HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, October 19, 1954.

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

PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Governor's Deputy, by message, recommended to the House the appropriation of such amounts of the general revenue of the State as were required for the purposes mentioned in the Public Service Act Amendment Bill.

QUESTIONS.

NUCLEAR POWER DEVELOPMENT.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I was perturbed on reading last Friday's *Advertiser* to learn that the Premier had failed in his mission to Canberra for the establishment of an experimental atomic reactor in South Australia and the securing of a firm promise from the Commonwealth to assist in the development of nuclear power in this State. We on this side of the House support the Premier entirely in his efforts to use our undoubted sources of this type of power for the benefit of our State, particularly in view of the paucity of other types of power. Can he say firstly, what effect the Commonwealth Government's decision is likely to have on further experimental activities in South Australia towards the development of a station to produce nuclear power for industrial purposes, and secondly, whether our present programme is likely to be affected because of a rather important plant being established in an eastern State and the consequent pull upon the services of technicians and experts now employed in the development of our uranium resources?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Mr. Speaker, I ask leave to make a short statement on this matter so that members may be fully acquainted with the decisions reached and so that I may fully answer the honourable member's question.

The SPEAKER—Under the Standing Orders it must be limited to 15 minutes.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Prime Minister and the Minister for Supply granted me an interview last Thursday afternoon at Parliament House, Canberra. I placed before them the position in connection with the project to develop nuclear power in this State. I pointed out in the strongest terms that possibly the whole future of this State is bound up in the maintenance of an abundant power supply to our secondary industries. I said that as far as I knew no other State had the same problem and had not shown any interest in the matter, and that South Australia could develop and become a solvent and self-supporting State only if she had an abundant supply of power provided from this source. The Prime Minister stated that the Commonwealth decision had been made on the advice of the Atomic Energy Commission and other competent officers and had arisen out of the alleged fact that personnel for the undertaking was available in New South Wales and that that State could do the job better than South Australia because of the larger industrial capacity there. He further said that the Commonwealth's decision could not be altered, as it was based on reports of scientific officers. The Commonwealth realized the interest of South Australia in nuclear power but at this stage could not go farther than that. He said that he was prepared to send Professor Baxter to this State to discuss the matter with me and that if the Commonwealth scientific officers reversed previous recommendations Cabinet would under the circumstances probably reconsider the position. Several questions, of course, arise in connection with the matter. The important point is that South Australia has been adjudged incapable of undertaking the project as efficiently as another State and that personnel here are not adequate to undertake the project. This, of course, is very important to us because if it is accepted by this State as being correct it means that other undertakings in the future will, of necessity, go to New South Wales and that if South Australia cannot do the job now, with the establishment of research organizations in New South Wales and the expenditure of Commonwealth money in that State obviously she will be less able to do the job in the future. Quite apart from the decision that this installation should be established in New South Wales, the reasons for the establishment in New South Wales, in my opinion, are even more important to us and must be refuted in the strongest possible terms. The actual facts are—and I have made investigations into this matter—that on May 8 last advertisements appeared in the *Advertiser* seeking key personnel for this project, and I have no doubt that they appeared in other States as well. Only last week further advertisements appeared in the *Advertiser* seeking a large number of technicians for the project. It seems anomalous that we should be told we have not the key personnel to undertake the

job and then that the Atomic Energy Commission, the authority making this recommendation, should advertise here for personnel for the undertaking.

Perhaps more important is the fact that in the advertisements appearing on May 8 there was a statement that the research officers would be stationed in Sydney and would undertake work there. It appears that in point of fact the choice of locality was actually determined by the Atomic Energy Commission before the nature of the research to be undertaken had been approved by the Commonwealth Government. I assure members that this matter has already been considered by the South Australian Cabinet which adheres strongly to the policy that it is necessary that in this State a nuclear power station should be established as soon as scientific advance makes that practicable. The growth of industry in this State has rendered that imperative. Secondly, we have decided to intensify the training of our personnel and arrangements have already been approved for additional members of the Electricity Trust to go abroad to acquire practical experience in connection with the future development to take place here. Thirdly, Cabinet yesterday approved of the Port Pirie Chemical Treatment Plant being declared outside the provisions of the Public Service Act. That declaration applies also to Radium Hill, and will enable the Government to offer competitive salaries, which will be necessary if we are to retain our present key research and production staff. It will enable us to compete on a salary range with anything offered by outside agencies. Obviously, if we are to maintain even our present production organization we must have the necessary staff to undertake it. Fourthly, one of our research officers who has been abroad has already reported very significant information concerning the establishment of metal production. The logical development of nuclear power in this State or the Commonwealth is, firstly, to assure that the necessary supplies of raw material are available and, secondly, to proceed to produce the uranium oxide—and that is the stage which has been approved up to the present in connection with this matter; but before it can be used for nuclear fission it must be purified and under some processes probably changed into a metal form. This is a fairly substantial development and we are now investigating the establishment of a metal production plant in South Australia, which will be the logical development, and, on present indications, the site for that plant will be at Port Pirie associated with the chemical treatment plant already there. It is interesting to note that since my return from Canberra I have been informed that the Commonwealth Government is at least discussing the question of establishing a metal treatment plant at Newcastle which seems to me to be a continuation of the policy of establishing all of the research installations in New South Wales.

Finally, I can only say that the State Government has in every way attempted to co-operate with the Commonwealth agencies; that we are prepared to co-operate with them in the future; that we believe that the development of nuclear power in Australia depends upon close co-operation between the defence organization on the one side and the authority responsible for providing electricity on the other, and that without some logical co-operation between those authorities the programme for both must be unduly expensive and competitive; and I can only hope that the Commonwealth will reconsider this matter in some way and at least give some expression to the undoubted ambitions and I may say rights of this State in connection with this matter.

Mr RICHES—I greatly appreciate the stand taken by the Premier on this matter. As I feel that no further action should be taken here until a reply has been received from the Federal Government, I ask him whether he will make it possible for this House to debate the State's attitude on this question in the event of either an adverse reply or no reply from the Federal Government?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The question of a debate in the House is one that the House itself always decides for under Standing Orders the business of the House is vested in members. I will consider the matters raised, but at the moment I think it would be wise to let the Atomic Commission and the Commonwealth Government consider the matters already placed before them regarding the establishment of further research stations in Australia, before we take any action. I feel strongly, and the whole policy of the Government has been, that in these questions it is necessary to have co-operation between the Commonwealth Government and the State agencies and that, for the logical development of nuclear power in Australia, the peace time users of electricity should be associated with the defence authority in the establishment of plants. The fact that we have not got agreements at the moment does not rule out for all time the possibility of agreement,

and in due course I hope for agreement with the Commonwealth authority on this important matter. At present a debate could not advance the matter any further.

BRANCH MAIN FROM MANNUM-ADELAIDE PIPELINE.

Mr. PEARSON—In this morning's *Advertiser* the Premier is reported to have said that a new branch water main from the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline to the Onkaparinga river might be laid by the new year so that water might flow down the Onkaparinga and improve the pressures in the southern suburbs of Adelaide. The plan is estimated to cost £150,000 and Cabinet has decided that the Public Works Committee should consider the project as urgent. There are many projects before the committee awaiting decision and most of them have a degree of urgency. The Government has frequently assured me that the Port Lincoln harbour project, for instance, is being treated as urgent. There are matters which, when the Government so decides, can make remarkable progress and I instance the power stations at Port Augusta, the work being done at Port Pirie and the work being done at Salisbury. Considerable criticism arises from the fact that other projects are apparently seriously delayed, if not put on one side, whilst schemes of much later origin are pushed ahead. I have no doubt the Government has good reasons for the decision announced in this morning's paper, but can the Premier say what are the circumstances applying in relation to the project announced this morning which, in the opinion of Cabinet, justify the urgent marshalling of resources to approve this job and push it through, and what other projects, if any, will be affected by the diversion of engineers, draftsmen, surveyors and other skilled executives in short supply and by the diversion of materials, manpower and money to this undertaking?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The reason for the request to the committee to give a report on a part of a reference which has been before it for a long time arose from the fact that the rainfall in the Adelaide catchment area has been abnormally light and insufficient to replenish the reservoirs. Unless water from the Murray were provided the city would be gravely embarrassed and not only would severe rationing of water have to be instituted but industries and every other activity would be greatly affected. This reference to the committee is not a new one, but one that has been before it, I believe, for two years. It was certainly before the committee before the reference that the honourable member mentioned in connection with Port Lincoln. The Government is now merely asking the committee to make an interim report on about 4 miles of the total of the length of the main to enable water to be pumped into the head of the Onkaparinga Valley so that the southern suburbs may have a water supply this summer. The honourable member mentioned some activities whose projects are not subject to the approval of the Public Works Committee. By Act of Parliament the Housing Trust and the Electricity Trust are responsible for the repayment of all the money provided them and they have to pay interest on it, and it is their responsibility to inquire into activities under their jurisdiction, so there has been no preferential treatment so far as the Port Augusta power station or the Housing Trust's activities are concerned, nor is it right for the honourable member to mention Port Augusta without also mentioning Port Lincoln power station, which had precisely the same treatment. That was approved by the Electricity Trust without going before the Public Works Committee. Cabinet decided yesterday that some other activities in the Adelaide water district would have to bear the diversion of funds, materials and labour to construct the main to the head of the Onkaparinga; other water districts and activities would not have to bear any of it.

PRICE OF TEA.

Mr. HUTCHENS—From press and radio reports I have learned that tea distributors will have to pay an increase of about 1s. 9d. a lb. in the price of tea, but reports about the retail price are somewhat conflicting. One report said that eventually the increase would be passed on to consumers, but another that it would not be. Can the Premier say what South Australia's attitude will be?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The State Prices Ministers were only advised on this matter yesterday afternoon, and I immediately wired the Commonwealth Government as follows:—

Understand increase of 1s. 7d. per pound in tea board release price of tea proposed to operate from tomorrow. In view of stabilizing of basic wage consider any further increase will place tea beyond reach of consumers in lower income groups. Strongly urge that Government take immediate action to provide additional subsidy to meet increased tea costs thus enabling State Governments to hold prices at present levels. Pending consideration of this request and detailed clarification of stocks wholesale price of tea in this State will remain unaltered.

I advised other Prices Ministers of the action I proposed taking and I have been informed that similar action was taken by Victoria and New South Wales, but that in Queensland an increase of 1s. 7d. has been passed on to the consumer. I have found that wholesalers in this State have at present 275,050 lb. of tea in stock, but under the arrangement with the Tea Board these wholesalers, although they have paid for the tea, will have to pay an additional 1s. 7d. a pound to the board for it, so from the point of view of the wholesalers they hold no tea at the old price. Therefore, the wholesalers will have to pay an additional £20,941. I have not yet had an opportunity to ascertain what retail stocks are held, nor have I yet received a reply from the Commonwealth Government to the request for an additional subsidy.

Mr. O'Halloran—Retailers could not be subject to the same price declaration as wholesalers?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—They are not, and it is necessary to find out precisely what stocks are held by them before any decision on a price alteration can be made, but in the meantime it is not lawful for anyone to charge a retail price higher than that stipulated already by prices orders.

Mr. LAWN—Why do the wholesalers have to pay an additional 1s. 7d. a pound for tea that has been bought at the world price and distributed throughout the Commonwealth? If the price dropped would the wholesalers get a refund, and what would be the position if consumers had bought and paid for that tea?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Commonwealth Government is subsidizing tea to the extent of 18d. a pound, and I understand that at recent auction sales in Ceylon the price has gone as high as 7s. 7d. a pound. From time to time the Commonwealth Auditor-General examines the books of the Tea Board and the price of tea is adjusted to meet the increased costs that have occurred, preserving the Commonwealth subsidy to the consumer of 18 pence. The increased costs may be borne by the Tea Board, to be adjusted to the 18 pence from time to time, and I am assured by the Victorian Prices Minister that the amount charged to the consumer is the cost, less 18 pence.

Mr. LAWN—In the past before an increase has been granted by the Prices Department it must have been satisfied that stocks of tea held were passed on to the public at the old rate. In reply to the member for Hindmarsh the Treasurer said that the increase of 1s. 7d. must be paid on the 275,000 lb. of tea held. Why must the wholesalers pay the 1s. 7d. on that tea which was imported at the old price, and what would be the position if there were a reduction in the price?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The wholesalers had paid the amount previously authorized by the Commonwealth on the tea they now hold, but they have not necessarily paid the amount it cost. Every shipment of tea imported is imported at a slightly different price, and the wholesalers had been paying an average price. If the price of tea fell, the price to the consumer would fall.

LAND FOR YATALA LABOUR PRISON.

Mr. JENNINGS—I understand that negotiations have been going on for some time for the acquisition of extra land for the Yatala Labour Prison for prison purposes. Can the Premier say what effect this would have on security over prisoners? One prisoner escaped only a week or so ago, and although this is a rare occurrence, this question is more important now that there is a large new housing settlement near the gaol boundaries. Can the Premier say how far negotiations have gone, and what the result is likely to be?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government decided that it was necessary to acquire additional land at Yatala where the area was already gravely congested and accommodation insufficient and where it was obvious, in view of the growing population and demands of the State, that additional land would have to be obtained. It is extremely undesirable to keep large numbers of persons cooped up in small areas without some opportunity to do reasonable work and without reasonable freedom of movement. With the Chief Secretary I visited the area and discussed the question of acquisition with the owners of the land. I think they realized after a full discussion that the Government's request was reasonable and that it was necessary to provide an additional area. Those matters, however, are normally dealt with by the Crown Law authorities and I am not sure what stage they have reached; but I will obtain precise details for the honourable member.

HORMONE SPRAYS.

Mr. WILLIAM JENKINS—A news item broadcast by radio last Friday evening stated that another State was experimenting with hormone spraying of vines affected by frost to find out whether it would bring the affected

buds back into production. Can the Minister of Agriculture say whether his department has the facilities for this work, and if not, will he have investigations made into the results obtained in other States with a view to using those methods here if necessary?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I have not previously heard of this process. A commercial concern in this State recently suggested that, if we sprayed the affected vines with an oil solution, the budding would be retarded and damage resulting from frost thus avoided. This, however, is a different process, and I shall be pleased to have investigations made to see whether it is practicable.

EGG BOARD.

Mr. DUNKS—Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to my question of last week regarding the submission to Parliament of a special report by the Auditor-General on the operations of the Egg Board?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I regret that, when replying to his question, I misinformed the honourable member. On investigating the matter I find that the special report of the Auditor-General must be placed before Parliament. This report is expected before the end of the session, and when received it will, of course, be laid on the table.

HARBORS BOARD CHARGES.

Mr. BROOKMAN—Recently the Harbors Board increased its wharfage charges by adopting the principle of charging by weight or space whichever is the greater, a principle that shipping companies have been using for some time. In some instances the new charges vary tremendously from the old; for instance, wharfage on a caravan going to Kangaroo Island has been increased by 333 per cent and on motor spirit by 77 per cent. Nobody can quarrel with the increase generally, as an increase is justified; but at present nobody seems to know the full story or the reasons behind the great variation in the recent increases. Will the Treasurer get a statement of the details and the reason given for increasing some charges more than others? Can he say whether the Harbors Board will be likely to vary its charges later in view of subsequent events? I find that the caravan traffic is likely to be seriously retarded. Will the Harbors Board alter the charges if it learns that a mistake has been made?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member has only to look at page 69 of the Auditor-General's report to see the reason for the alteration in the charges. It shows that last financial year there was a deficit in this undertaking of £210,766, and it is obvious that the fees must be increased. I will get a schedule of the increases so that the honourable member can see the basis for them. I will have investigated the particular matters he mentioned.

PRICES OF SHOES.

Mr. LAWN—I am led to believe that the prices of shoes are to be increased on the basis of at least 10s. a pair for children's shoes. Can the Premier say whether hides and shoes are still subject to price control, and, if not, will the Government consider the proposed steep increases in shoe prices to see that the matter is properly controlled in the interests of consumers?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—From the end of the war until recently hides, leather and shoes have been controlled. The control of hides was dependent on Commonwealth maintenance of export restrictions. The overseas price for hides was higher than the Australian-controlled price and unless the export restrictions were maintained there would be no hides for sale in Australia. Later the restrictions were lifted and the Hides and Leather Board was abolished, which left the Prices Ministers in the various States no alternative but to decontrol hides. There could not be a fixed Australian price in competition with the overseas price. It follows that if the price of hides was decontrolled only the tanners' margins could be controlled. The tanners in this State gave an assurance that their margins would remain unaltered, and only to that extent has leather been controlled. An increase in the price of leather must be reflected in the price of shoes, which is still controlled, and before there can be any increases there must be an inquiry into the matter.

RENTS OF GOVERNMENT HOUSES.

Mr. WHITE—Recently there has been a rise in the rents charged civil servants living in Government-owned houses in country areas. Some of the rises have been brought under my notice and there appears to be some inconsistency. For instance, I know of a case where the same rent is being charged for an iron house situated in an isolated area as is being charged for a good stone house in close proximity to a shopping area. In some cases the increases have not been as steep as in others, but for no apparent reason. In some instances

the increase has been 400 per cent. The matter is creating some discontent, but the people concerned are prepared to accept a reasonable increase. Can the Premier tell me the basis on which the increases have been calculated and will tenants who feel they have been unjustly treated have the right of appeal?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The reason that certain rises are steeper than others arises from the fact that old regulations, some dating back 30 or 50 years, provide for abnormally low rents. I believe that the rents charged in one department for houses which might have cost the Government as much as £3,000 today were as low as 8s. a week. Obviously such a rent could not be justified under modern conditions. The rents were fixed on the recommendation of the Housing Trust, which made an investigation and fixed the appropriate rent for each house. If there should be any anomalies in connection with the rents and applications are made to the trust in regard to them, instructions have already been given that the applications are to be considered and if necessary rent adjustments made.

Mr. CORCORAN—My question relates to the rents charged for houses occupied by Government employees in the Woods and Forests Department at Nangwarry and Mount Burr. I have received a letter which states:—

At a general meeting of tenants of Woods and Forests Department's houses held in the Mount Burr hall on October 14, 1954, it was decided to request a reasonable and prompt review of the recent raise in rentals of Government houses occupied by departmental tenants. Failing this a 24-hour stoppage of work be held to emphasize the importance attached to the feeling engendered by these increases in cost of living whilst automatic cost of living adjustments are frozen. Speakers expressed bitter disapproval of the harsh increases imposed. In February, 1952, rents were increased by up to 100 per cent at Woods and Forests Department's South-Eastern units, a point evidently not taken into consideration in fixing the present increase. An example of the anomalies existing is a 17-years old house with condemned garage and wash house. The rent of this house prior to February, 1952, was 12s. 6d. per week and this was admitted to be a low rental. In February, 1952, this rent was increased to 20s., which is considered reasonable and fair for this type of dwelling, and allowing for facilities and amenities provided in this Crown land settlement. The rent of this house after October, 1954, is 34s. 6d. per week, which represents an increase of 176 per cent on the original rental. This is typical of the increases imposed. It was pointed out that under the Landlord and Tenant Act private landlords could not increase their rent charges by more than 22½ per cent, yet the same Government which passed this Act has seen fit to impose increases of up to 250 per cent.

Further examples of the erratic procedure adopted in assessing rentals can be found in three houses constructed within six months of each other, side by side, and of identical design and appointments. The rentals of these three houses are 33s. 6d., 32s., and 32s. 6d. per week. One of the first four houses built in Mount Burr settlement 20 years ago has been imposed with a rental of 35s. per week. A new house built only three months ago, with the same number of rooms, but of better design, complete with sink and bath-heater, has a rental of 33s. per week. It is pointed out that indirect payment of rates is included in the rents but a further charge for sanitation clearance, 1s. 6d. per week, and water, 4½d. per week for a five hours' supply daily, is imposed. In Nangwarry settlement, where similar conditions exist, there are approximately 220 houses and at Mount Burr settlement approximately 200 houses.

In the *Advertiser*, October 14, the Auditor-General reported that the Housing Trust has shown a record surplus of over £269,000. This amount included £70,000 from rentals. Is it the policy of the Housing Trust, who fixed new rent increases at Mount Burr, to have another better surplus next year? To the minds of tenants this does not justify the increase in rentals. A committee was formed and instructed to interview Mr. J. Corcoran and express dissatisfaction in the strongest terms.

Yesterday, at the request of persons in the Area, I visited Mount Burr and met this committee. From conversation I ascertained that, although in the letter they referred to a stop-work meeting, they would be reluctant to adopt such a course of action. I asked them not to do anything until the Premier had been given an opportunity of considering the matter. To maintain peace and harmony in that settlement I appeal to the Government to treat this matter as serious. Will the Premier undertake to ensure a review of the rental charges and will he comply with the request of the people at Mount Burr to appoint some impartial authority to make that review? Although competent, the Housing Trust might be less impartial than some independent body. I urge the Premier to confer with the Minister of Forests, because if the latter journeyed to the South-East and interviewed these people it would be in the best interests of the Government and the people concerned.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The first point I would like to clear up is that these houses are not owned by the Housing Trust. The trust receives no direct benefit from the rent collected and although the honourable member suggested the appointment of an impartial authority I point out that the

trust is the impartial authority established by Parliament to fix the rents of all houses and I believe it has undertaken that work both impartially and without fear or favour. The suggestion that the trust only grants a 22½ per cent increase in rents is not correct. The position is that the trust has to grant a 22½ per cent increase over certain levels which existed at a stipulated time, plus any increase it considers necessary in respect of other matters. The real facts of the case are that only about one-fifth of the total number of Government servants in that area are occupying Government houses and receiving the benefit of low rents, and wages and conditions in awards applying to the Government servants are not generally based on the assumption that there is any rent concession. At present the Government is losing large sums annually in providing houses for its employees. The last survey revealed that the Government did not receive 2 per cent on the capital invested in housing its employees, and if rents are kept unduly low the Government will be precluded from establishing more houses for its employees and ultimately the employees will be worse off. If any person can prove an anomaly in relation to any rental and submits a request for an examination it will be made and, if necessary, an adjustment will be made.

Mr. CORCORAN—Will the Premier arrange for the Minister of Forests to visit Mount Burr to discuss not only the rentals problem, but also other problems that should be cleared up in the interests of the Government and the employees?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I am sure that the Minister will investigate any matters the honourable member thinks should be investigated, but it may not be possible for him to visit the South-East in the near future because of his heavy commitments in Parliament.

BUDD-TYPE RAIL CARS.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I understand that there has been a breakdown in the gearbox of the new Budd-type rail car being used on the Morgan line. I believe it is well known to the Premier that three companies are concerned with the manufacture of the mechanism for this type of car. Can he ascertain whether this vehicle is again in the Islington Railway Workshops receiving repairs to the gearbox? Can he say whether it is necessary for a qualified person to be present on every journey made by these new vehicles and, if so, will he consider calling for tenders to ascertain whether there is any competent firm able to supply a firm contract price with a guarantee that an efficient diesel rail car service can be inaugurated?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Considerable difficulty has been experienced with the gearboxes of the cars mentioned. These vehicles were contracted for four years ago and, on the recommendation of the Chief Mechanical Engineer who went abroad to study the position, the Government accepted a tender from a French contractor who, unfortunately, has not fulfilled the specifications of the tender.

Mr. Frank Walsh—Didn't he go insolvent?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I believe he not only went insolvent but farmed out some of the work to persons not competent to undertake it. In any case, I can only say that the contract has been most unsatisfactory in every way.

Mr. Quirke—Have the contractors been paid?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Progress payments have been made on some of the equipment, but, of course, the total amount due has not been paid. The Railways Department is investigating this matter, and I believe that if we could legally do it we would be much better off if we called the whole thing off and accepted another tender for modern transmission gears which have been evolved since the war and which are extremely good and reliable.

AMENDMENT OF ROAD TRAFFIC ACT.

Mr. STOTT—If a person is involved in a motor accident and a claim is made before the court he may get another person, or the Royal Automobile Association, to appear for him. If the court suspends his driving licence and he happens to be driving on that day he is guilty of an offence, and the court would have no option but to gaol him. Obviously, he would not know that the court had suspended his licence, so I ask the Premier whether he will bring down legislation to clear up that anomaly?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member asks Parliament to amend the Act to allow a person to drive notwithstanding that his licence has been suspended, but every person is obliged to know the law and to obey it. If we amended the Act as requested it would be easy for anyone to say, on any charge, "I did not know this Act was in operation and therefore I did not obey it." Therefore, I cannot undertake to move to amend the Road Traffic Act as suggested because it would nullify legislation passed by this Parliament.

PAYMENT FOR ANNUAL LEAVE.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Premier a reply to the question I asked recently about Government employees being paid for the full period of their annual leave before going on leave?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I think this is one of the matters on which the Public Service Commissioner will see me later this afternoon. I may be able to answer the question later, but if the honourable member asks it again tomorrow I will have a reply.

PRICE OF URANIUM.

Mr. DUNKS—When an agreement was made with the United States of America and the United Kingdom some time ago in regard to the price of uranium I was asked by some of my friends about the economics of the proposition. I told them I did not know anything about it because it was a secret matter and Parliament had made no decision on it. We did not know anything about the cost of production or the selling price, and the Auditor-General's report refers to only one or two matters in this regard. Under "Department of Mines" the Auditor-General states that the functions of this department include "(*e*) investigating, mining, and treating deposits of uranium." Then under "Net payments" he lists "uranium deposits" at £70,504, and "rewards for discovery of uranium bearing materials £5,400," and "geological and geophysical surveys £98,287." In another part of the report I noticed a payment in regard to the Myponga field, and I take it that that was a reward too, but I could find nothing about trading in uranium. Radium Hill has been built up into a big concern, and I ask the Treasurer whether any trading account has been taken out showing the cost of the concentrate after it has gone through all the various processes and showing its selling value to other countries so that we may judge whether it is a paying undertaking?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Certain provisions in the agreement entered into by the Commonwealth and the South Australian Government have to be regarded as confidential. The Combined Agency is the buying authority of the free world, and it has jealously guarded the price paid for uranium because that would give a clear indication of the supply position; therefore, I am not in a position to make any statement on the terms of the agreement. From time to time investigations have been made into the cost factor to see whether this will be a highly profitable undertaking, moderately profitable, or even unprofitable. Some factors cannot be ascertained until full production is achieved, but I believe that by and large costs have risen somewhat more than was anticipated when the agreement was made.

NORTHERN AREAS AND WHYALLA WATER SUPPLY ACT.

Mr. RICHES—In 1940 Parliament passed the Northern Areas and Whyalla Water Supply Act which authorized the provision of a water supply to Whyalla and ratified an agreement between the South Australian Government and the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd. It also ratified an agreement between the South Australian and Federal Governments with reference to the charges to be made for the supply of water. I understand that an alteration is proposed for the charges laid down under that Act. Can the Premier say what the alterations are and whether it will be necessary for Parliament to ratify them?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The agreement with the Commonwealth was very favourable to this State when it was made but it became very unfavourable later owing to the additional use of water by the Commonwealth, for it established Woomera, which took much additional water. There was a provision that precluded the Grants Commission from assisting the State in regard to any losses made on the activity. This question was argued before the commission on a number of occasions and the chairman said that it would be fair to this State if a new agreement was made with the Commonwealth. With the support of his statement it has been possible to negotiate a new agreement which will be subject to ratification by this Parliament in the near future. The Bill is not yet on the Notice Paper, but it will be in a few days.

Mr. Riches—What will be the position at Whyalla?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The new agreement will not directly concern the amount that the State may charge for water, but it deals with the amount that the Commonwealth shall pay to the State. The agreement with the Broken Hill Pty. Limited is not involved in this new agreement with the Commonwealth.

MURRAY BRIDGE COURTHOUSE.

Mr. WHITE—On June 28 I asked the Treasurer when the building of the new courthouse at Murray Bridge would be commenced, and he replied that money was being provided for this project on the Loan Estimates and that

it was hoped that tenders would be called before Christmas. Can the Treasurer say what progress has been made in this matter?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will find out for the honourable member.

BRUISING OF LAMB CARCASSES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to my recent question regarding the reported increase in rejections caused by bruising of lambs sent to the Metropolitan Abattoirs?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The general manager of the Government Produce Department reports:—

The problem of bruising of stock has had the attention of various authorities over a long period including the Meat Board of South Australia, the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board and the Australian Meat Board. Considerable press publicity has been given over the years to ways and means of avoiding the bruising of stock and statements on losses caused through bruising have been stressed by Ministers of Agriculture. Hundreds of coloured posters have been issued at considerable expense to railway stations, country branches of stock agents, Harbors Board, meat works and country carriers. These considerable efforts to minimize the incidence of bruising have been without result, for the figures show that the percentage has increased from 0.91 in 1948-49 to 2.38 this year. It is the concensus of opinion that bruising may occur at any point between the farm and the meat works, either in drafting and loading the sheep on the farm or in the transport vehicle or in the unloading of sheep at the works. Thus the remedy lies in the hands of the producer, his employees, carriers, drivers, and any other person engaged in the loading and unloading of lambs. An interesting survey made recently by the Metropolitan Wholesale Meat Company Limited showed that:—

(*a*) Rejections for all causes were lighter by rail transport (6.8 per cent) than by road (8 per cent).

(*b*) Rejections for bruising were much lighter by owner-carrier (0.2 per cent) than by licensed carrier (3.5 per cent), and also much lighter by direct rail from property (1.6 per cent) than from country sales (3.2 per cent).

This analysis strongly suggests that more careful handling is the answer to the problem.

INTERPRETATION OF LEGAL DOCUMENTS.

Mr. TRAVERS—For many years we have had in South Australia an Acts Interpretation Act, a convenient piece of legislation that assists greatly in interpreting Acts. There is, however, no such Act relating to various legal documents, and it seems that in the administration of justice much time would be saved in the drawing up of legal instruments if there were a general Act relating to them similar to the Acts Interpretation Act. There are such Acts in some other States, and in this State steps were taken in relation to a limited class of document, namely, those drawn up under the Real Property Act. Will the Premier have the matter investigated to see whether legislation relating to legal instruments could be introduced?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will have the matter examined.

SWAN REACH PUNT.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Minister of Lands a reply to my recent question regarding the provision of an additional punt at Swan Reach?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The Highways Commissioner reports:—

Apart from the ferry which is to be installed at Blanchetown in the near future, the department has one other ferry under construction at the departmental workshops, and contracts have been let for the construction of two others, but work on these has not yet commenced. When these new ferries are constructed it is the intention of the department to replace small ferries at a number of crossings, including Swan Reach, but it has not yet been decided which of these ferries will be the first to be replaced.

LOXTON COURTHOUSE.

Mr. STOTT—I have been approached by the Loxton District Council regarding the congestion at the Loxton Police Court. The increase in the size of the town is creating many difficulties in the hearing of cases, and the court accommodation is inadequate. Will the Premier take up this matter with the Chief Secretary to see whether additional accommodation can be provided?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will refer the honourable member's question to the Chief Secretary.

EGG PULP.

Mr. LAWN (on notice)—

1. Has the United Kingdom Government fixed an aggregate quota of egg pulp imports for 1954-55?

2. If so, how has this quota affected Australia?

3. What is South Australia's share of this quota?

4. Has the United Kingdom Government agreed with Communist China for the import of Chinese egg pulp for 1954-55?

5. If so, what is the quota?

6. Have the imports from Communist China had a considerable influence on the price of egg pulp?

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

1. A quota of 20,000 tons of egg pulp to be imported for the season 1954-1955 has been fixed by the United Kingdom Government.

2. Australia's share of the quota is 10,000 tons. For the season 1953-1954 Australia exported to the United Kingdom 17,000 tons of egg pulp.

3. 1,670 tons. For the year 1953-1954 South Australia exported to the United Kingdom 3,029 tons.

4. Yes.

5. 5,000 tons.

6. It is considered that the present price, at which pulp from China has been purchased, has had an influence on the price of Australian egg pulp.

DISMISSAL OF RAILWAY EMPLOYEES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (on notice)—

1. Has the Railways Commissioner dismissed any railways employees during the period 1950-51 to 1953-54, without taking the action prescribed in subsection (1) of section 44a of the South Australian Railways Commissioner's Act?

2. If so, will the Government consider amending that subsection, if necessary, to render such action obligatory on the part of the Railways Commissioner?

The Hon. C. S. Hincks for the Hon. M. McINTOSH—The Railways Commissioner reports:—

1. A number of the staff have been dismissed during the past three years for a variety of offences, including larceny of railway property, being under the influence of liquor while on duty, unsatisfactory conduct while on duty, civil offences, and refusal of duty.

2. Subsection (1) of section 44a of the South Australian Railways Commissioner's Act provides, *inter alia*, that the Commissioner may, by notice in writing, call upon the officer or employee to show cause before the Appeal Board why he should not be dismissed on the ground that he is guilty of the matter charged against him. If the Act were amended to make this action obligatory on the part of the Railways Commissioner, it would mean that no servant of the Commissioner could be dismissed, notwithstanding the seriousness of his offence, until that servant had at least the opportunity of giving notice in writing to the secretary of the board, of his intention to show cause, for which he is allowed fourteen days after receipt of the notice from the Commissioner. I believe it would be to the detriment of departmental discipline to deprive the Commissioner of the power to summarily dismiss an employee from the service where such action is manifestly justified. There is nothing to prevent an employee of the department who has been dismissed appealing to the Commissioner for his case to be reconsidered. I am, therefore, strongly of the opinion that subsection (1) of section 44a of the Act should not be amended.

TAXI LICENCES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (on notice)—

1. How many B class taxi licences issued by the Adelaide City Council were current on (*a*) 30th June, 1953; (*b*) 30th June, 1954; (*c*) 31st August, 1954?

2. How many C class taxi licences issued by the Adelaide City Council were current on (*a*) 30th June, 1953; (*b*) 30th June, 1954; (*c*) 31st August, 1954?

3. What methods is the Adelaide City Council using to supervise and control the operations of holders of C class taxi licences to protect the interests of holders of B class licences?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The City Council advises:—

1. Number issued on June 30, 1953, 250; number issued on June 30, 1954, 250; number issued on August 31, 1954, 250.

2. Number issued on June 30, 1953, 407; number issued on June 30, 1954, 378; number issued on August 31, 399.

3. The method used to supervise and control the operation of schedule C licensees is that all Corporation inspectors have instructions to report any breaches of By-law XXV committed by any licensees, particularly those licensed under schedule C who may be endeavouring to pick up passengers otherwise than by engagement. At least four inspectors are on duty during three nights per week. There are many instances where schedule C drivers appear to be unlawfully at the kerb and are ordered by inspectors to move their vehicles.

GERMAN MIGRANTS.

Mr. Hutchens for Mr. FRED WALSH (on notice)—

1. How many German migrants under Government contract have arrived in South Australia from July 1, 1952 to June 30, 1954?

2. Is the Government still recruiting migrants in Germany for employment in the Government service?

3. What is the intention of the Government in this regard in the future?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Railways Commissioner reports:—

1. So far as this department is concerned 1,557 German migrants arrived in South Australia under contract to the department between July 1, 1952, and June 30, 1954.

2. So far as this department is concerned, no.

3. No request has been made to the Government by the Railways Commissioner to recruit further migrants in Germany.

TRAMWAYS TRUST.

Mr. LAWN (on notice)—

1. What is the total amount of principal the Municipal Tramways Trust, since its inception, has repaid to the Treasury?

2. What is the total amount of debt still outstanding?

3. What is the total amount of interest paid by the trust to the Treasury since its inception?

4. What is the rate of interest paid by the trust on its debt to the Treasury?

5. What is the total capital cost of the metropolitan tramways and bus systems?

6. What is the present valuation of the assets of the trust?

7. What is the total amount made available by the Government by way of grants to the trust?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The replies are:—

1. £1,709,915.

2. £6,328,518.

3. £5,592,218.

4. Rates varying from £3 2s. per cent to £4 12s. 6d. per cent, and averaging £3 8s. 6d. per cent.

5. £6,482,885 at June 30, 1954.

6. Not available.

7. £1,400,000 to June 30, 1954.

FREE TRANSPORT FOR PENSIONERS.

Mr. LAWN (on notice)—

1. Is it the intention of the Government to consider the question of free railway transport for pensioners?

2. Is it the intention of the Government to approach the Municipal Tramways Trust, with regard to the provision of free tram and bus transport for pensioners?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The financial position of the State does not enable these concessions to be considered.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILIZATION 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 Wheat Industry Stabilization Act, 1948-1953.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

SWINE COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

INDUSTRIAL AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

SUPPLY BILL (No. 3).

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

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

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

Motion carried.

In Committee of Supply.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

That towards defraying the expenses of the establishments and public services of the State for the year ending June 30, 1955, a further sum of £5,000,000 be granted: provided that no payments for any establishment or service shall be made out of the said sum in excess of the rates voted for similar establishments or services on the Estimates for the financial year ended June 30, 1954, except increases of salaries or wages fixed or prescribed by any return made under any Act relating to the Public Service, or by any regulation or by any award, order, or determination of any court or other body empowered to fix or prescribe wages or salaries.

Motion carried. Resolution agreed to in Committee and adopted by the House.

Bill introduced by the Treasurer and read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time. Clause 2 provides for further supply of £5,000,000 for the year ending June 30, 1955. Supply already granted—£12,000,000—will be sufficient to provide for expenditures of the Public Service until about the end of October. It is proposed to bring the Bill for appropriation of the expenditure for the year before

the House before the end of October. The amount of supply now requested is necessary to meet expenditures pending the passing of the Appropriation Bill. I hope to introduce the Budget on Thursday next if the printing can be completed in time. This is the normal Supply Bill and contains no unusual features.

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Goodwood)—There is nothing on which to base any objection to this Bill. It is not my intention to delay its passage, but I am pleased that the Treasurer has intimated that the Budget will be introduced on Thursday.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages without amendment.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2).

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Road Traffic Act, 1934-1953. Read a first time.

REGISTRATION OF BUSINESS NAMES 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 Registration of Business Names Act, 1928-1950.

Motion carried.

Resolution agreed to in Committee and adopted by the House.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS (REDIVISION) BILL.

Second reading.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its object is to provide for the establishment of a commission to report upon the redivision of the State into electoral districts. There is no need for me at this stage to give honourable members any further information about the number of electors in the various electorates. The facts are well known and have been recently discussed in this Parliament. It suffices to say that the Government recognizes that the growth of the population in recent years and the changes in the distribution of the population have created anomalous differences in the sizes of certain electorates. There is admittedly good cause for making changes and this Bill is the first step towards that end. It ought, however, to be made clear at the outset that it is not the Government's policy to make radical changes in the electoral system. In particular, the Government believes that the existing ratio between metropolitan and country representation should be maintained as far as possible. The Government takes the view that if all parts of the State are to be effectively represented in this Parliament it is not possible to have country electorates with the same number of electors as metropolitan electorates. Provision is therefore made in this Bill for maintenance of the existing relation between city and country representation.

The proposed Electoral Commission will consist of three commissioners, one of whom will be appointed chairman. Two commissioners will constitute a quorum, and a decision concurred in by two commissioners will have effect as a decision of the whole commission. The commission will cease to exist upon completion of its duties under the Act. The duty of the commission to redivide the State into Assembly districts is set out in clause 5. The metropolitan area will be divided into 13 approximately equal districts, and the country areas into 26. For the purposes of the Bill districts will be regarded as being approximately equal if the number of electors in them is within 20 per cent (above or below) of the quota for the metropolitan area, or the country areas, as the case may be. This margin is the same as is applicable under the provisions of the Commonwealth Electoral Act. In addition to redividing the State into Assembly districts, the commission will also recommend the subdivision, and a grouping of the Assembly Districts into five Council Districts.

Clause 7 sets out the matters to be considered by the commission in making the redivision. The main principle is to aim at districts in which the electors have common interests. Subject to this, the commission must endeavour to create districts of convenient shape and with reasonable means of access between the main centres of population, and to retain existing boundaries as far as possible. Before reporting the commission must invite representations from individuals and organizations by public advertisement. Such representations must be made in writing in the first instance, but the commission is given a discretionary power to hear evidence, information and arguments submitted to it orally. The report of the commission will be presented to the President and

the Speaker as well as the Governor; and the President and Speaker must lay the report before their respective Houses. To enable it to carry out its duties the commission is given the powers of a Royal Commission under the Royal Commissions Act, 1917. It is the Government's intention to appoint commissioners of high standing and ability, who can be relied upon to faithfully carry out the provisions of the Bill.

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

PUBLIC SERVICE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 14. Page 1018.)

Mr. HUTCHENS (Hindmarsh)—Before I obtained leave to continue my remarks on Thursday last I was pointing out that the Premier had found it convenient to overlook the decision of Parliament contained in section 52 of the Act. Never before have I heard so much noise from one endeavouring to run away from an issue as from the Premier last Wednesday. It was no doubt a skilful attempt to raise political dust to cloud an important issue brought forward by the Leader of the Opposition. I give the Premier full marks for his ability to distort a good cause. To do this he quoted a report from the Public Service Commissioner, but he did not find it necessary to explain how he got it. Opposition members do not object to an officer of the Public Service replying to speeches made in this House, but it is unfortunate that the Premier, in replying to criticisms, employed a high-ranking officer in his defence. Let us examine some of the fantastic remarks made by both the Premier and the Commissioner. The Commissioner said that the Leader of the Opposition had made some criticisms of the Public Service Board. This debate was adjourned last week in order that the Premier might be able to hear members' speeches, but he now finds it convenient to leave the Chamber. Opposition members consider his remarks were unjust and an unfair criticism of the Leader of the Opposition, but we paid the Premier the courtesy of an attentive hearing, yet he now denies that to me by leaving the Chamber. The Commissioner stated:—

No request has been made by the Public Service Association for any alteration to those sections of the Act under which the board is constituted, from which it would appear that the board is generally functioning successfully in its respective jurisdictions.

Perhaps no such request has been made by the association, but that does not necessarily mean that the association is satisfied. Many people in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were dissatisfied, and many today in Communist Russia are, but they, perhaps for the same reason as the Public Service Association, believed that suffering in silence was better than what might result from a protest. The statement I have just quoted proves nothing. Some time ago the association objected to the Public Service Commissioner being the chairman of the Public Service Board. The Premier made an issue of it and told the association that it must accept his nominee or there would be no board at all. A little later in his report the Commissioner said, in effect, that apparently the officers of both Houses of Parliament were satisfied with the Public Service Board, but apparently the board is resigned to the unsatisfactory circumstances referred to by Opposition members, particularly by the member for Adelaide. A little investigation shows that officers of Parliament, by comparison with others, have received very satisfactory classifications, but fancy the Public Service Commissioner having the audacity to reflect upon the intelligence of members of this House by referring to four or five loyal, suffering, sacrificing, silent officers as evidence to support his contention, whereas hundreds are dissatisfied. Some have even left the Public Service. The Premier said:—

I have seen officers who were set for high promotion in this State accept an outside job because they would receive a few extra pounds immediately.

Then he said that the Police Force was satisfied because it had asked to be associated with the board, but the Police Force cannot be compared with the Public Service. The force has an appeal board similar to that strenuously advocated by the Leader of the Opposition for public servants. A magistrate is chairman, and the other members are the Commissioner of Police and a member of the Police Association. Further, the magistrate is not dependent on the Commissioner of Police for promotion, and the members of the force can only receive promotion within the force, whereas public servants are, rightly, able to seek promotion in all branches of the service. The Commissioner also stated:—

Except in so far as matters before the Public Service Board affect Government policy, for instance, the expansion of departmental activities, the board proceeds to a decision without reference to any Minister.

That is mighty interesting, for no sooner had this statement been made than we found an entirely different one. Someone got his facts confused. In view of the Commissioner's statement I ask, who initiated the move for a reclassification of the office of secretary to the Minister of Agriculture? I understand it was necessary to consult the retiring Minister on this appointment. The Commissioner said:—

In these cases it is obvious that I must discuss the merits of the various applicants with Ministers, for it would be unworkable for a Minister to be forced to take as his secretary a person in whom he had no confidence.

Those remarks were made regarding the recent appointment of the secretary to the Minister of Agriculture. The retiring Minister was consulted, but he has not had to work with the appointee; it seems strange that the incoming Minister was not consulted but had the new secretary thrust on him. On those grounds the Commissioner's argument falls flat. Has the Commissioner no confidence in himself that he must seek the Minister's opinion? Or is he convinced that during his lifetime there will be no change in the Government of the State? He should take a grip on himself, for he may do himself great injury in trying to face both ways at once in trying to please his superiors as he has done in framing this report. The Premier continued:—

The general comment of the Leader of the Opposition is summed up in those three extracts the Commissioner has taken from his speech, namely, in the Public Service promotion goes by favour . . .

The Leader, however, suggested no such thing. I am prepared to admit, whether the Premier understands English or not, he has well above average intelligence, and he could not have come to the conclusion he stated for any other reason than to avoid attention to other obvious points. Realizing this, Mr. O'Halloran interjected:—

Did the Commissioner make any report about "subtle influences?"

This was too much for the Premier, who, true to his habit of twisting an interjection, said:—

The Leader is anxious to get off this point. What the Leader did say, in effect, is that if you are not known to the Commissioner and are not a favourite of his, or if you are not known to the head of the department, you need not worry about applying because no-one will take the trouble to ascertain your variety of ability or your experience.

The Leader, however, said no such thing, nor did he mean what he said to be interpreted in that way. He said:—

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.

The Leader was merely pointing out, in effect, that every football fan supporting a country team sees a better man in that team than in any interstate team. Departmental heads are only human and cannot help developing a fellow-feeling for associates, which must prejudice other applicants. To slavishly accept the recommendation of a departmental head is most dangerous. The Premier continued:—

The Leader also said:—

> 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.

In respect of those remarks Mr. Schumacher said:—

> The above statements of the Leader of the Opposition are not in accordance with fact, as will be seen from the following explanation of the procedure followed in filling vacancies. Under the Public Service Regulations I am required to consult with the head of the department concerned, and for this reason the applications are forwarded to him for perusal and comment insofar as he has a knowledge of the applicants or as disclosed by their applications. They are not forwarded to him for recommendation, as the Act lays this responsibility on me, but for comment only. When these comments are received, I make the necessary inquiries and satisfy myself as to the qualifications and experience of the other applicants.

Those remarks bear out the Leader's contention. The Commissioner says that when these comments are received he makes the necessary inquiries to satisfy himself regarding the qualifications and experience of other applicants; but he is most careful to avoid saying to what extent that is done. No doubt if the head of the department favoured an applicant for reasons other than his efficiency or suitability his recommendation would have much bearing on the Commissioner's final decision. The Commissioner's report continues:—

At this stage a decision is made by me whether any of the applicants should be called for interview, and when this is done, which is usually the case, the head of the department or his delegate is present at the subsequent interviews. It often happens that after these interviews the head of the department agrees with me that an applicant from another department is more qualified to fill the vacancy. It is natural and common sense that I must pay due regard to the opinion of the head of the department, but I emphasize that I take full responsibility for the recommendation, which sometimes does not accord with the opinion of the head of the department.

Nobody suggests that the Commissioner should not take that responsibilty. How many of the applicants for the position of secretary to the Minister of Agriculture were interviewed? The answer to that question would prove conclusively that the recommendation of the departmental head is accepted without question. The Commissioner's report continues:—

I may add that I have frequent discussions with the President and Secretary of the Public Service Association on many matters affecting officers of the service, and on no occasion has there been any suggestion of criticism of the manner of selecting officers for promotion; in fact the reverse is the case, for on many occasions officers have expressed to me their appreciation of the system now in operation.

No doubt that is true, but in view of the circumstances I have mentioned who would be willing to cut off his nose to spite his face? It is only natural that an officer who is promoted will feel a little overjoyed and express appreciation to someone without concern for what that expression may mean; but that is no evidence that public servants generally are satisfied. The Commissioner's report continues:—

As you are aware, following the calling of applications for the positions of secretaries to the Minister of Works and the Minister of Local Government, I interviewed you.

In accordance with the Public Service Act, however, there should be no interference in the finding of the Commissioner until he has recommended the most suitable applicant. Only then has the Executive Council the right to accept or reject that recommendation: but the Commissioner's statement is an admission that he discussed these appointments with the Premier. His report continues:—

I interviewed you and drew attention to the fact that the position of Under Secretary would shortly become vacant and that if Mr. Pearce (the secretary to the Premier) applied for and was appointed to the vacancy, the same field of applications would probably be received for his position as had applied for the position of secretaries to the other two Ministers.

That is a frank admission by the Commissioner—acknowledged by the Premier—that they discussed the position that would become vacant, naming the person to fill it even before applications were called for. Yet we are told the Premier does not interfere in these appointments.

Mr. John Clark—It sounds like those meddlesome politicians!

Mr. HUTCHENS—Yes, and I should say the Premier is the chief of them. The Premier said that Mr. Pearce was the logical choice for the position of Under Secretary because he had served as Acting Under Secretary on a number of occasions. That may be so, but the Premier went on to say:—

If there was a sad story it was that for a period I had an acting secretary, but he did not regard it as a sad story.

It seems that Mr. Pearce was to be appointed Under Secretary because of his previous service in an acting capacity, but if that principle was logical in that case it seems that it has been rejected without apology by the Premier in other cases. He said:—

The obvious thing to do was to fill that position (the position of Under Secretary) first because the most senior man would obviously succeed in an application for any of the junior positions.

I do not know the justification for those remarks, but it is obvious to all thinking people that the Act is ignored in certain circumstances. It definitely states that the Commissioner shall consider the suitability of all applicants and that the appointment must not necessarily go to the senior man, but a different action is taken for purposes of convenience. The Premier continued:—

. . . and having been appointed to a junior position, as soon as the senior position was advertised he would immediately apply and succeed in that.

That means that the officer would immediately apply for a better position when it became available. In effect, the Premier said that public servants are a lot of go-getters. That was not complimentary even when he was avoiding an important issue. He also said:—

Then there was the appointment of the secretary to the Premier. A number of officers applied and as far as I know when the ultimate recommendation was made there was no appeal. If there were one I did not hear of it. Mr. King has courtesy, ability and tact.

I want those last few words to sink in. They are true of Mr. King, but there should have been an inquiry whether other applicants had courtesy, ability and tact. It is said in the Public Service, "If you are not one of the big boys you are left out." Mr. King's courtesy, ability and tact apparently were not appreciated at the time applications were called in May, 1948, for the position of secretary to the Minister of Agriculture. Incidentally that position became vacant in November, 1947. It is common talk among public servants that on that occasion a junior Minister canvassed a certain section of the service after the time for applications had closed inviting a public servant to put in an application and guaranteeing him the position. The person approached applied but learned

soon afterwards that some of the perquisites handed out to the retiring secretary were not to be made available to the incoming man, so he decided he would be better off in the position he then occupied and withdrew his application; yet they say there is no subtle influence and no interference with the activities of the Commissioner. The Auditor-General for some time has been conscious of the position. The Leader of the Opposition, however, made his remarks before the Auditor-General's report was laid on the table this session. In black type, so that everyone could see it, the report said:—

> The expansion of the activities of Government and the acute shortage of suitable personnel has resulted in a serious staffing problem in the State Public Service in recent years. That problem has been accentuated by the procedures which must be followed under the Public Service Act relating to promotions, filling of vacancies, employment of new staff, and the method of grading salaries.

He drew attention to the machinery used for the hearing of appeals. Mr. O'Halloran advocated the appointment of an independent chairman for the Appeal Board. In the present set-up each member of that board is a public servant and subservient to the Commissioner and it is logical that he will consider the facts presented by the Commissioner when appeals are heard. It is said that they are heard in an impartial manner, but I have some interesting facts regarding a recent appeal. In giving this information I do not want to embarrass the person appointed or those who appealed against the appointment so I shall refer to them by means of letters. I will call the first one P.B., the second P.B.A. because he also failed in his appeal, and the third L.B., because he was the lucky blighter. P.B. went along and stated his case. The chairman said "Mr. P.B., you have told us all about your academic qualifications. You have told us what you can do and what you have done," and then he showed surprise that there should be a man with such ability occupying a humble position. He asked what P.B. knew about the department concerned and P.B. had to admit that he knew very little. P.B. said that P.B.A. would be the logical choice for the position if knowing something about the department was the main requisite. On being questioned P.B.A. said he knew all about it as he had been in it ever since he had been in the service. The chairman then said, "That is not very necessary because any person appointed to the position could find out what had to be done by asking other officers. I submit that the Appeal Board is there to protect the Commissioner all the time and does not act in the interests of the appellants. An amazing thing happened when L.B. came along. He had to be asked questions, so this one was put to him, "What would you do in preparing a Bill from the department for submission to Parliament?" Very wisely he said, "I would put it in the Minister's bag in the right order and when the bag came back I would see that it was taken out and properly dealt with." What an intelligent reply! When it was suggested that there was a little more to it than that he said that the appointee would have to prepare the first reading for the Minister. He got the appointment. Yet we are told that appeals are heard with the utmost impartiality and that there is no influence at all.

When the Premier was debating this Bill, as I said earlier, he referred to Mr. King's courtesy, ability and tact. I have it on the best of authority that, when the Deputy Commissioner was addressing the Appeal Board about a person recommended for a similar position he said that a junior Minister had stated in writing that that person had the required personality and ability. Does that not suggest to any deep thinking person that the junior Minister was told to say it and is it not pretty clear who told him to say it? I suggest that we have created a position where everybody in the service is subservient to the leader of the one-man band. It is believed that he will be here for all time occupying the position of Premier and that we must reconcile ourselves to a situation that has come about through the circumstances I have mentioned. The Leader of the Opposition suggested an independent chairman for the Appeal Board because he would be unfettered and unhampered in his work, because he would not have the feeling that at some time he would have to answer to the Commissioner. The Premier made a lot of noise about this matter. The Premier said, in reference to the Leader of the Opposition:—

> I understood him to say that another authority should be set up, quite outside the Public Service. In other words, he said that the present machinery, which is cumbersome, should be added to.

The Leader said nothing of the kind. He wanted an independent chairman on the

Appeal Board and said that with such a chairman there could be no suggestion of influence from any quarter and that decisions would be just. The Premier also said:—

It has been, and it will be, the Government's policy to accept recommendations because it knows that they are made only after full inquiry and that the appeals are heard impartially.

I wish that latter comment were true, but I believe it is far from the truth and that subtle influences do intrude into the board's decisions. Last Thursday I suggested that too many of our senior public servants—frequently heads of departments—are holding down part-time positions. I quoted from the comments of the Premier in 1939 when he endeavoured to justify heads of department holding down these positions. On that occasion he concluded his remarks by saying:—

Objection has been voiced to the establishment of boards, but the fact remains that we have many boards operating in South Australia and those boards were created by Parliament.

The Premier finds it convenient to refer to Parliament when it suits him, but in the Public Service Act it is clearly provided that a person shall not accept any part-time position. That provision is enforced in relation to junior officers, but has a different application in respect of senior officers. When Parliament agreed to the salaries for certain high officers it did so believing that it would be sufficient to compensate them for their duties in their responsible offices. We believe that a public servant should give his full time to his position. If his services are diverted to some other part-time job the principal position must suffer as also must the welfare of the State. In conclusion, I contend that the Premier's remarks last Wednesday were without foundation, were cruelly incorrect and were a criticism beneath the dignity of a Minister of the Crown.

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

METROPOLITAN AND EXPORT ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 14. Page 1013.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This is not a lengthy Bill and it does not make important amendments to the principal Act, but, at the same time, the amendments are designed to continue the smooth and efficient working of a principle which was laid down some years ago concerning the control of the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs, namely, that those who were interested in various ways in its working should have a say in its management by nominating a panel from which a member to represent their particular interest should be selected. The South Australian Chamber of Rural Industries which submitted the panel of names in respect of breeders of fat lambs is dormant and the Bill provides that the panel of three names shall be submitted jointly by the committees of management of the Stockowners' Association, the South Australian Branch of the Australian Society of Breeders of British Sheep, the South Australian Wheat and Woolgrowers' Association and the South Australian Executive of the Primary Producers' Association. That would appear to include all organizations entitled to consideration in the selection of a panel to represent the breeders of fat lambs.

As regards the breeders of pigs for export, the Bill provides that a panel of three names shall be submitted by the committee of management of the South Australian Branch of the Australian Pig Society. I have hazy recollections of there being some difference of opinion in days gone by as to who was qualified to authoritatively speak on behalf of pig breeders, but as I have heard little of that difference of opinion in recent years I have concluded that the body mentioned in the Bill is now representing the interests of pig breeders and is therefore entitled to speak authoritatively on their behalf.

I believe that those who are interested in these industries should have a say in the management of the abattoirs, but that, of course, also applies to the workers and it is particularly fitting that the workers in the industry—the Australian Meat Employees' Federation—have a right to select a panel from which their representative on the Abattoirs Board is chosen. That happy position arose as a result of an investigation by a Select Committee, representative of both Houses of Parliament, which reported on the management, control and general working of the abattoirs some years ago and which recommended the type of board which has been set up and which is being continued as a result of the amendments provided in this Bill. Members will realize that much of the difficulty associated with the control of the abattoirs that formerly existed has disappeared. Much credit for the industrial peace which has obtained there for a lengthy period, and for the wonderful record of killing of fat lambs for export in the flush

of the season which results in a tremendous effort on the part of the slaughtermen, is due in no small degree not only to the presence of a direct representative of these employees on the board, but to the personal contact that representation brings with the breeders of fat lambs and pigs who would be the heavy losers in the event of prolonged stoppages. As a result of this type of control we get a measure of co-operation which is what we should aim at and which Parliament should be intent on perpetuating, therefore I support the second reading.

Mr. MICHAEL (Light)—I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill. I was a member of the Select Committee appointed about 10 years ago which made recommendations that resulted in an alteration to the Act. This gave the Chamber of Rural Industries the right to nominate persons capable of representing local lamb and pig producers. I thought at the time that this chamber would be able to speak with some authority on behalf of primary producers' organizations, but for reasons for which I have no need to go into now it did not function long. Although it still exists it is dormant, and the time has come to find another means for selecting the representatives of pig and lamb producers. I do not think there is any other organization that can speak more authoritatively for these producers than the organization specified in the Bill, which will submit a panel of names to the Government for appointment to the board. The South Australian branch of the Australian Pig Society has a stud branch and a commercial branch, and it is fairly representative of producers. The Leader of the Opposition said that the Select Committee recommended the appointment to the Abattoirs Board of a representative of the workers, but I do not agree with him that there has been a great improvement in the relations between the workers and the board. Until just before last year there was considerable industrial trouble, but then attempts were made to establish a meat works at Kadina. Immediately the workers adopted a different attitude. Evidence cannot be brought forward that placing a representative of the union on the board had any influence on industrial relationships.

Mr. O'Halloran—You wouldn't know what the records were.

Mr. MICHAEL—I have some knowledge of that.

Mr. O'Halloran—Can you say what the actual killing figures were?

Mr. MICHAEL—I cannot say offhand, but I do not think the honourable member will challenge my statement that until last year there was industrial trouble every year at the abattoirs. However, as soon as a move was made to establish another meat works there was a changed outlook.

Mr. BROOKMAN (Alexandra)—I support the Bill, which alters the system of providing panels of names for selection to the Abattoirs Board. I agree that it is undesirable for dormant bodies to be able to nominate persons for selection. I have in mind the history of the old Tramways Trust. Appointments to that board were not as carefully considered as they should have been. In future, appointments to the Abattoirs Board will be made from panels of names submitted by organizations that are active, namely, the Stockowners' Association of South Australia, the South Australian Wheat and Woolgrowers' Association, the South Australian Executive of the Australian Primary Producers' Union, and the Australian Society of Breeders of British Sheep (South Australian Branch). In addition, the member representing the pig breeders will come from a panel of names selected by the South Australian Branch of the Australian Pig Society. I feel sure that every satisfaction will result from the altered system of selection. I stress the importance of carefully selecting a board that has such a vital part to play in South Australian primary industries. Whether or not the board is protected by legislation, it will always feel the pressure of competition in some way. Even if it has no competition from other abattoirs, it will always be faced with some criticism from people most concerned with its operations. I do not mean this as any criticism of the board, which I think has done very well lately, but I support the Bill because it puts the selection of the members of the board on a sound basis.

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

EVIDENCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 14. Page 1015.)

Mr. DUNSTAN (Norwood)—I support the Bill, the two main provisions of which have been explained by the Minister. One makes an alteration in regard to evidence in certain matrimonial actions. An outmoded rule has been in force for some time in regard to cases

of adultery, and I agree that it should be removed from the Statute Book. The Bill also provides for notarial acts to be performed by certain officers overseas, and this is a machinery provision. Notarial acts have been widely recognized even in cases where legislation has not given force to them, but it is obviously desirable that they be made possible by officers overseas and that they be validated on the basis of legislation rather than on custom. Members will have noticed that I have placed a contingent notice of motion on the Notice Paper relating to other matters of evidence that I believe the House should consider. I understand that at this stage I cannot deal with them because they are not at the moment before the House.

The SPEAKER—The honourable member sees that he is precluded from discussing them at length unless he gets leave of the House, but he can briefly indicate them.

Mr. DUNSTAN—At present a conviction can take place on the entirely uncorroborated evidence of an unsworn child of tender years —that is, a child of 10 years or less. In most other countries of the British Commonwealth that is not possible. It is most undesirable that a man should be convicted merely on the uncorroborated evidence of a small child. The courts have pointed out time and again that it is unsafe to convict under those circumstances. Most other States of the British Commonwealth of Nations have made it impossible for juries to convict in these circumstances because, as courts have said that it is unsafe to convict, it has been provided that they shall not convict. Later I will move an amendment to bring our Act into line with legislation in Great Britain. Another matter with which I will deal is the admissibility of confessions of accused persons, and the way in which they are obtained. In England the judges have laid down rules of practice, not of law, as to how confessions shall be obtained from persons who are about to be charged, or are in custody.

Mr. Travers—Or how they shall not be obtained.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Yes, of course. It is obvious that nothing should be tendered as a confession that is not a voluntary statement, and that a man should not be compelled or induced to make a confession. English law provides that a man shall be convicted on his own confession only if it is a voluntary confession. In consequence, the judges have laid down very clear rules that are followed consistently in England and in many other parts of the British Commonwealth of Nations, but they are not followed here. In this State the judges have discretion to exclude statements they believe are unfairly obtained, but what happens in practice is that a police officer who has obtained a statement from a person in custody locks up the defendant and three or four or even 24 hours later types out a statement that the accused does not see or hear until the officer comes into court. He then says that he cannot remember what was said without referring to his notes, and then produces them out of his pocket. It is obvious in those circumstances that the change of a word may mean a man's guilt or innocence. Statements can be coloured entirely by a policeman, who after all has the job of detecting crime and naturally has a certain bias towards convicting the man he believes to be guilty of it.

In England the judges' rules provide that where a statement is taken from an accused person not only must it be made clear to him that he does not have to make a statement unless he wishes to do so, but also that he must not be unfairly cross-examined or put in a position in which he is invited to make comments on alleged confessions of other people. What is more, any statement taken from him when he is about to be charged or when in custody must be taken down in writing, read over to him, and he must be asked to make any corrections he wishes. He is then asked to sign the statement which, of course, would be available to him. In those circumstances it can be seen clearly that when an accused person has a statement taken down in an unfair manner by a police officer he can immediately challenge anything that is unfair or improper in that statement, but under the present circumstances in South Australia he has not that opportunity. In our courts what happens normally is that if an accused person eventually does challenge the statement that the police officer reads from his typed notes made some considerable time afterwards, the court feels, of course, that the matter would be fresher in the mind of the police officer because he made the notes afterwards; almost invariably the police officer is believed. I have indicated shortly the matters that I desire the House to consider. I do not propose to go into them any further at this stage, to argue them, or produce instances, but I hope to do so if the Committee agree to my motion.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. DUNSTAN moved—

That it be an instruction to the Committee of the whole House that it has power to consider amendments relating to the uncorroborated evidence of children and to evidence of confessions of accused persons.

Motion carried.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3—"Parties and their husbands and wives competent witnesses in suits of adultery."

Mr. DUNSTAN—I ask the Premier to report progress to enable me to put my amendments on the file.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT ADVISORY COUNCIL BILL.

In Committee.

(Continued from October 5. Page 893.)

Clause 12—"Duty of council," to which Mr. O'Halloran had moved the following amendments:—

Page 2, line 35—After 'shall' insert '(1)';
Page 2—Add new sub-clause as follows—
(2) Hear and determine any appeal which may be submitted to it on any matter arising out of the administration of any by-law or regulation relating to the control of taxicabs, taxicab drivers, taxicab stands or other matter cognate thereto made under the authority of any Act by any body or bodies so authorized to make such by-laws or regulations.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—When this matter was first before the Committee, the Premier took what I thought was a valid objection, namely, that I was seeking to insert a provision to provide for something that might occur under legislation not yet passed. At the time I move the first amendment I confidently expected that the Bill to provide for the control of metropolitan taxicabs would be passed before we discussed this Bill, but circumstances beyond my control have changed that position. Consequently I must provide for any contingency, and my amendment is just in that it will provide for any such contingency. Irrespective of whether the Metropolitan Taxicab Control Bill is passed or not there will be control in the metropolitan area, and, if the present method of control continues, the need for an appellate tribunal becomes even more urgent, because, despite the unctuous disavowal of their wrongdoing which has been reported in the press, the control of taxicabs by the City Council should not be permitted to continue. This House has already decided against that form of control, but we may yet be forced into having it. Taxicabs provide an important transport function in our metropolitan area, and with the development of the suburbs and an increase in the number of taxis, an appellate tribunal will be necessary to determine the broad, general questions set out in my amendment, and what more appropriate authority could be appointed than the body this Bill sets up? The Premier said that the idea of setting up this co-ordinating authority was to prevent unreasonable competition between railways, tramways and buses licensed by the Tramways Trust; but in some instances competition from taxicabs may be serious to both the trust and the Railways Department. It may become necessary in future for some authority to take legal steps to impose further controls on taxicabs, and the regulations may not be as just as they should be; therefore there should be a right of appeal against the decision of any authority controlling taxicabs in the metropolitan area.

Mr. TRAVERS—The passing of the amendment would produce an unacceptable situation. Its effect would be to give the Transport Advisory Council two separate functions: the co-ordination of public transport and the hearing of appeals on matters arising out of the administration of by-laws and regulations relating to the control of taxicabs and associated matters. The amendment would create an extraordinary situation by enabling the council to hear an appeal from a Court decision. That would be absurd. There are various council by-laws and provisions relating to the use of taxis, and normally any infringement is dealt with by the police court under the provisions of the Justices Act. In due course there is the right of appeal to the Supreme Court against these decisions. If the amendment is carried I submit there can be no doubt that instead of the Supreme Court being the appellate tribunal, one could go to the council. It makes an appeal more far-reaching than the present appeal to the Supreme Court. The amendment goes further than the control of taxis. That would be untenable and would reduce the matter to absurdity, and in effect expresses a vote of no-confidence in the Supreme Court and would result in substituting a tribunal to which we are not accustomed to appealing, namely, the council. I am wholeheartedly opposed to the amendment.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—My objection to the amendment is different from that expressed by Mr. Travers. The Advisory Transport Council proposed to be set up has only the one function and that is to co-ordinate the services at present run by the

railways and the tramways in the metropolitan area. It was hoped that the establishment of this council would provide a working arrangement between these two authorities. The Bill ensures their meeting on equal grounds and discussing problems together. It is simply a question of their adopting a policy for the efficient movement of the public in the metropolitan area. The clause puts taxis in the hands of an authority which is in direct competition to them. The present regulations governing taxis are subject to disallowance by Parliament. It would appear that the object of the amendment is that the authority proposed to be set up would regulate all types of transport in the metropolitan area.

Mr. Riches—Is there any reason why it should not?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That is another matter. The powers set out in the clause are powers directed by the Minister and he can direct only in regard to public transport.

Mr. Riches—He has power to control the Transport Control Board.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—He has no power in regard to that board. It is a Royal Commission with independent power and is not subject to direction by any Minister. It does not exercise authority in the area covered by the Bill. It is suggested that the proposed council should also control taxicab services, but it is the wrong authority to do so. It will comprise representatives of the tramways and railways. The one exception will be chairman. In any case it will not have the officers or the organization to control taxicab services.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.50 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, October 20, at 2 p.m.