

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, September 1, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.**ABATTOIRS STRIKE.**

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I notice from this morning's *Advertiser* that as a result of a conference held yesterday between the Abattoirs Board and certain producers' organizations it was decided that an attempt should be made to get free labour in order to kill export lambs at the Abattoirs. It seems to me that the introduction of free labour there might lead to serious difficulties in the treatment and handling of lambs in the current season, and should be avoided if at all possible. It appears to me that there was not much between the parties in dispute when they held their last conference. Will the Minister of Agriculture explore the possibility of another conference between the parties with a view to settling the dispute and restoring the position which was responsible for the successful killing last season at the Abattoirs?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—A number of conferences have already been held, but the Board is open to further discussions. The present position is that the decision of the Industrial Board which dealt with the wages claims of the men at the Abattoirs has not been accepted by the union. I believe, and the belief is generally shared by others in the industry, that if there had been a secret ballot the decision would have gone the other way and the men would have gone back to work. The position now is that unless some steps are taken or there is some change of heart or mind on the part of the employees, the large number of lambs ready for treatment will not be treated. Whilst the men continue with the attitude that they must have some increase, and the decision of their own industrial board is not acceptable to them, I cannot see them going back to work unless there is a secret ballot on the issue, but unfortunately there is no provision for it in our Industrial Code. As far as I can I will endeavour to secure a further conference to help us in this serious situation.

Mr. JENNINGS—Is the Minister of Agriculture aware that since the strike has been in progress the Abattoirs Board has voluntarily increased the wages of officers and other

employees not in the Meat Employees' Union by up to £2 10s. a week, and those of meat inspectors by £3 8s. 6d. a week? Is he prepared to call a conference over which he would preside, whereby some arrangements might be made to make an offer to the striking employees, and will he also try to see that the board's provocative actions, such as the sacking of two union delegates, the withholding of wages already earned, and the engaging of voluntary labour, are not further continued?

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—The honourable member poses a number of provocative questions that I am not prepared to answer, because I do not want to add fuel to the fire. I believe in conciliation so far as it can be made to work effectively and while there is any prospect of bringing reason to bear on this question I strongly deprecate any action that might provoke further feeling. I am not prepared to call a conference because the machinery for settling the dispute is there. It was only availed of by the union at the death knock; prior to that the men had refused to go to their own tribunal, but fortunately reason eventually prevailed. I believe that if they were left alone and a vote taken by secret ballot a majority would go back today on the terms awarded by their own wages board last Friday. I do not think that my official intrusion into this question would help. The way is open for further conferences and, indeed, for a further approach to the Industrial Court if the men are so minded. I suggest that it is up to them to make the next move.

INSTITUTIONS FOR SEXUAL OFFENDERS.

Mr. TEUSNER—Can the Premier say whether the Government has considered providing an institution for the treatment of certain types of sexual offenders? In a case recently heard before Mr. Justice Mayo in the Supreme Court His Honour, in remanding the defendant, is reported to have said:—

I wish something could be done to provide an institution for these people. We have asked for it often but nothing has been done.

The man concerned was 20 years of age and he admitted an indecent assault on a boy of eight. His Honour also said that he was loath to send the man to gaol. This subject has been referred to on one or two occasions by Mr. Travers, and I understand a committee appointed several years ago made certain recommendations.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—There are, of course, very heavy financial obligations in the establishment of institutions. It is easy to talk about establishing them, but immediately we decide to do so there is the cost of building and the upkeep, and where only a limited number of cases are involved it means that the cost to the State and the taxpayer is great. It is sometimes rather difficult, in my opinion, to ascertain which are criminal cases and which are cases suitable for institutions. I take it that what is desired is not a criminal institution, because we have them at present. I will examine the matter and give the honourable member a definite reply next week. At present the finances of the State are not such as will enable us to embark on a large increase in the number of institutions. We have a costly job, with the finances available to us, in maintaining the present institutions.

INDUSTRY AT WALLAROO.

Mr. McALEES—When some time ago the grain distillery building at Wallaroo was leased to Cheesman Bros., of Port Pirie, I understood that they would employ labour at Wallaroo. Reports I have received recently in my district indicate that they are employing only two boys. Does the Premier think it proper that Cheesman Bros. should tie up this property, which belongs to the taxpayers, for the purpose of employing only two boys and perhaps preventing another firm from establishing an industry there?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The latter part of the honourable member's statement is not correct. Cheesman's are certainly not depriving anyone else of the use of those premises, for we have had them on our hands for several years and have not been able to get anyone else to occupy them, except that we started a company that lost us much money and did not occupy the premises long. As to the first part of the question, Cheesman's is an energetic firm which has expanded rapidly in Port Pirie and has done much work there. It was established at Wallaroo because bulk handling appliances will be installed there and the firm intends to specialize on the servicing of ships and bulk handling appliances. Until the appliances have been installed the work that Cheesman's hope to do will be curtailed, but I assure the honourable member that everything possible will be done by the Government to assist the company to make a considerable contribution to the district.

DUST NUISANCE AT MILE END.

Mr. FRED WALSH—I have received complaints from a constituent of mine residing in Manchester Street, Mile End South, who wrote on behalf of local residents complaining about the dust nuisance. He states:—

The nuisance arises in the main from the factory of Metters Limited situated at Manchester Street and London Road, Mile End South. It is not infrequent to see fine sand and sand blasting material leaving the premises similar to a northern dust storm. Rain water tanks have become useless, fruit in the garden is unfit to eat, furniture and furnishings are being ruined to say nothing of what this filth must do to health. The matter has been referred already to the Central Board of Health and the Local Board of Health. Neither of these bodies have done anything other than allow the nuisance to increase.

Will the Premier ask the Minister of Health to refer this matter to the Central Board of Health with a view to the nuisance being remedied?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will ask him to obtain a report on the matter.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—In today's *Advertiser* appears a report from New South Wales that the Minister of Education (Mr. Heffron) said he had no power to deal with teachers found to have administered extremely harsh corporal punishment to children, and that they had been dealt with by the Public Service Board. I ask the Minister of Education what are his powers should such a regrettable happening occur here as was reported in New South Wales?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I read with astonishment the report of the question and answer in the New South Wales Parliament, and I would say that such conduct on the part of teachers would not be tolerated in South Australia, and the breaches of discipline by the teachers would not be dealt with by the Public Service Board but by the Director of Education or myself. Perhaps it would be as well if I read the regulations under the Act regarding corporal punishment. Firstly, the head teacher must keep a punishment book in which he must immediately record the full particulars of every case of corporal punishment. Corporal punishment may be used only as a last resort. It is not to be given for trivial breaches of school discipline, but may be employed for offences against morality, gross impertinence, or wilful and persistent disobedience. Corporal punishment may be inflicted only by the head teacher or by the

chief male assistant under his direction, and only in exceptional instances may it be inflicted in the presence of other pupils, and in no instance is it inflicted on girls. During the time I have been Minister I have received very few complaints regarding the infliction of corporal punishment. I believe it is very rarely imposed in South Australia, and I have complete confidence in the overwhelming majority of South Australian teachers that they resort to it very infrequently, and even then to nowhere near the degree reported in the *Advertiser*.

PUBLIC SERVICE HOUSE RENTS.

Mr. LAWN—Last year the rents of Government-owned houses were increased and, as a result of the matter being raised in this House by members of the Opposition, the Government accepted the Leader of the Opposition's suggestion for an appeal committee to be appointed to deal with appeals against rents increases. I understood the Government appointed Mr. Justice Paine to the tribunal, and I ask the Premier whether he has any report concerning the appeals.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Mr. Justice Paine is at present inspecting all the premises in respect of which appeals have been lodged, and this entails a lot of work. He has two officers associated with him in this work and, according to a statement he made to me last week, the work is proceeding smoothly and as expeditiously as possible.

NOARLUNGA MEAT WORKS CASE.

Mr. HAWKER—Can the Premier give an opinion on the constitutional effects of the Noarlunga Meat Works case, which is at present the subject of an appeal to the Privy Council? In the event of the High Court's decision being upheld would it affect the control over products in South Australia other than export lambs?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member mentioned on two occasions that he desired a report on this matter and I asked the Crown Solicitor to prepare me a memorandum. This is something of great constitutional importance to this State so, with the concurrence of the House, I will read the report in full. It states:—

The constitutional issues in this case are of first class importance to the maintenance of the sovereignty of the States within the Federal system. The question whether the Noarlunga Meat Company should be allowed to engage in export slaughtering in competition with the Metropolitan Abattoirs is in itself a matter

of minor importance. It may become more important if the public investment worth some millions represented by the Abattoirs and Stock Market at Gepps Cross is destroyed by companies financed from outside the State and operating under Commonwealth licence. That this is by no means unlikely is demonstrated by what I have reason to believe to be the fact that Noarlunga Company has been financed in this litigation by powerful outside interests. Even this, however, is not the vital issue to be fought out in the Privy Council. The real contest is between Commonwealth and States for the control of the production of goods and produce destined for export. All six States have indicated their intention to support the appeal on the one side and the Commonwealth engaged Counsel to appear both in the High Court and in the Privy Council in support of the High Court's decision on the other. What the High Court decided (there were six judges, equally divided and the decision went against the State by reason of the opinion of the Chief Justice) was that the Commonwealth Customs Meat Export Regulations were inconsistent with and therefore overrode the provisions of section 52a of the State Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Act which forbids the slaughter of meat for export without the licence of the Minister of Agriculture. The judges who were against the State said in effect that as the company's premises were registered by the Department of Commerce as premises in which slaughtering for export might be carried on, it could be carried on without regard to what any law of the State might provide. Both Commonwealth and State can make laws with regard to "trade and commerce with other countries," but if a State law conflicts with a Commonwealth law on this or any similar topic the Commonwealth law prevails. No-one doubts the validity or the wisdom of this constitutional provision, but the first question is how far the Commonwealth's power, which is derived entirely from the Commonwealth Constitution, extends. The High Court's view is that it extends to the control of the production of anything destined for export—the State's view is that it extends only as far as actual export trade. If the High Court's view stands it means that any Commonwealth Government, by a mere customs regulation, could exercise an as yet undefined degree of control of pastoral, farming, wine-producing and manufacturing operations, including industrial conditions, whatever the wishes of the States might be. This can be seen to be an extremely powerful weapon in the hands of a Commonwealth Government bent on nationalization of important industries and the destruction of State independence.

The other important issue which will be tried in the Privy Council is the meaning and application of section 109 of the Constitution which provides that in the event of inconsistency between Commonwealth and State laws the former are to prevail. This is also a matter of first rate general importance to the States. Briefly, the contest in the present instance is that the company and the Commonwealth contended that, because there was a set of Commonwealth regulations "covering

the field" of slaughtering for export, the State laws on the subject were inoperative. Now there are obviously many State laws covering a matter like slaughterhouses. They deal with such things as public health, town planning, nuisance to other people and like topics. These are things which are the domestic concern of the State and are of no interest to and indeed are outside the constitutional powers of the Commonwealth. Yet because the Commonwealth Government has prescribed by regulation the specifications for premises in which export slaughtering may be carried on, that is taken to exclude the whole of the State law on the subject. The State is left without authority on such topics as the suitability of the situation of the premises or their effect on public amenities, the fitness of the persons who desire to carry on the operations or the economic interests of the State. The view contended for by the State on the other hand is that while the Commonwealth may properly prescribe standards of fitness of goods for export, or if it sees fit limit or control exports, the operations which precede export are a matter of domestic concern and proper to be left to State authority. The State, like the other States, depends for its well being to a large extent on its export trade, particularly of course in primary products. The Government sees in the High Court's judgment a very serious threat to the constitutional right of the State to control essential State activities.

CONTROL OF CLOTHING PRICES.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Recently clothing prices were recontrolled and in that connection the Premier has given some alarming facts concerning excessive increases in prices. In reply to a question by the member for Semaphore (Mr. Tapping) on whether those statements applied to suburban as well as city stores, the Premier disclosed that the margins had been applied by a number of traders. In view of the fact that certain firms have blatantly exceeded a reasonable margin of profit, despite their promises to keep them within reasonable bounds if price control were abandoned, is the Premier now willing to submit to the House the names of those firms that have offended?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Parliament has provided—I think rightly—that all information obtained by the Prices Commissioner concerning firms shall be kept secret, and under those circumstances I do not intend to take up the question of advertising certain firms to their detriment. A regulation has been made to cover these matters, and if any firm now breaks it that firm will be subject to prosecution if the breach is considered sufficient to justify it. I do not think the proper procedure is to advertise the names of the firms as suggested by the honourable member.

FIRE-ARMS ACCIDENTS.

Mr. TAPPING—Last weekend two persons were killed as the result of accidents with fire-arms. As these were not isolated cases will the Premier consider introducing legislation to minimize the risk of such accidents?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Parliament has already passed legislation to prevent accidents from the use of fire-arms. One provision is that weapons must be registered. If the honourable member, or any member, can suggest any further provisions which would help to minimize the risk I shall be happy to submit them to this House. At the moment I know of none. All members must desire to minimize every type of accident.

ROBE SLIPWAY.

Mr. CORCORAN—On August 18 I asked the Minister of Marine a question concerning the Robe slipway and he said he would take the matter up with the Harbors Board. Has he anything to report?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—The normal procedure in connection with questions which require a report is that they are immediately forwarded to the board or officer concerned. Where a board is involved, a reply has to be considered. In this case I am glad to know that the people of Beachport and Kingston agree that Robe, as the centrally situated port, is the most desirable place for a boat haven, but what they suggest now is altogether different from what was conceived before. Obviously some time must elapse when there is a new departure—

Mr. Corcoran—This is not a new departure. They had this idea at the back of their minds in the first place.

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—Then they must have kept it well hidden, for previously each town wanted its own boat haven. The board selected Robe as being the most central port and constructed the type of haven it thought best. Something new has now been suggested and obviously an undertaking of the magnitude of the Harbors Board has many matters to consider and up to the present it has not had time to divert an engineer to investigate whether its scheme should be replaced by something suggested by laymen. The matter is being attended to and as soon as a reply comes to hand I will present it to the House.

PAINT ON SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—Has the Minister of Education any reply to the question I asked yesterday concerning the rapid deterioration

in the exterior paint work of some timber-frame school buildings?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I investigated this matter and the report I received this morning is that paint used on school buildings and all other Government buildings is supplied under annual contracts with the Supply and Tender Board, and before the selection of tendered paints a thorough examination and investigation is made. Only paints of the best quality are accepted.

IRON KNOB FATALITY.

Mr. RICHES—It may be that the Premier will not have to forward my request to the Chief Secretary. I desire to know whether the report of the Inspector of Mines, Mr. Mansfield, on a fatal accident which occurred at Iron Knob on August 13 in which Mr. Frank Branford was killed will be laid on the table of the House?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It is not the usual policy to lay on the table reports supplied to the Government. If a report is tabled it immediately becomes the property of the House, and if the Crown Solicitor or any other authority wants access to it, it is here when it should be somewhere else. I will get the information for the honourable member and make it available next Tuesday.

ELECTORAL ROLLS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I understand there has been no reprint of the Legislative Council electoral rolls since June 30, 1952. Will the Minister of Education ascertain from the Attorney-General whether it is intended to make a reprint of the rolls up to June 30 of this year or defer it until the rolls are being prepared for the election next year?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes.

HOLIDAY HOUSE RENTS.

Mr. TAPPING—Under the existing landlord and tenant legislation I understand a landlord can let a holiday house for not more than eight weeks and charge whatever rent he desires. I have received repeated complaints that many landlords are abusing this privilege and charging as much as £6 a week for two rooms, and in some cases, one room. In view of that abuse which is taking place in my district and I think others, can the Premier suggest a way to eliminate it?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will have the matter investigated and bring down a reply. It is not an easy matter because holiday houses have, rightly, been excluded from control. In

many instances they are only let for a period of the year and if they are included under rent control obviously they would be unprofitable as a normal proposition. I, too, have received complaints about holiday houses, but, strangely enough, from the aspect that the Act compels people to vacate them after a relatively short period. People who have hoped to remain in a holiday house cannot do so because it would then cease to be a holiday house.

EDUCATION DEPARTMENT: ENDORSEMENT OF BOOKS.

Mr. JENNINGS—I was telephoned this morning by one of my constituents and told that yesterday his wife had signed a contract to purchase a book *World of Children*, in four volumes, at a cost of £13 17s. After she had succumbed to the blandishments of the super-salesman she thought better of it and discussed the matter with her husband. She said that one of the arguments used by the salesman was that the book had been recommended by the Education Department. Can the Minister of Education say whether the department has recommended the book and, if not, what is the general policy of the department regarding the endorsement of books?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I have no personal knowledge of the book and cannot say whether or not it has been recommended by the department but I would be surprised if it has, because such recommendations are made sparingly and only after thorough investigation. As the matter has been raised I shall investigate the position and get a report, and perhaps make a general statement on the whole policy.

DRUNKEN DRIVING.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Has the Minister of Education obtained a reply from the Attorney-General following on the question I asked yesterday about drunken driving?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The following report from the Crown Solicitor has been supplied:—

There are already stringent penalties provided for the offence of drunken driving. For a first offence a fine of not less than thirty pounds nor more than fifty pounds or imprisonment up to three months and disqualification from holding or obtaining a driver's licence for not less than three months. For a second offence imprisonment for not less than one month nor more than six months and a minimum period of disqualification of six months. For a third or any subsequent offence imprisonment for not less than three months nor more than twelve months and a minimum period of disqualification of three years.

I do not think any increase of these penalties would provide a more effective deterrent. The law is effectively policed and all prosecutions are conducted by officers of this department, and substantial penalties including lengthy periods of disqualification are in general imposed by the magistrates. In some instances my impression is that some magistrates do not make sufficient use of the power of imprisonment for a first offence, but it is generally accepted and it has been laid down in the Supreme Court, that if there is a substantial degree of intoxication, imprisonment, even for a first offence is the appropriate penalty. Generally speaking, the period of disqualification even for a first offence is substantial. I should say, on the average, about twelve months. This in itself is a very effective deterrent.

If the honourable member considers the report in detail and peruses the relevant section of the Road Traffic Act, which has been amended in recent years, he will probably agree that if a more effective deterrent is required it cannot be obtained by amending the legislation but perhaps by having more regard to what is laid down by the Supreme Court, that, if there is a substantial degree of intoxication, imprisonment, even for the first offence, is the appropriate penalty. It might well be that a wider regard generally should be had to what the Supreme Court has laid down.

SWIMMING TUITION.

Mr. TAPPING—Some weeks ago the Minister of Education was good enough to announce that he had arranged with the department that swimming tuition in schools should be stepped up. In his statement he said that 42 centres outside the metropolitan area would be utilized for the purpose. Would he consider additional country centres being utilized if they are suggested by the swimming association or myself?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The 42 centres I named were places where we knew that pools and facilities were available. If other places are suggested by the Swimming Association I shall be pleased to consider them because I am as anxious as the honourable member and the association to make a real success of swimming instruction during the coming summer months.

EVICITION CASE.

Mr. LAWN—Last week I asked the Premier whether he could do anything to find accommodation for members of a family sleeping in a motor car in the city of Adelaide after being evicted from their house. Yesterday, in his absence, the Minister of Lands gave me the reply forwarded by the Housing Trust. It said that the earnings of the father and the

children were about £50 a week, and I want to know whether there is any significance in that statement. Does the trust take into account weekly earnings when considering whether or not a family is entitled to get a house?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—In considering applications for houses the trust must consider all matters. If there were a family of young children with a limited income as against a family with a large income the trust would rightly give preference to the family in the worst financial position. There is nothing in the Act to prevent any person from getting a trust house, but in the allocation of houses all these matters must be considered, as well as urgency. If a family is well off it must have a greater opportunity of getting other accommodation.

DOG REGISTRATIONS AT WOOMERA.

Mr. RICHES—Last session I asked the Premier whether Woomera dog registrations could take place at Woomera rather than at Port Augusta West, 130 miles away. The request was not granted and the dog menace has developed into proportions that are causing grave concern at Woomera and to station people nearby. The last report I received was that nine sheep had been killed recently outside the boundary fence, and that there are a considerable number of stray dogs at Woomera. I ask the Premier whether the request of the Woomera Village Board for registration to be effected at the Woomera Police Station and that the police there be given complete authority over the registration and control of dogs can be considered as early as possible.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Woomera is a military establishment under Commonwealth jurisdiction, and the laws of the State can only be administered there subject to Commonwealth approval. In many instances requests to the Commonwealth in regard to State laws have not been granted. However, I will take up this matter and see whether this request can be granted.

CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL (ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES).

Second reading.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Honourable members are, no doubt, familiar with the report of the Electoral Commission and there is little need to explain it in detail.

This Bill provides for alterations in the electorate exactly as recommended by the commission. The commission, however, did not assign names to the districts which it recommended and the names in the Bill are those selected by the Government. Most of the names are those of existing districts, but several districts, owing to the fact that they differ very considerably from any existing districts were assigned new names. Among the new names are Edwardstown, West Torrens, Enfield, Whyalla, Barossa, and Millicent. The Government decided that where a district had not been altered, or where alterations were only of a minor character, the existing name of the district or the subdivision would be retained, and the Electoral Office was asked to make recommendations with regard to districts which had been altered substantially. The names that have been included in the Bill are those that were recommended by the Electoral Office. The names are well-known and I think they are appropriate.

The Electoral Commission carried out its task strictly in accordance with the terms of its Act. The Act directed the electoral quotas for the metropolitan area and country areas to be ascertained, and required the commission to keep the size of the electorates which it recommended within 20 per cent above or below the quota. A perusal of the commission's report will show that the commission has kept well within the margin of tolerance. In fact, the greatest margin of divergence from the quota in any of the recommended districts is about 12 per cent. The new electoral districts will be used only in elections held after the next expiration of the House of Assembly. The term of the House of Assembly expires on February 28, 1956, and the altered boundaries will become effective for any election held after that date.

Any by-election which may be held before that date will be held in the electoral districts as they now exist, but in order to prevent any unnecessary elections in the present districts it is provided in the Bill that casual vacancies occurring between October 31 and March 1, 1956, other than a casual vacancy in the seat of a Legislative Council member who has three years or more to run, need not be filled. If a casual vacancy should occur in the seat of a Legislative Council member whose term has three years or more to run, it will be possible for the Governor to direct that the vacancy will be filled at the time of the next general election. This is provided for in section 18 of the Constitution Act. The Bill contains a complete description of the

boundaries of all the districts, including those whose areas have not been altered. This is necessary because in recent years there have been alterations in geographical names occurring in the definitions of all the districts, whether the boundaries have been altered or not.

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

SUCCESSION DUTIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—

That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Succession Duties Act, 1929-1954.

Motion carried.

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

SUPERANNUATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved:—

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—

That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Superannuation Act, 1926-1954.

Motion carried.

Resolution agreed to in Committee and adopted by the House.

LOAN ESTIMATES.

In Committee.

(Continued from August 30. Page 664.)

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide)—Just before progress was last reported in this debate I was referring to the inadequacy of the amount of £2,250,000 provided for expenditure by the Architect-in-Chief on hospital buildings. Recently, in reply to a question by me the Treasurer said that from 1932 to 1955 the number of aged citizens accommodated in our mental institutions merely because there was nowhere else for them to go had risen from 100 to 350. The Superintendent of Mental Institutions (Dr. Birch), the greatest authority in South Australia on this question, says that those people should be not in mental institutions but either in their own homes and cared for by relatives or in an infirmary type of hospital. Because it considered that the Government was not doing enough to house our

aged, the Opposition in 1951 moved in this House that more accommodation be provided for that section, but a Government member amended the motion to one of commendation for the Government's efforts in housing all sections of the community. Recently I had the opportunity to inspect Parkside Mental Hospital, where in certain sections there were people similar to those accommodated in the Magill Wards. During the past five years the Jellicoe Ward at Magill has been empty, but in reply to my question in this House the Treasurer recently said that the Government was again using that ward to accommodate the class of people to whom I refer. Apparently, I can expect support from the member for Unley (Mr. Dunnage) for on June 1, in this year's Address in Reply debate, he said:—

I should like to bring before the Premier the position of aged people who have nowhere to go. They are often taken to hospital and kept there because there is no-one else to look after them. Perhaps a son or daughter is unable to care for them because they are living in a flat. The result is that many beds at hospitals are occupied by elderly people who need only a little attention and should be in a place like the Enfield Receiving Home. The Lieutenant-Governor's speech mentioned the building of additional wards at the Northfield Hospital for this purpose, but I do not think it is building enough. I want it to do more.

Apparently, Mr. Dunnage has just seen the light on this question, for he did not see fit to support the Opposition's previous attempts to remedy the position. It is obvious why he should speak in this way this year.

Mr. John Clark—It may have something to do with next year's election.

Mr. LAWN—Possibly. Mr. Dunnage's remarks lend support to my criticism of the Government's lack of effort in this matter. In Parkside Mental Hospital are many old people who are mental cases, but there are 350 others who should not be there but should be accommodated in an infirmary type of hospital. Those people come from all parts of the State, and, as the Government has provided no other accommodation for them, they must be accommodated at Northfield, Magill, or Parkside. Further, because the Magill wards are full those people must be accommodated in mental institutions. They require some care, and, instead of bringing aged people to the city from country districts where they have spent all their lives, the Government should consider the provision of a few beds in country hospitals to cater for such cases. Then these people would be able to remain in the locality they know and love and be near their friends and relatives who find it

extremely difficult to visit them in a city institution. Further, additional accommodation for such cases should be provided in the metropolitan area so that the aged people from the city might be accommodated in a better environment.

When I have referred to this matter previously, the member for Torrens (Mr. Travers) and other Government members have said, by way of interjection, that these old people who are housed at Parkside are insane, but according to the Treasurer's statement 350 of them are merely senile or feeble. Members must realize that, although the Act provides that such people may be certified as insane, Dr. Birch says that they are not insane within the meaning generally given to the word and that such people should be accommodated elsewhere. On more than one occasion the Treasurer has told me that some of these inmates have volunteered for admittance to Parkside because they had nowhere else to go. Members know that relatives may apply on behalf of such people, but I have in mind cases in which police officers in the metropolitan area have picked up citizens, not because they were causing trouble, but merely because they were feeble-minded and had no proper care and attention available to them; those people were then sent to the Parkside Mental Hospital. Other elderly people who are boarding reach an age when they can no longer work. If they become feeble-minded or require attention, friends can apply for them to be admitted to Parkside. I hope the Government will seriously consider this matter.

An amount of £175,000 is provided for Government buildings. The Government offices today are scattered throughout the city. Cabinet Ministers are accommodated in buildings far apart. One possible solution of the problem of inadequate accommodation is to erect additional storeys on the Treasury Building and the Engineering and Water Supply Department building. The old Motor Vehicles Department building on the corner of Flinders Street and Victoria Square could be rebuilt as a substantial structure. Under the heading "Miscellaneous," £10,000 is provided for temporary and emergency housing accommodation. I understand that the Government stopped building temporary homes two or three years ago and we have been told, in reply to questions in this House and by the Housing Trust, that no more temporary homes are to be built. I would like the Treasurer to explain the presence of this item.

Mr. TAPPING (Semaphore)—I am disappointed at the meagre amount of £900,000

provided for the Harbors Board at Port Adelaide. I feel there is urgent need to proceed with the improvements suggested by the Harbors Board. The board proposes to make our port one of the most outstanding in the world and it is essential that work should be proceeded with as vigorously as possible because many owners of overseas vessels have suggested by-passing Port Adelaide and Outer Harbour. The Government should proceed with all haste with the improvements because a good port is a means of bringing revenue to the State. At present some cargoes are going to Melbourne and are being sent back to South Australia by road and rail, which increases the cost of the goods to the consumers.

People all too frequently are inclined to condemn our railways system. They fail to assess the true value of railways to the State. It has been suggested that road transport supercedes and excels railway services, but the railways have pioneered the State and have provided services where private enterprise has not been prepared to operate because it would not be profitable. Although losses are revealed each year the railways have done much for the outback and isolated areas. I am pleased to note that provision has been made for diesel services, particularly in the metropolitan area. No doubt they will be extended to country areas as soon as they prove satisfactory in the metropolitan area. Yesterday the Minister of Works said that it is planned to operate a diesel train on the Adelaide-Semaphore-Outer Harbour line in the near future. That will be appreciated by persons in that area and will be a means of recovering patronage that has been lost over the years. Many people in Largs, Semaphore and Port Adelaide have been using bus transport because it is more modern and more comfortable. Some of the carriages at present used on that service are poorly illuminated and most uncomfortable, but a diesel service will provide greater comfort and be a means of inducing people to use the railways again.

Members can criticize the railways and ask questions concerning their operations and the Minister is able to reply, but that is not the position with the Municipal Tramways Trust. Members ask questions but the Minister can merely transmit them to the trust for a reply. That is not good enough when we realize that thousands of pounds annually are provided for the trust. The Government should place the trust under the direct control of a Minister. Last week I asked a question concerning the construction of a convenience at Osborne for

the use of tramway employees on the service and the Minister forwarded my question to the trust, but I hold no hope of achieving anything. I ventilated this matter in 1951 without success, and on that occasion I said that I had made numerous requests to the trust but had not met with success. I am convinced that the trust has no intention of co-operating with members. The only possible way co-operation can be achieved is by placing it under the control of a Minister responsible to Parliament. It is essential that the trust should be operated successfully because it is a State instrumentality.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital is developing slowly but surely into one of the best in Australia. The maternity section has already proved its worth and I understand that since its opening every bed has been occupied at all times. That clearly illustrates its necessity in this area. The matron, sisters and nurses are to be congratulated on the services they are rendering to the community. An amount of £1,000,000 is provided for the general section of the hospital. The Royal Adelaide Hospital cannot cope with the number of people who require attention and is overcrowded. The general section of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital will be a means of decentralizing hospital services from the city. It is being erected in a healthy area, free from industrial smoke and handy to transport. Although £1,000,000 will not go far I hope that within the next two years sufficient money will be available to ensure that the hospital can function as a general hospital and ease the burden on the Royal Adelaide Hospital. I support the Loan Estimates.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE (Burnside)—I have said on other occasions that it would be easy to suggest projects which could well appear in the current Loan programme. I have no doubt that some honourable members will do that very thing, but it is necessary to point out that whatever our wishes may be they cannot be translated into reality unless some other project is cut by a similar amount. There are few among us who would be prepared to say that this or that work is unnecessary when Loan Estimates are so meticulously prepared as those before us. I believe that the programme has been designed to provide the best possible balance between the things which are necessary and the funds which are likely to be available.

It is very easy to say that more money should be found. It is easier still to say it when it does not mean any real effort on the

part of the critic. It is customary, too, to place the blame on the Loan Council for not approving even larger expenditures. What is the real position? The Loan Council consists of the Commonwealth and the States. The Commonwealth has two votes and a casting vote. The States each have one vote. At the most then the Commonwealth has three possible votes and the States six, so that in any decision said to be made by the Commonwealth, in fact two States must vote with it. In a vote thus taken, to the Commonwealth's two votes must be added two State votes. This would result in four all. The Commonwealth would then have a casting vote. It will be seen that the Commonwealth view cannot prevail unless two States first vote with the Commonwealth.

How then is the Loan programme arrived at? The States go to the Loan Council with their Loan programmes. I think it may not be unfair to say that some ask for more than they think they will get. To the total required by the States in their applications must be added the Commonwealth's needs to finance the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement. This in fact is £32,500,000. The remainder of the vast Commonwealth works programme is financed from revenue. It may be that the sum asked for is £250,000,000. The Commonwealth, which I believe provides the statistical advice on which the borrowing programme is framed, says:—

In our opinion the public will not subscribe more than £123,000,000. This was the amount the Loan Council raised last year and it is not likely to be exceeded if indeed equalled this year.

Then I understand it is customary for discussion to take place on how the States' programme can be adjusted to come to a smaller figure than £250,000,000. It would seem that the overall total of Loan expenditure agreed upon this year will be £190,000,000. Out of this the Commonwealth will require £32,500,000 for the Commonwealth-State housing agreement, undertaking as in last year the remainder of its works from revenue. Last year the Commonwealth found £104,000,000 for works from revenue. It is arguable whether expenditure on works out of revenue is less inflationary than when spent from Loan money, but whatever the view is on that matter there is a long-term saving in interest and sinking fund on the amount so spent. This year I understand it is expected that overseas loans may bring into the Loan fund £20,000,000. Local borrowing, if equal to last year, will be £123,000,000, a total of £143,000,000. This

leaves a gap of £47,000,000 if the full programme of State works approved is to be carried out. Where, then, does this £47,000,000 come from? Rather than being the ogre who devours the States' Loan funds, the Commonwealth has in the last few years provided this shortage from revenue.

The Federal Treasurer said in his Budget speech last week that the Commonwealth would look at this matter later in the financial year when the trend of public response to loan appeals is shown. Incidentally, on this aspect of borrowing, I would suggest that there should be some closer co-ordination between Commonwealth and State officers in preparing the material for loan advertisements. What suits a State like New South Wales does not necessarily suit South Australia. I know that it is a very difficult matter simply to explain the very real taxation advantage which investors in Commonwealth Loans receive as against investments in other securities. Until recently this has not been adequately explained. Some attempt is being made in current Loan advertisements and I suggest that even further simplification of this rather complex matter should be attempted in the interests of obtaining the largest possible number of subscribers.

There is from time to time a good deal of loose talk by persons selling Commonwealth Loans when they are at a discount and condemning someone or other for their loss. The position is, of course, that an investor in a Commonwealth loan makes a contract to lend for a fixed period, and if he wishes to get out of his contract before it expires he must be prepared to take whatever someone else will offer for that loan. It is not the fault of the Commonwealth or the Loan Council unless current issues of loans are made on much more favourable terms than existing loans. This is an ever-present anxiety to the Loan Council which must strike a balance between what is necessary to pay in interest, in order to attract sufficient money into new loans, and the consequential effect a higher rate would have on existing loans in the hands of investors who may for some reason or another wish to sell. It will be seen then that this is a delicate matter, and while higher rates of interest would undoubtedly attract new money at the same time they would have a serious effect on the market value of prior loan issues. This then brings me to the point that no practical purpose can be served by criticism that the Loan Estimates before us do not do enough for the State. The Government must take the responsibility for the Estimates which it presents to

Parliament, but Parliament of necessity cannot alter them, nor would it be desirable in practice if it could do so as a whole train of events would be set in motion which could gravely upset the financial balance which is so delicately set.

Judging by the accommodating attitude adopted by the Commonwealth in the past when borrowings have fallen short of needs or commitments, I think it would be reasonable to expect that the leeway would be made good if not entirely by the Commonwealth at least to the extent that works would be maintained. If, however, as the Premier suggested the programme of this State might have to be cut, two possible alternatives might present themselves. Should the cut be small the Government would undoubtedly make the revisions in consultation with the departments concerned. If the cut were large, which on past history is unlikely, then it may be that Parliamentary approval might be sought.

One would expect that the programme which has been submitted for this year's Loan Estimates would be capable of being carried out. Whether one agrees or not with the details of the appropriations is largely determined by whether they primarily serve one's own constituency. On that score there are few members, if any, who cannot point to substantial works within their own constituencies. But the overall test should be, will the Australian economy stand this programme? It must be accepted that the Loan Council has inquired into that. Secondly, does it provide a programme which is in its general application of advantage to the State? This House will I think concur in that view, which is my own view, and for that reason I have pleasure in supporting the Loan Estimates.

Mr. HUTCHENS (Hindmarsh)—In view of the fact that one of the members of this Committee has suffered a bereavement and a number of members on this side are attending the funeral, I ask that progress be reported, because a number of them would like to speak on these Loan Estimates.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

METROPOLITAN AND EXPORT ABATTOIRS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

I regret that the Bill is not yet on members' files, which is due to the excessive amount of

work to be done by the Government Printer. I thought that if I gave the second reading explanation today members would be ready to consider the Bill further when it was placed on their files.

The object of the Bill is to carry into effect the decision of the Government, announced in Parliament last week, to facilitate the entry into the metropolitan abattoirs area of meat from country abattoirs. This matter is at present provided for in a limited way by the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Act; but the existing provisions are not adequate for carrying into effect the policy of the Government.

By section 78 of the Act the Abattoirs Board is empowered to grant permits to bring carcasses and meat into the metropolitan abattoirs area from the Port Lincoln branch of the Government Produce Department. By section 77 of the Act the board is empowered to grant a permit to authorize any person to bring specified carcasses or meat into the metropolitan abattoirs area in any circumstances which, in the board's opinion, justify the grant of a permit. These sections were not designed to confer rights to bring specified quotas of meat regularly into the abattoirs area, and it is not likely that any country abattoirs, other than those at Port Lincoln, could obtain any substantial rights under them. Moreover, the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board, with all its virtues, should not be charged with the responsibility of deciding the rights of country abattoirs in the matter of slaughtering for the metropolitan area. It is therefore necessary that if country abattoirs are to be given extended rights to slaughter for the metropolitan area, some authority other than the Abattoirs Board should be empowered to decide the extent of such rights, and that legislative provision should be made for enabling a greater quantity of meat from country abattoirs to be brought into the metropolitan area than is likely to be permitted under the present legislation.

The Bill, in effect, places the power of deciding what meat from country abattoirs should come into the metropolitan area in the hands of the Government. It is laid down that the Governor may by proclamation declare what proportion of the meat slaughtered at any country abattoirs can be brought into the metropolitan area during any specified period. Different quotas may be granted to different country abattoirs, and any quota may be expressed in terms of the number of carcasses or weight of meat. When a country abattoirs

has been given a quota by proclamation, persons will have the right to bring meat, up to the limit of the quota, into the metropolitan abattoirs area under permits granted by the Minister of Agriculture. The permit system is necessary in order that proper provision may be made for ensuring that all necessary inspections are made and that the quota is not exceeded, and generally for regulating deliveries into the metropolitan area. However, it is contemplated that when a country abattoirs is granted a quota, permits will be made available in order that the quota may be filled. Provision is made for the Minister to direct inspections, additional to those provided for in the permits, if necessary in the interests of public health.

The Bill provides that meat brought into the metropolitan abattoirs area under a permit granted by the Minister may lawfully be sold within the area. A breach of the terms of a permit will be an offence and the person responsible will be liable to a fine and, in addition, the permit may be revoked. The Government is of opinion that this Bill is necessary in the interests of ensuring an adequate meat supply for the rapidly-increasing population of the metropolitan area and also in the interests of producers of stock in country districts, including Eyre Peninsula. Without entering into a discussion on the merits and the facts of the dispute at the Metropolitan Abattoirs, I point out that the present situation indicates the desirability of some decentralization in the slaughtering of our stock. In other words, if you have all your eggs in one basket you can be caught out badly, and that is the situation today. I believe that if we had had some country works operating they could have assisted materially not only in feeding the metropolitan consumers but also in overcoming the grave problem of the export trade that has arisen since the strike began.

Master butchers and their employees are doing a wonderful job in keeping up our supply, so no-one is going without meat, but we are faced with the grave problem of 700,000 to 1,000,000 export lambs awaiting slaughter. If more country works were operating they could help us out in such an emergency. This is borne out by the fact that the Port Lincoln works are still operating. They can handle the output on Eyre Peninsula, and during slack periods they could even take some of the lambs from the mainland. I have heard of many lambs being taken to Victoria from as far afield as Yorke Peninsula, and we are losing that trade while the

dispute continues, but this means of disposal cannot cope with the large numbers that await treatment, so I hope the dispute can be resolved soon with satisfaction to all parties.

Mr. Heaslip—Producers will have to take much less for their lambs.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—Undoubtedly there will be a serious price decline because the lambs will get too heavy or lose their bloom. Moreover, lamb prices are substantially lower than they were last year. Some prices I have heard quoted are about 55 per cent of the prices that similar lambs were bringing last year, so the producer and the State generally are faced with a considerable reduction in income from this source, quite apart from the additional loss occurring as the result of the dispute at the abattoirs. I am pleased to say that the proposals for the establishment of abattoirs at Kadina have been revived. Negotiations have been resumed, and with a definite quota in prospect there will be a better opportunity for country abattoirs to function. An export abattoirs cannot exist entirely on seasonal work of slaughtering solely for export because it only lasts three or four months. If there are no other slaughtering available for an abattoirs it has to be closed for the balance of the year, which means that its export killing charges must be so high as to become prohibitive, unless the abattoirs are to make a deep inroad into the profits of the stockowner who offers his lambs for treatment.

Unless the nucleus of the team in a meat works can be retained there is always the recurring difficulty of obtaining the necessary labour to carry on from season to season, so any country meat works that are established should have some quota in the meat consumption of the metropolitan area, where we have now more than 400,000 people, which is a substantial increase on the number when the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs' slaughtering capacity was raised to its present standard. Therefore, there is justification for allotting some quota to country works, as envisaged by the Bill. This should offer some encouragement for works to be established outside the area in which the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Board operates. I commend the Bill to the House.

Mr. JENNINGS secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.54 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, September 6, at 2 p.m.