HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, November 19, 1953.

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

QUESTIONS.

TRAMWAYS APPEAL BOARD.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Premier made any further investigations into the possibility of a Tramways Appeal Board being established for the hearing of applications by tramwaymen who have been penalized in one way or another by the management?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have not had an opportunity to go into the matter. Last week I had to continuously attend Grants Commission sittings and this week much legislation has had to be prepared for consideration by Parliament. I hope to deal with it next week and let the honourable member have a reply as soon as possible.

HARBOUR PILOTS' SALARIES.

Mr. TAPPING—Has the Minister of Marine a further reply to the question I asked on November 3 regarding salaries of pilots employed by the South Australian Harbors Board?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I took up the matter with the Harbors Board and today I forwarded to the honourable member a long reply following on the board's investigation. The general purport of it is that instead of suffering any disability they are in a favourable position as is shown by the report of the Public Service Commissioner, to whom the matter was referred. It is not a question that can be answered in detail now, but following on the receipt of the letter which will be forwarded to the honourable member, if he desires further details I shall be pleased to supply them.

SHARK FISHING.

Mr. WILLIAM JENKINS—Recently one month's close season was imposed on the taking of school schnapper shark in South Australian waters inside the three mile limit. South Australia co-operated with the eastern States in this arrangement, which eventually broke down. I have been told that the eastern States wish to impose a three month's close season next year on the same type of fish and others as well. Can the Minister of Agriculture say if that is so, and if it is intended to impose the same restrictions in South Australian waters?

The Hon. Sir GEORGE JENKINS—The honourable member is correct in saying that South Australia co-operated with the eastern States, but unfortunately, after agreeing to do so, they did not co-operate with us, and left us in the lurch. South Australia imposed the limitation but the other States did not. I have heard nothing further since and I do not know what they have in mind. I will ascertain the position, but South Australia will tread very warily in future after having been let down.

STACKING OF WHEAT AT WALLAROO.

Mr. McALEES—It has been reported to me that many hundreds of tons of wheat have been carted by road to Ardrossan from places as far up as Collinsfield, Snowtown and Red Hill. It is bagged wheat and when it reaches Ardrossan the bags, I understand, are slit so that the wheat can be put into silos. In the past the wheat has always gone to Wallaroo where there are acres of stacking ground. Could not this bagged wheat be taken by rail for stacking at Wallaroo, thereby preventing damage to the roads and making use of the railways?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Yesterday the Premier gave a detailed reply in regard to a number of points raised by the honourable member. The matter is outside the control of the railways. Personally, I regret that sometimes roads parallel to railways are used for such purposes but it is not for the railways to control the position. The Australian Wheat Board is the responsible authority to control and indicate the destination of the wheat. If the honourable member reads the reply given by the Premier yesterday and thereafter directs further representations to either the Wheat Board or myself as Minister of Railways I shall see what we can do. I think in many cases the practice is uneconomical, but it arises out of a large number of circumstances, some of which of course, have relation to the inadequacy of the number of employees at Wallaroo.

ROAD MAKING RESEARCH.

Mr. BROOKMAN—Recently, when speaking on the Road Traffic Act Amendment Bill (No. 2) I mentioned the need for research work on the matter of making and maintaining roads, and the passing on of the information obtained to members of Parliament. In this House we discuss roads and many members refer to the best ways of making them. Since making those remarks I have discovered that the Highways Department is conducting some

research into the matter. Can the Minister of Works indicate what is being done and can the information be made available to members?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I am glad to be able to say that a considerable amount of research work has been done over the last few years by the Highways Department. In years gone by it was not so well realized that certain materials combined with bitumen could make a good road, and that other materials seemed to starve it. Often materials that look almost identical produce different results in practice in wear and tear on the roads. The Highways Department has a good laboratory and tests by chemical and mechanical means the values of the various materials. Members could well spend one morning viewing to what extent these experiments are carried out in order to ensure that the best materials that can be economically obtained are used. Towards that end, not long ago the Highways Commissioner (Mr. Richmond) and the Deputy Highways Commissioner (Mr. Jackman) were sent abroad to enquire into the best means discovered overseas of making roads and to improve upon our methods. Therefore, to the extent possible with our limited resources we are endeavouring always to get the best materials obtainable. Unfortunately, our types of material are not the best. We have not anything like some of the good metals other States have, particularly Victoria, but all the time we are trying to ascertain which is the best material and often go to considerable expense in carting it long distances. I invite any member interested to come down with me when the House is not sitting to see what is being done. I am sure members would then agree that South Australia is not lagging behind any State or other parts of the world in trying to improve our road-making methods. A visit would dispel the popular belief that nothing is being done in this direction.

LAND FOR SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Can the Minister of Lands inform the House of the number of properties acquired for soldier settlement and not yet allotted, their acreages, the date on which they were acquired, and when it is expected they will be allotted?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The honourable member indicated a few days ago that he would ask this question, consequently I have been able to get the information he requires. I also have a report in reference to this matter, which states:—

Estates purchased for War Service Land Settlement are not necessarily developed and allotted in the order of purchase. Consideration must be given to the type of work involved, the economics of moving heavy plant and labour from one locality to another when they are likely to be again required in the original locality, and many other factors; for example the necessity for drainage, etc. Where this could be done without unnecessary transfers of men and equipment from place to place, it has been the policy to deal first with lands which could be developed and allotted with the least delay. With the exception of one or two comparatively recent purchases, the repurchased lands which have not yet been developed to the stage where the holdings can be allocated comprise the balances of estates formed by the aggregation of properties purchased as opportunities offered, sometimes after lengthy negotiations. Such purchases have been made over a period of some years with the object of building up composite areas for settlement. Those portions of the aggregated estates which could be brought to a productive stage with a minimum lapse of time have been developed and allocated without awaiting that stage being reached on those portions which are dependent on such factors as additional drainage. It would be most misleading to quote actual dates of purchase for these lands, because as I have explained, they comprise in most instances, balances of properties purchased over a period of years, and of which parts have already been allotted. It is anticipated that all re-purchased land which has so far been approved by the Commonwealth for inclusion in the scheme, can be brought to the stage where allocation can be made progressively in from 18 months to 4 years.

Lands Purchased, Approved by Commonwealth for Inclusion in War Service Land Settlement Scheme, but Not Yet Allocated.

Estate.	Hundred.	Acres.	Holdings.	Date of Inclusion.
Callendale (*ex* Legoe and Noswórthy)	Coles and Conmurra	4,480	4	September, 1948
Seymour, etc.	Coles and Spence	14,863	17	June, 1948
Bott and Sutton	Grey	1,179	1	June, 1946
Bryson	Townsend	1,674	2	September, 1953
Grieve	Townsend	1,831	2	January, 1949
McBain, McInnes, etc., Subd. II	Conmurra and Townsend	15,229	14	1947/1953
Seymour, etc., Subd. III.	Coles, Spence, etc	10,026	8	June, 1948
Wellington (*ex* Bowman)	Brinkley	3,469	3	October, 1952
Limbert	Townsend	4,236	4	May, 1953

ANGASTON PRIMARY SCHOOL YARD.

Mr. TEUSNER—Has the Minister representing the Minister of Education a reply to the question I asked yesterday about repairs necessary at the Angaston primary school yard?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I have been in touch with my colleague, the Minister of Education, and the position, subject to verification, is that tenders have been called for the work. I will verify that and let the honourable member know.

BURNSIDE-CRAFERS HIGHWAY.

Mr. SHANNON—About two weeks ago I asked the Minister of Local Government a question in regard to the costs incurred in the survey and purchase of land and some preparatory work by the Burnside council on the proposed new highway between Burnside and the Crafers summit along the spur of Waterfall Gully. Has the Minister that information?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The work on the Glen Osmond-Crafers Road, including work already undertaken, is estimated to cost £130,000. I think the actual amount expended so far would be less than half that. The construction of the new road between Burnside and Crafers will probably cost about £1,200,000.

Mr. SHANNON—Can the Minister give the costs incurred by the Highways Department in surveying the route, purchasing land and for work already done, I understand, by the Burnside council on the proposed highway? Can he also say whether tenders have been called for any of the earth works required, and, if so, with what result?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The amount spent on acquisition of land up to the present is £12,651 12s. As the corporation of Burnside was interested in providing a road to serve houses in Linden Avenue, which would also carry the traffic from the new road when completed, the department, at the request of the council, agreed to provide a proportion of the finance so that an adequate road could be constructed to fit in with future work. The amount thus provided totals £22,651 12s. Tenders were called for excavation on a further section of the road in November, 1948. At this stage a further examination of the route was made, which indicated that improvement in grade and alignment could be secured by alteration in the route. The lowest tender, though satisfactory, did not then apply and it was not accepted. Fresh plans and specifications were prepared and tenders again called in October, 1949. Two tenders were received, but, as available funds were required for urgent works elsewhere, no tender was accepted. I will see whether it is feasible and desirable to allocate further sums, and, if so, consideration will be given to calling tenders again for the work.

ACCOMMODATION FOR DREDGING STAFF.

Mr. DAVIS—Has the Minister of Marine a reply to my recent question regarding accommodation at Port Pirie for men engaged in dredging work?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I think that all except three have been provided for.

LIGHTING OF TRAM STOPS.

Mr. DUNNAGE—It was suggested in the House yesterday that a number of accidents might not happen if tram and bus stops were better lighted. I know a limited grant has been given in the past to councils for this purpose, but if they are prepared to light these stopping places, would the Government subsidize them?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Highways Act provides that not more than £5,000 shall be expended out of the Highways Fund for the lighting of streets. This work has always been regarded as the function of councils. The only streets on which the principle has been departed from are the Port Road, which is the main arterial road between the city and Port Adelaide, and Anzac Highway, which is regarded as a war memorial. It is not competent for the Highways Commissioner or the Government to provide any more than that amount, and any increase would require an amendment of the Act. If this additional work were undertaken some other work would have to be either delayed or suspended indefinitely. Parliament rightly took the view that expenditure on lighting in metropolitan and country towns was the function of local government authorities, and not the central Government out of the Highways Fund.

TAPLAN WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Minister of Works a further reply to my question of yesterday regarding the Taplan water supply?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I have not heard what has been done, but I am sure those people on the main have little to complain about compared with others who have not even a main.

HOUSING TRUST RENTS.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—It would appear that the rents of Housing Trust homes recently allotted are a little higher than for those allotted two or three months ago. In one case the rent fixed was 40s. a week, whereas in a recent case it was 49s. Does this mean that the trust is fixing a maximum rent to enable it to meet the cost of the homes?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will make inquiries and get a report.

PARINGA WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Premier any further information regarding an inspection he made at Paringa some time ago in relation to providing a bigger outlet from the Murray into Pike Creek? He promised a deputation from the local council to make inquiries.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will check the position and bring down a report next Tuesday.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD laid on the table a copy of the committee's report.

Ordered to be printed.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the Hon. T. Playford and read a first time.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Minister of Industry and Employment)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

It arises directly from a recommendation of an advisory committee appointed by the Government to deal with the general subject of workmen's compensation. Just prior to the last election I said that the proper procedure for considering amendments to this legislation would be a similar set-up to that which had been adopted over the years in respect of traffic by which a committee representing the various sections considers traffic problems and from to time makes recommendations to this House.

Mr. Lawn—Can anyone give evidence before the State Traffic Committee?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes, if the witness is competent.

Mr. Lawn—Was any evidence given before the Workmen's Compensation Committee?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The committee carried out its work in its own way and could have called evidence if it desired. I presume it heard a considerable amount, because it has made valuable recommendations. Those recommendations, signed by all members, were completely unanimous findings, but the member appointed by the Labor Party—

Mr. Lawn—The Labor Party did not appoint a member.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Then the member who was appointed as the result of the recommendation of the Leader of the Opposition—

Mr. O'Halloran—He was nominated by the Trades and Labor Council.

Members interjecting:

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The member appointed in the interests of the employees states in the report that he would have gone further. I assure honourable members who are already interjecting that, if they want this Bill to be scrapped, they have only to say so. If they desire it to be dealt with from a party political angle, they have only to oppose it and I am certain they will succeed in their endeavours. The member for Adelaide is obviously very excited about the Bill before hearing even one of its provisions. Usually members listen to the second reading explanation and then express their approval or disapproval of the Bill, but it seems to be a particularly sore point with the member for Adelaide that this Government should presume to introduce a Bill which will benefit workmen.

As honourable members know, the Bill is for the purpose of carrying into effect the recommendations made by the Workmen's Compensation Committee appointed by the Government. Some members have had the committee's report before them, but others have not, so it may be desirable for me to read it so that all members will be familiar with its contents. It is as follows:—

The Advisory Committee on Workmen's Compensation has considered what amendments should be made to the Workmen's Compensation Act this year. The main question is to what extent should the rates of compensation be increased? In considering this matter the committee has paid regard to the fact that the living wage in South Australia has increased by approximately 25 per cent since the rates of workmen's compensation were last fixed (at the end of 1951) by Parliament. We have also looked at the rates in other States and under Commonwealth Acts. To some extent these rates are now in a state of flux. Victoria amended its Act in April of this year, and Bills to amend the Acts of New South Wales and Western Australia are now before the Parliaments of those States. We cannot say at present whether these Bills will pass or what amendments will be made to them, but it is reasonable to assume that they will result

in some increases in the rates of compensation in New South Wales and Victoria. Some of the South Australian rates, though fixed as recently as 1951, are low compared with those prevailing generally throughout Australia, and we have no doubt that increases are justified. The only question is how much? In recommending the increases which the committee thinks should be made this year we have limited ourselves to such increases as we clearly see to be justified at present, but it may be that further adjustments will have to be made next year when the full effect of the changes in other States is known. The recommendations which we make are in all cases supported by the chairman and Mr. Gibb. Mr. O'Connor desires it to be recorded that while he supports increases, he considers that no rate fixed in the South Australian Act should be less than the corresponding Victorian rate fixed by the amending Victorian legislation passed in April of this year. The committee's recommendations are as follow:—

1. Compensation for injuries on journeys to and from work.—The committee recommends that compensation should be payable for injuries on journeys—

(*a*) taken by workmen to and from work by transport provided by the employer or provided under arrangements made by the employer solely or mainly for the benefit of his employees:

(*b*) on journeys taken by apprentices during ordinary working hours between the apprentice's place of employment and any trade school which he is obliged by law or required by his employer to attend.

While recognizing that precedents exist for granting compensation on workmen's normal daily journeys to and from work a majority of the committee considers that it is wrong in principle to hold an employer liable for events happening outside ordinary working hours and over which he has no control, and is not prepared to recommend such a law at present.

2. Earnings limit of a workman under the Act.—The committee recommends that the limit of the amount of earnings which determine whether a workman is under the Act or not should be raised from £24 to £33 a week, *i.e.*, approximately £1,750 a year. Victoria has already applied its Act to workmen earning up to £2,000 a year and the Bills in New South Wales and Western Australia propose the same figure. New Zealand and Queensland have no limit. The committee, however, thinks that consistently with the general scheme of compensation there should be an earnings limit in the definition of "worker" but that it should be high enough to cover the earnings of the best paid classes of manual workers. On the information available to the committee £1,750 a year, or £33 a week, is sufficient for this purpose at present. The committee also recommends that the period during which the average weekly earnings should be calculated for the purpose of determining whether a man is a workman or not could be set out in the Act. It recommends that the average weekly earnings should be based on the workman's average weekly earnings during the previous 12 months or if he has been employed for less than 12 months, during the actual period of his employment.

3. Maximum compensation on death.—The South Australian Act now provides a maximum of £1,500, plus £50 for each dependent child under 16. An adjustment on the basis of the increase in the living wage will raise the £1,500 to about £1,900, but the committee thinks a somewhat higher figure is justified. The maximum in New South Wales is already £2,000 and may be raised before long. In Victoria it is £2,240, in Tasmania £1,750 and in the Commonwealth £1,500. The present Western Australian Bill provides for an increase to £2,400. The committee therefore feels that the present South Australian figure should be raised to £2,000. The committee also recommends that the £50 child allowance should be raised to £75. The living wage adjustment would justify £62 10s, but, in view of higher allowances in various States, an increase to £75 is not too high.

4. Maximum compensation for disablement.—The present figure is £1,750. The committee recommends that this be increased to £2,250. The living wage adjustment would raise the figure to £2,200 approximately, but, in view of the existing higher rate in Victoria and the possibility that New South Wales and Western Australia will also make substantial increases, we think that £2,250 is now clearly justified.

5. Increases of weekly payments for incapacity.—In South Australia the present maximum weekly payments for incapacity where the worker has dependants is £11. We recommend that this be increased to £12. The living wage adjustment would justify a higher figure than this, but we take into account the fact that the figure of £11 fixed in 1951 was substantially above the Australian standard at that time. The most recently fixed interstate maximum weekly payment is in Victoria which has adopted £12 8s. Other States are now lower but it is likely that New South Wales and Western Australia will shortly adopt something comparable with this. £12 is therefore justified at present for South Australia.

Wife's allowance during workman's incapacity.—We recommend this should be increased from £1 10s. to £2. In making this recommendation we take into account the fact that the living wage adjustment would raise the wife's allowance to £1 17s. 6d. also the fact that some other States already allow £2. We recommend also that the child allowance of 10s. a week be raised to 15s. for similar reasons.

Workman without dependants.—We recommend that the maximum weekly payment for a worker without dependants be increased from £8 to £8 15s., which is approximately the same as the rate recently fixed in Victoria and is also proportionate to the increase recommended above for workers with dependants.

6. Medical and hospital benefits.—The committee recommends that the maximum of £75 now allowed by the Act be increased to £100. The £25 increase should be allocated as follows:—

(*a*) The amount allowed for doctors' fees, etc., to be increased by £5, *i.e.*, from £35 to £40.

(*b*) The amount payable for the hospital fees to be increased by £20, *i.e.*, from £30 to £50.

We also recommend that under the heading of medical expenses any living, travelling or other costs involved in obtaining an examination or treatment by specialists should be included; and that if an injury necessitates repairs to glasses or hearing aids, that the cost of these repairs should also be included as medical expenses.

7. Funeral Expenses.—In view of the increased cost of funerals the committee recommends that the amount allowable as funeral expenses for a deceased worker without dependants be increased from £30 to £40.

The committee is of opinion that the above amendments ought to be made this year. It has considered some other possible amendments of the Act but they are not urgent and the committee will report on them at a later date.

That report was signed by Messrs. E. L. Bean (chairman), E. R. O'Connor, and A. J. Gibb, and was dated October 19, 1953. The Bill has been introduced as a result of the work of this committee.

Mr. Stott—Did it receive any evidence or express any opinion about the effect on workmen's compensation premiums?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have given the House all the information I have received from the committee.

Mr. Jennings—Was a minority report put in by Mr. O'Connor?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have given the full terms of the report, which was signed by all members of the committee, but Mr. O'Connor desired it to be recorded that although he supported the increases he considered that no rate fixed in South Australia should be lower than the corresponding rate fixed by the amending Victorian legislation passed last April. With that qualification, the report was signed and approved by all members of the committee.

Mr. Fred Walsh—It was really an interim report?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Before the last elections I said that as a matter of policy my Government believed that alterations to the Workmen's Compensation Act should not be carried out in a haphazard manner as in the past.

Mr. Lawn—But you lost the elections.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member reminds me of a certain man who played in a cricket match. The umpire gave him out, but he said, "I am not out." The umpire said, "Have a look at tomorrow's paper and you will see whether you are out or not." Workmen's compensation legislation should not be amended haphazardly because, with changing values of money, unless it is under constant review by a competent, reasonable and impartial committee, our rates can become seriously out of line with those in other States or not meet the circumstances for which it was designed. For that reason I announced that the Government would appoint a permanent advisory committee. Having made a report, it will not go out of existence. It could make another report tomorrow if any of the members believed that a certain aspect should receive the attention of Parliament. The committee knows that is the position.

Mr. Lawn—For how long is it appointed?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—So far as the Government is concerned, it is permanent. For some reason or other the employers or employees may ask that their representative be changed. Each side has the right to nominate its representative. For instance, if the Trades and Labor Council desired to change its nominee it could nominate—

Mr. Dunks—Mr. Lawn.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—And I believe that would be a wise nomination—not that I am casting any aspersion on the work done by any member of the committee. In the time available, and taking into account that it was some time before Mr. O'Connor could attend to this work, I believe the committee has given a well-reasoned report, which, in itself answers the question whether it sought outside information before making its recommendations.

The committee has reviewed all the principal rates of compensation mentioned in the Act and has made suggestions for increasing them. In doing so the committee has taken into account the fact that since the amending Workmen's Compensation Bill of 1951 was passed the living wage has increased by 25 per cent and has also paid regard to the rates of compensation payable under the laws of the other States. The committee has also made some allowance for the possibility that the rates in some of the other States may be increased this year; but at the time when the committee made its report the only State which had passed an Act this year was Victoria. As the committee is a permanent one and will review the compensation from time to time it is not to be expected that this Bill will finally settle all the problems. Apparently it limited itself to recommending such increases as it thought were clearly justified at the time of its report. The details of the Bill are as follows:—Clause 3 provides that compensation will be payable in respect of injuries received

by a workman on journeys to and from work where the journey is taken by a means of transport provided by the employer, or provided under arrangements made by the employer. Compensation will also be payable for injuries received by workmen on journeys taken during working hours between the place of employment and any trade or other school which the workman is required by law or requested by his employer to attend. The committee, of course, was aware that precedents existed for giving a right to compensation where an injury occurs on any of the workman's ordinary daily journeys to or from work; but a majority of the committee thought that this was wrong in principle, and notwithstanding the existence of some precedents was not prepared to recommend it.

Clause 4 deals firstly with the earnings limit of workmen who are within the scope of the workmen's compensation legislation. At present a man whose average weekly earnings exceed £24 is not entitled to compensation. The committee recommended that the figure of £24 should be raised to £33. In doing so it was influenced by information showing that £24 a week was insufficient to cover the earnings of some classes of manual workers. The committee thought that the limit should be high enough to ensure that persons employed in manual occupations which have always been regarded as coming within the scope of the Act, would not, in future be excluded. The figure of £33 a week is equivalent to approximately £1,750 a year which is in force in some other States, and is considered high enough to include all manual workers. Another amendment made to the definition of "workman" is a new provision for clarifying the meaning of the expression "average weekly earnings." For very many years the question whether a workman came within the Act or not has depended upon his "average weekly earnings," but it has never been quite clear over what period the average is to be taken. It is proposed in the Bill to provide that the average weekly earnings of a workman for the purpose of determining whether he is under the Act or not, will be computed in the same way as his average weekly earnings are computed for the purpose of ascertaining compensation for incapacity. The method proposed is that the average weekly earnings for the 12 months preceding the relevant time are taken; and if the man has been employed for less than 12 months his average weekly earnings for the actual period of his employment are determined. If the period of a workman's employment is so short that his actual average weekly earnings cannot be ascertained, the earnings of other people in the same grade and the same work will be looked at.

Clause 5 raises the amount of compensation payable on death. At present the maximum is £1,500, plus £50 for each dependant child under 16. In accordance with the committee's recommendations it is proposed to increase this to £2,000, with an allowance of £75 for each child.

Mr. Lawn—I bet employers and insurance companies are clapping their hands this afternoon.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have already pointed out that, with the exception of Victoria, South Australia possibly has the most liberal workmen's compensation legislation in Australia, and in some instances our rates even exceed those applying in Victoria. Members can either accept or reject the Bill; if they do not like it they only have to say so. The Government intends to support it and hopes it will become law. The fact still remains that it is properly placed before Parliament, and any member has the right to move any amendment he desires.

Mr. Lawn—All I said was that employers and insurance companies are happy that it will be carried.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The insurance companies were not consulted, and I do not think that in the main they are very concerned what rates are fixed, because under our law every employer has to do one of two things—either to satisfy the Treasurer that his financial position is such that he could meet all claims arising from workmen's compensation, or insure. Therefore, if we doubled all the compensation rates provided for in the Bill, in due course insurance companies would double their premiums. Further, I believe that insurance companies are already collecting premiums which would cover the rates provided in this legislation. The Government carries its own workmen's compensation risk, but it has never sat tight on its strictly legal obligations in that respect. Indeed, in some cases where there has been a justifiable doubt as to liability, the Government has accepted the liability. At present workmen's compensation is costing the Government an amount less than the premiums that would be payable to insurance companies, and that leads me to believe that this legislation should not involve increased premiums, for wages and, consequently, premiums have risen.

Mr. Lawn—Premiums have risen, but wages are now pegged; therefore this afternoon insurance companies and employers are clapping their hands at the thought that their payments will be no more than those suggested by the committee.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I know of no law pegging insurance premiums.

Mr. Shannon—Compulsory third party insurance premiums.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—There is no legal pegging of third party insurance premiums. Although we have a committee which reports to Parliament on the adequacy of existing premiums, it has no power to fix rates. I do not believe insurance companies are concerned in the slightest degree with whether the amount is raised to £500 or £1,000, because in due course they will adjust their premiums to cover the risk they take.

Mr. Shannon—There is plenty of competition in the insurance business today.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If an employer thinks the rates are too high, he may apply for exemption under the Act, as some other employers have done.

Mr. Lawn—How about establishing a State insurance office?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I realize the member for Adelaide supports a policy which includes socialisation, but my Party believes in the policy of a fair deal for everyone, and that policy has resulted in our success at elections. This Government does not seek to compete with the taxpayer, for the logical conclusion of such a course would be that no taxpayers would be left.

Clause 6 of the Bill deals with the amount allowable for funeral expenses where an unmarried workman dies without dependants. In view of the increased cost of funerals the Bill raises this allowance from £30 to £40. Clause 7 makes substantial increases in the amount both of the weekly payments and the total compensation payable for incapacity. The maximum amount of compensation for incapacity, which at present is £1,750, is to be raised to £2,250. The maximum weekly payment for a workman with dependants is raised from £11 to £12 and in working out the weekly payment the amount allowed for a wife will be increased from £1 10s. to £2, and the amount for a child from 10s. to 15s. The maximum weekly payment for a workman without dependants is raised from £8 to £8 15s. Clause 8 raises the total amount of the allowance for medical expenses from £75 to £100. The increase of £25 will be appropriated towards raising the maximum amount of the allowance for general medical expenses from £35 to £40, and the maximum amount for hospital fees from £30 to £50. In addition, clause 8 provides that travelling expenses or costs of living away from home incurred by the workman in connection with obtaining a medical examination or medical treatment will be included in the allowable amount of medical expenses, and that if an injury necessitates repairs to spectacles or hearing aids the cost of these repairs will also be included.

Clause 9 provides that the payments as compensation for the schedule injuries set out in section 26 of the principal Act will in future be based on a maximum of £2,250 instead of £1,750 as at present. Clause 10 provides that the Bill will apply only to future accidents, subject, however, to the qualifications that persons who are receiving weekly payments for incapacity at the time of the passing of the Bill will receive the increased rates of such payments as soon as the Bill comes into force. The Bill sets out, without qualification, the recommendations of the advisory committee. I believe the existence of that committee, which can take up a question without reference from the Government and make such recommendations as it believes necessary to give a fair deal to the workers, should result in valuable work being done. I trust that that work will not only continue while my Government is in office, but come to be recognized as a feature of the system of advisory committees which make recommendations to Parliament from time to time. The advisory committee is a most satisfactory way of dealing with a special problem.

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

TRUSTEE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

PORT BROUGHTON RAILWAY (DISCONTINUANCE) BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CITY OF ENFIELD LOAN) BILL.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—

That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to authorize the Municipal Council of the City of Enfield to borrow two hundred and fifty thousand pounds for the purpose of carrying out drainage works in the said city, and for incidental purposes.

Motion carried. Resolution agreed to in Committee and adopted by the House. Bill introduced and read a first time.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH (Minister of Local Government)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

If the Bill passes the second reading it must go to a Select Committee, so it is desirable for it to be dealt with as early as possible. I commend the city of Enfield for its foresight in putting forward the proposal. Some time ago representations were made to me by its representatives for this work to be done and the Government was asked to make funds available, but £250,000 would make a hole in any loan programme. I pointed out that though we were prepared to agree to the work, if the Government made the money available other works of almost equal importance would have to be suspended. Investigations were made as to where the money could come from. The Savings Bank was approached and negotiations took place. It was only in August that the council approached me with a concrete proposal and the bank has agreed to make the money available over five years, with repayments extending over 60 years, provided Parliament sanctions the proposal.

Mr. Dunks—Can't the council borrow money in the ordinary way?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The total revenue from council rates does not allow it, and in any case the period of repayment would make the position impossible. It is unreasonable for the work not to be done. Special provision must be made therefor, and the matter is now being placed before Parliament. I have the greatest confidence in the outcome of the matter. I know the conditions in the locality and they do not exist because of any default, but because of the wonderful progress made in the settlement of the area. The topography is such that a drainage scheme is necessary. At first it seemed a very ambitious scheme and I had an investigation made by the Highways Commissioner, who is an eminent civil engineer, and his officers, and they said it was sound, but that it could not be proceeded with piecemeal.

Mr. Dunks—Is it not establishing a dangerous precedent?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—No. It was suggested that the Local Government Act be amended to enable the council to borrow the money, but that would have established a precedent. Any similar case will be dealt with in the same way as we are dealing with this one. It is a first rate scheme, put forward in good faith by the council, which is one of the most progressive in the State. The purpose of the Bill is to authorize the Enfield City Council to borrow £250,000 from the Savings Bank of South Australia, in order to carry out drainage works which are necessary within the municipality. It was suggested that there should be a general power to borrow, but it was pointed out that if there were such a power the scheme might go begging. This is a contract between a willing borrower and a willing lender, and that is why it is restricted to the Savings Bank. The municipality of Enfield includes a considerable area of land and, during the last few years, there has been a very large amount of building carried out in it. The Housing Trust has built many thousands of houses within the municipality and, in addition, there has been a great deal of building by others.

The topography of Enfield gives rise to considerable drainage problems. That part of the municipality which is easterly of the Main North Road is high land which generally slopes down to that road. From the Main North Road the ground falls away until relatively low parts of the municipality are reached in a considerable tract lying between Hanson Road, Woodville Gardens, and the northern railway line and running northerly to and beyond Grand Junction Road. Building has been carried out very extensively both on the higher portion of the municipality and on the lower. One invariable result of building up an area and the making of roads is to increase the run off of drainage water and this is particularly in evidence in an area such as Enfield where a substantial part of the area is high and this part slopes down fairly rapidly towards the lower portions. The council is fully aware of its problem and has, with commendable prudence and foresight, prepared plans for the carrying out of a comprehensive drainage scheme which it considers will take care of its drainage problem. The Commissioner of Highways has collaborated with the council in the

preparation of its scheme and considers that the scheme is not only necessary but is a realistic and reasonable approach to the problem.

The drainage scheme as proposed by the council is a comprehensive one and, by the nature of the scheme, is one that, if once commenced, must be completed in order that the benefits proposed by it can be obtained. The total cost of the scheme is estimated at approximately £250,000 and it is the intention of the council to carry out the work over a period of about five years. There are, however, other difficulties associated with the undertaking, apart from the actual construction of the drainage scheme with which the council is confronted and the council has accordingly approached the Government with a view to overcoming these difficulties. In the first place, Part XXI. of the Local Government Act imposes certain limits on the amount which a council may borrow. Enfield has, in the past few years, been faced with the problems associated with the very quick development of its area. The tremendous amount of house building at Enfield has necessitated considerable expenditure on roads and the other works necessary upon the development of an area and consequently the council, at the moment, has not the borrowing capacity under the Local Government Act to enable it to borrow the £250,000 necessary for these drainage works.

In the second place, the Local Government Act contemplates a maximum period of 42 years for the repayment of any loan. These drainage works will, it is considered, provide a permanent solution to the drainage problems of Enfield and the council considers that, in order to reduce the annual commitments which must be incurred by the council, the period for repayment should, in this instance, be 60 years and not 42 years. It may be mentioned that, when the Local Government Act was amended in 1941 to enable the Adelaide City Council to borrow for street widening purposes, the same issues arose and the Act was amended to enable that council to borrow moneys additional to that provided by Part XXI. and the term for repayment was fixed at 50 years.

Following upon the approach to the Government by the Enfield council, the first thing to be established was whether loans would be available to the council to carry out the scheme if the law were altered to meet the particular case of the council. Accordingly, the Savings Bank was asked whether it would entertain a loan to the council. For the purpose required, the council needs a total loan of £250,000 to be advanced in instalments over a period of about five years and with conditions for repayment which will have the effect of distributing the liability over a period of up to 60 years.

The Savings Bank has replied to the effect that, if legislation such as is proposed by the Bill is passed, it is prepared to grant a loan to the council for the purpose in question on terms and conditions to be agreed upon between the bank and the council and there have been some preliminary negotiations between the two parties. The Bill accordingly authorizes the council to borrow £250,000 from the Savings Bank but provides that every loan made under the Bill must have the consent of the Governor. The bank and the council are to agree upon the terms and conditions of the loan, which is to be made on the security of debentures issued by the council, but the maximum period for the repayment of any debentures is not to exceed 60 years. If debentures are issued for any shorter period, the council is given power to raise a further loan from the bank in order to redeem the earlier debentures but the total term of the original and any substituted debentures is not to exceed 60 years. To the extent that any debenture does not provide for the repayment of the principal by periodical instalments, the council is to establish a sinking fund based on an amortization period of 60 years.

Other provisions of the Bill deal with the powers of debenture holders on default by the council and the power of the council to levy a special rate to meet its commitments under any debentures. It is also made clear that the borrowing powers given by the Bill to the council are additional to those given to it by Part XXI. of the Local Government Act.

In general, these provisions are similar to those contained in sections 871j to 871q of the Local Government Act. These sections give additional borrowing powers to the Adelaide City Council for street widening and construction purposes. The Bill is a hybrid Bill within the meaning of the Joint Standing Orders and, if it is read a second time, it will, under the Joint Standing Orders, be necessary for it to be referred to a Select Committee. It will be the duty of the Select Committee to consider the various issues raised by the Bill and to make its report to the House accordingly.

The privilege of moving the second reading of this Bill gives me one of the greatest

pleasures I have had over a long period in Parliament. It is most pleasing that a council is prepared to come forward recognizing its responsibilities and opportunities and, without any suggestion that any other body should contribute towards its ideas and obligations, be prepared to go ahead with this progressive scheme if we give it the necessary authority. The Enfield council apparently is not greatly concerned whether any other body could or would be involved in this scheme or what the attitude of any other body would be. It did not want the issue to be delayed or complicated by debating what proportion of the cost should be borne by other councils. It considered that if the necessary authority were given by Parliament it would be in a position to meet its commitments. This is one of the few occasions over a long period on which I have known a council to come forward saying, "All we want is the necessary authority. Give us the tools and we will do the work ourselves."

Mr. JENNINGS secured the adjournment of the debate.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH (Minister of Local Government) obtained leave to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Local Government Act, 1934-1952.

PAYMENT OF MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the Hon. T. Playford and read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its purpose is to make some increases in the amounts provided by the Payment of Members of Parliament Act, 1948-1951, to be paid to members. The amounts now authorized to be paid by the Statute were fixed by the amending Act passed in 1951 and are as follows:—

Where no part of the member's electoral district is more than 50 miles from the General Post Office at Adelaide, the amount payable is £1,150 per annum. Where the whole or any part of the district is more than 50 but no part is more than 200 miles from the G.P.O. the amount payable is £1,200. Where the whole or any part of the district is more than 200 miles from the G.P.O. the amount payable is £1,225.

Since these payments to members were fixed in 1951, there have been considerable variations in the cost of living. At July 1, 1951, the time from which the present scale of payments came into effect, the "C" series index number was 1790. On July 1, 1953, this number was 2238. Whilst it is considered by the Government that the existing scale of payments should be increased, it is not proposed that the increases corresponding with the variation of the "C" series index number should be provided for, and the increases proposed by the Bill are something less. Accordingly, the Bill provides for the existing scale of payments to be increased from £1,150, £1,200 and £1,225 to £1,425, £1,475 and £1,500 respectively. The Act now provides that the President and the Speaker are to receive a payment at the rate of £600 per annum. This, of course, is additional to their payment as members of Parliament. It is proposed by the Bill to increase this allowance from £600 to £625. As was done by the 1951 Act, the Bill provides that the new scale of payments for members will take effect from the beginning of the current financial year.

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

SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Introduced by the Hon. T. Playford and read a first time.

EMPLOYEES REGISTRY OFFICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

In Committee.

(Continued from November 10. Page 1381.)

Clause 3—"Repeal and re-enactment of fifth schedule to principal Act."

Mr. HAWKER—I ask leave to withdraw my previous amendment with a view to moving new clauses instead.

Leave granted; consideration of clause deferred.

New clause 2a—"Licence holder to deposit and post up lists of fees."

Mr. HAWKER—I now move to insert the following new clause:—

2a. Section 13 of the principal Act is repealed and the following section enacted and inserted in its place:—

13. (1) Every licensee shall deposit at the office of the chief inspector and at all times keep posted up in some conspicuous place in his licensed premises, so as to be easily read by persons attending at such premises, a printed copy of the scale of fees for the time being chargeable by and payable to the licensee in respect of the hiring of employees.

(2) The scale shall specify the maximum amount chargeable to the employer and the maximum amount chargeable to the employee in respect of the hiring of any employee.

I previously explained the amendment.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The honourable member has made valiant efforts to improve the Bill according to his own ideas, and at one stage I thought I might support him, but after carefully examining his more recent amendment I feel I cannot do so. In South Australia for many years we have had the principle that fees as set out in the schedule to the Act could be charged by employees registry offices. We are well aware of that principle, and the Bill has simply been introduced to bring the scale of charges more into line with existing money values. In that regard I am happy to support it, although in my speech on the second reading I said I did not see much need for the continuance of these offices. From information I was able to get from Western Australia it appears that, despite the system which the honourable member seeks to have incorporated in our legislation, much of which is imported from that State, private registry offices there do not give as good a service to the public as those in South Australia. I find that there are more Commonwealth registry offices in Western Australia than in South Australia. Despite its smaller population I think that complications will occur if we accept the amendment, particularly in relation to arrangements that may be made by post. The amendment provides that a copy of the schedule of fees must be included in the correspondence, but there might be a tendency for the schedule to get lost. There is no difficulty about a schedule which is fixed in an Act of Parliament and with which all those having need to deal with such offices should be familiar. Therefore, I suggest that the Committee stick to the principle which has always operated in our legislation and which, as far as I know, apart from the change in money values, has always given satisfaction.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—I have had much experience in price fixation, but do not believe there is any great merit in having fees appearing in an Act of Parliament. If there is a very willing buyer and a very reluctant seller it is always possible for an additional amount to that stated changing hands. That often happened when we had price control over land. What the Leader of the Opposition has said about fees appearing in the Act does not appeal to me as a potent reason for rejecting the new clause. A bad system to introduce would be one under which a person got a job on the condition that he made weekly payments over a period to the registry office concerned. I have no objection to registry offices having a fairly free hand in making charges, because after all there is a Commonwealth Employment Office available, with numerous branches, run at the taxpayers' expense, and that is available to any person wanting a job. Indeed, it is there that he must register if, eventually, he wishes to claim unemployment relief. I do not object to the private employment agency charging an amount which may be considered appropriate and which the employee is prepared to pay, so long as no recurring charge is imposed, but I will not support a proposal enabling the charge to be spread over a long period, for in the event of unemployment developing to any extent that could be abused.

Mr. HAWKER—I ask leave to amend new clause 2a by adding at the end of new subsection (2):—

Provided that no payment by an employee shall involve a weekly charge upon earnings.

This will prevent a recurring charge being made on a worker's wages.

Mr. SHANNON—I support the new clause. I see no harm in a private employment agency working in competition with the Commonwealth Employment Service. Provided the employer and the employee are properly informed on the charges I do not care what charges are made, for they will be kept within reasonable limits by competition. Under the amendment to the new clause an employee cannot be called upon to make a weekly contribution.

Mr. O'Halloran—How about a fortnightly or a monthly contribution?

Mr. SHANNON—At the moment the workers have only one channel through which to find employment, for all the private employment agencies have gone out of business, which is a bad thing for the workers.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.30 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, November 24, at 2 p.m.