

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, October 22, 1953.

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

QUESTIONS.**COMMONWEALTH-STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT.**

Mr. O'HALLORAN—On Tuesday last in reply to my question about homes for pensioners the Premier said that this year for the first time the Government had availed itself of the provisions of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement because it resulted in a saving of interest on the money required for housing purposes. Can the Premier indicate the percentage saving on the loans being raised for housing purposes under the new principle?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The original agreement was entered into with the Chifley Government and at that time the interest rate was fixed at 3 per cent, which was only slightly below the rate that we were then paying for official loans. That rate has been maintained ever since, but over the last 15 months the Commonwealth loan rate has risen rapidly until today it is 4½ per cent, in addition to which there may be some brokerage charges—perhaps 2s. 6d. per cent—so there is an appreciable difference today between those interest rates. If the Commonwealth Government maintains its rate under the agreement at 3 per cent it will assist materially in keeping down the cost of rental houses. The reason that made it necessary for the Government to operate under the agreement this year was the big disparity that now exists between the housing loan rate and the Commonwealth loan rate of interest.

RAILWAY CROSSINGS.

Mr. PEARSON—Last week Mr. White asked a question relating to an accident at Callington level crossing. I have received a letter from a constituent, Mr. Frank Coles of Port Lincoln, who apparently has given some thought to this matter, suggesting a method of safeguarding against such accidents and I also have a copy of a letter he wrote to the Advertiser on the subject. Briefly, his suggestion is that at an appropriate distance from a crossing and for an appropriate distance the existing surfaces of roads should be varied in such a manner that the driver of a vehicle, and particularly a motor car, will become acutely or suddenly aware of a change in circumstances which would attract his attention. For instance, on a bituminous

road a grid could be constructed or a short length of the road could be somewhat rougher than the normal surface and on a gravel road a short strip of smooth road would attract attention. Will the Minister investigate this suggestion, which I believe has merit, and obtain a report?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I do not deprecate the suggestion but in many cases accidents occur as a result of faulty judgment, carelessness and recklessness and I do not know whether a differentiation in road approaches to crossings would make any difference in as much as many cars crash through crossing gates. In the accident referred to the line and train were both visible for a mile from the point of contact.

Mr. Pearson—The driver may not have had his attention on the road.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Councils and police have power to make compulsory stops and I think that is the only remedy. I travel through this district frequently and between here and Bordertown I have to stop at least four or five times in the metropolitan area but every council apparently objects to erecting stop signs on the broad highway. I believe it should be compulsory to stop at every railway crossing. The time lost would be infinitesimal when compared with the benefit that would be gained. It is not within the province of the Railways Commissioner or the central road authority to provide for compulsory stops: it is the responsibility of the councils and the police. I believe stop signs should be provided the same as at tramways crossings in the city. People contend that our roads are so bad that I doubt whether they would accept any differentiation in the roads when approaching a railway as a "warning." However, the suggestion obviously indicates that every railway crossing is a potential danger, and I will follow it up.

Mr. TEUSNER—I have received a letter from the district council of Angaston drawing attention to the dangerous state of the Nuraip railway crossing between Nuriootpa and Angaston. The letter states, among other things:—

The position as it stands is most dangerous to anyone crossing the line, and already several accidents have occurred there, one fatal, and another very serious. The railway line should never have been constructed in the first place, without a culvert or pipe and we feel that something will have to be done immediately before any further accidents happen.

Following on requests made by local residents, the council has intimated that it will be prepared to install approximately 32ft. of 4ft. concrete pipe at this crossing to lessen the

danger, and it desires to know whether, in view of the cost of doing this, which will be about £150, the Minister of Railways would agree to meet a portion of that expenditure and perhaps send an officer to discuss the matter with the council.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I shall be glad to collaborate with the council. A good deal would depend upon what funds are available for such purposes. I point out again that South Australia has more scientifically and mechanically guarded railway crossings than any other State in the Commonwealth, yet I do not know that the ratio of accidents is much less than elsewhere where approaches are left unguarded by such means. In some cases roads in the vicinity of crossings in order to improve visibility are approached by an S curve, but then I have had deputations from the councils concerned saying that this retarded the progress of traffic and asking that they be removed. I met a deputation not more than three months ago on such a matter. If we meet the honourable member's request in this case for more protection we shall have to meet many similar requests and that may mean that other railway work is retarded. The House must decide this matter, not the Minister or the Railways Department. Money is expended in accordance with the Estimates, but no-one would desire to be parsimonious in efforts to save life if we believe the remedy is available.

Mr. Teusner—This is not an ordinary level crossing.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I appreciate that. I believe there have been previous discussions on the matter. I believe that on the representations of the honourable member the council and the department agreed on what steps should be taken. I am sure action by the council in this matter will be appreciated and reciprocity will follow. I will go further into the matter with the Railways Commissioner.

FOOD PARCELS TO RUSSIA.

Mr. STOTT—In this morning's *Advertiser* there is a report that in the Commonwealth Parliament yesterday reference was made to new Australians purchasing food parcels to send to Russia and that they were being charged exorbitant prices. The Minister for Customs said that it was not in the power of the Commonwealth Parliament to take action but if there were any fraud it was a matter for State Parliaments. Will the Premier bring this matter to the notice of the Police Department and obtain a report as to whether action can be taken?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes.

WALLAROO FIRST-AID ROOM.

Mr. McALEES—Has the Minister of Marine anything further to report on the establishment of a first-aid room and other amenities on the Wallaroo jetty?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I think my first reply was that the matter was being dealt with. So far as I know the first-aid equipment and accommodation on the wharf was part of the plans. I will make inquiries and if there is any undue delay I will expedite them.

PORT ROAD FATALITY.

Mr. STEPHENS—No doubt the Premier has read the report in this morning's *Advertiser* of the unfortunate accident which occurred on the Port Road yesterday, when one of my constituents was killed and several injured. Our sympathy goes out to the relatives of these people. Can the Premier say whether an inquest will be held? Have the police power to examine the vehicles to see if there was any mechanical defect in either, particularly the brakes? Is it compulsory for vehicles having projecting timber, iron, or some other material to have a white sign at the end? As the Act does not specify the size of the material, will the Premier consider an amendment so as to define the size? This morning when I was coming up the Port Road I took particular notice of eight heavy vehicles. Only one complied with the Act because it had a big red and white sign at the end of the load. Of two break-down cranes, one had no sign at the end, and the other had two or three bits of paper. Five other vehicles had timber projecting over the front and back. Not one had a sign at the front, and two had no sign at the back. The other vehicles had a bit of brown material at the end, about the size of a woman's handkerchief, and if particular notice were not taken it could not be seen. There was a statement in today's *Advertiser* about "Stop" signs on trolley buses not being clearly visible. Will the Premier see that the matters I have raised are attended to?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I think that in this instance the question of whether an inquiry is to be held by the coroner is at his discretion. I am not conversant with the procedure, for this matter does not come under my departments, but I think that in any accident involving a death or unusual circumstances the coroner decides, after he has obtained full information, whether an inquiry is necessary. However, I believe the Attorney-General, if he has reason to believe certain things have happened, can request the coroner to hold an

inquiry. I think that in the case the honourable member has mentioned the coroner will hold an inquiry, and the facts be made public, but if one is not held I will get for the honourable member full information on each point he has raised in regard to the Road Traffic Act. As I understand it, this accident was not caused by a projection not being marked, but because the front vehicle stopped and the rear vehicle continued and rammed the back of the front one. In the circumstances, whether or not the projection was marked would not have made any difference. The police always make a careful survey of vehicles, including the brakes, when investigating an accident, if they are doubtful about the cause, to see whether the vehicles were roadworthy. The honourable member knows that the owner or driver of a vehicle commits an offence if he drives it on the roads when the brakes are defective.

CONCRETE LINING OF IRRIGATION CHANNELS.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—For some years the settlers in the Chaffey irrigation area have been urging that the channels be lined with concrete, to the advantage of the department and the settlers alike. I recently forwarded a letter to the Minister from the secretary of the Chaffey Settlers Association on this subject and would like to know if the Minister has any reply to it.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I duly received the letter and have to advise that at Chaffey on May 24, 1953, the Secretary for Irrigation (Mr. A. C. Gordon) met representatives of the association, when the matter of concrete-lining of earth channels in the area was discussed. An agreement was reached as to the particular channels on which the work should start, and then extend to others as funds became available. The association was told that, at that juncture, an amount of £17,000 had been placed on the Loan Estimates programme for the year 1953-54, but it was pointed out that whether or not work would proceed depended on the funds asked for being provided. In a subsequent review of the Loan Estimates programme, occasioned by the serious reduction in Loan money made available for irrigation works, however, this item was deferred in favour of other works which were deemed to be more urgent. The advantages of concrete-lining of earth channels are well recognized and a start will be made on this work when money is made available for it.

EIGHT-MILE CREEK AREA.

Mr. FLETCHER—On September 29 I asked the Minister of Repatriation a question with reference to the conditions of settlers on the Eight-Mile Creek area and the Minister promised to make a report available when it was received. Has he that information today?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I have received a long report which I will hand to the honourable member for his perusal. It appears that in other localities experiments have been conducted in weed poisoning in drainage areas, with encouraging results, and it is proposed to undertake a similar experiment in the Port MacDonnell area this year.

DRAINAGE WATER ON TRUST BLOCKS.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I have received a communication from Housing Trust tenants regarding the difficulty of disposing of roof drainage water on their blocks. Will the Treasurer take up with the trust the question of the practicability of the tenants doing this work themselves, under the supervision of the trust's officers, with material supplied by the trust?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If the honourable member will supply me with particulars to identify the houses mentioned I will have the matter examined.

SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—In last week's press appeared reports of statements made by Mr. Kent Hughes, Commonwealth Minister for the Interior, dealing with the lack of soldier settlement in this State, Western Australia, and Tasmania. He suggested that the Commonwealth Government intended making funds available to the States to expedite such settlements. Can the Minister of Irrigation give any information about these proposed expenditures, and advise whether the State Government has been consulted on the matter?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The Federal Minister has submitted proposals and as soon as they are analysed and we can see some good from them we will then put them into operation. As to finance, we have never had any difficulty with the Commonwealth Government. Our problem has been, and possibly will be, suitable soil in a suitable rainfall area. As soon as I have had an opportunity to analyse the report thoroughly I will make it available to the honourable member.

CEMENT AT SOUTH PARA RESERVOIR.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—Has the Minister of Works obtained further information concerning rumours of the waste of cement at the South Para reservoir?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—As promised, I caused a full investigation to be made regarding the allegations that large quantities of cement—and I emphasize “large”—held at the South Para reservoir had deteriorated and been entirely spoilt. These are the circumstances: In order to assure supplies of cement for housing and for essential public works, the Government imported a large quantity of cement and cement clinker from Japan. This arrived in large consignments and it was necessary to dispatch it to places where storage facilities were available. One of these places was South Para reservoir, where many hundreds of tons of cement was stored. Before all of this could be used, a quantity of 14½ tons at the bottom of the stack had hardened, and while being unsuitable for lining the diversion tunnel much of it was quite satisfactory for other purposes. A further quantity of 10 tons of loose cement was swept up from the floor of the cement shed, and it was decided to make this cement available for local sale. The losses of cement were therefore remarkably small, the actual amount discarded as unfit for any purpose amounting to only 2 or 3 tons. Apart from any other aspect, I point out that the Government's action in importing the cement meant that hundreds of home builders, whose operations would otherwise have been suspended, were able to continue their jobs. My previous extempore reply was borne out—that it was a grossly exaggerated statement that large amounts of cement were wasted.

TAXI-CAB CONTROL.

Mr. LAWN—Can the Premier say whether the Government intends to introduce legislation to give effect to the recommendations of the Committee on the Licensing of Taxi-cabs and thereby make the Adelaide City Council the central licensing authority?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—As I indicated to the Leader of the Opposition a few days ago, the Government has a very large programme of legislation to introduce this session, of which notice has not yet been given, and it is no use placing it on the Notice Paper until the Notice Paper is sufficiently clear to enable us to deal with it. Whether it will be possible for us to get around to the question of taxi-cabs this session is rather a moot point at the moment. However, I am hopeful that we will be able to

clear up the essential legislation before the Christmas holidays. I have studied the report and feel that it is of such a nature that it would be acceptable to the Cabinet, but I have not yet actually submitted it.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Has the Premier a reply to my question of Tuesday last regarding the employment of musicians in the South Australian Symphony Orchestra?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I promised to get a report on this topic for the honourable member, but I have not yet received a written report from either of the Government's representatives on the controlling committee. However, I feel that the inquiries I have made substantiate the honourable member's claim that South Australian musicians have not been getting a fair deal with regard to employment in the orchestra. In fact, I understand that most of the appointments are made from Sydney and South Australian musicians do not appear to be considered. It is even doubtful whether some of the interstate appointees have been superior to local musicians who could have been appointed. I have instructed my secretary to write a letter to the controlling authority, the Australian Broadcasting Commission, asking it what steps it proposes to take to rectify the position.

THE ESTIMATES.

In Committee of Supply.

(Continued from October 21. Page 1133.)

CHIEF SECRETARY AND MINISTER OF HEALTH.

Chief Secretary's Department, £14,627; Statistical Department, £47,138; Audit Department, £45,805; Printing and Stationery Department, £206,790—passed.

Police Department—£1,359,008.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Can the Treasurer say whether it would be possible to zone the metropolitan area and have larger police stations, so as to avoid the present unsatisfactory position at many small suburban stations where either the police officer must be in attendance all the time or depend on his wife and family to answer telephone calls?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Treasurer)—The amount provided for the department shows a considerable increase on that provided in previous years. This is due to a number of reasons, the main one being that a re-organization and improvement in the department's methods have been

proceeding. For example, we have tried to make the force more mobile, and have been systematically providing more modern motor car and motor cycle outfits. Further, wireless communications have been strengthened and I believe that the force is giving the public adequate protection. Whether any further improvement can be made along the lines suggested I am not in a position to say, but I will discuss the honourable member's suggestion with the Chief Secretary and in due course let him have a report.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Some considerable time ago in Great Britain there was much controversy about police methods used in taking statements from accused persons, and the judges there were asked to lay down certain rules. They made rules which constituted what they considered to be a fair system of taking voluntary statements from accused persons. In South Australia that set of rules does not apply, the law here being that a voluntary statement from an accused person *prima facie* must be taken fairly, and an accused person has to show that there was unfairness in the taking of the statement to require that it be not admitted in evidence. It is sometimes difficult for an accused person to do that. Will the Government consider making it mandatory for police officers to conform to those rules when obtaining statements? Many of the rules are complied with, but one requires that a statement shall be immediately reduced to writing and signed by the accused person. In South Australia a police officer obtains a statement and sometimes as often as 12 hours later types or writes his recollection of it. The statement is regarded as being almost a verbatim report of what was said, but a word which could make a considerable difference to the tone of a statement can easily be omitted and adversely affect an accused person. The report should be reduced to writing immediately and the accused person asked to sign it. If he refuses to sign it, it is an indication that he does not agree with everything contained in it and that would be fairer than the present system. At present he does not know what has been recorded as his statement until it is presented in court.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—There are two procedures in operation. If a person is accused of a serious offence, as, for instance, murder, he is warned that any statement he makes will be taken down and may be used in evidence against him. The statement is then taken and the accused person signs it. Two officers are

present and can swear to its accuracy and testify that the person has been informed that under British law no-one is obliged to make a statement that may condemn him. In accident cases police officers do not know whether any person has been guilty of negligence and obtain information impartially from all parties. That is examined to see whether any person should be charged with a breach of the law. It is doubtful whether 90 per cent of the persons from whom statements are obtained ever become accused persons and it is only after all the evidence that the statements provide has been considered that the police decide whether to prosecute or not. If a police officer is dependent upon a statement to convict a person that statement should be reduced in writing in precise terms at the time it is taken and the officer should not rely upon what might be his inaccurate memory. I will discuss the matter with the Chief Secretary and Crown Law officers and have the code of rules referred to by the honourable member examined to see whether our methods can be improved. The court is always anxious to ensure that justice is maintained and if the police ever produce evidence about which there is any doubt the court disallows it. I will obtain a report in due course.

Mr. SHANNON—I pay a tribute to the Government, which is not unmindful of the good work being performed by volunteer fire services. The Government has provided equipment which has become available since the cessation of hostilities and has made Mr. Kerr's services available to country fire services. Those interested in country emergency fire services are enthusiasts and Mr. Kerr encourages enthusiasm. The school conducted in Adelaide was well attended and resulted in a better understanding of the equipment used. I have in my electorate seven or eight emergency fire fighting services with their own equipment properly housed. Many thousands of pounds have been spent, the money having been provided mainly by the public in voluntary contributions. Areas in the hills are well equipped with these services, but they are only show window affairs if there is not the personnel to use them. Last year in an area of a few miles around Bridgewater I think there were 13 minor fires, minor because the emergency personnel got to work promptly and prevented serious damage. Not so many years ago the hills districts were ravaged by fires, but that is not so today because of our fire fighting services. Their members are aware of the great danger if there should be a heat wave in the coming summer. They do not know when

they will be called upon to stand by. We have arranged for the insurance of paid controllers but there is no cover for the volunteers. I realize that all volunteers cannot be covered, but it could be restricted to those who are registered as members of fire fighting services. I would place on the chief officer the onus of supplying the names. Mr. Kerr knows practically all the people who assist in this work and he would be able to check the names. The Government would not be liable for a very large amount in premiums, but an insurance cover would be appreciated by volunteer fire fighters.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I want to deny one statement made by the honourable member. He said that the equipment made available to the services had been largely surplus war equipment.

Mr. Shannon—I did not suggest that. I do not want to deny to the Government any credit.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Under this department we have four lines dealing with fire fighting services, and under the Minister of Agriculture there are another two lines. It has not been only a matter of providing the services with spare material, because the Government has been steadily building them up with the assistance of volunteers from the metropolitan area. All requests have been met from money granted previously. In each instance more money was voted than was required. About three years ago a Bill was passed that provided insurance not only for officers of official services but for all who attended a fire. A fund was established and a committee appointed to make payments from the fund to meet any claims.

Mr. Shannon—I thought the scheme applied only to fire control officers.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No. Some time ago Parliament gave councils the power to insure their fire control officers, but that did not meet the position when volunteers helped to fight fires, and that was why this fund was established. Claims can be made for personal injury or for damage to personal effects and belongings.

Mr. STEPHENS—Do insurance companies contribute towards that fund and, if so, to what extent? They should, for if a fire is prevented from spreading the insurance companies benefit considerably.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The legislation was agreed to by all parties, and I believe a fair and reasonable arrangement was come to. The matter was taken up with the insurance companies, who acted fairly and reasonably.

From memory, I believe they agreed to meet a percentage of the claims, but I do not necessarily agree with the honourable member's statement that they benefit considerably. If employees leave their job to fight a fire in my opinion they would not be covered by workmen's compensation, because they would be doing something outside their employment.

Mr. MICHAEL—Last year £250 was voted for a contribution towards expenses of the Australian representative at the Annual International Criminal Police Commission, £125 was expended, and it is proposed to vote £200 this year. Does one representative of Australia attend the commission each year, and do all States take a turn in providing a representative? Do all States contribute towards the expenditure incurred? Another line—"Payment to Official Receiver, Estate R. E. Gibson, money paid to Police Department which subsequently disappeared"—shows that an expenditure of £1,200 was incurred last year. Was that in regard to a sum of money that disappeared from the Police Department? It was suggested in the press that insufficient care was taken of it, and that it should have been deposited in the bank or with the Official Receiver. Will adequate precautions be taken to see that such a happening will not occur again? On the line, "Reimbursement of medical expenses, etc., incurred by ex-Constable R. L. Minear," £68 was expended last year, and it is proposed to vote £80 this year. I was under the impression that in circumstances which necessitated a policeman incurring medical expenses he would be covered by some form of insurance.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—With regard to the honourable member's first query, a convention of Police Commissioners of various countries is held annually in one of the large cities of Europe, usually The Hague or Brussels, I think, to deal with questions relating to the prevention and detection of crime. Each Australian State in turn sends the Australian representative and, of course, the reports of the proceedings are made available to all. As regards the second query relating to the money lost, the honourable member will see that no sum is set down for this year, but he is correct in his assumption that the line refers to the money lost whilst it was in the custody of the Police Department in accordance with procedure that had been in operation for many years. The Government felt that it was under a moral obligation to ensure that the estate concerned should not suffer by reason of any possible negligence on the part of a police officer, and accordingly provided that amount last

year. The procedure has now been altered and all monies are kept in the Treasury. I do not know the precise circumstances relating to the medical expenses of Constable Minear, but I have no doubt that it would be a case of the description that occurs occasionally when an officer suffers an injury which, though not entitling him to compensation, places the Government under some moral obligation to assist him. The Crown Solicitor has always held that the Government cannot make an *ex gratia* payment without the sanction of Parliament, and that makes it necessary for any such amount to be placed on the Estimates.

Mr. HAWKER—The Emergency Fire Services have been of great assistance and everyone appreciates the work they are doing, especially in a case such as happened near Burra a few years ago when a fire could not be brought under control until the Government sent up bulldozers to make breaks through the scrub. However, I wholeheartedly agree with the sentiment expressed by Mr. Christian last night when he said that self-help should be encouraged as much as possible. By far the greatest amount of fire protection work is done by the landowners themselves, and practically every farm and station has some firefighting equipment, ranging from a knapsack spray, which the district councils usually supply, to, perhaps, a five-ton truck with a 400gall. tank of water and a petrol-driven pump. These things are usually provided by individuals, and I think that is the way to approach the problem. There are, however, occasions when a fire gets beyond the control of landholders and the Government is called upon to assist. In the case I referred to near Burra a number of carriers left their own business and went out to help fight the fire, and the landowners levied themselves so much a thousand sheep to compensate them. I hope that the Government will continue to confine its assistance chiefly to exceptional circumstances and do nothing to destroy the spirit of self-help now so evident. I was somewhat perturbed by the Treasurer's remarks regarding workmen's compensation, for I have always believed that if one ordered an employee who was insured under workmen's compensation to fight a fire he would be still covered by that insurance in respect of any injury he might receive. Perhaps the Treasurer could enlighten me further on this point.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member will realize that it is not my province to advise on legal matters and any free advice he may get from me may not be worth what he pays for it. However, I believe that if the honourable member had a fire on his own

property and his own employees who were insured assisted him to put it out they would probably be covered by insurance, but I do not believe that if the fire were on someone else's property and his employees went out to help fight it they would necessarily be covered.

Mr. Davis—They would be if ordered to help fight the fire by the employer.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I do not think so.

Mr. Stephens—It would depend on whether it is the employer's trade or not.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Exactly, and they would be employed completely outside his trade or business, because that is not putting out fires.

Mr. Heaslip—But the employee may be instructed to do so.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Members should look at the policies they receive for workmen's compensation, and they would find that an employee working in the pastoral industry is only insured for pastoral work, not for sinking wells or mining or other such things. If an accident occurs while they are sinking a well they are not insured by these policies.

Mr. Heaslip—But insurance companies have paid out on accidents in those circumstances.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—They are not obliged to pay because the policies only cover the normal work, and are issued at a low premium because of this. Insurance for those employed on mining work and well sinking is at a high premium. On many occasions insurance companies have not stood by the strict letter of their policies, and have paid out. On one occasion I had a well to sink on my property and, although my employees were not covered by the compensation policy, the insurance company accepted the risk without extra premium. I do not believe that workmen's compensation would cover an employee instructed by his employer to fight a fire on a property, say, five miles from his normal place of work.

Mr. Heaslip—What about a fire half a mile away?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—In that case it might be accepted that he would be protecting his employer's property. To clear all doubts we have provided by legislation a cover for these people, because people were going to fires under all sorts of circumstances; some of them, as land owners, would not be insured under any policy, and in the city there were two or three emergency teams the members of which would normally work for the Government.

Mr. HUTCHENS—All wool brokers have a number of emergency teams.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That is so, and they are covered by special legislation introduced four years ago.

Mr. STEPHENS—The Premier misunderstood my question. I was not dealing only with compensation but with insurance against risks. Many landholders insure their premises against fire. The emergency fire service is there to put fires out, thereby saving money for the insurance companies, which receive large sums in premiums, so I asked whether the companies pay annual grants towards the upkeep of this service.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—A conference was held between the Government and the fire insurance companies, and as a result they agreed to contribute a certain amount towards the service provided. Section 9 of the Volunteer Fire Fighters Fund Act, 1949, provides:—

At such time in every financial year as is fixed by the trustees, the trustees shall be entitled to receive the following contributions:—

- (a) A contribution not exceeding one thousand pounds to be paid to the trustees by the Treasurer:
- (b) Contributions to be paid by each insurer but so that the total of such contributions payable in any financial year shall not exceed one thousand pounds:

Provided that the contribution to be paid by the Treasurer and the total contributions to be paid by insurers in any financial year shall be equal.

This fund has been established, it is audited by the Auditor-General, and trustees have been appointed. Section 11 provides:—

The trustees shall not be entitled to require any contribution to be paid so long as the amount in the fund exceeds ten thousand pounds.

When the fund is below £10,000 the State Government and the insurance companies pay £1,000 each. There are three trustees, one of whom, a special magistrate, is chairman, and one of the other trustees was appointed by the Governor from a panel nominated by the Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association of South Australia.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Our fire fighting organizations are doing a magnificent service, but I should like an assurance that there is no ground for the rumour that they are in any way encroaching upon work normally done by metropolitan fire brigades.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The operations of the emergency fire fighting organizations are entirely different from those of fire brigades

which operate in rated districts, towards which the Government, insurance companies, and local councils contribute. The equipment of the emergency services is designed to fight bush fires and fires in crops, and there is not the slightest conflict between their operations and those of fire brigades. No doubt if a fire broke out on the border of a fire brigade area the emergency service would help if called upon, but it is not designed to supersede the work of fire brigades.

Mr. HAWKER—Since I asked my question of the Treasurer, I have checked up with my own insurance company and have been informed that if a man were fighting a bush fire under my instructions, or under general instructions, on my property or the property of anyone else, he would be covered by my workmen's compensation policy. That would also apply if one of my men was on the way to, say, Mount Gambier and was injured when helping to extinguish a bush fire.

Line passed.

Sheriff and Gaols and Prisons Department, £200,064—passed.

Hospitals Department, £3,122,877.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—The Government recently sent overseas the new Director of Tuberculosis to gain further information on the operations of his department. I was wondering whether it would be of assistance to the Government if some of the senior officers of the department, other than medical officers, such as the secretary were sent abroad to gain information on the administrative side.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—For a number of years the Government has adopted the policy of sending officers overseas to improve their knowledge. Most of these men have been engineers, because engineering practices overseas have altered considerably in recent years and the Government is engaged in many important engineering projects. In numerous instances the Government does not have to pay their expenses because they are covered by scholarships, but in other cases the Government pays all expenses. The most recent officer selected to make inquiries overseas is the Engineer-in-Chief, Mr. Dridan, who has been nominated by the Commonwealth Government as an employers' representative at the International Labor Organization meeting in Geneva. The Government does not necessarily send technical or scientific officers abroad on every occasion. It sends administrative officers if special work is to be done or special information obtained.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—The Government is rendering valuable assistance to the Government Hospital at Barmera and the Government subsidized hospital at Renmark, but it has done very little to assist the Berri Hospital, which is run entirely by the people of the district. If it were to close down, there would be insufficient hospital beds in the district to cater for cases. Will the Treasurer consider the possibility of giving it financial assistance? During the past two years the amount provided for clerical assistance at the Barmera Hospital has increased by over £400. Could not savings be effected in administrative costs of that hospital so that this amount could be reduced and the consequent savings used to assist the Berri Hospital?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Last year £900 was voted and £1,116 spent on clerical assistance for the Barmera Hospital. This year £904 has been provided—a reduction of £212 on last year's actual expenditure. I will discuss with the Chief Secretary the possibility of assisting the Berri Hospital. Last year country hospitals generally were only half filled, and it would appear that that accommodation is reasonably satisfactory, although increased hospital and nurses' accommodation may be warranted in some instances. I will examine the question raised by the honourable member and let him have a reply in due course.

Mr. TAPPING—As I have received inquiries from prospective mothers in my district as to when the maternity section of the Western Districts Hospital will be opened, can the Treasurer say whether his earlier forecast that this section would open next March is likely to be fulfilled? Further, to whom should prospective mothers apply for bookings at the hospital?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No medical superintendent or booking staff has been appointed for the hospital, and any inquiries concerning the matter raised by the honourable member should be addressed to the Inspector-General of Hospitals who will no doubt inform inquirers what is to be done in this matter. I have heard nothing contrary to my earlier forecast, but experience has shown that contractors usually take longer to reach their targets than they originally estimate, therefore I regard the estimated time of opening as being somewhat optimistic. I will secure for the honourable member the latest information on this matter.

Mr. TAPPING—Can the Treasurer say whether the increase of £1,307 in the amount provided for the maintenance of bed cases at

St. Margaret's Convalescent Hospital, Semaphore, is due to an increase in costs or an increase in the number of beds there?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The increased grant is probably due to a slight increase in the number of patients and also to slightly higher costs. This hospital takes convalescent cases from the Royal Adelaide Hospital and is reimbursed by the Government for expenditure involved in such cases. An amicable arrangement exists between the two hospitals, and St. Margaret's hospital is satisfied that it is getting a fair deal.

Mr. HEASLIP—The upkeep of the subsidized hospital at Crystal Brook is almost entirely the responsibility of the people of the district, and any empty beds there are due to the fact that people requiring treatment prefer to go to the Port Pirie Hospital, where treatment is free. This use of the Port Pirie Hospital at the expense of the Crystal Brook Hospital has had an adverse financial effect on the latter institution. Can the Treasurer say why there should be in six of our large country towns Government hospitals at which people can get free hospitalization, whereas the cost of hospitals in smaller towns must be met by the people of the district?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Commonwealth hospital benefit scheme is in the process of coming into operation and the prohibition upon charges for beds in Government hospitals has been waived and the Hospitals Department has been informed by the Commonwealth Government that it can make charges on persons who are insured. These matters are being examined and an early statement of policy will be made.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I have been credibly informed that a number of approved societies under the Federal scheme will not insure persons suffering from some chronic ailments. It naturally follows that they are unable to obtain the full benefit of the Federal scheme which provides for the payment of 12s. a day to an insured person and 8s. a day to a person not insured. The amount of 12s., together with benefits derived from a society, substantially meet hospital costs but a chronic sufferer who cannot be insured, but who requires sympathetic treatment, only receives 8s. a day. Will the Premier take the matter up with the Federal authorities to see if something can be done to meet that position?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government is conscious of the difficulties associated with the present hospital insurance scheme and for that reason has not decided what charges will

be made. The Government is anxious to ensure that no person shall suffer disability through any charge. The whole question will be carefully examined before any policy is determined.

Mr. STEPHENS—Some years ago there was a resident medical officer at Port Adelaide but during a period of shortage he was transferred. Some years ago we were promised that another resident officer would be appointed. There is a great need for a resident officer in the district. At present many of the cases brought to the Casualty Hospital are treated by the nurse and then taken to Adelaide. It would be much better if they could be treated at Port Adelaide. Is it the Government's intention to consider enlarging the Casualty Hospital and to appoint a resident medical officer? A venereal diseases clinic was established at Port Adelaide many years ago, but I see no necessity for its retention. A part-time medical officer receives £300 a year for his services at that clinic, and that amount might well be transferred to the Casualty Hospital. I believe that the V.D. clinics in Adelaide and Port Adelaide should be transferred to the infectious diseases block at Northfield.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I believe the amount of £300 mentioned by the honourable member is paid to the doctor who also attends the Casualty Hospital—Dr. Cherry—and there should be no difficulty in making the proposed alteration. If it can be proved that no good purpose is being served by retaining the V.D. clinic at Port Adelaide the Government will speedily rectify the position and close it. I will ascertain the number of cases treated and bring the matters mentioned to the notice of the Chief Secretary.

Line passed.

Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department, £480,431.

Mr. DUNSTAN—At present bedridden invalid pensioners who are unable to be accommodated in institutions and homes are finding it almost impossible to maintain themselves. They require assistance but cannot afford it. The District and Bush Nursing Society cannot provide sufficient assistance because the nurses are too busy to attend to totally bedridden persons. Will the Government consider whether some service can be provided by the Public Relief Branch?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—There are two classes of old people who must be considered: those not requiring medical attention, who may be best looked after in institutions such as the

Old Folks Home at Magill or in the new type of cottage being erected by the Housing Trust where rents will be relatively low and they will have no difficulty in meeting their requirements; and those who require medical attention in varying degrees. Provision is made at Northfield for a number of persons and two new wards have recently been completed there. We have a problem there in regard to payment because the patients receive the Commonwealth invalid pension. From time to time, to the best of our ability, we will establish additional facilities at Northfield. A hospital is not the ideal place for such patients.

Line passed.

Department of Public Health, £117,719—passed

Miscellaneous, £1,159,059.

Mr. DUNSTAN—A grant of £2,600 is to be made in connection with a National Theatre. I am the secretary of an organization keenly interested in the establishment of such a theatre here. Can the Treasurer say how the money is to be spent and whether consideration has been given to the establishment of a full scale theatre? I understand that a suitable site may become available in the Exhibition grounds, between the University and the Exhibition building. I understand the proposal is to give half the land to the University and half to the School of Mines, but that both bodies are prepared to waive their claims to the land, provided they can get land further back, in order that a State theatre may be established. Has consideration been given to this land as a suitable site?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This is a matter of long standing. Negotiations were first started in the early days of Mr. Chifley's Prime Ministership when there was an urge from many quarters for a National Theatre, largely at the backing of the New South Wales Government the Commonwealth Government agreed to advance money, if it were supplemented by the States, for the establishment of a first-class company to give dramatic performances, but some of the States would not make a grant, so nothing was done. Our Parliament agreed to advance money. The sum of £2,600 was voted last year, but not spent. It appears again this year, because we have accepted the obligation to grant money when the other States do so, but I doubt whether it will ever be needed. The vote is really a renewal of approval given some time ago, and if it is not needed in the forthcoming year it will probably be deleted from next year's Estimates.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—The amount set down for caretaking and lighting of the National War Memorial shows a modest increase. If it will bring about a better supervision of the war memorial it will be money well spent because a number of people do not observe the sanctity of the memorial. In most cases it is due to thoughtlessness, but to ex-servicemen, and those who mourn ex-servicemen, the desecration of the memorial is a serious thing. Most people will be pleased that the Government has set aside money for work to proceed on a memorial to personnel who died during World War II. It is time material evidence was forthcoming in regard to the building of the memorial, which I understand will be an extension of the present one.

Mr. CHRISTIAN—An amount of £1,000 is set down for the Flying Doctor Service of Australia (South Australian section). It has stood at this figure for many years and it is time we had an increase. For many years Mr. Riches has championed in this place the cause of the Flying Doctor Service at Ceduna. Assistance has been given through the B.C.A., and we are grateful for the help given to the hospitals at Ceduna and Wudinna. Each receives £500. Then there are the contributions to the medical services at Tarcoola and Cook. We have asked for a recognition of the valuable work done by the Flying Doctor Service at Ceduna. I have an obligation to strongly support a grant for the service because it does valuable work in the part of the State extending to the Western Australian border and towards the interior. It is a service which cannot be rendered by anyone else; it has not been attempted by anyone else. There is no profit in the undertaking and largely it is a labour of love. The time has arrived for a more appropriate recognition of the work. Two or three years ago the Treasurer promised that help would be given if an application were made through the other Flying Doctor Service. I do not know what transpired, but the amount for the other service has not been increased from £1,000. Either there was no application, or, if one was made, there was no allocation. My support in this matter is strongly backed by the Local Government Association of Eyre Peninsula, which comprises 12 councils. The members are quite capable and render valuable service in their respective spheres. They decided that this case should receive recognition by the Government and passed a resolution to that effect at their last annual conference. Recently, the executive of the association met

at Kimba and again passed a resolution asking for Government assistance for this valuable work. I urge the Government to re-examine this matter to see whether it can break through the barriers that have apparently hampered it in the past.

Mr. RICHES—I support Mr. Christian's remarks, and vouch for all he said. The flying doctor service operating at Ceduna renders valuable service in parts of my district. The Coober Pedy opal field is inhabited mostly by elderly men, and a service which can put down a doctor there for regular consultations is much more acceptable than an ambulance service providing transport facilities only in case of emergency. The women in outback areas know they have the opportunity of going to the clinic regularly each month for consultations, and this affords them a greater degree of security than transport only in case of emergency or serious illness. There are two lady doctors in addition to the nurses in the hostels. The grant to the hostels does not nearly meet running costs, and the case that has been made out for a subsidy for the flying doctor service is unanswerable. Some of the consultations have been arranged so that the aerial transport services have been rendered free of cost to the patient, and throughout my district the service is held in the highest regard. Can the Treasurer say why the grant for the Institution for the Blind, Deaf and Dumb has been cut from £12,000 to £10,000? I understand an inquiry was held into teaching methods and services provided at Townsend House. Will the committee's report be made available to witness and parents of the children? What is the present policy of the institution on teaching methods? Will the manual method be used instead of concentrating entirely on oral teaching? I have known of children that have suffered three or four years' handicap because of the refusal for some time to teach deaf children who can talk on their hands by the manual method. I believe the institution now finds it difficult to obtain manual teachers. Both methods of instruction have advantages, and last night I saw a wonderful film about the oral method. My information is that Townsend House is in need of additional funds and I am concerned about the reduction.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Many of the institutions set up for philanthropic purposes have subsequently applied to the Government for assistance. The Government tries to assess the value of the work done and ascertain whether it would otherwise have to be carried

out by the Government. We usually obtain a report from the Auditor-General on how many persons are being cared for, the value of the services rendered to the community, the standard of administration, and other matters before asking Parliament to vote a grant. We have a special committee to inquire into hospital finances, the number of patients treated, and the financial circumstances of the patients. This is done to assess a reasonable grant. I will examine the remarks made by Mr. Christian and Mr. Riches about the flying doctor service. Last time I made inquiries there was some doubt whether it was in fact a flying doctor service because the communications system had not been installed, but I believe it has now. I will let the honourable members have a report on the Government's views and see that any injustice is rectified. The grant for the flying doctor service has been £1,000 for many years and I do not think there has been any application for an increase. I am advised it has no difficulty in meeting its commitments because of strong public support. Of course, it now covers a very large area and has given valuable services to places such as Radium Hill. I understand that a public appeal for support received a highly satisfactory response. We have had some difficulties in respect of Townsend House. It is conducted by a committee of management which installed some new teachers who placed more emphasis upon a different type of teaching than had previously been the case, and some of the parents of the children became concerned, fearing that their children were not getting the best type of instruction. The new principal was brought from England and, I understand, had very good testimonials. The Government has very heavily subsidized this small institution, and even though the amount is reduced by £2,000 this year, the subsidy is still large for an institution over which it has no control. Following on representations made to it the Government set up a competent committee of inquiry, with an officer loaned by the Victorian Government as chairman. The committee's report went to the appropriate Minister and I have not handled it, but I would think that there would be no objection to the honourable member, or any other member, seeing it. However, when it becomes a matter of making public a report which deals with other people's affairs, it needs further consideration. In addition, the Auditor-General made a number of reports upon this institution, and I have no doubt that the amount set down for this year was the sum recommended by him.

Mr. Riches—The reduction will not cause any hardship to the children?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Auditor-General is sometimes very critical of wasteful administration in various institutions and has suggested useful economies, but I am sure that he is the last person in the world who would recommend a reduction that would cause hardship to anyone. I have no doubt that I will be able to bring down on the next day of sitting both reports for the honourable member's information.

Mr. WHITE—On page 34 provision is made for £12,000 as a subsidy to the District and Bush Nursing Society, this being an increase of £3,000. This is an organization with which I have had some experience over a number of years. It is doing fine work throughout the State, and because of the efficiency of its service, demands upon it are growing. According to its annual report for the year ended June 30, 1935, 144,588 visits were made by nurses, which was an increase of some 16,000 over the previous year. The reasons for this are the efficiency of the organization, the steep rise in hospital fees which have compelled people to have more medical treatment in the home, the shortage of public beds in hospitals with the result that patients are sent home to convalesce, and the increased longevity due to progress in medical science; as a consequence there are many more old people who must be looked after, and this is very largely the work of the society. At present there are 10 country branches and 19 metropolitan centres. The society estimates that the amount of work it will be called upon to do in the ensuing year will be greater than in the year past, and because of that it hoped to get a bigger subsidy. I believe it sought £15,000 and I would like to know why the additional £3,000 was not given. I do not want to create the impression that the society is not grateful for the help that has been given, but in view of the splendid work it is doing and the additional work it expects to have to cope with, those responsible feel that the additional sum will be necessary. Failing this, the money will have to be obtained by the very arduous means of public collections. On page 38 £10,000 is set down for ambulance services. Will the Treasurer explain what this is for?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The subsidy for the District and Bush Nursing Society represents a 33 per cent increase in a Budget in which the overall increase is only seven per cent, so it will be seen that, although we very much appreciate the work the society is doing,

the Government has gone to the limit of its capacity in fixing the subsidy. Some time ago, at the request of our Chairman of Committees, Mr. Dunks, consideration was given to the ambulance services, and the Government decided to give material assistance to the setting up of a central organization to co-ordinate existing ambulance services and provide others. To that end we negotiated successfully with St. John Ambulance Brigade, which has been noted for many years for its fine public work.

Mr. Corcoran—Does this provide for setting up services in the country?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Organizations cannot spring up immediately, but we promised to give the St. John Ambulance Brigade financial assistance and we requested that services should be extended to country areas. The big increase is to enable additional facilities to be provided. A short time ago, had a major calamity such as a serious railway disaster occurred, we would not have had enough ambulances to handle the situation, as those existing were unco-ordinated and insufficient. Again, this line has been increased by 33 per cent as in the case of the District and Bush Nursing Society.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Last year the sum of £175 was voted towards nurses' quarters at the Terowie hospital, and apparently was not spent.

The item does not appear on this year's Estimates. Is some different provision now included in £1,000 provided this year for additions and alterations or has the item been inadvertently dropped? Last year £86 was spent by the committee on licensing of taxicabs, and £200 is provided for this year. Has the Government considered the committee's report and is it intended to bring down legislation dealing with its recommendations this session?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Although I have not the information before me it is apparent that the amount voted for the nurses' quarters at Terowie, which was on a pound for pound basis, was not spent by the committee, and no request was made for it. This year it is proposed to proceed with a more ambitious scheme because £1,000 on a pound for pound basis indicates that a fairly substantial job is proposed. I will obtain details of what the Minister of Health has approved for this hospital. I assume that last year it was proposed to enclose a verandah or provide a sleep out for the nurses but now they are providing better accommodation. Earlier today I stated that I had examined the report of the Committee on Licensing of Taxicabs and thought that Cabinet would approve of its recommendations, although

they had not yet been submitted to it. If possible legislation will be introduced this session.

Mr. MICHAEL—I commend the Government for providing increases to subsidized hospitals. No institutions are more deserving and they should be subsidized as much as possible. However, it is anomalous that in public hospitals no charges are made, whereas patients in subsidized hospitals have to pay. A statement was made recently that the cost per bed in public hospitals was considerably more than that in the subsidized institutions, and I do not think that was challenged by the Government. I urge this House to seek a solution to this anomaly. Free hospitals should not be provided for everybody but it is unfair that people in six or seven localities, irrespective of their means, should obtain free services, whereas those in other districts are denied these.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Earlier today I promised that the Government would make an early pronouncement on this matter. The Commonwealth hospitals scheme has been rather slow in developing, and, as pointed out by the Leader, still does not cover a large number of people.

Mr. TAPPING—The additional grant of £35,853 for the Fire Brigades Board is an increase of £2,733 on the amount spent last year, but I express my disappointment at the small increase because of the heavy burden which is being imposed on councils. The Port Adelaide city council, of which Semaphore is part, has this year been forced to levy a special rate of 2d. in the pound to meet its obligation under the Fire Brigades Act, and because of this it has no chance to make any progress in such matters as the provision of footpaths and roads. Under the existing set-up, five-sevenths of the special grant goes to the insurance underwriters. Although it is too late to alter the figures, I ask the Premier to seriously consider alleviating the burden on councils, because it is wrong that a special grant should be made to underwriters which imposes such a burden. Last year, of the grant of £33,000, over £20,000 went to them, and the remaining amount to the corporations; the amount they received was very small, 14 councils having to share only £14,000. I am concerned with the position of my own council, and ask the Premier to consider amending the Act to give alleviation to councils and to take away some of the benefits which accrue to the underwriters.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Act provides that certain proportions shall be paid by the Government, the underwriters,

and the councils, and there is a further proviso that the Government need not contribute more than £10,000 a year. The councils entered into an agreement, and no doubt it may be held that some are paying more and others less than their fair proportion. The Government has no right to break an agreement entered into with the councils, which, if they want an amendment of the Act, must reach an agreement among themselves. Every time we legislate and a council finds that its position is worse as a result, the Government hears about it, and it is said that it is breaking a solemn contract. The agreement was reached a long time ago and provided for different amounts to be collected from different areas. Port Adelaide has very heavy fire risks and therefore pays a much higher amount than districts like Norwood and Enfield. The Government studied the Fire Brigade Board's budget and as a result included an additional amount, which the Government considers to be its share of the additional expenditure involved. Whereas the amount provided in 1936 was £10,000 this year it will be £35,853, and therefore the Government is not resting on its legal immunity. The honourable member suggests that it would be fairer if the £35,853 were handed over to the councils and the insurance companies paid a bigger proportion. A householder who insures his house pays his

contribution through the insurance company and also pays a contribution through his rates, but the man who does not insure his house only makes a contribution through his rating, yet he is the one the honourable member says should receive further alleviation.

Mr. Tapping—No, the councils.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The councils do not provide the money; the ratepayers do.

Mr. Davis—Every ratepayer pays it.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That is the point, but every ratepayer does not make a contribution through insurance. From the point of view of equity, rating is the fairer system. Mr. Tapping says that the man who insures should pay the lot.

Mr. Tapping—No.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If there were no Fire Brigades Board fire insurance premiums would be very much higher. The Auditor-General has reported many times on this matter and the Government has tried to fix its allocation fairly.

Line passed.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.24 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, October 27, at 2 p.m.