HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, December 9, 1954.

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

ASSENT TO ACTS.

His Excellency the Governor, by message, intimated his assent to the following Acts:—Building Contracts (Deposits) Act Amendment, Commonwealth Water Agreement Ratification Act Repeal, and Friendly Societies Act Amendment.

QUESTIONS.

PETERBOROUGH WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Following on the question I asked on Tuesday regarding the provision of a better water supply for Peterborough and other towns, has the Minister of Works any further information on the matter?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Following on the conference I mentioned on Tuesday with the honourable member, the Engineer-in-Chief and the Engineer for Water Supply, a new aspect altogether has been evolved for the use of the existing supply there, supplemented by water from the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline. Cabinet has today approved of the revised scheme, based upon our discussions, being referred to the Public Works Committee. The question of providing a supply has had much consideration and has been fully reviewed. The annual consumption of water at Peterborough is now about 40,000,000gall. but with an improvement in quality the consumption would certainly increase to a very great extent. With this in mind the present proposal is to lay a pipeline from Jamestown to Peterborough capable of delivering 50,000,000gall. a year to that town. This pipeline also makes provision for supplying country lands *en route* and the small township of Yongala, and has sufficient capacity to provide for a branch line from Belalie North to Terowie if this is decided upon at some future date. The estimated cost of the smaller scheme for Peterborough is £238,600 and if working at full capacity the annual costs would amount to £29,560. It would be unreasonable to include this large expenditure to extend the Jamestown scheme to Peterborough without increasing charges at Peterborough to a level at least equal to those at Jamestown, *i.e.*, on 1½ times the ordinary scale of rating with water at 2s. 6d. for rebate and 1s. 6d. for excess. On this basis the overall increase in revenue, including Yongala and country lands, would amount to approximately £2,315. The present proposal is to put it on the same basis as that applying to Jamestown and I think people at Peterborough would not object to it. The matter will be referred to the Public Works Committee along those lines.

CHRISTIES BEACH CAMP.

Mr. TEUSNER—Following on a request I received last week from the National Fitness Council I asked the Premier whether he would obtain information whether the National Fitness Council Camp on the site called Parmanga at Christies Beach North could be connected with electricity from nearby trust mains. Has he any further information?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The general manager of the Electricity Trust reports:—

A quotation for the supply of electricity was submitted to applicants in this area, including the National Fitness Council, on December 1, 1954. Applicants have been asked to reply by December 15 whether they wish to accept this quotation. In the event of acceptance, work would start on the extension towards the end of January, 1955, and should be completed within a further two months.

NOXIOUS INDUSTRY AT WOODVILLE

Mr. HUTCHENS—In the Woodville district in my electorate there is a galvanizing establishment that is affecting the houses of residents nearby. Owing to the acid used in galvanizing many roofs are starting to decay. In fact, the roof of the establishment itself has been eaten away and has had to be replaced, and many of the walls have had to be replaced with asbestos. Curtains belonging to nearby residents are being affected and are falling to pieces. The acid is being drained on to a roadway and is becoming a nuisance to the public. I consider that it is an offensive type of industry. During the recess will the Premier consider the advisability of declaring it to be a noxious industry and making it necessary for it to be established where it would not be offensive to the general public?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will examine the position but I very much doubt whether a declaration that a certain trade is noxious would affect an established industry; as far as I know, no action could be taken to alter the position. Many industries which have been declared noxious trades are operating in the honourable member's district. They were established years ago under the then law and cannot, so far as I know, be closed down now, but any new industry of the same type would have to go to an area set aside for noxious trades. As to acid being permitted

to drain on to the main street, I think that would obviously be a case for the council to take action and I have no doubt the health authorities, under the Health Act could prevent it. I will examine the main question.

FREIGHT CHARGES FROM PORT PIRIE.

Mr. DAVIS—Yesterday I asked a question relating to the surcharge on goods carried by road from Port Pirie. Will the Premier take this matter up with the Transport Control Board with a view to having the anomaly removed?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I am not quite sure what the anomaly is that the honourable member refers to but I will examine the question and obtain a reply.

DISSEMINATION OF AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE.

Mr. BROOKMAN—I am particularly interested in South Australian farmers being kept abreast of agricultural developments in the United Kingdom, and to achieve this I believe the State should utilize its efficient Agent-General's office in England by requesting the Agent-General to write periodical letters concerning agricultural developments there for publication in the *Journal of Agriculture* or the press. Towards the end of last session the Premier informed me that he had given instructions that a letter should be sent to the Agent-General to this effect, but I know of nothing that has happened since. I believe I asked the Minister of Agriculture a question on this topic earlier this session. Can he indicate what progress has been made?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—Since I last answered a question on this topic no further developments have taken place. On occasions I have received letters regarding trade matters from the Agent-General, but nothing relating to agricultural developments in the United Kingdom except that he did forward a report he had secured from a correspondent of, I think, the *London Observer* who had studied agricultural conditions on the Continent. That report provided interesting reading and I will be pleased to make it available to the honourable member. No regular communications on the subject have been received from the Agent-General up to the present.

RAILWAY FURNITURE CRATES.

Mr. HAWKER—On November 30 I asked a question relating to the use of railway furniture crates and the Minister of Works promised to obtain a reply from the Railways Commissioner. Has he that reply?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Under yesterday's date the Minister of Railways has forwarded this information:—

This department caters for the movement of furniture in furniture boxes only within the State and as far as Broken Hill. The business of handling furniture between States has always been the function of furniture removalists, who own and supply furniture boxes for movement by sea, rail and road. We have never gone into competition with the removalists, because of the difficulty in obtaining return loading for empty furniture boxes sent interstate. Although nothing is known of the particular incident referred to by Mr. Hawker, no doubt the applicant could have had his requirements dealt with by any one of the large number of furniture removalists carrying on business in this State.

ASSEMBLY DIVISION BELLS.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Yesterday afternoon when a division was called on the second reading of the Long Service Leave Bill I was interviewing a constituent in one of the front interviewing rooms and failed to hear the division bells ringing. I do not know whether or not they did ring. If they were ringing it was impossible to hear them in the interviewing room with the door closed. As a result I was left out of the division. Will you, Mr. Speaker, have inquiries made and, if it is found the bells when ringing cannot be heard in the interviewing rooms, have steps taken to install bells in the rooms?

The SPEAKER—I was not here at the time but since then the bells have been examined by the electrician and they are now working and can be heard in the interviewing rooms. I regret that the honourable member did not hear them yesterday.

DEVELOPMENT OF NEW GRASSES.

Mr. WHITE—An article in the *Sunday Advertiser* of December 5 stated that Mr. B. V. Munn, a nurseryman of Edwardstown, had imported six new evergreen grasses, one of which is alleged to grow well in low rainfall areas. Two of the grasses are named Centipede and Merion Blue Grass. There are two aspects of this importation that should concern members. One is that as they are evergreen grasses they must possess an aggressive habit of growth and it is pertinent to inquire whether they could become a nuisance to agriculture. The second aspect is that being evergreen—and one variety capable of growing in low rainfall areas—if edible for stock they could be of great benefit to agriculture. Can

the Minister of Agriculture supply any information on this matter and if not will he have the matter investigated?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The honourable member referred this matter to me yesterday and I endeavoured to get some useful information on the subject. Unfortunately the Weeds Officer, Mr. Orchard, is engaged on outside duties and I was unable to communicate with him. Mr. Cook, the Chief Agricutural Adviser, examined the article referred to and has furnished the following information:—

Mr. Munn has been developing grass strains for lawns and playing areas and we have some knowledge of Merion Blue Grass which is a strain of Kentucky Blue. This has not been tested sufficiently long to say whether under our conditions it would thrive better than Commercial Kentucky Blue. Kentucky Blue Grass is not used very much in pastures except under irrigation, where it is a useful bottom grass for filling spaces between our strong growing tufty types such as Perennial Rye Grass, Cocksfoot, etc. We understand that Centipede Grass has a creeping habit and is not likely to be of use for other than lawns or playing areas.

My officers will pursue this matter and gather what knowledge they can on whether these grasses are likely to be useful agriculturally or whether they might prove a nuisance.

GRAPE AND DRIED FRUITS INDUSTRIES.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I understand that the Minister of Agriculture has just returned from a meeting of the Commonwealth Agricultural Council, and I ask him whether the problems of growers of grapes for winemaking and the problems of the dried fruits industry were discussed. What conclusions did the conference come to?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—These subjects were discussed, but no definite decisions were made because the Commonwealth Minister for Commerce and Agriculture has been overseas negotiating, particularly with the United Kingdom Government, in regard to modifications of the Ottawa Agreement as it affects dried fruits and similar commodities, and he has also been attending a conference in Geneva. All those deliberations may have some important bearing on the marketing of these commodities. Therefore, any decisions were deferred until the return of Mr. McEwen early next year. It is expected that a further conference of the Agricultural Council will be held shortly thereafter so that we may consider his report and then decide what action to take. In regard to the wine grape industry, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics is at present engaged in a survey of production costs and until the results are known no decision will be made.

FALCON GOLD MINES (NO LIABILITY) COMPANY.

Mr. JENNINGS—Some time ago I asked the Premier a question regarding allegations of fraud in the affairs of Falcon Gold Mines (No Liability) Company and he was good enough to show me the file of the negotiations in the matter. Although those investigations were undoubtedly inconclusive, I think it was obvious that they were made only in regard to one transaction and not into the general affairs of the company. I have had further approaches from constituents of mine who are interested in this company and they have shown me the balance-sheets for the years 1953 and 1954, both of which the auditor refused to certify because there were vouchers missing. There was also a statement by the company's secretary that it had spent £50,000 in some way that could not be accounted for. I also have a statement made by the present manager of the company. I ask the Premier to have investigations made into these matters by a responsible officer, as provided for under the Companies Act, for I feel there is sufficient evidence to justify such an inquiry.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Some investigations were made regarding this company and the opinion of the Crown Law Office was obtained on whether it would be possible to successfully prosecute for alleged fraud. The honourable member has seen a copy of the Crown Solicitor's opinion, which advised against any prosecution. I do not know whether the matters that the honourable member has brought forward involve anything new to alter the legal position, but I will have the further documents investigated to see whether any action can properly be taken by the State.

UNINCORPORATED SOCIETIES.

Mr. TRAVERS—There are many unincorporated societies of various kinds, such as sporting and business, which have always presented a great problem in the matter of taking legal proceedings either on their behalf of against them. Will the Minister representing the Attorney-General examine the position in the forthcoming recess to see whether some simple method can be devised by which legal proceedings can be taken without the present difficulties?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I shall be pleased to confer with the Attorney-General and let the honourable member know the result in due course.

LIQUID AND ORGANIC FERTILIZERS.

Mr. QUIRKE—At various times during this and last session I brought up the matter of spray liquid materials used as a form of leaf penetration fertilizers. There are many of these on the market, the worth of some of which I have good reason to doubt, and I understand that the Department of Agriculture has made some investigations into them. Can the Minister say how far those investigations have gone? At present there is a great shortage of highly valuable organic fertilizers in the form of blood manures, blood and bone manures, and others of that type. Can the Minister say whether this is just a temporary shortage, or likely to be permanent? If it is a permanent feature action must be taken by growers who have relied on them to use substitutes.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The shortage of blood and bone manure is very acute; in fact, its constituents are in great demand as they are also manufactured into poultry foods. There are demands for them from both sources: from those who want manure and those who want stock feed. The Abattoirs Board, which is the principal manufacturer of these commodities, tries to hold a fairly even balance between the two requirements, but whatever action it takes in this matter it meets with criticism from both sections because of the insufficiency of the constituents. I doubt whether we will have enough for manure purposes because of the growing demands by both sections, and it may be well for producers to look around for substitutes.

Mr. Quirke—The price factor has something to do with it.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—Yes. My department and I have been working for some months on the problem of liquid manure sprays, and a Bill has been in course of preparation to deal with both pest destroyers and manures of that nature. Unfortunately, in view of the many problems involved the Bill has not reached the final stage for presentation to this House, but I hope, subject to Cabinet's approval, that it will be ready early next year.

HOUSING TRUST HOMES.

Mr. RICHES—The announcement of the passing of the Bill which enables Housing Trust tenants to purchase homes erected under the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement has been well received in the north, and I have been asked by some tenants at Whyalla, who are living in double unit homes built by the trust before the implementation of the agreement, whether the Government will consider a scheme under which they could purchase homes from the trust. Can the Premier say whether consideration has been given to the possibility of selling those homes to the tenants who have occupied them for some time?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government has always encouraged to the utmost the purchase of homes and within the limits of the finances available to the State it has always provided in its programme for the purchase of homes to the greatest possible extent. There are, of course, a number of people who, because of circumstances, are unable to buy homes and it is therefore necessary to build a certain percentage of rental homes. If any of the trust's tenants at Whyalla desire to purchase a trust home they may apply to the trust, although they may not be able to buy the homes they occupy, as they are occupying double unit houses having a mutual wall, or they may be located in a rental area. For purposes of economy in administration, upkeep and collection of rents the trust keeps its rental houses in groups, but if any of the present tenants desire to purchase a home they may apply to the trust, which will use every means to develop a scheme to give effect to their desire.

BULK HANDLING OF WHEAT.

Mr. STOTT—No doubt the Premier is conversant with the necessity of planning a long time ahead for bulk handling facilities. At present there is a terrific hold-up at Ardrossan; in fact, 67 trucks queued up yesterday, and it is obvious that the Ardrossan installation will again be closed down unless the shipping programme can be kept up to schedule. Present plans are at such a stage as to involve big financial institutions and the Treasurer knows the effect on financial institutions of the necessity to plan ahead. Can he say whether Cabinet is in a position to consider this matter, and when a public announcement regarding Cabinet's intention to proceed with a bulk handling proposal is likely?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I hope that the Government will be in a position to make an announcement on this question within the next fortnight or three weeks. I have discussed with the Chairman of the Public Works Committee the possibility of a further report, and he has advised me that the committee is at

present working on a report dealing with the physical side of bulk handling. Further, he hopes that the report will be available in a few days. As soon as it is received the Government will consider it, and it will make an announcement as soon as possible on its policy in the matter. The fact that the report has not been presented this session will not make any difference to the programme that we could undertake. Apart from any other factor, materials for such installations must be ordered a long time ahead and, even if the report had been received six months ago, that would not necessarily have meant that an immediate start could have been made.

TAXICAB INVESTIGATION.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Last Thursday I asked the Premier a question about an investigation by the Prices Commissioner into the taxicab industry in the metropolitan area, and he said he would examine the position to see whether certain information that would not infringe the secrecy provisions of the Prices Legislation could be compiled and made available to me. Has the Premier had an opportunity to look into that aspect of the matter?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I consulted the Prices Commissioner, who said it would be possible for him to make available a large part of the report, and he has prepared that document which will be forwarded to the honourable member. In fact, I have already signed the covering letter to the Leader, and he should receive it tomorrow. The report, however, will not include one or two paragraphs that would infringe the oath of secrecy taken by the Prices Commissioner, nor certain annexures dealing with people's private business. It will contain the recommendations and relevant information of a general nature that will enable the Leader of the Opposition to traverse the grounds of the investigation. I have not studied the information very closely but it appears that the Commissioner has made a close examination of the problem and presented an impartial and valuable report. He has not minced matters in any of his statements and where he has found certain things to be substantiated he has not hesitated to say so. The report appears to be well balanced and will be advantageous in this important matter.

GUMMOSIS DIEBACK.

Mr. TEUSNER—In 1952 I introduced a deputation, consisting of representatives of horticulturalists and fruit processors, to the then Minister of Agriculture. It requested that there should be appointed a competent plant pathologist to undertake research work into gummosis dieback, a disease which has been devastatingly rampant, particularly in the Barossa Valley, for many years. Following on that deputation, a Mr. Carter was appointed as research officer and I understand that he did certain research work last year and issued a progress report, a copy of which was submitted to me, and which I found interesting. Can the Minister of Agriculture say whether the research work by Mr. Carter has been continued this year, what progress has been made, whether a further progress report has been made, and if so, whether a copy could be made available to me?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—Mr. Carter has been continuing his research work into this disease and much information has been collected and collated by him. He has presented another report, which was issued on August 13 this year. I shall be glad to make it available to the honourable member, or to any other member, for study purposes. It concerns chiefly the history of the investigations conducted since the previous report, but it does not disclose any hopeful signs of a remedy being found for the disease. A great deal more research work will have to be undertaken before we can find out its real cause, but we hope that ultimately a remedy will be found.

ROAD GUIDE POSTS.

Mr. HAWKER—Has the Minister of Works a reply to the question I asked on November 3 whether it would be possible to take action to discontinue the dangerous practice of grading out roads wider than the distance between guide posts and culverts, thus narrowing the roads sharply at these points, and whether the practice of painting the guide posts on the near side with a black band and those on the offside all white could be made universal?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I saw a reply to the question but I do not think it covered all the points raised by the honourable member. During the recess I will see that a full reply goes to him.

TEACHERS' PENSION PAYMENTS.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—On November 30 I asked the Premier whether the present practice with respect to pensions for teachers resigning or retiring before the usual retiring age could be altered so that pension payments could commence forthwith upon retirement without the teachers having to wait until their long service

leave had expired. He said he believed it was not necessary to alter the provisions covering teachers because they already had provisions similar to those recently granted to public servants. Has he investigated the position to see whether his assumption was correct?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I presume that my statement was correct because if it were not the officers who examine what I say from day to day would have told me that I had made a mistake. However, I will check up on the matter. I think that when the Public Service Act was altered this year I saw a statement in the docket that it would bring public servants into line with teachers.

EGG INDUSTRY.

Mr. SHANNON—I was pleased to read in this morning's *Adevertiser* a statement that the visit of the Minister of Agriculture to the Agricultural Council conference in Hobart had not been entirely abortive. Egg producers in this State are very worried about the overseas market position in regard to pulping, which provides an outlet for large quantities of their eggs. I read the press report carefully but it did not disclose that immediate action would be taken. Can the Minister set out what prospects there are for assistance to the egg industry and in what form it is likely to be? The article suggested a Commonwealth subsidy. Is that the only way assistance can be given or are there other ways?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—Deliberations of the Agricultural Council are never abortive because they achieve much good. The matter of eggs was debated at the meeting and a case for immediate assistance was strongly put by South Australia and other egg producing States. Finally a resolution was adopted requesting the Commonwealth to provide a subsidy immediately pending the outcome of the investigations being made by the Commonwealth Bureau of Agricultural Economics, which has been charged by the Commonwealth Government with the task of investigating the economics of the egg producing industry. The States felt that the outcome of these investigations might be prolonged and in the meantime many commercial egg producers would be seriously affected by the low return from export eggs. The position is complicated because the United Kingdom Government still holds between 50,000 and 60,000 tons of egg pulp from previous seasons and, as a result, we are limited to a quota this year. It is futile to manufacture more pulp than we can consume and export. Unfortunately many second grade eggs cannot be dealt with in any other way and we have an egg pulp problem. The sales of eggs so far made will return to the South Australian egg floor a net price of 2s. 4d. and 2s. 8d. a dozen, from which must be subtracted the cost of the growers' transportation to the egg floor. That represents only a small fraction but it does reduce the return slightly.

The Acting Minister for Commerce and Agriculture, Senator McLeay, who presided at the conference, could only promise to take the resolution adopted back to his Cabinet to try and get an early decision. I have no idea what that decision will be. We can only hope that it will be favourable and speedily given. Everyone realizes the serious problem the egg industry faces in view of the marketing difficulties we are up against. I have some faint hope that as a result of the conference and the facts disclosed we may get some assistance. I know that the Commonwealth Government is not unmindful of the position and, because of its appreciation of the facts, has inaugurated this investigation by the bureau. It is hoping that the investigation will disclose within a reasonable time the necessity or otherwise of granting some financial assistance.

FIRE-FIGHTING UNITS.

Mr. FLETCHER—In the *Bush Fire Bulletin*, published quarterly by the Bush Fire Committee in New South Wales, an article headed "Equipment Supplies—Half Million Figure Passed" states:—

The spending of £119,507 on fire-fighting equipment for 1954-55 has been recommended by the Bush Fire Committee. The amount will come out of the Eastern and Central Divisions Bush Fire Fighting Fund, which is administered by the Minister for Local Government. This will make a total of approximately £500,000 spent since the Bush Fires Act became law in December, 1949.

The Eastern and Central Divisions Bush Fire Fighting Fund is provided in the Act for the purpose of meeting expenses in connection with bush fire fighting and councils may secure power and manual equipment, erect storage sheds and provide wireless communication from the resources of the Fund. Contributions to the Fund are made by insurance companies (one half) and councils and N.S.W. Government (one quarter) each.

Will the Minister of Agriculture consider commencing a scheme in South Australia similar to that operating in New South Wales under which insurance companies will contribute to fire-fighting units? There is no doubt that, as a result of the activities of these units, insurance companies are saved large sums of money.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I think our fire-fighting organizations are second to none and the Government does make a very useful contribution to the local governing bodies and firefighting committees which organize these services. As to contributions by insurance companies, I do not know what is done in this State, but I will have investigations made.

INSURANCE OF HIRE-PURCHASE VEHICLES.

Mr. CORCORAN—A statement by the Chamber of Automotive Industries reads:—

For reasons so far unexplained, insurance companies continue to impose a severe initial premium penalty, plus additional loads for the second and third year, on vehicles bought under the hire-purchase system. The matter is one of considerable concern to the vehicle operator who is not a cash buyer but who at the present time, represents from 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the new market. This position is further aggravated by denying such buyers, in the majority of cases, the right of "no claim" bonuses. The insurance penalty incurred by the hire-purchase buyer ranges from 24 per cent to 42 per cent higher than the cash buyer—according to the State in which the vehicle is purchased—and from 17 per cent to 35 per cent higher on trucks. The additional loading over the extended period of hire represents 15 per cent for the second year and 25 per cent on the already loaded basic rate for any additional period involved. Insurance companies say they initiated these "loadings" some years ago to take care of any possible increase in tariffs during the period of hire and claim that its continuation is necessary. The motor vehicle manufacturing and distributing industry of the Commonwealth, however, views this as a specious plea which will not be borne out by a proper investigation.

If, in the past, some reasons existed for the insurance companies introducing this policy, it surely must be agreed that such were no longer valid. At the time when this procedure was initiated, premiums were relatively low, but with the greatly increased rates now being paid, these loadings represented a considerable and insupportable cost burden. Perhaps less justifiable was the tariff insurance companies' decision to deny hire-purchase buyers the right of a "no claim" bonus which is granted, in the case of a cash buyer, as a reward for claim-free experience, and in the case of non-tariff companies, to make it available in some cases only.

Can the Government do anything to relieve the buyers of motor vehicles on hire-purchase of these impositions?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have investigated this matter and I find that the premiums charged in this State are much lower than those in other States. Further, I have it on reliable authority that this type of business is not at all profitable to insurance companies; in fact, motor insurance in Australia generally is regarded as bad insurance business. In some States where claims are being assessed by juries the insurance companies are making heavy losses on that business. I know of no action that the Government could take.

PALMER WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. WHITE—I have been informed that the town water supply for Palmer has deteriorated to such an extent that some rationing has been imposed upon the consumers. I understand that the Engineering and Water Supply Department intends to draw the Palmer town supply from the Mannum-Adelaide main, which runs through the town. Now that this main is operating can the Minister of Works say when Palmer will be connected to it and so give Palmer a permanent supply?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The existing supply to Palmer is leased by the department to the Palmer Water Trust, which pays a rental of £5 a year. One of the provisos in the lease is that the scale of rates and the price of water in any one year shall be subject to the approval of the Minister. The rates and price of water applied by the trust are, I believe, the same as those in the metropolitan area, so in the first place there is an obligation on the trust to administer the supply in the best interests of the consumers, and the Government does not intervene in that respect. It is proposed to give the Palmer township a permanent supply from the Mannum-Adelaide main, but the conditions that will apply have yet to be determined. At present the Palmer supply is in a precarious state, and to give some temporary help arrangements have been made for a connection to be made between the Mannum pipeline and the service of Mr. V. H. Dohnt, of section 960, hundred of Tungkillo. This connection will give an infusion of River Murray water into the Palmer system and should help to maintain supplies. The connection will be metered so that the amount of water used can be determined and so that a charge can be made to the trust. This is only a temporary measure to overcome the present shortage from the wells. The resident engineer has discussed this connection with Mr. Dohnt, who is a member of the Palmer Water Trust. I am prepared to discuss the whole question with the trust or with the people in the area. Obviously, they will have to be prepared to pay what other areas are paying for a similar service, but what that is will have to be worked out.

CRAFT LESSONS FOR WHYALLA CHILDREN.

Mr. RICHES—I have received a letter signed by the chairmen of the three primary school committees in Whyalla expressing concern that wordwork, domestic arts, and craft lessons are not being taught to primary school children there, nor are they likely to be taught in the immediate future. They say that the enrolment at the Whyalla Technical High School in 1954 was 325, and a survey shows that by 1958, without any further increase in the population of Whyalla, it will increase to 495. It seems that unless special action is taken primary school children at Whyalla will be deprived of craft lessons for some years. These school committees carried a resolution that I think has been forwarded to the Minister of Education. It states:—

This meeting urges the Education Department to erect a portable room for woodwork instruction at the Whyalla Technical High School for primary children commencing school year 1955. The Education Department be asked to provide suitable accommodation for domestic arts for primary school children commencing school year 1955.

Has the Minister considered the request and, if so, can he say whether any decision has been reached?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I do not doubt the accuracy of the figures the honourable member quoted, and I did receive the request to which he referred. I have investigated it, but I have not come to a final decision, though I hope to do so in the near future, and I shall communicate it to the interested parties and the honourable member. I hope to visit Whyalla in the near future to discuss with him and the interested parties various education problems.

TUNA FISHING AND CANNING

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Some time ago the Government arranged for the Haldane brothers to come to South Australia from Portland, Victoria, after it had made financial assistance available to them so that they might exploit tuna fishing in South Australian waters. Some people have told me that there is very little tuna to be caught in South Australia and that the fish that has been called tuna is really bonito and that there would be difficulty in canning and marketing it. I do not say they are right, but I ask the Minister of Agriculture whether he can say how far this fishing project has progressed, whether there is any possibility of tuna being caught in large quantities, and whether the marketing and handling problems can be overcome?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The manager of Port Lincoln Fisheries Ltd. recently visited America and induced two expert tuna fishermen who own a fleet of about 12 tuna clippers to come to South Australia with a view to the development of the tuna fishing industry here. They were sufficiently interested to agree to come early next year and work in co-operation with the Haldane brothers in prospecting the tuna fields in a three-months' period of active fishing. Subsequently, I had several conferences with all interested parties—Haldane Bros. Pty. Ltd., Port Lincoln Fish Canneries Ltd., and other fishing interests. As a result, the Government agreed to guarantee such a venture, which would involve the State in a guarantee of about £9,000 or £10,000. Of course, the Government would be recouped if tuna were found in sufficient quantities, but everyone seemed perfectly happy with the arrangement and a satisfactory spirit prevailed in the negotiations.

However, we have, metaphorically speaking, struck a patch of rough water. Since the arrangements were made the price of tuna has dropped considerably as a result of large catches in the United States of America, which have exceeded consumption. That has been reflected in the price paid for tuna on the east coast of Australia, where considerable quantities of tuna are caught. The original price agreed upon under the guarantee proposition was 8d. a pound, but it has had to be revised to 5d. Nevertheless, all parties to the arrangement were prepared to continue with the scheme at the new price. However, the two Americans have struck trouble themselves. One of their boats has been seriously damaged, and they will be engaged for some months in repair work, which they prefer to do themselves in order to minimize the cost. This may delay their arrival for about a month. When I learn when they will be leaving America I shall be in a position to determine whether the venture shall proceed this season or whether we shall have to postpone it for a year.

The Leader of the Opposition asked whether tuna was in South Australian waters in large quantities, but the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, Mr. Moorhouse, has investigated this question from time to time and he is perfectly satisfied that it is. Tuna has been caught from time to time, and I think the largest catch in any one season was about 25 tons. Tuna has been canned at the Port Lincoln cannery and some of it has been exported in a frozen state to America for canning. Recently I had the pleasant experience of tasting our own tuna,

both that canned here and that canned in America, and both were very good. I trust that later the canning industry at Port Lincoln may be expanded so that the Australian consumer may be able to enjoy our canned tuna with the same relish.

STEAM BOILERS AND ENGINEDRIVERS ACT.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—About three months ago I introduced to the Premier a deputation from the Federated Enginedrivers and Firemen's Association (South Australian Branch) which requested certain amendments to the Steam Boilers and Enginedrivers Act. The Premier subsequently forwarded me a letter for transmission to that association, intimating that the position had been examined and that the Government had decided that none of the suggested amendments were necessary. The union informs me, however, that it still considers them necessary and has asked me to again submit the matter to the Premier. Can he say whether the Government will further examine this matter during the recess and whether he would appreciate the association furnishing any information not already at the Government's disposal?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I shall be pleased to do that, and if there is any additional information that has not yet come to the notice of the Government I shall be pleased to receive it.

PRICES MINISTERS' CONFERENCE.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Has the Premier a statement to make on the cancellation of the Prices Ministers' conference that was to have been held in Adelaide this month?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—A conference was called for December 17 by the chairman of the Prices Ministers' Conference (Mr. Landa, M.L.A.), but I subsequently received from him a telegram, which has been confirmed by letter, stating that the conference had been cancelled. I understand the reason was that Victoria's prices legislation would lapse after December 31 and that therefore the Victorian Prices Minister considered it futile for him to attend. Further, the Queensland Prices Minister found that any date in December was inconvenient for him. The general question of these conferences now arises, and the future of price control in this State is directly involved in the Victorian Parliament's recent decision to abandon its prices legislation, because Victoria was the co-ordinating State for determining the prices of many commodities manufactured there or manufactured by firms whose head offices were in that State. Without that vital and informative service it will be difficult to retain effective control over the prices of those commodities, but my Government will continue a policy of price control. It will, however, decontrol a number of items, particularly where the supplier is prepared to guarantee that the overall margin allowed him will be maintained under decontrol. I believe that in many instances the suppliers will give that assurance, which will help the Prices Department to police the legislation and also help the community generally.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT'S ECONOMICS SYLLABUS.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Has the Minister of Education received a report from his department on the principles taught in our schools regarding the creation of money and Australian finance generally?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I have received the following report from the Education Department:—

The principles of bookkeeping and accountancy, as taught in the schools of the Education Department and the University are set out in a number of standard text books. These incorporate accepted principles of finance. They are as follows:—

Bookkeeping in departmental high schools:—In the high schools conducted by the Education Department bookkeeping is a subject at the Intermediate and Leaving levels. The text books are the well known standards, R. N. Carter's *Advanced Accounts* and H. L. Ward's *Commonwealth Intermediate Accountdncy and Auditing Exercises.* These books are recognized and recommended in commercial schools in many parts of Australia.

Accountancy at the University:—A course of accountancy at the University covers three years and includes a thorough examination of basic accounting method and theory and applied accounting method. Text books are by recognized authorities, including the Institute of Chartered Accountants, *Recommendations of Accounting Principles,* and A. A. Fitzgerald's *Analysis and Interpretation of Financial and Operating Statements.* Mr. Fitzgerald is well known as chairman of the Grants Commission. In the third year, students study the relationship between accounting method and economic theory; accounting for public authorities; the accounts and reports of public corporations; the financial statements of governments; accounting aspects of budgetary reform; accounting for society as a whole.

The principles laid down in these text books are those recognized by banking and other financial institutions whose staff members include many graduates who have completed the course at the Adelaide University or obtained diplomas in accountancy in which the same text books are used.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—My question dealt rather with the teaching of the principles governing the creation of money rather than those of bookkeeping and accountancy. In a recent debate I quoted several world authorities, and I wish to know whether the principles enunciated by them are taught in our schools.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I shall be pleased to investigate the matters raised by the honourable member and to furnish him with a report as soon as possible. I point out, however, that the departmental report was factual in that it stated what books are used in our schools in the teaching of bookkeeping and accountancy.

MURRAY BRIDGE COURT HOUSE.

Mr. WHITE—Can the Premier say whether tenders have been called for work on the Murray Bridge courthouse?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Tenders will be called on December 17, the closing date being January 19.

HILLS ROADS.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE (on notice)—

1. Does the Minister's statement in the *Advertiser* of the morning of November 30 mean that the Burnside-Crafers route designed to carry 90 per cent of South Australia's interstate road transport is to be temporarily shelved or permanently abandoned?

2. For what period does the Government expect the present route from Glen Osmond can continue to be utilized without grave traffic dangers and serious economic loss to the State?

3. What is the estimated cost of completion of the widened portions in progress near the "Eagle-on-the-Hill"?

4. How many other sections of the present roadway are intended to be similarly dealt with, and what are the estimated costs?

5. Is it proposed to widen the present route so as to eliminate long bottle-necks between Adelaide and Aldgate?

6. What is the total estimated cost of all projected improvements along the present route?

7. What is the total cost incurred to date on the Burnside-Crafers route, including surveys, land purchases, widening of Greenhill Road, and the section of the 60ft. roadway terminating in a dead end at Beaumont?

8. What is the reason for a change in policy of the Government after adopting the Burnside-Crafers route as recommended by its technical advisers at the time it was decided to proceed with the construction of the Linden Avenue section?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I regret that I have not the information, but as soon as it is available I shall let the honourable member have it.

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE HOUSING SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

ELECTRICITY TRUST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

FRUIT FLY (COMPENSATION) BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

POLICE PENSIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

ROAD TRAFFIC ACT AMENDMENT BILL (MOTOR VEHICLES REGULATIONS).

Second reading.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its object is to amplify the power of the Governor to make regulations respecting the exemption from registration in this State of motor vehicles which are owned by persons resident outside the State and are temporarily in the State. Pursuant to this power, which is contained in paragraph XII of section 61 of the Road Traffic Act, regulations have been made enabling motor vehicles owned by persons resident in other States and Territories of the Commonwealth and registered in any of those States or Territories, to be driven in South Australia without registration subject to the observance of a number of conditions relating to drivers' licences, insurance, the carrying of various labels, and other matters. The existing regulations apply to motor vehicles generally. There is no discrimination between passenger vehicles and goods vehicles or between vehicles used for carriage for hire

and those used for other purposes. There is considerable doubt whether under the language of the Road Traffic Act regulations granting exemptions can discriminate between one type of vehicle and another.

As the Government has already announced, it is the Government's policy to require the larger kinds of vehicles coming into this State from other States to be registered in the usual way and in order to do this it will be necessary to alter the regulations so as to take away the exemption which these vehicles now enjoy. The Government's present view is that all vehicles of 100 power-weight or more, and large goods-carrying trailers should be obliged to register. The Government does not desire to impose any burdens on motorists who come into this State in ordinary motor cars or buckboards or commercial vehicles of a smaller kind. For this reason it is essential that the Government should have power to select the classes of vehicles which will in future be granted exemption from registration and it is desirable that the regulation-making power in the Act should be adequate for this purpose. For this reason it is proposed to extend the power as I have explained.

As experience of the proposed new system is gained, it may be necessary to make variations in the classes of vehicles which are required to register, or are declared to be exempt. By leaving the matter to be dealt with by regulations, the Government will be in a better position to work out a scheme which will ensure that proper contributions to the roads are made and, at the same time, cause a minimum of inconvenience to the general public.

Mr. Quirke—Would present registration fees be charged on those vehicles?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It would be impossible to charge any fee other than those stipulated in the Act. At present we are extending to motorists from other States a concession in that they need pay no registration fee. In effect, we are discriminating in their favour.

Mr. Hawker—Other States do the same.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—True, some other States do not charge a fee on lighter vehicles coming from this State, but any freight vehicle from South Australia is to be charged higher fees in other States than those operating before the recent Privy Council decision. The road tax to be charged by Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland will be heavier than the transport tax charged in the past. A South Australian freight vehicle will not enjoy the freedom of the roads in other States; it will be required to get a permit and to pay a road tax that will be assessed on a ton-mile basis. We will not be infringing any principle of reciprocity between the States; in fact South Australia will be charging a much lower fee than will be charged by other States on South Australian freight vehicles. The hauliers realize that, under this legislation, they will be getting off much more lightly than they had expected. There can be no kick from the interstate heavy hauliers because we will charge only what our own hauliers have to pay. The only grounds for refusing a permit will be those set out in the Act. Registration will be given to all law-abiding citizens. The Bill does not create any interference with interstate trade and there is no chance of its being considered unconstitutional. The contents of the Bill have been the law since we have entered into reciprocal arrangements with other States. I think the last arrangement was made with the Northern Territory a few months ago. The Bill is not designed to defeat the purposes of section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution but to ensure that heavy hauliers from other States will contribute towards the cost of maintaining our roads. The moneys collected will go into the Highways fund.

Mr. Quirke—Can you define a 100 power-weight unit?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government asked the Parliamentary Draftsman to deal with this unit but there was some doubt whether the power-weight was too light.

Mr. Riches—What about trailers?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That matter was also considered. If it is found that the regulations are too harsh and impose restrictions they can be amended, and, on the other hand, if they do not deal with the matter effectively there can be increases. All regulations are laid on the table of the House and are subject to disallowance.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I support the second reading of the Bill, which overcomes the difficulty that has arisen recently. After giving the matter consideration it seems to me to be the only practical way of dealing with the difficulty. If Parliament were continuously in session we could agree to a provision, see how it works, and then if necessary amend it, and so by the process of trial and error achieve something near perfection. The Premier said that regulations are subject to disallowance by Parliament, but they are also subject to scrutiny

by the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation. There is no real danger of mistakes occurring and injustice being created. The Bill deals with heavy vehicles registered in other States, and provides that they shall pay the same registration fees as South Australian hauliers operating inside the State. There is nothing unjust about that, and the proposal will not apply to the lighter type of vehicle or the ordinary motorist. From time to time we hear that the Road Traffic Act should be amended. Recently it was suggested to me that when the Act was next before Parliament I should move an amendment along certain lines. I would like to do that but unfortunately I cannot, because the Bill is limited to amending subsection 12 of section 61. If I wanted to deal with another matter I would have to get an instruction and that is not possible now.

Mr. HAWKER (Burra)—I support the Bill although I regret the circumstances that make its introduction necessary. There has been reciprocity between the various States but in one regard it has been undermined. I understand from the Premier that there is no intention to penalize the motorists who live along the borders of the State. I believe the Privy Council disallowed the New South Wales legislation because of the unreasonable charges and conditions imposed. It seems that whether charges are reasonable or unreasonable can be decided only by the judges of our courts and eventually the Privy Council. The South Australian administration of the law has left the State open to challenge because the fees received from interstate hauliers through the Transport Control Board have not gone into the Highways Fund but into general revenue. I think the money should have gone into that fund and the Bill ensures that it will do so. Recently I heard of a man who wanted to bring from New South Wales a light dinghy weighing about 100 lb. He got quotations from road, rail and air authorities. The airways people quoted £8 4s., including 30s. to take the dinghy from Parramatta to the Sydney airport. The road quotation was about £16, but the railways wanted to charge £72, of which £50 was to be paid for carrying the dinghy from Parramatta to Albury. The remaining £22 was the rail charge from Albury to Mount Pleasant in South Australia. It seems that New South Wales has been imposing very heavy charges and no wonder road transport in that State has been affecting railway revenue.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—I know of an instance where the railway charge was £20 and the road charge £192.

The SPEAKER—A general discussion on rates is wide of the Bill and I hope members will not continue with it.

Mr. HAWKER—My point is that whatever we do in relation to our own heavy transport has no effect on whether the charges imposed on heavy transport from other States are reasonable or unreasonable.

Mr. QUIRKE (Stanley)—Clause 3 amends section 61 of the principal Act by adding the following subsection:—

(3) Regulations made under paragraph XII of subsection (1) of this section may apply to any class of vehicles specified in such regulations, and such class may be specified either by reference to the weight, power, power-weight, carrying capacity, purpose, construction, or any other characteristic of vehicles.

That subsection covers every conceivable type of motor vehicle and it must be carefully applied because, if used unwisely, it could hammer interstate transport.

The Hon. A. W. Christian—Parliament can disallow regulations.

Mr. QUIRKE—That is so. I do not oppose this measure. The roads in this State are shocking and were never designed to carry the type of vehicle science and progress has made available to us. Many roads which were constructed 50 years ago are capable of carrying heavy transport, but unfortunately roads built more recently are incapable of doing so. A few days ago the Minister of Works said that £600,000 had been spent on one road, but that road consisted of a bitumen skin placed on rubble and sand. A considerable sum will be collected from road hauliers who, in the main, use only two or three roads—the road through to Mildura, the road through the South-East to Victoria and the road to Western Australia. We all know that the revenue collected through petrol taxes and other impositions on motorists has not all been devoted to road making. If it is at all possible we should ensure that the money collected from road hauliers under this proposal should be applied in constructing and maintaining the roads over which they travel.

Mr. Shannon—It would be difficult to keep that revenue in a separate fund.

Mr. QUIRKE—If we are to tax interstate hauliers we should provide roads capable of carrying the transport they use. We should endeavour to provide at least one good arterial road connecting the States, and not a road that can be smashed to pieces by the transport we propose taxing.

The SPEAKER—Order! I think the making of roads and the type of roads are questions for a substantive motion or Bill and I do not think should be discussed under this measure.

Mr. QUIRKE—I suggest that the money derived from interstate hauliers should be devoted entirely to maintaining the roads they use. The total petrol tax revenue in 1949-50 was £19,500,000. The State authorities received £8,374,000. Road users contributed £11,126,000 to general revenue.

The SPEAKER—Order! I think members will appreciate that we are discussing amounts to be levied on interstate hauliers and not overall registration fees.

Mr. QUIRKE—I do not oppose the Bill but will watch with some concern and interest how the revenue collected is applied.

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

Later the Bill was returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

SUPERANNUATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second second reading.

(Continued from December 8. Page 1783.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—Several approaches have been made to the Opposition during the past 12 months for amendments to the Superannuation Act and the Opposition was asked to support any amendments the Government introduced. No doubt many approaches have been made to the Government on similar lines. It is perfectly understandable that that should be so because since the last adjustment in the value of superannuation units of pension was made there has been a further deterioration in the value of money and consequently the superannuation pensioners' position has worsened materially. I think it is generally agreed that the value of a unit of pension should be increased to 17s. 6d. a week to bring it into line with the units of other superannuation schemes. In all other States and the Commonwealth where superannuation schemes operate, so far as I have been able to ascertain, the value of units has been increased to 17s. 6d. Most States increased the value of their units 12 months ago. This State is one of the last to bring the value of superannuation units up to the Australian average. We must remember that during this session we have provided not ungenerous increases in police pensions and we should treat those covered by the Public Service Superannuation scheme similarly. Whilst on this point I suggest we might well examine the superannuation scheme associated with this Parliament and give consideration to meting out at least the modicum of justice we are giving to the public servants to members of this Parliament who have to pay much higher contributions for their pensions and conform to onerous conditions, the most onerous of which is to remain here long enough to qualify for a pension. I am not suggesting that anything be done now, but I ask the Government to examine this question during the recess with a view to introducing legislation next session.

The increase in the pension unit represents an increase of one-sixth, but whereas this increase will be free to those who are now pensioners, those who are now contributors will have to pay an additional sixth of their present contributions if they wish to benefit from the increased pension when they retire. When pensions were last increased, this same condition was imposed on contributors, and I understand that this State was the only one to make this provision. In other States the increase in contribution was limited to one-half of the corresponding increase in pension. Subsequent increases in pensions have been granted in other States without any further increase in contributions.

A large number of contributors are paying more than £100 a year and the proposed increase will involve an additional payment of nearly £17 per £100. It is not much comfort to provide that a contributor may elect to contribute at the present rate and not benefit from the proposed increase in pension on retirement. An increase of £17 per £100 is substantial. Of course, that can be avoided if the contributor elects to contribute at the present rate, but when the time comes for his and their retirement he would be at a disadvantage compared with other contributors who have subscribed at the new rate. Some consideration should be given to the number of years a contributor has been in the service and percentage increases in contributions related thereto—there should not be a flat rate increase applicable to all contributors irrespective of length of service. It would be a reasonable suggestion that present contributors should continue to contribute for existing number of units of pension at the present rate and that any increase in contributions should apply to new units and new entrants to the service.

In view of the position elsewhere, it is also reasonable that if any increase in contributions is required, it should be limited to one-twelfth

of present contributions. I point out that the increased contributions required by the Bill will be one-sixth of the present contribution. On former occasions, when pension increases have been authorized, the date of commencement has been fixed as December 1. There does not seem to be any good reason why that date should not be accepted for this proposed increase. I regret I cannot now get the Premier's ear. I shall not move any amendments, but I would like the Premier to consider whether he will agree to making the increased contribution one-twelfth instead of one-sixth of the present contributions, and whether the increased pensions can be made payable from December 1 instead of from February 1. The provision relating to eligibility of persons to become contributors at the discretion of the board is a good one. At present there is some difficulty in some cases about obtaining medical certificates, but this may be overcome as a result of the powers proposed to be conferred on the board. The Bill is a good one. It confers benefits on existing pensioners, to which they are undoubtedly entitled in view of changed circumstances since the last increases were applied, and it also enables those who can afford to pay increased contributions to subscribe for more units.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 11 passed.

Clause 12—"Contributions on reduction of salary."

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—I want to inform the Leader of the Opposition that it is not possible to arrange for increased contributions to be payable from December 1, and under those circumstances it would hardly be fair to increase pensions from that date, but I hope that arrangements can be made to increase pension payments from January 1.

Mr. O'Halloran—Can that be done without amending the Bill?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I think so, but if it is necessary to amend the Bill it can be done in another place.

Clause passed.

Clause 13—"Increase of contributions for units in force on February 1, 1955."

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I shall move amendments to clauses 13, 17, and 22, but it is convenient for me to explain them all now. The amendments to clauses 13 and 22 rectify clerical errors. The amendment to clause 17 expressly states something that is implied in the Bill at present, namely, that if a contributor elects to retain units of £39 or £32 10s. his widow's pension and any child allowance will be based on units of that amount. These three amendments are merely drafting amendments. I move:—

In proposed new section 27a (*b*), to strike out "increased by."

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 14 to 16 passed.

Clause 17—"Unit of pension."

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

After "units" where ever occurring to insert "and the widows' pensions and child allowances based thereon."

Amendments carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 18 to 21 passed.

Clause 22—"Pension to widow and children of certain officers."

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

To delete "28" and insert in lieu thereof "48."

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 23 and 24 and title passed. Bill read a third time and passed.

Later the Bill was returned from the Legislative Council with the following amendments:—

No. 1, page 1, line 14 (clause 3)—Leave out "February" and insert "January".

No. 2, page 8, line 2 (clause 17)—Leave out "February" and insert "January".

No. 3, page 8, lines 14 and 17 (clause 17)—Leave out "January, 1955" and insert "December, 1954".

Consideration in Committee.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The purpose of these amendments is to give effect to the Leader of the Opposition's suggestion that the new scale of payments to persons receiving superannuation benefits should come into operation as from January 1. It will not be possible, in point of fact, to arrange for payments into the present scheme until February. There will be a slight difference in the time of payments but the new benefits will commence operating in January. I move that the amendments be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2) (GENERAL).

(Continued from November 24. Page 1532).

The Hon. M. McINTOSH (Minister of Works)—moved—

That it be an instruction to the Committee of the whole House that it has power to consider a new clause relating to the power of municipal

and district councils to erect traffic islands and roundabouts in streets and roads.

Motion carried.

In Committee.

Clause 2—"Interpretation."

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I move—

In paragraph (*b*) after "kind" to insert "and from which businesses or industries the occupier derives the whole or a substantial part of his livelihood."

The amendment will tighten the clause and is in keeping with the principle that has been adopted in other cases: the occupation must provide the whole or a substantial part of the occupier's livelihood.

Amendment carried.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I oppose the clause. The Bill, when introduced in another place, provided that "urban farm land" meant any parcel of land more than five acres in area and used for primary production. The Legislative Council amended the Bill to provide that the area should be two acres. Some time ago certain ratepayers in the Marion council district formed a committee in order to request a poll of ratepayers on a changeover from the rental to the land values system of rating. Those ratepayers were promised that there would be no variation in the rate and that it would be 5d. in the pound on unimproved land values throughout the district. After the poll, however, the Marion council, despite that promise, could not agree on a rate. The councillors were besieged with representations from many primary producer ratepayers. They attempted to satisfy everybody, but they did not agree with the assessment. The town clerk was asked to make another one. He proposed for subdivided lands a different assessment from other lands. In the second reading debate I mentioned land in Glandore that had been valued at £1,400 an acre. I also said that in No. 4 ward there had been an assessment on broad acres as low as £20 an acre. The council then thought of something new and decided to adopt two systems, giving concessions to some people. A flat rate of 6d. in the pound was fixed for the people in the subdivided land area, whereas people who had been assessed at £20 an acre were charged 4½d. in the pound. The Act provides for land values rating and for an assessment to be made. In 1951 at a conference between the two Houses of Parliament concessions as great as 50 per cent were granted to golf clubs, etc., holding 10 acre areas. The proposal in the clause is not fair. If we accept paragraph (*b*) we will be getting away from the principle of unimproved land values rating. The whole position was considered in Marion and those who made the greatest noise said they would go insolvent if they had to pay a rate of 6d. in the pound. On that rate some small primary producers would have had to pay £7 10s. in rates, but they could pay it. One primary producer in No. 3 ward squealed greatly about his assessment on a 300 acre property, yet he was able to pay £1,000 an acre in purchasing land nearby. That does not measure up to decency.

Mr. DAVIS—I also oppose the clause. The reduction of the acreage means that the right of people under the land values rating system is taken away. Under the clause a person with two acres will get a concession and that should not be. The amendment makes the position even worse. It means that if an industry can be established on two acres it will receive a concession. It is a camouflaged way of crippling the most fair method of rating. At Port Pirie there are many large industries established on an area of two acres and they will get concessions not granted to other people.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—Can you indicate any area of more than two acres in your district that is used for primary production?

Mr. DAVIS—The amendment goes further than that.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—I do not think you would find two acres used for that purpose. Read the whole clause.

Mr. DAVIS—I have read it. Concessions are to be granted to people establishing an industry on two acres of land. To meet the position other ratepayers will have to pay increased rates.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I oppose the clause, the main purpose of which is to defeat the land values system of rating. It grants a special privilege to a certain section and will assist those who purchase land for speculation purposes. I do not subscribe to the view that because a man in the metropolitan area makes his living off two acres of land he should receive a special rate. This clause will react to the detriment of councils and represents a retrograde and undesirable step.

Mr. PEARSON—I think the Committee has been debating this clause under a misapprehension. This is a definition clause and members' remarks would more appropriately be addressed to clause 13. I support the amendment.

Mr. DUNSTAN—I oppose this clause. The writing into an Act of a definition of this kind is the first step necessary to give effect to the

principle—if principle it be—that certain lands should be exempt from the land values system of rating. The argument advanced for this type of legislation is that within the metropolitan area there are certain small areas of land used for primary production and that it is an advantage to the community to retain these areas because they form some type of green belt and it would be uneconomic to force the people further out if they desire to continue that production. I do not agree with either of those propositions. I believe that if we are to have a green belt in the city it must be properly provided for. What we refer to as urban farm land should not be exempt from proper assessments as regards rates. It will only force other citizens to pay heavier rates for the provision of services. It will force people to build dwellinghouses further out of the metropolitan area and add greatly to the cost of providing water supplies and sewerage. I do not think that is economic. If it is the Government's policy to continue the accretion of population in the metropolitan area this is a means of implementing it. We believe that there should be a satisfactory decentralization scheme. The Government, by this provision, is providing that there shall be a continuation of its present policy to increase the population of the metropolitan area and to spread it more widely. Another argument advanced in support of this legislation is that it would be uneconomic to force vegetable growers in the metropolitan area to go further afield. I do not agree with that proposition. What harm would there be in vegetable growers going further afield, and how would it be uneconomic? There is adequate land for vegetable growing close handy to the metropolitan area and the additional transport costs involved would represent a mere drop in the ocean. I cannot see that a man living at Felixstowe pays much less in transportation costs than a man pursuing the same course of occupation at Norton's Summit. I believe that land of this type within the metropolitan area could amply bear land values rating. This proposal confers an unnecessary privilege on certain people who almost invariably vote for the Party at present occupying the Treasury Benches.

Mr. WHITE—Though there are some clauses in this Bill with which I do not agree I support this amendment because it does define the areas on which a differential rating shall apply. I favour differential rating. At Murray Bridge the land values system of rating operates with a differential rating. By defining the areas on which differential ratings shall apply councils are being assisted.

Mr. HAWKER—I think members opposite are running true to form in criticizing rural industries within or adjacent to the metropolitan area. Mr. Dunstan said that we must not increase the population of the metropolitan area and that there must be decentralization. He said that if these lands are permitted to be used for primary production the size of the metropolitan area will increase and that that is wrong. If these people are rated out of primary production they will only use the land for building blocks. The Labor Party takes no interest in primary production at all. Some of the best primary production land in South Australia is situated on the Adelaide plains. If primary production is to be retained on that land we should support this definition of "urban farm land", which is considerably tightened by the Minister's amendment.

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

Mr. QUIRKE—This clause constitutes a deliberate attack upon land values rating. This Bill contains all the elements that will lead to the final destruction of that system. It had its origin in another place. I uphold the land values system, but to substantiate that the Bill attacks that system I shall quote the remarks of members in another place.

The CHAIRMAN—Standing Orders will not allow a member to quote statements made in another place in the same session.

Mr. QUIRKE—It was said:—

Some objection may be taken by district councils which at present are using the land values method of raising rates, but with their wings clipped they will not be quite so keen on it, and would be less unhappy if we decided to do away with it.

The CHAIRMAN—We are getting into a dangerous position when we quote what was said in another place.

Mr. QUIRKE—We are debating vital matters that will change the whole system of land values rating. If we pass the Bill the land values system will be changed so materially that its effectiveness will to a large extent be destroyed. Land appreciates in value according to the aggregation of people around it. For instance, land in Rundle Street is very valuable because many people congregate there to do their shopping and for other purposes. The land for the new satellite town near Salisbury has been bought at nominal rates, but shortly it will appreciate in value, particularly in the shopping areas. This clause relates to urban farm lands. That is land inside a residential

area in this case, but its true value is not necessarily its value when used for the production of tomatoes and vegetables. It is valuable because around that land there is dense population. The member for Murray said that there was a differential rating at Murray Bridge, but the land there is not nearly as valuable as land where there are thousands of people, such as in the Marion district. After a poll was taken in the Marion area a subdivision took place, and the gardeners who petitioned, saying that they would be driven into bankruptcy by the land values system, said that they paid £1,000 an acre for the land. Those people bought that land for gardening, but if a man was a good gardener he could make a good living off it. There is not one acre of land there that cannot afford to pay ordinary rates under the land values system. The people there would not have bought the land if they were not assured of a reasonable return from it. Even if they paid £1,000 an acre they can be assured that it will appreciate greatly in value and eventually cease to be gardening land. It will become a building area, and it will be worth much more than £1,000 an acre. This House should not agree to a differential rating on this land. Firstly, the sum that the gardeners paid for it represented fair value for gardening purposes. I have seen £100 taken off less than one square chain of land sown to carrots. If we realize that an acre is 10 chains by one we can assess value of the production of that land when there is a reticulated water supply provided by the State. Those people should not be exempted from having to pay ordinary rating.

Secondly, this land will eventually be subdivided into building blocks at greatly enhanced values. The owners should pay the same rating as those in the township area around it. To say that those living near this land should pay more is ridiculous, for they are the people who have made the gardening land so valuable. Members who vote for this clause will be showing that they are antagonistic to the land values system of rating.

Mr. JENNINGS—I oppose the clause because it is a deliberate attempt to sabotage the land values system of rating. We are asked to differentiate between certain areas, but the real fact is that the Government is trying to nullify the decision made at local government rating polls. If the Government would like to alter the boundaries of local government areas so that certain types of land might be segregated, I would give that move my blessing. The ratepayers in the community are waking up to the inherent value of the land values rating system. Several members opposite have said that owners of primary-production areas near the city might go bankrupt if a uniform system of rating were adopted, but I point out that under a differential rating the value of such land would be vastly increased mainly as the result of the rates collected in other parts of the district.

In 1890 Queensland adopted a land values rating system throughout the State, and since then primary producers have done as well there as they have done in other parts of Australia. Since 1906 when New South Wales adopted a uniform rating system throughout the State no primary producer has suffered as a result of the system. A few years ago the Hon. M. McIntosh, when Minister of Local Government, opposed an amendment carried in another place and said that we must stick to one system of rating or the other. I hope that the Minister realizes the wisdom of his statement on that occasion and sticks to what must be his real conviction.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—The Bill, when introduced in another place, provided for a minimum area of primary-production land of five acres, but the clause was amended to provide for a minimum of two acres. Why has the Minister in this House changed his approach to this matter from that which he has made on previous occasions? Should the land values system of rating be modified as it is by this clause? The moment this clause is accepted any further amendments to the Bill will be valueless because this provision breaks down every principle underlying the land values rating system. Under the Act a council that is not satisfied with a previous assessment may have an assessment made under the land values system, and those parts of a district council area that enjoy certain amenities provided by the council will be assessed at a higher value than those parts which do not enjoy such amenities and which may be used for primary production. The modification of the land values rating system that would result from the passing of this clause would nullify the effectiveness of the system.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The amendment makes it two acres subject to the condition that a man derives from them the whole or a substantial part of his livelihood.

Mr. Quirke—Does that mean that we cannot make it five acres again?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—No. If a man makes a livelihood from two acres he is a hard worker. After long discussion the Council

decided that if a man could make a livelihood from two acres he should get a benefit and the Government holds the view that he should derive a substantial part of his income from those two acres.

Clause as amended passed.

passed.

Clause 3 passed.

Clause 4—"Assessment of certain areas used for sporting purposes."

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I move—

To delete paragraphs (*b*) and (*c*).

Section 169 of the Local Government Act was amended in 1951 to provide that, as regards council areas in which the assessment is based on land values, certain playing areas such as golf coures and the like would be assessed at 75 per centum of the land value of the land. The exemption applies only where the land is occupied by an association and is used for the playing of games by the members. The land is not to exceed 10 acres in area and the members are not to derive pecuniary benefit from the association. It is also provided that the exemption given is only to apply to the five financial years next after the passing of the 1951 Act. Clause 4, which was inserted by way of amendment in another place, provides, firstly, that this limitation of five years is to be deleted, thus giving the exemption permanent effect; and secondly, that the land in question is to be assessed at 50 per centum of its land value instead of 75 per cent, and thirdly, that the present requirement that the land should be 10 acres or more in area is to be reduced to two acres or more. Whilst golf courses and the like provide open areas, they cannot be compared with park lands. Park lands are available to the public but the enjoyment of a golf course is confined to the members. A golf course does not make very great demands on the council but roads need to be maintained and some subsidiary services are supplied by councils which obviously must be paid for. A council must, of necessity, raise adequate revenue for its needs and the position could arise that, if a local government area had a number of golf courses or similar exempted sports grounds in its area, and all these were given substantial exemption of rates, the rates on the remainder of the area would have to be correspondingly higher. Exemptions or partial exemptions from rating can only be justified if the exemption is justified in the interests of the general community. Churches, schools, and charitable institutions obviously are to the good of the community and rating exemptions for such institutions can thus be justified.

A golf course, whilst it may add to the aesthetics of a neighbourhood, is obviously not of vital importance to the community, in fact, it may be regarded as a luxury, particularly if the land in question is in an urban area where land for residential and other kinds of development is becoming scarce. If paragraphs (*b*) and (*c*) are deleted, instead of the period being five years it will be in perpetuity and the concession will be 50 per cent instead of 75.

Mr. QUIRKE—If the Kooyonga Golf Course were outside Adelaide its value would not be nearly as great as its present value. I would not agree to any reduction there. I would make the club pay the full rate, but because of the previous agreement I am prepared to accept the amendment moved by the Minister for a remission, and for the ridiculous reduction from 10 acres to two acres to be wiped out.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—In 1951 the Minister was very concerned about giving concessions. He was opposed on principle to giving them. There should be a straight-out general rating and we should not make such concessions a permanent feature of our legislation.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 5 and 6 passed.

Clause 7—"Voting at polls."

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I move—

In new subsection (2) (1) after the word "owner" to insert "or occupier."

This amendment is designed to simplify the position relating to voting at polls. Occupiers should have the right to vote at polls the same as owners. After all, occupiers have a stake in local government affairs.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—When a council assesses under the annual values system, both owners and occupiers are, under the Local Government Act, liable to pay the rates. However, when a council assesses under the land values system the rates are recoverable only from the owner. Thus, while it may be said that a tenant of a property assessed under the land values system pays the rates in his rent, he is under no obligation to pay the rates to the council as is the tenant of a property assessed under the annual values system. Accordingly, as the liability for rates under the land values system is placed upon the owner and not the occupier, the Act has been framed to provide that at these polls, which can shift this rate liability from the occupiers to the owners, the only persons who should vote on the question are the owners of ratable property

upon whom the burden of paying the rates is imposed by the Act. I hope the Committee will not accept the amendment.

The Committee divided on the amendment—

Ayes (15).—Messrs. Corcoran, Davis, Duncan, Fletcher, Hutchens, Jennings, Lawn, Macgillivray, McAlees, O'Halloran (teller), Quirke, Riches, Stephens, Stott, and Frank Walsh.

Noes (16).—Messrs. Brookman, Christian, Geoffrey Clarke, Goldney, Hawker, Heaslip, Hincks, Sir George Jenkins, Messrs. William Jenkins, McIntosh (teller), Michael, Pearson, Playford, Shannon, Teusner, and White.

Pairs.—Ayes—Messrs. John Clark, Tapping and Fred Walsh. Noes—Messrs. Pattinson, Travers, Dunnage.

Majority of 1 for the Noes.

Amendment thus negatived. Clause passed.

Clauses 7 to 12 passed.

Clause 13—"Amount of rates to be levied on urban farm land in municipalities."

Mr. FRANK WALSH—This clause completely breaks away from the principle of land values rating, and I oppose it. Once an assessment has been made surely it should apply throughout the area. If the assessment is reasonable there is no need to differentiate between farmlands and municipal land. I hope the Committee will reject the clause.

Mr. QUIRKE—No one with democratic principles can agree to the clause. It states that township areas must be rated at twice the value of urban areas, but the value of urban areas is given to them because people have settled in the township. Eventually these outside areas will become township areas. The clause will enable landholders to allow their land to appreciate in value, and those who buy that land will have to pay double the rates when they build upon it. That is not just. The clause is an attack on the land values system of rating, and I oppose it.

Mr. FLETCHER—The principle laid down in this clause has worked well in my district. Due consideration should be given to landholders in urban areas, though I do not include those who keep land out of production or hold it for speculation. Considerable development has taken place to the east of Mount Gambier where the new timber mill is being erected. There are some small landholders there who use their land for dairying, gardening, or potato and onion growing. The average price offered to them by the Housing Trust has been £400 an acre. I cannot see why those who continue to use their land for agricultural purposes should not be given some concession, but those who do not use it should pay the normal rates.

Mr. DAVIS—I oppose the clause because it is most unjust. People in urban areas will pay only half the rates that people living in municipalities will pay. How does the Government think that municipalities or district councils will be able to pay their way if these concessions are made to people in urban areas? Those living in the township will have to pay much higher rates for the benefit of other people in surrounding areas.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—It was suggested earlier that New South Wales had universally adopted the land values system of rating, but in fact under legislation passed in 1934 the system in that State is substantially the same as that incorporated in this Bill.

Mr. PEARSON—I am neither a supporter nor an antagonist of either system of rating; I believe that municipal authorities should, by and large, have the right to decide what system of rating shall apply within their districts, but this clause does not take away that right. Any system of rating, if equitably and reasonably applied, will work, particularly in an area where most of the land is of a similar class. True, there may be districts in which trouble may arise because the land is not all of a similar class; but this clause merely ensures—compulsorily if need be—that a council shall play the game by all the land owners in the area. I know that in some council areas where the land values rating system is adopted differential rates are applied. Because it is possible for councils to strike differential rates for certain classes of land, this clause does not introduce any new principle into the land values rating system or any other system: it merely provides security for some people who may be overruled by perhaps an unthinking or unsympathetic majority which may gain control of municipal affairs. A reasonable differentiation should be made according to what the land can bear. All this talk about decentralization has been completely misapplied in this debate. I fear that where high rates are imposed on urban land the owner will often go out of primary production, subdivide the land and sell it as building blocks. This will eventually mean the closing of much of the land that at present grows the food for the people. I support the clause.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The Minister invoked the New South Wales law in support of the principle that the Government is apparently seeking to have

introduced into this Bill, but the position in that State is different from what he would have members believe. In New South Wales the county of Cumberland, which is a very big county taking in the whole of the metropolitan area of Sydney including outlying suburbs, is not covered by the special rating provision which the Minister seeks to have included in this Bill and which would apply to municipalities mainly within the metropolitan area. This Bill provides that urban farmland in a municipality shall be rated at half the rate imposed on other land, but that rule does not apply in the county of Cumberland, although it applies in a slightly different way to municipalities outside the metropolitan area of Sydney. The New South Wales law gives a freedom to the municipalities where this section applies—and it applies only outside the metropolitan area—which is not permitted to South Australian municipalities under this clause. I therefore oppose it.

Mr. QUIRKE—The Minister's interpretation of the New South Wales law in this matter was slightly astray. Section 118 of the New South Wales Local Government Act states:—

In any municipality which is wholly outside the county of Cumberland the general rate leviable in respect of urban farm land shall be less in amount than the general rate leviable in respect of other land in the municipality; and in making the general rate the council of the municipality shall fix the amount in the pound of the rate to be levied in respect of urban farm land. The maximum amount in the pound of such general rate levied in respect of urban farm land shall be not more than—

(*a*) one-half of the amount in the pound of the general rate levied in respect of other land in the area; or

(*b*) the amount in the pound of the general rate levied in the shire adjoining such municipality (if any), or if there be more than one of such shires the highest amount in the pound of the general rate levied in any of such shires,

whichever is the greater; but no such general rate in respect of such urban farm land shall be less than one penny in the pound on the unimproved capital value thereof.

Let us now go to Victoria. The latest figures for that State show that out of a total rating under the land values system of £2,422,000 less than £4,000 came from the rating of urban farm land. I support the remarks of the Leader of the Opposition. In New South Wales the county of Cumberland is excluded, so the only areas coming under the system are outside the metropolitan area, whereas in South Australia we are including areas inside the metropolitan area.

Mr. RICHES—I oppose the clause and object to the way the measure has been brought before Parliament. Ordinarily when a council seeks an amendment of the Local Government Act the Minister insists that the opinion of the councils concerned be obtained, no matter how small the amendment. This clause affects only councils operating under the land values system. I do not think that one council operating under the system has been consulted about the clause. I suggest that it be deleted so that the matter can be referred to the councils. I have had some local government experience under both the annual values and the land values system. I know enough of the operations of local government to realize that the clause will embarrass all councils that have adopted the land values system. Under it there is to be a system whereby rating is imposed according to the way in which land is used. The Minister has often reminded us that we cannot argue about a system of rating without having some regard to the assessment. If a ratepayer is not satisfied with the assessment he can appeal, and if not satisfied with the decision of the committee he can then appeal to the court. That is an adequate safeguard.

Mr. Quirke—Under the clause two properties side by side could have a different rating.

Mr. RICHES—Yes, even if both were used for grazing purposes. The clause is ill-conceived. I do not think it has the endorsement of any of the councils affected. I ask the Minister to name one council that supports it. It was introduced following on an occurrence in one Adelaide municipality, but it will embarrass all councils operating under the land values system. In the Bill there is a clause authorizing councils to raise the upper limits of their rating if necessary. The clause contains a new principle and I oppose it. The Government should give further consideration to the matter. If there is a difficulty in connection with a suburban council this proposal is not the proper solution. The member for Flinders said he was neither a supporter nor an antagonist of the land values system of assessment. By supporting this clause he will certainly launch a blow against it. The ratepayers decide what system of rating they will enjoy. In many areas where annual values operate ratepayers have not had an opportunity of deciding the system they want: it has been decided by Parliament. In every municipality where land values operate, the ratepayers had decided by poll to accept that system. This

clause will cut the ground from under land values rating.

Mr. CORCORAN—The Minister has not provided any valid reasons for this clause. The member for Stuart (Mr. Riches) queried whether any of the councils that operate under the land values system have been consulted about this clause. I have no doubt that it has been included as a result of representations from a council within the metropolitan area. Before a council declares a rate it calls for an assessment. After the assessor has made his assessment any ratepayer has the right to appeal to a committee appointed by the council against it. If he is still not satisfied he may appeal to the local court. There is no possibility of any injustice. I cannot see why the Government has introduced this clause. We should know what the councils think of it. If the Minister cannot present reasons for it he should withdraw it.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I oppose this clause. There are 27 councils in this State which have adopted, by a two-thirds majority of their ratepayers, the land values system of rating. This clause will only destroy that system. On other occasions this Government has always ascertained the views of councils on legislation which is being introduced, but that has not been done in respect of this clause. The Minister referred to New South Wales legislation and quoted various provisions from it but members on this side of the House have not been misled by those quotations. Indeed, they quoted from that legislation to prove that there was no necessity for this clause. The Minister should be just and agree that this clause will operate against the councils which have adopted the land values system of rating.

Mr. RICHES—When the Minister of Works was Minister of Local Government he advocated the practice of consulting councils on any measure of major importance. Even in respect of requests submitted to him he either obtained the opinion of the Local Government Advisory Committee or circularized the councils affected. The only councils affected by this legislation are those in which ratepayers, by poll, have accepted land values assessments. Can the Minister tell the House why on this occasion not one council operating under land values assessments has been asked to express an opinion on this clause? Will he agree to its deletion on this occasion in order that the Government may follow the practice he invariably adopted when Minister of Local Government of consulting the councils affected? Not one council that will be affected by this clause would agree to it. The Minister can only satisfy himself on that point by consulting the councils. This is the first occasion that Parliament has been asked to act summarily without consulting any of the councils concerned. Why has the Minister departed from his usual practice?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—If the councils are not satisfied they should have informed me. The Bill was introduced on September 29, but no council has objected to me about the clause. Further, the Bill was debated in another place before it came here, so councils have had ample opportunity to put forward any alternative.

Mr. Corcoran—Do they know anything about it?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—If they do not it is the fault of members.

Mr. DAVIS—I was surprised at the Minister's reply. I ask him whether he notified councils that he would introduce this legislation so that they would have an opportunity of protesting to the Government if they wanted to. Recently I heard the Premier say that the Government had a mandate from the people to introduce certain legislation, but it has no mandate from councils to bring down this Bill. My council was not notified of this legislation. Councils should be given an opportunity to protest.

Mr. RICHES—The only information about this Bill that councils have had has been from press reports, but they thought the legislation affected only metropolitan councils. They would not know that it affected every municipality unless they had received a copy of the Bill. Undoubtedly it was introduced to correct a situation that developed in the metropolitan area so as to make it more difficult for the Marion Corporation to adopt the land values system, but in dealing with that problem every council that has adopted the land values system will be affected.

Mr. CORCORAN—I support Mr. Riches' remarks. Country councils would not realize that they were affected because this clause uses the word "urban." In the past the Minister has approached councils before introducing legislation such as this. I hope the clause will be defeated so that councils will have the opportunity of expressing their opinion.

Mr. QUIRKE—Under this clause there could be three contiguous areas with the one in the centre paying half the rates of the areas on either side. The clause does not envisage a

ward system of rating, for under it there can be different rates in the same ward, yet the roads passing through that ward will serve all properties in it. As Mr. Riches said, this clause was introduced as a result of what happened in our South-western suburbs. There are no less than 18 councils on land values rating, and all of them will be affected by this clause I firmly oppose it, and the next clause embodies the same principle.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—No, it has a different principle.

Mr. DAVIS—If this clause is passed some councils will be placed in an embarrassing position, including mine. The Port Pirie Council has imposed the highest possible rating, and it will not be able to carry on if this concession is granted.

The Committee divided on the clause:—

Ayes (17).—Messrs. Brookman, Christian, Geoffrey Clarke, Dunnage, Fletcher, Goldney, Hawker, Heaslip, Hincks, William Jenkins, McIntosh (teller), Pearson, Playford, Shannon, Stott, Teusner, and Travers.

Noes (13).—Messrs. Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan, Hutchens, Jennings, Lawn, Macgillivray, McAlees, O'Halloran (teller), Quirke, Riches, Stephens, and Frank Walsh.

Pairs.—Ayes—Mr. Michael, Sir George Jenkins, and Mr. Pattinson. Noes—Messrs. John Clark, Tapping, and Fred Walsh.

Majority of 4 for the Ayes.

Clause thus passed.

Clause 14—"General rates in district."

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I ask the Committee to oppose this clause. It is open to various objections. Whilst it may be generally accepted that land within townships requires greater services from the council than land outside townships that point is already provided for by section 214 of the Act which authorizes the levying of differential general rates on land within any road or part of a road. Thus, under section 214 the council can and often does impose on the township land or such part of it as is appropriate, a higher general rate than is imposed on land in other wards. If clause 14 becomes law not only would the council have power to impose these differential lighting and sanitary rates on township land, which relate to the greater part of the special services given to township ratepayers but, in addition, the general rate on the township land would have to be at least twice as much as the general rate on other land in the area. It can also occur that the township boundary includes land used for agricultural purposes as it not infrequently happens that land which is legally within the boundaries of a township is not used for urban purposes. The result would be that agricultural land which happens to be within the boundaries of a township could be subject to a general rate at least twice as great as the general rate on agricultural land outside the boundary. The clause was opposed by the Government in the Legislative Council and I ask members to support the Government's action.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I cannot understand why the Government has asked members to oppose this clause, when it forced a division on clause 13. Broadly speaking, the principle in the two clauses is the same. I understand that some people in the Marion corporation area owning broad acres objected to the rating system proposed by the council. It was said that land used for vegetable growing and other agricultural pursuits could not stand the rating imposed. About 1910 when Lloyd George was Chancellor of the Exchequer in Great Britain the question of land values was a live one. The landowners said that if a land values system was introduced they would have to sell their land. Lloyd George said he would meet them half way and promised to buy their land at the value they placed on it. The position in Marion might be met if there were an offer by the Crown to purchase the broad acres.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—I ask the Committee to oppose the clause.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Up to the present councils have been able to say how and when their revenue should be collected. I would have liked to delete clause 13 as well as this one. I cannot follow the Government's line of reasoning. An ex-member of this place, Mr. E. J. Craigie, has provided members with some information on this matter and he points out that the position of the Barmera District Council is illuminating. He said:—

> At present the township is rated at 1s. 3d. in the pound and land outside at 1s. 2d. in the pound. Under the new Bill the township will either have to be increased to 2s. 4d. in the pound or the land outside reduced to 7½d.

I cannot understand why the Minister wants this clause deleted when he was emphatic about clause 13 being accepted.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—There is a lot of land in townships that can be described as urban or rural land. Some places described as townships are not really townships. It is only in isolated instances that this clause would apply. I suggest that townships should not be given the same benefit as the urban areas.

Mr. QUIRKE—Clause 13 applied to the area that caused all the trouble, whereas clause 14 does not. Having passed clause 13, we have resolved the difficulties in that area and there is no necessity for this clause.

Clause negatived.

Clause 15—"Expenditure of revenue."

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I move—

After "amended" to insert "(*a*) by inserting after paragraph (*d*) of subsection (1) thereof the following paragraph:—

(*d*1) reimbursing any mayor or councillor for any loss of income caused by attendance at meetings of the council or the carrying out of any council business."

This amendment has been discussed over a period of years by municipal associations. It is designed to provide that the widest possible selection may be exercised by ratepayers in choosing their councillors by virtue of the fact that no ratepayer would fail to nominate for a vacancy in a council because of the fear of pecuniary loss. It is particularly onerous on members of country councils who sometimes have come to Adelaide on deputations that they should have to lose wages. Councils have no power to recompense them. Recently in a local government area in my electorate a councillor, in order to protect the interests of his council and to ensure that its work was continued as it should be, had to abandon his business and involve himself in considerable expense, and it was not competent for that council to recompense him in any way. This is an eminently just amendment.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—On the face of it this amendment seems to be fair, but difficulties will arise if it is accepted. For instance, what will be proper recompense? A man in business on his own behalf may lose substantially when attending to council business. If a shearer were a member of the council he might lose £8 or £9 a day. On the other hand, an ordinary wage earner may only lose a small amount. Provision is now made in the Local Government Act for payment of allowances to the mayor or chairman and the payment of travelling expenses of members of councils but the policy consistently followed by the Act is that service in a council is to be honorary. The proposal put forward in the amendment has been considered on a number of occasions by the Local Government Advisory Committee which has always recommended against the proposal and has recommended that the present policy of honorary service be continued. The amendment, if enacted as law, would cause some difficulty in administration as a councillor desiring to be recouped for loss of revenue would have to submit his claim and, obviously, there could be very great variations in the amounts which would be payable to different councillors. Up to the present time service on a council has been regarded as honorary. Once it is made otherwise the whole system of local government will be destroyed. I ask the Committee not to agree to the amendment.

Mr. RICHES—I have never heard greater nonsense than the statement that by reimbursing members of a council for losses of revenue incurred by them in attending council work it would destroy the system of local government. This question is of grave importance to councils in industrial areas where positions must be filled by persons who are not their own masters and whose attendance on council business necessitates their losing wages. No person renders greater service to a council in an honorary capacity than the persons this amendment is designed to assist. I suggest that if members of metropolitan councils were required to lose one-fifth of their weekly incomes every time they attended a meeting there would not be any local government in the city. This measure does not specifically apply to reimbursement for attendance at meetings. In most country places meetings are held in the evening. However, a council occasionally, by resolution, requests a member to represent it on a deputation. The ratepayers do not expect that a man should suffer financial loss by virtue of his representing them.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—A council has the means of recompensing a man.

Mr. RICHES—A council can pay his travelling expenses and in many district councils that is done. Farmers who are council members can come to town, do their shopping and attend council meetings on market days and receive travelling expenses. If a worker on wages who is carrying his full share of responsibility of citizenship in the town in which he lives is called upon to render any service to his council during the daytime, he must do it at the expense of his home budget. This amendment will empower councils who require a member to perform some special duty on its behalf to reimburse him for loss of wages. Every elected member of the Whyalla Town Commission who attends a meeting in the daytime does so at the expense of his wages, and with one exception every member of the corporation of Port Augusta who attends any function in the daytime suffers a loss in wages. The result

is that members do not attend deputations or meetings in the daytime. Country councils cannot always arrange deputations at night. Frequently departmental officers visit country areas to discuss important subjects with councils, but they cannot remain in the town all day and as a result several councillors are never available to attend meetings with departmental officers. Councils should be entrusted to vote expenses to a man they ask to represent them at deputations or to perform special duties which may result in his incurring a financial loss. The services by wage-earner members of councils I have been associated with are second to none. There is no honour and glory attached to their positions. On many occasions this question has been discussed by municipal associations and on at least three occasions the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association has supported this proposal.

Mr. DAVIS—I support the amendment. The Port Pirie Council has sought such a provision for many years because most of its members are men employed in industry. As a matter of fact, at the present time only one member is a business man. It is not fair to ask any man working in industry to lose wages in attending to council business. We are in an unhappy position in Port Pirie. The Port Pirie Corporation is affiliated with the Municipal Association, and it always desires to be represented at its meetings. If I am not available we have no representation unless we are fortunate enough to have a councillor on holidays who can come to Adelaide without losing pay. In Port Augusta and Port Pirie there are deputy mayors who act as mayor in the absence of Mr. Riches or myself. Many visitors go to those towns and the deputy mayor has to receive them. Is it fair that he should have to suffer loss of pay? No working man can afford to lose a day's wages. Ratepayers would be unanimously in favour of reimbursing a councillor's loss of pay.

Mr. WHITE—I oppose the amendment. Previous speakers have stated that councillors lose pay when visiting Adelaide on council business, but the farmer's time is just as valuable as the time of the man working in industry. I have been associated with local government for many years, but I have never heard any requests for reimbursing a councillor for loss of pay. Most councillors are anxious to do something for the community in which they live and they are prepared to make monetary sacrifices. If councillors were reimbursed the cost of local government would be considerably increased and possibly a racket would develop, if I may use that word.

Mr. STOTT—I have discussed this question with several local government officers in my electorate, but the opinion was that most councillors do not favour such a provision. Therefore, I oppose the amendment.

Mr. DAVIS—I have never heard such a ridiculous argument as that put forward by Mr. White. He cast reflections on certain mayors and councillors. It is all very well for him to say that councillors are prepared to lose money when on council business, but no fair-minded person would ask them to do so. Many people would be only too happy to pay councillors for the work they do.

Mr. O'Halloran—Don't you see that members opposite want to restrict the field from which councillors can be drawn?

Mr. DAVIS—Of course they do. They only want monied people on councils. Why should country councillors be expected to go to Adelaide on council business and lose money? Probably most councillors in Mr. White's electorate are wealthy farmers and do not expect to have their expenses reimbursed, but a working man cannot afford to lose money.

Mr. RICHES—I have supported this amendment on behalf of a number of councillors in the north of this State and I resent Mr. White's remarks that it might become a racket. I am prepared to trust the councils that I know. There is nothing mandatory about the amendment. Most councillors are happy to give their services in an honorary capacity and to make financial sacrifices, but many of them can ill-afford to lose time from work. Councils should be given the power to reimburse them. When a similar amendment was debated previously the Minister doubted whether any employer would dock an employee's pay for being absent on council business, but the Broken Hill Proprietary Company Limited and the Commonwealth Railways do. Councils realize that these people cannot afford to lose a day's pay, and often they are embarrassed in asking a councillor to represent them at deputations or meetings. The ratepayers would know whether the power was being abused.

Mr. DAVIS—The members of the Port Pirie Council favour the amendment, and I therefore support it.

The Committee divided on the amendment:—

Ayes (12).—Messrs. John Clark, Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan, Hutchens, Jennings, Lawn, McAlees, O'Halloran (teller), Riches, Stephens, and Frank Walsh.

Noes (21).—Messrs. Brookman, Christian, Geoffrey Clarke, Dunnage, Fletcher, Goldney Hawker, Heaslip, Hincks, William Jenkins, Macgillivray, McIntosh (teller), Michael, Pearson, Playford, Quirke, Shannon, Stott, Teusner, Travers, and White.

Pairs.—Ayes—Messrs. Tapping and Fred Walsh. Noes—Sir George Jenkins and Mr. Pattinson.

Majority of 9 for the Noes.

Amendment thus negatived; clause passed.

Clauses 16 to 22 passed.

Clause 23—''Septic tanks.''

Mr. RICHES—Does this clause transfer powers from the local boards of health to the Central Board of Health? My experience has been that the Central Board of Health is understaffed and unable to cope with the work of policing septic tank installations.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—If a council insists on the installation of a septic tank and the resident does not consider it desirable, the Central Board of Health will be the final authority to which the resident may appeal.

The clause does not take away any powers from the council; it gives the residents the right of appeal to the Central Board of Health.

Mr. QUIRKE—The impervious nature of the soil in the parts of the Clare district makes difficult the satisfactory operation of septic tanks under the ordinary method of effluent disposal. Other means of disposal have been found to overcome the difficulty. In the Clare corporation area every new house is required to install a septic tank. In all houses built in recent years septic systems have been installed, and with one or two exceptions they have worked satisfactorily. The Central Board of Health should not have full power in opposition to the local authority.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—The intention is that the Central Board of Health would intervene only where there was a dispute between the landowner and the council.

Mr. RICHES—I cannot read that into the subsection. It is not only a question of appeal. The council cannot agree to septic tanks being installed until the Central Board of Health has been approached. I do not know of any area where a council has insisted on septic tanks when they cannot be installed. I move:—

That paragraph (*g*) be deleted.

Mr. QUIRKE—I cannot see any need for the provision in the clause. Why should the Clare council have to appeal to the Central Board of Health for approval regarding an area about which it knows nothing? The local body is not likely to do anything to the detriment of the health of the town. How could an inspector from Adelaide say whether an area is suitable or unsuitable for the installation of septic tanks?

Mr. STOTT—I think the position would be met if the following words were deleted:—

No resolution of the council under subsection (1) or subsection (1a) shall have any force or legal effect unless the passing of the resolution is approved as aforesaid by the Central Board of Health.

I cannot see any objection to getting a report from the central authority, and then if the local council does not agree with it the report need not be accepted.

Mr. QUIRKE—How could a central authority inspector take soundings and put down bore holes to see whether or not land is suitable for septic tank purposes? Take, for example, the building of 10 houses in the Clare district. Some of the blocks may have good drainage and others bad drainage. Who in the central office would be qualified to say whether or not the land there was suitable for septic tank purposes? Must a report be obtained in respect of every block where a house is to be built? Apparently someone has had a bright idea and we are being asked to agree to something that is ridiculous.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The honourable member overlooks the fact that under existing law the Council has power to require any person to put in a septic tank. Previously I used the word ''appeal''; perhaps a sort of ''O.K.'' would have been better—a kind of liaison between the council on the one hand and the ratepayers on the other. To contend that they would have to put down bores in every case is too ridiculous. They would probably take the word of the council, plus their own knowledge and that of the Mines Department. Never to my knowledge has a council stated that throughout the whole of an area septic tanks must be installed. Before they can require people to do that they must have the sanction of the Central Board of Health, and therefore it would become a matter of negotiation.

Mr. Riches—Is there a case where it has been necessary?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Yes. Has the honourable member ever found the Central Board of Health anything but helpful?

Mr. Quirke—The Minister says the Central Board of Health has invariably accepted the word of the council. If so why does he want this provision?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—If it is struck out it removes a safeguard for the citizen.

Mr. QUIRKE—Corporations and councils are noted for the way in which they safeguard the rights of citizens, and the Minister condemns himself out of his own mouth. If a council says that a septic tank shall be installed and it is not thought desirable by the person concerned an appeal can be made to the Central Board of Health, and the board says, "No, dig a pit." There is not a responsible local governing body that would act that way. It has been proved beyond doubt in some places in Clare that it is impossible to put in a septic tank and we do not insist on that resolution.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—Don't you think the Central Board of Health would agree with that?

Mr. QUIRKE—But why make all this procedure necessary? Why centralize the whole thing?

Mr. Riches—I think if it were an appeal it would be acceptable.

Mr. QUIRKE—Yes, but if we have a resolution and it has been acted upon we will have to repeal it before we can apply to the Central Board of Health. The whole thing is futile. Have there been cases of extreme victimization of people which necessitates the calling in of the Central Board of Health? This is the sort of thing which clutters up the Local Government Act without serving any useful purpose.

The Committee divided on Mr. Riches' amendment to strike out paragraph (*g*)—

Ayes (16).—John Clark, Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan, Fletcher, Hutchens, Jennings, Macgillivray, McAlees, O'Halloran, Quirke, Riches (teller), Stephens, Stott, Frank Walsh, and Fred Walsh.

Noes (16).—Messrs. Brookman, Christian, Geoffrey Clarke, Dunnage, Goldney, Hawker, Heaslip, Hincks, William Jenkins, McIntosh (teller), Michael, Pearson, Shannon, Teusner, Travers, and White.

Pairs.—(Ayes)—Messrs. Tapping and Lawn. Noes (16)—Sir George Jenkins, Mr. Pattinson.

The CHAIRMAN—There are sixteen Ayes and sixteen Noes. As the matter is still subject to further consideration I give my vote to the "Noes" and so the amendment is lost.

Clause passed.

Clauses 24 and 25 passed.

Clause 26—"Blasting."

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—There is an amendment on the files in my name, but it is not very important and I do not propose to proceed with it.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—If that is the position I would like some information on this clause. I think all members who have any portion of their electorates in the Town of Mitcham have received a letter touching this matter. I believe certain by-laws were amended in 1951 to permit councils to have some control over quarrying operations.

The Hon. M. McIntosh—I am not restricting the powers of councils by not proceeding with the amendment.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I have no objection to the supervision of the Mines Department over the working of quarries, but I understand that the Mitcham Corporation has had trouble over the question of carrying on operations in a certain quarry, although it is not in my own electorate. Prior to 1951 certain quarrying operations which were carried on were not in the best interests of nearby residents. The operation known as "blistering" resulted in severe concussion and had a detrimental effect on nearby houses. Can the Minister assure me that this clause will enable corporations to exercise necessary control over certain quarrying operations, including blistering?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Paragraph (38a) of section 667 of the Act provides that a council may make by-laws for regulating and controlling quarrying and blasting operations. Subclause (1) of this clause provides that no such by-law is to apply to blasting operations in a mine which is subject to the Mines and Works Inspection Act. It is intended by the clause that the council will have power to make a by-law under which the council would have power to decide whether a quarry should be started or not in the particular locality having regard to its development and so on, but that the control of the quarrying operations should be left to the Mines Department and not be subject to the council's by-law. The Director of Mines has suggested that this demarcation of authority should be made plainer and this would be done by the amendments I proposed moving. The by-law making power would be altered to provide that the council might make by-laws requiring a licence to be obtained before a quarry is opened. Thus, it would be for the council, if it made a by-law, to decide whether the site in question was suitable for a quarry. The amendments also provided that the by-law was not to apply to the regulation of the quarrying operations; that would be

left to the Department of Mines. After discussion Cabinet decided that the amendments would curtail the powers of councils and would not be of much value.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Section 670 of the Act provides that any district council may make by-laws for all or any of certain purposes in addition to the by-laws under section 667. Does section 670 still apply when a district council becomes a municipality or corporation?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I am afraid I do not quite understand the question. My amendment would have restricted the councils. The Parliamentary Draftsman has advised me that councils still have the power to make by-laws relating to the control of quarries. The only thing done by the clause is to restrict the council's powers as to blasting. It is inherent in the powers of a council to say where a quarry might be. It is desirable that that power should be retained. On the other hand, when it comes to a question of the physical working of a quarry the Mines Department would say whether it was safe.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Frequently blistering at quarries causes severe concussion to nearby homes. Blistering, being a physical operation, would come under the control of the Mines Department. Do councils have to make representations to the Mines Department in respect of blistering which they consider causes unnecessary noise?

The Hon. M. McIntosh—The Mines Department and the councils work together amicably.

Clause passed.

Remaining clauses (27 to 33) passed.

New clause 2a—"Voting at elections."

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I move to insert the following new clause:—

2a. Section 120 of the principal Act is amended by striking out the words, "by making a cross, having its point of intersection within the square opposite the name of the candidate" in paragraph VIII thereof and by inserting in lieu thereof the words "by marking the voting paper in manner provided by section 120a."

I want to supersede the present method of voting by crosses and introduce the preferential system. The object is to make the principle of voting uniform with that adopted at elections for the House of Representatives, the House of Assembly and the Legislative Council, where electors vote with figures. I suggest that we remove the last relic of the old first-past-the-post electoral system of voting with crosses. I acknowledge my debt to the Parliamentary Draftsman for his preparation of my new amendments.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—On the face of it the amendment appears logical, and under ordinary circumstances I would be able to support it, but I have taken the advice of those who control elections. I think the Committee would have great regard for the opinion of the Assistant Parliamentary Draftsman, who is also chairman of the Local Government Advisory Committee, and I therefore quote him as an authority on the question. He says:—

The preferential system applies to State and Commonwealth Parliamentary elections and, at first sight, it would appear desirable to have the same system at local government elections. However, the preferential system is not ideally suited to local government elections. In many local government elections, only one candidate is to be elected. This is the case in municipal councils where the mayor or one councillor for each ward is to be elected. In such cases, however, it is unusual for there to be more than two candidates and, consequently, there is no necessity for preferential voting and a transfer of preferences. Thus, in practice there would, in most cases, be no different result if the voting were by crosses or according to the preferential system.

In instances, however, a local government election requires two or more candidates to be elected. This can occur in aldermanic elections and occurs with some frequency in district council elections. Some district councils are not divided into wards and several councillors are elected at the same time at the one election. In other cases, where the district is divided into wards, the town ward has three or more members, so that at some elections, two members have to be elected for the same ward. It is generally recognized that the preferential system is open to objection when applied to multiple electorates and these objections would particularly apply to these elections in the country.

The counting of the votes in such a case and the allotting of preferences is a matter of difficulty and productive of delay. The carrying out of such a system would, if adopted for local government, be required to be carried out by returning officers from country councils who would, in instances, lack the experience necessary to perform the duties efficiently. Another objection is that the preferential system, when applied to multiple electorates, usually leads to a "ticket" under which candidates seek to exchange preferences. This would introduce an element into council elections which is now largely lacking and which most people would desire to keep out of local government. Proposals for preferential voting have on several occasions been considered by the Local Government Advisory Committee which has recommended against their adoption. I suggest that the new clause be not accepted. It was opposed by the Government in the Legislative Council.

This advisory committee has studied the position in all parts of the State over a long period and has refused to countenance the honourable member's proposal.

Mr. DAVIS—The principle of voting proposed applies in the election of members of the House of Assembly, and therefore I suggest that the amendment be accepted.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The Minister put up the most ineffectual argument that could be conceived. He said the system would not work because in many districts we have single representation in wards. He then mentioned that in other districts there was multiple representation. There may be some councils where there are more than two representatives in a ward, but I have not heard of them. Usually, where there are two they alternate in their retirement. His suggestion that district clerks who were returning officers for council elections would not be able to undertake the preferential system of voting is an unwarranted reflection upon a very competent body of men. District clerks have to pass an examination which eminently qualifies them to count the simple preferential vote and allocate the preferences. Most of those who are returning officers at council elections in the area I have had anything to do with are, according to the Minister, not competent to undertake a simple municipal election on the basis of preferential voting; and yet some of these men are presiding officers and subdivisional returning officers for Federal and State elections where many votes are involved and more difficulties are encountered. The Minister's arguments are not valid. There is virtue in having uniformity in matters of this kind. At Federal and State elections a number of votes are rejected as informal because the vote has been recorded with a cross. It is this continuation of the system of electing councillors with crosses that perpetuates informal voting at Parliamentary elections. When people go to the polls they do not know whether they have to vote by numbers or crosses. I hope the amendment will be carried.

Mr. RICHES—I support the amendment because it will ensure greater uniformity and simplicity and promote electoral justice. In the last two municipal elections at Port Augusta three candidates were nominated for one ward and in each case the successful candidate was elected with less than half the number of votes cast, which does not necessarily reflect the opinion of the ratepayers. However, that argument does not make much impression on members opposite because they can see nothing wrong with a candidate being elected with a minority vote.

The Committee divided on the new clause—

Ayes (15).—Messrs. Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan, Fletcher, Hutchens, Jennings, Macgillivray, McAlees, O'Halloran (teller), Quirke, Riches, Stephens, Stott, Frank Walsh, and Fred Walsh.

Noes (16).—Messrs. Brookman, Christian, Geoffrey Clarke, Dunnage, Goldney, Hawker, Heaslip, Hincks, Jenkins, McIntosh (teller), Pearson, Playford, Shannon, Teusner, Travers and White.

Pairs.—Ayes—Messrs. John Clark, Lawn, and Tapping. Noes—Messrs. Michael and Pattinson, and Sir George Jenkins.

Majority of 1 for the Noes.

New clause 2a thus negatived.

New clause 17a—"Power to write off rates."

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I move to insert the following new clause—

17a. Section 298 of the principal Act is amended by adding at the end of subsection (2) thereof the words "or unless the council is satisfied that the payment of the rates or amount would, by reason of the necessitous circumstances of the person by whom the rates or amount is payable, inflict grave hardship on that person."

The intention is to give councils the power to write off rates in cases where insistence on payment would inflict hardship. This is a principle that has been accepted in most other States and it is supported by many local government authorities in South Australia. It has everything to commend it.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—We must realize that we are trustees for local government authorities, and by passing this new clause we should be giving away some of their rights and powers.

Mr. Riches—No.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—At any rate, they could be forced to take action under duress. The effect of the new clause is to give a council power to write off rates where the council is satisfied that, by reason of the necessitous circumstances of the ratepayer, it would inflict grave hardship to require payment. Section 298 already provides that a council may write off rates but this can only be done if the council's auditor certifies that, in his opinion, all reasonable efforts have been made to recover the debt and that it is not reasonably recoverable. This provision is totally different to what is now proposed. The view accepted in the past has been that a council should not

have power to remit rates although it has been provided that, in certain cases, the council may remit interest payable on overdue amounts.

A ratepayer expects and receives various services from the council and, whilst in some instances the ratepayer may find it difficult to pay his rates, the services given to ratepayers must be paid for in some manner and if not paid for by the particular ratepayer must be paid for by other ratepayers. If a council had power to remit rates, this could possibly lead to discrimination between ratepayers, and it would most certainly place an onerous and unpleasant duty on councils to deal with cases where application for rate remissions are made. A similar amendment was opposed by the Government in the Legislative Council and I therefore suggest that the new clause be not accepted. I do not know of any council that has been harsh in demanding the payment of rates. Many councils have waited years before making any claim, and I am sure they can be entrusted to do a fair thing.

[*Midnight.*]

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I thought the Minister and the Committee would accept the amendment without demur, but there is now an obligation on me to put the case as forcibly as I can. Victoria has had a provision similar to this for many years, but I have heard of no duress against any council there. Most other States have similar provisions. The Port Adelaide Corporation has written to members asking them to accept some provision on these lines, and I have received similar requests from others. The Minister said we should be taking certain powers from councils if we passed this new clause.

We are doing no such thing, but are giving councils power to deal with each case on its merits. If the merits of the case are such that councils feel that an exemption should be granted, they should be the best judges. In these days of additional costs, they have increased charges to obtain additional revenue, and these have been imposed on people on low incomes. As the rate has risen, the hardship has increased. The Minister suggested that these people could leave the matter until the owner of the property died, as the arrears could be collected from the trustees. However, I point out that that can be done under my amendment, except that it would be done openly rather than in a back door manner as suggested by the Minister. The Minister also said that the councils might be subjected to duress, but the only point he made was that the rate revenue of a council must be sufficient to meet its commitments, and if any arrears have to be met someone else has to pay the revenue to meet them. That is sufficient guarantee that this will be satisfactorily administered if conferred on councils. I ask the committee to accept the amendment.

Mr. JENNINGS—The Minister claimed that this proposal was a stricture on councils. However it should be perfectly obvious that that is not so; it is something that increases their powers. It is an expression of confidence in them, because it imposes on them the right to remit if they desire to do something helpful to people in necessitous circumstances. Requests were made by many councils for this provision. They did not ask us to reduce rates to pensioners, and this has not been mentioned by the Leader of the Opposition. What we seek is to grant this prerogative to councils and if they in their wisdom want to do it, they should be empowered to do so. We have seen an example recently in which this Parliament was not prepared to increase the powers of councils in regard to their privilege to increase rates. I support the amendment.

Mr. WHITE—I oppose the amendment. Councils have power to remit rates, but it should not be made too easy, otherwise they would be placed in an awkward position. People should pay rates as a contribution to the maintenance of the area in which they live. Power exists under section 298 to deal with cases in which people cannot pay.

Mr. DAVIS—The Minister has told us that someone else will have to pay if the councils assist pensioners or people in necessitous circumstances, yet in a previous clause the Government was prepared to relieve people living off two acres of land at the expense of other ratepayers. There is power to allow rates to accumulate until pensioners die. All we desire is to assist many old people who are not able to meet their rates, yet this Government is not prepared to accept the amendment. The honourable member for Murray (Mr. White) expressed an opinion that is not that of his council. This matter was defeated on the vote of the chairman of the conference, but Mr. White voted against the amendment. Councils should be given the right to remit the rates owing by pensioners.

Mr. RICHES—The Minister of Works, when he was Minister of Local Government, frequently advised councils to increase their revenue by raising their rates, but I point out that many councils find that the limiting factor in the declaration of a rate is the capacity of

pensioners to pay. If councils were given the proposed power they could make a more realistic approach to the problem of rate fixation.

Mr. Travers—It is the property that must pay and not the person.

Mr. RICHES—The property owners must pay the rates and in many cases they are age pensioners. This proposal was submitted to the Municipal Association in the form of relief to pensioners, and the motion at the city conference—a rather conservative gathering—was defeated only on the casting vote of the chairman. Members should have regard to the request from councils for this power and vote for the clause.

The Committee divided on the new clause:—

Ayes (11).—Messrs. Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan, Hutchens, Jennings, McAlees, O'Halloran (teller), Riches, Stephens, Frank Walsh, and Fred Walsh.

Noes (20).—Messrs. Brookman, Christian, Geoffrey Clarke, Dunnage, Fletcher, Goldney, Hawker, Heaslip, Hincks, William Jenkins, Macgillivray, McIntosh (teller), Pearson, Playford, Quirke, Shannon, Stott, Teusner, Travers, and White.

Pairs.—Ayes—Messrs. John Clark, Tapping, and Lawn. Noes—Mr. Michael, Sir George Jenkins, and Mr. Pattinson.

Majority of 9 for the Noes.

New clause thus negatived.

New clause 17a—"Erection of traffic islands, etc."

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I move to insert the following new clause:—

17a. Section 358 of the principal Act is amended—

(*a*) by inserting after the word "zones" in the fourth line thereof the words "traffic islands, roundabouts,";

(*b*) by inserting therein after subsection (1) thereof the following subsection:—

(1a) Before commencing to erect any traffic island or roundabout in the roadway of any public street, road, or place, the council shall give to the Commissioner of Highways notice in writing of its intention and shall supply to the Commissioner a plan of the locality at which it is proposed to erect the traffic island or roundabout and full particulars of the situation, shape, dimensions and manner of construction thereof.

The Commissioner may approve of the erection of the traffic island or roundabout in the manner proposed by the council or may approve thereof subject to such modifications thereof as the Commissioner deems advisable or may refuse to approve thereof. The Commissioner shall not approve of any traffic island or roundabout unless satisfied that it is necessary for the proper regulation of traffic and that it will be constructed so that, so far as is reasonably possible, it will not damage vehicles driven onto or against it.

If the Commissioner does not approve of the proposal of the council or if the Commissioner approves thereof subject to modifications and the council is not satisfied with the decision of the Commissioner, the council may submit the matter to the Minister, whose decision shall be final.

No traffic island or roundabout shall be erected in the roadway of any public street, road, or place unless the approval of the Commissioner or Minister is given thereto as provided by this subsection.

(*c*) by striking out the word "or" last occurring in the third line of subsection (2) thereof;

(*d*) by inserting after the word "zone" in the penultimate line thereof the words "traffic island or roundabout."

This new clause gives effect to recommendations of the State Traffic Committee relating to the construction of traffic islands and roundabouts in roadways. The committee recently considered the question of the design of these structures both with regard to whether some of those which have been constructed achieve the desired purpose and whether they provide traffic hazards. The committee heard evidence from a number of engineers and others concerned with the problems involved and came to the conclusion that the law should provide that before a council erects a traffic island or roundabout in a roadway, the proposal should be referred to and considered by the Commissioner of Highways and that his approval, either to the scheme proposed by the council or with any modifications thought desirable by the Commissioner, should be necessary before the proposal was carried out.

It was considered by the committee that in the event of the council being dissatisfied with the Commissioner's decision, the council could refer the matter to the Minister for final decision. New clause 17a accordingly gives effect to the recommendations of the State Traffic Committee. Section 358 of the Local Government Act authorizes a council to erect safety islands, safety zones and certain other structures in public streets and roads, but does not specifically refer to safety islands or roundabouts. The new clause extends the powers given by section 358 to traffic islands and roundabouts. The clause also provides that before a traffic island or roundabout is erected in the roadway of any street or road, the proposal is to be submitted to the Commissioner of Highways who may approve of the proposal or may approve of it with such modifications as he thinks desirable.

If the council is not satisfied with the decision of the Commissioner requiring modifications to its proposals or if the Commissioner refuses approval to the proposal, the council may refer the matter to the Minister whose decision in the matter is to be final. The effect, therefore, is that a traffic island or roundabout is not to be erected by a council unless its design is approved by the Commissioner of Highways or, in an appropriate case, by the Minister. It is considered that these structures should only be erected where the design achieves the desired purpose of regulating the flow of traffic in the interests of safety and when the structures themselves will not create a traffic hazard. It is also considered that, by requiring the plans of a proposed traffic island or roundabout to be subject to the appeal provided for by the clause, these objectives will be achieved.

New clause inserted.

New clause 29a—"Compulsory voting at elections and polls."

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I move to insert the following new clause:—

29a. The following section is enacted and inserted in the principal Act after section 766 thereof:—

766a. (1) It shall be the duty of every ratepayer entitled to vote at any election or poll to record his vote at that election or poll.

(2) It shall be the duty of the returning officer at the close of every election or poll to prepare a list of the names, addresses and description of the ratepayers entitled to vote at the election or poll who have not voted thereat, and to certify the list by statutory declaration under his hand.

(3) The list so certified shall in all proceedings be *prima facie* evidence of the contents thereof and of the fact that the ratepayers whose names appear thereon did not vote at the election or poll.

(4) Within three months after the close of every election or poll the returning officer shall send by post to each ratepayer whose name appears on the list prepared in accordance with subsection (2) at the address mentioned in that list, a notice notifying the ratepayer that he appears to have failed to vote at the election or poll, and calling upon him to give, within the time specified in the notice (which time shall be not less than twenty-one days after the posting thereof) and upon the form to be sent with the notice, a valid, truthful and sufficient explanation of his apparent failure to vote: Provided that the returning officer need not send a notification in any case where he is satisfied that the ratepayer—

(*a*) is dead; or

(*b*) was not entitled to vote at the election or poll.

(5) Every ratepayer to whom a notice under this section is sent shall fill up the form sent with the notice and state in it the true reason why he failed to vote, sign the form, and post the form, duly witnessed, so as to reach the returning officer not later than the date specified in the notice.

(6) If any ratepayer is unable, by reason of absence from his place of living or physical incapacity, to fill up, sign and post the form within the time aforesaid, any other person who has personal knowledge of the facts may fill up, sign and post the form, duly witnessed, within that time, and the filling up, signing, and posting of the form may be treated as compliance by the ratepayer with the provisions of subsection (5).

(7) Upon receipt of a form referred to in subsection (5) or subsection (6) the returning officer shall indorse on the list prepared in accordance with subsection (2), opposite the name of the ratepayer, his opinion whether or not the reason contained in the form is a valid and sufficient reason for the failure of the ratepayer to vote.

(8) The returning officer shall also indorse on the list opposite the name of every ratepayer to whom a notice under this section has been sent and from or on behalf of whom a form properly filled up and signed and witnessed has not been received, a note to that effect.

(9) The list prepared and indorsed by the returning officer indicating—

(*a*) the names of the ratepayers who did not vote at the election or poll;

(*b*) the names of the ratepayers from whom or on whose behalf the returning officer received within the time allowed under subsection (4) forms properly filled up and signed; and

(*c*) the names of the ratepayers who failed to reply within that time,

and any extract therefrom, certified by the returning officer under his hand, shall in all proceedings be *prima facie* evidence of the contents of such list or extract and of the fact that the ratepayers whose names appear therein did not vote at the election or poll, and that the notice specified in subsection (4) was received by those ratepayers, and that those ratepayers did, or did not, as the case may be, comply with the requisitions contained in the notice within the time allowed under subsection (4).

(10) Every ratepayer being entitled to vote at any election or poll who—

(*a*) fails to vote at the election or poll without a valid and sufficient reason for such failure; or

(*b*) on receipt of a notice in accordance with such section (4) fails to fill up, sign and post within the time allowed under subsection (4) the form duly witnessed sent with the notice; or

(*c*) states in such form a false reason for not having voted, or in the case of a person filling up or purporting to fill up a form on behalf of a ratepayer in pursuance of subsection (6), states in such form a false reason why the ratepayer did not vote,

shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a penalty of not less than ten shillings and not more than two pounds.

This clause provides for the application of the principle of compulsory voting at council elections.

New clause negatived.

Schedule and title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

Later the Legislative Council intimated that it had agreed to the House of Assembly's amendments.

PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

ROAD TRANSPORT ADMINISTRATION (BARRING OF CLAIMS) BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

WEST BEACH RECREATION RESERVE BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

URANIUM MINING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

It deals with the employment of officers by the Government on uranium mining and treatment projects. In 1952 the Government decided that for the speedy and efficient development of Radium Hill it was desirable that the Public Service Act should not apply to the employment of the officers there. It was felt that the high salaries which it would be necessary to offer would not be consistent with public service classifications and the procedures of the Public Service Act relating to applications, promotions and appeals were too cumbersome, having regard to the nature of the undertaking A proclamation was accordingly issued under the Public Service Act declaring that the Act should not apply to the employment of officers at Radium Hill. This proclamation left officers already employed at Radium Hill under the Public Service Act. Recently the question arose whether the employment of officers at Port Pirie Chemical Treatment Works should also be not subject to the Public Service Act.

The same considerations apply to the employment of officers on this venture as to the employment of officers at Radium Hill, and the Government decided that the Public Service Act should not apply to their employment. The status of public servants already employed on that project was considered and the Government came to the conclusion that those officers should not remain under the Public Service Act but they should nevertheless, not lose the rights which they had acquired under that Act up to the time and, further, that their service in that project should be counted as service under the Public Service Act if they desired, at any time, to re-enter the public service. It was thought also that officers of the public service who should, in future, take employment at Port Pirie should be given similar privileges if they desired at any time to re-enter the Public Service.

Further, the Government thought that the service of an officer employed at Port Pirie who was not previously a public servant should count as service under the Public Service Act should he at any time apply for a position in the public service. This scheme cannot be effected by proclamation under the Public Service Act and, accordingly, the Government is introducing this Bill. It provides, therefore, for the employment of officers subject to special conditions for the purpose of the Uranium Mining Act, and for those officers to have special privileges under the Public Service Act. The benefit of the Bill will extend to all officers employed in works or undertakings carried on under the Uranium Mining Act. The Bill enables the Government to retain privileges for certain officers of the Public Service following on their transfer to the special project. We hope it will also enable the Government to get the highly qualified officers needed for the work. Such officers are hard to get and if we can offer more security we have a better chance of getting them.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I agree with the Premier that it is desirable for this power to be conferred upon the Minister of Mines. He will have the right to employ officers on conditions not provided for in the Public Service Act, and the rights and privileges under the Act would be retained for those officers if they desire at some future date to re-enter the Public Service. Clause 3 provides that the Minister of Mines may, for the purpose of exercising any of his powers, employ officers and servants on such terms and conditions as he thinks fit. That seems to be a very wide power to place in the hands of the Minister of Mines although I cannot see any alternative. I suppose matters of this kind, would, in the main be subject to Cabinet decision.

The Hon. T. Playford—Usually following a report by the Public Service Commissioner.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes, and no doubt after a while a standard will be set which will facilitate the smooth administration of this section. I support the second reading.

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

PUBLIC WORKS STANDING COMMITTEE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Public Works Standing Committee Act.

Read a first time.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its main object is to reduce the quorum at present required when the Public Works Standing Committee meets to consider a report of the Committee. The principal Act provides that the Committee shall consist of seven members. For ordinary purposes a quorum of four is required, but where the Committee sits to consider a report, a quorum of six is required. In both cases questions are decided by a majority vote of those present at the meeting. The Committee has recently pointed out to the Government that for various reasons in recent times the Committee has not been able on a number of occasions to obtain a quorum of six. This has led to unnecessary delay in the transaction of the business of the Committee. In order to overcome the difficulty, the Committee has suggested that where a report is to be considered by the Committee, the quorum should be five, but, at the same time, that the votes of four members should be required for the adoption of a report.

This will ensure that a report can only be adopted by a majority of all members and will, in fact, considerably improve the present position. Although it has always been the practice for a report of the Committee to be approved by a majority of the whole number of the Committee, it is technically possible at present, if the chairman used his casting vote, for a report to be adopted by the votes of only three members. The adoption of the Committee's suggestion will make this impossible. The Government has accepted the suggestion of the Committee and has included it in this Bill. The Government believes that it will, if adopted, facilitate the work of the Committee.

The Bill deals with another matter raised by the Committee. Section 28 of the principal Act requires the Committee to make a general report to the Governor before the commencement of each session of Parliament. In practice, the report of the Committee has been presented before the commencement of Parliament on only three occasions, on two of which it was presented on the opening day. Twice special sessions of Parliament have been held without a report being presented at all. The explanation for this is that the general report of the Committee has been regarded as an annual report, and has regularly been presented each year in July or August. In the circumstances the Committee has asked the Government whether section 28 could not be amended to provide for the present practice.

The Government thinks it desirable that the present practice of the Committee, which is no way contrary to the spirit of the principal Act and is convenient to all concerned, should continue. The Bill accordingly provides that the general report of the Committee should be made to the Governor on or before August 31, in each year, and that copies of the report should be laid before both Houses of Parliament within fourteen days of the presentation of the report, if Parliament is sitting, or within fourteen days of the commencement of the next session, if Parliament is not sitting.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—As explained by the Treasurer, the Bill deals with three matters—the quorum for determining questions, the quorum for the adoption of report, and the presentation of the annual report of the Committee to Parliament. I had some experience of the work of this Committee and I am satisfied that the amendments sought are warranted. I support the second reading.

Mr. STOTT (Ridley)—I support the second reading, but am disappointed that the Government has not seen fit to make a further amendment while this opportunity presents itself. The Act prescribes that all works estimated to cost more than £30,000 shall be referred to the Committee, and in reply to a question by me the Premier stated that the Government would consider increasing this figure to £90,000, but evidently Cabinet has decided against it. I think the time is opportune for Parliament to take this step in order to bring the figure into line with present-day values. Since the figure was prescribed in 1937 costs of materials and labour have increased three-fold and if the amount were increased to £90,000 it would enable Ministers to get reports from their officers in respect of schools, police courts and other smaller Government works and go ahead with them without submitting them to the Committee. I would like to take this

opportunity of testing the feeling of the House, but I cannot do so without moving a contingent Notice of Motion, and the time for doing that has passed.

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

Later the Bill was returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

NURSES' REGISTRATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from December 7. Page 1740.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This is another non-contentious Bill that I propose to send speeding on its way. It relates to the enrolment of young women who are being trained, mainly by the Mothers' and Babies' Health Association, in matters associated with mothercraft. They will be enrolled, not registered. I would have thought that a better name than "mothercraft nurses" might have been devised, because the title could lead to some confusion. The only other matter included in the Bill is to enable the Nurses' Registration Board to grant diplomas for certain types of specialized branches of nursing. That is in conformity with the practice in other States. I support the second reading.

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

METROPOLITAN AND EXPORT ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Consideration in Committee of the following amendments made by the Legislative Council:—

No. 1. Page 1 (clause 2)—Before paragraph (*a*) insert the following paragraphs:—

(*aa*) by striking out the word "seven" in subsection (2) thereof and by inserting in lieu thereof the word "eight";

(*ab*) by striking out the word "six" occurring in the first line of subsection (3) thereof and in the first line of subsection (4) thereof and by inserting in lieu thereof in each case the word "seven";

No. 2. Page 1, lines 16 and 17 (clause 2)—Leave out " the Stockowners' Association of South Australia."

No. 3. Page 1, line 21 (clause 2)—Add the following paragraph:—

(*a*1) by inserting after paragraph (*a*) of subsection (4) thereof the following paragraph:—

(*a*1) One shall be a person who in the Governor's opinion is suitable to represent breeders of sheep and cattle and is selected from three persons nominated by the Stockowners' Association of South Australia.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN (Minister of Agriculture)—The Government proposes to accept the amendments, the purpose of which is to increase the membership of the board by one, bringing the total to nine and providing for the extra member to represent the sheep and cattle people, who at present have no direct representative on the board.

Amendments agreed to.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT ADVISORY COUNCIL BILL.

Consideration in Committee of the following amendments made by the Legislative Council:—

No. 1. Page 2, lines 8, 9, and 10 (clause 5)—

Leave out "for three years calculated from the commencement of the year in which he was appointed" and insert "until the thirty-first day of December, nineteen hundred and fifty-seven and on that day the Council shall cease to exist."

No. 2. Page 3, line 32 (clause 14)—Add the following new subclause:—

(5) No order shall be made under this section after the thirty-first day of December, nineteen hundred and fifty-seven, but any orders made on or before that day shall remain in force after that day for such period as is necessary to give effect thereto.

No. 3. Page 3, line 41 (clause 15)—Add the following proviso:—

Provided that when taking evidence the council shall sit in public unless it is of opinion that the public interest or the interests of justice require that such evidence shall be taken in private.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—The object of the first two amendments is to provide that the proposed Transport Advisory Council will have a life of three years. If they are agreed to, the council will cease to exist at the end of 1957, and if then it is considered that it should continue there is nothing to stop Parliament from reviewing the position. The Legislative Council took the view that this was a new type of legislation and that it would be of advantage for Parliament to have the opportunity to review the position at the end of three years. Amendment No. 3 provides that when taking evidence the council must sit in public unless it considers that the interests of justice or the public interest require it to sit in private. I see no reason why the council should not take evidence in public in most cases and in special cases it could be taken privately. The amendments are reasonable and do not curtail the activities of the council and therefore I move that they be agreed to.

Amendments agreed to.

ELECTORAL DISTRICTS (REDIVISION) BILL.

Consideration in Committee of the following amendment made by the Legislative Council:—

Page 2, line 36 (clause 6)—Add the following words "and shall as far as practicable retain the existing boundaries of Council districts."

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—The Bill as presented to the House provided that in making new districts the commission would, as far as practicable, retain the existing Assembly districts. The Legislative Council has provided a similar provision concerning Council districts. I see no objection to the amendment and move that it be agreed to.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—There is a definite instruction to the commission to divide the State into five Council districts. There must be some redistributions in the metropolitan area as regards Council Districts No. 1 and No. 2. I consider that in the amendment the Council is trying to find an excuse. However, in the circumstances, the hour being late, I will not proceed further.

Mr DUNSTAN—I oppose the amendment. I find it extraordinary the lengths to which the Legislative Council can go to protect the present electoral divisions. If there is to be a satisfactory redivision within the metropolitan area, surely the hands of the commission are not to be tied? It is significant that the way the present divisions have been worked is the only practical way to return safe seats in the metropolitan area for Liberal and Country League candidates. That is obviously the reason why the present amendment is being made. To me it is entirely lacking in principle and will interfere with the freedom of the commission. On this occasion we are putting the commission there as a blind. To me it is a waste of time. I am amazed and appalled at the depths to which members of the Legislative Council have seen fit to descend. Surely, when members come into either this House or the Legislative Council they come in as honourable members, and it seems to me that the Legislative Council supporting the amendment forget this when they try to include it in the legislation. How far do they think they are going to gull the public over this? The people are becoming sick and tired of this sort of thing, and members may well remember that attempts in other places to gerrymander have rebounded to the misfortune of the very party that saw fit to perpetrate it. Members opposite have had some practical notice of how far the public has been upset.

Mr. White—They do not care two hoots about it.

Mr. DUNSTAN—The member for Murray may not have received many letters about it, but some metropolitan members supporting the Government know what they will have to face at the next elections.

The CHAIRMAN—The honourable member should not indulge in a speech on electoral boundaries. The motion before the Chair is whether the Committee should accept or reject the Legislative Council's amendment.

Mr. DUNSTAN—But it has relation to the House of Assembly electoral boundaries. Of course, the results of the commission's deliberations, tied though it will be, will be before the House next session, and members on this side will have more to say on this matter then. Furthermore, at the next elections the people will have another opportunity to express their considerable disgust at the result of the tying of the commission in this shocking and disgraceful manner.

Mr. DAVIS—I hope the amendment will be defeated. I think, Mr. Chairman, that you were wrong in calling the member for Norwood to order for mentioning electoral boundaries, for the Bill altered boundaries as it left this House.

The CHAIRMAN—Order! My contention was that this amendment is confined to the boundaries of the Legislative Council districts.

Mr. DAVIS—The purpose of the amendment is to make seats in the Legislative Council safe for the L.C.L. It will take away from the commission the little freedom that it had.

The Committee divided on the Legislative Council's amendment—

Ayes (16).—Messrs. Brookman, Christian, Geoffrey Clarke, Dunnage, Goldney, Hawker, Heaslip, Hincks, William Jenkins, McIntosh, Pearson, Playford (teller), Shannon, Teusner, Travers, and White.

Noes (15).—Messrs. Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan (teller), Fletcher, Hutchens, Jennings, Macgillivray, McAlees, O'Halloran, Quirke, Riches, Stephens, Stott, Frank Walsh, and Fred Walsh.

Pairs.—Ayes—Mr. Michael, Sir George Jenkins, and Mr. Pattinson. Noes—Messrs. John Clark, Tapping, and Lawn.

Majority of one for the Ayes.

Legislative Council's amendment thus agreed to.

LANDLORD AND TENANT (CONTROL OF RENTS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council with the following amendments:—

No. 1. Page 2.—After clause 3, insert new clause 3a as follows:—

3a. *Amendment of principal Act, s. 21—Basis of fixing rent.*—Section 21 of the principal Act is amended by striking out the words "twenty-two and one-half" in the eighth line of subsection (2) thereof and by inserting in lieu thereof the word "thirty-five".

No. 2. Page 2, line 23 (clause 4)—After "amended" insert the following:—

(*a*) by inserting after the word "lessor" in the last line of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (*g*) of subsection (6) thereof the words "or by a brother or sister of the lessor or of the wife or husband of the lessor";

(*b*) by inserting after the word "purchaser" in the last line of subparagraph (i) of paragraph (*m*) of subsection (6) thereof the words "or by a brother or sister of the purchaser or of the wife or husband of the purchaser";

No. 3. Page 2, line 30 (clause 5)—Leave out "nine" and insert "six".

No. 4. Page 2, line 33 (clause 5)—Leave out "nine" and insert "six".

No. 5. Page 2, line 36 (clause 5)—Leave out "nine" and insert "six".

No. 6. Page 4, line 12 (clause 7)—Leave out "nine" and insert "six".

Consideration in Committee.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—The amendments made by the Legislative Council fall into three categories. The first deals with the fixing of rents and increases the present permissible increase of 22½ per cent on the 1939 level of rents to 35 per cent. Of course, in addition there can be rent increases following on additional costs of rates and repairs. The second category deals with the grounds on which a lessor may give notice to quit to his tenant. One ground is that the house is reasonably needed for occupation by the lessor, a dependant, or a son or daughter. These amendments extend the category of persons to include the brother or sister of the lessor or of the wife or husband of the lessor. The existing provisions confine the right to give a notice to quit to persons who ordinarily might be expected to have a claim on the lessor. The amendments extend the right to the brother, sister, brother-in-law and sister-in-law of the lessor, and thus extend considerably the ambit of the present provision. The third category deals with a provision that was inserted in this House at the suggestion of the Leader of the Opposition and relates to the notice period before a person can be compelled to quit. Originally it was six months, but the Leader of the Opposition thought that in certain circumstances it could be harsh and he advocated a longer period, so nine months was agreed to. I move:—

That the amendments of the Legislative Council be disagreed to.

Mr. SHANNON—I cannot believe that any person knowing the upward trend in repair costs and rates since this legislation was first introduced will cavil at the 35 per cent increase inserted by the Council. Landlords are being compelled every day to meet increased costs, yet rent increases have been pegged. The 35 per cent adopted by the other place is still not enough. Few of us know the extent to which landlords have to meet additional costs. The first amendment is really a sop to a section of the community that has been harshly treated and I regret that the Government is not accepting it. I am not so much concerned with the other amendments from the point of view of giving justice to property owners. If we adopt the first amendment we might avoid the need for a conference.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I would not have spoken if Mr. Shannon had not suggested that the first amendment be accepted. He referred to increased costs of maintenance, but that matter is considered by the rent-fixing authority and as far as I know it has always given effect to the provision. I have heard of cases where rents have been doubled and when the matter has been investigated it has been found that the increase beyond 22½ per cent was justified because of increased rates and maintenance costs. The further increase of 12½ per cent adopted by the Council represents a substantial amount for the worker whose wages are pegged by order of the Arbitration Court. The other amendments deal with privileged people. Brothers and sisters of lessors are now included If we extend the principle any farther we shall soon be covering forty-second cousins, great aunts by marriage, and others. There are some categories included in the Act last year which, in my opinion, should not be there. I see no reason why we should extend the categories as suggested by the Legislative Council. I will vigorously oppose the amendments designed to reduce the period of notices to quit, as I was instrumental in having the nine months' period incorporated in the Act.

Mr. HAWKER—I only desire to refer to the first amendment. It is true that increased

amounts have been allowed to landlords in respect of absolute outgoings, such as repairs. rates and taxes, but those amounts do not affect net incomes. It is well known that because rents have been pegged the State economy has been greatly assisted but it has been at the expense of one section of the community only—the landlords who invested money in houses for rental before the war. Practically all sections have received increases exceeding 22½ per cent in their net incomes since 1939. In fact, members of this Parliament increased their salaries considerably above what they were receiving in 1939. For many years the largest source of housing for the community was provided by private enterprise. The Housing Trust has, to a great extent, taken over that field and the number of private rental houses would not represent such a great percentage of the total number of houses available for rental now. It should not be necessary to penalize one section of the community for the good of the community as a whole and some method should be derived whereby the whole community bears the cost.

Mr. BROOKMAN—I urge the Committee to accept the Legislative Council's amendments. I believe that the suggested increase in rentals is just and fair although it does not represent a full measure of compensation to landlords for what they have had to outlay in capital in acquiring properties for renting. Costs, wages, and returns on investments have increased tremendously since rent control was introduced in 1939. The increase of 22½ per cent in rents generally in 1951 afforded relief to landlords and was an indication that Parliament recognized that the landlords had suffered because of this legislation. I was recently speaking to a man who owned 16 houses in 1939. For many years he was unable to obtain a room in any one of those houses for his own accommodation. Although 16 houses might appear to represent a great deal in terms of capital investment, this man is far from wealthy and I believe he has had to dispose of most of those houses without the added attraction of offering them with vacant possession. The continuance of this legislation has embittered many landlords and unless we do something to help them we will bring a spirit of bitterness permanently into the community. I abhor the idea that one section should have to provide for another section simply for reasons of expediency and not for reasons of sound principle. I oppose the Premier's motion that these amendments be disallowed.

Mr. SHANNON—The Leader of the Opposition said that the tenants who rent houses have had their wages pegged by the Arbitration Court, but he overlooked that the pegging of wages did not take place in 1951. There have been increases in wages since we pegged the rents of property owners. We also overlooked what is really a major issue for people who invest money. The more liquid the form of investment the more readily it can be converted to some other form of investment if it is unprofitable. Because of this legislation landlords cannot dispose of their houses profitably because they cannot offer vacant possession. We should also consider what has happened to gilt-edged securities since 1939. In 1939, 3 per cent was paid on Government loans but today the rate is 4½ per cent and the investor receives income tax benefits and other attractions. There has been an increase of at least 50 per cent in the return on gilt-edged securities since 1939, but landlords have not received such an increase. In many cases properties have been left to them by their forebears who were trying to provide incomes for their dependants, but the properties have not proved good investments because of this legislation. Many landlords have had to spend private money in maintaining their properties from which they have not received a satisfactory rate of interest.

Mr. DUNSTAN—As the Leader of the Opposition said, the increased rents allowed under section 21 (2) of the Act resulted from the increased cost of rates and outgoings, and in many cases increases in excess of 22½ per cent were allowed, in effect in respect of amortization.

Mr. Hawker—Has anyone denied that?

Mr. DUNSTAN—I understood that Mr. Shannon overlooked that, for he talked about the increased costs of repairs and maintenance. He overlooked the fact that houses have increased in value to a colossal degree. Even the poorest tenanted houses bring far more than 200 per cent or 300 per cent of their market value in 1939. Hovels in my district that might have fetched £200 in 1939 today bring about £1,500 tenanted.

Mr. Brookman—That is not very comforting to the landlord from an investment point of view.

Mr. DUNSTAN—If I were a landlord I would take my profit while it was offering, but there are people who still find it profitable to remain in this field of investment. If they choose to do so they should accept the fact that for the good of the community the return on those properties must be pegged. The

inflationary effect of an overall increase of 12½ per cent in rents can be gauged by what happened in Western Australia when the Legislative Council there refused to continue the legislation.

Mr. DAVIS—The Committee should reject the Legislative Council's amendment. When the Bill left this Chamber it was a reasonable one. Mr. Shannon and Mr. Brookman said that people who have invested in property are not getting a reasonable return for their capital outlay, but anyone with 16 houses is most fortunate. We were not told how long that man had owned those properties. If they were built years ago he is getting a good return on the money originally invested. Houses built today are costly, but the rent fixed for a new home is in accordance with today's costs.

Mr. Shannon—If you build a house today the rent is not fixed.

Mr. DAVIS—But the owner gets a reasonable return. A school teacher I know has recently had his rent increased from 16s. to £2 9s. I agree an adjustment should have been made, but the increase was too great.

The Hon. B. Pattinson—The rents of teachers' residences have not been increased since 1920.

Mr. DAVIS—I still say that the increase was too great. I hope the Committee will reject the Legislative Council's amendments.

Mr. HEASLIP—I support the Legislative Council's amendments. The last time all-round adjustments were made was in 1951, when a 22½ per cent increase on 1939 rents was granted. It has been said that wages are now pegged, but they were not pegged between 1951 and 1953, and no general increases in rents have been allowed for three years. We shall soon be faced with big increases in margins for skill, but the landlords are still not able to obtain vacant possession in order to get the best price for their houses on the market. Few people are prepared to build and let houses while landlord and tenant controls remain. It is most unfair to force landlords to charge rents that are uneconomic.

Mr. QUIRKE—I oppose the amendments. When the Bill was before this House many members admitted the desirability of an increase in rents, but none moved an amendment along those lines, and members should not now seek sanctuary behind amendments carried in another place. A 12½ per cent increase in rents would have too great an impact on the economy, although I admit that the cost of owning a house, if it is kept in good condition, far outweighs the rent received from it.

Amendments disagreed to.

The following reason for disagreement was adopted:—

Because the amendments would unduly impair the operation of the principal Act.

The Legislative Council intimated that it insisted on its amendments, to which the House of Assembly had disagreed.

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

That the House of Assembly insist upon its disagreement to the amendments.

Motion carried.

A message was sent to the Legislative Council requesting a conference, at which the Assembly would be represented by Messrs. O'Halloran, Frank Walsh, Travers, Teusner, and the Treasurer.

Later a message was received from the Legislative Council agreeing to a conference, to be held in the Legislative Council conference room at 2.35 a.m. on Friday, December 10.

At 2.40 a.m. the managers proceeded to the conference. They returned at 4.33 a.m.

The recommendations were:—

As to amendment No. 1.—That the Legislative Council amend its amendment by leaving out the word "thirty-five" and inserting in lieu thereof the words "twenty-seven and one-half."

As to amendments Nos. 2 to 6.—That the Legislative Council do further insist thereon and that the House of Assembly do not insist on its disagreement.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Members will recall that the first amendment relates to the percentage increase in rentals on the 1939 level. The Legislative Council had amended the Bill to provide that the level of 22½ per cent should be increased to 35 per cent. After duly considering the matter the conference decided that it should be 27½ per cent. Amendments 2 to 6 relate to the giving of a notice to quit. The managers agreed to recommend to the House that it do not insist upon its disagreement to those amendments. They felt that the important matter was the increase in rent levels and did their utmost to keep the increase to a minimum.

Later the Legislative Council intimated that it had agreed to the recommendations of the conference.

Consideration in Committee of the recommendations.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer) moved that the recommendations be agreed to.

Recommendations agreed to.

LOTTERY AND GAMING ACT AMENDMENT BILL (GENERAL).

The Legislative Council intimated that it had disagreed to the House of Assembly's amendment.

Consideration in Committee.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This House debated at considerable length the question of country representation on the league, and the vote revealed that the majority of members of this House did not favour the zoning system. I therefore move that we insist on our amendment.

Amendment insisted on.

Later the Legislative Council intimated that it did not further insist upon its disagreement.

LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council with the following amendments—

No. 1, page 4, line 41 (Clause 16)—After "1954" add "Provided that the number of licences of any one class shall not be reduced to less than one".

No. 2, page 5, line 26 (Clause 17)—Insert the following subsection:—

(1c) If the Minister certifies in writing that the effect of any resolution, if carried, would be to reduce the number of licences of any one class in the local option district to less than one, the persons who have paid the fee on the petition shall be entitled on application by them to a refund of the fee.

No. 3, page 6, line 20 (Clause 21)—At the end of subsection (1) insert the following proviso:—

Provided that no petition shall set out a resolution the effect of which would be if carried to reduce the number of licences of the class in the local option district to less than one.

No. 4, page 7, line 22 (Clause 24)—After "line" add "and inserting in their place the words 'subject to section 224 of this Act' ".

No. 5, page 7, line 27 (Clause 25)—After "resolution" add "provided that the court shall not provide for the reduction of the number of any one class of licence to less than one".

No. 6, page 7, line 30 (Clause 26)—After "subsection (2)" add "and inserting in their place the words 'subject to section 224 of this Act' ".

Consideration in Committee.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—The Licensing Act says that no local option poll shall reduce the number of licences in a district to less than two of a class. All the amendments make it one of a class. This matter was not mentioned in the Bill when it left this place and in the Council it was pointed out that a local option poll could deprive a district of all its licences. As licensing areas are to be smaller it is felt that the provision should refer to one of a class, and I move that the amendments be agreed to.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I draw the Premier's attention to the added injustice that will result to the four electorates I mentioned earlier if these amendments are agreed to. In my district, which has only one subdivision, there are three hotels catering for the needs of 7,000 people. Under this amendment one of these hotels could be done away with. I do not fear that that would happen but that is how the amendment could work. I feel somewhat disappointed that the Government did not accept an amendment I had placed on the files, even if only as a temporary measure.

Amendments agreed to.

PROROGATION SPEECHES.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—In moving—

That the House at its rising do adjourn to Tuesday, January 18,

may I, on behalf of the House, very briefly express to you, Mr. Speaker, our great appreciation of the manner in which you have continued to occupy the Chair. You have achieved a record term of office in this House and you have won the esteem of all members, not only for your impartiality but for the assistance you give members in the conduct of business and in straightening out problems confronting them from time to time. I believe that there is no Parliament in Australia where there is such a happy combination as exists with you as Speaker and Mr. Dunks as Chairman of Committees. I convey to you our seasonal greetings and express our appreciation for the continued service and courtesy we have received from you and the Chairman of Committees.

I express my personal thanks to the Leader of the Opposition for the co-operation he gives in the management and functioning of this House. In our Parliamentary system of government the success of Government depends firstly upon having a Government with the ability to undertake the job and secondly upon having an Opposition which at all times ensures that the Government is on the job and doing the job. If an administration is to function successfully those two things are essential. If a Government does not have an Opposition capable of criticizing and keeping a constant watch on the affairs of State it is inevitable

that it will get careless and not do its work as efficiently as it would otherwise.

I express to the Leader of the Opposition my thanks not only for the way in which he conducts the affairs of the Opposition, but for his unfailing courtesy in this House. It makes a big difference in the management of the House if the Opposition will extend courtesies, and every time I go into other Parliaments and see the way they work I feel proud to be associated with this institution. This Parliament has officers of great integrity who assist us in every way. On previous occasions we have expressed to the Parliamentary Draftsman, Assistant Parliamentary Draftsman, their understudy, the clerk of the House, the Librarians, and all the catering staff our appreciation of their great assistance. Let me not overlook the daily assistance we get from *Hansard*. Sometimes I hear the member for Chaffey make a speech and I wonder what it is all about, but if I am interested all I have to do is to read *Hansard* and then I can understand it. The *Hansard* reporters not only interpret his speeches; they make sense out of them. I am sure any new member coming into the House must be impressed with the way that speeches are reported and presented, and also with the excellent manner in which the *Hansard* staff indexes speeches. If any member wants to turn up the report of any debate he can find it in a few moments.

I wish all members the compliments of the season. There is not one member from whom I have not personally received courtesy and assistance. I know members opposite will not mind my making this distinction, but I particularly thank members behind me for the support they have given on so many occasions. May I again express to Opposition members the great regret of those on this side of the House that Mr. Tapping has had a prolonged serious illness. We express sympathy to the Leader of the Opposition on the loss, for the time being, of one of the most valuable members of this House. I do not know any member who is more universally esteemed than Mr. Tapping, and I should be pleased if the Leader would convey to him, on behalf of members on this side of the House, our deep regret that his illness has been so prolonged and our hope that he will be speedily returned to full health. We wish him the best compliments for Christmas and the New Year.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—In seconding the motion, I join with the Premier in his well-merited tribute to you, Sir, and the Chairman of Committees. I thank the Premier for his kindly reference to me and to the members of my Party. As I have said on previous occasions, we fight for those principles that we believe in, but we always fight cleanly. I thank the Premier and his Ministers for the many courtesies they have extended to me during the session. The Leader of the Opposition's lot is not always an easy one, and sometimes a little tolerance from a Minister is very helpful. That tolerance has been extended freely. I join, too, with the Premier in his thanks to the Parliamentary Draftsmen, Clerks, *Hansard* Staff, catering staff, and the messengers. One could speak at length of the sterling worth of our staff and the splendid services they render to members. Outside I see the dim, grey dawn approaching, and shortly the lights will be extinguished and the daylight of another day will be here. I thank the Premier sincerely for his kindly references to my colleague, Mr. Tapping. I am sure that all members on both sides of the House endorse his remarks. I am pleased to say that the latest report on Mr. Tapping's health is reassuring. He may be able to come into the House before Christmas. I wish to all members a happy Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year.

The SPEAKER—On behalf of the officers of the House, *Hansard* staff, Parliamentary Draftsmen, librarians, catering staff, and messengers, I acknowledge the kindly and appropriate references to their work that were made by the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition. The zeal and co-operation of the staff has been greatly appreciated. It gives me great pleasure to see the way in which members give their closest attention to the work of Parliament and the research in which they engage in the discharge of their duties. This session Parliament has had about 90 Bills before it and members have spoken on a variety of subjects. As they leave the Chamber to attend to the correspondence from their constituents which awaits them, I join with the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition in wishing them the best of health in the coming months.

Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.5 a.m. on Friday, December 10, the House adjourned until Tuesday, January 18, 1955, at 2 p.m.

Honourable members rose in their places and sang the first verse of "God Save the Queen."