

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.**

Thursday, August 16, 1956.

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

**HOUSING AGREEMENT BILL.**

His Excellency the Governor, by message, recommended to the House the appropriation of such amounts of the general revenue and other moneys of the State as were required for the purposes mentioned in the Bill.

**QUESTIONS.****SHORTAGE OF TEACHERS.**

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I noticed in the press recently that it had been suggested that female teachers should be allowed to be re-employed in the Education Department after they had reached the retiring age and that male teachers had been re-employed after reaching the age of 65. Yesterday the Minister of Education, in reply to a question, said that because of the shortage of teachers some five-year-old children were not enrolled in July. In view of this, is it possible to retain more teachers in the department after reaching the retiring age, and to make the profession attractive enough to encourage suitable men and women to take up teaching and thereby keep the department at least equal to the standard of the other departments of the Public Service?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The honourable member's question without notice is somewhat involved and covers a wide variety of subjects. The compulsory retiring age is 65, but for many years male teachers reaching that age have been encouraged to continue in the department in temporary positions, and I do not know what would have happened if large numbers of them had not done so. Of course, they do not carry on in the same positions they held before retirement. Recently a proclamation was issued as the result of which women teachers who have reached the retiring age can be re-employed as temporary relieving teachers. There is, of course, a shortage of teachers and in many of the metropolitan schools particularly classes are much larger than they should be. We are endeavouring as best we can to attract as many teachers as possible to the profession, bring back those who have retired, and enlist the support of a large number of temporary teachers. As to the last part of the honourable member's question, my own view, and I think that of the Government

and a large number of interested parties, is that, taking it by and large, the terms and conditions of employment and the emolument of teachers are better than those of the average member of the Public Service.

**NARRUNG-COONALPYN ROAD.**

Mr. JENKINS—Recently the Princes Highway has been closed by the Minister of Roads because it is under water. This has diverted a large volume of traffic and heavy loads on to the metal road between Narrung, Meningie and Coonalpyn, with the result that it is rapidly deteriorating. A contractor is on the job seven days of the week and he is doing a grand job, but in spite of this it would appear that this road will have to be closed and thus Campbell Park and Narrung will be isolated. Will the Minister representing the Minister of Roads take up with his colleague the question of limiting the load weights on vehicles used on this road and thereby preserving the road?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The Minister concerned has this matter in hand and is considering some immediate action. One position has arisen which was probably not foreseen at the time—the question of the heavy transport of cattle for agistment from the honourable member's district and that of the member for Murray and from other areas. I will take the question up with the Minister and bring down a report.

**BLOOD DONORS' LOSS OF WAGES.**

Mr. HUTCHENS—Only a few persons in a certain rare blood group donate blood to the blood bank; consequently they frequently receive urgent calls to give blood to save the lives of others, but this often results in their loss of working hours and wages. For instance, Mr. D. Tabotta, who is employed on a Hoffman kiln and one of the Co-operative Brick Company's key men, is often called to the blood bank. The company allows him time off for this purpose, thereby suffering some loss in production, but of course it does not pay him for the time he is off. For some time fellow employees have been making donations to assist Mr. Tabotta financially, but many of them feel that they cannot continue to do so. Can the Minister in charge of the House say whether some payment from State funds can be made to people rendering such humanitarian services as blood donors?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I would not suggest that money would be made available for that purpose, but I will take up the matter and obtain a reply.

## RATE CONCESSIONS TO PENSIONERS.

Mr. TAPPING—Can the Minister of Lands intimate whether the Government proposes amending the Local Government Act this session to enable councils to grant rate concessions to pensioners?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—An amending Bill will come before the House later, when no doubt the matter will be discussed.

## DISMAL SWAMP DRAINAGE.

Mr. FLETCHER—Has the Minister of Lands any information concerning the drainage of the Dismal Swamp area near Mount Gambier?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—As far back as 1953 I took up the question of the drainage of Dismal Swamp into Victoria and other adjacent areas with the Victorian Government. Several conferences were arranged, but this year the then Acting Premier of Victoria advised that it would be a costly proposition for Victoria—costing Victoria about £500,000 and South Australia about £250,000. He has since advised that a local scheme in Victoria can be undertaken for about £52,000 and that the original proposal is not a good proposition from their point of view. However, he has agreed for his officers to meet my officers in the near future and I have approved of Mr. Johnson and the Assistant Deputy Engineer meeting the Victorian delegates to further discuss this matter.

## SURPLUS WHEAT.

Mr. GOLDNEY—At the end of the last season there was a substantial carry-over of wheat, but I am given to understand that in recent months our wheat sales overseas have increased and that, coupled with the effect of unfavourable seeding weather in Victoria and New South Wales and to a lesser extent in South Australia, the position may be altered at the end of this season. In view of these conditions can the Minister of Agriculture say whether there will be a reduction in the carry-over of wheat at the end of the present season?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—It is expected that the factors mentioned by the honourable member will materially affect the amount of wheat carried over to the next crop year. The position of the States generally was reviewed at the Agricultural Council meeting. Apart from Western Australia, which is enjoying a normal season, and possibly Queensland, the main wheat producing States of South Australia, New South Wales and Victoria are expected to produce much less

wheat than in a normal harvest, particularly New South Wales and Victoria. Those two States are the bigger wheat producing States of the Commonwealth, and the effect of the heavy diminution of area sown and probable yield in those two States must materially affect the total crop in Australia. That factor, coupled with the fact that wheat sales have been rather more buoyant in recent months, will also reduce the quantity of carry-over. It is practically impossible to estimate with any accuracy just what the effect of those factors will be, but it was suggested by some Ministers at the Agricultural Council meeting that the carry-over as a result of those factors might even be reduced to 60,000,000 bushels.

Mr. HEASLIP—Early in the year it was expected that Western Australia would be required to accommodate an extra 6,000,000 bushels of wheat in Western Australia, which accommodation would have to be supplied by the Australian Wheat Board and paid for by the Australian wheatgrowers. In view of the fact that the expected surplus has been reduced, has the plan for its accommodation been abandoned?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I am not in a position to give the honourable member any clear answer to that question. I understand it was raised in the House in my absence on Tuesday and that the Premier made some comments thereon. It would appear on the face of it that Western Australia is enjoying a little better than normal season and this may mean that the pressure on storage in that State will not be reduced by the lesser intake in other States as wheat storage in that area is isolated from storage in other States. I will, however, make some inquiries in co-ordination with the Premier in the promise he made to the House on Tuesday and see what the position is.

## EMERGENCY EDUCATION ARRANGEMENTS IN FLOODED AREAS.

Mr. KING—Last week I arranged to take the transport officer of the Education Department to inspect transport facilities in river areas. Following the statement given to the member for Ridley yesterday, can the Minister of Education give particulars of any action taken following Mr. Harris' report?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I am indebted to the honourable member for Chaffey and also to his colleague, Mr. Story, for the very great assistance they have been to me and the Education Department in the difficult times we are experiencing. I am also

indebted to the member for Ridley (Mr. Stott), the member for Light (Mr. Hambour), and the member for Murray (Mr. Bywaters). Through my colleague, the Minister of Lands, I am receiving advice from day to day from the Government liaison officer, Mr. Gordon, and from the officer in charge at Renmark. In addition I am daily receiving reports and recommendations from the Director of Education and, through him, from the superintendents of high schools and primary schools, from the transport officer, the district inspectors and the headmasters and head teachers of various schools either directly or indirectly affected by the Murray flood. But in the nature of things many of these reports and recommendations are becoming obsolete almost as soon as they are made. Within the last hour or so I have received the latest comprehensive report concerning this question. It is very lengthy but I will endeavour to summarize some of the salient points. Many of them arise out of the visit of the transport officer to the districts concerned, and many of them are more recent and of a wider nature.

The position at Renmark is the most difficult. The primary school, with its infant department, was closed on Tuesday, August 14. A number of the children concerned have been transferred to Renmark North and others to Renmark West. Where possible, arrangements are being made for children to be boarded nearby. Halls are being hired as required to provide additional accommodation for these schools. Some teachers are being transferred to these schools from the Renmark primary school and the necessary school furniture is being sent from Renmark. Arrangements have been made, and are still being made, for large numbers of the students at the school to be transferred to surrounding and adjacent districts, or to come to Adelaide and continue their schooling and to board with relatives and friends.

Regarding Paringa, arrangements have been made for the old school at Paringa on the south bank of the river to be re-opened. About 40 children who live at Paringa and its neighborhood will attend there instead of going to Renmark. To provide additional accommodation wooden rooms are being sent from Adelaide and will be erected as soon as possible. With these rooms 60 additional children from nearby townships will attend at Paringa.

It was necessary to close the Renmark high school at noon today owing to an increase in

the level of the water and the difficulties of access to Renmark along the main road. Arrangements have been made for a number of the students to attend schools in other towns and in Adelaide where they can board with friends and relatives. Arrangements are also being made for the remainder of the students to attend Glossop high school and it is hoped they will be conveyed there by rail car. To ensure that all necessary arrangements are taken on the spot immediately to provide for the education of the children under the difficult conditions with which we are now faced the District Inspector of Schools has been instructed to leave all his other work for the time being and concentrate on arrangements at Renmark and nearby townships. Mr. Smith, the District Inspector, has been given all the necessary powers to make arrangements as may be required and he is working in close collaboration with Mr. Katekar and other members of the local committee.

Regarding Lyrup, although the head teacher has had to move from his residence because of the flood, and although the water is now lapping the lower part of the school grounds, it is considered unlikely that the flood will reach the school building itself. Access to the school is at present unimpeded. The primary school at Glossop is at present not affected by the flood. The high school stands on high ground and normal arrangements are proceeding for all students who live on the north bank. Students who live on the south bank and normally cross the river daily at the Berri punt are boarding in Glossop and Berri and are attending the school as usual.

The Barmera school stands on high ground and is continuing as usual. It is unlikely that access to the school will be in danger. Cobdogla school is protected by substantial outer and inner banks and it is thought unlikely that the school itself will have to close. Access from the township is unimpeded at present. If it should become difficult to approach the school the children will be transferred to Barmera primary school, where there is accommodation available.

The Loxton area school stands on high ground and is not endangered by the flood. The Waikerie primary school and the high school are both situated on high ground and are safe from the flood. There are 42 children who normally attend the primary school and whose homes are on the north side who are being accommodated in a temporary school that has been established in the old school

building at Devlin Pound. Teachers have been appointed and the necessary equipment has been sent. Seven or eight high school students whose homes are on the north bank are boarding at Waikerie and continuing to attend the high school. At Morgan, 18 other high school students are provided for, and lessons are being conducted in a hall. A teacher has been appointed and furniture has been sent. At Blanchetown, the school stands on high ground and is not threatened by the flood. The old school at Paisley on the opposite side of the river has been re-opened for 25 children whose homes are on that side. A teacher has been appointed and furniture has been sent. The Swan Reach school is not so far affected by the flood. The small school at Walker's Flat has had to be closed. The 12 children concerned are attending school in a garage that has been hired for the purpose.

The Mannum school building itself is not endangered by the flood. All children on the west bank are attending normally. About 40 children whose homes are on the east bank are being transported by launch daily across the river in accordance with arrangements approved by the parents themselves. Regarding Murray Bridge, the schools are on high ground and are not endangered by the flood. At Monteith, steps have been taken to protect the school in the event of the levees breaking. Emergency arrangements have also been made by the head teacher, and these can be put into effect at short notice if necessary. Precautions have been taken to protect the Meningie school in the event of an emergency. At the present time the school is being conducted normally.

Probably much of this information is already obsolete, even though I have received it only in the last hour or so. I shall be receiving further advice from Mr. Gordon and the local officer at Renmark, Mr. Katekar, and his committee, on further plans that will probably be put into effect from and including tomorrow for larger and wider movement of many of the children affected to the metropolitan area.

#### DRIVING LICENCE QUALIFICATIONS.

Mr. QUIRKE—Can the Minister of Lands say whether it is the intention of the Government to introduce legislation to provide for a higher age limit and for a driving test prior to the issue of any driver's licence?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—That matter has been discussed but no finality has been reached. However, I will bring it up again and furnish a report to the honourable member.

#### PUBLIC SERVICE ACT REGULATIONS.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Will the Minister of Lands take up with the Chief Secretary the possibility of an early re-print of the Public Service Act Regulations? These regulations, printed in 1922, have been out of print for many years and a great many people are trying to obtain copies but are unable to do so.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—Yes, I will take up the matter with the Chief Secretary.

#### PETROL TANKS.

Mr. STEPHENS—I understand that a few years ago petrol was delivered to retailers in tanks that were sealed against interference, whereas today although there are two classes of petrol—standard and super—the tanks are not sealed and there is nothing to stop a few unscrupulous distributors putting standard petrol into the super tank, supplying it to the public as super and charging the higher price. I have had a look at some of these petrol stations and it is merely a matter of connecting a pipe, turning the screw on the other tank and letting the standard petrol run into the super tank. Will the Acting Leader of the Government ascertain whether there is any regulation preventing the sealing of these petrol tanks? Further, can inquiries be made about the practice which I mentioned and by which the general public is being robbed?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I had no idea that those petrol tanks were sealed to avoid the action referred to and I would hardly have expected petrol companies to be so unscrupulous as to do such a thing, but I will inquire of the appropriate authorities and get a report for the honourable member.

#### EYRE PENINSULA MAIL DELIVERIES.

Mr. BOCKELBERG—Recently during the excessively wet season on Eyre Peninsula trains were held up for a considerable period and no effort was made to get the mail through to districts higher up on the Peninsula. Will the Minister representing the Minister of Railways inquire of his colleague to ensure that if such a thing occurs in future some effort will be made by the Railways Department to get the mail through to people between Cummins and Minnipa?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I will take the matter up with the Minister of Railways and get a report.

**CONCESSION FARES FOR PENSIONERS.**

Mr. LAWN—At present an important conference is being held at Canberra to consider the inflationary trend, but one section that has been badly hit by price increases comprises old age pensioners who have had no corresponding increase in their pensions. Will the Leader of the Government refer to Cabinet the possibility of allowing free rail and tram fares to pensioners, or could they be allowed reduced fares?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—This is an involved question, but I assure the honourable member that the Premier, while at Canberra, will endeavour, and I believe with some success, to fight for the interests of the people of this State. I will get a report for the honourable member.

**SCHOOL LAVATORY FACILITIES.**

Mr. QUIRKE—For a considerable time it has been intended to install a complete septic tank system at Clare primary school. Money was provided on the Estimates for this purpose, and I ask the Minister of Education whether he can say when the project is likely to be put in hand.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I regret that the work has not been put in hand before, but it is a much larger project than was expected. Following on representations which the honourable member made to me I made further investigations and have now received the following report from Mr. Slade, secretary of the Architect-in-Chief's Department:—

The intention originally had been to use the existing lavatory and ablution facilities at Clare. It is now considered by the Architect-in-Chief that because of the size and condition of these it is desirable to install an entirely new scheme, including lavatory and ablution facilities. It is now anticipated that the department will be in a position to call for prices on November 1.

The honourable member will appreciate that this will be a major job running into several thousands of pounds. It cannot be done by using standard plans and it will be necessary for a surveyor to take proper levels and for an architect to prepare plans if tenders are to be called in the general way, but I hope that the work will be able to be done by private contract.

**MURRAY RIVER FLOOD.**

Mr. KING—Will the Minister of Irrigation make available to the House the latest reports on the Murray flood position and give some information on the amount of plant available to deal with the situation?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—As a matter of interest to members, we get a daily report on river levels and the flood position generally, and if any member would like to avail himself of that information it is always available. Today the position at Renmark is desperate, as it is at other towns on the river. Only this morning there was an urgent request from Mannum for assistance, which we were able to give by forwarding sandbags. It is only through the magnificent efforts of people right along the river that we have been able to hold the areas we are now holding, and we hope to continue to hold them. The river level at Renmark today is 29ft. 6½in., a rise of 1½in. since yesterday. The banks there are in fair condition generally, but the hospital levee is weak and it will need a big effort today to save it. There is up to 2ft. 6in. of water now across the bitumen in Renmark Avenue near Olive Wood Estate. The road on the other side of the railway line between this point and the distillery crossing is still in use. A minor breach of the levee at Angove's distillery occurred at 8 a.m., but it was quickly repaired.

A landing mat and stone decking was placed on the road bridge in Renmark Avenue between midnight and 7 a.m. At Berri, Cobdogla, Waikerie, and Cadell, the banks around the pumping plant are being increased in height. At Berri the eastern bank broke yesterday. At Winkie the bank is weakening and a second line of defence is being prepared. A secondary bank is being built along the river frontage road at Berri, and an enormous amount of volunteer work is being done. No change is reported regarding the reclaimed areas on the Murray. A great deal of plant has been supplied by the Government and also by local district councils and corporations. Much of the plant has come from tremendous distances to assist in meeting the crisis. The following Government plant has been supplied to the up-river areas:—20 bulldozers, 24 front end loaders, one overloader, 42 tipping trucks, three excavators, 14 scoops, three carry-alls, six portable pumping units, a lighting plant, a switchboard, 16 miles of cable and telephones, and a number of walkie-talkie sets. Of course, a tremendous number of bags has been supplied as the result of various appeals. I hope that members, when they return to their districts over the week-end, will assist in the collection of bags by advising people of the urgent necessity to forward more bags.

Mr. KING—Can the Minister of Irrigation say when the organization headed by Sir Kingsley Paine will be in a position to deal with applications for relief arising out of the flood?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—Sir Kingsley has already interviewed several applicants for assistance. It is expected that by Monday or Tuesday next he will be set up in an office with a staff, which will be in the Lands Department as far as I know now. I will be able to advise the House more definitely on the position on Tuesday.

#### WOMEN JURORS.

Mr. TAPPING—In September last I asked whether the Government would consider employing women on juries, and the Premier told me in reply that it had decided not to introduce legislation last year. Will the Minister representing the Attorney-General take up the question again and ascertain whether the Government will consider bringing down legislation this year to enable women to serve on juries? Such legislation was introduced in Western Australia last year.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I will be pleased to take the matter up with my colleague and will advise the honourable member in due course.

#### NEW TEACHERS TRAINING COLLEGE.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Can the Minister of Education say what provision has been made for playing areas and recreation facilities at the new Wattle Park teachers training college, and if there are no immediately adjacent playing areas available will he consider recommending the acquisition of further areas adjacent to the site of the new Norwood boys high school which might be used for both institutions?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Arrangements have been made for the use of adjacent facilities, but I will only be too pleased to act on the honourable member's suggestion to see if it is necessary or desirable to acquire further land. I do not think it will be. We do not envisage purchasing large areas for recreation and other purposes in relation to Wattle Park. I will be pleased to discuss the question with the honourable member and advise him in greater detail if he so desires. There are ample facilities almost adjacent to Wattle Park where the 400 students can be accommodated. We have much bigger and older projects for large scale building and extensions to the existing teachers training college.

#### NEW PAYNEHAM PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Mr. JENNINGS—Has the Minister of Education a reply to my question last Tuesday regarding the completion of the new Payneham primary school?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The new school is finished with the exception of painting and ground formation. If there had been normal seasonal weather it would have been completed and ready for occupation last September. It has been so wet that nothing can be done on the ground formation at present and it will need three weeks of continuous fine weather before any worthwhile work can be done in this direction. The Architect-in-Chief therefore considers that the school will not be ready for use until the end of November. That means it will be ready for occupation at the beginning of the 1957 school year. It is considered unwise to open the school before that date, because recent experience has taught me that where the ground formation has not been completed there are a succession of justifiable complaints from members of Parliament, school committees, the Teachers Institute, the parents of the children concerned, *pro bono publico* and many others.

#### HOUSING AGREEMENT BILL.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON (Minister of Education)—I move—

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 approve an agreement between the Commonwealth of Australia and the States of Australia in relation to housing, and for other purposes.

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

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I move—

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

The purpose of this Bill is to authorize the State to be a party to the Housing Agreement which has been proposed by the Commonwealth after a certain degree of consultation with the States. The authority to execute the agreement on behalf of the State is contained in clause 2 whilst the agreement itself is set out as a schedule to the Bill. The agreement has been approved by the Commonwealth Parliament in the Housing Agreement Act, 1956, of the Commonwealth.

During the past ten years, Commonwealth assistance for housing has been provided under the Commonwealth and State Housing agreement. The term of that agreement has expired and the present agreement now contains the terms upon which the Commonwealth is prepared to assist the States in the housing field. The new agreement is to continue for five financial years, including the present year, and it provides that the old agreement, although it expired earlier, is to have operation up to June 30, 1956, after which date the new agreement comes into force.

The new agreement is drafted on the basis that it will be entered into by the Commonwealth and all the States. However, if any State or States abstain from executing the agreement, it will operate between the Commonwealth and those States which do execute the agreement. The agreement provides that, during the five financial years of its operation, the Commonwealth will make advances to each State for the purposes of the agreement. The amount to be allocated to a State is to be that agreed upon between the Commonwealth and the State or, failing agreement, to be such sum as may be allocated by the Commonwealth from loan funds made available to the Commonwealth by the Loan Council under the loan programme for that year.

Under the Financial Agreement the Commonwealth can, if it so requires, take for its use a proportion of the loan moneys raised for any financial year. The effect of the agreement is that the housing loans made by the Commonwealth will come from the amount of loan money which the Commonwealth could take in the particular financial year. The amount advanced to a State in any financial year is to be divided into two parts. One part is to be used for the erection of dwellings by the State and the other part is to be used for the financing of home builders and paid into a fund called the Home Builders' Account. During the first two years of the agreement, 20 per centum of the State's advance is to be paid into the Home Builders' Account whilst during the last three years of the agreement, 30 per cent is to be so paid. A full explanation of the provisions relating to the Home Builders' Account will be given later, but it will be seen that, assuming the amount allocated to the State remains constant, there will, of necessity, be a diminution of the funds available for rental housing.

During recent financial years, the State has received £3,600,000 under the Commonwealth

and State Housing Agreement and this amount has been utilized by the South Australian Housing Trust in its programme of rental houses. For the current financial year, the same amount, namely, £3,600,000, has been allocated but of this 20 per cent, namely, £720,000, is to go into the Home Builders' Account. In the last three years of the agreement, the amount to be paid into the Home Builders' Account, based on a total allocation of £3,600,000, will be £1,080,000. This diversion of funds from the rental programme must, of course, bring about a reduction in the number of rental houses which can be built. However, it is hoped that the Housing Trust will be able to expand its house sales programme and keep its total production of houses at a rate more or less equivalent to its present rate of production.

The agreement provides that during the first two years of the agreement, interest is to be paid by the States at the long term bond rate less  $\frac{3}{4}$  per cent, if the long term bond rate does not exceed  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent and less 1 per cent if the long term bond rate exceeds  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. Thus, at the present long term bond rate of 5 per cent, the interest rate under the agreement for this and the next financial year will be 4 per cent. For the last three years of the agreement, the interest rate is to be that agreed between the Commonwealth and the States or, failing agreement, at the rate fixed by the Treasurer of the Commonwealth but it is not to exceed the long term bond rate less  $\frac{3}{4}$  per cent.

The interest rate charged by the Commonwealth under the old agreement was 3 per cent. It is obvious that the increase in the interest rate must substantially affect rents to be charged for houses built under the agreement. If a house is built costing £2,500 an amount of £25 a year must be included in the rent to meet the increase in interest charges from 3 per cent to 4 per cent. However, the alternative to loan money under the agreement at 4 per cent is loan money raised at the long term bond rate of 5 per cent and, without any doubt, 4 per cent money is to be preferred to 5 per cent money. Advances to the States are to be repaid to the Commonwealth over 53 years by instalments of principal and interest. Thus, the repayment of these advances does not come within the scope of the Financial Agreement and the Commonwealth escapes the obligation imposed by the Financial Agreement of providing a sinking fund contribution of 5s. per cent. However, this method of repayment of housing loans by the States also applied under the old agreement. The agreement goes on to

provide that the State may use for the erection of dwellings that part of its annual advance which is not committed to the Home Builders' Account.

Certain restrictions are placed upon the State. Whilst flats may be erected they must not exceed three storeys in height except by agreement between the Commonwealth and the State. Land resumed by the State is to be acquired on just terms. This provision has no application to South Australia as the Housing Trust has no power of compulsory acquisition. Money advanced under the agreement is not to be used for shops or works other than those required for the erection of dwellings or for purposes such as water or electricity supply, normally the function of public utilities.

The Commonwealth has also imposed the condition that, of the total houses in the annual programme, 5 per cent are to be allotted for the accommodation of serving members of the navy, army, or air force. However, the Commonwealth is to advance an amount equal to one-half the cost of these houses which is to be applied for the purposes of further houses for serving members of the forces. It follows that, if the annual programme otherwise provides for 1,000 houses, the forces may take up to 100 for their members but the Commonwealth is to make an additional loan equivalent to the cost of 50 houses and thus expanding the total programme to 1,050 houses, of which 100 go to the forces. It is expected that, during the present financial year, at least 80 houses will be bespoke by the services.

The reason for this provision is that the forces are finding lack of housing for serving members a great detriment to recruitment. It is common for members of the forces to be transferred from one place to another and a serviceman who applies for a house to a housing authority often finds that by the time he has seniority on the applicants' list to justify the allotment of a house to him, he has been moved to another State. This disability of servicemen has for some time been recognized in South Australia and it has been the practice of the Housing Trust to allot houses to servicemen taking into account the fact that they cannot, by the force of circumstances, attain the seniority required from other applicants. Thus, this provision of the agreement will not affect the South Australian position materially and, I may mention, in this

State the view has been taken that the housing of these servicemen is a responsibility to be undertaken.

The agreement provides that these houses for servicemen may, at the option of the State, be let to the Commonwealth and by the Commonwealth to the servicemen, or be let direct by the State to the servicemen. In this State it has been decided that the Housing Trust will let its houses directly to the servicemen and preserve its direct relation of landlord and tenant. The agreement, as did the old agreement, provides that, in letting houses, there is to be a preference to ex-servicemen. This, of course, accords with the practice followed by the Housing Trust for many years. It is provided that a State may, on such terms as it thinks fit, sell houses built by it. It is provided that where a purchaser purchases under the Commonwealth War Service Homes Act the purchase price is, in effect, not to be paid to the State but the loan indebtedness of the State is to be reduced by its amount. A provision similar to this was included in the old agreement. The last provision of the agreement relates to the Home Builders' Account into which, as previously mentioned, is to be paid 20 per cent of the total loan allocation to the State during the first two years of the agreement and 30 per cent during the last three years. The money in the Home Builders' Account is to be applied by the State in making advances to building societies and other institutions approved by the Commonwealth Minister.

The details of the scheme are left to be worked out between the Commonwealth and the particular State. This comes about from the different circumstances arising in the different States. In some of the eastern States, the building society movement is very strong and plays a leading part in financing home building. There is a great number of societies, many being terminating societies, and they have been used to a great degree as the channel through which finance is made available to home purchasers and home builders. In South Australia, however, the number of building societies is small. They are permanent societies and, in most cases, they have been established for very many years. The general principle upon which they operate is that the loans they make are almost entirely provided from funds created by the savings of their members. Thus, whilst the building societies in this State have operated efficiently



and with considerable benefit to many, the provision of finance for home building has been made predominantly through other channels.

Government assistance for home purchase has been made through the operation of the State Bank and the Housing Trust and by means of guarantees provided under the Homes Act. Very large sums have also been lent on mortgage by the Savings Bank, the Commonwealth Savings Bank and the Superannuation Board. Consequently, under the arrangements to apply in South Australia, the Commonwealth has recognized the conditions obtaining in South Australia and has approved of the building societies mentioned in the Homes Act and the State Bank as institutions to which loans may be made. The Commonwealth arrangement is that the advances to building societies are to be limited to one-third of the mortgage loans made in the previous year from their funds, exclusive of loans made from advances from the Home Builders' Account. On present scale operations of the building societies, they would be entitled to take up advances to approximately £120,000 a year. A further amount of £100,000 a year is to be held in reserve for any other building societies which may be formed and approved but, if not taken up, this and any amounts not taken up by the existing societies will go to the State Bank as will the balance remaining in the Home Builders' Account.

The terms of the arrangement are to the effect that advances to building societies and other institutions are to be made at an interest rate not exceeding  $\frac{3}{4}$  per cent more than the agreement rate of interest, that is,  $4\frac{1}{2}$  per cent at present. The advances are to be repayable in instalments over a period not exceeding 31 years. Repayments of these advances are paid into the Home Builders' Account which will, accordingly, operate as a revolving fund. The societies and institutions are to use their advances for mortgage loans which can be up to 90 per cent of the value of the security but are to have terms not exceeding 31 years. The rate of interest on these mortgage loans is not to exceed  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent more than the agreement rate of interest, that is,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent at present. The mortgage loans are to be made on new dwellings to the extent of at least 80 per cent of the funds available. Other matters, such as the maximum mortgage loan and the security to be given to the State by societies and other conditions relating to mortgage loans are left to the State. Clause 3 of the Bill provides authority

to the Treasurer to make loans from the Home Builders' Account to building societies and other approved institutions and authorizes those societies and institutions to accept these advances.

Thus, the general effect of the agreement is that the Commonwealth undertakes to provide loan money for housing at a rate of interest lower than the long term bond rate. The greater part of the money so advanced will be available for State housing whilst a proportion is to be set aside for housing loans. Whilst in some respects the agreement is not entirely suited to South Australian requirements, it will provide some substantial advantages and the Government is of opinion that it will be of benefit to the State to become a party to the agreement.

Mr. FRANK WALSH secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON (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, 1933-1955.

Motion carried.

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

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON (Minister of Agriculture)—I move:—

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

The Bush Fires Act Amendment Act, 1955, among other things, provides for the constitution of a bush fires fund to which contributions are made by the Treasurer and by various insurance companies. The total contributions by the companies in any financial year are not to exceed the contribution by the Treasurer. The fund is administered by a committee appointed by the Minister and one of the members is appointed from a panel of names submitted by the Fire and Accident Underwriters' Association of South Australia. Section 46 provides that the committee can make payments from the fund for the purpose of subsidizing the cost of providing fire fighting equipment by organizations formed to fight bush fires and other fires in parts of the State to which the Fire Brigades Act does not apply. The subsidy is limited to two-thirds of the cost of the fire fighting

equipment and subsection (2) of section 46 provides that every payment must be approved by the Minister.

The committee has suggested that the scope of section 46 be widened to permit subsidies to be paid to councils, many of which purchase fire fighting equipment and make it available to fire fighting organizations within their districts. The committee feels that such councils should be supported and given the financial assistance contemplated by section 46. The Bill therefore re-drafts subsection (1) of section 46 and provides that, in addition to authorizing the payment of subsidies to the organizations now mentioned in the section, subsidies up to two-thirds of the cost of the equipment may be paid to councils for the purpose of providing fire fighting equipment to fight bush fires or other fires in localities outside the parts of the State to which the Fire Brigades Act applies.

It is not intended that the extension of the subsidy to district councils shall do any more than remedy a doubt that existed in the previous legislation as to eligibility; nor is it intended that subsidies to councils shall in any way replace, duplicate or supersede the operations of existing fire fighting organizations, which have rendered signal service to the sum total of bush fire prevention in this State. Every encouragement is intended to be given to the continuance of existing emergency fire fighting organizations and to their formation in areas where at present they do not exist. It was felt that as district councils are, in effect, acting in the capacity of emergency fire fighting services in given localities the subsidy should extend to them as it does at present to the emergency fire fighting organizations.

Mr. FRANK WALSH secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### FRUIT FLY (COMPENSATION) BILL.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON 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 provide for compensation for loss arising from measures to eradicate the fruit fly.

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

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON (Minister of Agriculture)—I move—

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

Its object is to provide compensation for loss arising from the campaign for the eradication of fruit fly which commenced in the Unley area in March this year. On the discovery of fruit fly in the area, stripping and spraying were begun, and a proclamation was issued on March 29 prohibiting the removal of fruit from the area. Subsequently, on April 26, a further proclamation was issued enlarging the area from which the removal of fruit was prohibited.

Following the practice of other years, the Government proposes that compensation shall be given for loss arising from these measures, and is accordingly introducing this Bill. It provides for compensation for loss arising from these measures in the same manner as in previous years. The details of the Bill are as follows:—

Clause 3 provides that a person who suffers loss by reason of stripping or spraying on any land while the removal of fruit therefrom is prohibited by the proclamations previously mentioned shall be entitled to compensation. Compensation will be available for loss arising from the taking of fruit, for damage caused by spraying, and for any incidental damage. This clause also provides for compensation for loss arising by reason of the prohibition of the removal of fruit from any land because of the proclamations.

In previous years, though not last year, a third ground of compensation has been provided for, namely, loss arising from a prohibition imposed by proclamation on the growing of certain plants. No proclamation prohibiting the growing of plants has been issued this year, and the Government does not intend to issue such a proclamation. Even if such a proclamation were issued, the circumstances of the outbreak are not such as would justify the payment of compensation for loss arising from the proclamation. Accordingly, no provision has been made in this Bill for payment of compensation for loss arising from a prohibition of the growing of plants.

Clause 4 requires claims under the Bill to be lodged with the Fruit Fly Compensation Committee before February 1, 1957. In previous years, claimants for compensation for loss arising from a prohibition of the removal of fruit have been given until July 1 to lodge their claims. The Government, on the recommendation of the committee, has decided to eliminate this provision, and to require the claims to be lodged by the same

day as other claims, namely February 1. The committee considers that since there are no commercial growers in the area, a later date for the claims is not necessary. Further, there have been very few such claims in the past, and having two dates for the final lodging of claims has caused confusion.

Mr. TAPPING secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. B. Pattinson (for the Hon. T. PLAYFORD, Premier and Treasurer)—I move—

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

The Bill extends the Prices Act for another year so that it will apply to transactions taking place before January 1, 1958. The justification for this Bill is much the same as that which has existed for previous similar Bills. The Government adheres to the policy of not imposing unnecessary controls; but information in the possession of the Government clearly indicates that there is still a strong case in South Australia for the continuance of price control in the interests of the public.

In the commerce of this State there is not at present sufficient free competition to protect consumers against excessive prices. Price fixing arrangements of various kinds are common and effective. A trader who endeavours to charge less than the price determined by his trade association may often find himself in difficulties; for example, he may find his supplies cut off. Generally speaking, the trade associations are able to prevent price reductions.

In recent years most commercial undertakings have been very profitable. Nevertheless, numbers of them continue to press for higher prices and the Government is constantly investigating requests for this purpose. A small increase in costs is sometimes made the occasion for demanding a relatively large increase in prices. There is no doubt that if price control were abandoned many trade associations would quickly increase their prices. As it is, they cannot increase without making an application to the Prices Commissioner, who in every case makes a careful investigation to determine what increase, if any, is justified. The Government continues to receive numerous complaints of overcharging from the public and has been able, in a number of cases, to effect substantial reductions and obtain

refunds, and the mere fact that the price control exists tends to prevent a good deal of overcharging which would otherwise occur.

While the living wage remains pegged as at present it would be unjust to abandon price control. The control is especially valuable and necessary on the items of food and clothing which enter into the C series index and it has been found from experience that if there were no control the prices of those articles would rise substantially. The fact that traders are making satisfactory profits very often does not prevent them from increasing their prices, if they feel that they can do so without a falling off in their turnover.

Finally it may be said that price control has not worked any real hardship to anyone. The department has always been reasonable and willing to grant increases which are proved to be justified. For these reasons, which are based on actual information in the hands of the Government, it is proposed to extend the Act for a further year.

Mr. HUTCHENS secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### ENFIELD GENERAL CEMETERY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. C. S. Hincks (for The Hon. T. PLAYFORD, Premier and Treasurer)—I move—

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

The Enfield General Cemetery Act, 1944, set up a trust to purchase and manage an extensive area of land at Enfield which is now known as the Enfield General Cemetery. The funds necessary for the purchase of the land comprising the cemetery, namely, approximately £7,000, were provided by the Government, and the Act also provides that further advances may be made from time to time to assist in the establishment of the cemetery. The maximum amount which can be advanced for this latter purpose is £20,000, and the Act provides that such advances may be made up to June 30, 1958. Provision for the repayment of advances by the trust are contained in the fourth schedule to the Act. Up to June 30 last £20,556, including the advance of approximately £7,000 for the purchase of the land, had been advanced to the trust so that about £7,000 can still be advanced.

Section 23 of the Act provides that the trust is to pay interest on these advances at the rate of 4 per cent. When this rate of

interest was enacted, the long term bond rate was  $3\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. It is obvious that, with the long term bond rate now standing at 5 per cent, the interest rate on advances to the trust should be in excess of 4 per cent. It is therefore provided by the Bill that, in lieu of the interest rate being fixed by section 23, the rate is to be fixed from time to time by the Treasurer. It is provided that different interest rates may be fixed in respect of advances made at different times, so that the interest rate to be paid on past advances when

the bond term rate was low can differ from the interest rate on other advances. The Bill is a hybrid Bill within the meaning of the Joint Standing Orders on Private Bills and if it is read a second time it will be necessary for it to be referred to a select committee.

Mr. JENNINGS secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.36 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, August 21, at 2 p.m.