

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, May 9, 1956.

The SPEAKER (Hon. B. H. Teusner) took the chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.**HIRE PURCHASE FINANCE.**

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Sometime ago I understood that representations were to be made to the State Governments on the subject of control of interest rates, particularly as they affected hire-purchase finance companies. Further, I understood from the introduction of the "horror" Budget in the Federal Parliament earlier this year that this subject was one of the most contentious in relation to luxury spending. Can the Treasurer say whether representations have been made to him, as leader of the Government, for the introduction of a measure to control this aspect of finance? If not, does he intend to introduce legislation on the subject?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I dealt with this matter when it was raised yesterday on the motion to go into Committee of Supply. In reply to the question of whether any request has been made to the State Government to take action, the position is as follows: At one of the most recent Loan Council meetings—possibly two meetings ago—the Commonwealth Government raised the question of hire-purchase finance in discussion with the States. No specific proposal was placed before the States, but they were invited to state their views. No request for definite legislation was made, but a discussion between the Commonwealth and the States was held on this difficult problem. There was much divergence in the views expressed. As far as I know, that was the end of State-Commonwealth consultations on the matter. During the last 12 months no request has been received from the Commonwealth for supplementary or any other legislation on the matter. If a request came from the Commonwealth it would receive the earnest consideration of this Government and probably be considered by this Parliament. As I said yesterday hire purchase finance is not all bad nor something that we should desire to eliminate altogether. As to the financing of it by the finance corporations, I think that this Parliament, and I know that the State Government, would give earnest consideration to any Commonwealth proposal.

HIGH GRADE IRON ORE SUPPLIES:

Mr. LOVEDAY—Can the Premier say what is the quantity of high grade iron ore available in the Middleback Ranges outside the B.H.P. leases as a result of boring operations by the Department of Mines; and if he cannot, can he make a tentative statement on the trend of the operation?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—We certainly do not know the quantity of high grade ore available in these ranges outside the B.H.P. leases, and to ascertain that would be a long and probably very costly work. We have been concentrating on seeing whether we could discover ore reserves to warrant some definite proposal being submitted for steel making. At the time of the Indenture Act all the known iron ore was placed by the B.H.P. under leases and was tied up to that company, so that any ore which would be available now for negotiation would have to come from outside those leases, and we have been investigating to that end. Investigations are being conducted north of Iron Knob adjacent to the area known as the Iron Knob racecourse, and generally they have been encouraging. At a previous session I had pinned on the board in the House the result of the investigations to that stage. I would not like to express the quantity in tons at present, but probably it would run into about 15,000,000 tons.

Mr. Riches—Is drilling still going on?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes. For several months we had a rather slack period and the investigations did not proceed satisfactorily, but quite recently they have been most encouraging, and many of the bores which had previously been regarded as of no value, as they had not been taken to sufficient depth to get to the lode, will now have to be drilled again because a bore so deepened proved a substantial deposit of ore of high grade, but at somewhat greater depth than was anticipated.

COUNTRY ELECTRICITY CHARGES.

Mr. HAMBOUR—My question relates to electricity charges in the country, and specifically to spur lines for country towns. Can the Premier say how the charges are assessed—on the capital cost of the installation or on the supply used by the consumer? If they are co-ordinated, and if there are any differences in the charges, will he explain them?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Certain arrangements have been made under proposals that have been submitted by the Electricity Trust involving the guarantee of the use of a certain amount of electricity and the payment of a certain amount of surcharge. In many instances the surcharges have been subsidized by a grant or a guarantee of a grant from the Government to the trust, but recently the trust considered the matter further because under the guarantees if one person falls down the rest of the subscribers in that group are involved in additional cost. A new proposal has been drawn up, and I believe it has been accepted by a number of country districts. I will get the precise terms of the proposal and forward the information to the honourable member.

Mr. QUIRKE—A letter in this morning's *Advertiser* referred to the high cost of electricity in country areas. I have been told by applicants for services that they have been informed that no extensions will take place in country areas under a surcharge of less than 75 per cent. Can the Premier confirm or deny whether that condition is being applied by the Electricity Trust?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I know that the Electricity Trust has placed an upper limit beyond which it considers it to be impracticable to supply electricity.

Mr. Quirke—It is a minimum surcharge of 75 per cent.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will get full information about the surcharges made in country areas and the extent to which the Government subsidy applies in respect to them. There is a limit set by the trust as to where it is practicable to take the electricity without the charges becoming excessive. Recently another problem arose. We have had a number of applications for electricity extensions in country areas where the capital cost of the installation would run into tens of thousands of pounds to serve only a small number of people. With the present possibility of restricted Loan finance becoming available to us it would appear that we may not have the money to enable us to carry out an extremely costly proposition where so few people are involved.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Will the Premier ascertain whether the trust has changed its attitude and will now accept the full capital cost of an installation and so eliminate the surcharge?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes.

BUDD RAIL CARS FOR PORT PIRIE.

Mr. DAVIS—Several months ago a deputation from Port Pirie, consisting of representatives of the Trades and Labor Council, Chamber of Commerce and the Town Council, and the member for Stuart, waited on the Minister of Railways and the Railways Commissioner in regard to a "bluebird" Budd car service from Adelaide to Port Pirie, when the Commissioner said he hoped to be able to install that service some time this year. Has the Minister representing the Minister of Railways any further information on this subject?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will take up the question with my colleague and bring down his reply as early as possible. I point out that only about one-third of the year has passed, so Port Pirie may get the service this year.

FISHERIES RESEARCH.

Mr. WILLIAM JENKINS—Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to the question I asked yesterday about the cutter *Weerutta*?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The honourable member asked what progress had been made in outfitting the *Weerutta* purchased by the Fisheries Department for experimental work, and I am now able to inform him that the fitting out has been completed and the vessel is actually at work, at present in the Port Lincoln area. It has been equipped with two-way radio communication, and the vessel will be employed in searching for surface fish, to expand our knowledge of the tuna grounds and tuna movement, to search for sardines, and also to do some work on crayfish and shark fishing grounds. The installation of the echo sounder has not yet been completed, but the work has been approved and that will be done probably as soon as the vessel comes back into port. The vessel will work in conjunction with the biology department of the University, taking scientific samples of plankton and seawater for research purposes.

RAILWAY HOUSES.

Mr. JENNINGS—I was approached recently by a constituent whose husband came out from England four years ago under contract to the South Australian Railways and was allotted a railways house built by the Housing Trust. A short time ago her husband died suddenly at the age of 50. The day after his death this woman was visited by a welfare officer of the department who told her that she had no need to worry about accommodation because in such circumstances ample time was given to obtain

other accommodation. However, less than three weeks after her husband's death she received notice from the Railways Department to quit the house within a few weeks. She wrote to the Railways Commissioner and as a result got a reprieve of three months, a month of which has already elapsed. Now this unfortunate woman with three young children is faced with the prospect of being evicted from her home in two months; and of course she has no chance whatever of obtaining other accommodation. Will the Minister of Works ask his colleague to look into this matter and see if this woman can be found a home, and also whether some policy can be devised whereby, in exceptional cases like this, more humane treatment can be meted out?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I shall be glad to take up this matter with my colleague. I was Minister of Railways for many years and never heard of any case of harsh treatment either to a railway employee or his widow. In special circumstances a house may be urgently required, but I think we can take it that no inhumanity was shown to the person mentioned.

EYRE PENINSULA ELECTRICITY SUPPLIES.

Mr. BOCKELBERG—The Governor's Speech mentioned that a new power station was being constructed at Port Lincoln. In the event of a second power station being constructed there, will power be available at Cleve, Cowell, Streaky Bay, and Ceduna?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Power has been extended in some directions already, but I shall obtain a report from the Electricity Trust as to how far it is possible to extend the lines from Port Lincoln.

MURRAY BRIDGE COURT HOUSE.

Mr. BYWATERS—Recently the Public Works Committee visited Murray Bridge with regard to the proposal to build a new court house to serve that area. Can the chairman of that committee inform me what progress has been made?

Mr. SHANNON (Chairman, Public Works Standing Committee)—The committee has concluded its inquiry into the proposal to build a court house and certain other offices to accommodate State Government officials at Murray Bridge, and is preparing a report that will be presented in the next few weeks.

BLANCHETOWN BRIDGE.

Mr. STOTT—District councils in my area are very perturbed at the time it has taken

the Public Works Committee to consider a proposal for a bridge at Blanchetown. My information is that the matter was referred to the committee about the middle of December, 1954, nearly 18 months ago, and that no evidence has been taken from the Upper Murray districts. Statements have been made in the press by the Premier on behalf of the Government that the matter will be looked into. Can the Premier state the position?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I answered a question on this topic yesterday. The Government referred two projects to the Public Works Committee—the Jervois Bridge and a bridge across the Murray at Blanchetown. The committee commenced hearing evidence from the Highways Department, which I believe stated that the Jervois Bridge was definitely unsafe, and the department considered that it should have first priority. The Jervois Bridge report may be almost ready and I presume that the committee will now commence its investigation into the Blanchetown proposal.

FRUIT FLY ERADICATION.

Mr. DUNNAGE—Has the Minister of Agriculture anything to report concerning the outbreak of fruit fly in the Unley district? Is this infestation more serious than the last outbreak in the district and what steps are being taken to permanently eradicate fruit fly?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—As the honourable member was good enough to intimate that he proposed asking this question I obtained the following report from the Chief Horticulturist, Mr. Miller:—

The outbreak of fruit fly which was detected at North Unley on March 29 of this year was found in late peaches scattered in an area of approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile radius. Stripping and spraying operations were commenced on the day that the outbreak was discovered. As most of the summer fruits had finished, stripping operations were rapid, and the quantity of susceptible fruits ultimately to be removed from the areas is expected to approximate half that involved in previous outbreaks. Picking of all host fruits and vegetables, except unripe citrus fruit, over an area of approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile radius from the outbreak centres has been carried out. It is expected that this picking will be completed within a month, after which there will be successive stripping to keep the area free of citrus, loquats and ornamental host fruits.

The last occurrence of fruit fly in North Unley was in 1949 when the infestation was entirely due to the Mediterranean species. The present outbreak involves Queensland fruit fly indicating that it arises from a new introduction into the North Unley district, either from previous Adelaide district outbreaks, or from

interstate. Confirmation of the species as Queensland fly also removes any doubt as to the full effectiveness of the 1949 eradication campaign in this area.

SALISBURY NORTH RAILWAY STOP.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—Some concern has been expressed by residents of the Salisbury North area relating to what is known as the 13-mile crossing. I have been told that trains stop at that level crossing to permit passengers, including a large number of children, to alight at peak periods. Traffic naturally banks up while the train is stationary, but after the train moves on there is a constant surging of traffic over the crossing. This represents a danger, particularly when children are on the road. Will the Minister representing the Minister of Railways ascertain whether it would be possible to provide a built-up area a short distance back from the crossing for detaining passengers?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will gladly take up that matter with my colleague. The honourable member is familiar with the area and he may be able to indicate whether there is a suitable place for a built-up area. Such information would be of assistance.

HENLEY AND GRANGE SEA FRONT DAMAGE.

Mr. FRED WALSH—My question relates to the damage caused to the seafront in the Henley and Grange area as the result of storms, particularly in recent years. Last year considerable damage was done and as the result of an arrangement, I think mainly on the decision of the department, a rock and earth wall was constructed along the seafront at Henley South. Because of the high seas last year a considerable amount of earth and rock was washed away from the protecting wall, and much damage was done. It is necessary for the road adjoining the seafront to be sealed if it is to withstand the effect of storms in the coming winter. The mayor of Henley and Grange, acting as spokesman for the council, has publicly stated that the council is not in a financial position to meet the cost and he has also emphasized the need for the road to be sealed. Can the Minister of Works say whether the Highways Department has considered the question of sealing the road and, if so, what was the decision? If not, will the matter be given immediate attention? Will he also bring before the Government the question of assisting the Henley and Grange Council with the necessary finance to enable it to carry out the repairs to the damaged wall along the seafront?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—Owing to the heavy damage done along the foreshore some years ago the Government made substantial grants to various councils. Of course, the Henley and Grange Council participated in the grants and the wall was restored. At that time I was Minister of Local Government and I inspected the damage with the then Acting Premier, Sir Lyell McEwin, and it was thought that the reconstruction work would hold out against any reasonable storm. The road was made good, but apparently the storms have undone some of the repair work that we then thought would be of a permanent nature. This raises another question as to what extent the Government and the council should be involved in the restoration of the damage. Necessarily it involves a matter of policy and I will take it up with my colleague. At this stage I am not prepared to say whether it should be the responsibility of the council, the Marine Department or the Highways Department.

RESIGNATION OF DIRECTOR OF MINES.

Mr. RICHES—In paragraph 22 of the Governor's Opening Speech the following appears:—

During the present financial year several notable developments have contributed to a substantial increase in mineral production, and the value of the minerals produced will be the highest in the history of the State.

I believe that this satisfactory state of affairs has been brought about very largely by the interest displayed by Mr. Dickinson, Director of Mines, in developing our low grade ore deposits. The news of his impending resignation has caused a great deal of concern, not only to members here but to people outside. I recall that he resigned some time ago and was persuaded to withdraw his resignation. Can the Premier make a statement giving the circumstances surrounding the resignation, because we feel that it cannot be that the Director has lost interest in South Australia? We also feel that there is something wrong if this State is unable to retain his services.

The SPEAKER—The honourable member cannot debate the question.

Mr. RICHES—Can the Premier inform the House whether any steps have been taken by the Government to retain the services of Mr. Dickinson, whom we believe to be of inestimable value to this State? Can he also say whether the resignation was in any way due to the failure of the Government to give effect to recommendations that Mr. Dickinson

has made from time to time concerning the erection of a steel plant in South Australia?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This matter first came under my notice some months ago when the Director of Mines informed me that he had received an offer from the Rio Tinto Company which is starting large-scale operations in Australia. He expressed the wish to be granted certain leave to go to Great Britain in order to see the company and decide whether or not to accept the offer. I informed Mr. Dickinson that the Government would be very sorry to lose him, but that it was a matter for his own decision. It is not possible for the Government to stop anyone accepting attractive offers.

Mr. Riches—Legislation was put through last year to enable you to negotiate to retain his services.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government honours the recommendations of the Public Service Board with regard to salaries, but it is possible for a private company to give conditions and pay salaries to highly qualified men entirely beyond the scope of the Public Service. It is not the province of the Government to stand in the way of a man if he can get promotion outside. The position is that Mr. Dickinson went to Great Britain to negotiate with a company, and I understand they have made him managing director of an Australian company. When he returned to South Australia he wrote to the Government in the most amicable terms, stating that he wished to resign from the Public Service to take up this position. The State Government has been doing much work for the Rio Tinto Company, and the company undoubtedly came into contact with Mr. Dickinson through that work. We are, through our laboratories, still doing much work, not only for the company, but also for many others outside South Australia. Be that as it may, no circumstance of Mr. Dickinson's resignation from the Public Service was associated with any of his statements or reports; it is merely that he received an extremely advantageous offer from an outside firm and saw fit to accept it.

RAILWAY EMPLOYEES' PASSES.

Mr. HUTCHENS—In view of the many hundreds of South Australians who desire to arrange accommodation and travel facilities the South Australian Railways Department will permit the general public to book on the Overland Express much earlier than is the usual practice, for the purpose of attending

the Olympic Games later this year. The department deserves the highest praise for this action. On the other hand, however, I understand that railway employees using their passes are unable to book on this express more than seven days prior to the date of travel, although they are the people who have made possible the super luxury of the express. This, of course, is a prohibition on the use of a pass that is considered part of the remuneration for their services. Will the Minister of Works take up with his colleague (the Minister of Railways) the possibility of granting railway employees the same opportunity of booking as that enjoyed by members of the public, which would put these employees on an equal footing with members of the general public who receive higher wages because they do not enjoy such facilities as railway passes?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will take up the matter with my colleague and bring down a report as early as possible.

FOOT-ROT.

Mr. HARDING—Can the Minister of Agriculture say what steps are being taken to help eradicate foot-rot in sheep?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The department has initiated certain action in an attempt to eradicate foot-rot completely. Approval has been given for the appointment of five additional officers to work on this problem, and, speaking from memory, two or three officers have already been appointed and sent to the South-East, the locality most subject to this complaint.

Mr. Fletcher—Why the South-East?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—It receives the highest rainfall in the State and foot-rot is associated with the high rainfall and wet country. One officer has been sent to Mount Gambier, another to Naracoorte, and the ultimate proposal is that two officers shall work at Mount Gambier, two at Naracoorte, and one with his headquarters in Adelaide will work in the Adelaide hills and adjacent areas.

KINGSTON WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. CORCORAN—Paragraph 7 of His Excellency's Speech states:—

Concurrently with these major projects, operations are in progress for providing or improving water supplies at a number of places through-out the State . . . Further schemes contemplated for next financial year include water supplies for Birdwood, Mount Pleasant, St. Kilda, Coonalpyn, Kingston, and the Hundred of Finniss.

Recently I received a communication from the Kingston Chamber of Commerce asking about the intentions of the Government and when the scheme for that town was likely to be completed, but according to His Excellency's Speech the scheme is at present only contemplated. Can the Minister of Works say whether that assumption is correct?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—Over a period of years no real request was received from Kingston for a water supply. It seemed that Nature and the Almighty were inclined to give it a good one, but now a township supply has been requested and boring operations have taken place to see whether a reticulated supply for the township is possible. Nothing more has been done, but if a scheme can be evolved that will meet with the approval of the House and the Treasurer (in regard to the allocation of loan funds) I shall be happy to support it. Investigations have not proceeded far enough to say whether the scheme is feasible.

SOCIAL SERVICES AND STATE LOTTERY.

Mr. TAPPING—The *News* of April 27 contained the following report:—

No Lottery Behind S.A. Benefits Lag.—Canberra, Friday: Lack of a State lottery may be one reason S.A. lags in social services spending. S.A. is behind all other States in its expenditure on social services. Lack of a lottery was one explanation offered today for the figures published in a Commonwealth statistical bulletin issued last night. The bulletin showed the S.A. Government last financial year spent only £14 11s. 1d. a head on social services compared with £19 9s. 10d. for Tasmania, £18 18s. 2d. for W.A., £16 12s. 6d. for N.S.W., £16 7s. 1d. for Queensland, and £15 3s. 2d. for Victoria.

Least on health.—S.A. spent least per head of population on health, hospitals, and charities, and on maintaining law, order, and public safety. It is believed that higher spending on hospitals in some States is the result of the existence of lotteries.

Will the Treasurer comment on the suggestion contained in the report that South Australia is lagging in social services because of the lack of a State lottery?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The reason for the somewhat lower costs in some social service items in this State has nothing whatever to do with lotteries. Although I have not analysed the figures in the press report I have studied the figures contained in the Grants Commission's reports regarding comparative expenditures in the various States because that is an important document upon which our grants from the Commonwealth depend.

This State has substantial economies in various social services, probably because of the habits of the people. For instance, large amounts are spent in the other States upon the maintenance of law and order, in fact very much larger amounts than in South Australia, where we have a better crime record. As to hospitals, if the honourable member had listened this week to a statement made in Victoria he would have known that notwithstanding the fact that they have a lottery there, which I understand is booming, the Government is contemplating making very drastic charges for all persons going to public hospitals, and indeed excluding people receiving certain incomes from going into those hospitals. South Australia is probably now the only State where the public hospital is maintained on a free basis. I can assure the honourable member that if we had a lottery it would not contribute one iota to our financial position as any amounts earned because of a lottery would immediately be deducted by the Grants Commission from the annual grant to the State.

Mr. Tapping—Does that apply to Western Australia?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes, and to Tasmania. When the Tasmanian Government lost its lottery to Victoria, its grant was immediately increased by £1,000,000. A bigger and better lottery has been substituted and as a result substantial amounts are being made available this year and Tasmania may show a surplus in its accounts, but as sure as we are discussing this matter here today its future grants will come down like a ton of bricks because of it.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—Is the Premier aware "that the New South Wales Hospital Commission which is supposed to care for the finance of 250 hospitals has 'gone broke' and the hospitals are £2,000,000 in debt?" That is an extract from a press statement, which continues:—

As an urgent measure the commission has instructed all hospitals to cut expenditure by 10 per cent. This means sacking of staff and economies in the kitchen.

Is that position likely to operate in South Australia in the near future?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The paragraph mentioned did come under my notice and I can assure the honourable member that the position in South Australia is not in that category. Indeed, a paper now on the table shows a request for an appropriation this year of an additional £321,000 as additional grants to hospitals where previous amounts provided are

considered insufficient. I assure the honourable member that our hospitals are receiving sympathetic consideration and getting sufficient finance to enable them to be adequately maintained under proper conditions.

EXPERIMENTAL DAIRY FARM.

Mr. BYWATERS—Recently at a field day and conference in the Murray district a resolution was carried asking the Government to establish an experimental dairy farm along the reclamation swamps adjacent to the Murray. It was considered that it would be a great advantage to the dairying industry as a whole so that dairymen could see the experiments. It was claimed that this could be made a paying proposition, in addition to being of immense value to dairymen. Would the Government consider establishing such an experimental farm?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I am unaware of any suggestion along those lines and it has not yet reached me, and therefore I am unable to quite appreciate what the conference had in mind and what lines the experiments might take. When the matter does come before me, as no doubt it will, and the text of the resolution is available, I will examine it and see whether the proposal can be entertained.

WINKING MOTOR LIGHT SIGNALS.

Mr. STOTT—My question relates to improving the traffic in Adelaide by the use of winking motor lights. Having had experience of these in other parts of the world, I assure the Premier that these lights are an improvement to travel, particularly at night, when it is difficult under some conditions to know whether a driver has his right hand out or not, and if he is turning to the left he cannot put his left hand out. In Geneva, where the traffic problem is not comparable with that in Adelaide, winking lights are used on motor vehicles and those in high authority consider that these lights help in reducing the number of accidents. Will the Premier ask the State Traffic Committee to reconsider its decision on the matter and inquire whether these lights would not be an added advantage to traffic in Adelaide?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I believe the committee is at present doing exactly what the honourable member requests. The present method in South Australia of having such matters inquired into by the committee before they are submitted to Parliament is a wise one.

PORT AUGUSTA HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. RICHES—Will the Minister of Education call for a report from his department on the progress being made with plans and the letting of contracts for the erection of woodwork, domestic arts and sheet metal centres at the Port Augusta High School?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes.

BUSH FIRES LEGISLATION.

Mr. BOCKELBERG—As large areas of scrub on upper Eyre Peninsula still remain unburnt, will the Minister of Agriculture consider some relaxation of the provisions of the Bush Fires Act for the coming season?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—This matter was the subject of some debate at the recent Eyre Peninsula Local Government Conference at Cowell, and representations came from those attending, from the Streaky Bay area in particular, that people in that area be permitted to burn their heavy scrub, which requires certain favourable conditions for its complete destruction. This would probably involve some modification or alteration of the present bush fires legislation. I think the honourable member will agree that generally speaking the reaction of the conference was completely unfavourable to any relaxation or at least to any removal of the basic provisions of the legislation as passed by the House last year, and the consensus of the conference was that the legislation had worked extremely well. However, I feel there is some reason to consider the representations made by the people in that particular area. As the late Minister of Agriculture, the Hon. A. W. Christian, said at the time, the bush fires legislation before the House was to a degree experimental. Therefore, if the people concerned desire to make representations for some method whereby their problem might be overcome without, I emphasize, in any way weakening the fundamentals of the legislation, I am sure that they would be considered.

VISITS TO WINERIES BY SCHOOL CHILDREN.

Mr. QUIRKE—Clare has a number of small industries and it has been the custom for children from schools in the district to visit them from time to time to see them at work. It has often fallen to my lot to organize these visits and the most recent one coincided with vintage operations in Clare, and because the wineries were in full operation I included a visit to one winery in the itinerary. The teacher concerned must submit to the department the list of visits, and on this occasion the

received the sanction of the department to make every visit with the exception of the one to the winery. He was told that the department did not sanction visits by school children to wineries, even though they may be escorted. Is the Minister of Education aware of this, and will he take immediate steps to have such a stupid prohibition removed?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I shall be pleased to investigate the circumstances of this case and also to consider the whole subject matter raised by the honourable member, but I am not prepared to give him any straight-out assurance in the form he requested. I would much prefer to consider the matter beforehand, and I will discuss it with him later.

ADMINISTRATION OF VERMIN ACT.

Mr. STOTT—Recently a country district council took action against a farmer for having vermin on his property. He thought he had removed all vermin from the property, but the case went to the court and his defence was that he had done everything possible to remove rabbits, but the inspector reported that there were two rabbits on the property. The farmer won the case in the lower court and a higher court subsequently ruled in favour of the district council because, as the Act was worded, the inspector was within his rights. Obviously, there is a grave anomaly if a farmer does everything possible to remove vermin, but because a few rabbits may climb over the wire netting or jump a fence an inspector may find one or two on the property and take action. Will the Minister of Agriculture investigate this matter, and does the Government intend to amend the Act to make its administration more flexible so that both farmers and inspectors may work together more amicably?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The honourable member should direct his question to the Minister of Lands, who administers the Vermin Act, and who, I am sure, will discuss the matter with him.

PORT WAKEFIELD-BALAKLAVA ROAD.

Mr. GOLDNEY—The road between Port Wakefield and Balaklava has carried much traffic over the past few years and it is now carrying much more heavy wheat traffic *en route* for Ardrossan. Will the Minister of Works take up with the Minister of Roads the question of sealing this road with bitumen and also see whether the Highways Department intends to seal it in the near future?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will confer with my colleague and bring down his reply as early as possible.

MORGAN PRISON FARM.

Mr. HAMBOUR—For some time workers at Cadell have been employed on the north of the River road and, as there will be no other avenue of employment for them shortly, will the Minister of Works try to expedite the construction of the proposed prison farm to be established between Morgan and Cadell?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I shall make whatever inquiries are necessary in regard to any expedition of that work. This does not come under my direct prerogative, but as the question has been directed to me I will accept it as my responsibility to follow it up.

OVERSEAS APPLE CONTRACTS.

Mr. STOTT—I was informed recently in London that South Australia had been successful in making contracts for the sale of 300,000 cases of apples to buyers overseas, but owing to the shipping strike has been unable to fulfil those contracts. Can the Premier inform me whether this was a dead loss to South Australia because of the shipping strike, who were the losers, whether any apples were held in freezing chambers and, if so, whether any of them were shipped after the strike was over?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Owing to shortages of crops in other parts of the world, no quota was placed by the British authorities on the importation of apples, and Australia had an open market. The quantity of the crop this year has been very satisfactory to South Australia, but weather conditions were bad and much of the fruit was not suitable for export. Secondly, there was some delay at the beginning of the season in allotting ships to South Australia, and I have heard from the Agent-General in England that some of the purchasers of our apples were disappointed because some consignments arrived later than they had expected. I do not know whether the shipping strike had any effect whatever on the allocation of ships. It did not come at a time when the apples were ready to go forward, but prior to the exporting season. I cannot say whether it delayed the arrival of ships, but I do not believe it had any effect. I think the effect was rather due to adverse weather conditions.

SITTINGS AND BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

That during the present session, unless otherwise ordered, the House meet on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday in each week, at two o'clock.

Motion carried.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

That during the present session, on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and after the six o'clock adjournment on Wednesdays, Government business take precedence over other business, except questions.

Motion carried.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer) brought up the following report of the Committee appointed to prepare the draft Address in Reply to His Excellency the Governor's Speech:—

May it please Your Excellency—

1. We, the members of the House of Assembly, express our thanks for the Speech with which Your Excellency was pleased to open Parliament.

2. We assure Your Excellency that we will give our best attention to all matters placed before us.

3. We earnestly join in Your Excellency's prayer for the Divine blessing on the proceedings of the session.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES.

In Committee of Supply.

(Continued from May 8. Page 26.)

CHIEF SECRETARY AND MINISTER OF HEALTH.

State Governor's establishment, £1,500.

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Edwardstown)—It has become usual to have Supplementary Estimates every year to authorize expenditure additional to that authorized at Budget time. The reasons for this are various. For two or three years the Premier found that he would have finished with a considerable surplus and he therefore decided to get rid of it before the end of the financial year so that the Commonwealth grant would not be affected adversely. I need not remind the House of recent happenings in this House in this respect. He failed in this respect when he appropriated additional revenue to roads recently, but did not actually spend the amount in the relevant financial year. That necessitated special legislation in the following year, and the amount had to be added to the loan programme.

In most instances the Premier has been very much astray in his Budget Estimates of revenue and expenditure, and that is another

reason why we have had supplementary estimates at this time of the year, not necessarily in accordance with the Opposition's policy of two sessions of Parliament. Apparently, this year is no exception, and we are being asked to approve an additional expenditure of £1,008,000. But there has been no corresponding improvement on the revenue side, and the ultimate result of the current year's financial transactions will be a deficit of about £2,000,000, as against an estimated deficit of about £750,000.

Another reason why we have these Supplementary Estimates is the Premier's sudden changes of policy from time to time. Not so long ago we approved of about £300,000 by way of grants to charitable and religious organizations for the accommodation of old people. No-one disagreed with this principle, but only a year or two previously the Premier had very strenuously opposed the Opposition motion for the adoption of a thoroughgoing policy on this question. The Premier's change of front on that occasion was obviously due to his desire to make a good fellow of himself and at the same time balance a budget which would otherwise have shown a considerable surplus. Incidentally, the idea that revenue surpluses should be set off against the Public Debt, as originally provided in the Public Finance Act, 1936, has been completely lost sight of. That Act is still on the Statute Book, but the Premier never suggests that a surplus should be used for the purpose of reducing the Public Debt. It may be said that the whole financial basis of the State is unsound because of the Premier's spasmodic, irresponsible and unco-ordinated policy.

There is no subterfuge to which the Premier will not resort in order to get more revenue to pursue his reckless and extravagant course, which he calls development. The Government's recent decision to charge itself motor registration was an attempt to get an increased Commonwealth grant, and no doubt its new proposal to charge itself insurance on its own motor vehicles is another attempt in the same direction. The Premier explained yesterday that it was necessary to insure Government vehicles because of a recent accident involving an Electricity Trust vehicle. If all vehicles owned by the trust are to be insured one can readily understand the difficulty that will arise in supplying services to country districts.

The most damning criticism of the Government is its extravagant, wasteful expenditure on its public works, the expenditure on engineering and water supply projects being a

special example. It might be as well for the Government to seriously consider establishing a Public Accounts Committee, as was suggested some time ago by the member for Burnside, Mr. Geoffrey Clarke. The Government should take notice of what has happened in the Federal sphere and one need only refer to the Bell Bay project in respect of which the nation was saved millions of pounds. Parliament is asked to make appropriations for certain projects but is never informed as to the progress of those works and the expenditure of the money. Last session I referred particularly to the Goodwood-Marino railway duplication. That work has not been completed and the costs would greatly exceed original estimates. I seriously suggest that the amount spent on the Emerson crossing would exceed the original estimate for the whole project.

It is not too much to say that Parliament has not the slightest idea of what actual progress is being made with many of these projects. The Premier is merely interested in recording the fact that huge sums have been spent. This year's Supplementary Estimates are largely due to what the Premier has described as unforeseen increases in public expenditure. For example, salaries, wages and contingencies in the Printing and Stationery Department were originally estimated to cost £219,628, but now another £29,000 has to be found. Of this, £21,000 will go in additional salaries and wages and £8,000 in other expenses. Yesterday the Premier said it had become necessary to bring 16 compositors from overseas to bring the establishment up to requirements. He also said there was nothing to prevent an employee in industry from receiving more than the award rate prescribed for the industry, and nothing to prevent an employer from paying more than the prescribed award rate. How is this Printing and Stationery Department faring under the administration of the present Government? I understand it has been possible for the department to obtain apprentices who later become tradesmen. At one time there was a waiting list and I do not doubt that there is a similar list today. Why do the apprentices trained by the department later go into private industry? It is said that the Government will not pay more than the award rate prescribed. If the department can train apprentices in this way, why is there a need to bring men from overseas who are later lost to private industry, which will pay more than the award rate? Our laws do not peg labour to industry, so the Government does not

know that these men from overseas will remain with the department. It is about time there was a revision of the administration of this department by the Government. I do not know how many years have passed since alterations were made to the present building. Yesterday the Premier referred to the increase in the work to be done by the Government Printer. Accommodation must be found for these men from overseas and additional machinery and equipment must be purchased to handle the additional work. Has it not become necessary to erect another building or put an additional floor on the present building to cope with this increased work? No mention of this has come from the Government. Additional information on the subject should be forthcoming.

Apparently the Government has had difficulty in keeping its employees in other departments and has deemed it necessary to appoint engineers and others from outside the Public Service. Frequently we see press advertisements for applications from professional and semi-professional men outside the Public Service who have good qualifications and much experience, but after their applications are submitted and an investigation has been made running into several weeks they are often informed that the vacancies have been filled by persons within the Service. If these men in the Service are available, why is it necessary to advertise for applications from persons outside? It seems cock-eyed to me. Recently a Deputy Police Commissioner was appointed. The Commissioner had no say in the recommendation that was made. Superintendent Walsh had been admired by all for the manner in which he carried out his work, and was the natural choice for the position of Deputy Police Commissioner. He had on many occasions acted as Commissioner, but the Government went outside the Public Service to fill the position. It would be interesting to know why the Government made this appointment at the expense of Superintendent Walsh, and I think it is time there was a complete review of the methods of making appointments.

The largest single item is under the heading of Hospitals Department, for which an additional £321,000 is provided. Some of this is due to increased staff and salaries of nurses, but a considerable proportion is due to the increased cost of materials, food and other supplies. Without going into details, it is obvious that prices have risen considerably in spite of the Government's boast that it could control prices. If the increase in prices has affected the Hospital Department to that

extent, how much more must it have affected the people who are being denied the 15s. a week cost of living adjustment? The Government is able to buy by tender at wholesale prices and sometimes less, whereas the people who are being denied that 15s. a week have to compete on a higher market.

The provision of additional expenditure under the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department is to be commended, but here again the effectiveness of the assistance made available to the unfortunate people cared for by the department is reduced by the fact that prices of commodities have been allowed to rise so high. I very much doubt whether adequate provision has been made in some of the weekly maintenance orders made over a number of years. Many of these orders need bringing up to date in keeping with the purchasing power of money. Apart from the sick and the poor who have orders made against them there are some who are prepared to go to gaol to escape their obligations, even though they know that when they come out of gaol the debt is still payable. I know it is a very difficult department to administer, but I also know that the people who are trying to administer it are doing a very good job in trying to cope with the rising cost of foodstuffs and clothing. This department may need a bigger grant than that provided.

The additional expenditure for the Engineering and Water Supply Department draws attention to the huge cost of pumping water from the Murray to the metropolitan area, an item which was not emphasized when the Premier first publicised this grand project.

Owing to some negligence apparently, the B.H.P. has been paying more than it should have for water over a long period and now the Government has to re-imburse the company to the tune of £18,000. Probably it has been delayed a little, and will not come into their profits for this year. It would appear that certain institutions only have to ask the Premier for additional grants to get them; and he has offered no satisfying explanation why, for instance, the University should require an additional £55,000. I do not know if that grant includes something for the Waite Research Institute.

The Hon. T. Playford—There is a separate amount provided for the Waite Research Institute.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—That is what I was coming to. The sum of £15,000 seems to me to be a large amount of money to be provided

to combat grasshoppers. I realize the necessity for their eradication, but I point out that the people of the metropolitan area make a big contribution towards money which is provided for this purpose.

The Premier said that accommodation shortages had forced the Government to make use of timber-framed structures in connection with the Public Service and that these structures involve constant and recurring maintenance problems. This is just another example of the lack of comprehensive policy on the part of the Government. The purchase of buildings in various parts of the city for Public Service purposes is still another example of the haphazard policy of the Government in this regard. It seems to me that there should be a complete review of the buildings under the control of the Architect-in-Chief, and he should be able to make a report on whether certain buildings should be demolished or added to. The Government will have to adopt some firm policy with regard to its buildings, and not resort to expediency. There is not a lot of difference in the cost of timber-frame and solid construction today. The maintenance on the solid buildings is less, and cheaper in the long run for all concerned. A comprehensive approach should be made to this matter by the Architect-in-Chief or some other authority.

Expenditure on education will probably be criticized later this session, and at present I shall content myself by saying that everything possible is not being done in this matter. In the metropolitan area many married women are doing excellent work as schoolteachers, but their presence in schools near the city means that many single women must spend long periods teaching in the country with no hope of transfer to the metropolitan area. The additional expenditure under the Mines Department indicates the extent to which the Playford anti-socialist Government has embarked on State enterprise. If boring on land outside the B.H.P. leases proves the existence of iron ore deposits, does the Government intend to establish a steel mill at or near Whyalla or will the deposits be handed over to private enterprise and the State receive no return from the expenditure on boring? What is the Government's policy in this regard?

First line passed.

Printing and Stationery Department, £29,000.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Can the Treasurer say whether the Department is able to get sufficient apprentices to train as tradesmen?

Is there any guarantee that personnel brought from overseas will remain with the Department?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The State Government pays the fares of personnel brought from overseas to work in the Department, and the men undertake to stay with the Department for a number of years, usually three. In some Departments many immigrants have remained permanently in the Service and others have left, but by and large the scheme has been successful and a number of specialists brought from overseas have rendered valuable assistance. One or two have defaulted, but that has generally occurred where private enterprise requiring the services of the person concerned has been willing to pay the balance of the bond money outstanding. Such cases, however, are unusual. In the main the people brought out have been satisfactory, have become good citizens, and have stayed with us. Of one batch brought out earlier 60 per cent were still in the Service a long time after the expiration of the term of the bond.

Mr. RICHES—Have there been any discussions with the Printing Industry Employees' Union about this scheme?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I know of none nor of any industrial dispute. As far as I know the Government Printer is on excellent terms with the union. Certain classes of printers have been in short supply and if we had relied merely on Australian tradesmen many of the reports and much of the printing required by members would not have been forthcoming; therefore the Government has tried to fill the vacancies by bringing tradesmen from overseas.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—A number of the staff of the Government Printing Office left to join the *Sunday Advertiser* when that paper started operations. Can the Treasurer say whether there has been any request from the Government Printer for further accommodation?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The accommodation position at the Government Printing Office is quite bad. It is a multi-story building unsuitable for the purpose, costly in maintenance and not a satisfactory proposition.

Mr. Jennings—Why not put the department in Foy & Gibson's building?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That would not be satisfactory either. That building would be suitable for offices, but not for the type of work the Government Printer has to undertake. There must be a proper flow of work going through, and he would require a considerable area of ground space rather

than accommodation in a high building. If there was a considerable quantity of heavy machinery on the upper floors there would be vibration. It is not easy to get large areas in the city for the purpose, and in this instance the works have to be quite close to Parliament House if the department is to operate satisfactorily. The Government has been examining the proposition of removing the Government Produce Department from premises at Light Square and erecting upon the site a modern printing plant to enable us to scrap the present Government Printing premises, which in every way are unsuitable for effective work. I pay a very high tribute to the Government Printer and his staff for the excellence of the work they are doing under very great difficulty. The building is antiquated and not suitable for heavy modern printing machinery. The question of new accommodation is receiving the Government's consideration, but of course it is something which cannot be undertaken overnight. If the Government Produce Department's site could be utilized it would enable the Government Printer to effectively handle the larger volume of work now coming forward and which will continue in the future.

Mr. JENNINGS—It is very discouraging if we have to make money available to bring 16 compositors from overseas. Surely there are sufficient skilled men in Australia. The only reason they are not available to the Government Printing Office is that they can get higher wages elsewhere. Yesterday we had an admission from the Treasurer that award rates are minimum rates and are not intended to be binding other than as minimum rates. Does not the Treasurer think it would be more economical in the long run to pay comparable wages to tradesmen in the Government Printing Office than to bring people from overseas who, after serving their bound time, may leave the service for more remunerative employment, obliging the Government to bring out an additional 16 compositors?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member is not well-informed if he considers that Government employment is not satisfactory employment. It is true, as in the case mentioned by Mr. Riches, that on occasions private enterprise will come along and pay rates for a specialist in excess of those he received in the Government service. It is also true, as stated by Mr. Walsh, that when a new enterprise is being established it may offer rates more attractive for skilled staff than the general rates in order to recruit its

staff rapidly. That is understandable, but taking it by and large the facts do not support what the honourable member has said. The Government is jealous of the fact that it is a good employer and does not have such a large turnover of staff as private employers do.

Line passed.

Hospitals Department, £321,080.

Mr. TAPPING—Some months ago, with several of my colleagues, I visited the Parkside Mental Hospital. I readily admit that the administration under the guidance of Dr. Birch is most satisfactory. He and his staff are doing a yeoman job and I commend them; but something should be done to provide additional accommodation for this institution. Because of the increase in population the demand for the service of this hospital will grow and therefore we should do something about it. My chief complaint is that during our inspection we saw children who were only partially segregated from their elders, and some of them were under 10 years of age. It is most unsatisfactory that children should be domiciled at Parkside; and the Government should take heed of the need of providing a place for these children in the Adelaide hills. The number of cases of mentally retarded children will increase annually with the growing population, and I ask the Treasurer whether he has considered the need for segregating such children from adults?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I appreciate the honourable member's remarks concerning Dr. Birch and his staff. I know of no more difficult problem than that of mental attendants at our various institutions. Too frequently they have been condemned when they should have been praised for what they have accomplished. We must remember that during the war building for hospitals and other services was virtually brought to a standstill, but at the same time there was an increasing number of patients coming forward for treatment. The line we are discussing does not deal with capital expenditure, but with maintenance, but in view of the honourable member's interest in this matter I will get a report for him on the contracts that have been let and those that are at present outstanding and he will see that a comprehensive building programme for our mental hospitals is being undertaken.

Mr. FRED WALSH—I desire some information on the item "Loan to P. C. Wall—porter, Royal Adelaide Hospital—for cost of passage to Adelaide from United Kingdom, £175." I

do not know whether Mr. Wall was an employee of the hospital or whether he was brought out here and the Government loaned him his fare. Can the Treasurer explain this item?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I regret that I have not an explanation with me. I do not know the circumstances, but it is not unusual for the Government to assist people to come to South Australia to work for it. We assisted 1,500 to come out for one department, but I will let the honourable member have the information he wants on this item tomorrow.

Mr. TAPPING—I understand that it is planned to complete the maternity section of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital by July or August. I understand also that the nurses' quarters has been used for many months as a maternity hospital, and all those whom I have met who have been confined in the hospital have spoken highly of it. I believe it is planned to finish the general section of the hospital by May, 1958. Last Sunday I observed the progress that has been made and I felt that it was most satisfactory, but I appeal to the Premier to take every step to see that the work is kept up to schedule because the demand on the Royal Adelaide Hospital is increasing daily with the rising population. Can he say whether the general section of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital is likely to be completed on schedule?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Governor's Speech mentioned the progress being made at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Much time has been saved by entering into a type of contract we do not usually undertake, namely, a cost plus fee type of contract, which involves a tremendous amount of supervision, but it saves waiting for the completion of all the plans, specifications and quantities before the work can commence. This hospital has been given the highest priority and the contractor has been told that we want it finished by a certain time. Special architects have been called in from outside so as to free the Architect-in-Chief's Department of an enormous amount of work. The last report I had was that the work was only about three weeks behind schedule, which for a work of that size is very satisfactory because to get a big job started is the most difficult part. I think the project will be completed on time.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I support the remarks made by Mr. Tapping about the Queen Elizabeth Hospital and I deeply appreciate the Treasurer's reply. However, many of my constituents, and particularly the Woodville Council, feel that there will be a parking

problem when the hospital is completed because the road that runs past it is very narrow and busy. Has the Government considered this problem?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I cannot remember all the details of every public work, but since the project was commenced the Government has taken steps to acquire additional land adjacent to the hospital. If the honourable member asked me which land it was I would not be able to tell him, but Cabinet has had submissions from the Chief Secretary for the purchase of additional land adjoining the hospital, and I believe that the Education Department was also involved in one of the transactions. I can assure the honourable member that the need for extra space around the hospital has not been lost sight of, and every effort has been made to obtain additional space.

Mr. SHANNON—The Public Works Committee has dealt with a large number of references relating to hospitals. Dr. Rollison, the Director-General of Medical Services, has done a first class job since his appointment to his very onerous position and I think in the interests of the State it would be wise if he were sent overseas to obtain information on the latest designs of hospitals and on their administration and management. As chairman of the committee I have felt on occasions that it has been embarrassing to him to be asked to give replies based on what is often hearsay information obtained from press reports and articles appearing in certain journals. He is still a young man with years of valuable service ahead of him, and it is not an unusual practice to send heads of departments overseas to obtain first hand information.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—For a considerable time the Government has had in mind sending the Chief Secretary overseas to investigate a number of problems associated with the Police and Hospitals Departments.

Mr. Jennings—A single ticket?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No, the Chief Secretary is a Minister that the State could not spare. There are many people we might be able to spare. I assure the honourable member that the Chief Secretary is one of the Ministers who for a long time have carried, with great efficiency, very heavy portfolios. It has not yet been decided whether the officer who will accompany him will be Dr. Rollison or an officer of the Police Department.

Mr. Shannon—Why not both?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will submit that suggestion to Cabinet as the matters to be investigated involve both departments.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I endorse the suggestion made by Mr. Shannon. I have been associated much with Dr. Rollison, and have the highest admiration for him. His task is a difficult one because he not only has to perform his professional work but also must administer a large project. I feel that the State would be served if he were sent overseas to bring back ideas that are new to the State, and that it might be of financial advantage to the State.

Line passed.

Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department, £24,000.

Mr. RICHES—I am interested in the necessity for providing £6,000 as additional monetary relief to people in country districts, in view of the statement in the Governor's Speech that there has been an unprecedented period of prosperity. I do not think anybody will oppose the line, but it appears to be in marked contrast to the prosperous condition of the State mentioned by His Excellency. Can the Premier inform me whether the provision means that there are more people receiving relief than was expected by the Government at the beginning of the year or whether there are some circumstances not known to members?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If the honourable member will look at the explanation I have given he will see this amount is not associated with unemployment relief, which is catered for by the Commonwealth Government under the Department of Labor and National Service. The Children's Welfare relief arises out of wives and children being deserted and that type of case in which maintenance orders have not been effective or in which the breadwinner for some reason or other may not have been able to look after his family or particular persons.

Mr. Riches—Is it an increased amount to each person or an increase in the number of persons?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Probably both, because the cost of assistance has arisen. Although it is a little of each, probably the increased amount is caused by a liberalizing of the scope of the department's policy. I shall obtain further information if the honourable member desires.

Mr. Riches—No. I only wish to know the trend.

Mr. LAWN—I was perturbed at this line having in mind what the Treasurer said yesterday when he explained the reason for its appearance on these Estimates. The reason why this amount appears is obvious from what he said yesterday, but now that an additional reason has been given every member should have a look at the position. The Treasurer said:—

The additional provision for this department is required to meet the costs of relief granted to a greater number of applicants than was the case last year. This is not unemployment relief, which is the responsibility of the Commonwealth Government, but relates to relief for deserted wives and children for whom the department has been unable to recover maintenance.

The Government should be perturbed about the necessity for this additional grant to the Children's Welfare Department. I suggest that the main reason for this requirement is related to the housing shortage in this State. People frequently come to me and say, "If we do not get a house shortly our marriage will end on the rocks." I am convinced that one of the reasons for the greater number of applicants for assistance from the department is that families are forced either to live apart or to occupy accommodation with in-laws and other people. There is constant bickering and ultimately the woman is deserted and is forced to seek assistance. Yesterday I asked the Premier whether the Government had any plans for making more houses available other than through the Housing Trust, but obviously it has not.

The Treasurer suggested that the department required more money because of increased costs. The Opposition admits that costs are increasing, but the workers, whose wages are pegged to Arbitration Court awards, are not receiving the increased wages to which they are entitled. According to the Commonwealth Statistician the cost of living has increased in South Australia by 15s., but that does not represent the amount by which a family's costs have risen. The C Series index excludes many of the things needed in a home. Whereas the Children's Welfare Department can seek a greater grant, the wage-earner cannot approach Parliament and ask it to subsidize his wages. Because the workers are denied what is rightfully theirs, many housewives have to go to work, with the result that family life is destroyed, homes are broken up and children suffer. It may be true that there are more applicants for assistance and that the relief granted costs more than in the past, but I suggest that the housing shortage and the fact

that workers are not receiving increased wages, resulting in wives working, are factors which necessitate this additional expenditure.

Yesterday the Treasurer said there is a shortage of money for the building of houses, and that all the money available is being spent in that direction. One reason for this item is the insufficient homes being provided. Many people have to live in rooms or with their in-laws, or the mother lives with her parents and the husband with his. Sometimes children have to be sent to live with other people. Some have even been placed in institutions. When the last Commonwealth election campaign was in progress the Treasurer said at Glenelg, when speaking in support of the L.C.L. candidate:—

Putting it on the lowest plane I would like to see the Menzies Government returned because I could get more out of them than the other crowd. We have some interesting projects in South Australia and we won't need a battery to push them along. Vote L.C.L. Support the Menzies Government and leave the rest to me.

It is obvious that the people accepted in good faith what the Treasurer said. I would like to know this. Why in May of this year does he say that all the money available for housing has been used to the best advantage and that it is hoped to get more money for housing, when on November 29 last he said he would get all the money he wanted from the Menzies Government? He has admitted that the people have so little confidence in the Menzies Government now that they will not lend it any money. He said that all the money for investment is going into semi-governmental loans. If that is true it means that the people do not have as much money now to invest as they did in the days of the Labor Government. The Menzies Government was elected to put value back into the pound.

The CHAIRMAN—I have given the honourable member much scope in this debate. I think he should return to the line.

Mr. LAWN—I am putting forward my view of the reason for this grant to the department. The Treasurer has admitted that he cannot get money from the Menzies Government in order to provide more homes. If he could get it less money would be spent on this line.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I want to reply briefly to Mr. Lawn's peculiar statements. The explanation I gave on this line shows that it is necessary not because we have not provided accommodation but because it has been given to certain people. We have been involved in looking after wives and children. The Governor's Speech shows that it is not the Menzies Government that has fallen down on

housing. It put forward a housing agreement with an interest rate three-quarters per cent below the bond rate, and if the States had had the good sense to accept it we would not now be in such an uncertain position.

Mr. Fred Walsh—You did not accept that.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I did accept it. I did not accept the preliminary agreement which was put forward as the basis of discussion, but I did accept it when the Commonwealth came forward with a firm scheme. I said at the outset that the firm agreement should be accepted by the States. We naturally try to get the best possible terms in any agreement, and members would be disappointed if it were otherwise. I did not at any time indicate that we would not accept the agreement, and I did my utmost to get the other States to accept it by pointing out to them that without it the housing programmes of Australia would collapse like a pack of cards.

Mr. Fred Walsh—The other States finally rejected it.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The New South Wales Government said that they would have nothing to do with it, and that is where the agreement broke down.

Mr. Fred Walsh—What about the other three Labor States?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I believe Queensland would have accepted the agreement. I am not qualified to say definitely that they would have, but they were not so completely opposed to it as New South Wales.

Mr. Fred Walsh—Did not Tasmania offer to accept it?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes, and I believe Western Australia would have accepted it. Victoria was in opposition, but I believe their attitude arose from a point that did not appear to me to be fundamental. The Commonwealth contended that there should be a 10 per cent deposit on purchase houses, but the Victorian Government in its election campaign had promised to introduce legislation for a five per cent deposit. They wanted to make the deposit conditions more liberal than the Commonwealth proposed. That

did not appear to me to constitute a fundamental objection to an agreement. However, I cannot say that Victoria would have accepted it because we did not get that far. We foundered on the point that the New South Wales Government would not accept the agreement. The Federal Minister is now negotiating with those States in an endeavour to get them to accept.

Mr. Dunstan—Do all States necessarily have to accept it?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member knows that this money has to be provided through the Loan Council, and the allocation of such moneys has to be on a unanimous basis. All States have to accept it. Previously, although we did not operate under the agreement we accepted it and complementary legislation was passed by this Parliament. We were always a party to the agreement, although we did not always draw money from it because we were able to get money more advantageously from another source. I think we were the second Government to sign the agreement, and we have been a party to it from the inception. What we are discussing is something the honourable member for Adelaide will approve, namely, the question of a little more relief to women and children who are in destitute or difficult circumstances. I do not think anybody will argue on that point.

Mr. Lawn—I agree with that.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—On the general question of the Housing Agreement, this State can operate satisfactorily under it. We would have preferred a slightly lower interest rate, because it would have meant that we could let our houses at slightly lower rentals. However, we can function under the Housing Agreement. It is still the cheapest money we can get, because it is three-quarters per cent below bond rate. In order that honourable members may have an opportunity to study my remarks at their leisure, I move that progress be reported.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.53 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday, May 10, at 2 p.m.