HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, August 12, 1954.

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

QUESTIONS.

PIG MEAT PRICES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—A statement was made yesterday in the House by the Minister of Agriculture showing the comparatively low prices being received for pig meats by the producers. Can the Premier inform the House whether any investigation has been made into the relationship between prices of pig meats in the market and the prices at which bacon and ham are being sold to the public? I am aware that bacon and ham prices are not controlled, but there is such a big disparity between the prices given by the Minister and those charged to the public that serious consideration should be given to the recontrol of these items.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Ham and bacon prices were, I think, decontrolled in all States until quite recently when the Victorian Government directed its Prices Commissioner to recontrol pig meats because of the disparity between the prices being obtained by the producer and the cost of the products to the consumer. Two reductions have taken place in South Australia. I am confident that the Prices Commissioner has investigated this matter. The fact that an article is not controlled does not mean that the Prices Branch has no interest in it; quite frequently routine checks are made to see whether prices of uncontrolled items are fair and reasonable. However, I will obtain a report on the present position for the Leader.

SCHOOL BUS SERVICES.

Mr. BROOKMAN—A number of parents in the district of Parawa have written to the Education Department asking for transport to the Yankalilla School for secondary school children. At the moment a number of secondary school children live too far from the school to be provided with a service. Next year it is expected that over 30 children will be concerned. Can the Minister give me an answer to these requests?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Tenders closed only yesterday for the Yankalilla area school, and transport for an area school is not normally arranged until it is about to open, but in this case approval has been given for the establishment of a Grade VIII at the Yankalilla primary school. Last month the president of the Parawa Progress Association was advised of this fact and informed that the parties concerned in the transport of Grade VIII students from the south and south-east of Yankalilla should endeavour to submit concrete suggestions covering transport routes, location, number of secondary students, and other relevant matters, but so far the department has not received any reply from him. As soon as we get the relevant information a final decision can be made.

Mr. RICHES—My question relates to a situation which has developed at Stirling North over the transport of school children to Port Augusta. Will the Minister give the matter his early personal attention because the situation should never have been allowed to develop? The Commonwealth Railways have transferred a number of families from the North-South and East-West lines to Stirling until there are now 54 school children from that camp requiring transport to Port Augusta. This was known in advance and early in the year the attention of the department was drawn to the situation which would develop at the end of June. The inspector in the district recommended in April that attention should be given to the matter but the situation has been allowed to develop until two men with contracts for transporting school children from other centres are endeavouring to bring the children in by overloading the buses to an extent which is giving the parents grave concern. They desire direction as to whether an additional trip can be run, or whether a town bus can be engaged while negotiations for permanent arrangements are in hand, or whether the department will accept the responsibility for the overcrowding, or whether the bus proprietors are to carry only the number for which their buses are licensed and leave the others. I would like the Minister to give me the result of any investigations made.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I realize the importance and urgency of the problem, but it was not brought to my notice until yesterday when the honourable member mentioned it to me. I immediately took it up this morning, and I have arranged, as an emergency measure, for a temporary service to operate next week for the benefit of the children from Stirling North. I have also arranged that as soon as possible the transport officer, Mr. Harris, will visit the district where he will meet interested

parties, including the honourable member, to see whether an early permanent solution of the problem can be reached.

Mr. TEUSNER—A matter of school transport has been referred to me by constituents in the district represented by Mr. Michael, who is now overseas on Commonwealth Parliamentary business. Twenty-two children living 3 to 4½ miles from Greenock attend the Greenock School. The parents have asked me to make representations to the Minister of Education with a view to transport for the children to the Greenock School being provided. Will the Minister have an investigation made?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes, I will be pleased to do so.

PORT PIRIE EMBANKMENT.

Mr. DAVIS—For about 12 months I have been trying to get £5,000 for strengthening the embankment at Port Pirie. First I approached the former Minister of Local Government (Hon. M. McIntosh) who was of the opinion that the money could be found from the £2,000 granted for storm damage. On investigating the matter the Minister found that it could not, and I was asked then to approach the Government. I have contacted the Premier several times, and I notice from this morning's press that he has received a letter from the Port Pirie Chamber of Commerce on the matter. It seems strange to me that this body should write to the Premier and ignore the member for the district. I ask him whether he has further considered this matter, whether he has received a report from the Harbors Board, and whether anything has been done in regard to granting Port Pirie £5,000 for strengthening the embankment?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I make it clear at the outset that it is not necessary for citizens of this State, if they desire to write to a Minister, to send the letter through a third person. Sometimes they desire to write to the Government direct, and we deal with letters received from anyone, provided they are written courteously, whether they come through the member for the district or not. I do not want to depreciate the work of members, but it was implied in the honourable member's question that anyone sending a letter to a Minister not through the member for the district was not in order. That is not the position. The honourable member approached me about this matter some time ago, and Mr. Robinson, Legislative Council member for the Northern district, also approached me. Presumably there is now a letter from the Chamber of Commerce, which I have not yet seen. The Government believes it is necessary to provide Port Pirie with protection against tide damage. This matter was sufficiently investigated to enable me to conclude that an amount should be provided on the Estimates to come before Parliament to enable the necessary work to be done. It is not usual to disclose what amounts are to be provided for any particular project before the Estimates are introduced, but I assure the honourable member that this matter is included in the Estimates.

FRUIT FLY CAMPAIGN.

Mr. DUNNAGE—The Minister of Agriculture told me that he would obtain information concerning the continuation of the fruit fly prevention campaign in areas east of the city. Has he that information?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—Some time ago I made a personal inspection of areas then being stripped and sprayed and saw what was being done in that regard. I have obtained a report from the Chief Horticulturist, Mr. Strickland, which reads as follows:—

The campaign necessitated by the evidence of fruit fly infestation in Norwood last spring is now in its closing phases. Although this campaign commenced much earlier than any previous one it was essential to continue fruit removal and spraying through the winter months. During this period the pest is most vulnerable, and chances of destroying any overwintering adult flies are greatest. It is, in fact, considered that the "one season" effectiveness of Adelaide eradication campaigns arises from the maintenance of a fruit free area right through winter and early spring and of spray covers and poison baits for a little longer. There are grounds for believing that earlier cessation of the measures might involve recurrence of the pest in the following season, and costly repetition of the campaign. About 100 men are engaged at the present time but when stripping is finished this will be reduced to 60 or 70. The embargo on the planting of vegetables has been lifted and people can plant tomatoes and other vegetables if they desire.

BLANCHETOWN FERRY AND PUBLIC WORKS INQUIRIES.

Mr. TAPPING—Yesterday I asked the Minister of Works why the project for a second ferry at Blanchetown had not been referred to the Public Works Committee. Has he a reply today?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—As I indicated yesterday the reasons are twofold. Firstly, the money having gone into the Highways Fund, the Highways Commissioner, under the powers conferred upon him, can appropriate the money for that purpose. That is an old standing Crown Law opinion and it has been followed throughout. Secondly, I said that I did not think the estimate would exceed the amount stipulated in the Public Works Standing Committee Act, and this is now confirmed. The estimated £48,000, included road approaches and the expenditure so far has been £16,000 on the ferry and £23,000 on the road approaches, a total of £39,000. The final costs, of course, will be probably as estimated, £48,000, but that portion of the cost represented in roads would not need the consideration of the Public Works Committee, so the Commissioner is acting in no way contrary to the spirit of the Act.

Mr. STOTT—Can the Premier state whether Cabinet has given any further consideration to the question of increasing the limit of £30,000 with regard to works referred to the Public Works Committee.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Public Works Committee was asked to report whether it thought any alteration in the limit advisable to meet changing money values. It replied that it does not think that it is its function to advise Parliament in this respect. Cabinet is examining the matter and I will advise the honourable member as soon as a decision is reached.

RUTHVEN MANSIONS.

Mr. LAWN—Recently it was reported that Ruthven Mansions in Pulteney Street had been purchased by an undisclosed buyer. Is it true that the property has been purchased by the Government and, if so, for what purpose?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes, the Government purchased Ruthven Mansions at auction for £90,000. The valuation by Government officers was £132,000 and the City Council's valuation was £135,000, so the purchase price was well below the actual value. The purpose of the purchase is to provide accommodation for additional staff for the Royal Adelaide Hospital. The Government is planning a large casualty clearing block for Royal Adelaide, but at present has no accommodation for the requisite staff. The casualty block will not be ready immediately, but, if we can get the plans drawn up, the Public Works Committee's approval and satisfactory tenders, it should be ready in three years. A number of plans have been prepared already for submission to the various authorities with a view to getting a satisfactory design. The Ruthven Mansions building is reasonably satisfactory and will not require much alteration. It will accommodate 200 nurses or 100 sisters. The building will be used as a nurses' home for a number of years, but ultimately will be disposed of when another nurses' home planned for the Royal Adelaide Hospital is built. It is proposed to consolidate the hospital buildings as soon as sufficient room can be made by pulling down some of the older portions of the hospital with a view to modernizing it.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—Will the present business tenants of Ruthven Mansions be granted renewals or extensions of their leases, or does the Government propose to take over the whole of the premises, including the business section, for its purposes?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I understand the present tenants have leases expiring in three years' time, and, as the Government would want the building for hospital purposes about then, the tenants, both business and otherwise, will have ample time to make other arrangements.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

Mr. DUNKS—On Tuesday I asked the Minister of Works a question relative to modern road making techniques as practised in the United States of America. Has he a reply today?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The gist of the honourable member's question was whether the department was keeping up-to-date on overseas practices, and I have a report from the Highways Commissioner which states:—

The department has for years been in touch with developments in road construction, both in Australia by its membership in the State Road Authorities Organization, and overseas by membership of the U.S.A. Highway Research Board, and technical literature. Constructional methods applicable to local conditions are tested, and if successful applied to departmental activities. In quite a few cases techniques are inapplicable by reason of cost, and acquisition of equipment is rendered difficult through import restrictions and uneconomic costs. I am not aware of the origin of the statement in the quoted extract, but it appears to be divorced from its context and differs materially from information in hand, obtained from official sources.

DECENTRALIZATION OF HOSPITALS.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Yesterday I asked the Premier a question dealing with the building of hospitals in the metropolitan area, but unfortunately I did not make it very clear because from his reply I gathered he thought I was complaining about the lack of country hospital facilities. That was not the purpose of the question, because I appreciate the work the Government is doing in building up our country hospital system. I drew the Premier's attention to the very grave danger which would arise in the event of Australia being subjected to attack by a foreign power. I mentioned that the public conscience had been aroused as to what would happen to the civilian population by the use of atom and hydrogen bombs, and that one or two bombs would clean up the Royal Adelaide and the Queen Elizabeth Hospitals and that our medical services comprising specialists and a highly trained staff and equipment would be more or less concentrated in those two hospitals. I should like to know whether the Government has considered that and whether it could build a hospital outside the metropolitan area within reasonably easy reach, say, 20 to 30 miles. When the Adelaide Hospital was opened horse-drawn ambulances were possibly used to convey patients very short distances, whereas, with a modern ambulance, they could be carried 20 to 30 miles as quickly.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I must apologize for not having understood the question. It affects the country from the point of view of civil defence and deals with the problem which could arise in the event of Australia being involved in a war in which there was the risk of ultimate destruction by the use of modern scientific weapons. The matter was discussed at a conference in Canberra and arose partly from a question asked by Mr. O'Halloran relating to what civil defence steps should be taken in the various States. An appreciation of the position was made by military, naval and air authorities as to what was the standard of attack which Australia could expect and what necessary work could be undertaken to meet it. The honourable member will realize it is not possible to disclose military reports, and the report obtained could not be made available to the House. However, I think I am permitted to say that the report was rather reassuring, and in many aspects it was much more reassuring than I would have been led to expect. In the event of an attack it is obvious that all the nation's resources would have to be thrown into the place attacked and that our civil defence organization must be of a quality and quantity suitable for rapid mobilization at the seat of the trouble. Both financial and staffing problems are involved in the erection of a hospital outside the metropolitan area. For years difficulty has been experienced in adequately staffing the Northfield Hospital, mainly because the staff desired to be nearer the city and transport facilities to and from the hospital were inadequate. I will, however, have the question of the establishment of a hospital outside the metropolitan area examined.

WESTERN DISTRICTS WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Can the Minister of Works say whether his forecast earlier in the session that the new large water main now being laid to serve the western districts, including Hindmarsh, Allenby Gardens, Flinders Park, Findon and Woodville South will be in service next month, still holds good?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Hope Valley-Findon main is nearing completion and at the moment it is expected that it will be charged at the end of September, 1954. Following the charging, the water will have to be changed in the main once or perhaps twice, and it should be in commission supplying the branch mains along its route by the second week in October.

VOTING AT COUNCIL ELECTIONS.

Mr. FLETCHER—At present voters at council elections must record their preference by means of a cross, and, as numbers are used at Federal and State elections, a number of informal votes have been recorded at council elections. Can the Minister of Works, representing the Minister of Local Government, say whether consideration has been given to the use of numbers instead of crosses at these elections?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The member for Stirling (Mr. William Jenkins) mentioned this matter to me earlier, and it has received some attention. In some cases confusion has been evident where a voter has placed a cross against the name of the person he wanted and the figure "2" against the other candidate, and, although the voter's intention was obvious, the vote has been declared invalid because it was not in keeping with the Act. I know

that the matter has received some consideration. A Bill to amend the Local Government Act will be introduced this session and in connection therewith I will ask the Minister of Local Government to consider the matter. I think, generally speaking, when the intention of the voter is clear the vote is declared valid.

BOWLING GREEN AT ABATTOIRS.

Mr. JENNINGS—I received a letter from a resident living near the Abattoirs in which he drew attention to what he claims is a waste of public money. He stated that a bowling green is in the course of being established at the manager's residence on which two abattoir employees have been engaged continuously for 18 months. I want to make it clear that I am not making any allegations because I do not know whether this information is correct. However, will the Minister inquire into the matter?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I will certainly have the matter investigated.

DAY LABOUR ON HOUSING TRUST HOMES.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Has the Premier a reply to the question I asked on August 4 about day labour on Housing Trust homes?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have received the following report from the Chairman of the Housing Trust:—

It has always been a general practice of builders to sub-contract for various trades, for example, plumbing and electrical work is commonly placed on sub-contract. What is placed on sub-contract varies from builder to builder. For instance, in the case of small country contracts, it is common for the principal builder to be a tradesman such as a bricklayer or carpenter; he himself carries out the work for his trade and sub-contracts for the other trades. The South Australian Housing Trust exercises close supervision over these sub-contracts and, by its architects and clerks of works, endeavours to see that the standard of work is according to the specification and what is being paid for. At the present time little trouble is being experienced by the Trust in this regard. As regards wage rates, the Trust has no knowledge of employees of sub-contractors being paid less than the wages legally payable. The practice of the Trust as regards sub-contracting is the same for its rental houses as its sale houses.

JUVENILE DELINQUENCY.

Mr. TAPPING—Has the Premier the report he promised to supply following the question I asked on July 27 relating to juvenile delinquency in the Semaphore district?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Acting Commissioner of Police has made the following report:—

Special police attention has been exercised for months in an effort to control and suppress juvenile delinquency in the Port Adelaide Police District and 41 offenders whose ages range from 14 to 19 years, have been either arrested or reported for various offences during the past few months; 22 cases concern drinking or possession of liquor, 7 offences against decency, and 12 covering disorderly or offensive behaviour. Although the position is sufficiently serious to require concerted and protracted police attention, the actual conditions appear to have been exaggerated in some press quarters. Recently publicity given to the matter, combined with close police attention, has had considerable effect and there is a noticeable reduction in the number of teenagers frequenting their usual haunts in the district.

The Port Adelaide Corporation is assisting in a proposal to provide extra flood lighting in certain areas. Police attention will continue and will be intensified if necessary, and will not be confined to any particular area in the metropolitan district.

SHIPPING SURCHARGE.

Mr. McALEES—In this morning's press appeared a report that a surcharge over Sydney and Melbourne rates has been placed on timber freighted to Port Adelaide. I understand that every berth there and at Port Pirie is filled and the men are working, yet the waterside workers at Wallaroo are on attendance money. Can the Premier inform the House whether something could be done to spread Gulf shipping a little more evenly?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The surcharge proposed for Port Adelaide is a serious thing indeed because it will impose a very high additional cost upon essential timbers, particularly those used for housing, and will have serious repercussions on this State. Unfortunately the solution is not quite so easy as the question would indicate because, assuming that a Gulf port could be used to unload the timber, there would still be a very heavy cost in transporting it overland from Wallaroo to Adelaide where it will be used ultimately. In these circumstances I feel that the best course of action is to get this iniquitous surcharge removed and I can assure the honourable member that the Government will take early action in an endeavour to have that done.

Mr. JENNINGS—Is it a fact that the reason for the surcharge is that timber ships are held up at Port Adelaide as a result of an industrial dispute between the Clerk's Union and timber merchants, and that the dispute

has been caused by timber companies departing from a principle that is standard custom in other States? Will the Premier use his influence to overcome this problem by asking the timber merchants to take a more reasonable and co-operative attitude?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I understand that a dispute does exist, its background being that timber merchants desire to have as checking clerks their regular staff, even when overtime is involved. However, the union considers that the merchants should employ not the regular staff, but casuals. I think the merits are entirely with the employers, because applying the same principle to our hospitals, we should have to employ outsiders to carry on the work after the nurses had finished their 40 hours. I do not know all the facts of this dispute because it has not been my concern, but looking at it on broad principles, I say that it has always been the custom, when there is overtime to be worked in any undertaking, to give the employees of that undertaking the first right to that overtime rather than persons not regularly employed. If the honourable member believes that we should settle the dispute by breaking down what I consider to be a solid principle, I cannot agree with him.

KANGAROO ISLAND SETTLEMENT.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Can the Minister of Repatriation say what is the average cost to the Lands Department in establishing each settler on soldier settlement blocks on Kangaroo Island, and what is the average cost levelled against the settlers?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—This question was asked of me by the member for Alexandra (Mr. Brookman) and was also raised at a recent sub-branch conference. As members know, we have a zoning or group system for the development of blocks. This system is well-known to settlers, and in the case of Kangaroo Island the first group is almost completed and the charges should be known in the near future, but if the honourable member will give me the names of the settlers concerned I shall know what zone they are in and could then perhaps give him some idea when the costs will be known. Only recently it was rumoured that one of the settlers heard that the cost would be £12,500 a block. I do not know where he got the information, but he considered that far too high, so he engaged a valuator who placed a value of £16,700 on his block.

"GAMBLING" IN SHARES.

Mr. LAWN—Has the Premier obtained a report from the Crown Solicitor in reply to the question I asked recently about gambling in oil and uranium shares on the Adelaide Stock Exchange?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member asked whether persons speculating on the Stock Exchange were infringing the Lottery and Gaming Act, and I have a report from the Crown Solicitor as follows:—

The police have taken no action to prosecute anyone for dealing in oil or uranium shares on the Stock Exchange and there is no action they could take. Dealing in shares of this kind may properly be called "gambling," but, like a good many more uncertain commercial ventures, is not the sort of gambling which is forbidden by the gaming laws. The Stock Exchange is part of the financial structure of the country and any legislation designed to prevent speculative investment by the buying of shares would involve a drastic departure from existing economic ideas as well as legal difficulties arising out of the provisions of section 92 of the Constitution. The existing law protects people from fraud in connection with the flotation of companies or the sale of shares. It has generally been accepted as impracticable for legislation to go any further in protecting them from the consequences of misguided attempts to obtain easy riches.

KAROONDA AND SWAN REACH WATER SUPPLIES.

Mr. STOTT—Can the Minister of Works say what progress has been made on the town water supply scheme for Karoonda, whether contracts have been let for the pumping plant, and when it is proposed to commence the Swan Reach scheme?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—In regard to Swan Reach, a tender has been accepted for the pumping plant and delivery is expected within a month. As regards reticulation, half the pipes have been delivered to the site and it is proposed to do the main laying when the Karoonda pipework has been completed. The position in regard to Karoonda is that tenders closed about a week ago for the pumping plant, but they have not yet been sorted, examined and approved. The reticulation pipes, valves and specials are on the ground, and laying will commence as soon as the men finish their work at Milang and Meningie, both schemes having been in hand for some time. This work is being done in order of priority, as laid down by the date of approval. It is expected that the men may take another two months to finish at Milang and Meningie, but then they will lay the mains at Karoonda before working on to Swan Reach.

HOUSE FOR URANIUM EXPERT.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—My attention has been drawn to an advertisement in the local press that a uranium expert from the United States will shortly be coming to South Australia. The advertisement said that this man was prepared to pay a substantial sum for a house. Does the Premier know anything about this man, and is he being brought here on behalf of the State or private interests?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I think the honourable member refers to an advertisement in which a purchaser advertised for a house for a uranium expert from America who would be prepared to pay up to £8,000. I think I would be conversant with the name of any *bona fide* expert from America. but I do not know of any such person desiring a house, certainly none wanting one to the value of £8,000. Probably the advertisement was inserted to catch the eye of people with houses for sale, so it was probably not a *bona fide* advertisement.

CARTAGE OF WHEAT.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—It was reported in last Tuesday's *Advertiser* that the Wheat Board proposes to assemble large quantities of wheat at certain points in order to clear sidings for the accommodation of the incoming crop. The quantity involved is 2,000,000 bags, of which 500,000 will be at Gladstone, a similar quantity at Wallaroo, 750,000 on the West Coast and a quantity at Port Adelaide. Can the Minister of Agriculture say whether this wheat will be carted to the proposed depots by rail or by road? If it is proposed to carry a substantial quantity by road will he make representations to the Wheat Board to ensure that that wheat is carted by rail so that damage to roads may be obviated?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I do not know the Wheat Board's intention in this regard, but I assume that most of the carting will be by rail where the depots are adjacent to railway systems. That has been the practice in the past and road cartage has only been used when wheat has been taken to Ardrossan for bulk handling. I think in this instance the wheat will be carted by rail, but I will make inquiries and bring down a reply.

LOXTON IRRIGATION SETTLEMENT.

Mr. STOTT—Can the Minister of Lands say whether any progress has been made in the valuation of blocks in the Loxton soldier settlement irrigation scheme?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—Much progress has been made but no finality has been reached.

CHILDREN'S WELFARE DEPARTMENT WAITING ROOM.

Mr. HUTCHENS—On July 28 the Premier promised to obtain a report concerning the accommodation provided in the waiting room of the Prosecution Branch of the Children's Welfare Department. Has he that report?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Chief Secretary has advised me that the Architect-in-Chief has been asked to carry out improvements to the waiting room and to provide for the extension of it.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Adjourned debate on motion for adoption of Address in Reply.

(Continued from August 11. Page 355.)

Mr. STOTT (Ridley)—I support the motion, and desire, firstly, to congratulate Mr. Christian on his appointment as Minister of Agriculture. Because of his past experience he should make a good Minister and bring much valuable knowledge not only to Cabinet but to Parliament. I also congratulate the Minister of Education, who has already displayed great interest in the work attaching to this portfolio. I personally appreciate the interest he has taken in country schools. The new Minister of Roads is also exhibiting enthusiasm in his office and has already undertaken a long and tedious visit to the West Coast where some areas require urgent attention. That visit indicates that he is alive to the problems attaching to his position. I congratulate the Chief Secretary, Sir Lyell McEwin, on the honour conferred on him by Her Majesty the Queen. He has performed valuable service to the Government and the State and his knighthood was well deserved.

The establishment of the power station at Port Augusta, which was officially opened by His Excellency the Governor on July 23, is an important step in the progress of this State. Many members will recall the fight in this and another place when the Premier sought to establish the Electricity Trust. If members refer to the speeches on that occasion they will notice that I referred to the extensions of electricity to rural areas which would result from the establishment of the trust. Such extensions would have been beyond the capacity of the Adelaide Electric Supply Company. It is the intention of the trust to extend its lines further into rural areas and it hopes, by 1962,to double its output. Such extensions will enable country people to enjoy many useful amenities,

which will make their lot much happier. There is no need for me to stress the importance of rural production to this State and the extension of power will greatly assist primary producers. I congratulate the Premier on his foresight in introducing legislation to establish the trust. Electricity is being taken to River Murray areas and I can visualize as a result greater development. Eventually it will be possible to link our scheme with the Snowy River scheme and then develop the proposal envisaged by the Murray River Development League by the use of cheap electric power, that is, closer settlement of the valley from Albury to the sea. That, of course, is looking well ahead, but I visualize that much progress will be made in the very near future, as well as in later years when Port Augusta power station comes into full production in about 1960 or 1962.

On many occassions I have brought before the Government the inadequate amount provided on the Estimates for the conveyance of children in rural districts to consolidated or area schools. I have hammered this point on many occasions and the Minister of Education has made some progress towards that objective. However, I think he has only a certain amount of money available so that some things have to be cut down in order to make the money go around. Country children must be educated and it has been the policy of this Government—as I believe it was of the previous Butler Government—to close down small country schools and bring the children into consolidated or area schools which, of course, necessitated the provision of transport for them. As this is the policy of the Government—and my district affords many illustrations of it—some children have to be transported considerable distances, but the Minister has refused some requests for larger subsidies to local private bus operators. Only yesterday I made representations to the Minister in respect of children from beyond Gurra Gurra. The difficulty is that when the river is high the children have to walk long distances to the ferry and then some distance again beyond that to the school at Berri. Unfortunately, the Minister has had to refuse this request because it does not come within the scope of the requirements laid down by the department. However, I think those requirements should be amended to meet a case such as this. If the money available is insufficient now is the time to bring it to the attention of the Government so that greater provision can be made on the Estimates. As Mr. White said yesterday bus owners are not all getting sufficient payment to warrant their continuing their services. On the other hand, by closing many small schools the department should have saved a considerable sum in the salaries of the teachers needed to staff them and the consequent relatively fewer teachers required in the consolidated schools, and if that is the case it should be possible to pay greater subsidies to the bus operators.

The Government has at last decided to appoint a special committee to make an inquiry regarding a bridge across the River Murray at Blanchetown. This is long overdue and I commend the Government for trying to make some progress. I have no wish to criticize the personnel of that committee for I could not hold a higher opinion of them, but the trouble is that they are so busy that they cannot afford the time to make this inquiry into the type of bridge needed, and consequently there must be further delay. The Government is providing a second ferry at Blanchetown, but the people hope that this will not be used as an excuse to avoid the building of a bridge because it will not meet the requirements of the people in the river districts. I therefore hope that the committee will endeavour to expedite its report. Blanchetown is a very important spot as it is becoming one of the worst bottlenecks in the whole of the transport system of South Australia. Because of the long delays that occur, particularly at Christmas and Easter holidays and long week-ends, big interstate hauliers avoid Blanchetown and go through the hills to Murray Bridge and thence *via* Pinnaroo and Ouyen to Sydney, thus aggravating the already difficult traffic conditions on the Mount Barker Road. The Government is in the process of widening it but nevertheless one almost invariably has to crawl along behind one of these big trucks. That is why a bridge at Blanchetown is important. From that angle alone it warrants an expeditious report from the committee.

I strongly support Mr. Quirke's suggestion for urgent action in the interests of the wine industry and I agree with the proposal to allow grocers to sell wine. That will not completely solve the problem of the wine industry but it will help. In about three years Loxton will have the largest co-operative distillery in the State, larger than the one at Berri. The Government should seriously consider granting wine licences to grocers. The position of the wine industry was considered recently by the Agricultural Council when it discussed a Wine Board resolution endorsed by the Federal Viticultural

Council of Australia. The Agricultural Council noted:—

That Australia's total exports of wine have fallen from an average of 3.7 million gallons pre-war to 1.2 million gallons in the post-war period. The fall has been due principally to the heavy duty imposed by the United Kingdom on imported wines, which has reduced consumption and the effectiveness of the *ad valorem* preference margin of 10s. per gallon. Before the war the United Kingdom took approximately 95 per cent of our total wine exports but now takes only a little more than 50 per cent of our total exports. Although repeated representations have been made by the trade and the Commonwealth Government to have the duty reduced, these efforts have been unsuccessful. Until this United Kingdom tariff is reduced there is little likelihood of Australia regaining the lost ground. Sales of wine and brandy to other markets are relatively small. Domestic consumption of wine and brandy, which increased from 3.6 million gallons pre-war to 11 million in recent years, has lately tended to fall. Sales in 1953 were about 2 million gallons below those of the previous year. However, production is still increasing and an acute storage problem has already been reached. Stocks at June 30, 1953, amounted to 22.6 million gallons, which is a record figure. As a result of the high level of production and stocks of wine and brandy, growers are experiencing difficulty in disposing of their grapes; prices dropped sharply for each of the 1953 and 1954 vintages. In the circumstances the wine industry is most anxious to increase the local consumption of wine and a programme of national advertising has been planned to supplement the publicity already undertaken by individual firms. This advertising programme will be financed from a special fund derived from an increased levy on wine grapes.

The Agricultural Council was informed that the Commonwealth, in collaboration with the Australian Wine Board, was using every effort to expand export sales. The council agreed that the question of promoting wine sales in Australia in the interests of the wine industry was a matter for the individual Governments, and that the current problems of the wine industry in the light of the circumstances outlined should be brought to the attention of all Australian Governments. The matter has now come back to the South Australian Government. I want to refute some of the ill-founded charges made in the press and in other places about the wine industry. The dried fruits industry has been blamed for the present impasse in that industry, but nothing could be further from the truth. The statements were made because two or three years ago the growers of dried fruits sent more grapes to the distillery and did not maintain the dried fruits quota they had to deliver to the A.D.F.A. It has been said that because of this the market in the United Kingdom has been lost, but it has to be remembered that during the period there was some bad weather and shortages of labour in the industry, and because of economic circumstances and the high prices offering in the wine industry the growers diverted grapes to the distillery. In Victoria, where there is a greater production of sultanas, the growers are not in the same happy position as the South Australian growers: they have no distillery to which they can divert their grapes. Because of that, many Victorian growers found themselves facing bankruptcy long before those in South Australia, but had there been distilleries to take their fruit they would not be in their present serious position. It was stated in the press that growers at Mildura had only £5 a week to live on. South Australian growers have not yet reached that stage, although they are getting worried, because the distilleries may not take their grapes. That refutes the charge that the dried fruits industry was to blame for losing the export market. During this period there was an increase in the sale of wine because some people who drank beer were also buying wine at 4s. 6d. to 5s. a bottle. It is well-known that a bottle of wine will go much further than a couple of bottles of beer. At that time the Federal Treasurer was clamping down on credit facilities for primary producers, and this had a very serious effect on the South Australian wine trade, because the proprietary people became a little nervous and were unable to provide credit facilities to growers. They had to conserve their own interests and therefore tried to sell as much as possible of their stocks which had been produced from grapes bought at high prices. The Federal Treasurer also imposed an increased duty on brandy and that affected sales on the Australian market.

We have now reached the position where no-one knows what is the best thing to do to assist the wine industry in its problem. In 1948, 10,000,000gall. of wine were withdrawn from bond, in 1949, 10,000,000, in 1950 and 1951, 11,000,000, 1952, 13,000,000, and in 1953, 9,000,000. That was a result of the increased duty on wine. That is the answer to the unfounded charges against fruitgrowers for putting their grapes into the wineries. The Federal Minister for Commerce explained the position and drew attention to the change in methods adopted by Britain in the purchase of foodstuffs. The British Ministry of Food had been the sole importer of all kinds of foodstuffs during the war, being responsible for the importation of wheat, butter, wine, dried

fruits and so on. During that period it built up stocks of dried fruits, and consequently when it was decided on September 1 last to revert to open trade, the Ministry had considerable stocks to unload. The United Kingdom merchants, knowing the world position and that prices were decreasing, would not go on the market to buy stocks until they had sold those held by the British Ministry of Food. Those facts cannot be denied.

Representing the soldier settlers at Loxton as I do, I take this opportunity to refute the unfair press charges made against growers. They are ridiculous and will not bear analysis. During his speech Mr. Dunnage mentioned how impressed he was with the change at Loxton since the fruit blocks had been planted. I agree that there has been a tremendous transformation since the official opening. I had the pleasure of escorting the Minister of Education around the area last week-end and he was particularly impressed. When standing on the rising ground one is presented with a wonderful panorama, especially when the sprays are in action. It shows what can be done when water is available. Almost anything can be grown. The Government should realize that the fruitgrowers at Loxton are an excellent type, a great credit to the district, and will prove worthy citizens. They are throwing all their energy into the development of their blocks and it is imperative, in their interests, that Parliament should do something for the wine industry. No-one is so intemperate as the temperance advocate. I draw the attention of the Minister of Irrigation to the urgent need for a domestic water supply to the Loxton soldier settlers. I have referred previously in this House to the open channels in the Loxton district, and, with the members for Chaffey and Stanley, I have advocated the laying of pipes instead of channels; the laying of pipes on the extension of the Loxton scheme proves that we were right. A tremendous loss has been sustained on the construction and use of channels in the Loxton district. For instance, the water from channel C overflowed on to a block on which was erected a soldier settler's house, and this caused seepage. I asked the Minister to have action taken to remedy the position, but the department merely added a row of bricks at the top end of the channel, and, when the water rose above the new level, it overflowed again. Recently a pump was installed to divert the water through a tank into channel G, but all that expenditure could have been avoided had a pipeline been installed originally. The Minister does his best to protect his officers, but many mistakes have been made by these engineers.

Mr. Macgillivray—The Minister's first duty should be to protect the soldier settler and not his departmental officers.

Mr. STOTT—That is so. Although members are told that punitive action can seldom be taken against public servants, who are protected by the Public Service Act, something should be done about the stupid mistakes that have been made in the Loveday, Waikerie and Loxton areas. It is now realized that pipelines are the most satisfactory means of irrigation, but what a loss has been sustained because of the construction of channels! Will the losses to settlers caused by these mistakes be written off or will the settlers have to stand them?

The Hon. C. S. Hincks—Eventually there will be a writing off.

Mr. STOTT—I am not attacking the Minister, but merely strengthening his hand so that he may take action through his department. He deserves credit for standing up against his officers when they recommended the installation of portable sprays. Notwithstanding the expressed opinions of local soldier settlers, many of whom had had experience in the production of dried fruits and citrus fruits before the war, departmental officers said that permanent sprays could not be installed. The settlers were blinded with facts about the output of portable sprays compared with that of permanent sprays, and it has taken a considerable time to break down the opposition of these departmental officers. The Minister helped considerably in breaking down that opposition, and this case proves that one cannot take as gospel everything departmental officers recommend, for they are often wrong.

Much has been said recently about the Australian Wheat Board and our overseas wheat agreement. Earlier in this debate Mr. McAlees blamed the board for a curtailment in the sale of wheat overseas, and I inferred from his remarks that, because the Barley Board had done a magnificent job, the Wheat Board should be able to do the same; but the Barley Board is in an entirely different position from that of the Wheat Board, for it suffers no price restriction, has practically a monopoly of the world barley market, and can arrange a contract anywhere at a satisfactory price. Further, it is much easier to market overseas the smaller quantity of barley than our huge wheat crop, because the Wheat Board has to

compete against such great wheat producers as the U.S.A. and Canada and also to meet a growing buyer resistance on the part of the rehabilitated European countries that are now growing their biggest wheat crops on record. The Barley Board does not have to contend with any of these adverse marketing conditions.

The discontinuance of the importation of wheat by the British Ministry of Food has adversely affected the sale of Australian wheat, for it has meant the sale of a huge stockpile of about 100,000,000 bushels to the local trade, mostly flour millers; consequently they will not buy Australian flour until the stock pile is depleted and their mills are unable to meet the demand of the United Kingdom market. We cannot expect the United Kingdom to buy flour from Australia; naturally, they want to buy wheat to mill into flour and this has had a very bad effect on our milling industry. The Commonwealth Government and the Minister for Commerce are fully alive to this position relating to sales of not only wheat but also flour and at present are arranging a big publicity campaign in an endeavour to build up future markets. The South Australian growers' representative on the Australian Wheat Board recently visited South Africa and on his return furnished a report advocating an increase in the protein content of our wheat. He was quite satisfied that if we were able to offer to our buyers a better and more uniform quality of protein we would increase our overseas markets. I think that that is correct and I am pleased that we have enlisted the aid of Doctor Callaghan, the Director of Agriculture, in our publicity campaign to get the growers to increase protein content.

Many statements have been made in the press and elsewhere that the Australian Government was responsible for the United Kingdom withdrawing from the International Wheat Agreement; that statement is absolutely incorrect. The argument used was that because the United Kingdom said it would be in the agreement at 17s. 10d., and the maximum price was fixed at 18s. 3d., it was forced out of the agreement. Firstly, 18s. 3d. was not a compulsory price and the United Kingdom could have remained in the agreement at 17s. 10d. and told the exporting nations that it would not pay more than 17s. 10d. notwithstanding the maximum had been agreed upon at 18s. 3d. Since then the price has fallen to 14s. a bushel and if the United Kingdom had been a signatory to the agreement it could have bought quantities of wheat at much less than it offered to pay. Although the price has fallen, the Minister for Commerce and the Prime Minister approached the British Government and asked it to review its attitude and to come back into the agreement, but this has not happened.

Mr. Shannon—Can you tell us why the United Kingdom would not join the agreement?

Mr. STOTT—The chairman of the Australian Wheat Board (Sir John Teasdale), who was present with me as a co-delegate at the Washington conference, said that in his opinion the United Kingdom had no intention of rejoining the International Agreement because it made it known in February, 1953, that it intended to scrap the British Ministry of Food and go back to open trade in September. At that stage the Ministry of Food had a stockpile of 100,000,000 bushels of wheat to be sold to the local trade, and under the agreement the quota for that country was 177,000,000 bushels. Sir John Teasdale asks quite logically how the United Kingdom could remain in the agreement in view of this.

Mr. Shannon—How many of the importing countries who were signatories have taken their quotas?

Mr. STOTT—Up to July 31 Italy, a signatory for about 132,000,000 bushels, had withdrawn because of a large home yield.

Mr. Shannon—It was obvious that although the United Kingdom signed it was under no obligation to take the wheat.

Mr. STOTT—There was an obligation, but countries cannot be forced to live up to such obligations except by war. At the last conference held a few weeks ago in London whether the exporting countries should make a call on the importing countries to take the quantities they had agreed was considered, but nothing was done because Canada and the United States did not want to force importers at that stage, preferring to let the matter drift in an effort to save the agreement. They realized that if a call had been made these nations would have withdrawn from the agreement.

Mr. Shannon—In other words they allowed them to avoid the agreement rather than break it?

Mr. STOTT—That puts it correctly. Although the United Kingdom has been pressed by the Commonwealth Government to enter the agreement and can now buy wheat at 14s. a bushel, it still will not sign the agreement, which many importing nations as well as exporters are anxious to continue. Egypt is an importer because it wants to be sure of obtaining supplies. Japan wanted to increase

its quota but could not find the necessary currency to buy Australian wheat; America offered to provide the dollars necessary and as a quid pro quo insisted that Japan build up against Communism, which was done. It is very difficult for the Australian Wheat Board to answer this challenge because it has no authority to grant long term credit to enable Japan to build up sufficient reserves to buy wheat. Six weeks ago it had to turn down a contract for 12,000,000 bushels to Brazil because credit could not be arranged. This contract was not refused until the board had approached the Commonwealth Government asking for the necessary credit and the request had been declined. We have now the possibility of having a storage of up to 90,000,000 bushels in the coming harvest and we should approach the Commonwealth Government to provide credit facilities to other nations to enable them to purchase our wheat. That would be a very great help to some nations anxious to buy and it would relieve the surplus here. The Commonwealth Government through the Commonwealth Bank is the obvious authority; the Wheat Board has no power to grant credit.

Statements have been made recently in the country press and other places that the cost of moving wheat through the Ardrossan silo is over 9d. a bushel; that statement is not correct. On page 723 of last year's *Hansard* the then Minister of Agriculture gave the figure as 5.522d. for the six months ended June 31. The Wheat Board worked out costs over a six-monthly period, and from January 1 to June 30 this year the figure is 5.772d., just slightly higher than the figure given in the House last year.

The Hon. A. W. Christian—Was that exclusive of the 2½d. that the growers are charged?

Mr. STOTT—The press reports stated that handling costs through Ardrossan were 9d. That is ridiculous, because in addition growers are charged 2½d. a bushel to meet capital expense of building the silo. The figure of 5.772d. is for handling in and out of that silo including the charge by the Broken Hill Proprietary Company for putting the wheat over the conveyor belt. The Public Works Committee has announced that it hopes to make a report to Parliament later this session on bulk handling; that report is long overdue. The matter was referred to the Public Works Committee on May 22, 1947. I agree with the member for Rocky River that a report by the committee is long overdue. The Public Works Standing Committee Act of 1927 laid down that any project estimated to cost more than £30,000 of money to be voted by Parliament had to be referred to the committee for report. A big structure could be built for £30,000 in those days, but today every little area school, addition to a hospital, or sewerage or water supply scheme costs over £30,000; consequently the committee is cluttered up with projects. Parliament cannot expect the committee members to be Mandrakes or Supermen. How can the members remember details of evidence taken on bulk handling six or seven years ago? The £30,000 laid down in the Act causes a bottleneck.

Mr. Fletcher—What jobs have been held up?

Mr. STOTT—Bulk handling for one, for seven years. I am sure that the Ministers could mention delays with other reports. The £30,000 should be raised to £90,000, and then the committee could give more attention to big projects, such as bulk handling.

Mr. Macgillivray—The purpose of the committee is to protect Parliament. Why not remove that protection altogether if you want to raise the sum as high as £90,000?

Mr. STOTT—I do not want to remove the protection altogether, for the committee has a function to perform. It should be obligatory on the committee to make a report to Parliament every session on every project referred to it. It need not necessarily be a final report, but the committee could at least tell Parliament what progress has been made. I stress that Parliament must carry the final responsibility for any scheme. I am only trying to relieve the pressure on the committee so that it can work more smoothly.

The Hon. A. W. Christian—The committee submits an annual report giving a resume of the matters before it. Do you ever read it?

Mr. STOTT—Yes. I am only giving constructive criticism.

Mr. Macgillivray—The committee's chairman said that the members were not overworked.

Mr. STOTT—The member for Rocky River brought up the question of bulk handling the other day and the committee's chairman made a statement. It had to be dragged out of him after much trouble, but he virtually gave a progress report, though it was not official. Had he gone to the trouble of making an official report the criticism levelled at the committee would not have been justified. I congratulate the Government on at last realizing that we must have an overall plan

for greater Adelaide. I commend the Premier for his foresight and I hope that he has not forgotten the proposed electrification of suburban railways and the transfer of the railway yards. I am pleased that the Government is at last taking some notice of the suggestions I have made on this important matter. The member for Onkaparinga referred to the traffic island at the corner of Portrush and Greenhill Roads. I agree that it is an eyesore, but I am more familiar with the one at the corner of West Terrace and Anzac Highway. There the traffic is forced into narrow bottlenecks.

Mr. Fletcher—It is a mouse trap.

Mr. STOTT—That is a good description of it. We must follow the lead of other countries by getting the traffic moving. If members visited the West Terrace-Anzac Highway intersection at 5 p.m. they would see what an obstruction the traffic island is. If one travels south along West Terrace and wishes to turn into the Anzac Highway he is often confronted with a tramcar and heavy road traffic. One can often see a long queue of motor cars waiting to make this turn. I am greatly disappointed that we have officers in high positions who would think up such an absurd thing as that traffic island. It is time our planning authorities got recent overseas literature on these matters. Bigger cities than Adelaide with far worse traffic problems avoid bottlenecks and get the traffic moving. Of course, some of them have underground electric trains, but they have a far greater population than Adelaide, so we should be able to ease bottlenecks. I hope that the Government will draw the attention of the authorities to the dangerous obstructions to traffic that they have created. Some enterprising firms are trying to increase the sale of dried and citrus fruits by selling tomato and citrus juices. One firm purchased a van and stocked it with these fruit juices. It travelled all over our country districts, and the venture proved most successful. One housewife asked whether dried fruits were sold, and the driver said that on his next trip he would bring some. However, when the authorities found that he was selling sultanas and lexias he was stopped.

Mr. Wm. Jenkins—You are not even allowed to buy them from the factories.

Mr. STOTT—That is so. It is time Parliament amended the Act and removed the monopoly in selling dried fruits. This would assist the industry, and incidentally the wine trade, too. I saw in California what could be done by publicity in getting the housewife to take the sun-dried sultana rather than the amber-coloured type, which is lighter. We could increase the sales of dried fruits and fruit juices in South Australia if we indulged in propaganda and greater publicity. The Govvernment must face this problem and do something to assist the dried fruit and wine industries because many young soldier settlers are involved.

I congratulate Sir George Jenkins on his outstanding record as Minister of Agriculture. The new Minister will gain much from the work of Sir George. Sir George has fought hard for the establishment of a wheat stabilization scheme and the new Minister will get credit which rightly should go to Sir George Jenkins for what will be achieved. After long and tedious negotiations the Victorian Government has been brought into line on this matter. There is no fear that in South Australia the ballot will not be overwhelmingly carried by the growers. I could refer to many other subjects, but will address myself to them when appropriate legislation is introduced. I support the motion.

Motion for adoption of Address in Reply carried.

METROPOLITAN TAXICAB CONTROL BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to provide for the control of taxicabs in the metropolitan area of Adelaide and for incidental purposes.

Read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill gives effect to the recommendations of the committee appointed by the Government in December, 1952, to inquire into the licensing of taxicabs in the metropolitan area. The members of the committee were representative of metropolitan local government bodies and the chairman was Sir Kingsley Paine. The problem with which the committee had to deal was to evolve the best method of providing effective control over taxis in the metropolitan area. At present, control of taxis is, under the Local Government Act, vested in local governing bodies and, if a council desires to control taxis in its area, it must make by-laws for the purpose. There are 21 municipal councils in the metropolitan area, including the Garden Suburb Commissioner, and the present position is that, of these, 11 have made by-laws relating to taxis. It thus follows that if a taxi driver

wishes to ply for hire throughout the whole of the metropolitan area, he must comply with the by-laws of 11 councils.

The Committee, in its report, points out in some detail the disadvantages of such a system and has recommended that there should be one and only one licensing authority for taxis in the metropolitan area. After discussing other alternatives, the committee came to the conclusion that the most suitable authority to undertake this licensing duty is the Adelaide City Council which already has an adequate staff of experienced inspectors and officers and, as may be expected, has had more experience in dealing with taxicab matters than has any of the other councils in the metropolitan area. The Adelaide City Council is willing to undertake this licensing duty and is prepared to carry out the work without any financial assistance from the Government or any other council. Accordingly, the committee has recommended that the Adelaide City Council be the sole licensing authority for taxis in the metropolitan area and that, as a necessary consequence, a taxi licence or a taxi driver's licence should have effect throughout the metropolitan area.

Mr. Stephens—How many councils are opposed to this measure?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Bill has not been put to a vote of the councils and I cannot say whether they oppose or favour the measure.

Mr. O'Halloran—Has it been submitted to them, or do they know what it contains?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It certainly has not been submitted to them. It is very unusual for the Government to submit measures to outside persons before members have an opportunity of studying them. There are, of course, occasions when outside advice is required, but in general the Government believes that the provisions of measures should be discussed first by Parliament, not submitted to all and sundry before members have an opportunity of knowing what is involved.

Mr. Shannon—You would be criticized if members didn't see the measures first.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government is careful not to hawk measures before members have an opportunity of discussing their provisions.

Mr. Stephens—I have received a letter requesting me to oppose this Bill.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I read in the press that taxi drivers from the Port Adelaide district were opposed to the measure and that the Port Adelaide Corporation would not support it. I have no knowledge of how many councils will support it. There are 21 councils in the metropolitan area, but 10 have no by-laws relating to this matter, so it is presumed they are not particularly interested. Because of that I assume a majority of the councils will favour the measure.

Mr. Macgillivray—The 10 councils may believe in free trade without restrictions.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The law already provides that no-one can ply for hire without being licensed. This Bill does not alter that. It merely provides that there shall be one authority to issue licences in the metropolitan area instead of 21.

The Bill accordingly provides as follows:—

Clause 2 provides that the Act is to come into operation on July 1, 1955, and thus give the City Council ample opportunity to make the administrative arrangements necessary before the new licensing scheme comes into effect. Metropolitan area is defined in clause 3 to mean the area within 10 miles of the General Post Office at Adelaide. In addition, the part of the City of Port Adelaide outside the 10-mile radius is included in order to bring the Outer Harbour district within the licensing area. Power is also given to the Governor to include within the metropolitan area any other contiguous areas.

Taxicab is defined to mean a motor vehicle which seats up to eight people including the driver. The effect of this definition is to limit the Bill to ordinary motor cars of the kind usually used for taxis or hire cars. The Muncipal Tramways Trust Act and, to a lesser degree, the Local Government Act, provide for the control of motor omnibuses and the effect of the definition of taxicab will be that the control of these larger vehicles will remain with the Municipal Tramways Trust or the council, as the case may be. Clause 5 provides that it will be an offence to drive, own or keep a taxicab in the metropolitan area unless it is licensed under the Bill whilst clause 6 makes it an offence to drive a taxicab in the metropolitan area without a taxicab driver's licence.

In its report, the committee has stressed the necessity for preventing unlicensed taxis from plying for hire and has recommended that, if a driver of an unlicensed vehicle is convicted the court should have the power to disqualify him from holding a driver's licence under the Road Traffic Act. Section 38a of that Act already provides that such action may be taken if a person is convicted of an offence in the commission of which a motor vehicle was used, when the court may disqualify the defendant

from holding a driver's licence for the period fixed by the court or until further order by the court.

Clause 7 makes it clear that section 38a and other relevant sections of the Road Traffic Act will apply if a person is convicted of the offence of driving an unlicensed taxi or of driving a taxi without holding a taxicab driver's licence. Clause 8 authorizes the Adelaide City Council to issue taxicab and taxicab drivers' licences to fit and proper persons. It is obviously most necessary that licences should be issued only to fit and proper persons and clause 9 provides that the council is not to issue a licence to a person unless satisfied that he is a fit and proper person to be licensed. The clause also provides that the council may obtain from the Commissioner of Police a report upon an applicant for a licence. In addition, it is provided that in any case where he thinks fit and whether a report has been asked for or not, the Commissioner may report to the council on the suitability of a licensee or an applicant for a licence.

Mr. Riches—Is the Commissioner of Police prepared to give those reports?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes, if he is authorized by Parliament to do it. Clause 10 gives the council a discretion in the issue of licences. It also provides that a transfer, lease, or other dealing in a licence must have the consent of the council. This matter is one of some importance and it is most desirable that there should be a check on unrestricted dealing in licences. Clause 10 (3) provides that if a taxicab licence in respect of a taxicab is issued to a person other than the owner of the taxi or if the council consents to the licence being transferred to such a person, it must report to the Minister its reasons for so doing and the report is to be laid before Parliament. In other States the problem of trafficking in this type of licence has been unfavourably reported upon on many occasions, and I think it most necessary, particularly in such cases as I have outlined, that the full particulars of these transactions shall be forwarded to the Minister who, in turn, will see that they come before Parliament so that Parliament shall know precisely the reason for any approvals and, if thought necessary, take action.

Mr. O'Halloran—What action could Parliament take?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It could take swift action in several directions; it could alter the licensing authority, it could provide for an investigation by a Royal Commission if it thought that there were any unsavoury aspects of the matter—in fact the powers of Parliament are paramount and it could do precisely what it felt should be done.

Mr. O'Halloran—Exactly, but it would take a long time.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Not necessarily. I have known Parliament to deal with matters expeditiously when it felt the need to do so. At any rate, the proposal is infinitely better than the position that now exists because at present the reasons would not be made known in any case. In general, it is expected that a licence for a taxicab will be held by the owner of the taxi and the clause therefore provides that, where there is a departure from this rule, the reasons for so doing must be made public. Clause 11 provides that if at the commencement of the Act an applicant for a licence under the Act holds a corresponding licence under any council by-law the term of which still has some time to run, his fee for the new licence will be reduced by a proportionate amount of the fee paid for the old licence which will of course, cease to have effect.

Clause 12 authorizes the Adelaide City Council to appoint inspectors and other officers and provides that the council may arrange with any other council for the appointment of officers of the other council as part time inspectors, etc. As the Act will apply throughout the metropolitan area, it will probably be desirable to enlist some officers of suburban councils as inspectors to assist in its policing.

Clause 13 provides that the Adelaide City Council may make regulations for a variety of topics. These include the conditions upon which licences may be granted, fees to be paid, the testing of taxicabs, appeals to the council from decisions of officers of the council, fares to be charged to passengers, conduct of drivers and so on. In general, these regulation making powers are similar to the by-law making powers now given by the Local Government Act to municipal councils. It is provided, however, that the council must make regulations laying down the conditions upon which licences may be transferred, leased or otherwise dealt with. As pointed out when dealing with clause 10, this question is of importance and it is therefore made obligatory by clause 13 for the council to make regulations dealing with the matter. Regulations made by the council will be subject to the same rules as regulations made by the Governor, that is, they will take effect when made but must be laid before Parliament and will be subject to disallowance in the ordinary way.

The effect of clause 14 is to provide that the Adelaide City Council will have exclusive control over the licensing of taxis and drivers within the metropolitan area and that the existing powers of metropolitan councils in this regard will come to an end. However, section 370 of the Local Government Act provides that a council may appoint stands for taxis in its area, and there are by-law powers dealing with this matter. In accordance with the recommendation of the committee, this power is still left with the councils so that, whilst the licensing of taxis and drivers and the regulation of incidental matters will be solely for the Adelaide City Council, the suburban councils will still have the right to fix taxi stands and to charge fees for their use.

Clause 15 provides that the Bill is to be read subject to the Municipal Tramways Trust Act, the Road and Railway Transport Act, and the Road Traffic Act. Clause 16 requires the Adelaide City Council to meet the expenses of administering the Bill but also provides that the council is to retain all licence fees and other amounts paid to it under the Bill.

Clause 17 provides that the Adelaide City Council is to recover all fines for offences against the Act. This is subject to the two qualifications. Section 65 of the Police Offences Act provides that where a police constable makes a report upon which proceedings are taken by a council and a conviction results, one-half of the fine is to be paid to general revenue. Clause 17 provides that this section is to apply to offences under the Bill. Clause 17 (2) provides that where the report it made by an officer of a council other than the Adelaide City Council, one-half of the fine is to be paid to that council. The committee has suggested that such a provision would probably encourage suburban councils to assist in the policing of the legislation.

Clause 18 enables officers of the council to enter premises and examine vehicles suspected to be driven or kept in contravention of the Act and clause 19 makes it an offence to obstruct any person in the exercise of his duty under the Bill. Clause 20 deals with the service of notices and clause 21 provides that evidence of the constitution of the council or the appointment of its officers is not necessary. Clause 21 provides that the certificate of the town clerk or the assistant town clerk that a vehicle was or was not licensed as a taxi or that a person was or was not licensed as a taxicab driver or that any person was the owner of a specified vehicle is to be *prima facie* evidence of the fact alleged.

Clause 23 provides that the allegation in the complaint that any place is within the metropolitan area or that any vehicle is a taxicab or a motor vehicle is *prima facie* evidence of the fact alleged. Clause 24 provides that if evidence is given that any motor vehicle is driven which has displayed on it a sign or device that it is a taxi or hire car or available for hire, it is to be deemed to have been driven for the purpose of carrying passengers for hire. It is also provided that if passengers are in a motor vehicle, they shall be deemed to be carried for hire unless the defendant satisfies the court to the contrary. This latter provision is similar to a provision in the Road and Railway Transport Act. In recommending the provisions contained in clause 24, the committee has pointed out that evidentiary provisions of this nature are necessary to prevent what is called "pirating" by drivers of unlicensed taxicabs. The remaining clauses of this Bill do not call for special comment.

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

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Medical Practitioners Act, 1919-1950. Read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time. This is a non-controversial Bill. Its object is to enable doctors employed by the Commonwealth or the Flying Doctor Service to be registered by the Medical Board of South Australia without payment of fees. In September of last year a conference of representatives of State medical boards discussed some of the difficulties arising from the fact that medical practitioners registered in one State cannot practise in other States without securing registration in those States also. This is particularly inconvenient for practitioners employed by the Commonwealth who may be called upon to work in any State. The conference took the view that such barriers to the practice of medicine should be broken down as far as possible, and expressed the view that it was desirable that State medical boards should be enabled to register without fee doctors employed by the Commonwealth who are already registered in

another State. The resolution was submitted to the Government by the Medical Board of South Australia with a request that the Medical Practitioners Act should be amended. The Government has accepted the proposal, and is accordingly introducing this Bill.

The Medical Board at the same time asked that the privilege should be extended to medical officers of the Flying Doctor Service of Australia (South Australian Section). Officers of the Northern Territory Medical Service of the Flying Doctor Service are occasionally called upon in their duties to go into South Australia, where they are not registered. At present, if such an officer holds himself out to be a doctor or prescribes certain controlled drugs in South Australia he will, strictly speaking, be breaking the law. In 1952 the Medical Board was approached by the Flying Doctor Service of Australia (South Australian Section) with a request that such officers should be registered without payment of a fee. The Board was unable to grant the request as the Medical Practitioners Act did not permit registration without fee in such a case, and subsequently decided that the matter should be referred to the Government. The Government takes the view that it is desirable that the work of the Flying Doctor Service should be facilitated in this way, and the matter is accordingly dealt with in this Bill.

Clause 3 permits a person to be registered without fee who is registered as a medical practitioner in any other State or in any Territory of the Commonwealth, and who is employed as a full-time medical officer by the Commonwealth or is employed or holds an appointment as a flying medical officer of the Flying Doctor Service of Australia (South Australian Section). Clauses 4 and 5 make consequential amendments.

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

PUBLIC FINANCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Public Finance Act, 1936-49. Read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This short Bill should not prove controversial. It makes some amendments to the Public Finance Act consequential on recent legislation of the Commonwealth Parliament respecting the Commonwealth Bank. By the Commonwealth Bank Act, 1953, a new institution called the Commonwealth Trading Bank of Australia was formed to take over the general banking functions of the Commonwealth Bank. The new institution was in law a separate corporation, distinct from the Commonwealth Bank. In the Public Finance Act of South Australia there are two provisions in which the Commonwealth Bank is mentioned. One is section 7, which states that the Treasurer may make agreements with the Commonwealth Bank of Australia or any other bank in London respecting the issue and conversion of stock, and allied matters.

The other provision is section 34 which provides for the payment through the Commonwealth Bank, Adelaide, of orders drawn on trust funds held by the Treasurer. As a result of the Commonwealth legislation it is now doubtful whether these provisions apply to the Commonwealth Bank or to the Commonwealth Trading Bank; and it is necessary that the position should be clarified without delay. The Government is advised that it is desirable that it should be empowered, in transactions under sections 7 and 34 of the Public Finance Act, to deal both with the Commonwealth Bank and the Commonwealth Trading Bank. It is therefore proposed by this Bill to amend both these sections so that they will apply to both the Commonwealth Bank and the Commonwealth Trading Bank. The Bill deals only with a technical matter because the Commonwealth Bank has been divided into two sections in accordance with legislation.

Mr. FRANK WALSH secured the adjournment of the debate.

INFLAMMABLE OILS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Inflammable Oils Act, 1908-1935. Read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its object is to deal with a problem which has arisen concerning the supervision of licensed stores where more than 1,000,000gall. of inflammable oils are kept. The Inflammable Oils Act provides that where inflammable oil is kept in more than certain insignificant quantities the place where the inflammable oil is kept must be either registered as "registered premises" or licensed as a

"licensed store," depending on the quantity of inflammable oil kept. The maximum quantity of any inflammable oil which may be kept in registered premises under the Act is 800gall. Quantities in excess of those permitted in registered premises must be kept in a licensed store.

In 1933 an amendment, originally moved by a private member, was inserted in the principal Act which required a person keeping more than 1,000,000gall. of inflammable oil at registered premises to provide watchmen so that the premises would be under continual supervision. It will be seen that this amendment was wrongly framed since it is not possible to keep 1,000,000gall. of inflammable oil at registered premises. The amendment should have referred to a licensed store. It is almost certain that a court construing the amendment would read "licensed store" for "registered premises" rather than hold the amendment to be meaningless, which is the only other alternative. To avoid any doubt, however, the Bill corrects the error. This is only a minor matter. The real problem which has arisen is whether the amendment requires the employment of full time watchmen or whether it is sufficient if persons who have other duties are appointed to act as watchmen. The question has arisen in a dispute between the Shell Company of Australia Limited and the Federated Miscellaneous Workers' Union. Until recently the company employed three full time watchmen at its installation at Birkenhead. A little over a year ago, however, the company for reasons of economy decided to dispense with full time watchmen. Its intention was to entrust the supervision of the installation to ordinary employees during working hours and to employ casual watchmen when there were no other employees on the premises. In practice this scheme would entail the employment of watchmen at weekends only. The union protested against this action, mainly on the ground that the company would be contravening the principal Act.

The Government is advised that it is almost certainly not the case that the company is required by the amendment to employ persons as watchmen who have no other duties. The word "watchman" in the amendment has no technical meaning, and can mean persons who have duties other than that of keeping watch. The union also argued that in any event full time watchmen should be employed in the interests of safety. Neither side has yielded in this dispute, and in the meantime no proper watch is being kept over the installation at weekends.

The Government has referred the question whether watchmen with no other duties should be employed to the Chief Inspector of Factories. After careful consideration he has given his opinion that so long as adults (not employed as watchmen) are working at such premises, a reasonable safeguard is provided, and that when no such adult persons are working, watchmen, with or without other duties, should be provided. The Bill gives effect to that recommendation. It requires a person keeping a licensed store where over 1,000,000 gall. of inflammable oil are kept to appoint persons over the age of 21 years to watch the store. These persons must be sufficient in number to keep the store under adequate supervision at all times and must be given proper instructions to ensure the safety of the store. Further, the persons keeping watch over the store must take all reasonable precautions to ensure that the store is properly watched. The Bill expressly provides that persons appointed to keep watch may have other duties. It also makes it an offence for a person appointed to keep watch to fail without reasonable excuse to keep watch in accordance with his instructions.

Mr. HUTCHENS secured the adjournment of the debate.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT ADVISORY COUNCIL BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to provide for the establishment of a council to be known as the Metropolitan Transport Advisory Council, to prescribe the functions and powers of that council and for other purposes. Read a first time.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I move:—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The object is to provide for the creation of an advisory body to investigate problems affecting the metropolitan public transport system, and to define the powers of such a body. The proposed authority will be called the Metropolitan Transport Advisory Council; but although it is an advisory body, its recommendations may form the basis of orders which will have binding force. The Government, of course, has now a vital interest in the three main elements of the metropolitan transport system, namely, the roads, the buses and trams, and the railways. It has to provide money for all these things, and therefore has a duty to the public to see that all possible measures are taken to secure the use

of the best methods, to promote economical and co-ordinated working, and to prevent unnecessary duplication of services. The problems which arise in connection with the possibility of over-lapping between road vehicles and railways, and in connection with the use of buses as opposed to trams, are well known to members and afford evidence of the need for such a body as is proposed by the Bill. The proposed council will be limited in its inquiries to questions affecting public transport services or public transport requirements in the metropolitan area. This area will include the area in which the Tramways Trust conducts its operations, and also takes in the district of Salisbury. If necessary, the metropolitan area can be extended for purposes of the Bill by proclamation.

The council will consist of a chairman and two other members, all of whom will be appointed by the Governor. The term of office of a member will be three years calculated from the beginning of the year in which the member was appointed. The Bill contains provisions on the usual lines as to the quorum of the council, remuneration of members and staff. The function of the council will be to conduct inquiries into the problems of public transport in the metropolitan area as directed by the Government. The reports of the council must be submitted to the Minister of Railways and laid before Parliament.

In order to enable it to conduct its enquiries the council is given the status and powers of a royal commission. The principal powers conferred by this provision are to call and examine witnesses, to obtain the production of documents, and to inspect premises. Upon receipt of a recommendation from the council the Government is empowered to make orders binding on the Railways Commissioner or the Tramways Trust, or both, as to their general policy, or as to what is to be done in any specific circumstances. Such orders may be made for the following purposes, namely, ensuring adequate services, preventing over-lapping or duplication of services, and securing efficiency and economy. It will be obligatory for the trust and the Railways Commissioner to obey any orders made under the Bill, subject to Parliament voting any money which may be required for that purpose.

Mr. Riches—Will the council have any control over the Transport Control Board?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No, because the board does not operate in the metropolitan area and never has. The Bill specifically deals with transport problems in the metropolitan area, and seeks to provide a co-ordinated policy between the Tramways Trust and the Railways Department.

Mr. O'Halloran—Something I suggested three years ago.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—When I believe a suggestion from the Opposition is right, I never take the Party line and hold that everything the Leader of the Opposition says is automatically wrong. If he has suggested something which I believe could be used, not only have I used it, but frequently given him full credit for it.

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

GAS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD 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 repeal the Meters and Gas Act, 1881, and to amend the Gas Act, 1924-1950.

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

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its object is to make better provision for the supervision of the gas supply at Mount Gambier, and at other country centres (if any) where a gas supply may be instituted in future. At present by far the greater part of the gas used in South Australia is supplied by the South Australian Gas Company. This company, however, does not operate at Mount Gambier, where the supply is undertaken by the Mount Gambier Gas Company Limited. This company has about 1,200 consumers and supplies about 27 million cubic feet of gas per annum. Under the existing law the supervision of the Mount Gambier gas supply is a function of the local governing bodies in that area. The law governing this matter is contained in the Meters and Gas Act, 1881, which empowers and requires the councils to test and stamp gas meters, and to test gas for illuminating power and purity. The councils concerned, however, have neither the technical staff nor the equipment required for this work and are not in a position to investigate or remedy any complaints which may be made by consumers. They have recently approached the Government with a request that more suitable legislative provision should be

made on this subject. The request has been investigated and reported on by the Director of Chemistry and the Public Service Commissioner. It is clear from the reports that the difficulty at Mount Gambier can be simply and cheaply solved by making the Director of Chemistry responsible for supervision of the gas supply in that area and by the introduction of legislation to declare that the provisions of the Gas Act, 1924-1950, relating to quality and pressure of gas, and testing of meters shall apply to the Mount Gambier Gas Company. The Gas Act of 1924, as amended in 1950, is considered to prescribe reasonable standards for gas having regard to modern requirements. The Government has accordingly decided to introduce this Bill for the purposes mentioned.

The Bill repeals the Meters and Gas Act, 1881, which is unsatisfactory in two respects. The first—as I have mentioned—is that it has to be administered by district and municipal councils which are not equipped to do the work. The second is that the gas standards prescribed by the Act are based on illuminating power. This is no longer a satisfactory standard and the more modern legislation of 1924 prescribes standards based on calorific value. This is the important thing now that gas is used mainly for heating purposes. If the Bill is passed it will completely supersede the Act of 1881 and there will be no point in retaining that Act on the Statute Book.

Clauses 4 to 9 and the amendments made by the Schedule are all directed to the same purpose, namely, to extend the application of the Gas Act, 1924-1950, to companies other than the South Australian Gas Company. Clause 5 declares that the Governor may by proclamation declare that any other company or person shall be a gas supplier within the meaning of the Act. When a company is so declared it will become subject to the provisions of the principal Act respecting the testing of meters and the calorific value, purity, and pressure of gas.

The Bill also provides that the Mount Gambier Gas Company, when proclaimed under the Bill, will have to bear its share of the costs of administering the principal Act. These costs will not be heavy. The administration of the Act at Mount Gambier will be carried out by existing officers of the Government without any further appointments, and the initial outlay by the Company for testing equipment will be a fairly small amount.

Mr. TAPPING secured the adjournment of the debate.

WILD DOGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Wild Dogs Act, 1931-53. Read a first time.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I move:—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

In 1951 section 6a of the Wild Dogs Act was enacted to provide that the Minister could, in each of the calendar years 1952, 1953 and 1954, expend up to £2,000 in the carrying out of aerial baiting for wild dogs. This amount is to be provided out of the rates levied under the Act. The section provides that the Minister may seek the advice of the Dog Fence Board as to the best means of carrying out this aerial baiting. The Dog Fence Board has reported that due to nomadic habits of dingoes and the varying seasons which cause fluctuations in the number of tails and scalps from baited areas presented for bonus payments it is somewhat difficult to assess the true value of aerial baiting. However, results in Queensland and Western Australia, where aerial baiting has been conducted over a longer period, indicate that reduced numbers of tails and scalps have been received from treated areas. A similar reduction has occurred in South Australia. The board accordingly recommends that aerial baiting be carried out in future years and accordingly it is proposed by the Bill to repeal the time limitation now included in section 6a. The effect will be that aerial baiting may be carried on in any year subject to the limitation that up to £2,000 only may be expended for this purpose in any year.

Although section 6a authorizes the Minister to expend money for the purposes of aerial baiting the point has been raised whether the powers of the Minister are sufficiently wide to authorize him to cause this aerial baiting to be carried out. The Crown Solicitor has advised that section 138 of the Pastoral Act would probably be construed as giving the Minister the requisite power but has suggested that, in order to remove any doubts on the matter, it would be advisable to amend the law and to provide specific power for the purpose. Paragraph (*b*) of clause 2 accordingly expressly authorizes the Minister to cause this aerial baiting to be carried out. The effect of the clause is that this baiting may be carried out on pastoral lands, Crown lands, and reserved lands. The clause also provides that section 38 of the Vermin Act is not to apply to these operations. This section provides that where the Minister lays poison baits;

notice must be displayed on the land. Obviously this provision did not contemplate aerial baiting and should not apply to aerial baiting. As has been pointed out by the Crown Solicitor, a general power of this kind proposed would not be construed to extend to the performance of acts dangerous to humans or stock, and, as a consequence, it is incumbent on the Minister, in carrying out aerial baiting, to see that care is used in selecting the places where the baits are dropped so that they will not be dropped near domestic water supplies or in circumstances that could endanger human lives or stock. Notice of the intended dropping of baits will be given wherever possible.

Records show that in the years when baits were dropped (1952 and 1953) 10,784 and 6,834 scalps respectively were presented for payment, as against 5,715 and 6,667 respectively in 1950 and 1951. These figures cannot, however, be taken either to prove or disprove the efficacy of aerial baiting as the incidence of dogs in any particular year must be taken into account and also the fact that breeding country more or less inaccessible to humans for collecting the scalps can be baited from the air. The dog population is by no means static from year to year, but fluctuates very greatly according to seasonal conditions.

Mr. RICHES secured the adjournment of the debate.

WHEAT PRICE STABILIZATION SCHEME BALLOT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN (Minister of Agriculture), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Wheat Price Stabilization Scheme Ballot Act, 1953. Read a first time.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I move:—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

In doing so I would like to express my great satisfaction at agreement having been reached after a long time of constructive debate on the question of wheat stabilization. I wish to pay a tribute to my predecessor for the very important work that he did to bring about the ultimate agreement. I know that Sir George Jenkins and the New South Wales Minister of Agriculture did practically all the spade work in getting the other States into line on the home consumption price principle and the wheat industry owes them a very great debt. Victoria, the final citadel of resistance, was overwhelmed at the last two Premiers' conferences. Victoria had held out against the home consumption price that other States had accepted. It was agreed at the Agricultural Council meetings held recently that a ballot on the stabilization scheme should be held not later than October 15, because some State Parliaments will not be in session beyond that time. As all States have to take uniform action on holding ballots and must subsequently amend the stabilization legislation which provides for an expiry date in 1956, this must be attended to before Parliaments in other States go into recess. I do not want to debate the matter of stabilization except to point out that the most important feature of the whole scheme, in my opinion, is the Commonwealth Government's guarantee in regard to the five year period. That is important because the industry is facing difficulties in marketing the huge surpluses that have been built up, as well as current crops. To get, as we have, a guarantee from the Commonwealth for five years in respect of 100,000,000 bushels of export wheat each year at cost of production to the growers is a remarkable achievement. If the State Governments had been foolish enough to jeopardize the guarantee by failing to agree they would have done a grave disservice to the wheat industry of Australia. It was just as well that the States were able to compose their differences over the minor matter of the home consumption price.

Mr. O'Halloran—It is a major matter for some industries that are suffering today.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I hope the honourable member will be patient. I do not think the 14s. a bushel will obtain for the whole five-year period. Anyone watching market trends will see that even today under the International Wheat Agreement the overseas selling price is getting close to the floor price, which in Australian currency is 13s. 10d. Recent sales abroad have been made at 14s. 6d. The provisions of the Stabilization Act are that the International Wheat Agreement price shall be the price ruling in Australia as the home consumption price, or 14s., whichever is the lower. The International Wheat Agreement has a term of three years, so for the last two years of the five years the stabilization scheme will be on a different basis. It is provided that for those two years the export parity shall be the home consumption price, or 14s., whichever is the lower. That is distinctly set out in the other Act to which I have referred and I have no doubt that before long we shall be down on either the International Wheat Agreement floor price or the export parity price.

Then there is the further provision that if any of the prices I have quoted fall below the cost of production figure that figure shall be the home consumption price. Both the wheatgrowers and the consumers are safeguarded in this legislation. I do not think the consumer can reasonably ask or expect the wheat industry to continue to supply wheat to Australian consumers at less than cost of production. It has been suggested that because of the large wheat surpluses throughout the world Australia should take some action in curtailing production, but all the States and Commonwealth Governments have resisted such views because we did not consider that we were the guilty parties in creating surpluses. Over a period we have reduced our wheat acreages from 14,000,000 to 10,000,000 at present, so surely we have done sufficient in this direction. Again, our consistently low internal price, by comparison with overseas internal prices, has resulted in decreasing our wheat acreages by economic methods. On the other hand, the United States and other countries have consistently maintained high internal wheat prices. The United States had a price of 19s. 7d. for some years, and Canada had a high internal price, and that brought about greatly increased production. Therefore, the wheat surpluses with which the world is now burdened were created by other countries. America is now imposing considerable restrictions on her wheatgrowers.

It was provided by the Wheat Price Stabilization Scheme Ballot Act of last year that if a wheat price stabilization scheme should be agreed to by the Governments of the Commonwealth and of all the Australian States, the Minister of Agriculture was to direct that a poll of wheatgrowers should be held. The object of the poll would be to ascertain whether the growers favoured the scheme. As honourable members know, there has been some delay in securing the necessary agreement of all the Governments to the stabilization proposals, but agreement has now been reached and it is necessary to hold a poll. Since last year's Act was passed, however, another wheat harvest has been delivered to the Wheat Board and another wheat crop has been sown. This, of course, will bring additional persons into the category of wheatgrowers. Accordingly, it has now been decided that in addition to the wheatgrowers specified in last year's Act, namely, those who delivered wheat to the board in 1951-52 and 1952-53, any wheatgrower who delivered wheat in 1953-54, or who has planted 50 acres or more to wheat for the 1954-55 season should also be granted the right to vote at the poll. To carry this decision into effect it is necessary to amend last year's Act, and the present Bill has been introduced for that purpose. We have arrangements for conducting the poll well in hand. The wheatgrowers voting list has been compiled and we hope to be ready as soon as the other States are for taking the poll.

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

TOWN PLANNING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Town Planning Act, 1929. Read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.41 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, August 17, at 2 p.m.