

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, August 18, 1954.

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

QUESTIONS.

PETERBOROUGH HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Recently I learned from the local press that the Architect-in-Chief's Department was calling for tenders for the painting of the Peterborough High School, and it occurred to me that if the painting were to be proceeded with soon it might seriously disturb the work of the school, particularly during the final examinations. I consulted people interested in the school, and they agreed it would be wise for the painting to be done during the September school vacation. Has the Minister of Works any information on this subject?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—With his usual courtesy the Leader indicated beforehand that he would like some information on this subject. The Architect-in-Chief reports that tenders for the work closed yesterday, that four tenders have been received, and that the work could not be completed during the 10-day September vacation from September 3 to 13. It is estimated that to carry out the whole of the work five men would be occupied for about two months, and it is possible that in a country centre the successful tenderer might engage fewer than that number of tradesmen. To obviate interference with end-of-term examinations, arrangements will be made with the contractor to delay commencement of the work until after September 3. With regard to the rewiring of the woodwork centre at the school, about which a question was asked recently, difficulty was experienced in obtaining a suitable offer; but a better offer has now been received and is being considered.

SUPREME COURT ACCOMMODATION.

Mr. TRAVERS—Can the Minister of Education, representing the Attorney-General say what action the Government has taken towards meeting the acute situation existing at the Supreme Court because of lack of accommodation, particularly a witnesses' room, a counsels' conference room, a room in which prisoners may be interviewed, and general court accommodation?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I am unable to say what is being done, but the Attorney-General has been and still is interested in this

matter. I shall be pleased to take it up with him and bring down a report as soon as it is available.

WHYALLA SOUTH SCHOOL FENCING.

Mr. RICHES—The question of fencing the Whyalla South School has been before the Education Department for about five years, and recently I received the following letter from the secretary of the school committee:—

At a meeting of the Whyalla South School Committee held July 29, 1954, it was resolved we write to you, requesting that you raise the question of fencing the South school property in Parliament. We have been writing periodically to the Minister for the last five years and have not received a satisfactory reply. Recently the headmaster raised the question with the police seeking their co-operation in trying to stop the vandalism in the school grounds, and they replied they would not take any action until the grounds were fenced. The fence between the Memorial Oval and the school has recently been completed, but the three sides bordering on the streets are wide open. The school committee is ready to co-operate in any way possible with the department in having the work started.

Will the Minister of Education call for a report from the department as to the reasons for the delay in fencing the school, and will he use every endeavour to see that it is fenced as soon as possible?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I have no personal knowledge of the matter, but I will do as requested by the honourable member.

NEW HECTORVILLE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—A member of the Hectorville Progress Association is holding a letter from the Director of Education dated about a year ago and stating that a new primary school at Hectorville would be finished early in 1955. As the Public Works Committee has only recently reported on this project, can the Minister of Education say whether it is likely to be completed in the present financial year?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—No. If and when the Director of Education wrote the letter, he did so, no doubt, in an optimistic mood, hoping, as most departmental heads hope each year, that his loan programme would be fulfilled within the year; but the Public Works Committee only recently reported on the project, details of which were forwarded to the Architect-in-Chief only a week ago. The report I have received states that the plans are ready with the exception of the bills of quantity, which are being prepared by a private firm. When information is received as to when they will be completed, approval will be sought for tenders to be called.

KANGAROO ISLAND SOLDIER SETTLEMENT.

Mr. BROOKMAN—Can the Minister of Lands indicate the result of the recent call-up of settlers for the latest blocks available on Kangaroo Island?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—About a month ago 20 blocks were ready for allotment and notices were sent out to 40 applicants, giving them the opportunity to apply for those blocks, but only 14 wished to take blocks, leaving six blocks unallotted. We are now calling up further applicants with a view to allotting those six blocks.

TRAIN WHISTLE BLASTS.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—During the Address in Reply debate I referred to the unnecessary noise of whistle blasts on the main south line between Goodwood and Mitcham, especially as all crossings have wig-wag warning devices or gates, and said something should be done to curtail this nuisance to residents. Will the Minister of Works ask the Minister of Railways to have the position reviewed and also see whether it is necessary to examine the Coroners Act to repeal the section about whistle blasts?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—There is something in the point that, wig-wags having been instituted long after the Act was framed, there may be some reason to amend the Act now.

NORTH UNLEY WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. DUNNAGE—About three years ago I asked the Minister of Works whether he would improve the North Unley water supply. I received an answer, and also a letter, that this work would be carried out in the near future, as soon as men and materials were available. Then I made another request for an improvement of the supply in the Parkside area and received a similar reply. The work in Parkside has been completed and I naturally assumed that the men and equipment would be transferred to North Unley for the work there, but, much to my surprise, they have all gone. The position remains the same in North Unley, so I ask the Minister whether he will see if the North Unley scheme can be completed, as promised three or four years ago?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—A very strict order of priority is laid down for these works, which are carried out according to need. I am glad to say that last year the department expended every penny Parliament allocated to it, though it is not always easy to do that. If the men and equipment have been moved

to another place it is because they have been sent to some more urgent work than that required at North Unley, but I will get a report and I am sure the work will be carried out as soon as possible.

PORT ADELAIDE COUNCIL RATES.

Mr. TAPPING—As a result of a new assessment by the Port Adelaide city council rates, in many cases, will be doubled. This impost will seriously affect pensioners owing to their meagre incomes. Seeing that the council already uses a differential method of rating in various parts of the municipality, can the Minister representing the Minister of Local Government say whether such a method could be applied to pensioners?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I will address the question to my colleague but, speaking broadly, I doubt whether there is any power to differentiate between various classes of ratepayers.

IRRIGATION WATER RATES.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—The Premier, speaking on the Address in Reply, assured all members that any points raised by them during that debate would receive the consideration of the Ministers. During that debate I drew the attention of the Minister of Irrigation to the fact that there have been major reductions in the incomes of settlers in the irrigation areas who produce citrus fruits, dried fruits and wine grapes. I also referred to a committee which in 1949 recommended increased water rates, but said that if there were any reduction in the settlers' incomes the cost of water should be reconsidered and, very likely, reduced. Seeing that the settlers' incomes have been reduced and that the private Mildura irrigation trust has reduced the cost of water by 9s. an acre, I ask the Minister whether he has considered these facts and, if so, is he prepared to recommend a reduction in water rates, which are a major cost to the users of water in the river irrigation areas?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I am sorry that I cannot quite agree that there was a suggestion for a straightout reduction in rates if there was a drop in the price of commodities. I think the committee said that consideration would be given to rates should that position arise. I certainly assure the honourable member that I will consult Cabinet with a view to a committee again examining the position, in view of the drop in prices. I am not quite sure of the position at

Mildura, but even with the 9s. an acre drop there the rates may be still higher than in South Australia.

NAMING OF BILLS.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I call the Government's attention to the method sometimes adopted in determining the short titles of Bills. On the Statute Book we have the Marketing of Eggs Act and also the Potato Marketing Act. Obviously, the latter system of naming an Act makes it much easier for location in the index, but already this session we have on the files the Metropolitan Taxicab Control Bill and the Metropolitan Transport Advisory Council Bill. Would it not be much more effective in such titles if the word "Metropolitan" were dropped, because it is unlikely that another similar measure would be introduced to apply to another part of the State? Even if it were and applied to, say, Port Pirie, the title of the Bill could be altered accordingly. Has the Government any views on the question?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I will take the matter up with my colleague.

The SPEAKER—Is the member for Hindmarsh referring to a Bill before the House?

Mr. HUTCHENS—I am only referring to the title of Bills.

The SPEAKER—At the appropriate time any honourable member can contest the title of a Bill, and it can be amended. The title is submitted by the Chairman of Committees at the appropriate time, and the honourable member can challenge it then.

EXPENDITURE ON WATERWORKS AND SEWERAGE.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—On July 27, in a lengthy reply to a question by the Leader of the Opposition about water supplies, the Minister of Works said:—

The Government is already constructing £16,000,000 worth of water and sewer works, and, with the labour and materials available, this programme would take three years to accomplish.

Will the Minister ascertain how much of that £16,000,000 is for waterworks and how much for sewerage?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I will get that information and let the honourable member have it.

WARREN TRUNK MAIN ENLARGEMENT.

Mr. TEUSNER—Last year, during the Budget debate, I drew the attention of the Minister of Works to the poor condition of the Warren trunk main which sup-

plies the Barossa Valley and districts north of it. I also referred to the report of the Public Works Committee, tabled in October, 1953, which recommended that the Warren trunk water main be enlarged and that the supply of water to the Warren reservoir be augmented by constructing a branch water main from the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline to the reservoir. Can the Minister of Works say whether Cabinet has considered these recommendations and, if so, whether it is proposed to put them into effect?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Loan Estimates are now being prepared and if provision is made in them for this work it will be commenced this year.

MORPHETT STREET BRIDGE.

Mr. STOTT—It has been reported in the press that the City Council is widening some of Adelaide's streets, including the Morphett Street bridge road over the railway yards. Has the Minister of Works received any plans from the City Council and does the work envisage making another north-south highway over the bridge? Has the Railways Commissioner considered widening the railway yard, following on the widening of the bridge, to provide for the suburban electrification scheme?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The two questions concern the Minister of Railways, who is also Minister of Roads. I have not seen anything in relation to the matter and I know of no representations or plans submitted to him. I shall make inquiries and let the honourable member have a report.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF ACCUSED PERSONS.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Is the Minister representing the Attorney-General aware that following on the passing last session of the Police Offences Act, under which an accused person can ask for his own doctor to examine him, it has become the practice for police, at the time of examination of an accused person by his own doctor, to station police officers in the room and then in subsequent proceedings to attempt to lead evidence by the police officers as to what happened between the accused and his doctor? Does the Minister agree that this is an undesirable practice, and, if so, will he take steps to have it stopped?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—In regard to the first matter, I am not aware of the new procedure alleged, and concerning the second, I will express no opinion but confer with the Attorney-General.

DRIVERS' LICENCES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Minister leading the House in the absence of the Premier a reply to the question I asked the Premier recently regarding the advisability of having tests before drivers' licences were issued in this State?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I have the following report from the chairman of the State Traffic Committee:—

The Australian Uniform Road Traffic Code Committee's recommendation for the classification of drivers' licences is still under the consideration of this committee.

MOTOR SALE PROFITS.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I draw attention to an announcement in today's *Advertiser* that a well-known motor firm is making a one-for-one bonus share issue following on a profit more than double that of last year, when there was a dividend of 35 per cent. This year, in addition to the bonus share, a dividend of 60 per cent is to be paid, and even then more than £408,000 remains for reserves and the staff benefit fund. In 1949 Mr. Quirke informed the Premier that another well-known motor firm had been able to make such a huge profit that it paid a dividend of 255 per cent. The Premier then indicated that the price of motor vehicles had been de-controlled. Does not the press announcement referred to indicate that excessive profits are being made and that some action should be taken by the Prices Commissioner to ensure for the buying public fair and reasonable treatment?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I did not see the report but I shall examine it, and get a reply for the honourable member.

TAPLAN-NOORA WATER MAIN.

Mr. STOTT—Is the Minister of Works aware that over 20 applications have been made for connections to the Taplan-Noora water main and that they have been refused by the department on the grounds that there is insufficient pressure? Is it a fact that five persons, who are members of the Engineering and Water Supply Department, have been connected and, if so, what is the reason?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I do not know the circumstances mentioned, but I shall make inquiries and bring down a reply.

IMMODEST DRESS.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Has the Minister leading the House today a reply to a question I asked the Premier on August 5 regarding amending the Police Offences Act to enable the prosecution of people who offend by immodest exposure?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—There is the following reply from the Acting Commissioner of Police:—

I am of the opinion that the Police Offences Act and the Criminal Law Consolidation Act afford ample protection against persons who offend against accepted standards of decency. The present law is adequate and I do not consider any amendment of the Police Offences Act in this respect is necessary. If patrons of proposed drive-in theatres attend dressed only in bathers and thereby offend against the common standard of propriety, police action will be taken with a view to court proceedings.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

The SPEAKER—I have to inform the House that His Excellency the Governor will be pleased to receive members for the presentation of the Address in Reply at 2.30 p.m. today. I now propose, accompanied by the mover and seconder and other members who so desire, to proceed to Government House.

At 2.22 the Speaker and members proceeded to Government House. On returning at 2.40—

The SPEAKER—I have to inform the House that, accompanied by the mover and seconder of the Address in Reply to His Excellency's Speech, I proceeded to Government House and there presented to His Excellency the Governor the Address adopted by the House on August 12, to which His Excellency was pleased to make the following reply:—

I thank you for your Address in Reply to the Speech with which I opened Parliament on June 3 of this year. I am confident that you will give full and careful attention to all matters placed before you and I pray that God's blessing may crown your labours.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I move—

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable to appoint a Public Accounts Committee to—

- (a) examine the loan and revenue accounts of the State and all statements and reports required by law to be submitted by the Auditor-General to Parliament;
- (b) report to Parliament, with such comment as it thinks fit, any items or matters in those accounts, statements and reports or any circumstances connected therewith, to which the committee is of the opinion the attention of Parliament should be directed; and
- (c) report to Parliament any alteration which the committee thinks desirable in the form of the public accounts or in the method of keeping them or in the mode of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys.

I emphasize that this is not a Party matter and should not be treated as such. I visualize a Public Accounts Committee that, if appointed, would represent all sections of the House the same as the Public Works, Land Settlement, Industries Development, and other Parliamentary Committees. Such a committee would help to ensure that taxpayers got value for the money which we in Parliament vote in various appropriations and the expenditure of which is left to Government departments or semi-government instrumentalities. Public Accounts Committees have been established by the British, Commonwealth, and New South Wales Parliaments, so the appointment of such a committee in this State would be no innovation.

While a representative of this State in the Senate some years ago I had some experience of the working of the Commonwealth Public Accounts Committee, and found that it did useful work in examining the way in which money voted by Parliament, very often on the report of the Commonwealth Public Works Committee, was being spent. A notable example related to the foundations laid for certain public buildings to be erected in Canberra. The Commonwealth Public Works Committee investigated the proposal to erect those buildings, examined the plans and specifications together with the estimates of costs, and reported that the work should proceed. For some reason not disclosed tenders were called for the laying of the foundations, and one was accepted, but the buildings were not proceeded with immediately and the Public Accounts Committee was able to investigate the expenditure on the foundations. It had the quality of the foundations tested and found that they were not up to the standard which had been stipulated in evidence before the Public Works Committee and which was supposed to be observed by the successful tenderer. Some recompense was secured as the result of the Public Accounts Committee's investigation. That committee was able to make a check that could not be effected by either Parliament or the Public Works Committee.

Mr. Dunks—Would that matter be referred to that committee?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—No, the procedure to be adopted by the committee is adequately covered by the terms of my motion. In recent years members—particularly Government members—have become careless about the expenditure of public moneys, and this is evidenced by extravagant spending. We seem to have

become imbued with the idea that no scheme is worth proceeding with unless it involves much public money, but the time may not be far distant when, faced with the problem of providing the necessary interest to meet the annual commitments on some of these schemes, this Parliament will find itself in serious difficulties. Parliament should be as concerned about the expenditure of public money as if it belonged to private members. I have raised this matter before in this House, and my colleague in the Legislative Council, the Honourable F. J. Condon, raised it last year by way of motion. My motion is not one of no-confidence in the Treasury or the Auditor-General. The Treasury issues money in accordance with statutory or other authority, and the Auditor-General has the duty of ensuring that the audit regulations are observed. A Public Accounts Committee would be more concerned with the value of the expenditure than with the accuracy of the financial statements. Financial relations with the Commonwealth and the vast expansion of Government and semi-governmental activities, especially since the adoption of uniform taxation, have increased not only revenue expenditure, but also loan expenditure, necessitating the critical examination thereof in the taxpayers' interests.

Large Government and semi-governmental undertakings are represented by the Electricity Trust (including the Leigh Creek coalfield), the Municipal Tramways Trust, railways, highways, harbours, education, soldier settlement, and uranium mining. Notwithstanding the great expansion in magnitude and variety of Government and semi-Governmental works, today there is not even the annual report on progress that was once presented to Parliament. Some years ago we received an annual report of the progress made on public works and the expenditure incurred during the preceding 12 months, from which members were able to ascertain what work had been done on a specified project that had been authorized by Parliament and what it had cost; but that practice has been discontinued. I have said time and again in this House that in recent years a practice has grown up of transferring money voted for one Loan work to another. During the war and the difficult post-war years that may have had some merit because of the shortage of building materials, but my point is that the power to transfer from one account to another weakens the control of Parliament over expenditure. For instance, Parliament might authorize

expenditure of a certain sum for a water main in a certain district, but because of a shortage of pipes the money might be spent on harbour works. It is time we devised a system that would enable us to know from time to time how the Loan and revenue appropriations were being expended and what results were accruing from that expenditure.

Mr. Dunks—The committee would really only hold an inquest after the money had been used.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Not necessarily. Big public works take a number of years to complete, and if some weakness were found in the way the money was being expended in the early stages steps could be taken to correct that weakness for the balance of the works. That is precisely what happened in the example I referred to earlier about the foundations of the buildings at Canberra. If those buildings

had been constructed without any examination by that committee no one knows how serious the consequences to the Commonwealth might have been.

Mr. Dunks—That examination was carried out before the building was started?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The Commonwealth Parliament had a public accounts committee which inquired into this matter, and the necessary corrective measures were taken.

Mr. Dunks—Would that be possible under your proposal?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes. To show members the magnitude of our present expenditure and how it has grown in recent years I have prepared the following table showing the total net Loan expenditure in various departments to June, 1948, and expenditure during the ensuing five years:—

Net Loan Expenditure Compared.

Item.	To June, 1948.	To June, 1953.	Increase in five years.
	£	£	£
Railways	32,745,000	39,898,000	7,153,000
Harbors	7,887,000	10,047,000	2,160,000
Metropolitan waterworks	9,956,000	17,127,000	7,171,000
Country waterworks	11,248,000	13,842,000	2,594,000
Government buildings, land	4,532,000	10,443,000	5,911,000
Housing Trust	3,625,000	18,607,000	14,982,000
Municipal Tramways Trust	3,381,000	5,765,000	2,384,000
Electricity Trust	1,995,000	21,439,000	19,444,000
Leigh Creek coalfield	243,000	2,914,000	2,671,000
Purchase of stores	1,885,000	5,784,000	3,899,000
Total (all items)	£116,409,000	£193,534,000	£77,125,000
Per head of population	£175	£252	£77

I draw attention to the huge increase in Loan Expenditure by the Housing Trust and the Electricity Trust.

Mr. Dunks—Both socialization!

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes. They were established in accordance with Labor's policy, and I am pleased that the honourable member can now utter the word "socialization" without having a fit.

Mr. Dunks—But you must realize that the expenditure by those two trusts was approved by Parliament, and the only criticism I can remember has been about grants to the Tramways Trust.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The honourable member has furnished adequate support for my argument. The large expenditure of about £34,000,000 by the Housing Trust and the Electricity Trust was voted by Parliament.

They are both semi-Governmental authorities, but Parliament has no control over their expenditure of the sum appropriated for them. I am not criticizing the administration of either trust. I believe they have both done an excellent job, but Parliament has a duty to the taxpayer, who has to provide the revenue to meet interest and sinking fund payments on these huge sums, to see that some periodical examination is made of expenditure and that the volume of work carried out is commensurate with that expenditure. We must see that the efficiency of bodies spending large Loan appropriations is maintained. It is wellknown that we are all as lazy as we dare, and if people can carry on year after year without being questioned in any way we cannot be sure that departments are being run efficiently. Heads of departments and semi-Governmental authorities in the

future may not show the same enthusiasm for socialism as the present heads show, and may not manage community enterprises established for the benefit of the community in the best interests of the community.

Revenue expenditure for the year 1947-48 was £19,156,000 but for 1952-53 it was £49,076,000, an increase of £29,880,000. Here again, it is time Parliament established a body to act as a watchdog on all our departments so that they do not become careless, though I must say that I have seen no evidence of carelessness yet. I believe we can be proud of the Public Service of South Australia. A change of Government could present some awkward problems to administrators of Government departments because the generation which has experienced such a change is passing. This generation, too, will pass away, as all things pass away, and a new generation will arise which, because of the continuing form of Government kept in office in South Australia by the worst gerrymander in the world's history, will become careless and the interests of the taxpayers could be prejudiced as a result. In considering the Loan Estimates in Committee members subject even small items of expenditure to close scrutiny, but once an amount is passed nothing further is done. Some body should be appointed to ensure that the community obtains full value for the expenditure of money which has been authorized by Parliament.

Mr. Dunks—Does not the Auditor-General act as a watchdog?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The Auditor-General is charged with the specific task of ensuring that public moneys are expended in accordance with the provisions of the Auditor-General's Act and the regulations thereunder, but it is not his duty to report on that expenditure so long as there have been no defalcations or obvious falsifications.

Mr. Jennings—The expenditure could have been wasteful.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—It need not necessarily have been wasteful, but it might have been extravagant. The Auditor-General is powerless to examine that aspect. The Auditor-General is what his title connotes—an auditor whose duty it is to ensure that money voted by Parliament is expended on the items for which it was approved. His position is similar to that of a private auditor who does not

inquire into the efficiency of an undertaking, but merely examines and certifies its accounts.

Mr. Dunks—Under your motion, would the committee have any supervision over guarantees of money to private enterprise?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes. My motion is clear and paragraph (b) covers that aspect. It provides that the committee would:—

Report to Parliament with such comment as it thinks fit, any items or matters in those accounts, statements and reports or any circumstances connected therewith, to which the committee is of the opinion the attention of Parliament should be directed.

So long as an item was mentioned in the Estimates a public accounts committee could investigate and report upon the manner in which the money provided was expended. A guarantee does not become an item of expenditure until it has to be supported, but if, as the result of the guarantee, it became necessary to place an item of expenditure on the Estimates to support the guarantee, then without doubt that item would be subject to the scrutiny of the committee. Another aspect to be examined relates to subsidies to the railways and tramways. The subsidies have been as follows:—

Railways—			
1949-50.	1950-51.	1951-52.	1952-53.
£2,400,000	£2,600,000	£5,050,000	£4,850,000
Tramways—			
1952-53.	1953-54.		
£700,000	£700,000		

Subsidies are voted by Parliament to assist these undertakings, but no investigations are made to ascertain whether economies could not be made in the management of them to obviate the expenditure of some of this money. This applies particularly to the Tramways Trust. I shall have an opportunity in the near future of speaking on that subject, so will not enlarge on it now. Those who opposed the motion of the Honourable F. J. Condon in the Legislative Council last year suggested that the Public Works Committee acts as a safeguard. It does in relation to examining estimates of proposed work and in considering plans and specifications. As a result of its activities over the years it has saved this State large sums of money. However, once that committee has reported on a project and the Minister brings down an appropriation which is approved by Parliament to enable that work to proceed, there is no further scrutiny as to

how the money is spent. Let us examine some of the current projects:—

Work.	Original Estimate.	Spent to June, 1954.	Proportion completed to June, 1954	Estimated further cost.
South Yorke Peninsula water Scheme	£2,685,000	£645,000	11%	£5,400,000
South-East Railway gauge broadening	£4,112,064	£3,695,766	abt. 60%	£2,524,000
Queen Elizabeth Hospital	£491,795	£886,138	25%	£2,800,000
Mannum-Adelaide Pipeline	£3,390,000	£5,560,000	60%	£3,400,000

Mr. Pearson—What could your proposed committee do about them?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—It could examine the projects at any stage of their progress to ascertain whether value was being got for the money spent.

Mr. Pearson—What would it do if it did not think that value was being obtained?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—It would report to Parliament, which could take appropriate action. I am conscious that much of the additional expenditure estimated is due to increases in the costs of labour and materials which have taken place since the original estimates were submitted, but I am not fully satisfied that it is all due to that fact and that is why I desire provision to be made for investigations to be made by a competent non-party body appointed by this Parliament. When speaking in the Legislative Council on the Hon. F. J. Condon's motion last year, the Attorney-General said that the Grants Commission serves the purpose which would be served by the appointment of a public accounts committee. That is an entirely erroneous belief. The Grants Commission makes comparison of expenditure. It compares the expenditure on an item in South Australia with the expenditure on a similar item in a non-claimant State: it does not examine the merits of the expenditure in order to report on any weaknesses that may occur. I do not cast reflections on the Public Works Committee or any State department, but I believe that Parliament is somewhat to blame for the expenditure on certain works. For example, we went ahead with great gusto to construct a reservoir at South Para a few years ago in order to provide additional water for the metropolitan area. At that time we were not much concerned with laying a pipeline from Mannum. It was felt that a series of reservoirs would suffice for years to come but we suddenly discovered that we had to push on with the Adelaide-Mannum pipeline as an emergency measure in order to prevent the possible catastrophe of a water famine in Adelaide. We had to abandon the South Para reservoir after considerable work had been done on it,

and it has remained abandoned for some time. Sometimes we move men from an uncompleted job in order to make a start on another job, so as to placate public opinion in certain quarters. Parliament does not know what is going on behind the scenes and consequently cannot take any steps to prevent this sort of thing from happening, but a Public Accounts Committee could draw attention to such matters and then Parliament could take the action necessary to see that the money was spent on the particular work concerned and that it was completed as soon as possible after it had been commenced.

I could speak for hours on this subject because it is important. I repeat that the Old Country has a Public Accounts Committee. We are proud of British Parliamentary traditions and are fond of saying that we model our behaviour on the lines adopted by the Mother of Parliaments. New South Wales, the oldest State in the Commonwealth, saw the necessity for a Public Accounts Committee, and the Commonwealth Parliament has felt the need for one. Because of the peculiar position in South Australia, and our growing development and the huge costs associated with it, we should get the full value for public money voted for expenditure by Parliament. This growing development is regarded as a virtue at the moment, but we will not regard it as a virtue if we have many hot days and frosty nights. I confidently expect the motion to be treated as it should be. It will be a non-Party Committee and the motion should be supported unanimously.

Mr. TEUSNER secured the adjournment of the debate.

BUSINESS AGENTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Having obtained leave, the Hon. C. S. Hincks, for the Hon. T. Playford, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Business Agents Act, 1938-1951. Read a first time.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The object of the Bill is to require a licensed auctioneer carrying on business as a business agent to hold a licence under the Business Agents Act. At present, by virtue of section 4 of the principal Act, a licensed auctioneer is completely exempt from the requirement to hold a business agent's licence. This arrangement has a number of disadvantages. First, a licensed auctioneer may act as a business agent without depositing a fidelity bond or security. Second, it is very much easier to obtain an auctioneer's licence than a business agent's licence. An auctioneer's licence can be obtained merely by satisfying the court that the applicant is a fit and proper person. The Business Agents Act, on the other hand, requires an examination of the applicant's character and financial position. This could mean that a licensed auctioneer might be enabled to act as a business agent, although his credentials would not stand up to examination under the Business Agents Act. Third, renewal of an auctioneer's licence is automatic upon payment of the fee for renewal. Under the Business Agents Act, a procedure is provided whereby objections may be lodged against the renewal of a licence. Moreover, there is no provision in the Auctioneers Act for the cancellation of an auctioneer's licence for misconduct. This might mean that a licensed auctioneer whose character proved to be bad could not be prevented from acting as a business agent. Fourth, an auctioneer acting as a business agent is not required to comply with a number of the provisions of the Business Agents Act which apply to licensed business agents and to which there are no comparable provisions in the Auctioneers Act. For example, a licensed business agent is required to have a registered office and to display his name or business name at his place of business. A licensed auctioneer acting as a business agent is not affected by these provisions. Nor are his books and documents open to inspection as are a licensed business agent's and there are no restrictions on the persons he may employ, as there are on the persons whom a licensed business agent may employ.

The present arrangement is clearly unsatisfactory and the Government has decided that it should be rectified. The best course appears to be to adopt similar provisions to those contained in the Land Agents Act. The Land Agents Act provides that a licensed auctioneer is not required to hold a land agent's licence merely by reason of the fact that he sells land by auction, but is otherwise required to hold a licence if he carries on the business

of a land agent. He is not required to pay a fee for a land agent's licence. This arrangement will remove the disadvantages of the present scheme and is adopted in the Bill. Under clauses 3 and 4, a licensed auctioneer who carries on business as a business agent will be required from April 1, 1955, to comply with all the provisions of the principal Act except those requiring payment of licence fees. A licensed auctioneer, however, will not be treated as a business agent merely by reason of the fact that he sells businesses by auction. The exemption from payment of a licence fee is justified by the relatively high fee payable for an auctioneer's licence.

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

ANATOMY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Having obtained leave the Hon. C. S. Hincks, for the Hon. T. Playford, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Anatomy Act, 1884-1934.

Read a first time.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The purpose of the Bill is to make provision for the operation known as corneal grafting. This is the second occasion on which this Bill has been before the House. It was introduced at the end of the session last year but was not proceeded with. The Government's intention was to enable members and the public to consider the proposals contained in the Bill, and to study it with the view of suggesting alterations or improvements. No representations have been made to the Government since the Bill was introduced last year, and accordingly the Government is proceeding with the Bill this session in the same form as before. Corneal grafting is a valuable surgical procedure by which the cornea of a deceased person's eye is grafted on to the eye of a living person, thereby restoring, improving or saving his sight. The cornea is the transparent covering of the pupil of the eye and corneal grafting consists of replacing damaged cornea which has become opaque by fresh cornea which has been removed from some other eye.

Last year the City Coroner drew the attention of the Government to the fact that the removal of eyes from a body even for such a meritorious purpose as this is probably not permitted by law. Certainly, the Anatomy Act makes no provision for it whatsoever. He pointed out that the United Kingdom Government had found it desirable to pass legislation dealing with the subject, and that at a recent medical conference in Adelaide a resolution had

been passed that State Governments should be approached with a request for the enactment of similar legislation. The Government thereupon decided that the law of the State should make provision for corneal grafting while at the same time giving proper protection to the feelings and interests of the relatives and friends of deceased persons. The Government accordingly introduced the Bill, which followed the Act of the United Kingdom, the Corneal Grafting Act, 1952, almost exactly.

Clause 3 makes an amendment to the long title of the principal Act which extends the scope of the long title to include provisions dealing with corneal grafting. Clause 4 enacts new section 18a of the principal Act. Subsection (1) of section 18a provides that a person lawfully in possession of a body, for example, an executor, may authorize the removal of the eyes to enable them to be used for corneal grafting if the deceased person has at any time expressed a request in writing that his eyes be used for that purpose or has expressed the request orally in the presence of two witnesses during his last illness. Subsection (2) provides that a person lawfully in possession of a body may authorize the removal of the eyes for corneal grafting unless the person has reason to believe that the deceased had objected to his eyes being so dealt with, or the surviving spouse or any relative objects. Subsection (3) provides that the removal must be done by a legally qualified medical practitioner who must have satisfied himself that life is extinct.

Subsection (4) provides that where the person lawfully in possession of the body believes that an inquest will be necessary, he may only authorize the removal of the eyes with the consent of the City Coroner, who may give his consent on such conditions as he thinks fit. This is the only provision which differs from the English Act. That Act provides that no authority may be given at all where an inquest may be required. The City Coroner recommended that it should be possible to give authority in these circumstances, subject to his consent. The Government felt that under these conditions an inquest would not be prejudiced and accepted the recommendation. Subsection (5) provides that a person such as an undertaker entrusted with a body purely for the purpose of its interment or cremation shall not have power to authorize the removal of eyes. Subsection (6) provides that the authority under the section may be given on behalf of a person having the control or management of a hospital by an officer or person designated in that behalf. Subsection (7) pro-

vides that the section shall not be construed as rendering unlawful any dealing with a body which would otherwise have been lawful. Clause 5 makes a consequential amendment to the principal Act. Clause 6 provides that the Bill will come into force three months after it is passed. This provision will enable the Bill to become generally known before it becomes effective.

Mr. HUTCHENS secured the adjournment of the debate.

WHEAT PRICE STABILIZATION SCHEME BALLOT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

PUBLIC FINANCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS ACT AMEND- MENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

GAS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

WILD DOGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS, for the Hon. T. Playford, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Prices Act, 1948-1953. Read a first time.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

It extends the operation of the Prices Act for another year. The reasons which have influenced the Government in proposing this extension are the same as in former years. The Government would be very glad if price controls could all be taken off without detrimental effects. The fact is, however, that supplies of some essential goods and materials are still substantially below requirements; and if there were no price control it would be possible for unscrupulous persons to take an unfair advantage of the position and charge excessive prices. Among the goods which are in short supply are certain building materials, the price of which is an important factor in the cost of a house. Although, on the whole, there has been in recent months an improvement in the supply of goods generally we have not yet reached the stage when it would be wise to repeal the Act. It is preferable to leave the Act on the Statute Book for the time being, and de-control goods by appropriate orders as and when circumstances justify that course.

Under this system the controls can be reimposed if it again becomes desirable to do so.

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

MARKETING OF EGGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN (Minister of Agriculture)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The Marketing of Eggs Act was first passed in 1941. Under it the board was to remain in operation until the expiration of six months after the Governor-General issued a proclamation declaring that the war with Germany, existing at the time of the passing of this Act, had ceased. In 1945 Parliament agreed to the extension of the Marketing of Eggs Act until September 30, 1949. In September, 1949, Parliament agreed to a further extension of the Act until September 30, 1954. For the first 12 months of the board's operations—the year ended June 30, 1944—9,663,346 dozen eggs were received by the board. They were valued at £792,352. For the year ended June 30, 1954, the board received 12,040,469 dozen eggs, their value being £2,364,447. The gross value of all grades of eggs was 3s. 11.13d. a dozen, and the net value was 3s. 5.15d. a dozen. For the year 1953-54 exports of eggs in shell totalled 1,257,120 dozen, their value being £219,347; and the export of eggs in pulp totalled 5,066,990 dozen, their value being £1,116,687. Total exports were 6,324,110 dozen, valued at £1,336,034. A total of 4,584,693 dozen eggs were sold in shell locally, their value being £999,059; and eggs in pulp form sold locally amounted to 1,131,666 dozen, the value of £241,750. The total local trade was 5,716,359 dozen, to a value of £1,240,509. In regard to the costs of handling, the agents' charges (including receiving, grading, testing, packing, and accounting to producers) totalled 4½d. a dozen, and the pool deduction was 1½d., making total deductions 6d. a dozen. I refer members to section 16 of the Act, which gives the Auditor General the authority to examine the board's accounts. Under that section he is required to report on:—

(a) whether the prices at which during that year eggs were bought and sold by the board and sold by retailers to the public were reasonable;

(b) whether the board has been economical in its expenditure on the administration of this Act and on the collection, transport, grading, treatment and marketing of eggs.

That is a very wide power, and if members will look at the last Auditor General's report at page 159 they will find that the accounts are well dissected, and on the following page the balance sheet is published. The costs of exporting eggs are considerable. The cost of placing eggs in shell on board, including cases, fillers, storage, and Australian Egg Board levy amounted to 7d. a dozen, and the cost of placing egg pulp, including tins, cartons, manufacturing charges, and Australian Egg Board levy amounted to 5d. a dozen. The Egg Marketing Board for this year is faced with a new set of circumstances for all surplus export eggs in shell, and egg pulp is now on a competitive market. The last long-term contract expired on May 31, with a completion of the sale of egg pulp to the United Kingdom. For the season 1954-55 the board is faced with the difficulty of competitive prices on the free market. This is the first year since 1939 that this position has arisen. In addition, owing to the large supplies of egg pulp held by the United Kingdom which were purchased under long-term contracts, a quota of 10,000 tons which Australia will be allowed to forward to the United Kingdom has been enforced.

For the year 1953-54 Australia shipped about 16,000 tons of pulp to the United Kingdom, and the placing of a quota on this means that a much greater quantity of eggs in shell will have to be shipped so that quantities of pulp can be kept within the quota. I mentioned recently, in answer to a question by the member for Newcastle, that the contracts so far concluded in respect of pulp totalled 3,500 tons at £215 a ton. Of course, for the balance of the quota the price has yet to be arranged. The egg industry in South Australia is now showing definite signs of increased production, and receipts for this pool year are about 10 per cent above those of last year. It is estimated from the time the eggs leave the producers' farms until they reach the consumers in the United Kingdom the cost is 2s. a dozen. The Bill extends the operation of the Act for three years. An approach has been made to the Commonwealth Government for a subsidy on export eggs for the ensuing season because of the much more difficult situation that has arisen, and I hope that some assistance will be forthcoming.

Mr. LAWN secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.12 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday, August 19, at 2 p.m.