

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.**

Tuesday, August 21, 1956.

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

**PREMIERS' ECONOMIC CONFERENCE.**

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Last week the Leader of the Opposition asked if I would make a statement concerning the Premiers' Economic Conference that was to be held in Canberra, and I promised to make such a statement today. I ask leave to make a short Ministerial statement.

Leave granted.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The conference was called by the Commonwealth Government and there were two items upon the agenda; the question of bringing about a uniform basic wage throughout Australia and the question of associated matters to assist in controlling inflation. All States were represented by their Premiers and the Commonwealth was represented by the Acting Prime Minister, Sir Arthur Fadden, and the Minister for Industry, Mr. Holt. The conference commenced with a statement from the Acting Prime Minister which concentrated entirely upon the problem of a uniform wage and stated plainly that the Commonwealth did not consider that direct controls should be taken into account and, in fact, rather discouraged any direct control. In reply, all States expressed the view that the scope of the conference should be broadened. Mr. Cahill, the New South Wales Premier, brought forward a number of questions he considered had a direct bearing upon inflation. Mr. Bolte, the Victorian Premier, approached it from rather a different angle, but he too wanted to bring other matters into the discussions. His approach to the problem, incidentally, was that price increases were not the cause but the result of inflation, and that if Victoria were granted another £5,000,000 it could refrain from increasing charges for public utilities which would have the effect of assisting to stabilize prices and wages there.

Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania were not so involved in the discussion as Victoria and New South Wales because one of the Commonwealth requests was that any directions that had been given by Parliament to the State courts should be withdrawn, and no directions had been given in the four States mentioned, where State tribunals have continued to function and make awards, but not as a result of directions from Parliament. The courts in Vic-

toria and New South Wales have been directed by their Parliaments to increase the wages in accordance with the C Series Index each quarter.

To give members some idea of the problem so that they can study it, I have had some information prepared for me by my own officers which, at the conference, proved quite useful in the discussions and which, I believe will be useful to members. The basic wage for Sydney as at August, 1956—and this is the Commonwealth court's rate—was £12 13s.; Melbourne, £12 5s.; Brisbane, £11 8s.; Adelaide, £12 1s.; Perth, £12 6s.; and Hobart £12 12s. The average of the six capital cities was £12 6s. The amounts fixed by State tribunals were—for Sydney, £13 3s.; Melbourne, £13 3s.; Brisbane, £11 17s.; Adelaide, £12 1s.; Perth, £13 1s. 6d.; and Hobart, £13 12s. The basic wage paid to employees in State Government employment was—in Sydney, £13 3s.; Melbourne, £13 3s.; Brisbane, £11 17s.; Adelaide, £12 1s.; Perth, £13 1s. 6d. and Hobart £13 12s. The amounts that would have been provided under the C Series Index equivalent were—for Sydney, £13 3s.; Melbourne, £13 3s.; Brisbane, £11 17s.; Adelaide, £12 13s.; Perth, £13 13s. and Hobart £13 12s.—an average for the six capital cities of £13. Members will see that there have been wide fluctuations in the wages that have been paid as between States and also in the wages paid between employees in the States working under State and Commonwealth awards, with the exception of South Australia, where the Commonwealth and State awards are precisely the same. In Melbourne and Sydney the State and Commonwealth rates are the same, but the Commonwealth court rate, of course, is much lower in each instance. In one instance it is 10s. lower and in the other 18s. lower.

Members will appreciate that this presents a real problem because, obviously employees will suffer some sense of frustration at least if they find that their wages are on a fixed level while their costs are increasing or if they work under a State award and are in an inferior position to those working under Commonwealth awards. Most of the States were prepared to take considerable action to try to overcome the problems associated with this matter and those of inflation. All States rejected outright the contention that inflation was due entirely to the alteration in wages. Wages are only one of a number of factors which we thought influenced the cost of commodities and which should be considered at this time. The matters I placed before the conference as being

most important at the moment were firstly, that we should seek to get a much more effective price control system working, and secondly, that there should be a drastic overhaul of import quotas. Import quotas should be based in the first place on the provision of necessities for our national development and secondly on the need to provide a stabilizing influence on the cost of living. If we then had anything over it would be time to consider artificial jewellery and all the miscellaneous luxury and semi-luxury goods that are still allowed to come into the country.

In regard to price control, I pointed out that of the 22s. by which prices had increased in South Australia since the C Series index had been discontinued, about half 10s. 11d.—was due to only two commodities, meat and potatoes, and that it was due directly to interstate buying in both instances. Because Victoria had made no attempt to stabilize the meat market—and prices here have always been subject to competition from interstate markets when the commodity has been scarce—and because potatoes had been completely uncontrolled in New South Wales and in a time of shortage had been allowed in that State to go up to £130 a ton this meant that of the cost of living increase in South Australia in the period under review about 50 per cent of the total was due to these two commodities. The conference continued for two days but we did not succeed in getting the Commonwealth Government to make an appreciable approach to any of the associated problems. It requested that any interference with State industrial tribunals by law should be discontinued and efforts made to stabilize the basic wage between the States and the Commonwealth, without necessarily pegging it. It was not prepared to grant assistance in regard to the other matters, and, in fact, no additional information was available to us on them.

Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania and Queensland strongly supported bringing in uniform price control. New South Wales gave some support to it, but not vigorous support, and Victoria was entirely opposed to it. At my request the Commonwealth Government ultimately said that, in the event of the States substantially agreeing, it would return to the practice that we had when price control was first taken over by the States. That was that it would make available a high officer of, perhaps, the Commerce Department to assist the States, but that he would be available only if there were unanimity between the States,

and if the two States that had directed their courts by legislation passed laws to refrain from further directing them.

Virtually the conference broke down without any solution, but I believe that the problem is vital and that unless it is solved the economy of Australia will suffer severely, and that our living conditions will suffer, particularly for those depending on a fixed income, such as pensioners. Arising out of the conference was the realization by all Governments that that was the position. That much was accomplished and as a result I would not be surprised if another conference were called within a month or six weeks. I believe that the Commonwealth Government and all State Governments, as a result of the discussions, took a more realistic view of the problem and I am sure that another conference, which may lead to better results, will be held.

The SPEAKER—The 15 minutes allowed under the Standing Orders for the making of a Ministerial statement has expired. Does the Premier wish to ask for further leave?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have almost concluded. The only other thing I intended to say was that I have had prepared an amount of material dealing with the problem and that if any member would like to see it it will be made freely available to him. He can take notes from it and use them if he so desires. I do not think it is necessary or desirable to have the information included in *Hansard*, but I assure members that if they desire to peruse it it is probably the best economic information that has been compiled recently. It is available to members to use now or on a subsequent occasion. I have no objection if a member quotes the source of the information as being documents prepared by the South Australian Treasury.

### QUESTIONS.

#### WORKERS UNDER FEDERAL AND STATE AWARDS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Arising out of the Premier's report, has he details of the number of employees in the various States working under Federal or State awards?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have not that information, but I have been previously informed that over 50 per cent of South Australian employees work under Federal awards. At the Canberra conference the subject was not discussed from the point of view of percentages, but I can probably get that information for the honourable member.

## ROAD DAMAGE BY HAULIERS.

Mr. JENKINS—Since the High Court's recent interpretation of section 92 of the Commonwealth Constitution interstate hauliers have had an open go on interstate roads and paid nothing toward their upkeep in return for the hammering they had given them, which has called for increased contributions from other road users and taxpayers generally. Can the Premier say whether this problem was discussed by the Commonwealth and the State representatives at last week's Canberra conference and was any solution found?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The agenda paper for last week's conference contained only the two subjects I mentioned, but I am given to understand that after the Prime Minister returns from the London conference on the Suez Canal problem he will call the annual Premiers' Conference. I have no doubt that a number of other general topics remaining to be solved between the States will then be discussed and that the topic mentioned by the honourable member will be subject to much discussion, because the road systems of Australia generally—and I speak with some knowledge not only of this State but of other States—are becoming deplorable.

## MURRAY RIVER PUMPING STATIONS.

Mr. STOTT—The Minister of Lands is no doubt aware of the desperate position of the Waikerie Pumping Station and that representations were made for an alternative pumping plant to be installed there. The Minister announced that an alternative 650 electric horse power plant would be installed to pump water to the settlement. Can he say whether any progress has been made on the installation, whether the excavations have been started, and whether difficulty is being experienced in getting a transformer from the Electricity Trust? As this problem also applies to the Moorook Pumping Station, will the Minister when replying indicate the position at that pumping station and the river levels generally?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The position at the Waikerie Pumping Station being desperate, I got in touch with the Engineer-in-Chief who, after consultation with the local advisory committee, suggested that a 650 h.p. plant be installed in case of emergency. It was generally recognized that that power would be hardly sufficient for a full irrigation, but the advisory committee and the engineers are satisfied that that would at least help them over this very difficult position. On making repre-

sentations yesterday I found that the work had not actually started because every engineer available for that sort of work was busily engaged on other work in the flood areas. The Engineer-in-Chief, however, realizes that this work is very important and at the first possible opportunity he will have it attended to in the interests of Waikerie growers. On the question of the transformer, I do not know what is in the mind of the honourable member, but I assure him that the Engineer-in-Chief will have that matter in hand also. I understand that a 650 h.p. electrical pump will be installed at Waikerie as a temporary measure. I have not with me details in answer to the latter part of the question concerning the increased heights at the various stations along the river, but I will try to get that information during question time.

## COUNTRY ABATTOIRS.

Mr. HEATH—Can the Premier say what progress has been made by Mr. Rice on the abattoirs project in the Wallaroo division?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Mr. Rice has been given the duty of investigating this matter, but his report is not yet to hand and I do not know what conclusions he has arrived at. I will, however, speak to him and see if I can get the information.

## FINDON SCHOOL.

Mr. HUTCHENS—My question is directed to the Minister of Education who is representing the Acting Minister of Works and who may also be indirectly interested. During the week-end together with the Chairman and other members of the Findon school committee I inspected a shelter shed under construction at the school. The brick work and the carpentry are of the highest quality as regards workmanship and material used, but I am not satisfied with the galvanized iron roof that has been placed on the building. The iron is not fluted properly, some of the upper sheets that overlap the lower sheets laying almost on top of the flutes, the guttering falls away from the downpipe, and the ridge capping is not properly nailed nor matched in its placement. The job is a disgrace to the person who did it and a wicked waste of public money. I assume that the job has been passed as satisfactory because the plasterers are already plastering the walls. Will the Minister have this matter investigated and if he finds the job unsatisfactory will he see that the person who did the work is debarred from further wasting public money?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I shall be pleased to investigate the matter, firstly on behalf of my colleague, the acting Minister of Works. The honourable member says I am only indirectly interested, but I am vitally concerned in my capacity as Minister of Education. I shall take up the matter immediately through my colleague with the Architect-in-Chief and let the honourable member and the House have a report as soon as possible.

#### COMPENSATION FOR ROAD DAMAGE.

Mr. LAUCKE—Has the Minister of Lands a reply from the Minister of Roads to my question of last week concerning compensation to district councils for damage done to roads by vehicles taking part in reliability trials?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The Minister of Roads reports:—

Section 779 of the Local Government Act provides that any person who damages or causes the destruction of or any damage or injury to any road shall pay the council the cost of repairing the same, and if the damage is done wilfully, the person shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding £20. Section 178 of the Road Traffic Act provides that any person who otherwise than by reasonable use thereof damages any road shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a penalty of £50: and the Court may order the defendant to pay to the council responsible for the maintenance of the road such sum as the court thinks proper by way of compensation for the damage. In terms of the Acts Interpretation Act 'person' includes a body corporate, and it is presumed that the clubs sponsoring the trials in question are incorporated bodies.

In practice, both damage and the assessment of it would obviously be very difficult to prove and Cabinet decided last year that no further amendment was desirable unless really effective. Certain clubs are already offering co-operation with the district councils regarding such trials and it is felt that this is probably the best way to deal with the problem. The continuation of the recent type of public trial is obviously arousing resentment of the general taxpayer and it is thought it could well be left to the sponsors to give proper consideration to this point.

#### ATOMIC EXPLOSIONS IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Mr. JENNINGS—When the Premier was in Canberra last week I saw a press report that he had had some private discussions with Sir William Penney, the British atomic expert who is visiting Australia. Did the Premier obtain any assurance from him about safety precautions regarding the forthcoming atomic explosions in this State?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No, because those matters are under Commonwealth control. My discussions with Sir William Penney were directed rather towards getting an appreciation of how quickly nuclear power would be developed, how effective it would be, and whether it would be competitive with other thermal forms of power that we use in this State. Sir William is particularly interested in all forms of nuclear energy, particularly in some of the metals that are now being found in Australia and which are very important technically because they will stand the heat necessary for power generation. He is coming to South Australia and I hope to get further information from him, and I also hope that the Leader of the Opposition and other Opposition members will have an opportunity of getting firsthand information from this great scientist.

#### MURRAY RIVER FLOODS SIGHTSEERS.

Mr. BYWATERS—Many orchardists at Mypolonga are doing their utmost to assist dairymen in their fight against the Murray flood. I hate having to ask this question, but unfortunately some sightseers who are coming into the district have no respect for private property. They are stealing oranges from various orchards in the locality while the orchardists are away assisting others in desperate need. On Sunday before last two men stealing oranges were accosted by a neighbouring orchardist, and they immediately tried to run him down with their motor vehicle. Last Sunday a boy remonstrated with people stealing oranges from his father's block, and one of them picked up an orange and hit him behind the ear and laid him low. This is a dastardly thing to do when people are trying to assist their fellow men and I cannot find parliamentary words strong enough to describe these people, but strong action should be taken against them. Unfortunately, the police at Murray Bridge have their hands full in trying to control the excessive traffic of sightseers during weekends, so I ask the Premier will he take up this question with the Chief Secretary to see whether another police motor outfit could be provided to patrol the area so as to safeguard people's property?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes. I am sure the Commissioner of Police will do his utmost to see that untoward happenings of the type the honourable member mentioned do not recur or, if they recur, that the offenders are adequately punished. I did not hear of the second incident the honourable member mentioned, but

I heard of the first, and I believe the police secured the names of the offenders and will take action against them.

Mr. Bywaters—I hope the penalty will be severe.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will not discuss it because that is a matter for the court, but I will take up the question with the Chief Secretary.

#### LOANS TO COUNCILS.

Mr. HAMBOUR—A letter from the Highways Department states:—

I have been directed by the Commissioner of Highways to advise that no Loan funds are available to permit the Commissioner to recommend a loan to enable the council to purchase a Caterpillar Patrol Grader.

I ask the Premier whether the Government intends to provide interest-free loans to councils for the purchase of equipment?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No, this practice was discontinued some time ago. The Government has not the money available at present to carry out its own responsibilities adequately, and is certainly not in a position to make interest-free loans, though we assisted councils considerably when money was available.

#### FIRE BRIGADE CONTRIBUTIONS.

Mr. TAPPING—On May 17th I asked the Premier whether any progress had been made following on information tabled by the Fire Brigades Board regarding the re-siting of metropolitan fire stations and the request of the Municipal Association for the appointment of a committee to inquire into the basis for contributions from metropolitan councils. The Premier replied that a questionnaire had been sent to councils asking them to express their views but that some councils had not replied. The Port Adelaide council pays about £12,500 annually as its contribution to the Fire Brigade, and this is the highest of all councils, except the Adelaide City Council. This is proving burdensome to the council and I ask the Premier whether he will consider this matter in the interests of the ratepayers of Port Adelaide.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This question has received considerable attention from the Government for a long period. The Government would be quite prepared to bring in a new basis if it were acceptable to all councils, but the councils have not been able to agree on a new basis. Some councils believe that payments should be based on the amount of rates collected, but other councils hold that in residential districts the fire risk is totally different

from that in an industrial port—as, for instance, Port Adelaide—where petrol is stored and where there are associated risks. The problem is not easy, but the Government hopes that some solution will be reached as a result of an agreement between the councils. At present the councils which are not paying large amounts reveal no great desire to increase their payments, whilst those paying large amounts reveal every desire to get out of them.

#### DELAYS IN ISSUING LAND TITLES.

Mr. FLETCHER—Has the Minister of Lands a reply to the question I asked last week concerning the delays in issuing titles to persons who have purchased homes from the Housing Trust?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I have received the following reply from the Chairman of the South Australian Housing Trust:—

Except in a few cases, the South Australian Housing Trust is able to give title to purchasers of houses without delay. Where there is any delay, it usually does not extend beyond two months. However, in a few instances, some long delays do occur. The longest delay has been for about 21 months in the case of a house at Mount Gambier where the delay was caused by reason of difficulties associated with the registration of easements for the purposes of the Engineering and Water Supply Department. Such matters as these and where closing of roads is involved, sometimes hold up the preparation of plans of subdivision, but the principal reason for any delay which may occur is the shortage in South Australia of licensed surveyors and survey draftsmen. It may be mentioned that, when a plan of subdivision is lodged with the Town Planner, the plan is invariably dealt with promptly and, as regards the actual issue of certificates of title, this is done most expeditiously by the Registrar-General of Deeds.

#### PRICE CONTROL.

Mr. RICHES—The Premier's report of last week's conference has confirmed my belief that the only effective method of price control is that administered by the Federal Government. Can the Premier indicate his Government's policy on the suggestion that price control should be administered by the Federal Government?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—At the outset of the recent conference the Commonwealth stated that under no circumstances would it ask for any additional powers, nor would it control prices. I do not think any State, except New South Wales, expressed any view upon the matter. I do not believe that price control by the Commonwealth is any more effective than price control by the States, provided all

States do control prices. However, if one State does not control prices problems arise. Because there is freedom of trade between States, articles in short supply go to the State where there is no control and there is an immediate shortage in the price-controlled States. I have a document which contains a comprehensive list of prices for articles in controlled and non-controlled States and it is apparent that where a State has endeavoured to implement a reasonable system of control it has had a stabilizing influence upon the cost of living. The cost of living has increased less in Queensland because that State controls prices most drastically.

Mr. John Clark—Most effectively.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Most rigidly; more rigidly than South Australia—particularly in respect of rents, which represent a big item in the C series index. However, the price for some commodities in South Australia is lower than in Queensland. If a uniform policy is being carried out I do not think Commonwealth price control is superior to State price control.

#### LOAD LIMITS OF VEHICLES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—It has been brought to my attention—and I have made personal observations of the position—that recently a number of large semi-trailers, owned by persons in other States, are carrying freight on the Broken Hill road between New South Wales and South Australia. Considerable quantities of wool have been brought down in the last few weeks and much heavy merchandise has been taken back. I realize that in view of the Commonwealth Constitution we can do nothing to prevent these vehicles operating, but the road, particularly beyond Ucolta, is lightly constructed and was never intended to carry heavy loads. If this trade continues that road will be destroyed and the State will be involved in considerable expenditure in rehabilitating it and the local people who have a legitimate need to use the road will be severely inconvenienced. Will the Premier have the matter investigated to ascertain whether this traffic is assuming dangerous proportions and, if so, will the Government consider the advisability of limiting the laden weight of vehicles using that road?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will make inquiries, particularly in connection with the road mentioned by the honourable member, in the hope that there may be a solution of the problem of heavy traffic using this lightly constructed road.

#### DISTRICT OFFICER AT WAIKERIE.

Mr. STOTT—The Minister of Lands will realize that the advisory committee at Waikerie is at present without a chairman. The position is usually occupied by the district officer but that person has left the Waikerie district and the district officer from Barmera now acts as the temporary chairman of the committee. I understand that a new district officer at Waikerie has not yet been appointed because of an appeal against the proposed appointment. The district officer from Barmera is doing a good job, but will the Minister see that the appointment of the new Waikerie officer is expedited? If there is to be a further hold-up will he consider appointing temporarily as chairman one of the local growers?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—There was an appeal in connection with the appointment but it was not upheld. The new officer was appointed on Monday and he will immediately take up his position.

#### FARES FOR ADELAIDE HOSPITAL PATIENT.

Mr. JENNINGS—A constituent of mine suffers from an ailment, which is apparently of great interest to medical students at the Royal Adelaide Hospital, and he is frequently called there so that instruction can be given to the students. He has no objections to going to the hospital in order to further medical knowledge, and he goes every time he is requested to do so, but he is an aged pensioner and the calls are so frequent that the amount of the fares is becoming prohibitive for him. As the man is doing a service, will the Premier see that some means can be found to reimburse him for his expenditure on fares? To enable the Premier to identify the man I am prepared to give privately his name and address.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If the honourable member will give me the name of the man I will refer the matter to the Minister of Health to see if something can be done if there is a hardship. The position in regard to the Royal Adelaide Hospital is involved, and after studying the budgetary position of South Australia carefully this year, that is, our obligations and the amount of money available for expenditure, I have to regretfully announce that we will have to impose a charge for attention at the Royal Adelaide Hospital this year. Steps are now being taken to prepare the necessary documents to enable it to be done. People attending the hospital up to the present have not been under any particular disability. I

believe the hospital is one of the two capital city hospitals that have not been making charges to indoor patients.

#### HOOLIGANISM IN RUNDLE STREET.

Mr. LAWN—Has the Premier obtained a reply to the question I asked the Minister of Lands on August 16th about making available the reasons for the Deputy Police Commissioner deciding not to take any action in connection with the University students and the incident in Rundle Street?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Minister of Lands referred this matter to me and I have received the following report from the Deputy Commissioner of Police:—

I have carefully examined the police reports concerning the action of University students during the evening of August 9th, 1956. The incident was not as alarming as would appear from press reports. Two members of the Students' Representative Council called at police headquarters first thing on the morning of August 10th and expressed regret at any inconvenience which may have been caused. I have had a conversation with Rev. Borland, warden of the University, and he has promised to do everything possible to ensure that future "stunts" do not offend. In view of the above, no further police action was taken.

Mr. LAWN—Can the Premier say whether the Government applied any pressure or influence to the Deputy Commissioner of Police, and if not, is the Police Commissioner or his deputy the sole arbiter on whether the department acts in such cases?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government certainly did not make representations to the Police Commissioner in this matter. Every day numerous people infringe the law in some way or another and there is a committee in the Police Department that decides whether a matter should be the subject of a caution or a prosecution. Incidentally, if the police were out purely for prosecutions they could prosecute tens of thousands of motorists every year for minor technical breaches of the Road Traffic Act, but I suggest that immediately they did that they would lose the sympathy of the public and be much less effective than they are today. In cases of doubt the committee refers the matter to the Crown Solicitor who advises the Police Department but the question is certainly not determined by the State Government.

#### NORTHERN SUBURBS PUBLIC TRANSPORT.

Mr. COUMBE—Last May I presented to this House a petition on behalf of 1,151 residents of Broadview and Walkerville who desired

the Tramways Trust to provide some form of transport in the areas mentioned. I have since interviewed the general manager of the trust, but so far have not obtained satisfaction. Will the Premier bring the contents of the petition before the trust with a view to affording some service in the areas mentioned?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Minister who usually deals with these matters is absent through illness. I will get a copy of the petition and discuss the matter with the chairman of the trust to see if a satisfactory solution of the problem can be worked out. I believe the problem in this case may be associated with the fact that in another district the trust is having some difficulty with the local council in getting permission to run buses through its area. The proposed route is the difficulty. I will make inquiries in this matter and advise the honourable member in due course.

#### SCHOOL ENROLMENTS.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Has the Minister of Education a further reply to my question of last week concerning the number of applicants who have been refused enrolment in primary schools?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Last week I said that, as far as I was aware, no child of compulsory school-going age had been refused enrolment but that a few children who had just turned five had had their enrolment deferred because of shortage of staff. I have been confirmed in my opinion that no children of compulsory age have been refused admission. At the mid-year admissions in July it was necessary to defer enrolment of five-year-old children at certain schools, but there were only ten such schools and fewer than two hundred children were involved. I consider it undesirable to exclude the many five-year-old children who can be admitted without undue staffing difficulty merely because the staffing position in a relatively few schools makes it necessary or desirable to defer the enrolment of some.

The honourable member will therefore be pleased to know that the reports he received were greatly exaggerated and that the number of five-year-olds who were deferred for so short a time was relatively insignificant.

#### STIRLING NORTH ELECTRICITY TARIFF.

Mr. RICHES—Has the Treasurer a reply to my question of last week concerning the tariff to apply on electricity supplies to Stirling

North and the probable date of the connection of the supply to the Umeewarra aboriginal mission station?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will get that information.

#### FEDERAL ROADS GRANTS.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Will the Treasurer explain the principle behind the Federal Roads Grant, whether it affects this State's share of petrol taxation revenue, and whether it must be spent in certain areas?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This State receives from the Commonwealth each year an amount from the petrol taxation revenue, a portion of which must be spent in areas outside the metropolitan area. I can get the honourable member the relative percentages if he desires. This year there has been an increase in the amount available—I think of about £400,000—because of the increase in Federal taxation, an additional one penny per gallon of which is being made available to the States; but generally speaking the amount available today for road work is not adequate to meet the demands being made on our roads, particularly by the heavy and frequently fast-moving transport vehicles. This whole matter will be examined at the next Premiers' Conference.

#### PETERBOROUGH WATER SCHEME.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Will the Minister of Education, representing the acting Minister of Works, ascertain when it is intended to commence laying the pipes for the Peterborough water scheme?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes.

#### INSURANCE OF FLOOD WORKERS.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Minister of Lands a reply to my question of last week concerning the insurance of voluntary workers in the flooded areas?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I have received the following report:—

All personal accident policies specifically exclude hernia, and this exclusion was applied to the special policy which the Government has arranged to cover voluntary workers. However, negotiations have now been carried out with the company which has given the cover and the company has agreed to endorse the policy as follows:—

In event of a volunteer claiming injury by a hernia, he must submit advice through the proper channels to the insurance company, undergo surgical treatment at his own expense and authorize the operating surgeon to supply a post-operative report, and if such report indicated that the hernia was of recent origin, and in all

probability was caused in the circumstances stated, the insurance company would accept liability.

In addition to giving immediate notice of the injury, the volunteer workman must have the operation as soon as possible.

I believe that the reason for the latter provision is to allow the surgeon to ascertain how recent was the cause.

#### NIGHT WORK BY WATERWORKS STAFF.

Mr. JENNINGS—I have received a considerable number of complaints during the last few days from residents of Main North-East Road, Hampstead, that work is being carried out by employees of the Engineering and Water Supply Department on a 24 hour basis in order to reline the water mains in the area. This night work occasions noise from the machinery, trucks and men and is greatly inconveniencing residents throughout the night. I realize that the work is urgent and that the complainants may benefit from the completion of the main, but will the Minister representing the Acting Minister of Works ask his colleague to have the matter investigated to see whether, without interfering with the early completion of the work, some relief may be given to residents during the nights?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes.

#### COAL DISCOVERY NEAR QUORN.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Recently coal was discovered near Quorn and conflicting reports have appeared as to the possibility of its proving a worthwhile find. As the latest report is slightly more favourable than earlier reports, has the Premier, representing the Minister of Mines, any information on the matter? Has the Government considered testing the area and quality of the field by the use of a diamond drill, and if not, will it do so?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have no direct knowledge of this matter but I read a report in the press this morning by a geologist who had pegged a claim in the field and who stated that certain borings had taken place, but that up to the present the coal had dipped steeply and the overburden ratio was high and the occurrence of the coal limited. This find has been pegged by private people who have an obligation under the Mining Act to spend money to determine its worth. In the event of their not making the necessary endeavour to establish its worth the lease would ultimately lapse. Reports the Government have received up to the present do not recommend that Government money should be spent on opening the field.



## PARINGA BRIDGE.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Minister of Lands a reply to my question of last week about the construction of the concrete decking on the Paringa Bridge?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The Minister of Roads reports:—

In answer to the honourable member's question, no concrete decking exists at the moment on the Paringa Bridge. Plans for laying the concrete deck have been prepared and it was the intention of the Highways Department to proceed with this work later in the year. The far more urgent works in the Renmark district, including several collapsed bridges, etc., may now preclude this from being done by the time scheduled.

## RIVER LEVELS.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Minister of Irrigation a reply to the question I asked earlier today regarding River Murray levels?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I have received the following report:—

Area.	Rise since 17/8/56. Inches.
Chaffey . . . . .	1½
Renmark . . . . .	1½
Berri . . . . .	2½
Cobdogla . . . . .	3½
Waikerie . . . . .	4½
Cadell . . . . .	4
Morgan . . . . .	4

## Reclaimed Areas.

Murray Bridge . . . . . 1½

Jervois . . . . . stationary

Renmark: No Report.

Chaffey, Berri, Waikerie, Cadell: No change reported but unfavourable weather predicted.

Cobdogla: Seepage at pumping plant is serious despite sealing of a number of pipes.

Kingston: Some movement took place in the walls of the building of the pumping plant. Position serious and steps being taken to remedy.

Reclaimed Areas: No change reported.

## BANKS AND HIRE-PURCHASE BUSINESS.

Mr. QUIRKE—An article in today's *News* by Mr. Don Thompson outlines the dire effect of present financial policy on the building industry because the private banks are not lending money for home building, but are making large sums available for hire-purchase business, which yields a much higher return. This is a short-sighted policy that will rebound against the banks. At the beginning of the session I forecast that banks would invest more in hire-purchase business and advance less to home builders, and it is now becoming apparent. Can the Treasurer say whether the banks'

policy is dictated by the Commonwealth Bank, or is it a matter of their own administration?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I cannot give the honourable member any definite information on this matter, but I believe it is one for the private banks' own determination. I understand that the Commonwealth Bank may set an overall ratio of loans to deposits, but I think the banks decide themselves which securities they will lend money on and what amounts they will lend.

## TRAMWAY EMPLOYEES WORKING WEEK.

Mr. LAWN (on notice)—

1. Are employees of the South Australian Municipal Tramways Trust the only tramway employees in Australia who do not enjoy the benefit of a 40-hour working week?

2. Were the employees awarded a 40-hour working week by the Conciliation Commissioner who deals with tramway employees awards?

3. Were members of the trust consulted before the appeal against the 40-hour week judgement was lodged before the full court of the Commonwealth Court of Conciliation and Arbitration?

4. If so, what were the reasons of the trust for depriving its employees of the uniform 40-hour week?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The replies are:—

1. The Full Court awarded the trust's traffic employees an 80-hour fortnight, worked on 11 days. Public transport in other States work under awards providing a 40-hour week worked on five days.

2. Yes.

3. Yes.

4. The Full Court awarded the trust's traffic employees an 80-hour fortnight, worked on 11 days.

## FUMES FROM TRAMWAY VEHICLES.

Mr. LAWN (on notice)—

1. Has the Municipal Tramways Trust obtained a medical opinion on claims that fumes from petrol and oil burning vehicles could cause cancer?

2. If so, what was the nature of the report?

3. Could it be made available to members?

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

1. As the trust is standardising on diesel buses it has confined its inquiries to diesel fumes.

2. Expert medical opinion briefly is that there is no evidence that diesel fumes are a cause of cancer.

3. There are a number of technical publications by research groups in England and America on the subject of air pollution available which will be made available for reference, if required.

#### TRAMWAYS RECTIFIER EQUIPMENT BUILDING.

Mr. LAWN (on notice)—

1. Did the Municipal Tramways Trust erect a building at the Victoria Square depot to house rectifier equipment?

2. If so, what was the cost of this building?

3. Is this cost included in the £27,000 mentioned in the reply given on May 22, 1956, to a question concerning rectifier equipment?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The general manager of the Municipal Tramways Trust reports as follows:—

1. The existing depot was modified to use rectifier equipment.

2. £3,500 was the cost of the modifications.

3. Yes.

#### LARGS BAY JETTY.

Mr. TAPPING (on notice)—

1. Did the Harbors Board receive any response to the call for tenders to partly demolish Largs Bay Jetty?

2. If not, will the board carry out the work with its own employees or advertise interstate for tenders?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The replies are:—

1. No tenders were received for the demolition of portion of the jetty.

2. It is intended to undertake the work departmentally during the coming summer, possibly about December, when weather conditions will be the most favourable.

#### PORT AUGUSTA-WOOMERA-KINGOONYA ROAD.

Mr. LOVEDAY (on notice)—

1. Is the Government aware that the Port Augusta-Woomera-Kingoonya road was used by motor vehicles in the Ampol Trial in weather conditions which were such that normal users would refrain from travelling on these roads if possible, and that considerable damage was done?

2. Is it the intention of the Government to approach the promoters of the trial for compensation sufficient to have these roads graded and put into good order again?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The replies are:—

1. Yes. The road was seriously damaged, particularly the Port Augusta-Woomera section, where it may be necessary to abandon some miles of the road and construct a new one. When the road has dried out, the District Engineer will make a detailed inspection and will report on the extent of the damage and the probable cost of re-instating it.

2. Yes.

#### NATIVE BIRDS AND ANIMALS.

Mr. JOHN CLARK (on notice)—

1. Which Minister in South Australia is entitled to grant permits for capturing protected native birds and animals?

2. What reasons must be given before such permits are granted?

3. Who is authorized to grant licences for the export of our native fauna from South Australia?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The replies are:—

1. The Minister of Agriculture.

2. Scientific research or for keeping the animals or birds in confinement or in a domesticated state. The number allowed to be taken is limited according to the rarity of the species and advice from the Flora and Fauna Committee.

3. Overseas exports are controlled by the Commonwealth Customs Department which acts in consultation with the State's Chief Inspector of Game.

#### PRICES BRANCH EXPENDITURE.

Mr. MILLHOUSE (on notice)—

1. What is the last financial year for which complete figures are available showing the expenditure on administration of the Prices Branch?

2. What was the said expenditure during that year?

3. What amounts included in this expenditure on administration were expended under each of the following headings—(a) rent; (b) office staff; (c) inspectors; (d) travelling expenses?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The replies are:—

1. 1955-56.

2. £78,082.

3. (a) £2,000; (b) £13,054; (c) £56,112; (d) £460; (e) £6,456 (office expenses).

FRUIT FLY (COMPENSATION) BILL.

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

APPROPRIATION (FLOOD RELIEF) BILL.

The Governor recommended to the House the appropriation of such amounts of the general revenue of the State as were required for the purpose mentioned in the Bill.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—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 appropriate the sum of £300,000 from the revenue of the State for flood relief.

Members will appreciate that as this is a new matter it is not possible to include it in the ordinary Supply Bill that will be discussed a little later this afternoon. The amount the Government has available to it for new lines under the Governor's Appropriation Fund is very limited, and it has already been fully appropriated for flood relief. Therefore, the appropriation of a further £300,000 is urgent because, unless the money is made available, the work being undertaken to prevent damage to property on the river would have to be discontinued for want of funds. There is also the question of hardships to settlers that is being dealt with by Sir Kingsley Paine, and relief could not be provided without passing this measure. The Bill is only one of a number that the House will have to consider in connection with flood relief.

Motion carried.

Resolution agreed to in Committee and adopted by the House.

Bill introduced by the Hon T. Playford and read a first time.

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

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

I thank members for enabling this Bill to be dealt with as an urgent measure. Members are all aware of the damage and hardship which is being caused along the Murray River by the devastating floods which are being experienced. The local people and the local authorities have been working and organizing people to assist with protective work, but the full measure of protection necessary has been quite outside the

resources of those people on the river. It has therefore been essential for the Government to expend funds on this very necessary work.

The Governor's Appropriation Fund limits the amount which the Government can spend for this purpose to £100,000, and, so that the assistance being given by the Government can be carried on without interruption, it is necessary for £300,000 to be provided by Parliament for expenditure on prevention, reduction, control and alleviation of damage, hardship and loss sustained from the Murray floods.

Parliamentary authority for the expenditure of this sum will enable the Government to continue assisting the people on the river to fight these disastrous floods and to alleviate hardship where necessary. The Government has appointed three committees to handle these matters. One committee will supervise flood protection work in conjunction with the local people and recommend to the Government the financial assistance to be made to local authorities from time to time so that their worthy efforts in fighting the floods will not be interrupted; and a second committee will supervise the removal of dairy herds from flooded pastures and arrange fresh pastures. The third committee will be His Honor Judge Paine, who will make the recommendations in all cases for assistance to relieve personal hardship.

His Honor will make recommendations to the Government on the appointment of a committee which will have some local affiliations and which will comprise persons who understand the local position and, it is hoped, some of those who are assisting with the Lord Mayor's Appeal which will be launched tomorrow. At the invitation of the Government the Lord Mayor is launching a public appeal and I am sure I will have the support of the Leader of the Opposition in making a Government donation of £50,000 to commence the fund if this measure is approved. Various local organizations which have been fighting these floods are in urgent need of financial assistance as they have expended their resources. Two or three grants have been made and in some instances councils have been told not to worry about payments for Government equipment as they will be considered by Parliament in due course.

An approach has been made to the Commonwealth Government and it has agreed to subsidize on a pound for pound basis amounts provided by the State for the alleviation of personal hardship. The Commonwealth has also agreed to consider proposals relating to the rehabilitation of the areas and for the re-establishment of levee banks that have been

breached. I discussed this matter with the Commonwealth Treasury last week and I am sure we will get sympathetic consideration. The Government does not intend to ask the taxpayer to shoulder the whole cost of rehabilitation, because that would be impossible. I believe the settlers are prepared to do their utmost and consider it their duty, but it is quite obvious from the magnitude of the disaster that many settlers would never be able to re-establish themselves from their own resources. Unless action of this nature is taken there will be a permanent reduction in the production from these rich areas and grave hardship will be suffered not only by settlers, but by business people in neighbouring towns and, indeed, the whole community. The Government has appointed His Honour Judge Paine chairman of a committee to recommend what action should be taken and that committee will secure the best advice possible from Government departments and from responsible people. In the meantime further negotiations will take place with the Commonwealth Treasurer to ascertain whether funds can be made available for rehabilitation purposes. There are precedents for such action. For instance, in connection with the floods in New South Wales, the Commonwealth Government allocated £3,000,000 for the purposes of alleviating hardship in and rehabilitating the flood areas. From conversations held last week, I believe this matter will be dealt with realistically by the Commonwealth.

This amount of £300,000 should be regarded as a carry-on amount to enable the flood fighting work to continue and to assist in alleviating the distress and suffering that has resulted. The peak of the flood is only just reaching South Australia and it must run the course of the river and it is hard to estimate how much further damage will result. It is quite apparent, however, that we will be involved in heavy expenditure if we are to take effective measures to re-establish the river areas.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The Opposition joins with the Premier in his desire to pass this Bill without undue delay. By that, I do not mean that members should be debarred from making worthwhile suggestions for the solution of the problems that arise as a result of what is probably the greatest calamity in South Australia's history. Already we know of some of the dangers that have been encountered by the people all along the river in their efforts to protect their homes and holdings. There has been an almost continuous struggle with the rising

flood waters and I pay a tribute to those many other South Australians who have voluntarily gone to the assistance of the river people in their herculean task. In many instances the areas sought to be protected have been engulfed by "old man river" despite the magnificent efforts of those concerned, but that does not militate against the value of the efforts made.

I was pleased to hear the Premier say that this might be regarded, in effect, as a first instalment of what Parliament will subsequently have to do in order to restore these valuable areas along the river to their former productive value and to re-establish near to the basis of their old prosperity the many fine towns on the river. At the moment we are concerned mainly with two things—firstly, the protection of those areas remaining to be protected and, secondly, the alleviation of individual hardship where it has occurred. No doubt there are cases where serious individual hardship is already being suffered. One of the committees mentioned by the Premier is to consider the question of moving dairy herds to other pastures. In this regard South Australia is fortunately situated because the State is probably having the best season ever for pastures and grazing. This particularly applies to the pastoral country. I do not know whether consideration has been given to obtaining agistment in some of these areas and an examination of the position might be worthwhile. I realize that we could not transfer milking cows but there are some dry cattle that could be sent away for agistment purposes and pasture could be found not far from the river. I have in mind some areas in my district that are almost within walking distance of the areas from which the cattle would come. I make the suggestion so that others more competent than I can consider it. If the dry cattle could be sent to these other areas it would make the position of the settlers much easier and give some of the owners in the washed out swamps an opportunity to derive an income.

We shall have to spend large sums of money in the rehabilitation of flooded areas, and South Australia is not the only State affected, for Victoria and New South Wales are similarly situated. I am sure the settlers will themselves assist to the maximum of their financial resources in their rehabilitation but after that has been done consideration must be given to the control of the waters at the source of the river. We must rehabilitate the higher lands from which the water comes and we must undo the results of the greed of man

over many years. By a process of reafforestation, and the restoration of natural protective cover, we could slow down the flow of water. I remember reading where a gentleman who has spent the best part of his life in studying the problem said that in some cases the run off had been accentuated 14 times as a result of the denudation of timber and foliage. I suggest for the consideration of the Commonwealth and the other States that the scope of the River Murray Commission be increased to control the waters in the catchment areas as well as those in the river. We must now try to save all we can and provide succour for those suffering from the floods.

Mr. JENKINS (Stirling)—I commend the Premier for introducing this timely Bill and join with Mr. O'Halloran in paying a tribute to the people who have been nobly fighting the mighty Murray River. I commend also the people who have volunteered each weekend to assist the settlers in their fight. Some of the settlers are just about out on their feet. They no sooner get home after a day's work, have a meal and get to bed than they are called out in the night when another levee breaks. I pay a tribute to the men of the Engineering and Water Supply Department. On Sunday I visited the Jervois area and when the threatened break came at 10.30 at night the men had just gone to bed after working all day. They turned out again and while I was there they were busily organizing the work to see that the best could be achieved from what was being done. These men are entitled to a great deal of praise, as well as the settlers.

I agree with Mr. O'Halloran that livestock should be sent away as soon as possible from the flooded areas. Some of it could be placed in those areas where there is ample feed this year. In connection with their being sent away, I understand there is a difficulty in being able to assess the return of milk from a particular cow. In some instances cows have been put out for agistment on other people's property and those people have obtained the whole of the proceeds from the cows. Where there are only one or two cows it may be all right, but where a larger number is concerned it would be equitable for an assessment to be made of the return from the cows so that the owners could be reimbursed to some extent. In my district where stock has been moved to properties the families washed out have accompanied the cows and milked them. This is a good arrangement. There will be many problems and it is a matter to be looked at closely by the committee in charge of the

agistment arrangements. I was glad to hear the Premier say that £50,000 would be allocated to the Lord Mayor's fund for immediate assistance to settlers. There are a number of settlers who have lately gone on to their holdings after putting all their cash into plant and stock and who are now not getting any return. They will be financially distressed and the Lord Mayor's fund will be applicable to them in the main. It will assist them to a great extent. The Bill has to go to another place this afternoon so I will not delay its passage here. It is a good measure and only the forerunner of further appropriations of money by this House. There is no chance at this stage to estimate what the State will be called upon to pay.

Mr. BYWATERS (Murray)—I wholeheartedly support the Bill. With other members I commend the excellent work of the settlers who have been involved in this flood, the greatest flood in the history of white man. It has been a national calamity, as others have said, and by taking an active part in the work I have been in direct contact with the settlers and the people who have come from the city and other areas at the weekend. One good thing has come out of the flood. It is the spirit of co-operation that has existed between the city workers and the men on the land. One has come to learn the problems of the other. This spirit of co-operation has meant that the country man has learned in conversation of the problems of the city man, and the city man has seen on the spot the difficulties of the settlers. This spirit has been of benefit to all concerned. In many instances I have seen settlers out on their feet through working long hours in battling all day against the flood, milking morning and night, and then having to patrol levees at night.

According to today's press we have about 600 unemployed persons in this State but I believe there are more. They could have been usefully employed in assisting the settlers to fight the flood. The volunteers have worked magnificently at weekends, but on week days more use could have been made of our unemployed people. I commend the Lord Mayor's appeal and the help given will be greatly appreciated by the settlers. The Premier said the settlers would have to try to help themselves. I know they will be only too happy to do that after the flood waters have receded, but many of them are committed to heavy mortgages and they will find their task very difficult. I suggest the Government might help them by providing long term loans. They would be

then able to rehabilitate themselves without having to rely on charity. It has been heartbreaking to see people moving furniture, etc. from their flooded homes. They deserve all the assistance that is promised by the Lord Mayor's fund. I suggest also that there should be a Parliamentary visit to the flooded areas. Members are called upon to vote on measures like this without having any real knowledge of the position. All the flooded areas should be visited by Parliamentarians and I hope the Government will be able to arrange a visit, possibly in September. I support the Bill, which is an attempt to salvage everything possible from the devastation in the flooded areas.

Mr. QUIRKE (Burra)—I support the Bill. I have had a look at the floods around Renmark and at the southern end of the river. It must be heartbreaking for a person to see a lifetime of effort inundated in the way some settlers have overnight. At the same time as we provide money to alleviate the suffering of these people we must recognize that circumstances are such that similar floods could easily occur again. At one time the Darling River alone was navigable for 1,000 miles to the sea, but today it is silted up. In the event of further good seasons with bountiful rains, which could easily occur, disastrous results could recur; therefore I trust that we will not overlook our responsibility to provide money to see that, as far as it is in our power, similar floods will not occur again. The banks should be consolidated to hold the pressure. That this can be done has been proved by the pressure being withstood by the new banks made of new earth and consolidated where possible by running tractors across the top. Some of the present levee banks will have to be removed from inside areas because they will form obstructions, but when this earth is removed it should be moved to the first line of defence so that the consolidated banks will have the better chance of withstanding any future flood. If we do that we will receive the thanks of the children of the people who today are suffering.

An irrigation system is a permanent system: it is not here merely this year or for the next ten years, but goes on *ad infinitum* and helps provide a permanent source of income and livelihood for a number of people and food for a much larger number. That is one of the factors that we must look after in the general economy of the State, and I hope that, as there is no niggardliness now about what is to be done for the people in distress, the

same spirit will be present when it comes to providing money to give definite and permanent protection. That applies particularly to the southern dairying areas where the maintenance of Adelaide's milk supply relies on the irrigation of the dairying areas adjacent to Murray Bridge. It has been said that it will be necessary to ration milk in Adelaide after this flood.

Mr. O'Halloran—One-third of the milk supply of the metropolitan area comes from that area in the autumn and early winter.

Mr. QUIRKE—Yes, and there is no other place where you can get it. To restore these areas the water will have to be pumped out and will probably drown out pastures. When these levee banks are built again they should be high and wide enough to withstand a flood. We should not need more than one lesson. I congratulate the Government on the earnestness of its proposal and the speed with which it is operating. I know that the people to whom this money will go and on whose behalf it will be spent will be extremely grateful to Parliament for doing what is being done today.

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

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

#### SUPPLY BILL (No. 2.).

His Excellency the Governor, by message, recommended the Assembly to make provision by Bill for defraying the salaries and other expenses of the several departments and public services of the Government of South Australia during the year ending June 30, 1957.

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

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

Mr. DUNSTAN (Norwood)—I rise to speak on the motion after hearing the Premier say earlier today that the Government intended to charge for public hospital services in South Australia. I feel that the earliest possible opportunity should be taken to protest against the levying of charges in public hospitals. True, as the Premier said, in only one other State is there no charge for public hospital services. It is also true that other States are facing some difficulty concerning their public hospital finances, but in South Australia the position is not that we are suffering great difficulty in our hospital finances because we are giving a hospital service at least equal to those of other

States. The plain fact of the matter is that we are not providing a service equal to that being provided by other States and therefore we cannot use their charges as an excuse for our own.

The report of the Commonwealth Grants Commission states that the average of all States' expenditure on health, hospital and charities was 110s. 10d. a head and South Australia's 98s. 8d. Only one State spent less than South Australia: Victoria, under a Liberal Government, spent 97s. 7d. Are we in South Australia to have the same disgraceful position that obtains in Victoria where the Liberal Government intends to raise its charges to 36s. per head per day? What is the effect of these charges on patients in public hospitals? It is to take money from the poor people to provide for the revenues of the State. Not only are we spending less on social services in South Australia than in any other State except Victoria: we were actually in the position to get considerably more money from the Commonwealth for social services had we spent it. This is shown by the adjusted expenditure in the Grants Commission report, under which heading South Australia got a favourable adjustment of £1,306,000. We could have had the whole of that to spend on social services had it not been for the fact that there was an unfavourable adjustment on State taxation (non-income tax) and charges on public undertakings, but had we not adjusted our charges and our taxes South Australia could have got an extra £456,000.

Now, however, we are to claim money from the poor people for hospital services. What sort of hospital services are we charging for? Have a look at conditions at the Royal Adelaide Hospital on North Terrace. Even compared with the metropolitan hospitals in Victoria, which is the next worst State, conditions at the Royal Adelaide Hospital are antediluvian. The overcrowding and outmoded ward conditions are dreadful, yet we are to charge the poor people in the community in order to rectify our State's financial position. The proper thing for this Government to do is to levy taxes according to the proper canons of taxation and to see that those people in the community who can best afford to pay for social services pay for them. The whole tenor of Liberal Government, both Commonwealth and State, has been to whittle away social services from the people and take from those who have not to give to those who have. Many poor people in my district need hospital services but cannot get them because

of lack of accommodation. I am appalled to think of what will happen when they have to pay for these services, for I do not know what they will pay with. This State is not in such a condition that it cannot afford to provide hospital services.

Mr. Jenkins—Labor Governments in other States make people pay.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Certain Labor Governments do, but they provide a service. We did not provide these services when we had the money to provide them. We did not even ask for money to provide hospital services. South Australia has fewer public hospital beds *per capita* than any other State, but the Commonwealth Statistician's figures show that we have the highest income *per capita* in the Commonwealth. They also show the lowest level of average income to employed persons. Where is the difference? It is in profits. We have the highest level of profits of any State, yet we are proposing to tax the wage earner and pensioners who need hospital services in order to provide facilities that should have been provided long ago. The way many people talk about good government in South Australia only displays their ignorance of the position in this State. It is time the Government got out of office and gave way to a Party that could carry on our affairs much more satisfactorily.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—It is refreshing to know there is someone opposite who thoroughly understands finance and is able to expound so vigorously the methods upon which the Grants Commission fixes grants for the States, but actually the standard of the other States is the standard that the Grants Commission applies to South Australia. All other States, except Queensland, have imposed hospital charges, so that is the standard that the Grants Commission applies to South Australia. Without knowing the proposals to be put forward the member for Norwood gets up and says that they will adversely affect the poor people of this country, but nothing could be further from the truth. The cost per bed per patient at the Royal Adelaide Hospital is now over £4 a day. Recently I visited the best Sydney hospital, but undoubtedly the Royal Adelaide Hospital compares more than favourably with it. Our problem is that there are many people going to the Royal Adelaide Hospital who could well afford to go to private hospitals. This results in many people having to wait for accommodation at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. The member for

Norwood has tried to make a little political capital, but he is not espousing the cause of the poor people but the cause of those getting treatment at the Royal Adelaide Hospital who could well afford to go elsewhere.

There was never any intention to charge pensioners or others who could not afford to pay for hospital services. Those who could afford to pay have been charged at country hospitals all along, and why should we say that one of our hospitals is sacrosanct and that any person may go there without charge and occupy a bed at the public expense? We have maintained that the Royal Adelaide Hospital, being a training hospital, should be exempt from charges, but we know that the Grants Commission will be stricter in the future in fixing grants. This year we must raise heavy additional charges. We could increase our transport charges and tram and railway fares, for instance, or levy heavier direct taxation, but if we do that we immediately penalize people on fixed income and pensioners and wage-earners. Secondly, through the effect on the C series index, we would immediately start another chain of inflationary rises. At the Royal Adelaide Hospital—

Mr. RICHES—Is that the only hospital affected?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes. Patients have always been charged at country Government hospitals, where the same charges will apply as at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. The patients at the Infectious Diseases Hospital at Northfield will still be exempt from charges. Pensioners and others who cannot afford to pay for hospital services will not be charged at the Royal Adelaide Hospital.

Mr. TAPPING—There will be a means test?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Any person not able to pay may apply for a remission of the charges, and that will have an effect opposite to what the member for Norwood suggested. It will result in more accommodation becoming available for poor people. When accommodation is available without charge there is a big demand for it, so the public wards at the Royal Adelaide Hospital have been overcrowded and many people urgently needing medical attention there have not been able to get it. In its Budget the Government will try to prevent imposing charges that would have an inflationary effect.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide)—I wish to make some observations. This afternoon—

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I moved a motion and

replied to objections raised by the member for Norwood. I think that closes the debate.

The SPEAKER—That is the position. The member for Norwood raised certain matters and when he sat down I saw the Treasurer rise and called upon him. He is the Minister in this Chamber representing the Minister of Health. The Treasurer moved:—

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of Supply.

The Treasurer replied to the member for Norwood, and that closes the debate.

Mr. DUNSTAN—I move—

That the Standing Orders be so far suspended as to enable other honourable members to speak.

The SPEAKER—That motion is out of order.

Mr. LAWN—On a point of order, I suggest that the Treasurer's motion is not being debated. Another matter entirely has been raised and I submit that any member may raise any matter on a motion that the House go into Committee.

The SPEAKER—I have given my ruling. The Treasurer moved the motion and it was then possible for any member to bring matters before the House. The member for Norwood did so and the Treasurer, as mover of the motion, was entitled to reply. He did so and that closed the debate.

Mr. DAVIS—Do you rule, Mr. Speaker, that a member would be out of order in opposing the Treasurer's motion?

The SPEAKER—Standing Order 142 provides that in all cases the reply of the mover of the original motion closes the debate. The question before the Chair is:—

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole to consider a supply to be granted to Her Majesty.

Motion carried.

In Committee of Supply.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD moved—

That towards defraying the expenses of the establishments and public services of the State for the year ending June 30, 1957, a further sum of £7,000,000 be granted; provided that no payment for any establishment or service shall be made out of the said sum in excess of the rates voted for similar establishments or services on the Estimates for the financial year ending June 30, 1957, except increases of salaries or wages fixed or prescribed by any return made under any Act relating to the Public Service, or by any regulation or by any award, order, or determination of any court or other body empowered to fix or prescribe wages or salaries.



Resolution agreed to in Committee of Ways and Means, and adopted by the House.

Bill introduced by the Hon. T. Playford and read a first time.

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

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

It appropriates an additional £7,000,000 for the purpose of the Public Service for the year ending June 30, 1957, pending the passing of the Estimates and the Appropriation Act. Supply Bill (No. 1) provided £7,000,000 for a like purpose, and this amount will have been expended by the end of August. It is estimated that the amount of expenditure to be authorised by this Bill will meet financial needs for September and October.

Mr. O'Halloran—Some of the expenditure will be designed to meet the expenses of the Royal Adelaide Hospital?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—When I raised the point of order earlier it was not for the purpose of curtailing the debate, but if we break Standing Orders we break precedents. Standing Orders provide that when the mover of a motion replies he closes the debate. There is nothing to stop members from debating this measure fully, because the Bill provides for the expenditure of £7,000,000 on all State services and, subject to your ruling, Mr. Speaker, there is no branch of the State services which cannot be debated during the second reading. I have no particular appointments this evening and if members want to discuss various services I am prepared to remain here for a long time.

Mr. LAWN (Adelaide)—This afternoon the member for Enfield, Mr. Jennings, asked the Treasurer a question concerning one of his constituents who was called upon to visit the Royal Adelaide Hospital from time to time because he suffered from a complaint which was of great interest to medical students. The Treasurer took advantage of the question by throwing out feelers about a change of Government policy concerning Royal Adelaide Hospital charges in his reply. I remarked to my colleagues that the Treasurer's statement then about charges upon patients at that hospital was quite irrelevant. The Treasurer said that when the Budget was introduced we would discover that patients would be charged in future at the Royal Adelaide Hospital as a means of raising revenue. The member for Norwood, Mr. Dunstan, challenged this when the Treasurer moved that we go into a Committee of the Whole and the Treasurer immedi-

ately backed down on his earlier statement. He told Mr. Jennings that the Royal Adelaide Hospital would be used as a revenue-producing institution, but he has told Mr. Dunstan that the main reason for imposing a charge on patients is that many persons who use the hospital could go elsewhere. What a stupid statement to expect us to believe.

Mr. Jenkins—It is a fact.

Mr. LAWN—To bar a person who is able to pay from going to the Royal Adelaide Hospital is totally different from putting a means test on those who go there. Who will say who is able to pay and who is not? If the Government says that those able to pay for hospitalization shall go elsewhere and that the Royal Adelaide Hospital will be used wholly and solely for people who cannot afford to pay, there might be some merit in that, but that is not the policy of the Government. Its policy is that there should be a means test, and having determined that a person can pay, it will be decided how much he shall pay. That is entirely different from being told to go elsewhere. It would be far better to use the Royal Adelaide Hospital solely for people unable to pay for hospital treatment than to carry out what I suspect is the Government's policy. When the honourable member for Norwood (Mr. Dunstan) challenged the Treasurer about imposing a means test on pensioners, he said that there is no intention to charge them. I challenge him on that. He is still trying to get out from under.

Mr. Dunstan—He raised the matter on a question that was asked about pensioners.

Mr. LAWN—That is so. The question asked by the honourable member for Enfield (Mr. Jennings) was about a pensioner attending the Royal Adelaide Hospital, and the Treasurer took advantage of that to announce Government policy. Then, when challenged by Mr. Dunstan, he said that there is no intention to charge pensioners. Pensioners fall into two groups—those whose only income is their pension and those who have some other income, and it is against the latter group that I say the Government will impose a means test. The Treasurer can reply to that if he desires. The Government may not charge these persons the full rate charged other citizens, but it will say that they can pay some intermediate rate.

For two or three months it has been rumoured that the Government intends to make a charge against in-patients of the Royal Adelaide Hospital. I remember that the British Medical Association made a statement to the effect that if this charge is made the

medical profession, which now gives its services free because the hospital is a free institution, will require payment. The Treasurer said he will not do anything that will add to the inflationary spiral. He implied that this matter would start and stop at the charge placed on patients, but the Government will have a greater burden because it will have to pay the fees the doctors will demand. In addition to having to meet the present deficit the Government will add to its financial commitments in this way. To prove the point that I made that this was raised by the Treasurer as a Budgetary matter and not as a matter of forcing people who can afford it to go elsewhere, let me now cite another statement made by him in reply to the honourable member for Norwood, when he said, in effect:—

What other avenues are open to the Government? We could raise other charges.

Does that not again emphasize that all the Government is concerned about is revenue? As Mr. Dunstan said, it will raise revenue from the poorer section of the community instead of from those who are well able to pay. The Treasurer mentioned tram and rail fares and other ways in which the Government could raise revenue. For some six years I have drawn attention to statements made by the Treasurer at the opening of Parliament about the concessions that this Government grants to certain sections of the community. I have challenged the Minister of Railways on many occasions to indicate the concessions and why they were granted, but so far I have received no information. During the past five or six years the primary producers have enjoyed much prosperity and could have got along without the concessions.

Mr. Fletcher—It applies to all of us.

Mr. LAWN—Because of the inflationary spiral many people are in a worse financial position than they have been for many years. Only the depression years could be regarded as worse years for them. Instead of increasing charges the Government should forego some of the concessions granted to primary producers. The time might come again when we should grant concessions but at present the primary producers can well afford to pay.

Mr. Heaslip—Are they all primary producers around Peterborough?

Mr. LAWN—The honourable member is pleased to support the Government when it grants railway concessions to primary producers, yet that same Government inflicts charges on the poorer sections of the community

that receive attention at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. We must not forget that people from both the metropolitan area and the country go to that hospital. It was obvious this afternoon when the Premier replied to Mr. Jennings that he took the opportunity to make a statement on policy, but since the remarks by Mr. Dunstan the Premier has tried to break down what he said earlier. It seems that the pensioners are to be again a target for a Government that represents vested interests, yet says it represents all sections of the community. I can remember reading in several election statements that members opposite said they supported a Government that represented all sections. Here is an opportunity to show that it does represent those sections; or is this Government move another attack on one section of the community in an attempt to make up the financial shortages of the State?

Mr. DUNSTAN (Norwood)—I want to deal with one matter mentioned by the Premier. In his reply to my remarks on another motion he said with a smile on his face that it was nice to find that someone knew something about the work of the Commonwealth Grants Commission. Then he gave the House a lecture and said that our standard of charges in South Australia had to be the same as the standard in other States if we were to get any money from the commission. The Premier knows that is not true. In the commission's report there is no mention of an unfavourable adjustment being made in respect of our lack of charges for public services as compared with those in the non-claimant States. In fact, there are no unfavourable adjustments for many of the things that have been mentioned by the Premier. He has often used the report of the commission as something with which to slightly pull the wool over the eyes of members, but he will not get away with it any longer. Unfavourable adjustments by the commission are limited to two headings. First, there was the £150,000 unfavourable adjustment in respect of taxation other than income tax. Then there was £700,000 for differential impacts on financial results of State undertakings, and those undertakings were railways, harbours, electricity, metropolitan water and sewerage services, country water supplies and irrigation, and tramways.

These were the only unfavourable adjustments in the report of the commission, yet the Premier said that this State does not get money from the commission because it does not charge for attention at public hospitals. If the State had spent more on public hospital services it would have got the money from the commission.

The Premier's sudden concern for the poorer people of the State, when replying to the matter raised by me, is certainly unusual. He has shown, in his approach to the State's finances and the expenditure on social services, a complete disregard for the poorer people of the community. The only reason he raised the question of the ability of the poorer people to get into the hospital, which incidentally provides less accommodation than public hospitals in other States, was to back down after he found his feeler about imposing charges at hospitals would receive vociferous opposition from members on this side who do represent the poorer sections of the community. The Premier will not get away with that sort of thing and the Opposition will keep its eyes closely on the matter. We will see that the people of the community do not lack hospital services because they are not being provided by the Government or because the people cannot afford to pay the charges imposed.

Mr. DAVIS (Port Pirie)—I protest against a charge being made for attention at public hospitals. We on this side believe that hospital accommodation should be free to all people, and at all times I will fight for it. It is wrong to penalize the people now after so many years of free attention. The Government has a duty to look after the sick people of the State. The Premier said that Opposition members wanted to rob old age pensioners and to look after the more wealthy people. It is strange that when a matter of this description arises Government members always think of the pensioners. They are always prepared to use these people in an attempt to get out of a difficulty, but when the Liberal Party in the Commonwealth sphere restricts the rights of pensioners Government members here forget them. It did not enter the heads of Opposition members they would be deprived of free hospital treatment. Why should country people pay more than city people for hospital accommodation? They are both entitled to free accommodation. In country districts there are many people who are struggling to meet hospital charges. They should have enjoyed the same concession as city people. It would be unjust to impose a means test in regard to hospital accommodation. Who can say accurately whether a person can pay for it? When the decision is made the weekly earnings of the patient is considered, but it goes farther than that because one man might earn £15 a week and another £20 a week, yet the latter might be less able to pay for his hospital accommodation than the other

because of financial commitments. With other members on this side I enter a strong protest against any charges for hospital services.

Mr. RICHES (Stuart)—I have feared for some time that the Government would feel itself forced into the position of making charges at public hospitals and I feel sure that every member will regret that the step has had to be taken. We all recognize that if it can be avoided it should be and I join with other members on this side who have asked the Treasurer and his colleagues to have another look at the Budget to see whether the amount he hopes to recoup from hospital charges cannot be obtained from some other source. The total he hopes to receive from the imposition of charges will surely not be that big an item in the Budget that it cannot be saved as a result of economies in some other branches of Government or collected in some other way. When the provision of free hospitalization in public wards was first introduced at the behest of the Chifley Government we all heralded it as one of the finest things in social legislation that had been accomplished in Australia, and when the South Australian Government fell into line it had a record of which the State could be well proud. It is a great disappointment to all of us who have been associated with hospitals that the Government has had to retract from its satisfactory position.

Mr. O'Halloran—The retraction is due to the sheer incompetence of the present Federal Government.

Mr. RICHES—The Treasurer admitted this afternoon that the Grants Commission had forced the issue in this matter, but I appeal to him to stand against the Commission, because this is a big and vital item of social legislation. If the Treasurer is willing to do that, he can be assured of the wholehearted support of Opposition members. The argument he adduced that in Adelaide people who have means are admitted to the Royal Adelaide Hospital to the exclusion of people who are not so well off financially does not apply in country districts because Government hospitals in the country are the only hospitals serving those districts; further, they serve not only the town in which they are situated, but also the surrounding area, in some cases considerable. The Port Augusta hospital, for instance, serves the area to the Western Australian and Northern Territory borders. It has been something to the credit of the State that the service in the public wards has been available to people on a basis as

generous as, if not more generous than, that in other States. I give full credit to all responsible for that provision.

It is a source of great disappointment to me and to my constituents that it has been decided to retract from the present satisfactory position. Surely it is not too late for the Treasurer to have another look at the Budget. It will be too late if we wait for its introduction. As a member of 23 years' standing I know that Parliament has not altered a single line of any Budget in that time. The Budget, however, has not yet been introduced this year and I understand Cabinet is still considering it. I therefore join with those members on this side who have asked the Treasurer to recast the Budget with a view to recouping from some other source the amount he estimates will be returned to the State as a result of these charges. Surely any other source would be preferable to charging the people who must receive treatment in public wards of our Government hospitals.

Mr. STOTT (Ridley)—I have received a plea from doctors and others associated with the Loxton district hospital for improved amenities for nurses in country hospitals generally. I am informed that country hospitals are having difficulty in getting staff. Loxton is having a bad time in this regard and according to my investigations the general problem of hospitals in rural areas is that they lack the amenities provided for nurses in city hospitals. Consequently, country hospitals calling for applications from nurses do not receive the number of applications received by hospitals in the metropolitan area. The Minister of Health should look at the problem of country hospitals with a view to providing improved amenities or, if this is impossible, an increased wage or allowance to attract nurses to the country.

Mr. HAMBOUR (Light)—The debate on this Bill is getting away from the effect of hospital charges on South Australians generally. The member for Stuart (Mr. Riches) was temperate in his remarks, but I would point out to him that the late Mr. Chifley, in providing free hospitalization throughout Australia at 6s. a day, sent country hospitals almost insolvent. Most of them were so near insolvency that it did not matter. A charge in public hospitals should be welcomed by members of the Labor Party because the Government is going to take from the rich and give to the poor, which is what members opposite advocate.

Mr. Davis—Who said that? We are not Ned Kelly.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Near enough. The member for Norwood (Mr. Dunstan) kept labouring the words "taking money from the poor people"; but I do not think there is any doubt in anybody's mind about whether the Government or any Government hospital administration will take money from pensioners or any other poor people. Everybody knows that money will not be taken from these classes, so on whose behalf do Labor members speak?

Mr. Riches—We know what went on before.

Mr. HAMBOUR—What has been going on in past years has been going on too long. The members from Port Pirie and Stuart, who spoke on this measure, both have public hospitals in their electorates, and many of their constituents will not like this legislation.

Mr. Davis—We want you to have them, too.

The SPEAKER—Order! Interjections are out of order.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Our economist from Norwood did not tell us how we could provide free treatment for everybody, and I think he is at odds with his Leader on the statements of the Grants Commission.

Mr. O'Halloran—He is not.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Well, you did not support him.

Mr. O'Halloran—I supported his very effective argument.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I think his most effective was his histrionics. If there were television he would require only static and he would go over very well. This is the second time the member for Norwood has let off a damp squib on hospitals. The first time he admitted it was prepared by a medical officer, and this time it has been denied by members on his own side saying that the poor people would be—

Mr. O'Halloran—Who denied it?

Mr. HAMBOUR—The member for Stuart gave a moderate—

Mr. RICHES—I cannot allow that to go, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER—The member for Stuart rises on a point of order?

Mr. O'Halloran—The member for Light is completely misrepresenting what was said.

The SPEAKER—The honourable member is making a personal explanation?

Mr. RICHES—I am sure the member for Light would not wish a statement so far from the truth of the matter to go into *Hansard* when he claims that I in any way denied any statement of the member for Norwood.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I do not desire any statement that you say you did not make to go into *Hansard*; *Hansard* will show what you said.

The SPEAKER—I ask the honourable member to address the Chair.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Do I have to withdraw anything, Mr. Speaker.

The SPEAKER—No.

Mr. HAMBOUR—The member for Stuart gave a moderate discourse on this question. The electors in his district will be very upset if they have to pay for hospital treatment. The electors in the district of Port Pirie will be upset, but they are not all pensioners or other poor people. What about taking some money from the wealthy people in Port Pirie whom the honourable member has just slated? They can pay the hospital fees the same as people in other parts of the State. The member for Norwood is worried about the financial position of people who will have to go into the Royal Adelaide Hospital, but there are plenty that will be able to make a contribution. The question of how much revenue the Government will gain from this move is not important: the important thing is that the Government will gain as much revenue as it can from those who can afford to pay.

Mr. Davis—Who will determine whether they can pay?

Mr. HAMBOUR—The honourable member seems to be able to decide that, but I believe the administration of the Royal Adelaide Hospital will be able to determine whether people are in a position to pay. It is all very well for members opposite to talk about what they would like to do. There is much that we on this side would like to do in providing hospital and other services, but we must be guided by the money available. We do not know yet whether the Treasurer is making enough available for hospitals, but if we give more to hospitals we must give less to other departments. I have no doubt that members opposite will say that the amount to be provided for every line is insufficient, and it will be interesting to see, if we are fortunate to live long enough to see them in office, what remarkable documents the member for Norwood will produce when he is Treasurer.

Mr. LOVEDAY (Whyalla)—It is significant that during the debate the name "pensioner" has been mentioned almost alone when discussing who is a poor person. I stress that revenue will be obtained not only from pensioners but also from people earning about £15 a week. If such people have to go into

hospital they will be in an unsatisfactory financial position, and to attempt to raise revenue from them is wrong in principle. Every other avenue of raising revenue should be attempted before singling them out. The only real point made by the Treasurer was the overcrowding in the Royal Adelaide Hospital, but surely there are ways of preventing that other than by imposing charges on everybody apparently, except pensioners. If the hospital is overcrowded surely the remedy is to increase hospital accommodation and prevent wealthy people from imposing on the community. We should make the strongest protest against raising revenue by charging people for hospital accommodation when they are ill and need help most.

Mr. JENNINGS (Enfield)—It was a question I asked this afternoon that evoked a response from the Treasurer—a very irrelevant answer to my question—stating that charges would be made for public hospital accommodation. Irrelevant answers from the Premier, when he wants to be evasive, are not infrequent, but on this occasion he was throwing out a feeler to see how the proposal to charge for public hospital beds would be received by the House, and now he has some indication. He said that because of the State's financial position it will be necessary to raise further revenue by charging for public hospital beds, but after the member for Norwood had spoken he changed his ground and claimed that raising revenue was not his objective and that he was attempting to make patients who could afford to pay go to private hospitals, and thereby make accommodation available at the Royal Adelaide Hospital for those in necessitous circumstances. If that is his real reason why could he not evolve a scheme such as a means test?

Mr. John Clark—The revenue would not be there.

Mr. JENNINGS—That is the point. If all people who could afford to pay went to private hospitals there would still not be enough beds available at the Royal Adelaide Hospital for all those needing treatment. Why then should any person who can afford private hospital treatment be admitted to the public hospital and charged just to raise revenue for State purposes? Of course, exceptions would have to be made in accident cases and for people who need specialized treatment that cannot be given except at the Royal Adelaide Hospital. The Treasurer contradicted himself. He said that his proposals will enable more attention

to be given to necessitous people, but that conflicted with his statement that the purpose of his proposals was to raise additional revenue. We should not attempt to raise further revenue by imposing charges on unfortunate people who are sick. If we cannot raise revenue in some other way we are in a sorry plight. If we only want to ensure that accommodation at the Royal Adelaide Hospital will be available for those who cannot pay we should insist that those who can afford to pay go to other places for treatment.

The SPEAKER—If the Treasurer replies now he will close the debate.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—I point out that the Government has to pay its way just as everyone else has to. In theory it is easy to say we can raise money by this, that or the other method, but we are governed by the amount of hard cash we have at our disposal. We know what are our financial resources this year. We have a number of alternatives open to us. For instance, we could cut down our services, but I believe members opposite would object to that, and so would I. The standard of services in this State is about on an average of the other States.

Mr. Corcoran—What has created the necessity for your present proposals now when we have avoided them in the past?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I cannot tell the honourable member now because my information is confidential, but it will not be confidential when I deliver the Budget. I shall then be able to disclose certain facts. The amount available to us this year to carry on our services is totally inadequate. We have investigated all alternatives by which we might raise money, but the amount will still be insufficient. There is an increasing demand for many services and an inescapable demand in relation to some. For instance, the number of children attending schools is increasing sharply and if we are to provide adequate education we must incur heavy additional expenses. We have adjusted some charges which, incidentally, we believe are justified and one or two items of taxation will have to be given effect to when the Budget is introduced. After taking everything into account, we are still appreciably short of the amount necessary to enable us to carry on the State services. If we increased tram fares by 30 per cent we would not achieve anything in the long run.

Mr. O'Halloran—That would not come within the State Budget.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It would, because it would relieve the State of the grants it makes to the Tramways Trust. If the trust increased its fares we would automatically be relieved of some of our expenditure, but the benefit would be transitory because in the next quarter, when the C series index came out, the statistician would point out that miscellaneous items had been increased by a certain amount. Any person with commonsense realizes that there cannot be a fixed wage level while there are increasing costs. If, by increasing items, we increase the cost of living, we immediately add to the inflationary pressure. The amount of revenue we will obtain from this proposal will not be great. It will be useful, but it will not be a significant amount. It will certainly not be significant in comparison with the cost of the services which today is over £4 a patient a day at the Adelaide Hospital. If a person does not believe that he has sufficient means to meet reasonable hospital charges he can insure himself for a remarkably low sum and receive a considerable proportion of his hospital expenses. That scheme is heavily subsidized by the Commonwealth and has been used by many people in other States and by a considerable number here. I do not see anything wrong with a person paying out money when he is not ill to insure himself when he is ill.

Mr. Jennings—If a person is suffering from a chronic ailment he would not be admitted into such an insurance scheme.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The answer to that will become obvious when the Budget is introduced and the honourable member will then see that his argument is completely fallacious. This proposal has been carefully investigated, but it will not solve our Budget problem. I have never had the distasteful task of dismissing men from the State services and I hope I never will, but the fact remains that the revenue available under the uniform taxation system is strictly governed. It is not elastic and the avenues of taxation available to the States are relatively restricted. Under those circumstances it is inevitable that we will have to impose charges for those services in respect of which the majority of other States charge. Immediately other States charge for them they are taken into consideration by the Grants Commission.

Mr. Dunstan—Where is there any unfavourable adjustment in the Grants Commission's report as a result of such charges?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member is reading from a report which is one or two year's old and in relation to a Budget which is probably three years old. That is all very well from the point of view of debate, but one cannot work a mill on water that ran down the creek last week and the honourable member is quoting from a document that is as antiquated as the Ark. It does not relate to the State's financial position today. It is so easy to talk about things that happened in Gladstone's time.

Mr. Jennings—The other States were charging and we were not.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The fact that this State has abstained from charging proves what I am saying, that we have desired to refrain to the utmost limit from charging for services. When New South Wales, Victoria, Western Australia and Tasmania, which had

Labor Governments at the time, decided to make hospital charges, this State did not do so.

Mr. Riches—A Liberal Government followed up what the Victorian Labor Government did.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It did. It might please the honourable member to know that I do not agree with everything that Mr. Bolte does. This Government still has a mind of its own. I believe it is much more important to have adequate hospital services than to provide free beds for people who are able to pay.

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

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.45 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, August 22nd, at 2 p.m.