

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, August 17, 1954.

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

QUESTIONS.

DECENTRALIZATION OF INDUSTRY.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The Premier was reported as saying, when speaking at the Commercial Travellers' Association dinner last Saturday, that there was some difficulty in finding room for new industries wishing to establish themselves in South Australia. Has the Government taken any steps to ascertain whether any new industries can be established in suitable country towns and so bring about a decentralization of industry and population and, if not, will it examine this possibility?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Whenever the Government is approached about the establishment of new industries in South Australia, attempts are always made, if it is at all feasible, to persuade them to go outside the metropolitan area and no expense has been spared in this direction. Recently, for instance, there were negotiations concerning what would be a big and new type of industry in South Australia. I took the principals to a country town and I also arranged to take other directors to a country town. Photographs of country localities have been taken and all sorts of things have been done to foster the idea that it is not necessary to be in the metropolitan area to achieve success in industrial activity. Sometimes our efforts have been successful. For example, the firm of Parsons is to be established at Whyalla. It will undertake an important and new type of production in Australia, and one of great national significance. The State Government sponsored the establishment of that industry at Whyalla and so that there would be no difficulties about operatives coming from England special provision was made for housing them at Whyalla. The Tourist Bureau took photographs of the town, including the school, the hospital and the shopping centres, so that the people coming from England would know that necessary amenities existed in the town. I assure the Leader of the Opposition that everything possible is done to get industries established in the country if it is feasible. Occasionally, because an industry manufactures a bulky article at a reasonably low price it cannot be established outside the metropolitan area because of the transport charges involved.

AUSTRALIAN PERFORMING RIGHTS ASSOCIATION.

Mr. WHITE—Over a period of many years the Australian Performing Rights Association operating from 66 Pitt Street, Sydney, has collected fees from institute committees and committees in charge of public halls in South Australia and, I assume, throughout Australia. I have been requested by the Murray Bridge Institute Committee to make some inquiries concerning this organization. Up to July 1 of this year the maximum amount paid by the Murray Bridge Institute for any one year has been £11. The Association is now computing its fees differently and the Murray Bridge Institute will have to pay £48 a year. This represents an increase of 450 per cent. Can the Premier say:—(1) Has this steep rise in fees been investigated by the Prices Branch of any State Government, and, if not, will he investigate this matter as it concerns all institutes? (2) Has this organization a legal right to collect these fees? (3) Is an institute, or other public body, legally compelled to collect fees for the Australian Performing Rights Association?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This matter has given much concern to the State Government and to every authority that has the duty of providing entertainment for the public. For instance, the Australian Broadcasting Commission has not escaped the charges made by this organization, which makes a charge on every record played over the air. It is not merely a Commonwealth, but an international organization that has a copyright of every producer's work, on which it pays to the producer a certain fee. If it is desired to play any record subject to performing rights charges there is no way of avoiding such charges. As the Performing Rights Association is registered under Commonwealth law, I doubt whether the South Australian Prices Act has any jurisdiction in this realm, but I will have the matter examined by the Crown Law authorities.

HOUSING TRUST OCCUPANCIES.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Can the Treasurer say whether any Housing Trust rental homes are occupied by only one person?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will get a report for the honourable member.

REGISTRATION OF LOW LOADERS.

Mr. PEARSON—Section 7 (6) of the Road Traffic Act provides that tractors, bulldozers, scarifiers, graders, etc., may be used by contractors free of registration fee, provided

they are being used for making roads or proceeding to or from the site of a roadmaking contract, but the Registrar of Motor Vehicles informs me that this subsection does not include, either expressly or by implication, a vehicle such as a low loader. Although I realize that such a vehicle may be used for purposes other than the conveyance of plant, will the Premier consider exempting it from the payment of registration fee, provided the contractor can satisfy the Registrar that the vehicle is used solely for the purpose of transporting his own heavy equipment from place to place? If he desired to use it for other contracting purposes, he would, of course, be liable to pay a fee.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—There are many matters in the Road Traffic Act concerning which it might be thought desirable to reduce registration fees, but every reduction in fees would have a surprisingly great adverse result on our revenue, which is used to keep our roads in order.

Mr. Pearson—District councils are exempt from such fees.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes, their road-making plant is free from registration fees, but the honourable member suggests that a vehicle, which is not a roadmaking machine but which can be and is used for carting all sorts of things other than roadmaking equipment, be exempted. Such vehicles, however, are used for carrying heavy weights and take their full toll of the roads. Under those circumstances I doubt whether it is wise to extend the present exemption, but I will have the matter examined.

COMPENSATION FOR QUORN RESIDENTS.

Mr. RICHES—Has the Premier a reply to my recent question about the results of a survey made by the Mines Department in the Quorn district with a view to establishing an industry there to compensate residents for the adverse effect of the alteration in the route of the northern railway line?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Director of Mines reports:—

1. A detailed geological survey has been completed in the Quorn area and the results are now being compiled in a report dealing with the geology of the district. A geological map is also in course of preparation. The work has been of an extremely detailed nature and every endeavour has been made to locate mineral resources of economic value. However, the search and investigational work have been unsuccessful and it can be said that there are no major economic mineral resources in the area.

2. In addition to the mineral resources survey, a survey of underground water resources of the Willochra Basin is in progress and the results to date tend to indicate that the scope for utilizing them for irrigation is likely to be extremely limited. In fact, north of Bruce the underground waters are generally too saline for use other than the watering of stock. A detailed report will be completed in due course, but altogether, both the mineral and underground water resources may be taken as being of little consequence in connection with any development that can be undertaken to compensate Quorn for the loss of its rail activities when the broad gauge line is operating between Leigh Creek and Port Augusta.

Mr. RICHES—In view of reports read today by the Premier concerning the failure of the search in the Quorn district for minerals on which an industry could be based, will the Government consider introducing legislation to provide for compensation for Quorn people who will suffer losses as the result of railway policy?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I shall have the matter examined. I refer the honourable member to an answer I gave recently to a somewhat similar question. Then I pointed out the Government had introduced legislation but at the time I had received requests from several members not to proceed with it because the committee proposed to be set up under legislation would investigate claims which at that time could not be substantiated. The legislation provided for some assistance in the way of compensation for disabilities suffered. It was pointed out to me, and I think properly, that persons who may in the future suffer a disability could not at that time prove one because the railway was still operating. If the honourable member desires it, I shall have the matter examined to see if it is practicable to introduce the legislation this session.

RURAL YOUTH COUNCIL.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Can the Minister of Agriculture indicate the composition and functions of the Council of the Rural Youth Movement?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The present Rural Youth Council comprises Dr. A. R. Callaghan (Chairman), Department of Agriculture, Messrs. A. R. Ninnies and Mr. L. C. McCarter (Department of Education), Mr. D. Cramm (Advisory Board of Agriculture), Mrs. S. Perrin (Women's Agricultural Bureau Council), Mr. H. J. Finnis (Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society), Mr. A. A. West (Financial Institutions), Messrs. H. Plumridge and R. R. Stewart (Press), Mr. C. C.

Wicks (Radio), and Mr. S. T. North (Secretary). Mr. P. Angove, although not a member of the council, attends all meetings in his capacity of General Supervisor. The functions of the council would be, generally to advise the Minister and those in charge of the Rural Youth Movement on relevant matters.

MOONTA MINES ELECTRICITY SUPPLY.

Mr. McALEES—Can the Premier say whether action will be taken to extend the supply of electric power and light to Moonta Mines people living beyond the post office?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will have a survey made and see whether it is possible to serve the district mentioned, either under the ordinary scheme or under the scheme where some compensation is paid by the Government.

SCHOOL-LEAVING AGE.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Under the heading "Boys should be in School" an article in the *Advertiser* of August 12 states:—

Parents were wrong to let their children leave school before they were 16, to work in such places as factories, the Deputy Director of Education (Mr. G. S. McDonald) said yesterday. He told the annual conference of School Welfare Clubs at the Teachers College, that some parents did not care what environment their children fell into after leaving school. "A 14-year-old boy should still be at school—not working in a factory, where he would be expected to cope with adult situations," said Mr. McDonald.

A sub-leader of the *News* of the same date states:—

In chastising parents for allowing children to leave school at the age of 14, the Deputy Director of Education, Mr. McDonald, is neglecting the fact that Parliament, in 1946, passed a Bill raising the school leaving age to 15 years. It was the expressed will of the people that children should not leave school at the age of 14 years. However, the proclamation of this legislation has been withheld by the Government, presumably on the advice of the Education Department. It has been conservatively estimated that the raising of the age would increase the numbers in secondary schools by one-third—a situation with which the department is apparently not prepared to cope.

I ask the Minister of Education whether the assumption of the *News* is correct and, if so, will he acknowledge the wishes of Parliament to the widest extent possible and go so far as to compel those scholars who commence a year at a secondary school to complete it?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Mr. McDonald, Deputy Director of Education, is a very able

and experienced officer, and I have no doubt that he delivered an excellent address at the gathering to which the honourable member referred, and he doubtless expressed his own personal opinions, with which in general I agree, namely, that it is desirable that boys should stay at school as long as possible and not be tempted to take dead-end jobs carrying a high rate of remuneration for a time, but not continuing to do so as the youth becomes a man. I read the synopsis in the *Advertiser*, but did not take the same view as the leader writer of the *News* that Mr. McDonald was chastising parents. I think he was merely expressing what he thought was an experienced viewpoint. Even though the law raising the school-leaving age has been passed by Parliament it has never been put into operation because we have neither the accommodation nor the teaching staff to cope with all the children, but I understand we can cope with all children whose parents desire that they voluntarily stay till a later age. The matter having been raised, I will ask for a report on it.

WHEAT CARTAGE BY ROAD.

Mr. QUIRKE—A fortnight ago I asked the Minister of Agriculture a question relating to the cartage of wheat from Kybunga to the silo at Ardrossan. Has he a reply?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I have a report from the superintendent of the Australian Wheat Board, who states:—

We do not call tenders for cartage to Ardrossan, but rates are fixed by the Prices Commissioner. During the war years, the road cartage on Yorke Peninsula by the Y.P. Carriers' Association was under the direction of the Government Road Transport Board and the Liquid Fuel Board. Many big cartage jobs were done for us and our growers had reason to be well satisfied with the expeditious handling of their grain. Since the advent of the Ardrossan Bulk Silo, the Y.P. Carriers' Association has proved that it can cope with our demands. We indicate, very often at short notice, to their secretary whether our requirements are 10,000 bushels or 40,000 bushels, or any other quantity per day, and the work is immediately allocated by him. In the event of a breakdown with one or more trucks, replacements are arranged without reference to us. It is impracticable for us to engage a fleet of individual carriers. From our experience of the efficiency of properly organized transport, we recommend the formation of a similar association on Eyre Peninsula. The results have been equally successful. If Northern carriers are debarred from joining the Y.P. association, I suggest that they form another association. Regarding the movement from rail stations to Ardrossan, the explanation is that for the 1953-54 season we received

1½ million bushels in bulk at Ardrossan. That quantity was readily shipped and our buyers have continued to nominate Ardrossan as the port where they are prepared to accept cargoes. Consequently, we have this season shipped about 3½ million bushels in bulk through that port, and expect the total to reach 5 million bushels before the end of the year.

I think this answer generally, covers a point raised by the Leader of the Opposition, but he brought up another question which I will deal with later. The report continues:—

Our other export ports, Wallaroo, Port Pirie, Port Lincoln and Thevenard, are full of wheat awaiting sales and shipments, and while there is an outlet through Ardrossan, it is an economic proposition to our growers to move wheat to that port. We are thus able to compete in a small way with other States which have bulk handling facilities and large stocks of wheat.

I subsequently got some further figures, which show that up to the sixth of this month 1,863,000 bushels have been transported by road at a cost of £3,174, which is .04d. a bushel in excess of what it would have cost by rail.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Minister of Agriculture any information further to what he gave to Mr. Quirke about the carting of wheat to Ardrossan and its shipment from that port? Also, has he any information on the damage being done to roads by the haulage to Ardrossan of wheat, which could be sent by rail for export from other shipping ports?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The Leader of the Opposition's question the other day related to depots established by the Wheat Board in various parts of the State, and on that matter the board reports that emergency storages are being erected at Gladstone, Kadina, Cummins, and Port Adelaide, and that in all cases the wheat is being railed. This is in accordance with what I assumed. Regarding damage to roads through the cartage of wheat to Ardrossan, I have no information at this juncture but I shall ask the Minister of Roads to look into the matter.

Mr. GOLDNEY (on notice)—

1. What was the cost per bushel of carting wheat in bulk by road from Kybunga, Hoyleton, Halbury, and Balaklava railway sidings respectively, to Ardrossan?

2. How do these costs compare with rail freights for the same mileages?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The State Superintendent of the Australian Wheat Board reports:—

In reply to your letter of even date, we would advise the cost per bushel of carting

wheat in bulk to Ardrossan and the comparative costs of rail freights for the same mileages are as follows:—

Agency.	Road Cartage. (per bushel.)	Rail Freight. (per bushel.)
	d.	d.
Kybunga	9.908	8.598
Hoyleton	9.546	8.598
Halbury	8.820	8.196
Balaklava	7.714	7.393

HARBORS BOARD'S CHARGES.

Mr. TAPPING—I purposed directing a question to the Minister of Marine, but in his absence I shall direct it to the Premier because it involves Government policy. Last Friday's press indicated that certain harbour charges would be increased from September 1 and were expected to yield an additional £400,000 annually. Can the Premier justify the proposed increases in view of the following factors:—(1) pegging of basic wage since September, 1953; (2) plea to shipping companies by Federal Government to reduce freight rates; and (3) gradual decline in prices received for primary produce?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Harbour charges have always been regarded as charges for services. For some years the board paid its way but recently it has not been doing so. No increases have been made in the charges for many years. They are now the subject of an investigation by the Commonwealth Grants Commission. An investigation by State officers discloses that the moment the Grants Commission makes a check on present charges it will be forced to make an adverse adjustment in our grant because they are below those of other States. In these circumstances and as we are losing money in operating our harbours, and likely to have a reduced grant following on an investigation by the Grants Commission, there is no alternative but to increase the charges. Regarding the effect of the increase on the cost of living, many of the commodities subject to the charges have an extremely low rate and a 25 per cent increase on a commodity with a rate of only 2s. a ton would have no noticeable effect. In my opinion the increased charges are capable of being absorbed by the shipping interests and will not affect the cost of living. They are necessary if the board is to satisfactorily carry out its function without coming on the general taxpayer for a subsidy.

HOUSE FOR URANIUM EXPERT.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Last week I drew the Premier's attention to an advertisement in the press suggesting that a person was in a position to negotiate for a house valued up to

£8,000 for a uranium expert who was supposed to come from U.S.A. In the concluding remarks of his reply the Premier said that probably the advertisement was inserted to catch the eye of people with houses for sale so it was probably not a *bona fide* advertisement. I always understood that before a person could become a member of the Land and Estate Agents Association he had to be registered and possess a fidelity bond. Will the Premier make further investigations into the matter to see if the person who inserted the advertisement is a member of the association and, if not, whether he is entitled to do the business the advertisement presumes he is doing?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will take up the matter. Frankly, I do not think it is a new dodge. Frequently persons desiring to be agents for the selling of houses advertise in the hope that they will be able to interview prospective purchasers and in due course place the matter in the hands of agents. I do not think it is a fraud under the Act but I shall have the matter investigated.

STEAM BOILERS AND ENGINE DRIVERS ACT.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The Steam Boilers and Engine Drivers Act has not been amended, as far as I know, since 1935. There was a wide discussion on this subject at the 1953 Australian Labor Party Convention and I was requested to put the following request to the Government:—

That an advisory committee be constituted by the State Government to revise the South Australia Steam Boilers and Engine Drivers Act and regulations with a view to having a Commonwealth machinery Act or uniform State Act based on the existing Queensland machinery Act, introduced at the earliest opportunity. This resulted from numerous complaints in recent years about the working of the Act. I understand one difficulty discovered recently is that there is no provision in it to register drivers of electric winches, which I understand have been introduced in South Australia, particularly at Radium Hill. Will the Government have the matter investigated with a view to an improvement in the State law, or have it listed for discussion at a Premier's Conference in order to have uniform legislation so that an engine driver holding a ticket in one State may have his qualifications recognized in another State and continue in that employment?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I do not think there is any difficulty in getting uniformity on

the matter of a man's qualifications being accepted in another State. On the general question of uniformity, experience has shown that it is difficult to get uniform legislation adopted by all States, particularly on such an important matter. Our legislation, for example, exempts certain types of callings from the Act. I do not know whether this State would be prepared to forego that exclusion or whether Queensland, which includes those callings, would be prepared to accept our exemptions. Up to date, Parliaments have used their own ideas, which have differed slightly. I will have the matter examined because it is useful to examine all legislation from time to time, not only with a view to improving it but, sometimes, of discarding it. We are often prone to clutter up our courts and Government departments with useless, unnecessary procedure. I will see if it is possible to improve this Act.

PIG MEAT PRICES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Last week I asked the Premier whether the prices of bacon and other processed pig meats had been reduced to consumers in conformity with the drop in the prices of pigs on the hoof in the markets. Has he any further information?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have a long report from the Prices Commissioner setting out the prices operating in Victoria and South Australia. That information is available to members but the report may be summarized as follows:—

Although pig meats have not been subject to price control for about six years, prices of bacon and ham are checked periodically by the Prices Department. The check has been intensified since market prices of pigs began to ease early in June. The Prices Commissioner has reported that bacon curers have already implemented two price reductions since June and that these reductions have been followed by proportionate reductions in retail prices. The wholesale price of middle rashers of bacon, which is the type of bacon in greatest demand, has already been reduced by 5d. per lb. and in most instances, the retail price has been reduced by 6d. per lb. The Prices Commissioner has also advised that, owing to the time taken to cure and market bacon and ham, any variation in market prices of pigs is not reflected in the cost of the finished product for approximately four weeks. Although the Prices Department has found no cause for dissatisfaction regarding prices up to the present, it is considered that a further price reduction should take place within the next fortnight if recent market values of pigs continue to prevail. Officers of the department will continue to watch the whole position very closely to ensure that there is no exploitation by any section of the trade.

SATELLITE TOWN NEAR SALISBURY.

Mr. FRANK WALSH (on notice)—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to proceed with the construction of a satellite town near Salisbury?

2. If so, is the Housing Trust only awaiting Government approval to begin construction?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This matter is under consideration.

HERD TESTING.

Mr. FLETCHER (on notice)—

1. Has the re-organization of herd testing in South Australia reduced the number of stud herds being tested?

2. How many herds, grade and pedigree, were under test before the grade and official tests were amalgamated?

3. How many herds of both these types are now under test?

4. To what extent has the waiting list for testing of pedigree herds been reduced?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The replies are:—

1. No.

2 and 3.

	Pedi- gree.	Grade.	Total.
1953/54	62	502	564
1954/55	90	532	622
Increase	28	30	58
Percentage increase . .	45%	6%	13%

4. Before the new scheme was adopted in 1953/54 there was a substantial number of pedigree herds on the waiting list for official test. Since the introduction of the new scheme the department has been able, for the first time, to satisfy the requirements of all stud breeders who have made application for official accreditation, so that no waiting list now exists. The waiting list for grade herd testing has been reduced considerably, and the few dairymen at present waiting will be absorbed as soon as numbers are sufficient to form additional associations.

PROGRESS OF PUBLIC WORKS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (on notice)—

1. How much has been spent on the following works to June 30, 1954:—(a) The Southern Yorke Peninsula water scheme, including the Bundaleer trunk main reconstruction; (b) the South-Eastern railway broadening, including rolling stock; (c) the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (formerly known as the Western Districts Hospital); and (d) the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline?

2. What was the estimated cost of the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline when approved?

3. What proportion of each of these works was completed by June 30, 1954?

4. What is the estimated cost of the work still to be completed in each case?

5. When is it anticipated that these works will be completed?

The Hon. C. S. Hincks for the Hon. M. McINTOSH—The replies are:—

1. (a) £645,000.

(b) Civil engineering projects £3,486,155
Rolling stock projects . £209,611

Total £3,695,766

(c) £886,138.

(d) £5,560,000.

2. £3,390,000.

3. Southern Yorke Peninsula scheme—11 per cent.

Civil engineering projects:—

Wolseley-Millicent 65 per cent

Naracoorte-Kingston Nil

Rolling stock projects 50 per cent

Queen Elizabeth Hospital—25 per cent.

Mannum-Adelaide pipeline—60 per cent.

4. Southern Yorke Peninsula scheme—

£5,400,000.

Civil engineering projects:—

Wolseley-Millicent £1,022,000

Naracoorte-Kingston £1,200,000

Rolling stock projects £302,000

Queen Elizabeth Hospital—Approximately £2,800,000.

Mannum-Adelaide pipeline—£3,400,000.

5. Southern Yorke Peninsula scheme—1957.

Civil engineering projects—It is anticipated that broad gauge working to Millicent will be possible by Christmas, 1955, providing the labour position does not deteriorate.

Rolling stock projects—Completion date indefinite for projects as a whole. Three of the nine projects are not yet programmed for commencement.

Queen Elizabeth Hospital—from three to four years, depending upon the capacity of the various contractors to complete the work.

Mannum-Adelaide pipeline—1956.

MAIN NORTH ROAD.

Mr. GOLDNEY (on notice)—Is it the intention of the Government to commence widening of the Main North Road to Gawler in the near future?

The Hon C. S. Hincks for the Hon. M. McINTOSH—Apart from the work which is in hand as far as Gepps Cross, it is not the intention to do any further widening in the near future.

JOINT COMMITTEE ON CONSOLIDATION BILLS.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

That the House of Assembly request the concurrence of the Legislative Council in the appointment for the present session of a Joint Committee to which all Consolidation Bills shall stand referred, in accordance with Joint Standing Order No. 18, and to which any further question, relative thereto, may at any time be sent by either House for report.

That, in the event of the Joint Committee being appointed, the House of Assembly be represented thereon by three members, two of whom shall form the quorum of the Assembly members necessary to be present at all sittings of the Committee.

That a message be sent to the Legislative Council transmitting the foregoing resolutions.

That Messrs. O'Halloran, Pearson and Tuesner be representatives of the Assembly on the said Committee.

Motion carried.

PARLIAMENTARY DRAFTSMAN.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

That Standing Order No. 85 be so far suspended for the remainder of the session as to enable the Parliamentary Draftsman and his assistant to be accommodated with seats in the Chamber on the right hand side of the Speaker.

Motion carried.

SUPPLY BILL (No. 2).

His Excellency the Governor, by message, recommended the House to make provision by Bill for defraying the salaries and other expenses of the several departments and public services of the Government of South Australia during the year ending June 30, 1955.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer) moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

Motion carried.

In Committee of Supply.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

That towards defraying the expenses of the establishments and public services of the State for the year ending June 30, 1955, a further sum of £6,000,000 be granted: provided that no payments for any establishment or service shall be made out of the said sum in excess of the rates voted for similar establishments or services on the Estimates for the financial year ended June 30, 1954, except

increases of salaries or wages fixed or prescribed by any return made under any Act relating to the Public Service, or by any regulation or by any award, order, or determination of any court or other body empowered to fix or prescribe wages or salaries.

Resolution agreed to, adopted in Committee of Ways and Means, and agreed to by the House.

Bill introduced by the Hon. T. Playford and read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

It provides for a further £6,000,000 of supply to carry on the public service of the State pending the passing of the Appropriation Bill. Clause 2 provides for the issue and application of £6,000,000. Clause 3 provides that payments are not to exceed last year's estimates, except that payment of increases in salaries or wages can be authorized by the Treasurer.

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

WHEAT PRICE STABILIZATION SCHEME BALLOT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 12. Page 377.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This is a Bill to bring up-to-date the Act passed last session authorizing a ballot among wheatgrowers on the Stabilization Act passed some time earlier in the same session. Its main purpose is to include those farmers who could not have been included when the legislation was introduced last year, that is, persons who have since entered the industry within the meaning of the provisions contained in the Bill. Last year the legislation on which the ballot was to have been held was introduced and passed before the legislation providing for the ballot, and, as the growers are to be asked to express their views on a slightly different stabilization scheme now, it might have been more appropriate to introduce the major amending Bill first.

The Hon. A. W. Christian—Supposing the growers rejected the proposal?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—At present they have none to reject. If the growers, by ballot, supported the scheme to be submitted to them, it would still be possible—although, I admit, improbable—for Parliament to reject it, and it would have been better tactics from the point of view of orderly legislation to have had the alterations in the stabilization scheme, to which this House agreed last year, approved

before we took a growers' ballot. In explaining the Bill the Minister said that he did not wish to debate the stabilization scheme itself as that was not the subject of the Bill; but the bulk of his speech was in fact on that subject, and as he made two or three mis-statements in connection with the matter, I feel it is necessary to make some comment thereon. The Minister said:—

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 . . . Victoria had held out against the home consumption price that other States had accepted.

The real question was not whether a home consumption price should be an essential principle of the stabilization scheme—that was never questioned. The real point at issue was at what level that price should be fixed under the scheme. It was first suggested that the price should be 15s., but the Victorian Premier objected, contending, quite rightly, that the price should be much nearer the ascertained cost of production. I think he originally stood out for 13s., and he had in mind the effect of the suggested price on the price of bread and on the primary industries using feed wheat. These industries were not—and have not since been—considered. These industries, particularly the pig and poultry industries, should have been considered and some form of assistance, preferably a subsidy from the Federal Government, devised to assist them to market their products overseas where marketing has been made more difficult by the raising of the home consumption price of wheat. At the time of the last discussions on wheat stabilization its cost of production was 12s. 7d. a bushel. Eventually Mr. Cain agreed to accept 14s. a bushel for a period of three years, but there had been so much delay that the legislation could not be implemented. Various conferences were held, but the Federal election intervened and no ballot was possible under last year's legislation. In his second reading speech Mr. Christian said:—

The most important feature of the whole scheme, in my opinion, is the Commonwealth Government's guarantee in regard to the five-year period . . . 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 in Australia.

The Minister speaks of this guarantee as if it were being made by some external authority, whereas it is in fact the Australian people who are being directed to foot the bill for the wheatgrowers' costs. Secondly, it is not so much the wheat industry as the wheatgrowers themselves who will benefit. Incidentally, growers have been rendering a great disservice to the industry by assisting in the process of rising costs and by the reduction of wheat acreages.

During the Minister's speech I pointed out how the price of wheat growing land under this system of stabilization and the cost of production had increased enormously during recent years. Unless a halt is called to this increase the price of wheat for home consumption will rise continually to keep pace with the increase in the cost of production brought about by enhanced land values. The net result will be that we will have assisted our wheat farmers to price themselves entirely out of overseas markets. This point should be seriously considered in the future.

The Hon. A. W. Christian—The Bureau of Agricultural Economics does not take present land values into account.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—There has been one adjustment of land values since the original value was assessed to ascertain cost of production, and in the last six months there has been a wide demand from every farmers' organization in Australia for the price to be raised by the bureau to the present standard of values in the various wheat growing areas of Australia.

Mr. Heaslip—But it has not been raised.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—No, but there has been a wide clamor for it and when one realizes the implications of this stabilization legislation and just how much it will be possible for the wheatgrowers to wrest from the people of this country in the next five years, it is not very difficult to imagine that there will be no trouble in having an adjustment of land values made once this matter is settled finally, and as pointed out by an authority speaking on behalf of the wheatgrowers, to bring it to the average of the wheatgrowing districts.

Mr. Heaslip—The average yield would be different, wouldn't it?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—That is something that neither you nor I can estimate; it is in the hands of higher authorities.

Mr. Quirke—if it does not rain soon they will be re-selling.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I agree; if we do not get some rain in the northern areas soon we will have to revise our ideas of yields considerably. An export maximum of 100,000,000 bushels is to be guaranteed, but it should be remembered that when Australian wheat could have been sold under the International Wheat Agreement at much higher prices than now ruling—and still higher prices outside the agreement when the sky was the limit—Australian producers did not produce enough to fulfil Australia's commitments of about 91,000,000 bushels under the agreement. This also disposes effectively of the argument that because the domestic price was comparatively low, the farmers have not produced as much as they might have and have in fact reduced acreages. The real fact of the matter is that producers were receiving such high incomes relative to the general level of incomes in Australia, and consequently paying high taxes, that they deliberately curtailed production of wheat; when barley prices were high, they sowed more barley than wheat because they could get a higher effective return from that commodity than they could from wheat in certain areas. In many areas the wise practice of sowing barley as a rotation crop has been followed. I hope this will continue because it is much sounder practice than a continuation of wheat growing on the same land for long periods.

In reference to the home consumption price of wheat, it is as well to remember that the cost of production, on which that price was formerly based, is comprehensive in that it includes every conceivable ingredient of cost involved in the production of wheat—including an allowance for the farmer's managerial activities and labour and including his profit—and no-one can say that it is not generous. According to the 1952-53 compilation, gross farm costs, excluding freight, etc., but including other activities besides wheat growing, were equivalent to 15s. a bushel of wheat produced—that is, if all farm costs were debited to wheat. The adjusted figure, based on the assumption that the farmer engaged in other activities, was approximately 9s. 10d. a bushel. In the gross calculations, the farmer's own return was taken as 48d. a bushel, so that if we make a proportionate reduction corresponding to the reduction from 15s. to 9s. 10d. a bushel cost of production, we can safely reckon the farmer's return from wheat only at about 2s 8d a bushel. The farmer's return is the net return for his own management and labour after all other costs, includ-

ing interest on land and cost of machinery, have been obtained. Freight and handling charges for the 1952-53 season (about 25d. a bushel) brought the net cost of production to approximately 11s. 11d. a bushel, the farmer's share being 2s 8d. a bushel. The cost of production calculated for the 1953-54 season was 12.7d. a bushel, and, assuming that the farmer's share remained the same as for the previous year, it can be seen that if he receives 14s. a bushel, he is really being rewarded at the rate of 4s. 1d. a bushel for wheat alone. On a crop of 12,000 bushels a farmer would be netting about £2,500 from wheat only. However, he is allowed approximately 1s. 4d. a bushel as a reward for managing other activities on his farm, so that his income, if his farm is typical as to costs, etc., would be nearer £3,500. The Minister also said:—

I do not think that the consumer can reasonably ask or expect the wheat industry to continue to supply wheat to Australian consumers at less than cost of production. This statement is absurd. The home consumption price has not been less than "cost of production" price calculated in the comprehensive manner indicated. It is now approximately 1s. 5d. above cost of production as calculated in December last. It is proposed to continue that margin over the cost of production in the scheme that the growers are asked to approve in the proposed ballot. The Minister also evinced some confusion regarding the fate of prices under the stabilization scheme. Actually, home consumption price will not fall below cost of production. Mr. Stott had to correct the Minister on this point.

The workers of this country will have to pay a little over a penny more for each 2 lb. loaf of bread as a result of fixing the price of wheat at 1s. 5d. above the ascertained cost of production, and it is very interesting to note the reasons advanced for giving this incentive to farmers to grow more wheat. The representatives of the farmers and the chairman of the Australian Wheat Board (Sir John Teasdale) recommended a reduction in the quantity of wheat grown. I do not agree with that policy because I think it would be suicidal in the face of conditions existing in other parts of the world, particularly because of the large numbers of people not very far to the north who are clamouring for food. Also there is a danger that the seasonal conditions could very easily turn against us. Everyone in this State recognizes that in the last seven or eight years we have had the longest run of good seasons generally throughout the State in the history of white settlement and it is only

natural, knowing that history repeats itself, that we must be getting near a leaner period.

Mr. Heaslip—If that happens would not the 1s. 5d. margin above the cost of production disappear?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes, after the first three years. The guaranteed price for the first three years is 14s., and the cost of production price or 14s. is guaranteed for the remaining two years.

The Hon. A. W. Christian—Whichever is the lower.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes. If we run into bad times I think the cost of production will go down. I am not satisfied with the cost of production ascertained by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics; it is like many other prices and quotations obtained from experts who have no practical knowledge of the particular thing for which they are giving a quotation or on which they are making an estimate.

Mr. Pearson—I think there are a number of practical people in that bureau.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I read a finding of this organization, but as that was two years ago I will not attempt to quote it now. I cannot forget, however, that I was in the Federal Parliament in the bad old days when the average price of wheat in this State at country sidings was between 1s. 6d. and 1s. 8d., and farmers' organizations throughout Australia were clamouring for a guaranteed price of 3s. 4d. a bushel. We know that costs have increased since then but, I suggest, not sufficiently to account for the difference between 3s. 4d. and 12s. 7d. a bushel. I believe there are some screws loose somewhere, and if we run into a difficult period, as well we might within the next few years, we will find a general tightening up of some of those loose screws.

Mr. Brookman—The average prices takes into account the cost of the average farmer and not necessarily that of the good farmer.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I suggest that the average farmer is a good farmer. I have had considerable experience in farming areas and I have yet to find the bad farmer. A few years ago, before we learnt what could be the consequences of over-cropping, the farmer who took proper steps to allow the largest possible area of his land to lie at grass was classed as a lazy farmer—a bad farmer—when, as a matter of fact, he was the best farmer in the district because he realized what the consequences of over-cropping would be, and when many of the alleged good farmers who had flogged their

land went through the insolvency court he was able to purchase their properties. This legislation will add more than one penny a loaf to the price of bread and this is something which the worker cannot recover as his wages have been pegged by the Arbitration Court.

The Hon. A. W. Christian—That 14s. home consumption price is already current.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes, but it was not current when the court made its determination, so the worker has lost that penny a loaf and has no chance of recovering it while the freezing of living wage adjustments remains. The position of pig and poultry farmers also is made more difficult because they have to market substantial portions of their production overseas where prices are falling, and the extent of that fall is anyone's guess. I have read some optimistic forecasts that prices will recover, but I do not see how they can while the cost of feeding grains is so high. The tendency rather will be to get out of the industry, with the result that the nation will lose this valuable export market. In this scheme a little more attention should have been given to other primary producers who are affected by the price of wheat, and at very little cost the Commonwealth Government could have compensated them for the disabilities they will suffer.

I am supporting this measure because it is the policy of the Labor Party to support anything that will stabilize the income of the man on the land. We have been fighting for it for years and will continue to do so. We believe that the primary producers' incomes should be stabilized as far as it is possible to do so and that schemes of this nature are one of the effective means of doing so. However, as I said earlier, we do not think stabilization schemes should be used to bring about an inflation of land values. We contend that the guaranteed price to the farmer should be for the whole of the wheat he can produce, that it should continue for a long period and should be on a cost of production basis ascertained in a more competent way than by the present method. With those reservations I support the second reading.

Mr. HAWKER (Stanley)—I congratulate the Minister of Agriculture on the way he introduced this Bill. He showed a very intimate knowledge of the history of stabilization and was able to give the House much valuable information before actually dealing with the meaning of the various clauses. Stabilization

has been under consideration for a very long time. The Leader of the Opposition said that the Labor Party agrees with the stabilization of prices for the man on the land. However, our primary products constitute the bulk of our exports and overseas prices depend very much on the economics of the purchasing countries over which we have no control, so I do not think we can ever achieve stabilization of the prices of primary products, and those who go in for farming must be prepared to take the good with the bad. The wheat farmer, over the years, has taken many kicks. In the 1930's, of all industries in Australia I suppose the wheat industry was the one which increased its production, for in that period South Australia sowed its biggest acreage to wheat. Secondary industries, if they cannot sell their products, put their employees off and close down, or restrict production, whereas the primary producer must take a very long term view. He starts fallowing in July in order that he may get a crop in the next following season which he does not sell until probably February or March of the next year. He thus has to plan at least 18 months in advance. Since the war the price of wheat has soared to great heights, especially in overseas' markets; figures have been quoted in this House to show the respective overseas and home consumption prices. The wheat farmer has been selling his wheat on the Australian market at below world parity. In other words, those employed in secondary industries have been able to buy their wheat at less than world parity and yet, except in very small amounts, secondary industries have been unable to compete in the export trade. In other words, although the world has had to pay a good deal more for wheat than Australia our secondary industries have not been able to compete in the world's markets, and I think that does not speak very well for their organization.

In South Australia wheat no longer holds such pride of place in our grain production. For years after the first World War wheat topped the list of our cereal production, but in the season just past wheat was nearly equalled by barley, and there are several reasons for that. One lies in land usage. We found that the wheat-fallow-wheat-fallow rotation mined our soil and caused very bad erosion problems. To grow wheat there must be fallow, and where there is fallow there is erosion, and in a tremendous area of South Australia, especially in the lighter land localities, farmers are now growing barley instead of wheat because barley can be sown

without fallowing. The land is less liable, therefore to soil erosion and barley also fits in very well with the mixed farming practices which have been advocated and adopted in recent years and done so much to restore the fertility of our soil. For these reasons, I think, we will never go back to the same wheat acreage as formerly, and wheat has consequently lost its predominant place in our scheme of things. I think that another reason for the lower acreage sown to wheat is that it has become in the last few years rather a political football; the farmer has resented having to supply his wheat for home consumption at less than overseas parity especially, as I said earlier when the people who can buy it more cheaply than it is bought overseas cannot compete with their manufactured goods in world's markets.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—Isn't it also a fact that a lot of second grade wheat land was first class barley land, so economic conditions have favoured barley.

Mr. HAWKER—That is another reason. Before the Minister came into the Chamber I referred to the lighter lands and said that barley has brought a good price since the war and works in well with mixed farming. For those reasons we shall not go back to large areas being planted to wheat. There has been much talk lately about the drop in our wheat acreage. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned it, and several leading agriculturists have said that South Australia's wheat acreage is dangerously low and that we should be in difficulties in a dry season. Previously I have said I did not altogether agree with that pessimistic view because we have rebuilt the fertility of our soils. Consequently, in a dry year we should not have as low an average yield as we had when we mined rather than cultivated the land. Many people consider that our wheat acreage might go so low that we shall not be able to supply our own needs.

I believe that certain people who have opposed a high home consumption price have been more afraid that we may be short of wheat than concerned with looking after farmers' interests. This view has been strengthened after talking to farmers in my district. They say, "We took the knock in the depression when we produced large quantities, and now we are asked to grow more wheat, but we have not got world parity. Since the war overseas prices have been high, but we have had to sell to secondary industries, amongst others, at a low price. It now seems that overseas wheat prices will drop. The

stabilization plan might seem favourable, but why are those people who were not interested in giving us a good price before, but more interested in keeping the home consumption price down, suddenly trying to boost up the wheat acreage by incentives? Why don't they let us have overseas prices, just as producers of other commodities have?" Even with all these incentives, I think the farmer will still be chary about growing more wheat. At present he has many ways to use his land profitably. For instance, wool, barley and oats are payable. However, this Bill merely lays down who shall have the right to vote at the forthcoming ballot. It really does not deal with the stabilization scheme. The Leader of the Opposition spoke at length on that, and I do not agree with his contention that the prices for primary products and land are out of step. I support the second reading.

Mr. HUTCHENS (Hindmarsh)—The purpose of the Bill is to enable a ballot to be taken to see whether wheatgrowers desire stabilization. As a member of the Opposition, and as a metropolitan member, I keenly appreciate the necessity of encouraging wheat production to the fullest possible extent. The remarks made by Mr. Hawker about the impracticability of stabilization were somewhat misleading, for it is possible to stabilize the industry and to guarantee prices. If wheatgrowers had accepted without question the principle of stabilization in years past they would not have suffered financially as much as they did. At one time farmers were probably worse off than most sections. Many were on relief and I admired those who worked their way out of debt. They are now enjoying prosperity as a result of high prices of primary products. It behoves the farmer to appreciate that these prices will not prevail for all time. Therefore, he should seize this opportunity of stabilization so that when prices decline he will have some security and be able to keep the nation supplied with necessary commodities at a price that will compensate him for his services and expenditure. I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we are facing a great danger: I hope that those engaged in rural production will avoid costing themselves out of world markets. The Leader pointed out that there has been a tendency to pay exorbitant prices for land. It is some years since I was employed on the land, but I can remember land that was sold in 1911 for 30s. an acre. It was just outside Goyder's line of rainfall. In 1917 it sold for just under £3, but today

it is bringing about £13. I cannot see any justification for such a big increase. Many people will regret that they paid such prices.

Mr. Hawker said that farmers are reluctant to grow wheat and sell it on the home market below world prices, but in doing so they are helping rural industries. He said that some people were concerned that we might not produce sufficient wheat for our needs, but although the overseas price will certainly decline, in accepting lower prices now on the Australian market the farmer is aiding our industries, thus establishing a local market for the future. I hope the farmer will be conscious of the importance of securing local markets. I support the measure because Opposition members believe in stabilization, and feel that the man on the land is all-important to the nation and that he should be assured of a satisfactory return for his efforts. I hope that he in turn, will appreciate that those engaged in secondary industries must not be penalized to his advantage and that we must all work together in the interests of the nation.

Mr. HEASLIP (Rocky River)—The discussion has to some extent got out of hand because the Bill merely amends an Act passed last year to enable wheatgrowers to decide whether they want wheat stabilization. Most speakers have debated stabilization, but an opportunity to deal with that aspect will be afforded after the farmers have voted, when we shall probably have another Bill before us. I do not agree with some of the remarks made by previous speakers on wheat stabilization. The Leader of the Opposition said that the cost of production in Australia today is 14s. a bushel, and that farmers are getting too much for their wheat. He mentioned a margin of 1s. 5d., which would bring the price down to 12s. 7d. a bushel. When we compare the prices charged for wheat in other parts of the world with the price in Australia we realize that our consumers are on a favourable basis. Farmers in the United States of America are paid 19s. 7d. a bushel on the farm; in Argentina 24s. 4d. on a bag basis, in the United Kingdom 20s. 8d.; in Italy for soft wheat, which compares with our wheat, 28s. 6d. and for hard wheat 31s. 6d.; in France 24s. 7½d., and in Turkey from 18s. 5d. to 26s. 1d. according to quality. Our consumers get the benefit of the low price here. If the inducement to grow wheat is not stabilized and our producers are not guaranteed the cost of production, consumers will have to import wheat, not at 14s. a bushel but at the prices I have mentioned, and

in addition there will be freight charges. It cannot be said that our producers are overpaid. For the past five years people have been apt to forget that the farmers have been supplying wheat to consumers at about half the price obtainable for it overseas. It was a tragedy that Victoria did not come into the stabilization scheme last year. Over the last five years farmers have been contributing to a pool for stabilization, but because Victoria did not come in the Commonwealth Government had to pay out the £9,000,000 which had been placed in the pool to provide for the time when prices fell below cost of production. Now if the farmers vote for stabilization they will have to build up the pool.

Mr. Lawn—Won't the consumers build it up?

Mr. HEASLIP—They have never put a penny into the pool. It has all been provided by the producers.

Mr. Lawn—Where does the producer get his money?

Mr. HEASLIP—He works hard for it, and long hours. The Leader of the Opposition referred to farmers costing themselves out of world markets. Too often is the farmer warned about keeping down his costs of production, but he is doing his best to do so. Unfortunately the only thing under his control is his own time. He has to buy machinery that is produced in industries working a so-called 40-hour week, which all adds to his costs. It is vital to the economy of Australia for the cost of production to be kept down. If we cannot export our wheat in competition with wheat grown elsewhere in the world we will not be able to carry on, because we have only primary produce to export. Not one secondary industry can export its goods in competition with goods produced elsewhere in the world. I am sure the farmers will vote overwhelmingly in support of stabilization.

Mr. Lawn—You believe it is right for the farmers to have a say in the matter?

Mr. HEASLIP—Yes.

Mr. Lawn—Do you think the majority view should prevail?

Mr. HEASLIP—Yes. Every farmer should have the right to decide how his produce should be sold. I support the Bill and compliment the new Minister of Agriculture on the way in which he and the Premier handled the matter at the Agricultural Council meeting. I commend the Minister also for the manner in which he is conducting the ballot. He is bringing up-to-date the roll of growers and

individual growers do not have to register in order to have a vote. Their names are automatically placed on the roll.

Mr. PEARSON (Flinders)—Generally speaking I give the Bill my blessing. At the outset it must be candidly admitted by all shades of political thought that the real credit for this legislation being possible must go to the Commonwealth Government. It propounded the scheme some time ago, but was prevented from putting it into operation by resistance from one State Government. The Commonwealth repeated its offer to growers and continued it through the stormy period of the last Commonwealth elections. Efforts were made to use wheat as one of the political footballs of the period. The Commonwealth Minister for Commerce and Agriculture must be warmly commended for keeping before Cabinet the principles of the scheme and persuading it to continue to offer the scheme, even though it had been spurned by the Victorian Government. Fortunately through the continued efforts of our Premier and the Ministers of Agriculture—I use the plural because the ex-Minister was prominent in the negotiations—and striking whilst the iron was at a suitable stage of heat, Victoria was brought into line. The Commonwealth Government offered the plan and as a result of the efforts of State authorities to achieve unity the Bill is now introduced. The Leader of the Opposition made one or two comments to which I wish to reply. He said that workers would be obliged to pay an extra penny for each 2-lb. loaf because the growers would receive more for home consumption wheat than was justified by cost of production. Whether that is a correct mathematical calculation I have not worked out.

Mr. Frank Walsh—Apparently he did.

Mr. PEARSON—Then I accept it, but my point is that it may be better for the workers to pay the penny extra in order to ensure that our primary industries continue to prosper. Later Mr. O'Halloran reminded us of the tragic days of the 1930's when the price of wheat was so low that the farmers were in financial difficulties. He alluded to the situation in which the working people found themselves, which proves my point. If the State is to remain prosperous and if the workers referred to by the Leader of the Opposition are to maintain a decent standard of living, to which they are entitled, everything rests largely on the prosperity of the primary industries. It is futile to reduce the

return of the primary producers to a point where they will be forced to exercise the stringent economies and frugalities that must be imposed in less prosperous days, and be obliged to curtail expenditure on the goods produced in secondary industries. I believe that the guarantee which is now offered to Australian wheat growers is not excessive and is not too high a price to pay for stability in this important industry. I have heard it seriously suggested by some people, with the best of motives, that, on the one hand, we should curtail production, and on the other, that we should maintain our present acreage sown to grain and give away any surplus to countries in dire need of foodstuffs. I believe that it would be wrong to curtail production under the present circumstances. It would certainly be unwise, because in this country nature has a way of taking a hand in matters and we cannot expect good seasons to continue indefinitely. Indeed the present season at this stage indicates that possibly our reserves may be somewhat lowered. The contribution Australia makes to the total exportable quantities of wheat available in the world is comparatively small, although not unimportant. The amount of wheat which we grow in comparison with the total world production is so small as to be almost a negligible factor. Our export surplus represents a greater percentage of the world export surplus than our production does of the total world production. Even if we had 100,000,000 bushels of wheat to export, the production in North America is so great that a 10 per cent reduction in its total crop would be equivalent to that quantity. It will be seen that a slightly unfavourable season in North America could quite easily offset the effect of the whole of our exportable surplus.

The United States of America has made arrangements with its growers to curtail acreages. Last August it offered them a choice of two alternatives—firstly, to continue to sow an unrestricted acreage to wheat without any price support arrangement or, secondly, to accept a 17½ per cent reduction in sowings and be guaranteed a floor price. The growers overwhelmingly voted in favour of the second proposal—I think it was a 77 per cent vote. Since then I believe a further reduction has been agreed upon and the effect of those two reductions will be that the acreage sown in the United States of America will decrease by about 28 to 30 per cent. That is a material factor in the total amount of wheat likely to be produced in the world. From the point of

view of common sense alone it would be unwise to curtail our production. I suggest that the way to handle this matter is for the farmer to be made aware of the economic position of this grain. He must decide what he will do about it, relying upon his own business knowledge and his knowledge of his own circumstances and farm production. That would be a far better method of arranging this matter than someone trying to dictate what the farmer must do.

In relation to the proposal that we should give some of our wheat surplus to countries in need, I am afraid the popular conception is based on a loose interpretation of what "giving away" means. People who advocate the Government giving away wheat have not followed the matter through all its ramifications. I believe we could probably improve not only our relations with our near northern neighbours but also their standard of living considerably if some of the wheat which is temporarily embarrassing us could be got to them.

Mr. John Clark—It would help to fight Communism.

Mr. PEARSON—I agree with that in general principle. Communism breeds in places where there is deep poverty and where persons are faced with a constant struggle for their bare existence. As citizens and people, having regard to the ethical aspect of this matter, we should attempt to alleviate the conditions in those countries where real hardships exist. It must be borne in mind that if we are to give wheat away it must be a gift from the nation as a whole and not from one section. Someone has to be paid for producing the wheat to be given away.

Mr. Quirke—It has not been suggested otherwise.

Mr. PEARSON—I agree, but some people overlook these matters.

Mr. Hawker—Do you think the farmer should be paid?

Mr. PEARSON—He must be paid the cost of production. If this gift is to be made it must come from the nation as a whole with the Commonwealth acting on behalf of the nation. The Commonwealth will have to pay the growers their cost of production at least. If the Commonwealth is to be involved in a large expenditure on behalf of the nation in order to give something to someone else, the expenditure so incurred must be obtained by the Commonwealth Government either from additional taxation or by applying some of its general revenue to that purpose.

Mr. Shannon—That boils down to the same thing.

Mr. PEARSON—Precisely, but to put it more succinctly, it means that if the nation is to make a gift of wheat it will either have to produce additional money for that purpose or go without something. After all, there is really no virtue in giving away something which does not cost anything. If the community is to make a gift of wheat, the grower will make his fair contribution pro rata through taxation which is gathered for that purpose or through going without some service he otherwise would have received. The cost of the gift should be equitably spread throughout the whole community. There has been some difficulty in the past in arranging a roll of wheatgrowers for elections and ballots which are necessary under legislation. The same applies to barley growers. I have suggested to the Minister that it might be possible for the boards concerned to keep a more complete record of those involved in the production of these cereals. The Act governing the Barley Board provides that any person who grows barley may participate in the ballot. There are many partnerships and companies in existence and a number of people who are actually growers under the terms of the Act are not known as such to the boards concerned. They are regarded as partnerships and the individual members are not actually enrolled. I know that one of the boards would be prepared to co-operate in this matter if the Minister made a request along the lines I have suggested. It would make provision for members of partnerships to be included on the roll. That would enable a complete and ready record of every person entitled under the Act to vote to be provided with a ballot paper. I am sure there is no real opposition to this measure and believe that all sections of the House are in favour of it. It will provide wheatgrowers with a degree of stability which they can ill afford to be without. I support the second reading.

Mr. SHANNON (Onkaparinga)—Every member who is interested in primary production should take this opportunity of addressing himself to the measure. The Bill will ensure that persons who have recently entered the wheat industry, and whose names do not appear upon a roll of wheatgrowers, will be registered. These newcomers will be vitally concerned with what happens in the industry and I commend the Minister of Agriculture for the part he has played in ensuring that they will be given a voice in the management of their own affairs.

Even small growers of only 50 acres are concerned in the welfare of the industry. What Mr. Heaslip and Mr. Pearson said about the wheat industry generally is self-evident to those engaged in it, but perhaps not to those who take things by and large and say, "They can look after themselves. They have been getting high prices for their wheat, so why worry about them? They have had enough opportunity to put aside ample funds to tide them over any lower price period." Although it is true that the industry has enjoyed high prices, many growers have suffered from very high taxation during the same period and not had an opportunity to maintain their earning assets, such as plant, fences and sheds, in a fair and reasonable condition. Such factors are likely to be overlooked by those who only cursorily examine the problem and do not understand the impact of taxation on people who, admittedly, have had substantial incomes from some form of primary produce. I know a number of farmers who could be classified as very wealthy growers but who, over a number of years, have had virtually no opportunity to maintain their assets because there has not been enough money left after the Taxation Commissioner has taken his share. We should not lose sight of that factor, although frequently it is overlooked. Some people look upon wheatgrowers as wheat barons with money to waste on luxuries. I know that is not true. I also know that some of our bigger growers have had a greater struggle to maintain their assets than some of the smaller growers because, relative to their income, their taxation has been considerably greater. For those reasons I felt it my duty to say a word on behalf of the wheat industry.

Although I am not a wheatgrower I know a great deal about the economics of the man on the land. It would appear that our honeymoon is finished and we now have to go to the buyer cap in hand and say, "This is what we have to sell. What will you give us?" The buyer is in the position of being able to choose the source from which he will draw his requirements. Providence makes variations in world production in such a manner that, although today we may be in a happy position, in a couple of years we may be in a very unhappy one. Yesterday I visited Wallaroo and saw there a building which cost the Commonwealth Government during the war years more than £600,000, including plant, erected to manufacture power alcohol from wheat. We were then fighting for our very existence and because of our inability to secure power

requirements from overseas it became necessary to start converting wheat into power alcohol for our industries. However, this plant never turned a wheel. We were able to overcome our power problem without having to convert foodstuffs. Such conversion appears to me entirely wrong. There is a growing need for food in certain parts of the world, and no policy of restricting the production of any line of foodstuff in Australia can be justified. If there is one thing more than another Australia fears it is an inundation by underfed people immediately to our north. It is a justifiable apprehension. The only way to avoid the feeling among the Asiatics that they could do better than we do in growing sufficient food to sustain themselves is to provide them with our foodstuffs at a price they can afford to pay.

The so-called cost of production of Australian wheat is 12s. 7d. a bushel, ascertained after an inquiry by a committee which I should imagine knew something about the subject. I do not criticize its personnel, but the fundamental facts which have been accepted as the basis for the cost of production. For instance, it is not fair to accept as a cost of production basis land values which have soared as the result of high prices for our primary products. These prices have now started to decline. Does this cost index fluctuate up and down—up when we are living in the sky and down when we come down to earth again? The present basis is up to 12s. 7d. a bushel because £30 an acre has been paid for farm lands which before the war could have been bought for £8. What is the fundamental factor which fixes the cost of production at 12s. 7d.? I understand that the actual capital cost of a farm was considered in arriving at the cost of production.

Mr. Pearson—That would be in the base year.

Mr. SHANNON—It does not matter about that. Farmer members in this Chamber should give some consideration to basic values on farm lands when it is known that there are fluctuations based on the commodity produced. Land values increased tremendously when wheat could be sold for £1 a bushel and wool for £1 a pound. Any committee set up to assess the cost of any primary product is on unsound ground in adopting a short-term basis of land valuation.

Mr. Pearson—You suggest that the 1946-47 basis was dangerous?

Mr. SHANNON—Yes, land values have changed tremendously since 1946.

Mr. Macgillivray—Do you suggest that land values should be ignored?

Mr. SHANNON—No, but they should be carefully looked at if used as a basis upon which to assess cost of production. Land values used in this way should be taken over a fairly long period. In some cases three generations of farmers have worked the land. The first farmer spent much time and energy developing his farm; his son did much to improve the property; today his grandson enjoys many advantages as a result of their labours. When assessing the cost of production of that farm's product, are we entitled to ignore the labour that has gone into developing that land?

Mr. Heaslip—Land values were taken over a period of years.

Mr. SHANNON—I do not believe that a realistic approach was adopted in arriving at a cost of production of 12s. 7d. a bushel, for in some years before World War II many farmers waxed fat on 5s. and 6s. a bushel, and I have even heard of a farmer who made a profit when wheat was selling at 1s. a bushel. If this alleged cost of production price is accepted, a heavy burden will be placed upon the shoulders of the general taxpayer. This matter should be further examined; indeed, I believe the average farmer would be happy if it were examined. Some farmers believe they are entitled to every penny they can get, but others wish to see a more realistic approach to this problem. The time may not be far distant when, because of its financial impact on the Budget, we will have to re-examine the cost of production formula, for we cannot go on expecting Governments to support an inflationary price.

Mr. Pearson—You are wrong there!

Mr. SHANNON—It is based on an inflationary era; unreal land values have been accepted as fundamental, whereas they are not related to a period that, we could say with certainty, would give a fair average. Nobody except a fool expects to reap indefinitely a profit from an inflated era, therefore we must come back to the reasonable average value of land over a fairly long period. Even 20 years may be too short a period on which to assess a cost of production figure. I understand that the cost of production figure has been assessed on a 1946-47 land value basis, but I suggest that a decade previously land values were entirely different. The taxpayer is interested in seeing that this industry is satisfactorily guaranteed, but not upon a basis that cannot be justified

over a longer period. I compliment the Minister of Agriculture (The Hon. A. W. Christian) and his predecessor (Sir George Jenkins) on the active part they have played in framing this legislation and in overcoming many objections, particularly those of the Victorian Government. Stabilization is essential in this industry if we are to encourage our young primary producers to stay on the land; therefore, I wholeheartedly support the Bill.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—Wheat stabilization is necessary under ruling conditions, and under any conditions for that matter; the Opposition has always supported it. In this ballot the wheat producers will have the opportunity to decide, and we know they have the common-sense to decide in the right direction. I appreciate the difficulties through which farmers in the past few decades have passed because I, like Mr. Shannon, was brought up amongst them. I was interested in what Mr. Pearson said about supplying wheat to our near Asian neighbours. I do not believe we were put into this world to live in plenty while others are forced to starve. The only way to kill Communism is to give people who are suffering from its blight the freedom from want. That has been proved over and over again, and I believe there is an obligation on us as conscientious human beings to do this. The average primary producer in this State would be prepared to help these people and to make some sacrifice to do so. I do not suggest they should, but from my knowledge of them I know that many would be only too pleased to help people who suffer the Communist blight only because they prefer anything to what they have had to endure.

I offer a small protest at the half-veiled aspersions on the workers in secondary industries cast here this afternoon by Mr. Heaslip. Surely it is obvious that primary and secondary industries are dependent on each other for their prosperity; one section needs markets and the other food. Prosperity depends on the harmonious working together of primary and secondary industry workers. Over the last two years I have noticed an unfortunate tendency on the part of some members deliberately to stir up strife between these industries. I deplore this because it is harmful to Parliament and the State. We are all workers and I resent any implications on the dignity of labour. Although I believe stabilization is necessary I view with grave misgivings the present high cost of land and the high costs of production. To a very great extent I think it is cause and effect, and we must watch the cause and if possible guard against the

effect. With these reservations I think we can safely leave this ballot in the hands of those who have the right to vote.

Bill read a second time, and taken through Committee without amendment. Committee's report adopted.

MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Marketing of Eggs Act, 1941-49.

Read a first time.

PUBLIC FINANCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 12. Page 372.)

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I support the second reading of this Bill. As indicated by the Minister, Parliament must subscribe to this measure, but there are some extraordinary features about the two matters under consideration. The Commonwealth Bank was established to conduct all classes of banking business. It was a central bank and conducted general banking, rural credit, and mortgage finance; it has rendered yeoman service, particularly to primary producers. Legislation introduced in Canberra in 1953 has put the Commonwealth Trading Bank of Australia on all-fours with private banking institutions. It is now in open competition with other banks, and competing favourably; so much so that it has exceeded all expectations. While private trading banks had the opportunity to complain when controls were imposed on credit and currency, they were always able to criticize and point the finger of scorn without advancing any propositions. It seems that the Commonwealth Trading Bank is now doing a little better than expected. But for an amendment in 1953 and the creation of the Commonwealth Trading Bank the Commonwealth Bank itself could have still carried on in this field. The Commonwealth Bank is still able to do everything necessary in the financial interests of this country, provided there is not too much political interference.

Mr. Quirke—There is nothing financially that it cannot do, provided it is not hamstrung.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—That is practically what I said. As a result of legislation passed by a Commonwealth Government of the same

political complexion as that occupying our Treasury Benches we have to agree to the passing of this Bill.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee without amendment; Committee's report adopted.

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 12. Page 372.)

Mr. DUNSTAN (Norwood)—The purpose of this Bill is to make it possible for medical practitioners who are duly registered in other States to practise in South Australia without going to a great deal of inconvenience to register here. I think that all members support this principle, for it is most undesirable that legislation should exist placing unnecessary restrictions upon the practice of the professions by people who are duly qualified and able as a result to give a service to the public. Another provision deals with the Northern Territory Medical Service, members of which might, but for this Bill, have to pay a fee to carry on work here. I think the Government's proposal should be adopted and the registration fee remitted. I support the second reading.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee without amendment; Committee's report adopted.

INFLAMMABLE OILS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 12. Page 373.)

Mr. HUTCHENS (Hindmarsh)—I do not oppose the second reading, though there are some weaknesses in the Bill. In explaining it the Premier said:—

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. I emphasize "continual supervision." The Premier continued:—

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.

Members should read the debate on the Inflammable Oils Act passed in 1933. It is recorded on pages 1161, 1162, 1913, and 1914 of *Hansard* of that year. Mr. A. V. Thompson, who represented Port Adelaide at that time, drew attention to the lack of proper supervision at oil installations. From his remarks it can be seen that the oil companies appreciated the necessity for employing watchmen, whose only duties were those of a watchman. It seems that all the companies but two had for a long time before 1933 employed watchmen solely for the purpose of supervising stores to prevent fires. The Vacuum Oil Company and Commonwealth Oil Refinery had agreed to employ one caretaker to watch their premises, and he was paid jointly by those companies. The local residents became perturbed and called on Mr. Thompson and Mr. Stephens, the present member for Port Adelaide, pointing out the great danger that existed as a result of inadequate supervision in one watchman having to look after two premises. The Premier said that the Shell Company stressed the necessity of this Bill. In 1933 it had two large tanks with a capacity of 2,000,000gall. each and eight or nine smaller tanks. Almost adjoining the Shell Company was the Vacuum Oil Company with 20 acres of land, 13 of which were fenced, and there were eight or nine tanks for oil. Opposite were the Commonwealth Oil Refinery premises with large storage tanks loaded to full capacity. Further along H. C. Sleigh and Company had large quantities of oil stored. In the last 20 years these firms have grown considerably. Adjoining them today are the Ampol premises, the new acid plant, and the I.C.I. works. If a fire should occur great damage would result and possibly loss of life. Twenty years ago the then member for Port Adelaide said that the people at Port Adelaide, Largs Bay, Semaphore, and Birkenhead in particular felt that adequate provision was not being made. In those days watchmen were employed, so how much greater is the need for watchmen today? To provide proper

safeguards it is necessary to have full-time watchmen. The men engaged on that work today are trained in the prevention of fires and they know how to deal with a fire should one start. They have more authority than the ordinary worker. One oil company found a loophole in the legislation and has not provided watchmen. The Bill makes it essential for all oil companies to provide them and the Government is to be commended for its action. However, we are amazed that there is a provision in the measure that will weaken the protection. I refer to subsection (2) of proposed new section 17a, which permits the appointment of watchmen who are also required to perform other duties.

Let us look at the position of the Shell depot at Birkenhead, which comprises 30 acres. There are two compounds, north and south, and I am informed that it is common practice for people working at night to be in the south compound, leaving the north compound unprotected. Watchmen should visit hourly every corner of the premises. They are trained to use foam machines and to stop leakages. The provision I have mentioned could ruin important industries. We have recently read in the press of great oil fires causing loss of life and damage to the value of many thousands of pounds. I support the second reading, but some of the provisions in the measure are undesirable and in Committee I shall move for their deletion. I have mentioned one, and others are the provisions which give the employer the right to give instructions to unskilled persons in the way to deal with fires and then submit those employees to a penalty if they refuse to keep watch in accordance with the instructions given. That is a grave injustice and I doubt whether it is valid in law. In other industries the duties of workmen are determined by the Arbitration Court and I do not think any member of this House wants to interfere with arbitration; consequently, I believe all members will agree to the deletion of the provisions I have mentioned.

Mr. TAPPING (Semaphore)—I verify the points raised by Mr. Hutchens. It is my duty to warn members about the matter, particularly as the area concerned is part of my electorate. Twenty-one years ago Mr. Thompson, the then member for Port Adelaide, told Parliament of the dangers in the storage of oil at Birkenhead. Mr. Hutchens pointed out that the position was acute 21 years ago and there is now a greater need for protection because of increased industrial development.

Within three miles of the oil installations about 1,000 houses have been erected. Many of them are prefabricated, and they create a great fire hazard. There must be adequate protection because of them. For over 20 years most of the major oil companies were prepared to employ watchmen permanently to carry out the duties of watchmen, but in the last 12 months they have been studying their economy and have deleted from their pay sheets men employed as regular watchmen. When overtures were made by one company to an inspector he decided that the company was in order in dispensing with watchmen. Because of that decision the Bill has been introduced, but it is incomplete because it does not provide adequate protection. By introducing a Bill affording incomplete safeguards the Premier showed that he does not realize the position existing at Birkenhead. I appeal, as Mr. Thompson did 21 years ago, for proper protection for people residing at Osborne, Draper and Largs Bay.

In the Address in Reply debate I said that some of the major oil companies were spending thousands of pounds in one direction, which was really an inflationary act. They are buying premises for as much as £25,000 when the true value is less than £10,000. They are spending money in this way but are disregarding the need to have watchmen to provide proper protection. It is the duty of Parliament to safeguard the people. I believe the Government was not fully aware of the dangers in that area when it introduced this legislation. "Prevention is better than cure" is an old and true saying. If sufficient watchmen could be employed night and day they might prevent the development of some great fire. Men who are clerks can at present be delegated to act as watchmen but, because of their other duties, cannot properly perform the work. I hope that when Mr. Hutchens moves his amendments in Committee members will seriously consider his proposals which offer complete protection to the public.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide)—I support the principle of the Bill, but am opposed to subsections (2) and (4) of proposed new section 17a. The principal Act was designed to regulate the keeping, conveying and sale of inflammable oils and to protect the safety of the general public. It was designed for the protection not only of men working in and around the stores, but of those living nearby. Mr. Tapping has mentioned that within a radius of three miles of one of these stores there are about 1,000 homes, and the original legislation had, as one

of its purposes, the protection of those homes and the persons living there. Section 6 of the Act defines inflammable oil; section 9 and 10 relate to the keeping of inflammable oil, sections 11, 12 and 13 to registered premises; section 15 prescribes conditions relative to licensed stores, and section 17 (b) provides—

Except as otherwise provided in this Act, the depot shall be used exclusively for the keeping of inflammable oil and the packages in which the oil is contained.

In view of that subsection, of what use is subsection (2) of proposed new section 17a? It provides:—

Subsection (1) of this section shall be deemed to permit the appointment of persons to act as watchmen who are also required to perform duties other than that of acting as watchmen.

If a store is exclusively for the keeping of inflammable oils, what is the purpose of saying that a watchman may also be required to perform other duties? I can imagine that a watchman might be ordered by his employer to go to another building and perform other work during part or all of his shift, but he is still required to act as a watchman in the premises in which the inflammable oils are stored. If he is carrying out other duties he cannot be policing those premises. Section 17 of the principal Act prescribes certain rules which must be obeyed by every person keeping inflammable oil in a licensed store and by every person in or about the same. I agree with previous speakers that subsection (2) and (4) of proposed new section 17a will nullify the general purpose of the Bill.

I remind the Government that the Arbitration Courts have stated, in effect, that an employee must carry out the desires of his employer and rarely will the courts admit that an employee has the right to refuse. No matter what instructions are given, an employee must carry them out, but if the employer directs an employee to carry out duties other than those of a watchman, in accordance with the proposal before the House, the employee will be guilty of an offence if he does so, for subsection (4) of proposed new section 17a provides:—

Any person appointed pursuant to subsection (1) of this section who without reasonable excuse fails to keep watch in accordance with the instructions given to him pursuant to that subsection shall be guilty of an offence. Penalty: Fifty Pounds.

There is a grave inconsistency in the proposed legislation and injustice is being meted out to employees who may, from time to time, be called upon to act as watchmen. In the first place, they must carry out the instructions of

their employers, and in the second, if they do not act with reasonable care in carrying out their duties as watchmen they are liable to a £50 fine. There is no justice in legislation of that nature.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Would not the court decide what work a man should do?

Mr. LAWN—It has been held that unless the work an employee is instructed to undertake is drastically different from that in which he is engaged, he cannot refuse to do it. If a man were employed as a carpenter and were instructed to do painting work the court would probably hold that the man accepted employment as a carpenter and not as a painter and therefore the employer had no right to expect him to paint. However, I do not think the court would object to watchmen or gatekeepers being instructed to undertake other duties. I have known employers who have attempted to give watchmen other duties and they have only been stopped because of union action. There may be instances where employers have got away with that and instructed watchmen to do other work during their shifts. I can visualize an employer giving instructions to a watchman to perform work outside the premises where inflammable oil is stored. If he is obliged by law to carry out those directions then it is wrong for this legislation to impose a penalty of £50 on him for obeying those instructions. I shall oppose those provisions in Committee.

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

Mr. STEPHENS (Port Adelaide)—When this matter first came before the House, the Port Adelaide district was represented by two members—Mr. Thompson and myself. We visited the oil stores at Port Adelaide and Birkenhead and spoke to the managers and to people living in homes adjacent to the stores. Many years ago it was usual to employ old men or cripples as watchmen, which I consider a mistake, but in subsection (1) of proposed new section 17a it is provided:—

Any person keeping a licensed store where more than 1,000,000 gallons of inflammable oil are kept shall—

- (a) appoint persons over the age of 21 years sufficient in number for adequate supervision of the store at all times to act as a watchman;
- (b) give such instructions to each of the persons so appointed as will ensure that if the instructions are properly carried out the store will be kept under adequate supervision at all times.

It does not provide for only part of the time, but all the time. I strongly object to subsection (2) which reads:—

Subsection (1) of this section shall be deemed to permit the appointment of persons to act as watchmen who are also required to perform duties other than that of acting as watchmen.

In my time I have carted large quantities of kerosene, naphtha and benzene, but before entering the store I would be approached by a watchman who would take away any matches, cigarettes or tobacco on my person and also examine my clothes. It is only right that such precautions should be taken to guard against the danger of the loss of property and lives. The whole of Port Adelaide could be destroyed in a short time and hundreds of lives lost simply because a watchman was taken away from his job for a time and employed on other work. Could not the same apply to our fire brigade, and the firemen allowed to work at some other job until their services were required to attend a fire? I hope this provision will be deleted. When Parliament dealt with the matter some years ago it decided that an adequate number of watchmen should be employed to do the work, but an alteration was made because the provision had been put in the wrong place and was almost ineffective. A man might be employed during the day delivering petrol, oil or kerosene and on his return to his place of employment be directed by his boss to stay on duty for the remainder of the night as a watchman. Under those circumstances there might be the great risk of his sitting down for a few moments and falling asleep, just when his services were wanted. This is taking too much risk for the sake of saving a few pounds. We know of instances of vandalism and one of the vandals could deliberately set fire to an oil store. That could easily happen if a watchman was not present all the time. At some places the foolish custom is adopted of requiring a watchman to punch a clock at certain places at varying times and anyone desiring to break in could ascertain the position and make an entrance before the watchman returned again. It is not that the oil companies cannot afford to pay for watchmen, and they should be compelled to employ such labour to protect the life and property in the vicinity. I hope that in Committee members will delete subsection (2). If they do not, and an accident happens such as I have mentioned, it will be no use their protesting. Let us accept the responsibility and provide for these places to be reasonably protected.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1, 2 and 3 passed.

Clause 4—"Supervision of licensed stores."

Mr. HUTCHENS—I move—

That subsection (2) of proposed new section 17a be deleted.

To a large extent its inclusion would defeat the purpose of the Bill, which is to provide for the employment of watchmen for the adequate supervision of oil stores to prevent the occurrence and spread of fire. If a man were also employed as a storeman or a clerk, only secondary consideration would be given to his duties as watchman. On some premises a watchman has to supervise several acres. For instance, the Shell Company has a north and a south compound consisting of some tens of acres. If a watchman were on duty on the south compound the north compound would be neglected. Heating could take place in the latter store and a lighted match lead to its total destruction. In the past men have been trained as watchmen able to carry out minor repairs, to detect danger, to carry out preliminary fire-fighting, and to hold the flames until the arrival of the fire brigade. The passing of the clause in its present form would reduce that protection, and subject large sections of these stores to grave risk, possibly resulting in the loss of hundreds of thousands of pounds' worth of goods and the lives of many valuable citizens.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

GAS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 12. Page 375.)

Mr. FLETCHER (Mount Gambier)—I support the Bill, which principally concerns Mount Gambier and district. I am grateful to the Treasurer for introducing it so early in the session, for it was not until the House had risen last year that the proposals in the Bill were suggested by the Mount Gambier Corporation. The Mount Gambier Gas Company, Limited, referred to by the Treasurer, is owned and operated by a Victorian concern, and for many years Mount Gambier residents have complained about the quality of the gas it has supplied. Like many other similar concerns, it has had to contend with poor quality coal, but it has been alleged that the poor quality of its gas is not attributable solely to that. Clauses 4 to 9 and the amendments made by the schedule aim at extending the application

of the principal Act to companies other than the South Australian Gas Company. I hope the Bill will receive the support of members.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee without amendment. Committee's report adopted.

HUNDREDS OF CHANDADA AND INKSTER WATER SUPPLY.

The SPEAKER laid on the table a report by the Public Works Standing Committee, together with minutes of evidence, on the hundreds of Chandada and Inkster water supply.

Ordered that report be printed.

WILD DOGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 12. Page 376.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This Bill seeks to continue the legal authority for the aerial baiting of wild dogs. Parliament should consider the efficacy of this method of destroying wild dogs. I represent a district in which many sheep are depastured and, although no recent troubles have been experienced because of the ravages of wild dogs, I can remember the time when such ravages were serious. The elimination of dogs in that area was brought about by the vermin-proof fencing of districts and the local destruction of dogs within those districts. When confined to small areas the dogs may be destroyed fairly easily. In recent years the practice of maintaining those smaller vermin-proof districts has been substantially abandoned, and we now pin our faith to the buffer fence that has been authorized by and kept in repair under legislation passed a few years ago. The aerial baiting of wild dogs is carried on outside the buffer fence by agreement with the Queensland Government, which is interested in the destruction of wild dogs throughout its outback areas contiguous to South Australia. I have given this matter some thought. I have made many inquiries from pastoralists in northern areas and from the Minister and other people in Queensland interested in the subject, and the general opinion seems to be that whilst aerial baiting is not a complete success it helps to reduce the dog population. Probably it has confined them to reasonable numbers which would not have been possible without it. The term "wild dog" used in this legislation is somewhat of a misnomer because most people associate with

it the hardy Australian native dingo, whereas in fact there are not a great number of true dingoes left. Dogs with very long pedigrees, made up of bits and pieces of every type of canine that has ever existed, are the real wild dogs and are more dangerous and devastating than the true dingo type. Keeping the wild dog population within bounds is not assisted by the oldest Australian inhabitants who occupy as a right certain large areas outside the buffer fence and who seem to think their life is not complete unless they are associated with a large number of dogs. This is a very difficult question and whilst I am not satisfied that aerial baiting is particularly successful, it does help to check the pest to some extent. Myxomatosis is effective in destroying considerable numbers of rabbits, but unless the landholders follow up its ravages with a campaign for the eradication of the remaining pests, in a short time the country is just as badly overrun as it ever was; the same applies to aerial baiting. After it is carried out it is still necessary for a dogger to catch the remaining animals and destroy them by hitting them over the head or shooting them. I support the second reading.

Mr. HAWKER (Burra)—I support this Bill. I agree with a lot that the Leader of the Opposition said. He was quite right in saying that any one means of attacking the vermin is quite ineffective. Several means have to be used. However, I have never seen doggers hitting animals over the head; they use traps. The average number of scalps paid for by the Dog Fence Board in South Australia is 7,000 a year, subject, of course, to variations depending on the season and the amount of ground feed available for the dogs to breed on. Aerial baiting has been carried out for three years and the results are inconclusive because the poisoning is carried on outside the buffer fences in inaccessible and often unoccupied country, making it difficult to assess the effectiveness of the scheme. The planes usually fly at about 100ft. above water courses and drop baits on them. Sometimes station owners have followed up these watercourses and found perhaps up to a dozen dead dogs, which may not seem many against the 7,000 scalps paid for, but is some indication of how many are killed by baiting. Aerial baiting should be given a further trial to see whether it is necessary to carry it out permanently.

A point which perhaps ought to be considered in Committee is whether this expenditure should be cumulative, i.e., if any portion of the

£2,000 is not spent in any one year, because it is perhaps not a good year for baiting, the balance be allowed to accumulate to be spent in a subsequent good year. The expenditure is authorized by the Minister on the advice of the Dog Fence Board so that the taxpayer has every safeguard against money being spent unwisely. The wild dog has been a great menace to the sheep industry in Australia. In Queensland about 35,000 scalps are paid for each year, considerably more than in South Australia. From what I have seen aerial baiting in this State has been carried out more efficiently than in Queensland. As an example of the destructiveness of the pests Cordillo Downs, one of the

best outback sheep stations in South Australia, had to abandon sheep completely and go over to cattle because of the prevalence of the dogs. A number of stations in Queensland have been similarly affected. The menace is getting worse; it cannot be eliminated, but any means of minimizing it is worthy of consideration. I support the Bill.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee without amendment. Committee's report adopted.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 8.15 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, August 18, at 2 p.m.