HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, November 10, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.

SATURDAY BANKING.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Recently I was approached by representatives of the Commonwealth Bank Officers' Association and the other bank officers' associations, who asked me to take up with the Premier the question of further consideration to a matter which has been before the Government—an amendment of the law to permit banks to close on Saturday mornings. They pointed out that at present the banks are precluded from doing this. If the law were amended it would be a matter of perhaps an application to the court or mutual arrangement with the employers. I understand that in Tasmania banks close on Saturday morning and that in this State bank officers are prepared to meet the demands of the public by closing later on Friday afternoon so that the business normally done on Saturday morning can be done then.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—At the request of the Bank Officials' Association the Government has examined this matter on a number of occasions, and the number of Saturday banking transactions was investigated. The records of the State Bank showed that there was a great demand for banking on Saturday morning. Many people who work during banking hours during the week avail themselves of the opportunity on Saturday morning, and we also found that no other mainland State had been able to dispense with Saturday morning banking. The Government feels that the interests of the public must be considered, and after careful consideration it decided it could not bring down a Bill to the effect suggested.

WALKER FLAT AND PURNONG FERRIES.

Mr. WHITE—Has the Minister representing the Minister of Roads and Local Government a reply to the question I asked last Tuesday about the possibility of building up one of the approaches to the Walker Flat and Purnong ferries so that people in that vicinity would be able to cross the river when it was at high level?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—As promised, I took the matter up with my colleague and the honourable member will be glad to know that he has arranged for a senior officer to go to the area early next week and discuss the matter on the spot with the district council concerned.

ARCHITECT-IN-CHIEF'S WORKSHOP.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Has the Minister of Works a report in reply to my recent question about the installation of a dust extraction plant at the Architect-in-Chief's workshop at Keswick?

The Hon. M. McINTOSH—I have taken the matter up and obtained a preliminary report, but I do not know whether it covers all the points the honourable member mentioned. The Architect-in-Chief has reported that the only part of the exhaust plant not destroyed by the fire was the hopper. Tenders were called in July for the additional plant and installation, but no satisfactory offer was received. Tenders were again called and one has now been accepted, and it is expected that work will be commenced within the next three weeks.

BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Bush Fires Act, 1933-1952.

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

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

In view of the few remaining days of the session I thought it necessary to give the second reading explanation of this Bill today so that members might have an opportunity to peruse it before the House resumes next week. It is a modest measure, introducing no radical changes to the Act. Wider and more far-reaching changes have been considered for a long time; in fact, since the disastrous bushfire on January 2 this year resolutions recommending various amendments have literally poured into my office from district councils, organizations and private individuals. As a result of those representations and my own observations, I felt that a considerable overhaul of the present machinery was necessary, and consequently, I referred all those matters to the Bush Fires Advisory Committee, a statutory body whose function is to advise the Minister.

That committee has met on a number of occasions, considered certain matters, and made recommendations. All that has taken a considerable time, and I have given personal attention to those recommendations as well as to other matters that have continued to come to hand. Although a scheme was drawn up for a more drastic overhaul of the legislation, by the time it was ready there was insufficient time to put it into the form of a Bill, with amendments to the various sections. Consequently, Cabinet decided that this measure would only deal with those matters most requiring urgent attention, and I have therefore introduced a rather modified Bill which, although it does not deal with some of the more far-reaching proposals submitted to the advisory committee, nevertheless appreciably decentralizes control and gives local Government bodies more discretion and power than they have been able to exercise under the existing Act, which rather places the entire State in a strait jacket because it imposes similar conditions throughout the length and breadth of the State regardless of differences in local climatic conditions. There has always been a disability, in some parts of the State, to operate under these rather rigid conditions. Councils, however, could approach the Minister to ameliorate the conditions to a degree. For instance, a council by applying to the Minister could get an alteration of the conditional burning period or the prohibited period. It will be appreciated that whereas a certain prohibited period was suitable for the far north, conditions in the South-East were so different that they warranted totally different times for prohibited and restricted burning periods. However, alterations in conditions could only be achieved by the somewhat cumbersome method of applying, with the usual paraphernalia, to the Minister. Some districts are far removed from the metropolitan area and mails are not always expeditious or regular and it is rather difficult to obtain Ministerial approval.

This Bill provides greater latitude to councils and affords them some discretion. It is recognized that, in view of the disastrous fires earlier this year, provision must be made to achieve greater co-ordination between councils and fire-fighting organizations on whom the responsibility for combating a fire is generally thrown. I pay a tribute to the wonderful work done on January 2 by the fire-fighting organizations, fire control officers and the hundreds of volunteers who assisted in the suppression of the disastrous fires that broke out that day. They rendered magnificent service under the most difficult and trying conditions. I do not think we have ever before experienced such difficult and dangerous conditions as on that occasion. The efforts of those who fought the fires in the Adelaide hills and the South-East revealed their marvellous spirit. It would not be out of place to express deep appreciation of the wonderful response of the public to appeals made for funds to assist in re-establishing those who suffered so severely. The committee set up worked splendidly and the public responded magnificently. I congratulate the various voluntary committees which subsequently assisted in distributing the funds. Many people rendered service in assessing the damage suffered by the fire victims and aided the central committee in arriving at a fair and reasonable distribution of the money collected.

Mr. Corcoran—It was not an easy job.

The Hon. A. W. CHRISTIAN—No, and it was frequently thankless. I am happy to say that we had very few complaints about the administration of the fund. The cost of administration was small, as most of it was undertaken by officers of my department and only a few additional people were engaged. The details of the Bill are as follows. Clause 2 provides that a council may authorize in a written permit the lighting of stubble during the prohibited period without full compliance with the conditions now provided for a fire break and the number of men present at the fire. It has been found in practice that the fire break now required (at least 6ft. if the ground is ploughed and cleared or at least 12ft. if it is cleared only) and also the provision that at least 4 men shall be present at the fire, are not always necessary, particularly if the fire is controlled by experienced men with the necessary fire fighting equipment. This clause also provides that the council may issue the permit subject to such conditions as it thinks fit. The intention is that the council may be prepared to minimize the conditions regarding size of fire break and number of men present by specifying the minimum fire fighting equipment and water supply which must be at the fire. Clause 3 gives a council similar power to issue a written permit during the restricted period to that given in clause 2 for the prohibited period, with the addition that the council may also vary the time of lighting the fire. The present section 5 provides that no fire shall be lighted before 12 noon. This

has been found unnecessary in many cases, and it has made burning almost impossible in some areas. In some coastal districts a cool change invariably arrives during an afternoon and, if a person has not been able to burn stubble in the morning, the opportunity to burn it—particularly if the stubble is not very thick—is lost. In such circumstances it is desirable to provide for an alteration of the time of commencement.

Clause 4 gives a council power to authorize the burning of stubble in township allotments during both the prohibited and restricted periods subject to such conditions as the council thinks fit. This provision will facilitate the controlled burning of township allotments by experienced officers of the S.A. Fire Brigade Board and voluntary fire fighting organizations. The object of this is to make it possible to clean up town allotments generally and thus minimize the possibility of serious outbreaks later in the season. I am happy to be able to announce that many people are taking advantage of the offers of fire brigades and voluntary fire-fighting organizations and are having the work undertaken by experienced people. I am now getting many applications for permits to take action in anticipation of hazards later on.

Clause 5, in a similar manner to clause 3, gives councils power to authorize the burning of scrub during the restricted period, without full compliance with the conditions now imposed concerning width of fire break, number of men present and time of lighting. Here again the council may impose its own conditions upon which the fire can be lighted without full compliance with the conditions now imposed in the Act.

Clause 6 gives a council power to vary the commencing time of the prohibited period two weeks either way (that is to say, it can start the prohibited period two weeks earlier or two weeks later) and also to postpone the final date of the prohibited period by two weeks. This provision is designed to enable councils to take action themselves to vary the prohibited burning period to meet seasonal conditions without having to seek Ministerial approval, as is now necessary under section 11 of the present Act. The clause also provides that if councils vary the period such variation shall not be effective until notice has been published once in a newspaper circulating in the area and also displayed for at least seven days at the council's office. Notice must also be sent to the Minister. It is further provided that if a Government forest is situated within a council's area that council cannot alter the prohibited period without consulting the Conservator of Forests.

Clause 7 gives a council power to make by-laws prohibiting the lighting of fires for burning stubble or scrub or charcoal burning on any Saturday or public holiday. Section 12 now prohibits the lighting of fires for these purposes on any Sunday. In a particular case where a council wished to make by-laws prohibiting the lighting of fires on any Saturday or public holiday, the Crown Solicitor advised that such by-laws were outside the council's authority. Further negotiations showed that there was some difference of opinion amongst legal men on the question, so it is proposed that the point be cleared up by including the provision in the Act. It will be observed that this is merely a by-law making power given to councils.

Clause 8 gives the Minister or a person authorized by him the power to cause to be made a broadcast from a broadcasting station of a warning of a day of extreme fire hazard and to prohibit on that day the lighting of fires in the open, either within the whole State or any part of it. This provision now operates in Victoria and I understand it has been successful. It has been strongly recommended by the Bush Fires Advisory Committee. It is contended by some people that there should be a total prohibition of the lighting of fires during the prohibited period from October 15 until February. That is not altogether desirable because during that period it is often necessary for a council to light fires under strictly controlled conditions in order to burn rubbish and make conditions safer. By a complete prohibition this necessary clearance of fire hazards would be prevented.

Clause 9 imposes an obligation on the owner of any aircraft landing in any stubble paddock during spraying or dusting operations to provide certain equipment for the suppression of fire unless the landing ground has a fire break on all sides. The equipment specified is at least one hand or power pump with adequate water and two knapsack sprays.

Clause 10 makes an important extension to section 19 of the present Act, which provides a penalty for throwing a lighted cigarette or cigar or live tobacco ash from any vehicle during the period between November 1 and April 30 inclusive. This prohibition now applies only in parts of the State outside any municipality or town. Under clause 10 the offence will apply throughout the whole State,

and there will be no exemption within the metropolitan area and townships. This alteration has been recommended by many authorities, particularly in the Blackwood and Belair areas, and also by the Advisory Committee. It is felt that it will be good training for people to get them out of the habit of throwing lighted cigarettes and the like from vehicles.

Clause 11 gives a council power to require the owner of a sawmill, or any other class of premises declared by the Governor by proclamation, to provide a water supply, fire-fighting appliances and telephonic communications for the purpose of having them readily available should an outbreak of fire occur. Provision is also made to give an owner receiving such a notice from a council the right of appeal to the nearest local court if he objects to the notice.

Clause 12 provides that the Director of Emergency Fire Services shall *ex officio* be a fire control officer. At present the Director when attending bush fires has no more authority than a private spectator. Every honourable member acquainted with the work of the present Director knows how valuable it is. He is *de facto* in charge of the various volunteer fire-fighting organizations in the State. He has given them much useful advice and help in organization and in securing equipment. He has studied how best to organize brigades and how best to combat fires of various kinds. His services are highly appreciated and it is desirable that he should have a status. Under the bush fires legislation at present he has none and we propose to give him the status of fire control officer.

Clause 13 gives additional power to fire control officers to order occupiers of land to extinguish fires which in the opinion of the fire control officer have been lighted illegally or are out of control or might reasonably be expected to get out of control. Similar authority is given for the fire control officer to direct any person apparently responsible for the fire.

Clauses 37 to 48 provide for the establishment of a Bush Fires Fund. These are perhaps the most important clauses in the Bill. They are the result of a suggestion by Mr. Fletcher, I think last year or the year before, that we approach the insurance companies for a contribution towards a fund like this, as insurance companies contribute in other States. I have found that in the eastern States substantial contributions towards a fund of this nature are made by the underwriters' associations. As a result of the honourable member's representations I called in the Underwriters' Association's representatives and at a conference they agreed to make a substantial contribution, beginning in the first year with £5,000 and possibly continuing on that level. If it is found necessary to increase the amount, that can be done on the recommendation of the committee.

This fund will be financed equally by the Government and insurance companies and will be used for the purpose of subsidizing up to a maximum of two-thirds of the cost of fire-fighting equipment purchased by volunteer fire-fighting organizations for the purpose of fighting bush fires. Clause 38 provides that a Bush Fires Fund Committee of three shall be appointed by the Minister for the purpose of administering the fund. It is specified that one member of the committee shall be appointed from a panel nominated by the Fire and Accident Underwriters Association of South Australia. Clause 40 provides that the fund shall be held by the Treasurer. Clause 41 provides that the accounts of the committee shall be audited by the Auditor-General and copies of the accounts shall be laid before both Houses of Parliament. Clause 42 makes provision for clerical assistance for the committee.

Clause 43 provides that at such time during the present financial year as is fixed by the Treasurer, the Treasurer and insurance companies shall each contribute £5,000 to the fund. Under clause 44 contributions for future years will be recommended by the committee to the Minister. If the insurance representative on the committee does not agree with the committee's recommendation regarding the contribution for any particular year, the Fire and Accident Underwriters Association shall have the right to make representations to the Minister and the Treasurer as to the amount of contribution to be made. After considering the committee's recommendation and any representations made by the insurance companies, the Treasurer, after consultation with the Minister, will fix the contributions to be paid each year. It is provided that the contributions to be paid by insurance companies shall not exceed the amount fixed to be paid by the Treasurer.

Clause 45 provides the method of computing insurance companies' individual contributions to the fund. This is the same method as that provided under the Volunteer Fire Fighters Fund Act, namely individual insurers contributions will be calculated *pro rata* according

to stamp duty (other than stamp duty attributable to life assurance business) paid by them in their annual licence under the Stamp Duties Act. Clause 46 provides that subject to the Minister's approval the committee may make payments to voluntary fire-fighting organizations for providing up to two-thirds of the cost of fire-fighting equipment. In the past the amounts we have had on the Estimates for this kind of subsidy have only aggregated between £1,200 and £1,300 a year. so it will be appreciated that £10,000 can do a great deal in providing better equipment for our valuable fire-fighting organizations.

Clause 47 deals with financial provision and clause 48 protects members of the committee against action for any acts *bona fide* done by the committee. The establishment of this fund has been discussed with the insurance companies and they have voluntarily agreed to the establishment of the fund and the general details as covered by the provisions set out above. I should like to pay a tribute to the willing co-operation given me by insurance companies in organizing the scheme. Clause 15 provides for a schedule of increased penalties. In general the present penalties have been doubled and in some cases more than doubled where it was felt that thoughtless or careless acts of people could cause a lot of damage and that the courts should have the power to prescribe a penalty more in keeping with the offence than they can now do.

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

PHYSIOTHERAPISTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council with an amendment.

INDUSTRIAL CODE AMENDMENT BILL (PENSIONS).

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 8. Page 1449.)

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—The Minister of Lands secured the adjournment of the debate because the Leader of the Opposition referred to the superannuation fund of members of Parliament, and he thought I might wish to comment on the Leader's remarks. It is true that the complaint that the Government has not always rushed forward with increased benefits to members until other sections had received increased benefits would be a valid criticism, if regarded as a criticism, but I have always felt, and I think members will agree, that we have to be careful to see that any privileges granted to members are in keeping with what has been provided elsewhere, and that we should not be the first people to claim privileges. Superannuation pensions paid to ex-members in South Australia are on a lower level than those paid in other States. Our qualifying period to secure superannuation pensions is longer, but it is also true that the contributions we pay are lower than the Australian level.

Our superannuation fund is quite solvent; in fact, I have felt that the amount accumulated in a fairly short time indicates that the amount of benefits provided are perhaps actuarially low, but the Government Statist does not agree with that. The Government would be prepared to examine this proposal, but only on two considerations. Firstly, the circumstances of members fluctuate somewhat, and some may not desire to make additional contributions to secure additional benefits; therefore any alteration would be of a voluntary nature and a member would have the right, which is frequently given in the Public Service, to either come into the new scheme or stay under the old one. Secondly, if there is to be an increase in benefits there will have to be a considerable increase in members' contributions, and although I have not the exact figures, for a weekly payment of about £3 it would be possible to provide, on the present basis, a maximum pension of £12 a week. That would mean that to enjoy an additional 50 per cent pension, it would be necessary to increase the contribution by nearly 100 per cent.

Mr. O'Halloran—Do you propose to increase the Government's contribution?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That would include a corresponding obligation on the Government, which would contribute 50 per cent of the additional benefit.

Mr. Stott—What would be the minimum payment?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—At present two schemes operate because, when the pension was slightly varied last time, members were given the opportunity of either continuing to contribute at the previous rate of £50 a year or to increase their contribution to £72 and receive a corresponding increase in their benefit, and I believe one or two stayed on the old rate. True, on interstate standards the benefit paid to members here is low, but also on those standards the contribution is correspondingly low.

Mr. Riches—How does it compare with the standard set in this Bill?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—We have always compared our superannuation scheme with that of the Public Service, and at present that scheme is more generous than the Parliamentary scheme. I do not think Parliament should lead the band in this matter, but rather supply itself with what it has previously supplied to other people. If the Leader of the Opposition after consulting members of his Party, indicates to me at an early date that he is interested in a scheme such as I have outlined, I will have more precise figures taken out and present a report.

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

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 25. Page 1218.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This Bill embodies the recommendations of the Workmen's Compensation Advisory Committee, and I suppose we must be thankful that the Government has seen fit to introduce a Bill giving effect to them, but it should not be forgotten that those recommendations represent the point beyond which the majority of the members of that committee are not for the time being prepared to go. In effect, the procedure followed by the committee is that the workers' representative, Mr. O'Connor, submits reforms based on Labor's policy—and on the progress that has been made elsewhere in compensation matters—and the other two members, inevitably representing the Government's viewpoint, determine which of those reforms—and how much of them—will be recommended to the Government. The Government cannot, of course adopt anything less than the majority findings of the committee, but, by the same token, it ignores altogether Mr. O'Connor's minority report. That report, however, is available and it indicates how far the majority findings fall short of what the trade union movement considers to be essential in determining the compensation that ought to be available to workmen who have the misfortune to meet with accidents in the course of their employment. I need hardly say that the Opposition is not prepared to accept unreservedly this sort of solution of an important industrial problem.

Before going into details of the actual amendments proposed, there is one other general criticism that I feel I should make. The committee is obviously too prone to think in terms of expediency and ignores the fundamental principles involved in workmen's compensation. An example of this tendency is the basis on which the amount of compensation to be paid in specific cases is determined. Apparently, the majority of the committee is always afraid that it will sanction an amount higher than the amount prescribed somewhere else. So long as the amount prescribed in our legislation is somewhere near the average for other States, whatever the amount that may be decided upon at any given time is regarded as satisfactory. Apparently, also, it never occurs to the majority of the committee that it might sometimes pioneer the cause of justice and do something more than bring compensation payments into line with movements in the value of money.

It is no wonder that the representative of the trade union movement on the committee is continually calling attention to the failure of the other members to face up to the real problems of workmen's compensation. The fact that the other members of the committee would not accede to the representations of Mr. O'Connor that fundamental amendments should be recommended—and the fact that those amendments do not figure in the Bill—make it necessary for me to express my dissatisfaction, and the dissatisfaction of the Labor movement generally, with the extent of the proposals now before the House. I have given notice that when the Bill passes the second reading, I will move for an instruction to the Committee of the whole House that it has leave to consider two matters not dealt with in the Bill; and, in addition, I propose to move a number of other amendments to some of the clauses already in the Bill.

Some time ago the Act was amended to extend compensation cover to workmen travelling to and from their work provided they are conveyed in a vehicle supplied by their employer. This was not, of course, a recognition of the principle which we have been endeavouring to introduce into the Act for a number of years, namely, that workmen should be covered for compensation purposes while travelling to and from their work in the normal way. Not only is this principle expressed in the legislation of most of the other States and of the Commonwealth, but it is fundamentally sound. The great majority of workers have to travel some distance in order to reach their places of employment, and only the insignificant minority of them would have

the privilege of being transported by their employers. The question of travelling to and from work is becoming more and more important as the distance between the workers' homes and their places of employment becomes greater and as the liability to accident in the course of travelling becomes greater. It must be remembered that the industrial development that we have witnessed especially in recent years has magnified the problem, and industry may properly be regarded as having the responsibility of providing for the additional risks involved.

In this connection, I would merely add that appropriate safeguards should be attached to any provision for compensation in respect of accidents incurred by workmen while travelling to and from their work. Industry should not be unduly burdened with the liability referred to. Those safeguards are, of course, provided in the State compensation Acts which do cover travelling to and from work and in the Commonwealth Act. Substantial interruptions of and deviations from the normal journey are expressly excluded. Such safeguards are provided for in the relevant amendment which I propose to move.

Another justifiable objection to the committee's majority decision is in reference to the maximum amounts of compensation to be provided under the Bill. I have already mentioned this in a general way. Taking, for example, the compensation payable at the death of a workman, we find that section 16 of the Act provides for the payment of four years' wages where the workman leaves dependants. That basis for the calculation of compensation in such a case might be regarded as fundamental, but it is almost completely nullified by the qualification imposing an entirely unrealistic maximum—at the present moment, the sum of £2,300, plus £80 for each dependent child. The Bill proposes to increase this to £2,400, plus £80 for each dependent child. The absurdity of this maximum, even when amended, is emphasized when we realize that no compensation would be payable in respect of that part of a workman's wage which exceeds the present official living wage, namely £11 11s. a week, which is approximately £600 a year.

There is no justification at all for the extremely low maximum now provided in the Act for compensation payable at death—and the proposed additional £100 is almost insignificant. I might mention, in passing, that the Bill proposes to include all employees receiving up to £35 a week, which is £1,820 a year, approximately three times the maximum annual rate of wage to be recognized in the maximum compensation payable under section 16 of the Act. One of the amendments I propose to move in Committee is that the maximum be raised to £4,000. This would, in terms of section 16, represent four times an annual wage of £1,000, which is equivalent to £19 4s. 6d. a week—and this is well below the maximum wage in respect of which the Act covers workmen.

Another limitation now prescribed by the Act is that the weekly payment during total incapacity shall be a sum equal to three-quarters weekly earnings, plus £1 for each dependent child and £2 10s. for a wife, with the further limitation that weekly payments shall not exceed £12 16s. a week for a workman with dependants and £8 15s. a week for a workman without dependants. The inclusion of this further limitation reminds us of one of the greatest confidence tricks ever put over the worker. Apart from that, however, who ever heard of a man being able to live on less during his incapacity than while he is employed?

I intend to move an amendment to authorize weekly payments during total incapacity equal to weekly wages; and as a corollary to this, I will also move that the maximum aggregate compensation payable in respect of weekly payments shall be increased to £4,000, with provision for additional payments, if approved by a special magistrate after considering all the relevant circumstances of any particular case. I also intend to move that the maximum for specified injuries, as set out in the table to section 26 of the Act, be increased to £4,000.

Another amendment I have in mind is one giving a workman twelve months instead of six in which to give notice of his intention to claim for damages. This involves an amendment of section 69 of the Act, which at present requires notice within six months and commencement of action within twelve. The amendments I have foreshadowed do not, of course, represent everything the Labor Party would like to see embodied in the Workmen's Compensation Act, but they do represent the broad, general principles of the Party's policy on this subject. With those reservations, I support the second reading.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide)—In explaining this Bill the Premier made some general observations by referring to the various clauses. He said:—

Since last year's Act was passed by this Parliament there has not been much alteration of workmen's compensation law in Australia. The only Bill of any importance which has

been passed is one in Western Australia. In that State by a Bill passed early this year, the maximum weekly payment for incapacity was increased from £10 to £12 8s.

That implies that the Government closely examines compensation legislation in other States with the object of achieving some degree of uniformity. As a matter of fact, when explaining the Electoral Act Amendment Bill yesterday the Premier pointed out the desirability of having uniformity in electoral legislation. The Government accepts uniformity when it suits it, but although it implies that it desires uniformity in workmen's compensation laws I hope to prove that no such uniformity exists. Apparently the Government does not intend to bring about uniformity. The Premier also said:—

> However, the Western Australian Act had the effect of slightly increasing the average Australian standard of compensation and the committee took it into account in making its recommendations.

Only in one or two respects does this Bill agree with the position in other States. South Australia produces more per head of population than any other State, yet the workers are to be given only the average of all the States when it comes to compensation. That is all the Liberal Party can do for the excellent services rendered by our workers. Clause 3 refers to the circumstances under which workmen's compensation shall be paid. The Treasurer said:—

> Clause 3 abolishes the present rule that no compensation, other than medical expenses, is payable unless a workman is disabled by his injury for at least one day. This rule was in all the early Workmen's Compensation Acts, but has now been generally abolished.

South Australia is the last State to abolish this rule. In the past the South Australian worker has had to be off work for at least one full day in order to qualify for compensation. Such a provision does not apply in any other State. At present if a man works for half an hour one day and is home the rest of the day as a result of an accident at work, and then resumes duty next day, he receives nothing except pay for the half an hour worked.

Mr. John Clark—What if he were ill on a Friday and came back on the Monday?

Mr. LAWN—Some employers would regard him as entitled to compensation, but others would not. Clause 4 refers to the maximum permissible earnings and increases the amount to £1,820 on a yearly basis. In Victoria the amount is £2,000, New South Wales £2,000, Tasmania £1,300, and there is an unlimited amount in Western Australia, Queensland and the Commonwealth. In explaining the Bill the Premier repeatedly referred to the position in Western Australia, but although there is an unlimited amount in this regard in that State he is not willing to adopt it for South Australia. Clause 5 deals with the maximum amount of compensation payable on death. The Premier said:—

> The present limit in South Australia is £2,250, but as the recent increase in Western Australia has raised the general Australian level of these payments the committee recommended an increase of £100.

The Commonwealth amount is £2,350, in Victoria it is £2,240, New South Wales four years' earnings with £2,500 maximum, Queensland £2,500, Tasmania £2,240 and Western Australia £2,500. The average of these amounts is £2,350. These figures show how the Government works in considering amendments to the legislation. It is willing to take note of only the lowest amounts. Earlier this session Mr. Fletcher asked whether a female employee who had her hair caught in a machine during her employment and was scalped, necessitating the wearing of a wig for the rest of her lifetime, and who would have a permanent scar, was entitled to a lump sum payment under the Act. The Premier said that the case was six years old and that it was impossible for him to establish the circumstances. He added:—

> I understand from my solicitors that the case would, in any event, be Statute-barred.

This girl could have had considerable facial disfigurement. There is nothing in the Act to cover the payment of lump sum compensation for such an injury, only payments for the time she was away from her work. She had previously been a receptioniste and a waitress, but because of her injury she has little chance of doing that work again. This injury and others are covered by the legislation in other States. Whatever Government is in office next year I hope these matters will be considered and action taken to improve our legislation.

I now want to make charges against employers of deliberately swindling employees. It does not occur in every instance, but in many cases employees are prevented from getting their rights under the Act. The only way to overcome the difficulty would be to establish a board to administer workmen's compensation, similar to the one operating in Victoria, and oblige employers to insure all their workmen's compensation liabilities with the State Insurance Office, and not with private insurance companies. I have a report setting out the

experiences of a trades union in this State in connection with workmen's compensation. It was handed to me on October 3 and it covers a period of about 19 months. The following cases are set out in the report:—

Case No. 1.—Workman lost two joints of middle finger of right hand in press accident. Workman not used to this type of job and only used on same due to production bottleneck. Press, an automatic type, not fitted with adequate guard. Following accident insurance company offered settlement of £115 but after seven months' negotiation finally settled for £350.

Case No. 2.—Workman injured back and went on workmen's compesation. Returned to work and some seven months later suffered recurrence of injury. Claim rejected by insurance company in spite of medical reports from senior Adelaide specialist supporting workman's claim. After six months' negotiation and just prior to court action full settlement of £710 given effect to.

Case No. 3.—Workman unable to work due to "tennis elbows" caused through using file on metal finishing production line. Migrant with several young children not only could not sustain his claim but was actually ordered out of the insurance office. Workman treated at Royal Adelaide Hospital and doctors there were adamant that his condition was a direct result of his work. Claim finally settled for full amount of £90 some three months later. This workman suffered severe financial hardship during the negotiating period.

Case No. 4.—Workman injured hip in fall and laid up on compensation for seven weeks. Injury left workman with permanent disability which would not be accepted by insurance company. Just prior to court action and some two years after accident finally settled out of court on a basis of £200 plus extra legal and medical expenses.

Case No. 5.—Workman lost part of right hand in press accident and offered £612 10s. as final settlement. Accident considered by union as due to negligence and after three months of negotiation finally settled for £1,150 plus legal costs.

Case No. 6.—Workman suffered burns at work when welding spark ignited petrol used on another operation. Insurance company agreed only to pay compensation amounting to £120. After protracted negotiation matter finally settled just prior to court action, some five months after accident, for £1,250.

Members will notice how many times settlement was made just prior to court action. How many workmen were swindled by the employers we do not know. A board, if all accidents were reported to it, could adjudicate in this matter in a proper way. But today many workmen do not apply for compensation because they are not conversant with the law and do not know what they are entitled to. Even when they apply many claims are rejected, and an applicant may be told he is not entitled to compensation. Perhaps the employer may give some excuse, and we do not know how many men have been swindled as a result, but we do know, from the cases that come before us, that a great many are swindled. Many applications are rejected at the outset, and in many others the amount first offered and the amount finally paid are totally different. The report continues:—

Case No. 7.—Workman injured back and was unable to work for long period. Injury reported at company casualty section immediately, but in spite of this and two supporting specialists' opinions, the insurance company flatly refused to accept claim. Finally settled for full compensation of £330 plus medical expenses. This workman suffered severe financial worry pending finalization of his case some nine months after accident.

Case No. 8.—Workman collapsed and died on job and coroner found that death could have been caused by "work strain." Claim refused by insurance company, but finally settled out of court, on eve of court case, for £1,500 plus legal expenses some 15 months after death.

I know something of this last case. The workman died on the job and the company refused to accept the claim that death was the result of his employment. His widow accepted the insurance company's decision, though she was in financial difficulties. The matter was later reported to the union, which placed it in the hands of its legal adviser and the union is confident that the maximum amount of £2,400 would have been ordered by the court had the case been pressed. The widow was offered £1,500 and she was told that if she did not take that she would have to go to court. She had to provide for her children and naturally thought that the court might not award her £1,500 and thought she did the right thing in accepting that sum. If the company admitted liability for £1,500 I am sure the court would have awarded £2,400 because no court would award anything less than the full amount for death. The report continues:—

These eight cases, which cover different companies and insurance offices, are few of many handled by the union. Many hours of time and much expense is involved in endeavouring to obtain the just legal rights of our members, and worse still, even though we try at all times to educate our members to report to the union following injury at work, we feel sure many workers, due to ignorance, accept the first offer made and thus do not obtain their full rights under the Workmen's Compensation Act. My organization is greatly concerned about this position and feels that workmen's compensation should be under only one authority, a State Compensation Office, where all injured workmen would quickly receive their just rights under the prevailing Act, or

alternatively be advised that as negligence was involved they should take steps to pursue a civil claim.

When the Premier opposed the Early Closing Bill introduced by the Opposition he said he had not received any complaints and that therefore he considered that the law did not need amending.

Mr. Jennings—Perhaps the unions no longer have any faith in him.

Mr. LAWN—I have no doubt that that is so, and that is why they did not take these cases to him. The Government cannot say it does not know that employers and insurance companies are not facing up to their obligations under workmen's compensation. I have made the charge that some companies are attempting to swindle their employees, and are swindling them. All the information I have will be made available to the Government if it wants it.

Mr. Jennings—You will stand or fall by it?

Mr. LAWN—Yes. I guarantee the accuracy of the information because I am personally associated with the union concerned. In the eight cases I have mentioned the insurance companies originally offered a total amount of £847 10s., but after the union took them up they paid £4,732 10s., plus sums for legal and hospital expenses that I do not know. Those figures give members some idea of the filching being practised by employers. I say "employers" because according to the Act they are liable for workmen's compensation, though they insure their risk with insurance companies. These employers know what their insurance companies are doing, but they have done nothing to correct the position. They did not tell the insurance companies to pay the amounts due, and they did not place their business with other insurance offices, so they must accept full responsibility for the way their employees have been treated. The Premier referred to legislation in other States. He mentioned the Western Australian and Tasmanian Acts probably because they are the two worst from the employees' point of view. The Government's attitude in referring to these Acts reminded me of a lot of vultures plucking at the body of workmen's compensation and giving the toenails to the workers and the rest of the carcass to the bosses.

Mr. JENNINGS (Prospect)—I am the third Labor member in succession to speak on this Bill. If its purpose were to protect the foreshore at Oodnadatta, or something of like importance, we would have Government members jumping up like jack-in-the-boxes, one after the other. However, I support the Bill, not because it provides anything like adequate benefits, but because it is some improvement on the present legislation. If it passes the second reading the House will be able to endeavour to effect some further improvements in Committee. That is a constructive attitude to take, one that is quite different from the attitude the Government adopts towards most Opposition measures.

Mr. Lawn—Members opposite always accept measures introduced by their own Party.

Mr. JENNINGS—Yes, but what does the Premier do when considering Opposition measures? He looks around for some obscure clause—

Mr. Lawn—Or word.

Mr. JENNINGS—Yes, he looks for a word that he cannot approve and then rejects the measure out of hand. Opposition members know the meaning of such words as "honest" and "fair," so we do not need to bring dictionaries into the Chamber to help us determine our attitude. Of course, our advantage in this respect is something we cannot hope the Premier or his supporters to share. Compensation to injured workmen, or widows and children, is of unparalleled importance, but no workmen's compensation legislation in Australia has ever done justice to the subject. In other States with Labor Governments many improvements have been made lately towards establishing justice, especially where those Governments are not hampered by Tory-ridden Upper Houses. Even in those States the legislation is not perfect; nevertheless, it puts South Australia to shame. We still lag far behind in workmen's compensation, as we do in all industrial legislation. In all legislation that affects the humble, but worthy section of the community, South Australia is in the most ignoble position of all Australian States. It is interesting to hear so frequently in this House and to read so frequently in the press about what is called the amazing industrial progress made by South Australia, but I do not believe that progress is genuine unless it encompasses and uplifts every member of the community, and measured by that yardstick, what is called progress in this State is not really progress: It is merely the advancement of one section at the cost of the great majority of members of the community. That is what masquerades under the name of progress in South Australia.

Of course, we hear glowing reports about the establishment of new industries in South

Australia, and it is a fact that a number have come here in recent years; but despite that fact we can afford to be sceptical about any claim that industrial development in South Australia has kept pace with that in other States. Although we hear much about the new industries attracted here, allegedly because of the advocacy and untiring efforts of the Premier, we know that in other States there has been equal, if not greater expansion, and that similar, in some instances much more important, industries have been established during the post-war period in other States where, presumably, they are getting on quite well (unbelievable though it seems) without the indispensable Playford. In view of the consistent refusal of the present Government to raise workmen's compensation and other industrial benefits there comes into our minds the nasty suspicion that one of the important inducements the Premier offers to industries to come here when he talks to business executives in other States is his promise that, because of a gerrymander that almost ensures the return of the Liberal Government for some years, he can promise that our workmen's compensation legislation will remain so depressed as to bear favourable comparison, from the employers' point of view, with that operating in other States. Further, he is able to promise that many of our other industrial laws will be similarly depressed so that companies can make greater and greater profits here.

Mr. Lawn—There is not much doubt about it.

Mr. JENNINGS—If that is so, then to gratify the glory of the Premier and to satisfy the insatiable greed of employers who establish plants here, workers in industry are penalized. If that is so, it is something of which Parliament, and particularly the Government which has a large majority, should be thoroughly ashamed. Surely, we should be ashamed that, if a man is killed 100 yards this side of the Victorian border, his widow is hundreds of pounds worse off than if he were killed 100 yards the other side of the border. Only recently I was approached within a week by two widows whose husbands had both been killed on their way home from work. One man had worked at the Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation and was covered by Commonwealth workmen's compensation provisions under which his widow received full compensation for her husband's death, but the other widow, whose husband was killed about the same time and had worked in a similar type of industry, received not even a penny because the South Australian legislation did not cover a workman proceeding to and from work by means other than his employer's vehicle. Therefore, because of the refusal of this Government to put this legislation on a decent basis one widow is thousands of pounds worse off than the widow whose husband was killed in similar circumstances but covered by other provisions.

It has been truly said that our workmen's compensation legislation compares unfavourably with that of other States, and I believe that its provisions have been deliberately depressed by the Government in the interests of the employer class, which the Government so faithfully represents. In recent years, however, the depressing of its provisions was beginning to be politically unpopular, and the Government realized it might possibly cause acute electoral embarrassment, gerrymandering notwithstanding; therefore a more subtle way of depriving the worker of his just rights was evolved. The buck was passed by forming a committee comprising one representative of employees, one of employers, and an independent chairman. I do not want to say anything about the personnel of that committee; all members are doing their job according to their own lights, and as one who considers that the rights of employees should be paramount, I pay a tribute to Mr. O'Connor (the employees' representative) who has done an outstandingly good job. The decision and recommendation of the committee, however, must inevitably be a compromise. The employees' representative naturally seeks to raise the standard, and in doing so he must base his submissions on the best features of other workmen's compensation legislation. The employers' representative, not unnaturally, tries to keep the standard as low as possible in the interests of those he represents. Thus far there is a deadlock, and what can the independent chairman do except arrive at a compromise which, although it may be an improvement on existing provisions, still falls far short of the best features of the other compensation Acts and keeps South Australia progressively behind other States.

That is what goes on under this system. In explaining the Bill, the Premier said, in effect, "This is not the responsibility of the Government; a committee has been established to make recommendations." That is so, but although the committee has been established, the responsibility is still that of the Government because workmen's compensation is

something on which the Government has a legislative responsibility, and therefore nobody else can be responsible for it. The reason for the difference between the legislation in South Australia and that in other States is simple: we have been blighted for so long by a Tory Government. Let us take encouragement, however, in the confident hope that it is merely temporary.

This legislation can be made much more just and more in line with that of the enlightened States if we carry the amendments foreshadowed by the Leader of the Opposition. If those amendments are not carried then we will continue, to our eternal shame, to allow the widow and the fatherless in this State to be so much worse off than the widow and the fatherless across the border. I sincerely hope that Government members will support the amendments, and I appeal to them to justify to society, if only for this once, their occupancy of seats in this House. I appeal particularly to those Government members who are staring at political oblivion, before their feeble, flickering, fitful flame is finally extinguished, to be able to say next year, "I have done something to justify the fact that I was once a member of Parliament." Let them in their last fateful hours revolt only once against their vassalage and strike out against their sycophancy, and having had their glancing glimpse of glory, go back into the grey obscurity from which they so briefly emerged, saying, "At least I have done something for somebody."

Mr. TAPPING (Semaphore)—I desire briefly to comment on the Bill, which emanates from deliberations by the Workmen's Compensation Advisory Committee set up a few years ago by the Government. The provisions of the Bill are a piecemeal method of amending the Act. It is regrettable that each year we are faced with the need to amend the principal Act. If the Government desired to meet modern requirements it would not be necessary to conduct periodical reviews. The Workmen's Compensation Advisory Committee met on a number of occasions and considered many matters. Mr. Eric O'Connor, who has rendered valuable services in expressing the views of the workers, has paid a tribute to the chairmanship of Sir Edgar Bean. However, the committee did not agree on all its deliberations and has made several minority reports. The existing legislation provides that a workman who earns £33 a week or less is qualified for workmen's compensation. The Bill proposes to increase that amount to £35, but I believe there should be no limitation on a man's earning. Although a man is receiving over £35 a week he may have only been receiving that wage for a short period and if he met his death in the course of his employment his widow would be left in poor circumstances. In the Commonwealth, Western Australian and Queensland legislation there are no limits. Those Parliaments recognize that it is wrong to provide a line of demarcation in respect of the earnings of any person. A man who has been receiving more than £35 a week for some time may be purchasing a home or educating a large family and he has heavy financial commitments. The imposition of a limit is an unnecessary provision.

I welcome the proposal to provide up to £60 for funeral benefits to a worker's dependants. Such a provision is long overdue but £60 is insufficient to meet the expenses involved. I believe the committee inquired into burial charges in South Australia before arriving at that figure, but it has overlooked the question of providing a decent grave. At the present time that alone can cost almost £100. The committee also considered the question of providing a cover for a workman travelling to and from his place of employment, but when a vote was taken the proposal was defeated. This State is backward in this respect in comparison with other States which have made provision for such compensation. I agree that it would be wrong to provide such a cover unless there were safeguards to ensure that compensation was not paid to a man who suffered injury as the result of his own misdemeanours. Such qualifications appear in the Commonwealth, Victorian, Western Australian and Queensland Acts. Men have lost their lives in journeying to and from work and their dependants have received no compensation. The only avenue open to a woman who loses her husband in this matter is to receive social service payments, which are not sufficient to cover all her requirements of a home, food, clothing and education for her children. We should seriously consider providing such a cover for workmen.

The committee also considered the question of insurance. In some States workmen's compensation is transacted through State insurance offices. I know that there is provision in our Statutes for the conduct of a State insurance department and if such a department were operated it would be of advantage to employers and employees alike. During the

year 1953-54, premiums paid to insurance companies in respect of workmen's compensation less rebate totalled £1,306,119 and claims met in the same period amounted to £671,282. After allowing for administration and other charges the insurance companies made a profit of 48 per cent. That is too great and I believe that premiums could be reduced. If investments were made in a State insurance office the premiums would be much lighter and the burden on the employer easier, and consequently employees would benefit. I support the second reading but will have more to say during the Committee stage.

Mr. DUNSTAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

LAND SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 26. Page 1253.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN—This Bill extends the term of office of members of the Land Settlement Committee for a further term of one year. On the last occasion this Act was amended the committee's term was extended for three years. It seems to me that the Government is indicating, in a gentle fashion, that the committee is on the way out. The Premier as much as said so and the Minister in his second reading speech said that there was not a great deal of work for the committee at the moment. The reason for that, of course, is that the Government has made no attempt to provide work for it. The committee is so circumscribed by the narrow limits of the legislation under which it works that it is extremely difficult to provide work. This committee was first envisaged in about 1944 and I thought the terms provided in the legislation were too restrictive and said so at that time. Experience since then has proved conclusively that I was right. This committee which could have been the most important body associated with Parliament, has had its usefulness seriously diminished as a consequence. I suggested then and I suggest now—although I cannot have it included in this Bill—that it should become a permanent Parliamentary standing committee. It should always be investigating the possibility of making greater use of the land, firstly, by increasing the fertility of the soil and the production therefrom and, secondly, by increasing the number of people actually deriving their living from the soil. The Public Works Committee renders valuable service to Parliament and to the State in its investigations into public works. Important as that aspect of government is, it is less important than land settlement. Instead of agreeing to this Bill, we should be passing legislation giving the Land Settlement Committee a longer term of office and increased powers. With these reservations I support the second reading.

Mr. FLETCHER (Mount Gambier)—Some time ago a committee inquired into agricultural matters in this State and it suggested that a permanent committee be appointed to investigate the possibilities of land settlement. The Land Settlement Committee was then appointed and it has done a wonderful work. If its members were now to inspect the land it has approved for land settlement purposes they would collect much important information, which could be made available to Parliament. I support the Bill, but suggest action be taken to have a permanent committee investigating land settlement matters.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY (Chaffey)—As one of the original members of the committee I was delighted to hear the remarks by Mr. O'Halloran and Mr. Fletcher. I have some diffidence in agreeing that we should have a permanent Land Settlement Committee with increased powers, although I think we should. On a number of occasions the committee has made recommendations, but has never been told what has happened in regard to them. It inquired into the possibilities of land settlement in the Lameroo district. Farmers there had sons growing up and land nearby was available. The committee recommended that it be split up with access roads constructed. I for one do not know what resulted from the recommendation.

Mr. O'Halloran—Apparently there has been no result from it.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I do not know. The committee should be told what happens after it has submitted recommendations. It has examined land in all parts of the State and has accumulated knowledge that must be of help to Government departments. For instance, it investigated land in the Tumby Bay area. It was a major proposition and recommendations were made. All I know is that men were settled in the area. The committee should be allowed to discuss matters with the men settled on land approved by the committee instead of the discussions taking place with departmental officers. If a settlement has not progressed as was hoped it should be the committee's task to approach the Minister. Land

at the bottom of Yorke Peninsula was investigated. To me it looked like some of the most inhospitable land in Australia. I thought the mallee desert country held out more chance of success than this land. I do not know what has resulted from the committee's recommendation. Members of the committee believe that its work has solved the problem of drainage in the South-East. I am proud to be associated with the committee that put forward a scheme that must be of benefit to the State for 500 or 1,000 years, or even for all time. I visualize the time when, instead of it being necessary to have 1,000 acres for one holding in the South-East, we will have a type of agriculture more closely allied to the type in Europe where families are brought up on an area not exceeding 200 acres, and perhaps smaller areas. Land in the South-East is fertile and the rainfall is assured. It has been saved from annual flooding. Hundreds of thousands of acres were put out of production each year when the floodwaters came, some of it from Victoria. The committee's work has resulted in increased carrying capacity in that part of the State. Instead of one sheep to the acre being carried, in some parts it will be possible to carry four or five. The committee had the responsible task of taking land from owners in the South-East. The members did not feel happy about doing that. I was not happy because I believe in private ownership of land, so long as the best use is made of it; but South-Eastern land was held in large areas and the best use was not being made of it, so the committee had to decide which was under-developed land.

Mr. Fletcher—That did not apply generally in the South-East.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—No. I have said previously that with possibly two exceptions landowners in the South-East are men of whom the State can be proud. They were generous and made land available for soldier settlement. Incidentally, in helping the committee and the Government, they helped themselves because the money they received for the land that they could not use has been spent, by many landholders, in building up the fertility of the land they have left. They find they can carry more stock on the limited areas they have left than on the broad acres they had.

Mr. Corcoran—There is more under-developed land that could be acquired.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—I agree, although I am not in favour of taking land from people if they use it properly. That is where the Land Settlement Committee could be used more than it has been done. I felt hurt, as a member of the committee, when the Government reduced the salary of its members by a miserable £50 a year. We would not have minded so much if the Government had decided to pay us no salary, but we objected to the slur that we were not worthy of our salaries. I would willingly serve on the committe without any pay for the pleasure and interest I get. I understand I was placed on it mainly to consider irrigation schemes. The Loxton scheme was one of our first major projects, and I am sorry that so many unnecessary mistakes have been made on this scheme. They would never have been made if the committee had been given a fair opportunity of dealing with the project. The cost of the scheme will be investigated before long, and I believe there will be a tendency to blame the settlers for the increased costs. When the scheme was first suggested the Premier was rightly concerned in getting soldier settlers on the land as quickly as possible. He made a public statement that if the Commonwealth Government was not prepared to finance the scheme he would do it from the State's resources. Eventually the problem of finance was solved and the State had to draw up a scheme for the Commonwealth's consideration. The Government wanted a proposal as soon as possible, but the responsible Government department could not make an investigation and provide all the information as quickly as the Premier and the committee desired.

The committee's chairman, The Hon. C. R. Cudmore, and the secretary, Mr. Bleckly, consulted the responsible officers and it was agreed that they should send down the broad outlines of a scheme to the committee and that, if it were acceptable, it would be forwarded to the Commonwealth Government. If it was accepted by the Commonwealth it was to be referred back to the Land Settlement Committee to go into all the details, but what happened? The Commonwealth accepted the scheme, but the powers that be in South Australia said it was no longer a State responsibility, that it had been taken over by the Commonwealth and the Government had no need to consult the Land Settlement Committee any longer. That was a piece of double dealing of the first order, and it led to the losses that have been incurred in the Loxton scheme. The department recommended open channels, but I believe the committee would have recommended pipelines. An area of a quarter of an acre was under water

about two years ago, but today water is covering 40 acres of fertile land there. There are at least two other big overflows at Loxton. I cannot repeat too often that the free water in an irrigation area is an absolute menace. Overflows from open channels raise the water table and cause great trouble, but this does not happen with a pipeline system. We have been told at various times that South Australia will eventually need all of its share of Murray water and that we must be careful in using it. I stress that with a pipeline system it is not necessary to waste a pint of water. A settler simply draws what he needs and the rest of the water remains in the pipes.

Mr. Fletcher—Are there any pipelines at Loxton now?

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—There were no pipelines in the original scheme because an engineer in evidence said that no engineer would be silly enough to recommend a pipeline system for an irrigation system after the experience at Loveday. I have a fruit-growing property at Loveday served by the pipeline system and one at Nookamka, which has open channels. I have always strongly recommended the pipeline system. I used to work those two blocks myself, and I considered that work at Loveday was something of a holiday compared with trying to control water in open channels, especially if the land slopes steeply, as much of it does in irrigation areas. Another part of Loxton is now being developed, and it will have the pipeline system. The original Loxton scheme could have been the best settlement in Australia and equal to anything in the world, and we now find the Government, through its officers, doing what the Land Settlement Committee would have recommended 10 years ago. If the Government intends to continue the term of the Land Settlement Committee it should give it more follow-up powers so that it could watch what is being done under the various schemes. Some of the Loxton citrus and stone fruit areas were served by a sprinkler system. One of Australia's leading horticultural authorities said that in no part of the world had orange trees been brought into bearing with that system alone, and that it would be interesting to see the result of the experiment at Loxton.

Mr. William Jenkins—That system seems to be all right at Cooltong.

Mr. MACGILLIVRAY—Yes, and at Loxton too. It is a good system, but it has peculiar problems that are not encountered with the furrow system. An orange tree is very small when planted, and will probably use only a little moisture in its first year, but the whole area is irrigated. I made such mistakes 30 years ago and I warned that if the whole area were watered there would be serious problems as a result of the surplus moisture. When I visited Loxton recently I was shocked at the damage done as the result of the sprinkler system. There is not the same problem at Cooltong because peas and other crops are grown between the trees, and they take the surplus moisture. Lucerne should have been drilled down the rows at Loxton to take the excess moisture. When the trees grow the lucerne rows could be made smaller so that there would still be plenty of moisture for the trees. If the moisture builds up we have major seepage problems. Even now the trees at Loxton could be saved by growing lucerne, and when the new settlers move in the Minister should see that something is done to prevent a recurrence of this problem. Many people speak of the wonders of lucerne, but some are frightened of it. I support the Bill.

Mr. MICHAEL (Light)—I am the only original member of the Land Settlement Committee in this Chamber, and for about nine years I have had the honour and privilege of being its chairman. I have found my work most interesting and I regret that it seems that the term of the committee is running out. I have always thought that its powers should be wider and that it could have done more, but because of the prosperous times we have had in the last few years it has been unnecessary to conduct many investigations into land development. I do not agree with the statement by the member for Chaffey (Mr. Macgillivray) that the committee should have the power to follow a project right through, because that would create an impossible position and slow up development. Some years ago legislation was passed giving the Government power to acquire land compulsorily, and this committee was set up in the interests of the public generally to watch over the acquisition of land. In that respect I believe it has done valuable work. I agree with Mr. Macgillivray that the landholders in the South-East rose to the occasion and offered portions of land they could not use themselves; indeed, this increased the productive capacity of the South-East, and many people today are earning greater incomes from smaller holdings than they did in bygone years from larger holdings. Much has been accomplished by drainage and modern methods of production in that area, and there is a great future there.

I sound a warning in the matter of compulsory acquisition. I agree that such a power must sometimes be used by the Government, but I agree with Mr. Macgillivray that it is not desirable to take things away from people, particularly when they are making use of those things. It is with some regret that I visualize the end of an interesting job. I was particularly happy to be associated with the work of draining land in the South-East for that area has great potential. I support the Bill.

Mr. QUIRKE (Stanley)—I, too, support the Bill, which extends the life of the Land Settlement Committee for another year. Like the member for Chaffey (Mr. Macgillivray) and the member for Light (Mr. Michael) I reget that it appears that the committee is to go out of existence, because I consider it should be a permanent committee with greater powers than it has enjoyed in the past. I was an original member of the committee and served on it from 1945 to 1950. During those five years I was associated with work that has done much for the development of South Australia. If I had the time I would very much like to go over all the areas on which the committee made recommendations during those five years. Knowing the country as it was then and having seen some of it developed since, I know that as a member of the committee I have taken part in the development of vast areas. An extensive area of stunted scrub on Kangaroo Island has been converted to productive pastures, and the same thing can be said of an area on the West Coast. Some problems still remain in both those areas, but those problems will be associated with the development of any areas with low fertility of soil.

The first big effort by the committee was at Loxton. I was there last weekend and, as a member of the committee that recommended the purchase of that land, I take pride in the development that has taken place. Like Mr. Macgillivray I wish the committee had had even more to do with that development. I do not wish to criticize unduly, but the planting of certain wine grapes should not have been carried out there, and if there is any chance of stopping further plantings of those types it should be done at once. Further, the grenache type that has already been planted should be worked over as soon as possible to more desirable varieties. The grenache is a characterless product, an all-purpose blending variety that can make either dark or white wine. Without a character of its own it can become a problem child, as it has become in Loxton and in other wine grape growing areas. It gives a heavy yield, is hardy, and is the most drought resistant vine that we grow, but it should be worked over to the dry wine types that are rapidly replacing the heavy wine types formerly produced from the grenache type of grape. As a distillation grape it makes a good brandy, but when you have the doradillo and the sultana there is no great room left for the grenache in the economy of the Loxton irrigation settlement, and the continued planting of it would be a grave mistake.

Having seen Loxton so recently I have come to the conclusion that some engineering works there must be replaced. Two features were mentioned in the 1945 report of the committee, one of which was drainage. Whether or not the committee's recommendations were implemented we do not know, but we know the results that have been outlined by Mr. Macgillivray. The committee should be made permanent and given more power to supervise these matters. Clause 43 of the 1945 report states:—

> The committee is strongly of the opinion that with the increased acreage that would become available for irrigation development and the saving in labour cost to the settlers, a pipe system of reticulation to blocks should be attempted from the outset.

That was never done. Indeed, every recommendation made by Mr. Macgillivray and me in this House in 1947 has now been put into operation on the Loxton Extension scheme, which shows clearly that the committee was right and that the installations in the Loxton scheme, which were made in the face of the committee's recommendations, were wrong. At Loxton today a channel is being lifted by adding brick courses to the top, and although it cost many thousands of pounds, it will never really be effective and sooner or later the whole thing will have to be moved. The sooner that is done the better, and we will just have to write off our losses in that respect. I am proud of my association with the committee over the first five years of its life. I would like to see it become a permanent committee, but it would need extra powers. If it were composed of people who knew and loved the land it could do a mighty work in the interests of agriculture and horticulture in this State. I support the Bill.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands)—I thank members for the interest they have taken in this debate and express my appreciation to present and past members of the Land Settlement Committee for the

valuable time they have expended in considering matters associated with land development in South Australia. The Leader of the Opposition suggested that the committee could contiue its operations by undertaking soil surveys with a view to bringing more land into production, but that work has actually been carried on by the committee, which early next month is visiting a drainage area in the South-East where there are 140,000 acres available for settlement. The member for Chaffey (Mr. Macgillivray) mentioned various areas, including Jeffries. The Government seriously considers the committee's recommendations and in respect of Jeffries the Commonwealth Government deferred a decision as to whether it should be developed and later refused it for settlement purposes, but because of the committee's recommendation as to its suitabality, the State Government developed some of the area and I was informed yesterday that the Minister for the Interior (Mr. Kent Hughes) intends to inspect the area. The Government, Lands Development Executive and Land Board are satisfied that this is, and always has been, an area suitable for soldier settlement. The pasture on it today is equal to some of the best pasture in the State.

Because of the wetness of Koonetta the Commonwealth would not accept it for settlement purposes, but the State decided to develop it because of the recommendations of the Land Settlement Committee. I inspected the area last Sunday and was amazed at what has taken place since drainage was installed. I did not think it possible that pasture, in its first year, could be so good. Although drainage is costly I am convinced, as a result of my inspections last Sunday, that it is well worth while and will assist in developing much greater areas of land in that locality. I agree that drainage in irrigation settlements represents a problem that has not yet been solved. Other States experience similar problems. In Victoria, in one area where there is a comprehensive drainage scheme, the land has been overdrained and the problem now is to provide sufficient water. They have no records of where the drains were placed underground and at the present time are searching for them.

Mr. Quirke—Irrigation has two problems—putting on the water and taking it off.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—That is so. I assure members that we are endeavouring in every way to overcome the problem and we are hopeful that it can be overcome. Mr. Macgillivray referred to Yorke Peninsula. Some of the country there is extremely rough. The committee recommended that certain development be undertaken and that if it measured up to requirements a recommendation be made to the Commonwealth. Its recommendations have been carried out and bores have been put down and water points established on each block now subdivided. We are now taking surveys for roads and fencing will shortly be undertaken. I thank honourable members for their comments.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.10 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, November 15, at 2 p.m.