HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, October 7, 1954.

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

PUBLIC PURPOSES LOAN ACT.

His Excellency the Governor, by message, intimated his assent to the Act.

QUESTIONS.

RAILWAY DERAILMENTS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Some time ago the public were perturbed over the number of derailments occurring on the South Australian railway system, particularly on the hills lines. The statement was made at the time by a responsible railway authority that it was felt they were due to some defect in the four-wheel trucks which have been introduced recently. I understand that these trucks were withdrawn from service, and that there have been no derailments since. Can the defect be corrected and these vehicles made safe for traffic under all circumstances, particularly on the hills line?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I have had no recent conversation with my colleague on the subject, but can give some idea of the position. Apparently on the hills line the tolerance on these trucks is such that there were some difficulties at curves, and they were taken in to be machined to give greater tolerance. Whether they have been put back on the line I am not sure. The trouble occurred with the newer type of four-wheeled vehicle; it would appear that the older vehicles of the same type were not causing any difficulties. I will bring down a full report from my colleague on the matter generally.

PETROL SALE HOURS.

Mr. DUNKS—The following appeared in today's *Advertiser*:—

Sydney, October 6.—Petrol trading hours will be extended by four hours a day in New South Wales. State Parliamentary Labor Caucus today approved legislation for new trading hours to be introduced in Parliament before Christmas. New trading hours will be: Week days, 6 a.m. to 8.30 p.m.; Saturday, Sunday and public holidays, 7 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Christmas Day, Good Friday and Anzac Day, closed all day.

As some members are prone to quote Acts and regulations operating in other States, and suggest that we should copy them where suitable, I ask the Premier whether he has made up his mind in reference to petrol trading hours in South Australia?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Trading hours in the metropolitan area are fixed by the Minister of Industry, and adherence to them is one of the conditions of a licence to sell. The Minister has from time to time considered an alteration of the hours. The matter has been discussed this year and a decision arrived at by Cabinet in respect of hours, which will come into operation after the New Year. The decision is that there shall be no alteration to the trading hours permitted this year—they will not be extended or reduced. The only alteration is to enable taxi drivers to buy petrol in an emergency at any time. It was found from experience that a taxi driver does not always know what demands will be made on him over a week-end. Some come long distances to the city and have difficulty in getting petrol to enable them to return to their home town. For others we do not propose to follow the New South Wales alteration, but maintain the present hours, which are believed to be reasonable in the interests of both motorists and resellers.

MARION ROAD WATER MAIN.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Has the Minister of Works a reply to the question I asked last Tuesday relating to the new water main on Marion Road?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Engineer-in-Chief has reported as follows:—

Some of the 30in. pipes purchased for the renewal of portion of the trunk main along Marion Road were recently removed for use in the new main being laid from near Salisbury to Adelaide. This new main, which is the trunk main from the South Para reservoir, is being pushed through as it may be possible to give some help to the metropolitan area by using bores in the Salisbury area and pumping the water from them through this new main. As soon as additional 30in. pipes are made by the manufacturer they will be returned to the Marion Road so that the replacement can be carried out.

WARREN RESERVOIR WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. TEUSNER—Can the Minister of Works indicate the present position concerning water supplies from the Warren reservoir to the Barossa district and other areas? Can he say whether it is proposed to make an immediate start with the link up of the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline to the Warren reticulation system?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Unfortunately the position in regard to the Warren reservoir will be parlous unless we can give some assistance by restricting the use of water for the time being and augumentation later. The capacity

of the reservoir is 1,400,000,000 gallons, and although it is usually one of the best reservoirs to fill, the present storage is only 521,000,000 gallons and it has been dropping throughout the year. The full capacity of the Barossa reservoir is 993,000,000 gallons and its present storage is 695,000,000 gallons. That reservoir has an advantage in that really first-class water can be boosted to it from bores, but that does not apply to the Warren basin. For the present it is considered that the Barossa storage is fairly satisfactory, but a review of the position may be necessary later in the summer. The Engineer for Water Supply has recommended that, in relation to the Warren reservoir, certain restrictions should be imposed. They will be similar in nature to those imposed on the last occasion they were necessary. One of the reasons necessitating restrictions is, as the honourable member knows, that large consumers have been using the supply as an irrigation system rather than as a reticulation system. They will be rationed to perhaps one-third of their last year's consumption, but other users will be permitted to water their gardens by hoses held in the hand, not by fixed sprinklers. In order to relieve the position a new main is proposed from a point near Birdwood to pass through Kersbrook to the Warren and it has been approved by the Government at a cost of £138,000. That will commence as a 14in. main and finish up as a 10in. main and will feed the reservoir by gravitation. It is hoped that it will be in use by the middle of February. It is not possible to draw more water from the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline as that is already loaded to capacity. Every effort will be made to provide an adequate supply rather than restrict the use of water.

RAIL CAR SERVICE TO MOONTA.

Mr. McALEES—On many occasions I have raised the question of the use of Budd type rail cars on the Moonta line. I am disappointed that such services have been provided to Morgan and other parts of South Australia and not to Moonta, since I was the first in this House to ask for such a service. I think more consideration should be given to my district. Has the Minister of Works anything to report in this connection from the Minister of Railways?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Railways Commissioner reported to the Minister of Railways in the following terms:—

I have to inform the Hon. the Minister that one railcar has been completed and placed in service this week. It is running to Morgan and return each day, as well as doing short trips to Gawler and other suburban stations. A second railcar is practically completed and it is anticipated that a further four railcars and two trailers will be completed early in the new year. However, as the Hon. the Minister is aware, we are having trouble with the Cotal gear-boxes from France, of which we have received five. All of these have revealed defects, but the Chief Mechanical Engineer, by taking parts from one or another and doing work on the gears himself, has put two gears into such condition that we have been able to hand the first car over to traffic. Until such time as I can make a recommendation to the Government as to what steps should be taken to rectify this trouble, I am not able to say when we shall be able to place the second railcar in service. The matter is at present in the hands of the Solicitor for Railways, who is advising me on the legal aspects of the trouble, and I will report to the Hon. the Minister as early as possible.

SLAUGHTERING AT ABATTOIRS.

Mr. HEASLIP—From press reports in recent weeks I have been led to believe that almost a record number of stock have been slaughtered at the Abattoirs and the fact that there has been no hold-up there leads me to believe that the slaughtermen must be doing a good job. Can the Minister of Agriculture inform the House what has happened at the Abattoirs, particularly in relation to figures of animals slaughtered this year?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I am very pleased to be able to report that things are running very smoothly indeed at the Abattoirs this season, and I am very appreciative of the efforts of the management, slaughtermen, and other workers engaged in the slaughtering of stock. The latest figures are not only interesting but are extraordinarily good. Export lambs slaughtered up to October 4 numbered 335,365, whereas the figure last year for the corresponding period was 57,777. In the previous report referred to in the press there was a suggestion that a good deal of bruising was taking place, but I am able to advise that the percentage of bruised lambs has fallen since that report was issued. Killings for the week from September 27 to October 4 were 91,287, of which 72,788 were for export and the balance for the local trade.

FIRE AT GOVERNMENT DEPOT.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Following the disastrous fire that occurred at the Architect-in-Chief's depot on West Beach Road last week, the Fire Chief (Mr. Whyte) made a statement to the press in which he said, among other

things, that if there had been automatic protection such as a sprinkler or thermostat system this disaster would not have occurred. He also stated that in 1944, after inspecting the building, he recommended that it be protected by automatic sprinklers or certainly by thermostats connected with Fire Brigade headquarters. In view of the possibility that a thought might develop in the minds of the general population that public institutions and buildings are not adequately protected, can the Premier inform the House whether it is a fact that the Fire Chief made such a recommendation, and if so, why was the recommendation not acted upon?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If the Government went to elaborate costs probably it would be possible to protect every Government building in the State. The costs would be excessive and, incidentally, we would not then require a fire brigade. Experience has shown that there are some costs that could be practicably handled and some that could not. It is not possible to afford protection for every fire risk in the State by providing automatic fire extinguishers of the type suggested by the officer. Instead, the Government covers those risks by insurance.

LOANS FOR SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

Mr. DUNNAGE—I understand that under the Financial Agreement the States raise money allocated to them for loan purposes, and also that loans are raised in other States for semi-Governmental purposes, such as is happening with the Electricity Trust in this State. I am wondering whether it would be possible—seeing it is not possible to get a new Unley high school because of the excessive cost of about £750,000—for the Government to raise a loan to build some of the new schools that we urgently require. I know that the Government, and the Minister, are doing their best with the limited money available, but when the Gas Company raised a loan recently it got £800,000 in four hours. Is it possible for the Government to raise funds or a loan to expand our education system so that we can have the schools that we all desire?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Under the provisions of the Financial Agreement no State Government raises any loans. All loans for State Government purposes are raised by the Loan Council, and under the Financial Agreement the Commonwealth is the authority that acts on behalf of the Loan Council and raises money for both Commonwealth and State loan works. No State is empowered to raise moneys for any State activity except through the Loan Council, in which the money is allocated between the States according to the provisions of the agreement. It is true that recently the Gas Company, which is not a Government instrumentality, by giving better interest conditions than other undertakings in this State (though not unfavourable conditions to it) was able to raise a loan quickly, but the State Government cannot do that. It is true that in some States semi-Governmental activities have been established and, of course, they are not directly included in the Financial Agreement, but by agreement between the States all approvals for semi-Governmental loans have to be given through the Loan Council, so if you get it one way you do not get it the other. This State gets a high official appropriation and does not require, nor ask for, semi-Governmental finance because that is always more costly and more undesirable. With regard to the question of the new Unley high school, the difficulty is not one of finance, but of the excessive cost of the proposal. The Architect-in-Chief's Department has made a comparison between the cost of State schools and those established by one of the churches, and it is found that for a similar school area the State schools are costing nearly twice as much, arising out of what may be regarded as rather excessive specifications and amenities. This problem is being examined.

KIRKCALDY-HENLEY BEACH RAILWAY.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Recently I have had a number of letters from constituents residing at Henley Beach expressing concern that the gang repairing the line between Kirkcaldy and Henley Beach is to be withdrawn. This line is in such a bad state of repair that it is causing extensive damage to houses in the vicinity. Will the Minister of Works ascertain from his colleague whether the gang is to be withdrawn, and if that is proposed take steps to have it retained in order that this work may be completed?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Following the honourable member's earlier verbal representations I asked for a report through the Minister of Railways and the Commissioner has advised as follows:—

The relaying of the whole section between Grange and Henley Beach has been approved and the work was commenced, but it has been held up pending an investigation at the request of the council, that a portion of the line be re-located. In the meantime, the relaying gang was shifted to Port Adelaide to construct sidings for the Wheat Board which were

urgently required. However, it is anticipated that in four weeks' time the gang will return to the Henley Beach line and resume the relaying work.

The honourable member will notice that it is the proposed re-location of the line that is causing the hold-up for the time being.

BOTTLES ON ROADWAYS.

Mr. CORCORAN—I have received the following letter from the secretary of the South-Eastern Dairymen's Association:—

I have been instructed by the central council of the association to request your assistance to have a surcharge of sixpence or more placed on all beer bottles. It was felt that until such time as beer bottles have a good recovery value nothing can be done to prevent empty bottles being left on roadways. I am enclosing a copy of letter received from the Inspector of Police, Mount Gambier, for your information.

The letter from the Inspector of Police referred to was as follows:—

I am sure your association appreciate that the matter complained of is not local but statewide. I noted during a recent trip interstate that similar conditions prevail in Victoria and New South Wales. Although section 149 of the Road Traffic Act, 1934-1953 makes it an offence to deposit or drop injurious matter (which includes glass) on roads I feel that it would be stretching the section to its limit to include the grass verge divorced from the road proper and shoulders. I understand that the model by-laws include a by-law which would cover the matter if the offenders were detected. As the majority of the bottles deposited are beer bottles it is quite apparent that until such a time that such glass containers have a good recovery value or are substituted by a metal or carboard container the matter complained of will always be with us.

Will the Premier consider introducing legislation to give effect to the suggested surcharge of 6d. a bottle?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—A surcharge of that nature would be borne by the consumer, and I do not feel it is warranted. I cannot give the honourable member an assurance that such a Bill will be introduced this session.

INDUSTRY FOR MURRAY DISTRICT.

Mr. WHITE—Has the Premier a further reply to my question of Tuesday last regarding the possibility of a French firm commencing operations at a town in my district?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The chairman of the Housing Trust reports:—

The Company in question was brought to the South Australian Housing Trust by the chairman of the Industries Advisory Committee. The possibility of the industry being established at Murray Bridge or some other place where River Murray water would be available has been put to the company. However, the company is not interested in such a site but is considering the establishment of a business either in the metropolitan area or the new town north of Salisbury. I may mention that the trust holds an extensive area of land at Murray Bridge and, if the occasion offered, would by the provision of housing do all it could to assist a new industry in that or any other country town.

From inquiries I find that for some time the company has been negotiating with me for sites and that a number of country sites have been suggested. Although no final decision has been made by the company, apparently it is not prepared to open a branch of its business in this State outside the metropolitan area.

PRICE OF MOTOR VEHICLE PART.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Some time ago I drew the Premier's attention to an excessive charge made on one of my constituents for a piece of pipe for his motor vehicle. After inquiry the Premier said the matter had been taken up with the parent company in Melbourne. Has a reply been received from that company?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Those investigations are still being continued. The part in question was for a model that was not a recent one, and had to be imported from Canada. The cost of importation was stated but it was not accepted by the Prices Department, which demanded a statutory declaration on the matter. That declaration was not forthcoming in the terms of the original statement, but one with some slight amendments was provided. The company has suggested that one of its officers come to South Australia to discuss the matter, and when it is finalized I will advise the honourable member.

MOTOR REGISTRATIONS.

Mr. JENNINGS—This week the Acting Commissioner of Police stated that South Australia is developing into a happy hunting ground for interstate motor car thieves because of an apparent weakness in our motor registration law. I understand the public is genuinely concerned about the matter. Will the Government introduce legislation to strengthen our motor registration law?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The matter has been examined and a number of reports have come from the Registrar of Motor Vehicles, together with a number of discs that have been falsified, showing how easy it is in the

other States to falsify registrations even when the vehicle has been inspected. In the opinion of the Government an alteration of our system would not give the protection claimed, and it would certainly cause a tremendous amount of inconvenience to persons registering motor vehicles if on every occasion they had to have the vehicle inspected by the department. As it is we have frequent complaints from country people in connection with the registration of motor vehicles because of the amount of formality to be undergone before registration is obtained. Any increase in that formality is not justified in view of the negligible results obtained in the other States. Therefore the Government can give no assurance whatever that it will introduce legislation to please the Acting Commissioner of Police in this respect.

TRUST HOME TANKS.

Mr. STEPHENS—Has the Premier obtained a reply to the question I asked on September 5 regarding the rumour circulating at Kilburn that trust homes are to be supplied with concrete tanks and that the tenants are to be charged an increased rent in consequence?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The position is as I surmised. A report from the chairman of the Housing Trust states:—

Owing to the shortage of suitable galvanized iron during past years very many of the rental houses of the South Australian Housing Trust in the metropolitan area are without water tanks. In order to make good this deficiency in some degree the trust for some time has been securing the manufacture of a limited number of concrete tanks which are installed in rental houses now without tanks. Rents are not increased when tanks are installed.

STEEL SUPPLIES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I have noticed in the press recently complaints by various users of steel in South Australia about the shortage of this important commodity. I am concerned as to whether this is holding up important developmental projects, such as extensions to water schemes and electricity mains, particularly in country districts. Has the Premier any information on this matter?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Nearly every department is short of steel, particularly the departments mentioned by the honourable member. For instance, the Electricity Trust is very short, and in consequence country extensions are being seriously inconvenienced. I have discussed this matter with the Broken Hill Proprietary Co., which has pointed out that it would considerably alleviate the position if we could get reasonable transport of steel from the eastern States. At present there are 8,699 tons in Newcastle awaiting shipment to South Australia, and at Port Kembla 22,992 tons. This shows that 31,691 tons of steel have been allocated to South Australia but still await shipment. The South Australian position is not peculiar. At September 30 in New South Wales awaiting shipment to other States were 115,000 tons of steel. Although we are in desperate need of the commodity there is piled up at Newcastle and Port Kembla awaiting shipment to other States 115,000 tons, which on my information appears to be the normal figure; it was the same figure a fortnight earlier. I will take up the matter with the Commonwealth shipping authorities. There seems to be a serious breakdown in our economic structure if enormous quantities of material required for urgent works can be allowed to remain on wharves awaiting shipment that does not seem to transpire. We are experiencing serious difficulty in our extensions. Those concerned with the Electricity Trust are made more urgent because in addition we have 50,000 poles of the old wooden variety that must be replaced, because they have outlived their usefulness, if adequate and reliable services are to be maintained. I will take up the matter as one of urgency.

Mr. RICHES—The statement that steel is held up at Port Kembla and cannot be brought to this State because of lack of shipping has long caused concern to most of South Australia. I ask the Premier whether this could be alleviated if the railway line from Port Pirie to Broken Hill were broadened and if he agrees will he take the opportunity to have an early discussion with the Federal Minister for Transport as to whether this work could be put in hand?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member is not correct in his assumption that the reason for non-transportation is a shortage of shipping. I have found no difficulty when a request has been made to get ships to shift anything asked for. The problem at Port Kembla is the inadequacy of harbour installations, and I believe there is also a grave inadequacy of labour to load ships. I fancy the slow turn-round of ships at Australian ports is also having a detrimental effect on transportation. South Australia is having the greatest difficulty in getting rails to carry out even a minor railway project in

the South-East, and how the honourable member supposes we could undertake the broadening of a railway for a distance of 250 miles in view of the present steel shortage, I do not understand.

Mr. Riches—A good job is being done in the north.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes, because South Australia indicated it was prepared to give a priority for it. The State is just as interested in that work as in any other work in South Australia. Although it is a Commonwealth project it is of enormous benefit to South Australia which has shown its willingness to allocate both sleepers and rails. I can assure the honourable member that there are not sufficient rails to do both the northern extension and the work he has in contemplation.

SOUTHERN SUBURBS TRANSPORT.

Mr. DUNKS—Some years ago I was concerned about the transport service available to people in Westbourne Park and Colonel Light Gardens. Now they have to use two forms of transport. First, they have to take the Hyde Park tram to the terminus. This is a 12-minute service. Then they travel to Westbourne Park or Colonel Light Gardens in a privately operated bus. This is a 20-minute service. They have to pay two fares, tram and bus. Compared with the use of the Colonel Light Gardens tram which goes down Goodwood Road it is a dearer form of transport. As the Tramways Trust is now considering not using trams, can the Minister of Works say whether it would consider not using the Hyde Park tram and having the private bus operator run his service from Springbank Road to Victoria Square? He does it now on a Sunday morning and finds no difficulty. It would be helpful to the residents if they could go right through in the bus and make a saving in the fare.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I will take up with the Tramways Trust the matter raised by the honourable member.

BRIDGE ACROSS STURT CREEK.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—On the bridge which crosses Sturt Creek at the boundary of the electorates of Glenelg and Goodwood there is a notice, "Bridge out of order, not to be used. By Order." But no-one appears to know who the authority is for saying it is unsafe for use. From my observations it is not a very appropriate bridge and as soon as the new school at Morphettville Park opens I believe considerable use will be made of it. I have taken the matter up with the local council, which denies liability of ownership, the Housing Trust denies any liability, and it would appear that the Highways Department denies liability. Will the Minister of Works get a report as to who is the owner of the bridge, and what representations could then be made for the provision of a satisfactory bridge to serve the area?

The Hon. M McINTOSH—I will get the information for the honourable member.

BRIDGE AT BLANCHETOWN.

Mr. STOTT—Has the committee which was appointed to make inquiries concerning the erection of a bridge at Blanchetown made any progress, and is it likely that a reference will be sent to the Public Works Committee this session for an inquiry?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Some time ago the honourable member asked a question regarding some work at Swan Reach and I obtained a report at the time. I have received the following report, dated August 30 last, from the Commissioner of Highways, who is a member of the committee preparing plans:—

The committee has had two meetings in respect to the proposed bridge and inspected possible sites. The existing data obtained many years ago were insufficient for the purpose of the bridge and therefore a survey party is at present obtaining the additional information required.

I will get a further report for the honourable member.

TREES AT MOUNT PLEASANT.

Mr. TEUSNER—Growing on railway property near the entrance to Mount Pleasant are 51 very fine poplar trees. I understand they have thrown out suckers which are growing on the roadway adjacent to railway property and virtually constitute a nuisance. The local council has requested the railways to eradicate the suckers. I have a communication from Mount Pleasant that information has been received from the Railways Department that it proposes to remove 25 of the trees. Local people are very proud of these trees and would resent their removal. Will the Minister of Works confer with the Minister of Local Government with a view to saving the trees and see whether any steps could be taken to eradicate the suckers without destroying the trees?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I will take the matter up with my colleague. From my knowledge you can still have suckers a long

time after trees are removed. I will have the matter considered from the point of view of removing the suckers first while still retaining the trees.

TRAMWAYS TRUST AND BUS ROUTES.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Has the Premier a reply to my question of last week concerning the policy of the Tramways Trust on the taking over of bus routes?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have received the following report from Mr. Seaman, who is the Treasury representative on the trust:—

The Municipal Tramways Trust Act makes the trust the licensing authority for omnibus operation in the metropolitan area, and accordingly the trust does not permit private operations which duplicate or directly compete with its own service. In authorizing private operation where necessary to provide a reasonable service to the public it is inevitable that the private routes ordinarily run parallel to and even, for short distances, along the same roadway as the trust's own service. Therefore, in some small measure there is competition, although the licence ordinarily contains a protective clause when the same roadway is used for any distance. Under present circumstances it is improbable that the trust could take over, at a profit to itself, any route which is privately operated, and in any case until the rehabilitation programme has progressed much further the trust will not have the vehicles to do so. All licences are subject to periodic renewal, so that if at any later stage it were appropriate to take over a privately-operated route, either because it is profitable to do so, or because it is otherwise desirable in the public interest, the trust could do so.

WATER PRESSURE IN WESTERN SUBURBS.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Can the the Minister of Works indicate whether plans for the connection of the new Findon main in the western district are going according to schedule and if, when connected, that main will obviate the necessity of using bore water in that area?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I am happy to announce that plans for the linking of that big main are slightly ahead of schedule. It is now actually being flushed out. The member will understand that after completion it had to be flushed out and that operation should be completed today and water will be let in for use and the new main connected up gradually with the old main. It is not desired at the moment to remove the best of the bores out of that service because they have helped to supplement existing supplies and the water from them will be diluted with reservoir water and should be of first class quality. The pressures generally should be so improved that some minor bursts may take place in the older mains. I have received complaints from residents in that area, but in instances the faults reported were in the pipes leading into the houses and not in the main. If the member gets complaints in the future I suggest he advise the persons concerned to test their own service pipes, and if they are satisfactory, something must be wrong with some of the small mains in the locality, and this defect will be remedied as early as possible. I point out that of the 112,000 additional residents in the metropolitan area over the last five or six years, 70 per cent reside in the western area and many of them are heavy water users because they are market gardeners. It can readily be understood how greatly the mains were drawn upon.

INDUSTRY AT WHYALLA.

Mr. RICHES—Can the Premier indicate when the next conference between the Premier and the directors of the Broken Hill Proprietary Company in relation to establishing an industry at Whyalla will take place? I believe it is to be held in Melbourne.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The conference is scheduled for October 29 in Melbourne.

ADVANCE PAYMENTS FOR ANNUAL LEAVE.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The United Trades and Labor Council has forwarded a letter to me from the Australian Government Workers' Association, an industrial organization, many of the members of which are employed in the Government service. It states that some time ago the Government agreed to pay two weeks' annual leave in advance to employees commencing their leave. The organization suggests that sympathetic consideration should be given to paying for the whole of the leave at the time it is taken. It points out that in many instances three weeks' or more annual leave has accrued to an employee as a result of his service and suggests that the employee receive payment for the whole period when commencing his holidays rather than having to wait until the end of his leave before collecting some of the pay which has accrued. Will the Premier consider this matter?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I can remember when it was decided to pay two weeks' annual leave in advance. At that time not many officers were receiving their three weeks' leave and the payment of two weeks' leave would probably have met the majority of cases. I will examine the matter and inform the honourable member of the Government's decision in due course.

FULHAM GARDENS SEWERAGE SCHEME.

The SPEAKER laid on the table the report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on the Fulham Gardens Sewerage Scheme, together with minutes of evidence.

Ordered that report be printed.

SWINE COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Swine Compensation Act, 1936-1951.

Motion carried.

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

VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

INDUSTRIAL AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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 the Whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Industrial and Provident Societies Act, 1923-1952.

Motion carried.

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

POLICE PENSIONS BILL.

In Committee.

(Continued from October 6. Page 928.)

Clause 29—"Benefits for widows and children of members and pensioners."

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—When this matter was discussed in Committee last evening, the question of a lump sum payment to orphans was raised by several members, including the Leader of the Opposition. I explained that I had not gone into the question of these benefits, but that the particulars had been drawn up by Mr. Bean and Mr. Bowden, who had been consulting with the Police Association. I have received a minute from Mr. Bean, who was in charge of negotiations and the drafting of the Bill, which I think will clear up the query. It reads:—

I understand that the suggestion by the Hon. the Leader of the Opposition is that when a member of the force dies as a widower leaving orphan children the orphans should get the same lump sum as the wife would have got if she had been alive at the time of the death. The Bill at present, of course, provides that in the case of orphan children the allowance per child is to be £78 a year as against £39 a year for a child who is not an orphan. I would like to point out that these amounts are, on the whole, generous when compared with what is commonly provided in schemes for Government employees' pensions. For example, under the Superannuation Act which applies to the Public Service the amount for a child who is not an orphan is £19 10s. and the amount for an orphan child is £39. The amount in the previous Police Pensions Act was £32 10s. for every child with no higher amount in the case where the child was an orphan. I do not know of any case where lump sums are provided for orphans and the Public Actuary tells me that in his experience he has not come across such a case. The lump sum is paid to the wife because she has the responsibility of maintaining a family; the child, of course, has no similar responsibility.

Mr. O'Halloran—Someone has the responsibility.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That is the whole point. That is why the pension rate for the child has been increased from £39 to £78. The report continues:—

Of course there is no limit to the benefits that might be provided if there were unlimited funds available but in all these schemes it is necessary, as far as possible, to endeavour to make the payments where the need is greatest. It is considered that the needs of the widow who has children are greater than those of orphan children for whom, under modern legislation, a variety of benefits are available both from the State and Commonwealth. I would also draw the attention of honourable members to clause 31 of the Bill which, in effect, adopts the principle of contributions back in all cases. The meaning of this clause is that if after all pensions and benefits in respect of a contributor have come to an end the amount paid is less than the amount of the contributor's contributions the contributor's estate receives the balance of his contributions. In many cases, of course, this money would be available for the maintenance of children of 16 years old or more.

The committee considered these matters and made some adjustments. The provisions of the Bill have not been designed on an ungenerous basis, though this clause probably does not increase the Government's liability very much. However, alterations to pension schemes usually lead to repercussions if they are out of line with common practice. If it is found that these provisions act harshly the Government will bring them again before the House. I ask the committee to accept the clause as it stands.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I accept the Premier's assurance that this provision will be again

examined if any anomalies are found and that steps will be taken to rectify them. When I raised this question yesterday afternoon I did so of my own volition. I did not know that conferences had been held between the association, the Parliamentary Draftsman, and the Government Actuary, but I was impelled to raise the question because I knew of a case of a young policeman and his wife being killed in an accident, leaving two orphan children. A case of that nature merits special consideration. I admit that the differential rate of pension for the orphan child affords some consideration, but the benefits vary with the age of the child. For instance, a very young orphan child, over the period, would probably get a payment equal to the lump sum payment if that method were adopted, but an older child would not. However, I agree that, generally speaking, the Bill is not ungenerous. It puts police pensions on a fairer basis and I hope that will result in retaining men in the force and encouraging others to join it.

Clause passed.

Clauses 30 to 41 passed.

Clause 42—"Pensions payable at intervals."

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I move—

To insert "equal" after "two".

This is necessary because of a printing error.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Remaining clauses (43 and 44) and title passed. Bill read a third time and passed.

PRISONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This Bill makes a number of amendments to the Prisons Act. For convenience I will deal with them in the order in which they appear in the Bill. First the Bill validates the regulations made under the Prisons Act providing for the payment to prisoners of money for credit marks, and of bonuses and gratuities. It has recently been pointed out that there is no authority for these regulations in the principal Act, though payment has been included in the Estimates. Clause 3 gives the necessary authority and validates the existing regulations. It also deals with a problem which has arisen concerning the detention of sexual offenders and children in prison. Under the Criminal Law Consolidation Act a sexual offender ordered to be detained in an institution may be detained in prison. Under the Maintenance Act, a child who proves too unruly or depraved to be kept in a reformatory may be transferred to the custody of the Comptroller of Prisons. At present these persons are in an anomalous position when detained in prison, because by virtue of the way in which the Prisons Act and regulations are framed a number of provisions of the Prisons Act and regulations do not apply to them. In particular, they cannot be given any bonuses, remissions, privileges or indulgences, and therefore have not the same incentive to good conduct and industry as other prisoners.

The Government considers it desirable that these benefits should be available to such prisoners, and that their status while in prison should be clarified. Accordingly clause 3 enables regulations to be made prescribing the duties, liabilities, privileges and conditions of detention of sexual offenders and children detained in prison. Clause 3 also enables regulations to be made for the remission of any part of the period for which such prisoners may be detained and for applying any provisions of the principal Act or regulations to them. This last provision will enable such provisions of the principal Act as section 42 to be applied to such persons. Section 42 deals with the release on probation of prisoners, and does not at present apply to children and sexual offenders detained in prison. Clause 3 also provides that the regulations may authorize the remissions and earnings of sexual offenders and children detained in prison at the commencement of the Bill to be computed from the commencement of their detention. Thus sexual offenders and children at present in gaol will be able to get the full benefit of the Bill. Clause 4 removes a reference in the principal Act to committal for trial under the Coroners Act. This reference is now obsolete.

Clause 5 provides for the release on licence of life prisoners. The Comptroller of Prisons has asked the Government that there should be a power to release life prisoners on licence. At present a life prisoner can only be released by exercise of the Royal Prerogative and the release is unconditional. There can be no control over the prisoner's conduct after his release, and he cannot be recalled. The system of release on probation under the principal Act does not apply to life prisoners. The Comptroller has recommended the adoption of legislation on the lines of English legislation on this subject. Under the English Prisons Act, the Secretary of State is given power to release on licence on such conditions as he

thinks fit. A prisoner so released is subject to recall at any time. Such legislation would enable life prisoners to be effectively kept under control after release for such period as may be thought desirable and Clause 5 accordingly provides in these terms for release on licence by the Governor on the recommendation of the Comptroller.

Clause 6 amends section 46 of the principal Act which creates a number of prison offences punishable by the Comptroller or a visiting justice, such as disobedience of orders, abusive or indecent language and wilful injury to property. Section 46 was originally enacted in 1869 and contains provisions which overlap or are redundant. In some cases it is difficult to know with precisely which offence a prisoner should be charged. Clause 6 makes several minor amendments designed to make the section more effective. To attempt to commit an offence under the section and to aid or abet the commission of an offence are made offences.

Clause 7 re-enacts section 47 of the principal Act, which deals with the punishment of prisoners for such offences. At present the only punishment which may be imposed for prison offences are solitary confinement, a bread and water diet or forfeiture of remissions. As re-enacted by clause 7 of the Bill section 47 provides in addition for forfeiture of privileges, indulgences or earnings and for payment of compensation for damage. The section also provides that the prisoner may be cautioned. Section 47 at present does not make any provision for taking any evidence other than that of the prisoner himself or for the compelling of witnesses on the hearing of a charge against a prisoner. Clause 7 makes the necessary alterations to enable the justice to secure any relevant evidence.

Clause 8 makes amendments to section 48 of the principle Act consequential upon clause 7. It enables a court of summary jurisdiction hearing a more serious charge against a prisoner to caution the prisoner or to make any order as to forfeiture of privileges, indulgences and earnings or payment of compensation which the Comptroller or a visiting justice may make upon conviction of a lesser charge. Clause 9 provides for the debiting of prisoners' accounts where earnings are forfeited or where the prisoner is ordered to pay compensation for damage caused by him. The clause also provides for the payment of the compensation to the person entitled. Clause 10 amends section 58 of the principal Act, which makes the escape of any prisoner under sentence of a court a felony. Clause 10 extends the scope of section 58 to apply to a child or sexual offender detained in prison, at the same time extending the scope of the section to cover the escape of any class of prisoner. There is at present no provision in the principal Act making it an offence for a prisoner other than a prisoner imprisoned for a crime to escape.

Mr. DUNSTAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

RENMARK IRRIGATION TRUST ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 6. Page 924.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The Bill provides that the rate levied on land in the Renmark irrigation area which has been improved as a result of drainage may be increased above the amount at present provided. This is a fair proposal because the Renmark Irrigation Trust is a self-supporting body and its expenditure must be recovered from the landowners in the area either in water rates or drainage rates. Therefore, if the present limit on the drainage rate were retained, water rates would have to be increased progressively to meet the deficiency in the drainage account. After this Bill is passed the whole of the cost of drainage will not be met out of the rates provided for in the Bill, but at least a much greater proportion will be collected by way of drainage rates than is the case at present and some rule-of-thumb measure of justice thereby secured. I support the broad general principles expressed in the Bill, which will be submitted to a Select Committee for examination of details.

Bill read a second time and referred to a Select Committee consisting of Messrs. J. A. Heaslip, W. Macgillivray, B. H. Teusner, F. H. Walsh, and the Minister of Lands; the committee to have power to send for persons, papers and records and to report on October 28.

PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 2. Page 569.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I desire to make a few remarks on the various clauses of the Bill and to refer to a few important points which, I trust, the Government will consider at an early date. In recent years the Government has introduced several Bills to amend the Public Service Act; and I suppose we are to assume that it

regards these frequent amendments as remedial. Whenever we, on this side of the House, introduce a Bill, for whatever purpose, one of the first objections the Premier raises to it is that it is not remedial—an Opposition Bill is never remedial, apparently. I do not know where he gets this cry from or what meaning he attaches to the word "remedial"; but I am inclined to think that this Bill, insofar as it deals with the definition of the term "public servant," is remedial only in the sense that it seeks to remedy a drafting or technical defect which had apparently gone unnoticed by the Government's experts for a long time but which, perhaps, should never have been permitted to exist at all.

Except for the fact that the Bill confers on certain unfortunate persons (who have been or may be retrenched from the Government service through no fault of their own and are subsequently re-employed within two years) the right to have their previous service counted for purposes of long service leave, the Bill is remedial in a very restricted sense, namely, that it ostensibly alters the Act to say what it was always thought it did say. It is as if the Government came to Parliament with the excuse—"We are sorry, but we thought we made this amendment last year—at any rate, we intended to do so." We have had several examples of this sort of legislation, amending other Acts as well, during the last few years; and it may well be, judging from the way in which the present Bill is drafted, that we will have to amend the Public Service Act again later on to make it express what the Government really has in mind now.

But there are more important matters involved in some of the provisions of this Bill that ought to be brought emphatically before the notice of honourable members. Among other things, the Bill provides that members of the Public Service Board shall retire when they reach the age of 65 years. The Premier's reason for this—apart from the desire to clear up the doubt whether members of that board are, in fact, obliged to retire at 65—was that the board fits in so well with the rest of the Public Service and that it is desirable that its members should be public servants in the generally accepted sense of the term. But why does the Premier find it desirable that the Public Service Board, especially when acting as an appeal board, should fit in so well with the Public Service? Would it not be better for all concerned if the board were as separate and distinct as possible from the service? If recent happenings in the matter of appointments, appeals and classifications are any criterion it would appear that there is too intimate a relationship between the board, the Commissioner, the Department of Industry—and the Premier.

It must be realized that the provision for the retirement of members of the Public Service Board at the age of 65 is really a confirmation of the Premier's somewhat questionable policy of appointing public servants, that is, persons who occupy other presumably full-time positions in the service, to serve on boards in a spare-time capacity. But that policy is especially objectionable in the case of the Public Service Board. Not only are the actual affairs of that board in a very bad state of confusion because appointments to it are on a spare-time basis, but the very fact that members are public servants as such inevitably leads to acquiescence, which is the negation of the principle it ought to express. For this reason I feel convinced that the Public Service Board has very little value even in such matters as determining classifications. It has obviously become bogged down with instructions from the Government and as its members are spare-time members I fail to see how they can devote sufficient time and attention to the duties they are supposed to perform in that capacity. As an appeal tribunal, the board seems to be more of an evil than a blessing. It has apparently degenerated into a body whose function, in certain cases at any rate, is to act as a back-stop for the Commissioner. In those cases it would also seem that the Commissioner carries out the bidding of the Premier, having been previously fortified with a guarantee that if the matter does come up to the appeal board an alibi will be available. I will deal with this aspect of the board's constitution more fully later.

According to section 52 of the Public Service Act the Commissioner is supposed to select the most suitable applicant for any vacancy and recommend that applicant for appointment. The section, perhaps naively, takes for granted that the choice will be the Commissioner's own decision and not someone else's, and that no undue influence will be brought to bear to determine the decision; in short, that the selection will be a *bona fide* one, uninfluenced by the personal motives, honest or dishonest, of any person who might be in a position to influence it. But we know that the Commissioner normally relies on the recommendation of some other person, such as, for

example, the head of the department in which the vacancy in question has occurred. Under this system, we may say, without imputing any dishonesty, that the qualifications of applicants who do not happen to be employed in the department concerned may not receive adequate consideration for the simple reason that those applicants are not generally known to the particular head of the department; and, of course, if they happen to be junior to the recommended applicant they do not even have the redress that is supposed to be afforded by an appeal. That is what can and may happen even when the selection, so determined, is perfectly honest; but, of course, there is considerable scope, which I fear has increased rather than decreased in recent years, for the exercise of fellow-feeling, favouritism, etc., depending on the degree of familiarity or goodwill existing between the particular people involved in any given set of circumstances.

I believe that the appeal system originated in a desire to protect the interests of senior officers in any one department against the possibility of favouritism that might be exercised by the head of that department in conniving at the promotion of a junior officer of the same department. In other words, if the junior officer in a department received the recommendation over the head of a senior officer the head of the department would have to justify it. But the position is not nearly as simple as that today. Many of the appeals which the board now hears are lodged by officers employed in other departments than the department in which the vacancy has occurred, with the result that the influence of the head of the department may for that reason be the greater because it is not now subject to the same kind of scrutiny as was originally contemplated for cases of promotion within a department.

Of course, it is not to be supposed that because there is an appeal board every appeal, or even a high percentage of appeals, should succeed; and this must be the case even where the board is entirely unprejudiced and free from the same form of duress or suggestion to which the Commissioner may be subjected in certain instances. But I think it would be found that very few members of the Public Service have any faith whatever in the transactions of the appeal board. It is a common thing to hear someone say, "An appeal? Don't make me laugh!" The same sort of criticism, incidentally, is levelled at the board when it sits as a board for classification purposes. Some public servants, especially those in the Department of Industry, to name one section of the service, seem to be able to secure higher classification without much effort, while others find it impossible to convince the board of the justice of their case, in spite of their apparently unassailable arguments based on comparison with other public servants. Over the last two or three years the salaries of certain highly paid public servants have been very considerably increased, in spite of the margins ban, but the general run of public servants has been unjustly neglected. Moreover, we find that certain positions are highly classified not because of their importance or because of the qualifications required for the performance of the duties involved, but for some other reason which the board apparently decides cannot be applied to certain other, although comparable, positions. Then, in addition, we find that an officer whose duties would not on general grounds warrant a higher salary than the salary of another officer has the right of appeal against that other officer merely because he is receiving a higher salary.

As far as appointments and appeals are concerned, it may be remembered that some years ago, when the subject was before the House, I suggested that we should separate the functions of the appeal board in an effort to eliminate the very influences which were then and which I feel are still vitiating the operations of that board. I wanted to make the appeal board as independent as it was possible to make it, but the Premier opposed my suggestions. It may also be remembered that when it was a question of appointing the so-called independent chairman the Premier insisted on appointing a certain high-ranking public servant, despite the protests of the Public Service Association. I understand that the Premier made an issue of this, declaring that the association would have to accept his nominee or not have the board at all.

I believe that the existing dissatisfaction among public servants regarding the appeal board arises partly from a misconception of the functions of that board. I do not for a moment think that any board set up by the Government should have the right to dictate to the Government, but if it is an accepted principle that the appeal board may reverse the Commissioner's recommendation that board should not be forced by circumstances into being afraid or disinclined to do so in any particular instance. The whole idea of drawing up rules for appointments and appeals is that the Public Service shall be the better for it. The rules should conduce to the greatest

efficiency of the service and at the same time as far as possible guarantee to every public servant the satisfaction that he is at least being fairly treated in the matter of classification and promotion. But the Premier's apparent disregard of these rules in manipulating appointments both to the Public Service proper and to boards—not to mention his policy on classification—has contributed to the negation of efficiency and to a growing dissatisfaction among public servants generally.

The misconception to which I referred is the idea that, simply because the appeal board may upset the Commissioner's recommendation, there is some sort of obligation on the part of the Government to appoint the person nominated by the board instead of the person nominated by the Commissioner. This is a misconception, for the appointment of any person to an office in the Public Service is entirely the Government's responsibility. It is no mere convention that every public servant is appointed by the Governor in Council. Unfortunately, however, the appeal board appears to consider that it is a waste of time to reverse the Commissioner's decision in certain cases, that is, cases in which the powers-that-be have already guaranteed the appointment to a particular person, who for that reason has secured the Commissioner's recommendation. But if the board were really carrying out its true function, it would not allow this fact to deter it from reversing the Commisioner's decision or even allow it to influence its own decision. It should force the Premier to come out in the open and take the responsibility of appointing persons contrary to the board's recommendations, if need be.

I feel convinced that the method of appointing the board itself has led to the present unsatisfactory state of affairs; and it is no necessary reflection on the members of this board that we have this position. It is perhaps quite natural that any public servant appointed to such a board should, when the particular occasion arises, be constrained to acquiesce in the deliberate and no doubt emphatically expressed wish of the Premier, even when that wish is only expressed indirectly. While the board consists of public servants—that is, persons already holding other full-time offices in the Public Service—it is inevitable that all its members, whether they are supposed to represent the Government or its employees, will tend to become representatives of the Government. It is also perhaps inevitable that any public servant who is in receipt of some additional emolument over and above his normal salary will, where necessary, act accordingly. It may be possible to avoid this situation entirely as far as the ordinary functions of the Public Service Board are concerned because it is a more or less accepted principle that employer and employee should be represented, although it should be noted that in industry generally the employees' representative is rarely the employee of a sole employer, as he is in the case of the Public Service Board. But when it comes to a question of an appeal against a proposed appointment, it is really a matter of one (or more) officers against another officer, and thus the idea of employer-employee representation is not really appropriate. A good case could therefore be made out for the constitution of the appeal board on an entirely different basis. If, however, it is impossible to have an appeal board that does not incorporate the principle of employer-employee representation, the least we can do is to ensure that the chairman is really impartial and not subject to the same employee complex as the other members. For that reason it might be an improvement to appoint as chairman a person who, while having a knowledge of the service or some other suitable qualifications, is no longer a public servant in the ordinary sense of the term or even someone who has not been a public servant at all in that sense. Such a chairman would at least feel that he was not obliged to take directions from the Government and would therefore be the means also of encouraging the employees' representative on the board to stand out for a greater degree of justice in appointments than he may be disposed to do now.

This matter must have caused the Commissioner some anxiety, for on pages 5, 31 and 32 of his report on the efficiency of the Public Service recently submitted to Parliament he deals at some length with the subject, as if he felt it necessary to answer complaints he had heard about. On page 31 he states, "In June, 1949, provision was made for an independent chairman when the board was sitting in this appellate jurisdiction." I have already referred to the circumstances under which the "independent chairman" was actually appointed and to the objection raised by the Public Service Association to his appointment. The Commissioner goes on:—

The following figures show the cases dealt with by the board in the four years since the independent chairman was appointed and, for comparison, the results for the preceding four

years. As will be seen, there has been no significant change in the results achieved. Although I consider that the procedure adopted by the new board has some weaknesses, I certainly think there can be no legitimate cause for complaint by appellants that their claims do not receive full consideration.

According to the table appearing on page 32 of the Commissioner's report, during the last four years of the old board 12 appeals were upheld, representing 5.71 per cent of the appeals lodged, while during the first four years of the new board 16 appeals were upheld, representing 5.94 per cent of the appeals lodged. There is not much difference between these two percentages, and the Commissioner has apparently submitted them in support of the view that, after all, there was not much wrong with the old board. But one could just as logically argue that they indicate that the new board is as bad as the old. These are the only percentages quoted by the Commissioner, but percentages based on certain other figures appearing in the table could be much more significant. For example, under the old board only 39.7 per cent of the Commissioner's recommendations were in favour of applicants senior in salary and service to all other applicants, whereas under the new board the corresponding percentage was 52.1. This represents a fairly considerable increase, and it could mean that by reducing the number of prospective appellants the Commissioner has been endeavouring to offset the advantage they are supposed to enjoy owing to the procedure adopted by the new board. It should be observed, however, that on page 5 of his report the Commissioner expresses himself as "a little concerned as to the possibility of the present procedure of the board favouring the senior officer and the efficiency of the service as a whole suffering as a result."

In the second place, according to the table mentioned, under the old board 210 appeals were lodged in respect of 546 recommendations, the firstmentioned figure representing 40.3 per cent of the latter. Under the new board this percentage is 36.7. To the extent that these percentages have any significance at all, we could quite fairly conclude that fewer applicants are now exercising their right of appeal —for reasons that might well be in accordance with what I have already said. However, without further analysis of the actual appeals heard and decided one way or the other, and especially without knowledge of the nature of the appointment in dispute in each instance and of the personalities involved, it would be impossible to draw reliable conclusions from any of the figures submitted by the Commissioner. On page 5 of his report the Commissioner states that the appeal board's procedure tends to favour the appellant because the head of the department is disinclined, or unable, to say what he really thinks on behalf of the Commissioner's nominee, that is, his own nominee, or against the appellant. The particular procedure referred to is the board's practice of hearing appeals in the presence of the nominee and the appellants, and it would seem that the Commissioner finds an excuse in this for the reticence of the head of the department. He says:—

> Impressions built up over years of association with officers are impressions only and often cannot be proved by factual evidence . . . and in view of the many subtle, indefinable factors that go to make up efficiency, the board is not obliged by the legislation, and should not in practice, confine itself to things which can be established by the normal rules of evidence.

But I think that the Commissioner has admitted that some of these "subtle and indefinable factors" may be not so much those which go to make up efficiency as those which go to make up impressions which cannot be justified when it comes to a thorough and impartial investigation. If the head of the department is disinclined to say why he prefers the nominee to the appellant in their presence, it may well be that he has no good and valid reason for having expressed that preference in the first place. Without resorting to dishonest practices, a head of a department may have made his selection on the basis of sheer prejudice, to which he may be a victim without knowing it, or an inordinate valuation of actual experience in the department, or the inability to marshal in his mind the various items that really do go to make up efficiency, or the natural tendency to think that he could not possibly be wrong in his decision once he has made it.

On page 31 of his report the Commissioner states that in accordance with the provisions of section 52 of the Public Service Act he sends applications for appointment to the head of the department concerned after they have been scheduled—whatever that might mean—and that the head of the department "submits a report to the Commissioner on the applicants as known to him." However, in view of what I have said, I think honourable members will agree that, except where the head of the department is obliged to apply some test or otherwise exert himself to ascertain the qualifications of all applicants, those who are not known to him are liable to receive very little consideration. It will be

noted, also, that the Commissioner says nothing about reports that might emanate from others on applicants not very well known to the head of the department. The Commissioner then goes on to say that on receipt of the head's report—and after interviews, where considered necessary—he selects the applicant he considers to be most suitable for appointment, but it would be interesting to know under what circumstances the Commissioner would consider interviews necessary. In view of the unsatisfactory situations that can result from the procedure as described by the Commissioner, we might consider whether the Commissioner should not be relieved of his many duties as chairman of the Public Service Board, secretary to the Minister of Industry, and whatever else he is supposed to do, so that he could devote his full time and attention to this important question of determining recommendations for promotion. It will be noted that during the last four years of the old board's existence there were 905 recommendations, whereas during the first four years of the new board there were 1,536 recommendations, and there must come a time, if it has not already come, when this function in the public service will warrant a special appointment, quite apart from the desirability of keeping it separate from the many others with which it is now associated. Until that is done, however, the Commissioner ought to be especially mindful of the possibility that the "many subtle, indefinable factors that go to make up efficiency" can be "subtle, indefinable factors" unfairly influencing the head of a department to recommend one officer instead of another. The Commissioner should therefore never slavishly accept the recommendation of the head of the department but rather exhaust every avenue of inquiry to ascertain whether that recommendation is not merely based on such things as prejudice or a desire to give a friend a helping hand.

One of the greatest objections to the present method of determining recommendations is that the wrong applicant may be recommended in spite of the Commissioner's claims that we have "come a long way since the days of nepotism," and that " political pressure as affecting appointments and promotion is now practically non-existent" and that senior public servants "can generally be relied upon to act quite impartially and with the interests of the service and community as their sole aim." But where the wrong applicant does get the recommendation, it is generally a hopeless struggle for the appellant to upset it. I think it would be difficult to adopt any procedure which would really favour the appellant. Even an appeal board of the most impartial kind would normally insist that an appellant, to be successful should have a clear superiority over the nominee, especially if it believed that the Commissioner had thoroughly and effectively investigated the qualifications of all applicants before making his recommendation. Actually, the new procedure referred to only makes the process of an appeal less unfavourable to the appellant than it used to be. In any case, whatever advantage an appellant may derive from the procedure adopted by the appeal board may be very effectively offset by other factors. That it is offset seems to be borne out by the very small percentage of appeals upheld. For example, if one appellant has not had actual experience in the department concerned, the chairman can confine his questions to details of that department, frame his questions so that the answers can only be "yes" or "no" and stress the importance of possessing some particular knowledge which, though generally of a petty nature, can only be acquired by actual experience. On the other hand, if the appellant has had such experience and stakes his claim on the fact, the chairman can suggest that the officer to be appointed—having in mind the recommended applicant, who may not have had the relevant experience—could pick up the necessary knowledge as he went along and, in the meantime, find out what he does not know from those who do know. In addition, the chairman can also ask the recommended applicant such questions, and ask them in such a way that appropriate answers can be given and amplified. There are numerous ways in which the appeal board may, if it is so inclined, defend the Commissioner's nominee against appellants.

I want now to deal with the sad history of the recent appointments to secretarial positions in the Public Service. Towards the end of last year two new Ministers were appointed in accordance with an amendment of the Constitution Act. As a result of these appointments, two existing portfolios were divided and it became necessary to appoint two secretaries, although one of these positions was filled temporarily. Applications were accordingly called for two secretarial positions on December 17 and, no doubt as an indication of the urgency of the situation, closed on December 24. One might therefore have expected that appointments would be made early in the new year. But before anything was done in that direction, it was decided to call for applications for the position of Under Secretary, although the person occupying that

position was not due to retire for some months. After a while we were informed per medium of the press that the Premier's secretary would be promoted to that position, although he could not take up his duties until its occupant had retired. Applications were then called for that officer's position. In the meantime the salaries of the secretaries to the Minister of Agriculture and the Attorney-General were raised. The two new secretarial positions were then filled. Later, the secretary to the Minister of Agriculture was appointed secretary to the Premier and later still applications were called for the position of secretary to the Minister of Agriculture. The person appointed to that position took up his duties at the end of September. Thus we may say that the business of making these appointments was a long drawn out affair and we can only guess what took place behind the scenes in the process. I am at a loss to understand why all this manoeuvring should have been necessary and how the efficiency of the service, about which the Commissioner is so concerned, was advanced by the shuffling that had to be done in order to achieve the final result. As far as I have been able to ascertain, in spite of the importance of these positions, it was not considered necessary to interview any of the applicants and no appeals were successful.

There are a number of other matters arising out of the provisions of this Bill which I think ought to be discussed. One is the practice of appointing the higher ranking public servants to various boards—in the same spare time capacity as in the case of the Public Service Board. In referring to some of the officers concerned, I do not wish to be understood to be reflecting on them personally. In fact the reverse is the case; I have a very high regard and admiration for the competence and efficiency of these officers, but they should not be overloaded with extra work as a result of the spare time appointments they fill.

Mr. Hutchens—They are too good to be killed.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—That is so. In recent years some valuable public officers, men difficult to replace, have gone to an early grave because they had too much to do. The Under Secretary is also chairman of the State Bank Board; the Government Statist is also chairman of the Superannuation Board; the Parliamentary Draftsman is also chairman of the Teachers' Salary Board, a member of the Superannuation Board and chairman of the Police Appeal Board; the Assistant Parliamentary Draftsman is also chairman of the Housing Trust, chairman of the Building Act Advisory Committee and chairman of the Local Government Officers' Classification Board; the Under Treasurer is also chairman of the Electricity Trust and a member of the State Bank Board; and the Economist is also a member of the M.T.T. Board and a member of the Land Settlement Administrative Board. The officers concerned hold responsible positions in the Public Service—and, I assume, are paid accordingly—so that it is difficult to understand how they can carry out their normal duties and yet find time to carry out the additional duties of their spare time jobs. It may well be that some at least of these spare time jobs are really too important to be in that category.

I have said enough, I think, to indicate that there is a good deal wrong with the existing set-up of the Public Service and especially in the matter of making appointments, the classification of the various offices and the classification of the Public Service generally. I feel that the Commissioner himself would not have made such a vigorous defence of the appeal system if he did not suspect that it had at least lost credit among public servants, and I would very much like to see some other system put in its place. The business of appointments and classifications is a most important function and much too important to be entrusted to a spare time board. The question whether members of the Public Service Board should retire at 65 is much less important. We have dealt with a number of matters in this Bill which, no matter how worthy they may be, do not touch the vital problem that has grown up over the years with the increased population and production of this State and the enormous increase in governmental activities in recent years. I suggest that an effort be made to classify public servants and provide for appeals against decisions of the Public Service Commissioner in a better way than the present system, which belongs to the horse and buggy era. I have put forward these suggestions for the consideration of the Government so that when it brings in another Bill to amend the Public Service Act it will be able to deal with these very important and urgent matters. I support the second reading.

Mr. PEARSON secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.23 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, October 13, at 2 p.m.