completed within 12 months, but according to a reply from the Minister of Railways yesterday it is expected that only one-third of the work will be completed by the end of next June. The people will not grumble if they can see that the work is going on and they will not mind waiting, and the same could be said if they could see that something was being done towards rehabilitating the roads I have mentioned. I hope it will not be long before the road system in the South-East will be rehabilitated. Associated with the development is the matter of drainage. A scheme is on foot to drain the vast area between Kalangadoo and Kingston and I hope it will be proceeded with as money is available. People in the Reedy Creek locality have complained that the drains are not functioning to capacity. I do not speak disparagingly of the Drainage Board because some of the matters I have raised have been put right after consultation with the Minister and the board. The cleaning of drains can be done only in dry periods of the year. We know the possibilities of the area, but proper drainage is needed.

The people will not be encouraged in their work unless they can see that the drains will function to capacity.

Another matter causing concern in my area is the lack of buses to convey children to school from isolated areas. Better roads are necessary before people will be encouraged to run their buses in this way. They refuse to tender because of the damage done to their buses on the poor roads. We do not want the education of the children to be neglected, or the mother to have to teach the children through the medium of the post. She has enough to do in the home and in helping her husband develop the holding. I have received letters urging me to do what I can to encourage people to tender for the conveyance of children to school, but when I get in touch with them they are reluctant to do so because of the bad condition of the roads. During the election campaign this year the Premier promised a water supply for Millicent.

Mr. O'Halloran—The trouble is that he did not say when.

Mr. CORCORAN—He did not say that the matter had to go to the Public Works Committee and that there might be other obstructions. He gave the impression that there would be a water supply and the householders expected one to be provided soon. I want the Premier to honour that promise because it is obvious that a water supply is needed. Reference has been made to the septic tank system at Murray Bridge, and there is talk of schemes being implemented at Millicent, but there is no chance of that unless water is supplied. I commend the people of Murray Bridge for being capable of overcoming their sanitary problems and they are worthy of emulation, but I understand the nature of the ground at Millicent and Naracoorte does not lend itself to other than deep drainage. I do not know under what Act the Murray Bridge council is operating in undertaking work there, but I believe it must be the Health Act. I know the people of Millicent are looking forward to the provision of a water supply, which the Premier has promised. The Leader of the Opposition interjected that the Premier didn't say when it would be undertaken, but if it is not established while I am here the people will probably blame me. I will not take the blame for what the Premier said, but it will be my constant endeavour to serve the district faithfully and well, though when I am advocating the rights of my constituents I am not unmindful of the needs of other districts. I will co-operate with other members, but I will use my physical and mental energies

to see that the people of Millicent, Naracoorte and other South-Eastern towns get what they are entitled to. The Government realizes the necessity of providing proper amenities, and I hope it will act accordingly.

Mr. Shannon—Your voice will be heard.

Mr. CORCORAN—I am looking for the support of the member for Onkaparinga. He knows the primitive conditions in certain South-Eastern towns. A casual observation of conditions at Millicent would convince anyone of the necessity of a water supply. Recently, I was asked to make representations to the Minister of Health on behalf of the Millicent ambulance committee for financial aid to purchase a new ambulance. I referred the matter to the Minister and in due course received a letter from him advising that the committee should apply for money from the ambulance fund, for which money is voted on the Estimates, but I understand that such money is to be devoted purely for the provision of ambulances in the metropolitan area. I hope the Minister did not make his suggestion in order to put me off the right track, but I will find out more about this subject in due course. When one considers the important part that the Millicent ambulance plays in conveying the sick from the far-flung parts of the South-East to the Millicent hospital he realizes it is worthy of support. I am not saying I will encourage the local people to shirk their responsibilities, but if they are prepared to pay the bulk of the costs the Government should render some assistance by making a contribution. I hope the Ministers will realize I am not talking for talking's sake. I take these matters seriously and I hope they do too. We shall have further opportunities of discussing the various items when we come to the lines, and I may ask for additional information then. The best way the Government can show its appreciation of my remarks is to respond to my appeals and attend to the matters I have referred to.

Mr. BROOKMAN (Alexandra)—The soothing words of the member for Victoria about the Labor Party platform have not been very comforting to me as one with a healthy fear of the future policy of the Party, for I believe it is one of drastic socialism. If the Labor Party has on its platform the socialization of distribution, production, and the means of exchange, that should be sufficient for all who can read English. I do not see why it should be necessary for a Party platform to be explained at length by someone trying to allay the fears of people who can read plain English.

I remember that a few years ago the Federal Labor Government tried to nationalize the banks, with the support of every branch of the Labor Party. As far as I know, the Labor Party still supports this policy, but it can see it is not a practical proposition at the moment and that is why it is not being urged now. It is ridiculous for Labor members to say that their platform does not mean what it says. The member for Victoria has done his own Party a disservice in trying to take that point, because he cannot do so.

The Treasurer has told us that additional money will be raised in two ways, one by increasing motor vehicle taxation. This will be the subject of a special Bill, so there seems little point in discussing this matter now, except to mention in passing that the Government intends to raise £1,100,000 from motor taxation. It also proposes to increase harbour charges, but as this will not be done by legislation, but by regulation, it might be worthy of comment. One can scarcely quarrel with the argument that our harbour charges are low. They have not been raised substantially since 1930. In 1951-52 the Harbors Board's revenue and expenditure virtually balanced. In 1952-53 the board made a loss of about £125,000, and it is expected it will make a loss of about £300,000 in this financial year. The Treasurer said that before 1951-52 the undertaking had for many years made a substantial contribution to the State's revenue. My point is that I see no reason why charges should not be raised to balance revenue and expenditure of the Harbors Board, but when it makes a profit the surplus goes into general revenue, and when it makes a loss it is met by increasing charges, so it is a one-way traffic. It means, in effect, that when the charges are raised sufficiently the revenue derived over and above the board's own needs goes into general revenue, and that is possibly a type of taxation to be criticized.

Mr. O'Halloran—Would you suggest the establishment of a reserve fund to balance accounts?

Mr. BROOKMAN—I do not know whether that should be created. There should be an attempt to balance revenue and expenditure, and not make the charges so high that they become a special type of taxation. Obviously, the major States are raising revenue from their charges, and one can assume the Grants Commission makes a note of that when allotting grants to South Australia, but this is not a good way to raise money for general revenue.

Harbors Board fees are really a sectional charge, but they have a big bearing on the community generally, and it is hard to trace their full impact. The member for Victoria said that many of our roads are in a bad state and need attention, but we have been assured by the Treasurer that the extra money to be derived by increased motor taxation will be used on the roads. I realize many of our roads are unsatisfactory, but we should remember that we have far from recovered from the effects of the war, that there are many more vehicles on the roads, and the weight of vehicles and their loads has greatly increased. We must also remember the great increases in speed of not only motor cars, but heavy lorries and semi-trailers as well, which have a devastating effect on road surfaces. Having heard the honourable member for Victoria, I know that we will have his full support when the Bill is introduced to raise extra money from the registration of motor vehicles. I support the first line.

First line passed.

#### THE ESTIMATES.

##### THE LEGISLATURE.

Legislative Council, £8,747; House of Assembly, £11,248; Parliamentary Library, £4,128; Joint House Committee, £9,336; Electoral Department, £26,379; Government Reporting Department, £23,855; Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, £3,085; Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement, £3,196; Miscellaneous, £34,197—passed.

##### CHIEF SECRETARY AND MINISTER OF HEALTH.

State Governor's establishment, £5,117—passed.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

#### WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILIZATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS (Minister of Agriculture)—I move—

That the Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill provides for the continuance of wheat marketing by the Australian Wheat Board for the next three wheat harvests and, incidentally to this, for fixing the home consumption price to be charged for wheat during the next three years and the mode of determining the price to be paid by the board to growers. The Wheat Industry Stabilization Act of 1948 has now expired except so far as it continues to apply to last season's wheat.

This Act was part of a Commonwealth-wide scheme providing both for orderly marketing and price stabilization. Orderly marketing was secured by the establishment of the Australian Wheat Board and the enactment of laws in all States requiring growers to deliver their wheat to the board and requiring the board to sell it and distribute the proceeds among the growers. Price stabilization was secured by a Commonwealth guarantee of a price not less than the cost of production, the guarantee being supported by the creation of a fund to which the growers themselves contributed through the medium of taxes on wheat. This marketing and stabilization scheme, however, has now completed its statutory life and will not, unless renewed, apply to the coming season or thereafter.

The present Bill contains the proposals which have, so far, been agreed upon between the Commonwealth and all the States in relation to wheat of the three next seasons. This agreement is limited at present to orderly marketing, but the possibility of obtaining a price stabilization scheme is by no means to be ruled out. Price stabilization is still being considered by the Commonwealth and the States; but as a stabilization scheme involves a levy on wheat which is borne by the growers, it is generally accepted that no such scheme should be introduced until it has been submitted to the growers by ballot and approved by the majority. The Government is still hopeful that agreement will be reached on some price stabilization scheme and will be willing to introduce legislation for a poll on this subject as soon as that becomes practicable. It seems, therefore, that I shall have the privilege of introducing, I hope during the present session, a Bill to give effect to price stabilization. Discussions between the Federal Minister of Commerce and the Ministers of Agriculture in the various States indicate that there is more than a possibility of agreement on this matter. Any such legislation will provide for stabilization for five years, and a poll of growers to express their approval or otherwise of the scheme.

On the subject of orderly marketing, the Bill by clause 10 provides that the marketing scheme will continue until September 30, 1956, that is to say, it will cover the wheat of the next three harvests and growers will continue to be under a duty to deliver their wheat for sale to the board. The home consumption price of wheat during that period is provided for in clause 9 of the Bill. The basis of this

price will be the International Wheat Agreement price, or 14s. a bushel, whichever is the lower. As the International Wheat Agreement price is now 16s. 1d. the immediate practical effect of the clause will be that the home consumption price will be 14s. a bushel for wheat of fair average quality free on rails at ports. This price, however, is subject to alteration in the light of two factors. One is that if the home consumption price determined in the way I have mentioned is less than the cost of production, such price will be raised to a sum equal to the cost of production. The cost of production from year to year will be determined by the Commonwealth after consultation with the States. In working it out the Commonwealth authorities will assume that the cost of production in the season 1952-53 was 11s. 11d., and will make such variations in that amount as are justified by altered costs in each season. It does not appear likely at present that the proposed price of 14s. will have to be modified in the near future on the ground that it is below the cost of production.

The other factor which will affect the home consumption price is a surcharge of 1½d. a bushel or some other small sum as a contribution towards the cost of shipping wheat from the mainland to Tasmania. It has been agreed, as part of the marketing plan, that the home consumption price of wheat in Tasmania will be the same as on the mainland and, in order to secure this, it is necessary that the home consumption price of wheat generally shall be increased by a small amount in order to provide funds to pay the freight on wheat shipped from the mainland to Tasmania. The Bill provides for varying the amount of 1½d. a bushel, if that figure should prove to be too high or too low. The Tasmanian freight account will be kept separately; and if, when the present Bill ceases to operate, there is any balance in that account it will be applied for the benefit of the wheat industry. The provisions as to the determination of the price to be paid by the board to growers are set out in clause 8. The basis of the price is, of course, the pooling of the net proceeds of the sale of all wheat of each season delivered to the board throughout Australia. The Bill provides that before dividing the net proceeds among growers, the board is to deduct a sufficient sum to pay a premium of 3d. a bushel on all Western Australian wheat which is available for export to places outside Australia. The object of this is to give Western Australia the benefit of the higher returns which it can normally get for its wheat because it is nearer

to overseas markets than the other States, and its overseas freight rates are consequently less. The balance of the pool, after providing for the Western Australian premium, will be divided among the growers in proportion to the amount of wheat delivered by each of them to the board. Due allowance will be made for differences in the quality of wheat, transport charges, carriage of wheat to the terminal port from the place where it is delivered to the board, and any other necessary adjustments in particular cases. The Bill also provides for advance payments to be made to growers with the approval of the Commonwealth Minister.

The other amendments made by the Bill are of minor importance. Clause 4 contains consequential amendments only. Clause 5 strikes out some references to the acquisition of wheat by the board which are not necessary, and may lead to constitutional difficulties in connection with the interpretation of the Commonwealth Act. Clauses 6 and 7 deal with the monetary penalties for offences in connection with non-delivery of wheat or unauthorized dealings with wheat. The maximum fine for any such offence is thrice the value of the wheat in respect of which the offence is committed. In order to clarify the meaning of the expression "value of wheat," these clauses provide that the value to be taken into account will be that certified by the board as the value of the wheat on the basis of the board's prices in the State at the time when the offence was committed. It will be seen, therefore, that although the Bill may appear complicated the basic principles of it are quite simple, namely, the continuance of an orderly marketing scheme for three years, and the maintenance during that time of a home consumption price for all purposes based on 14s. a bushel, subject to reduction if the International Wheat Agreement price shall be lower than that figure, and also to the principle that the home consumption price shall not be below the cost of production.

In fixing the price of 14s. in the first instance the Agricultural Council had in mind the possibility that overseas prices might fall considerably, and that prices under the International Wheat Agreement might fall below the 14s. If it fell below 14s., that would be the price at which wheat would be sold for human consumption. It must be borne in mind that the price under the International Agreement varies from 18s. 3½d. to 13s. 10d. and that wheat can be sold under the agreement at any price between those prices. We must realize the wisdom of the Agricultural Council in determining that the price paid to the growers shall

not fall below the price of production, and that is all the farmers are guaranteed under the scheme.

Mr. O'Halloran—Does that mean that the cost of production as disclosed by the present formula?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—It is the cost of production ascertained by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics. There may be slight variations, but broadly speaking that is the basis.

Mr. O'Halloran—Whatever happens, the price cannot rise above 14s.

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—That is so. The price is fixed not only for human consumption, but for stock feed also. Stock foods such as barley and oats will probably be considerably cheaper than wheat. The value of export barley today is not nearly so high as that for wheat, and consequently it is assumed that there will not be nearly so much wheat used for pig and poultry feeding during the years immediately ahead because of the lower priced barley which will be available. At one time export barley was being sold for £1 a bushel, but possibly will be the cheapest food that can be used for animal production. It has been my lot to have much to do with the wheat stabilization schemes introduced into this House. Over the past 10 years I have been attending the meetings of the Agricultural Council and consequently have been closely associated with all the discussions which have taken place to bring to fruition wheat stabilization in this country. The legislation which has been in operation for five years and is now expiring was introduced in this House by me and similar legislation was carried by the Federal and other State Parliaments after the Agricultural Council, of which I was a member, had agreed to the terms upon which it should be introduced. Therefore, it gives me a great deal of pleasure to be associated with the introduction of this measure.

I want members to realize that in the first instance the Agricultural Council set out to prepare a wheat stabilization scheme which would extend over a period of five years, but because of the possibility of such a scheme not being agreed to in all States the proposal now before the House was submitted. Before that scheme can be given effect to growers in all the States must vote by ballot in favour of it so that we can have an over-all policy for the Commonwealth. Realizing that such a scheme might not be endorsed by growers in all States, the Agricultural Council decided that it would



be wise to bring forward a reserve plan which would enable the orderly marketing of wheat to continue for a period of three years. If we were to give effect to the International Wheat Agreement it was necessary that the Commonwealth Government or some authority under it must have the control of wheat. I am sure that members will realize for that reason alone that the Bill is necessary. Further, the Ministers of Agriculture were seized with the fact that Australian marketing had been carried on for so long under the Commonwealth scheme that many of the merchants who had previously handled wheat had almost gone out of existence, and because of the tremendously high price ruling for wheat in recent years they would have found it most difficult to finance wheat crops. Because they were not in a position to do so, it was decided that it would be wise to bring down this reserve scheme I have outlined. I have every confidence that the House will pass the Bill and enable the orderly marketing scheme to continue in Australia for the next three years.

Mr. O'Halloran—Will it result in increasing the price of bread, and if so by how much a loaf?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—The present price of wheat for home consumption is 11s. 11d. a bushel. The price may probably rise to 12s. 6d. or 12s. 8d., which in itself may necessitate a rise in the price of bread. It is expected that the over-all effect of the general rise in wheat for home consumption to 14s. a bushel will possibly result in bread being increased by 1d. a loaf. I am not giving anything positive, because eventually the Prices Ministers will determine the price of bread in each of the States. I ask members to support the Bill, because it will be in the interests of wheatgrowers and the people generally.

Mr. O'HALLORAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 9.39 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday, October 22, at 2 p.m..