

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.**

Tuesday, October 9, 1956.

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

**QUESTIONS.****COMMONWEALTH-STATE HOUSING AGREEMENT.**

Mr. O'HALLORAN—On page 184 of his report the Auditor-General refers to the provisions of the Commonwealth-State Housing Agreement which expired in January, 1956, but was continued by agreement until June, 1956. He states:—

The Commonwealth will bear three-fifths and the State two-fifths of any losses sustained during any financial year, as certified by the Auditor-General of the State.

Can the Premier say whether that provision related only to the now expired Agreement under which it was agreed that, subject to certain provisions, a rebate to reduce rents below the economic rent should be granted in certain cases? Did that provision apply only to that particular section, or did it relate to general losses made during the currency of the Agreement in any year? If the latter is the case, is there any provision in the new Agreement relating to any losses incurred during the currency of the Agreement being borne on the basis of three-fifths by the Commonwealth and two-fifths by the State?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Speaking from memory, the old agreement provided for rent remissions in certain cases. If houses were to be occupied by persons in certain categories rent remissions were possible under certain conditions. The Commonwealth agreed to bear a percentage of the losses that arose therefrom. In South Australia we were always able to do better than the Commonwealth scheme and we never operated under the rent remission provisions. As far as I know no losses ever occurred under the old Agreement. In the new Agreement the principle of rent remissions has been entirely eliminated. It provides that the Commonwealth will lend the States certain sums upon certain conditions. The chief concession is that the Commonwealth provides the money at one per cent below bond rate. The State's obligations are to use a specified proportion of the money for house purchase schemes and to provide a certain proportion to building societies for similar schemes. The Commonwealth does not meet any losses arising from rent remissions under the provisions of the new agreement.

**COMMONWEALTH LOAN TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA.**

Mr. HEASLIP—In Saturday's *Advertiser* the following article appeared:—

The Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) announced today a special £2,000,000 loan to Western Australia. The State has been pressing the Commonwealth for an allocation to alleviate unemployment. Mr. Menzies said the special loan should enable the Western Australian Government to carry out a works programme and sustain employment "at levels considerably higher than would otherwise have been possible."

Can the Premier indicate the circumstances surrounding this loan? South Australia could well do with a loan of £2,000,000. We cannot get it, but apparently Western Australia can.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—For a number of years Western Australia did not spend large amounts under its Public Purposes Loan Acts and consequently did not receive a good quota under the Loan Council formula. Its quota is relatively small compared, for instance, with South Australia. In recent years there has been considerable industrial development in Western Australia and for a period that State attracted many additional migrants; for instance, when the Kwinana Oil Refinery was being constructed. However, when building operations ceased the labour position retrogressed and, as we know, many of Western Australia's unemployed came here. The position was further complicated because in recent years the Western Australian Government overspent its loan allocations and at the end of each financial year it issued many I.O.U's under a deferred payment scheme. I think the amount involved was between £3,000,000 and £4,000,000. Those documents were being handled by banks and held against the Government's loan allocations for the next year. It became apparent that Western Australia would have a major problem of unemployment and a difficulty in financing public works because its finances had drifted and it suffered from the Loan Council formula. At the last Loan Council meeting Mr. Hawko applied for special assistance. The Commonwealth submitted the proposals to all other States and asked whether they objected to a loan being made to Western Australia. The States unanimously decided not to object to the Commonwealth helping Western Australia and I presume the £2,000,000 referred to relates to that particular transaction. The grant will assist Western Australia but in my opinion it will be totally insufficient for the problem facing that State.

**WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION.**

Mr. TAPPING—Can the Premier say whether the Government intends to bring down this session amending legislation to the Workmen's Compensation and Local Government Acts?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Both these matters involve policy, which has not yet been placed before Cabinet. I will in due course have the matters examined and advise the House whether Bills on these topics will be introduced. As far as I know, there has been no recommendation from the special committee that deals with workmen's compensation. A large number of minor amendments to the Local Government Act have been submitted for the Government's consideration. I do not think any of them are vital. I believe them to be minor amendments of the type we would make to a Bill under review in the House. I doubt whether in themselves they justify a Bill to deal with them specifically. I will get a decision on both these matters and advise the honourable member.

**MYPONGA-VICTOR HARBOUR ROAD.**

Mr. JENKINS—My question relates to the five miles of road between Myponga and Victor Harbour. It goes over Nettles Hill and is rough indeed. It is only two miles farther from Adelaide along this road to Victor Harbour than along the main road through Mount Compass. Can the Premier say whether any money has been provided to bituminize these five miles for the coming summer? If the work were done it would relieve the congestion on the main Victor Harbour-Myponga road.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will get a report for the honourable member.

**HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES' STOPWORK MEETING.**

Mr. LAWN—I understand that employees in Government hospitals at the time of their engagement were granted certain conditions, which included free hospital attention and free medical advice. They have been told that as from October 1 these conditions have been withdrawn. Can the Premier say whether the Government was consulted on this matter by the Hospitals Department and, if not, will the Government consider the matter with a view to restoring the conditions to the employees?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—As far as I know the conditions now existing are those that have always obtained when the hospitals have levied a charge on in-patients. I believe

the original decision was made by Mr. Whitford, when he was Minister of Health in the Hill Government. Whilst hospital charges were not levied on in-patients people working at the hospital paid nothing for medical attention and medicine. I noticed in the press this morning that it was said to be a condition of employment. I will verify the position from the docket but as far as I know it has never been a condition of employment. The condition that obtains now is the one that has always obtained when hospital fees have been charged.

Mr. JENNINGS—The Premier said he did not know there had ever been an agreement in the hiring of these employees whereby they would receive certain benefits, but I have seen the advertisement calling for applications for these positions and can assure him that it stated that a condition of employment was the provision of free medical attention and medicine. Further, I understand that applicants, on being interviewed, were told that this was not so much a concession as compensation for the greater risk of contracting disease in hospital wards. Furthermore, in negotiations with the authorities for increased wages and better conditions it has been repeatedly pointed out to them that they must remember they are receiving free hospital treatment and medicine, whereas other employees are not, and that this must be considered in fixing their wages and conditions. The employees have taken this matter seriously—

The SPEAKER—The honourable member should ask his question and not debate it.

Mr. JENNINGS—There was a stopwork meeting on this matter—

The SPEAKER—I ask the honourable member to ask his question.

Mr. JENNINGS—In view of the serious attitude taken by the employees on this matter will the Premier undertake to have it reviewed immediately?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The stopwork meeting referred to was held without any notice whatever being given to the department, whereas if the employees had a grievance it would have been appropriate for them to raise it with the department before walking out on the hospital and the patients. I have no sympathy with the employees' attitude on this matter. On the general question, in no documents I have seen on this matter have the hospital authorities ever stated that this was a condition of employment. Had there been any agreement of the type referred to by

the honourable member I would have thought that the hospital authorities would place it before the executive when dealing with this matter. For instance, had the advertisement stated that this was a condition of employment, I would have thought that they would say so in reports they have made. I have already told the member for Adelaide that I will investigate that aspect, but as far as I know the conditions applying now are those that applied when charges were made at the hospital.

Mr. Jennings—But you believe me when I say that I saw it in the advertisement?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Although I do not disbelieve the honourable member I want to see the wording of the agreement and learn the facts of the matter, because they are important to the argument. I do not necessarily have to accept every statement made as the final statement. I will examine the aspect mentioned, but I have no sympathy whatever with the attitude adopted by these employees.

#### EGG INDUSTRY.

Mr. LAUCKE—I recently referred to the unsatisfactory condition of the egg industry in South Australian and asked the Minister of Agriculture if he would, on a Commonwealth level, investigate the possibility of ensuring cost of production to producers. Has he any information on the matter?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—At the time of replying to the honourable member's earlier question I said I felt the decline in egg production was due more to the long cold winter than to any other factor. I have since studied the matter further and find that there is a difficulty in the industry in respect to meeting costs of production from the current prices received. It would appear on the face as though the commercial poultryman, who has to carry the whole of his overhead costs in the prices he receives from his eggs, has some difficulty in making ends meet, whereas the smaller poultryman, who has other strings to his bow, can absorb some of his overhead costs in other directions and perhaps still make a margin. I find that over the last 12 months or so the industry has made representations to the Commonwealth Government which has said that it will investigate the matter to see what effective steps can be taken. I am now getting in touch with the Commonwealth Minister to see if any conclusion has been reached in this matter, or how far the investigations have gone. On receipt of a reply from the Minister for

Primary Industries I will advise the honourable member accordingly.

#### BOOKPURNONG SETTLEMENT SCHEME.

Mr. STOTT—Some time ago I asked the Premier a question regarding the Commonwealth Government's refusal to go ahead with soldier settlement at Bookpurnong and inquired whether he would place the matter before Cabinet so that South Australia could proceed with it, notwithstanding the Commonwealth's refusal. Since the matter of rehabilitation of flooded settlers has become an important topic, many people are talking about making use of parts of the Bookpurnong area. Can the Minister of Lands say whether consideration has been given to allocating some of this land for soldier settlement, and has a reply been received from the Prime Minister regarding the amount of money available to South Australia for the rehabilitation of settlers in flooded areas?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The Premier took up this question with me as Minister of Irrigation and I in turn took it up with the Commonwealth, which said that it was not considered a worthwhile proposition. However, I have been in touch with the Minister for Primary Industries again and he has promised to visit South Australia in the near future. I have this matter on the agenda to be discussed with him and when I have his report I will advise the honourable member.

#### SOUTH ROAD TRAFFIC LIGHTS.

Mr. DUNNAGE—Has the Minister representing the Minister of Roads a reply to my recent question concerning the installation of traffic lights at the Anzac Highway-South Road intersection?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Commissioner of Highways reports—

Before traffic lights can function satisfactorily at the Anzac Highway-South Road intersection, it is necessary to widen the South Road on both sides of the intersection. Negotiations with the land owners concerned (generally protracted as they are unwilling sellers) are not yet completed. The final plans are ready for forwarding to the local authorities concerned to complete negotiations with the installing contractor, as soon as the necessary land has been acquired.

#### UNEMPLOYMENT AT PORT AUGUSTA.

Mr. RICHES—Has the Premier a reply to my recent question concerning the unemployment position at Port Augusta and the possibility of the local officer of the Children's Welfare and Public Relief Department issuing

emergency relief without referring the applications to Adelaide?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—That matter was referred to the Chief Secretary for appropriate action and no doubt he has taken it up with the department. The question of emergency relief is dealt with in special instances, but I will take up the question to see what action has been taken.

#### LEIGH CREEK-MARREE RAILWAY.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Can the Premier say whether the Commonwealth Government is proceeding with the construction of the broad gauge line northward from Leigh Creek to Marree and, if so, what progress has been made and when is the line likely to be completed as far as Marree?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Although I have heard it said on two or three occasions that the Commonwealth Government has approved of the broadening of the gauge as far as Marree, I have never seen that stated in any official document, or in any letter from the Prime Minister or the Commonwealth Government. I will inquire of the Commonwealth Government, however, and advise the honourable member in due course how far the existing approvals extend and on the progress made.

#### APPOINTMENT OF TOWN PLANNER.

Mr. DUNNAGE—Has the Premier a reply to my recent question concerning the appointment of a new Town Planner?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Public Service Commissioner states:—

A selection for the position of Town Planner has been unavoidably delayed because of the necessity to obtain more information regarding one of the applicants in England. This has now been received, and it is hoped to make a recommendation within the next two or three weeks.

#### PARINGA-REMARK SHUTTLE SERVICE.

Mr. STOTT—I recently asked a question about the railway shuttle service between Remark and Paringa, and the Railways Commissioner reported that the volume of traffic did not warrant an extra truck being used. I point out that there have been delays of up to three hours in that service, and it is apparent that it is being used more than it was. Will the Minister again take up the question with the Minister of Railways to see whether a more powerful locomotive can be used so as to give better service to the people concerned?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes.

#### ELECTORAL ACT AND REGULATIONS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—During the State election campaign held earlier in the year I received complaints from country electoral officers that the Electoral Act and regulations had not been reprinted for a number of years. They pointed out that this involved country, and I suppose metropolitan, officials in some difficulty in ascertaining what the law provided in certain matters. If it is true that the Act and regulations have not been reprinted for a number of years will the Minister representing the Attorney-General take up with his colleague the advisability of having them reprinted prior to the next election?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I shall be pleased to do so.

#### DISCHARGE OF FIREARMS.

Mr. FRED WALSH—It was reported in the press that last Saturday night the proprietor of a night club on Anzac Highway disturbed two men interfering with motor cars. I hold no brief for anybody who interferes with motor cars: in fact, I think more drastic penalties should be imposed; but I am concerned about the aspect that the proprietor of the night club, when chasing the men, fired a revolver. Whether it was fired at them or over them, the shot could have easily injured someone else, and I understand it is not competent, under the Act, for any person other than a police officer or other authorized person to discharge firearms in a public thoroughfare. If that is so, will the Premier issue a warning to that effect?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The position is not as simple as suggested by the honourable member, because citizens have certain rights of self-protection and also against persons proceeding with any unlawful activity, and to issue a warning that no one in any circumstances may use a firearm in a public place would be contrary to the law. I will get the matter clarified for the honourable member and also an opinion from the Crown Solicitor. After the honourable member has seen the report he may ask a further question if he desires.

#### TURNING OFF WATER AT MAIN ROADS.

Mr. QUIRKE—Can the Minister representing the Minister of Roads say what is the policy of the Highways Department in regard to the turning off of water at main roads? I know of two cases where great devastation has been caused by the present policy. Can the Minister say whether there is any definite policy on this work, or can it be carried out

in any slipshod way, detrimentally to the land alongside the road?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will get a report for the honourable member.

#### MARINE FIRE STATIONS.

Mr. TAPPING (on notice)—

1. How many officers and firemen were

	June 30, 1954.	
	Officers.	Firemen.
Port Adelaide . . .	6	29
Semaphore . . . .	3	3
Birkenhead . . . .	—	6
	9	38

The above figures represent the actual numbers of employees appearing on the pay sheets of the respective dates.

2. The decrease in the number of firemen at Port Adelaide Station in 1955 and 1956 has been brought about by resignations from the service, some to join the fire service at Adelaide Airport, others for private reasons, and replacements have not been made. Difficulty has been experienced in obtaining suitable recruits for the service.

#### ADELAIDE PARKLANDS

Mr. Tapping, for Mr. LAWN (on notice)—To whom are allotted the 592 acres of the original 2,300 acres of parklands surrounding the City of Adelaide and not now available to the public?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Of the original 2,300 acres of parklands surrounding the City of Adelaide, 592 acres have been allocated for the following purposes:—City Baths, Art Gallery, Botanic Garden, Botanic Park, bowling green, Central apprentice school, cemetery, gaol, Government domain, Government Offices (Kintore Avenue), Government Printing Office, high school, (Adelaide Boys), hospital, library Meteorological Bureau, Museum, Parade Ground, Parliament Houses, P.M.G. depots, Police Barracks, powder magazines, railways, reservoirs, School of Mines, sewers yards, trades school, training college, tramway depot, University, war memorial, waterworks yard, zoological gardens—and for roads. During the last 25 years only two acres have been alienated from the parklands for the purpose of an A.I.F. cemetery.

#### TRAM AND BUS TICKETS.

Mr. LAWN (on notice)—What amounts do the Municipal Tramways Trust charge for each section of school term tram and bus tickets?

employed at Semaphore, Port Adelaide and Birkenhead marine fire stations, respectively, as at June 30 in each of the years 1954, 1955, and 1956?

2. What are causes of any fluctuations in these numbers?

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

	June 30, 1955.		June 30, 1956.	
	Officers.	Firemen.	Officers.	Firemen.
	6	27	6	24
	3	3	3	3
	—	6	—	6
	9	36	9	33

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—School term tram tickets are not issued but, as the honourable member was advised last week, monthly tickets at a reduced rate are in operation.

#### WATERWORKS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

#### THE ESTIMATES.

In Committee of Supply.

(Continued from October 4. Page 901.)

#### MINISTER OF LANDS AND MINISTER OF REPATRIATION.

Lands Department, £734,739; Government Motor Garage, £35,409; Advances to Settlers, Vermin-proof Fencing and Loans for Fencing and Water Piping, £1,262—passed.

Miscellaneous, £107,402.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—An amount of £1,000 is provided for road repairs to Botanic Park. Most motorists exercise discretion in driving and the present gutters at the entrances to the park could well be eliminated. Will the Minister ascertain whether any of this vote will be used for that purpose?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—Yes.

Mr. JENKINS—Under the heading "National Park Commissioners," a special grant of £3,000 is proposed for road construction and repairs. Can the Minister say whether any of this money can be used for constructing roads for three soldier settlers in the Wellington area? At the present time the only means of entering their properties is by tractor. It is impossible for their wives to get out to do their shopping.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—This is a special grant for the National Park and has no relation to the matter raised.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The sum of £3,000 is proposed as subsidies to councils for the destruction of noxious weeds, and an amount of £400 for the destruction of rabbits on Crown lands. A friend of mine with property interests in the southern portion of Eyre Peninsula recently mentioned that the noxious weed South African Daisy is becoming a serious menace in that area. Can the Minister indicate whether any portion of this vote will be devoted to research into methods of eradicating this type of noxious weed?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The Minister of Agriculture will be introducing a Bill relating to noxious weeds and this matter can then be considered. Although only £50 was spent last year, the vote for the destruction of rabbits has been maintained at £400 because it is anticipated that additional amounts will be claimed this year.

Mr. GOLDNEY—Can the Minister indicate on what basis subsidies are paid to councils for the destruction of noxious weeds?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—That matter can also be considered when the amending legislation is introduced by the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr. LAUCKE—An amount of £96 is provided for pay-roll tax. I draw attention to the amounts all departments are required to pay for pay-roll tax. It is obvious that this tax depreciates the money available to the various departments and greatly adds to the costs of production, and this results in increasing inflation. I realize that the proceeds of pay-roll tax are earmarked for a desirable purpose, but taxes that are levied before income is made and that strike at the root of our cost structure are wrong in principle. Will the Treasurer endeavour to ensure the abolition of this line in future Estimates?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This matter was the subject of the commencement of legal action against the Federal Government. Our objection at the time was that we were not only being levied pay-roll tax upon wages but upon allowances, such as motor car and travelling allowances. The case was listed for hearing in the High Court, but the Federal Government on the eve of the action agreed that we should only pay the tax on actual salaries. The Government has never challenged pay-roll tax as such. It was introduced by a Federal Government for the purpose of providing a social amenity and, as Government employees are receiving the benefit of that amenity, if the Government was not required

to make such payments private employers would be compelled to pay more. It would be wrong for the State to evade paying its fair share of the tax. The merit of having a pay-roll tax is something for the Commonwealth Parliament to consider. It should not be debated here.

Line passed.

#### MINISTER OF WORKS.

Public Works Department, £7,861—passed.

Engineering and Water Supply Department, £2,474,545.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The Engineer-in-Chief, whose salary is set out in the Estimates, is also a member of the River Murray Commission and the Electricity Trust, for which additional duties he receives extra remuneration. I do not suggest that he, with the salary and the other remunerations, is being overpaid, for with his great ability and excellent service to the State he may still be underpaid; but I have said before that we have many excellent officers in our Public Service who are being overworked because of the additional duties imposed on them. Many excellent officers have gone to early graves, largely through trying to do too much work for the State. I do not like the practice of placing extra duties on these excellent officers, and consideration should be given to relieving them of the additional work, without perhaps reducing their salaries. Appointments to commissions and boards could be made from other than key men. I do not refer only to the Engineer-in-Chief, for my remarks apply equally to the Under Secretary and other officers.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This matter has received much consideration by Cabinet. The Government is anxious that key men should not be overworked, for it realizes how important they are to the State and how much the State is indebted to them. Before an officer is given additional duties it is invariably the practice of the Government to carefully consider the matter and to get his views on it. The Engineer-in-Chief in South Australia has always been a member of the River Murray Commission for much of the important work of the State depends on River Murray waters and these extra duties have become almost a normal part of his work. In the other States the Engineer-in-Chief is always a member of the River Murray Commission. Some time ago the chairman of the Electricity Trust asked that Mr. Dridan's services be made available to him. He said the work of the trust and the Engineer-in-Chief's Department were

closely related and that it was important to have a link between the two bodies. The Government is alive to the possibility of imposing too many duties on officers and causing them to break down under the strain. The views of the Leader of the Opposition will receive the utmost consideration by the Government.

Line passed.

Architect in Chief's Department, £187,718.

Mr. TAPPING—I understand that there has long been a shortage of architects and architects' assistants in this department. Can the Premier say what prospects there are of getting sufficient architects for the department? I understand that on one occasion men were obtained from overseas.

Hon. T. PLAYFORD—When the building boom was at its peak in all States, South Australia had difficulty in getting architects and then, after engaging them, in retaining them, for frequently private firms enticed them from the Public Service and said they could do planning and designing work for the Government. Work in connection with the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was given to an outside firm of architects so as to prevent other Government work from lagging, and this week an outside firm offered to do architectural and designing work for the Government. I do not think any Government work is held up now because of a shortage of plans. Only this morning we let a contract for some work on the new Teachers College, which must be opened next year. Generally speaking, work is flowing as freely as the money will allow it.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I have never suggested that the Architect-in-Chief's Department was inefficient, but I consider that in the interests of the State and to assist decentralization some country work could be done by local contractors. In my town three workers from the Architect-in-Chief's Department have been painting the school and police station, but I find the whole procedure cumbersome. Could not tenders for such work be called from country painters? Although it may be said that such tradesmen are not available, I believe that, if it were known that tenders were to be called regularly, the labour force would be there. I point out that city workers have to travel to and from the town each week and the Government must pay for time lost in this way. There is no bituminizing in South Australia that cannot be done by local authorities at a cost that is reasonable and lower than that entailed in sending workmen from the city. The Architect-in-Chief

manufactures cupboards, school desks and other equipment, but surely tenders could be called for some of that work so that it could be carried out in the country. In my district alone are two firms that would probably be happy to tender for such jobs at a reasonable price. Minor tasks such as these could be performed by tradesmen in the district.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Because of a slight sickness the Minister in charge of this department unfortunately cannot attend today, but I will have the honourable member's suggestions analysed. I remind him, however, that the Government often calls for tenders, and a number of jobs, such as school furnishings, have been done by the Architect-in-Chief merely because he has received no tender.

Mr. QUIRKE—I support the member for Light. I have been told that the Architect-in-Chief's Department is 12 months behind, but if the Treasurer's statement is correct I have been misled. For three years I have been asking questions about the installation of septic tanks at the Clare Primary School, but still there is no septic system there, although a registered plumber in Clare could easily do the job if tenders were called. Are plans that take six weeks to draw necessary for such an installation? A similar job has been done cheaply and efficiently by a local plumber without the preparation of such elaborate plans. Surely country contractors are competent to build school houses. A landowner may offer land for the erection of a school building; months later an inspector inspects the block and the Department of Lands decides on a fair and reasonable price; later still another officer surveys the land for the Architect-in-Chief's Department, but any builder could do such work in half a day. Country people must wait for their schools because of a system similar to the mills of God. Is it proper for tradesmen in the Architect-in-Chief's Department to work on departmental work in the daytime and undercut local workmen at night? This practice is causing much distress and trouble in country towns. Further, £10 a week must be paid to country hotels for the board and lodging of each departmental worker engaged in the country.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Last year the expenditure of the department exceeded the amount provided by Parliament. There was no lag in doing work for which money was provided, particularly in respect of the education vote. The amount made available for schools and furnishings was in every instance exceeded to the embarrassment of other lines, which had to be cut short. By and large, the

Architect-in-Chief's Department is keeping up with the work, although some of its architects and draftsmen have gone into firms that can pay higher salaries than the Government can. I believe that over 90 per cent of Government expenditure on schools and other buildings is on work done by contractors and that the other 10 per cent is spent in a certain way only because of the urgent nature of some work. I will get the actual figures on this matter, but as far as I know the departmental work undertaken has not been more costly than contract work; the position is rather the reverse. For many years private tenders greatly exceeded our estimates, but recently there has been much more competition and sometimes the reverse obtains now.

Mr. HEATH—Members realize that during the past few years the Architect-in-Chief's Department has been overtaxed, but I think much money and manpower could be saved if the Government gave the Minister of Education the right to approve expenditure for small jobs, such as additions or alterations to schools. The members of school councils are reputable people who know the requirements of their schools and I am sure they would be careful in spending Government money. In my district much money has been wasted in travelling expenses, the preparation of plans, and negotiating for small jobs. School councils would see that work was carried out properly, and I am sure that if the Minister had the power to authorize small jobs they would be carried out more expeditiously and cheaply.

Mr. KING—I support Mr. Heath's remarks. When tenders are called the work should be advertised in local papers and the school committee should be notified so that local contractors and tradesmen could tender for the work. The Victorian Education Department built a technical school at Mildura, the work being done by a local contractor under the supervision of the Senior Master of Technical Schools. The foundations were laid one November and the school was ready for occupation by several hundred children in the following March. Steel lockers were provided and the classroom forms were of tubular steel construction.

Mr. RICHES—Last year the Director of Education, on behalf of the Minister, met school committees in the district I then represented. He outlined a new procedure that received the unanimous endorsement of every school committee he interviewed. The proposal was that all minor works on school buildings

had to be approved by the school committee concerned, the headmaster, and district inspector. The school committee had to get a satisfactory price for the work and the job could go ahead when the Minister had given his consent. Usually the work was given to a local contractor. This was a good scheme, but later the Minister, in answer to a question from me, said that Cabinet had rejected it, notwithstanding that he thought it was practicable. Can the Treasurer say why Cabinet did not approve of this scheme?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Cabinet has the responsibility of seeing that Government money is spent properly and in accordance with the audit regulations. The rules that have been laid down have ensured that we have not had a series of public scandals and that work has been carried out properly. The Government calls for tenders even for only small items of equipment: we do not make private agreements if they can be avoided. Before we purchase land we always get a valuation. Frequently we get recommendations favourable to the purchase of land, but often the Land Board takes a different view. School committees are empowered to handle small sums, but the Government must be able to defend all transactions that are made.

Mr. SHANNON—Some members have criticized the Architect-in-Chief's Department, but I point out that the Architect-in-Chief does not provide his own funds. Some of the complaints levelled against him arise from questions of finance. Some schools in my district have waited for sanitary systems for several years because of lack of finance. We must remember that everything cannot be done at once, but a more realistic approach on land purchases will have to be taken by the Land Board, otherwise we shall have to pay much more for land later. One country school wants an additional acre for a playing area, but the Land Board valued it at £40, whereas it was assessed by the Meadows District Council, for rating purposes, at £75. During the war years the Education Department set up a trade school for the training of young men in carpentry and joinery. It worked admirably and provided much school furniture, but some years after the war the Architect-in-Chief took over that building division. He took over not only the plant but the personnel which had been trained by the Education Department. The Education Department experiences difficulty not only in obtaining its buildings but in procuring furniture. I wholeheartedly support the suggestion



that the department might install tubular steel furnishings in some schools. Children are not all the same size, but at present they all use the same size desks and seats. They would be more comfortable if the furniture could be adjusted to their requirements.

Other members asked questions concerning the use of local contractors by the Architect-in-Chief's Department. On occasions the Architect-in-Chief has found it impracticable to send his own men to undertake certain work. If a local contractor tenders for that work and his price is reasonable his services are utilized. At a recent conference of private architects they decided to investigate means of overcoming the present bottleneck in the building industry of taking out quantities. Quantity surveyors are few and far between and there are not sufficient to serve the industry. I congratulate private architects on endeavouring to find means of speeding up the erection of buildings.

Mr. QUIRKE—I feel I must protest at some of the remarks made during this debate. I did not appreciate the innuendoes the Treasurer introduced. There has never been any suggestion of malpractice by the Architect-in-Chief. If such a suggestion were publicized it could appear as a reflection on him. Certain references were made to the Land Board's valuations. Six months could elapse between the sighting of the land and the Board's valuation and a further period could elapse before the next operation. I agree that certain procedure is necessary, but it could be accelerated.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I had no intention of casting any reflections on the Architect-in-Chief or his Department. There was no necessity for the member for Onkaparinga (Mr. Shannon) to sing the praises of that department so gloriously. I merely asked that a proportion of that department's work be transferred to the country if economically possible.

Line passed.

Government Offices, £140,384—passed.

Cemetery, £19,500.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—An admirable crematorium has been erected at the Centennial Park Cemetery which is conducted by a trust comprising members of the Mitcham and Unley councils. I query the amount proposed for repairs to the West Terrace Crematorium. It seems unnecessary to continue maintaining that building in view of the new crematorium at Springbank. Can the Treasurer say what repairs are proposed?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The West Terrace crematorium has operated for many years and I believe it is the oldest-established crematorium in the Commonwealth. No special re-organization is planned and the amount provided is simply for maintenance. Many people still desire to patronize that crematorium.

Line passed.

Public Stores Department, £118,923.

Mr. HAMBOUR—At present when a person tenders for certain works he does not learn the result unless he is the successful tenderer. That is not conducive to the State's best interests. I believe the Supply and Tender Board should publish the name of a successful tenderer and his price. A man in my district recently tendered for six rollers, but was unsuccessful. He asked me to inquire why his application did not succeed, but I was informed that that information was not made public. On one occasion this man was told his price was too high, but on another, although he knew he was the lowest tenderer, he was not successful. Will the Government instruct the board to publish the results of tenders?

I did not know until recently that the board was responsible for taking and keeping accounts of stores and materials of all State departments. I read with some concern that the Auditor-General could only give qualified certificates in some cases. The Public Stores Department should maintain a continuous stocktaking system and it should apply to all departments, not only to the Harbors Board, Highways Department, and Engineering and Water Supply Department. If that were done officials of the board could go into any department at any hour and reconcile the visible stocks with the stocks shown on that department's books.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Auditor-General has the second matter in hand. I am keen to see that the control of our stores is kept up to date, for it provides a field for waste. As far as it is practicable, I favour the honourable member's suggestion. Regarding the first matter, I am not sure that he is on the right grounds. When we call for tenders we seek the best possible price in the interests of the Government and the public. It is not our duty to tell tenderers what their competitors quote so that they can try to underquote next time. This morning Cabinet dealt with some tenders, the lowest of which was £2,813 and the highest £14,000. Not so long ago, in connection with an important public

work, the lowest and successful tender was £300,000, but the highest of about 15 was £3,000,000. Is it our job to educate people in the way to prepare tenders? Obviously many tenders are put in "on spec," so that, if successful, the tenderers are on a little gold mine. If there should be a case where the lowest tender is not accepted I would favour advising the tenderer why it was not accepted, but I would not tell him the quotes of other tenderers. Sometimes the board seeks tenders after setting out certain specifications, but the tenders are submitted on different specifications. The Engineer-in-Chief and his officers look at them and say that the lowest cannot be accepted because it does not come up to the specifications set out. In such a case there would be no objection to telling the tenderer why his tender was not accepted. I would not agree to telling everybody the prices of the other tenderers.

Mr. Hambour—I did not suggest that.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I understood that was the suggestion. Our schoolrooms are of a standard specification and if one tenderer heard the name of the successful tenderer and his price it would be simple for him to work out what the successful tenderer would quote for the next job. If we did as Mr. Hambour suggests we would undermine the confidence of tenderers in the Government for frequently it gets prices lower than are available to the general public.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—When a final decision has been made by Cabinet when considering tenders could the name of the successful company be made public?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government receives thousands of tenders each year and normally they are dealt with by the Supply and Tender Board, and not by Cabinet. Those going to Cabinet involve the importation of goods by someone inside the State. A percentage preference in price is given to locally manufactured goods. The Supply and Tender Board is the authority that calls for tenders after receiving specifications from departments and it lets them as a matter of routine. Only the more important works come to Cabinet and then with a certificate from the Auditor-General and estimates prepared by the Architect-in-Chief's Department. Most tenders have little public interest. This morning about 15 tenders of all sorts were considered by Cabinet, but they covered only more or less small works. If a schedule had to be prepared in respect of them it would not be printed because of the little interest in them. Sometimes a successful

tenderer advertises that his tender has been accepted for a work, and there is no objection to that.

Line passed.

Aborigines Department, £208,817.

Mr. LOVEDAY—Will the Government consider adopting a totally different policy in connection with housing and amenities, in particular at Point Pearce Mission Station, and will it consider the position of teenagers there after leaving primary school? I have previously referred to the unsatisfactory housing and amenities at the station. I understand the idea has been to keep the present conditions unattractive and cause people to leave the station. The report of the Protector of Aborigines contains some comments about behaviour of people at the station and it may be due to conditions there. I do not think the present policy is achieving its object. If housing and amenities were viewed in a different light the position would improve. The present housing could be replaced by houses with proper amenities. Teenagers are not eligible to work on the station until they are married or reach 18 years of age, which encourages idleness and delinquency. It is said that many teenagers do not want to be apprenticed or undertake work of a special nature as they prefer rabbit trapping, etc. If the policy were altered there would be different results.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Under Act of Parliament the control of aborigines is vested in a board. Over the last few years the Government has been concerned about the establishment of better homes for aborigines. There has been a housing problem, but in the past it has not been satisfactorily solved. Recently money has been made available to improve the position. If the appointment has not already been made, it is proposed soon to appoint a building inspector to establish and maintain better class accommodation. The honourable member's remarks will be referred to the Aborigines Board and when I get a report it will be made available to him.

Mr. Riches—Is sufficient finance available to carry out that programme?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Some finance has already been provided for housing but the real problem is to get the aborigines accepted as citizens. I do not favour the mission type of establishment: I believe these people should be living in some other town and accepted as citizens. That should be our objective, although we would probably have some difficulty in reaching it immediately. In some respects we would

have to break down certain inhibitions and prejudices that the white population have towards natives. On one occasion in a country town I received a powerful deputation asking that a house be supplied to an aboriginal family living there. I was told that the people in the town looked after the family and even arranged a special service at their home on Sunday, but I would have thought that the best way to establish that family in the community would be to invite them to the normal service in the town.

A building inspector is to be appointed at Point Pearce. The Government is anxious that we assimilate these native citizens into our community on the same basis as other citizens. Although in some respects they need assistance and protection, the sooner we get away from the position where they need either assistance or protection the better it will be because the very fact that they receive assistance holds them apart from the community and makes them dependent on the State. The Government desires to improve their position.

Mr. DUNSTAN—I am delighted with the Treasurer's statement that the Government intends to pursue the policy that has been enunciated by the Aborigines Protection Board concerning the assimilation of aborigines into the community, but I am concerned that the board's present policy, particularly on detribalized aborigines on Government stations, is preventing their assimilation in the community because it is making it harder for these people to leave the station and be assimilated. With the member for Whyalla (Mr. Loveday) I recently visited Point Pearce as a result of complaints I had heard about the condition of children at the station. I contacted the Minister and, after some evident reluctance on his part, was permitted to visit the station, where I was informed that the Minister had said we were going to make trouble. I resent that statement because we wanted, not to make trouble for the Government or anybody else, but merely to exercise our prerogatives as members in an endeavour to help in any way we could.

We inspected the station and, unlike most visitors, were invited into the homes of aborigines. They were anxious that we should see everything. With the manager I visited a tumble-down home where the manager asked an old man sitting outside how his rheumatic condition was. The old man said it was not very good. In reply to the manager's question whether he was getting enough food the old man said, "No." These answers were not

prompted by me but were elicited by the manager. The old man then said that he could not make his rations go around and referred to the price of vegetables, stating that he could not buy all the green foods the doctor said he needed.

After visiting a number of homes, some good, some not so good, I talked with various aboriginal ladies, a number of whom were terribly concerned about their inability to feed their large families of eight, nine, and even 10 children. Until recently they had tried to make ends meet on £4 5s. a week, but they could not do so even with free firewood and free housing of a sort. Workers at Point Pearce may get work off the station if they can find it. In fact, they form a labour pool for Yorke Peninsula farmers and at other times obtain seasonal work such as fruit picking. That allows for certain months of the year, but for the rest of the year most of them cannot obtain work. The board has seen fit to grant share farming agreements but only four people from the station are engaged under them. Those who are not share farmers attend a pick-up at which they may be allotted work by the overseer. A few days before our visit the wages had been increased, but before then the base rate was £4 5s. per week. I obtained a list of the wages paid to the men on the station, which shows that for the week ended June 27 three men received less than £5, 11 between £5 and £6, 10 between £6 and £7, seven between £7 and £8, two between £9 and £10, three between £10 and £11, and one over £11. For the week ended June 20, more men were in the lower income bracket.

The conditions on the station are very poor and the housing on the average is very much below what would be permitted in the metropolitan area. Most of the houses would be condemned by any council. Many of the large families are living in very cramped quarters without a satisfactory water supply, and it is difficult to keep the houses clean, let alone the bodies of the people. At times there is not even sufficient drinking water. It is remarkable how, despite these discouraging conditions, the people have made earnest endeavours to improve their housing and to scrape up the money to buy decent furnishings. Although some of the homes have decent furniture it is difficult to keep them clean.

It is obvious that it is the policy of the board to keep the station in the same way as the old workhouses in England—sufficiently unpleasant that they will not attract people,

but will force them out. However, the people are not being forced out because, bad as the conditions are, they are better than nothing. Many of the people have not reached a standard high enough to enable them to be assimilated in the community, and until we raise the standard we will never break up these stations. One or two families have left Point Pearce; one has been accommodated in a Trust home in a country area, and has been well assimilated. That family is to be congratulated on rising above the level of Point Pearce.

The efforts of the people to improve themselves have not always met with the encouragement they deserve, and the young people have not been given a chance to reach a standard at which they can be assimilated. These people are keen to improve their situation so that they will be on a standard comparable with the rest of the community, yet, when they wanted to start a progress association, they were told that they could do so as long as there was no criticism of the station. They must be careful because the management determines their wages from day to day, and if they protest they might not get such favourable work to do.

When it was stated that they have not sufficient money to provide their children with meals, it was said that they were indolent. The Minister said that it had been found that the parents of some children who were not getting enough to eat were buying too much tobacco, but the fact still remains that the children were not getting enough to eat. I was told by the manager that one man had been receiving good wages but had wasted his money. However, the man's wife told me that he had been receiving smaller wages than I had been told. She said that for the greater part of the year she did not get enough money for food, so when she did get extra money she had to spend it on clothing. Even if one or two parents have been spending too much on tobacco, the children are wards of the Board just as much as of the parents, so it is the duty of the Board to see that they have proper sustenance so that they can do their schoolwork. Then arises the question mentioned by Mr. Loveday that children at the Point Pearce Station reach a certain standard in their school work and then leave, but there is nothing for them to do on the station. A few have attended schools in the metropolitan area, with their board paid by the Aborigines Department. They have lived in a protected community all their lives amongst their friends and relatives,

but not in the very best homes, because Point Pearce has not good home facilities. They are required to enter a strange community, and to them it is very strange, without the background of their families and relatives. It is only natural that they get extremely homesick, more homesick than children coming from the country to board in the city.

It is most difficult for them to make friends and be assimilated in a community which has a different standard. Therefore, these experiments have not been successful. What happens for the most part is that the children on the stations who have left the primary school have nothing to do until they reach 18 or are married, the result being that mischief breaks out. It would do so in any community where that kind of thing went on. Imagine what the situation would be in the city if all children were idle from 14 to 18. We would not have the present bodgie-widgie problem of the proportions now in the city; it would be completely overwhelming. We must have creative activities for these people.

As the Premier has suggested, the aim should be for conditions at Point Pearce and the other aboriginal stations to be brought up to the standard of the general community. Small industries and home crafts could be developed; it can be done. Many of the women there have suggested that they could start a clothing industry within their own homes if given instructions and machines and produce clothing to be sold on a co-operative basis. The only alternative would be to close the stations and disperse the people in the community, as was done in certain instances in Western Australia. I hate to think what would happen to these people if that were done, because we have seen what has happened to some of the people off these stations when an attempt was made to assimilate them in the metropolitan area. They are subject to very extreme consorting provisions. Other people in the community are not allowed to mix with them except on the pain of penalty. The only place for the most part they can find to go is the West End of the city, and that is no proper place for them.

We must get rid of the workhouse policy and bring these stations up to a standard. It may entail the expenditure of much larger sums, but in the long run it will mean the spending of very much less money. If we could bring the stations up to the standards where aborigines could look upon them with pride, then and only then could we get them properly assimilated into the community. At present we have a

workhouse policy which is keeping the aborigines within our community at a level which does not reflect any credit upon us.

I should not like to think what the United Nations Commission on Under Privileged Peoples would think of us if they investigated some of our aboriginal stations. It would not be a very satisfactory reflection upon us. Their protection is our responsibility. Their standard is the result of the workhouse policy of the board which has been applied year after year. The only thing to do is to give them vocational training, and by that I do not mean training them in rabbit killing along the lines suggested by the Minister's interjection the other day. I have heard him say that previously these people at Point McLeay have been asked what they wanted to do and they replied that they wanted to be rabbit trappers and shearers. I do not know when the Minister asked these questions but I am certain that it was many years ago, because recent inquiries of the aboriginal children as to what they wanted to become gave different results. Most of them have been given no idea that they can become something in the community, but when they have been so instructed, as by some of the excellent school masters placed in charge of aboriginal schools, they can really develop ideas and show their creative ability, initiative and pride. The only way to develop these people is to give them the vocational training they need and then, and then alone, will we be able to see a final breaking up of Point Pearce Station and the assimilation of these people into the community, as the Premier has stated should be the case.

Mr. KING (Chaffey)—I can speak of the work of the Aborigines Department as it applies to my district. From the little I have seen, the department within the limitations imposed by the nature of the material on which it has to work and the finances available is doing a very good job. As part of the assimilation programme, working in co-operation with the Housing Trust, quite a few families of aborigines have been established in towns along the Murray. By their own efforts these people have lifted themselves above the difficult environment in which they found themselves, and become valued members of the community. Some are contractors, some are in business, and others are working for wages. Speaking generally they have been found to be satisfactory, although some are not reliable as in the middle of harvest they may decide to go walkabout.

Some people prefer to employ them. Usually they work on piece-work and give satisfactory service, but one difficulty is that they usually bring their families with them and that creates a housing problem. Full-blooded aborigines who have given good service to the community find on retiring that they do not qualify for the old age pension, but if they did they would not be so dependent on missions. I know one old man who goes around like a pauper and cannot make ends meet on the rations available to him, but such people should be accorded the same privileges and recognition as any other person. As long as we have aborigines in a state of part assimilation they will regard mission stations as a refuge to which they can retire. If they took courage and stood up for their rights they would not continue to be looked down upon by the rest of the community. They should be encouraged to lift themselves from a tribal environment, and then their cost to the Government would be reduced considerably.

Mr. JENKINS—I favour the assimilation of aborigines into the community. In a town in my district is an aboriginal family that has been allotted a Housing Trust home. Those aborigines are full-blooded, or close to it, and carry out their obligations to the community like other people. Another trust home is being provided nearby for another aboriginal family, but I believe it is not good policy to house all aborigines in the same street in a town. If they were spread amongst the community they would be assimilated more easily. People would then look upon them as neighbours and treat them like they do other people.

Mr. RICHES—I hope the thoughtful contributions made to this debate by Mr. Dunstan and Mr. Loveday will prove of benefit to aborigines. In my district the policy enunciated by the Treasurer is being given effect to by the people of Port Germein. One family of aborigines there is sending a girl to the Port Pirie high school. The residents of Port Germein are assisting in this direction, and they are asking that the family be brought right into the town so that those aborigines can live in that community and take advantage of the facilities of a town. A wonderful work is being performed at the Umeewarra Mission, and I am pleased to see the line on the Estimates for electricity to be supplied to the mission, but I am concerned about the living conditions of aborigines. Some aborigines come from Point Pearce or Point McLeay

to Umeewarra, and stay there until they are required to leave. There is no employment on the station itself, which is merely a reserve where they can go and get protection from exploitation. I believe that houses should be provided for them in townships, particularly if the head of the family is working for a Government department.

The Government should find employment for them wherever possible. I shudder to think what would happen if an independent committee went into the north and reported on the way our adult aboriginal population is living. In Queensland they have a different attitude towards the treatment of aborigines. We could learn much from Queensland. It is quite common to see aboriginal girls serving behind counters. The men work in road gangs and operate mechanical equipment. I had the pleasure of discussing the Queensland system with a doctor representing the Queensland Native Affairs Department and he showed me pictures of the houses built by the aborigines themselves. They have been trained to be carpenters and tradesmen. I have never heard of an aboriginal carpenter in South Australia. For many years we have had a Protection Board, but I doubt whether it could point to one apprentice tradesman in South Australia. We seem to be content to adopt the attitude that at some future date the aborigines will completely die out.

An amount of £21,000 is provided for the purchase of houses for aborigines. Can the Minister indicate where those homes are to be built? Can he also indicate the progress of the work at the Yalata station? Is it still being held intact for and on behalf of the aborigines? I know that pressure has been brought to bear on the Government to sell or lease some of that station to white settlers in the district. I can remember when these natives were at Ooldea and the board notified the then missionary and me that if an alternative site could be found it would consider purchasing it. The missionary ascertained that Yalata was available and notified the board. The first reports were that the station was not suitable for settlement: there was no water and native game could not subsist there. Those reports were proved wrong and the Government purchased Yalata at a reasonable price. Immediately afterwards the then Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Christian, informed the House that he had received wires from the white population in the vicinity threatening civil war if the aborigines were permitted to move into Yalata. However, the

natives were transferred and immediately there were applications from people who wanted to purchase portions of it for their own use. Can the Minister explain the meaning of the line "Yalata Trust—operating surplus, 1954-55 and 1955-56, £2,610?"

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The only explanation I have of that line is that it is the estimated surplus to be placed in trust and used for the benefit of aborigines at Yalata and elsewhere. I will obtain more information for the honourable member. It is proposed to build homes for selected aborigines—as, for example, a young couple just getting married. The Housing Trust is constructing a nice type of comfortable house for aborigines. I have personally inspected them in the Glossop area. I will ascertain where these homes are to be provided. I believe some will be provided at Bordertown.

I regret that I was not present when the members for Norwood and Whyalla spoke about the Point Pearce station. I regret that they did not notify me, as member for the district, that they were going there. I could have accompanied them and pointed out what had been achieved in the aborigines' interests. I recently had the honour of opening a school constructed for them by the Education Department. I agree that many of the homes are in a bad state of repair. There are only a few homes that are habitable and they are occupied by good type aborigines who have spent money on them and taken a pride in them. I have raised with the board the question of appointing some person to attend to the building and renovating of aboriginal homes. An inspector has been selected and appointed, and he in turn will train two young aborigines in that type of work so that there will always be someone on the station to attend to any necessary building repairs. That has been done by the Government to help them in these particular problems, and I think members will agree that it is a very good move.

I do not know if the plan has yet been put into operation, but only recently it was decided that girls from Point Pearce would be taken to the Maitland area school to be taught domestic arts. I think it was the member for Whyalla who said that the children and young people at the station were undernourished. That might appear to be so from their general appearance and outlook, but as one who has lived next door to them and played sport against them since I was a boy I can assure him that their activities on the

sporting field do not suggest that they are undernourished. No team in that association has participated in more football finals than the Point Pearce Mission football team. They were defeated in the final this year, but I point out that they had the youngest team in the association. I say definitely that the young ones are a keen and active people, and by no stretch of imagination are they really undernourished; they may be in individual cases, but generally their activities prove that they are a very active race.

I have watched their school work with a great deal of interest, but generally speaking they are backward except in certain subjects. Strangely enough, they excel at drawing. The member for Gawler will agree with me when I say that they readily adapt themselves to this subject and produce some excellent work. The member for Stuart said that he had not heard of any of them being builders or carpenters, but there are some quite good tradesmen there, and the carpentry and stonework in the very large hall on the station was done by the station people. Some of the best fencing I have ever seen has been done by aborigines, and they are also amongst the best shearers on Yorke Peninsula. They have certain concessions to which I think they are entitled. I claim that whatever is wrong with the aborigines is the fault of the white man. We need not go into details but I say that is a positive fact; I have lived near them in that part of the district over the years, and that is what I observed.

The move by the Government in building the houses referred to by the member for Stuart is a step in the right direction. We will never get the older people to move away from their old environment; a lot of them have had this exemption, but they are not very long away and are very glad to get back to their relatives and where they have been brought up. Many people claim that aborigines "go walk-about," but that is not so true of the half-caste who loves to get back to his home. Those I know of who have gone into homes provided for them by the Government have accepted them and are very happy indeed. I saw those at Glossop recently and they are very happy there. If the board can select the right type of couple it will be one way in which we can eventually get them assimilated with the white people. I will get reports on the two questions raised by the honourable member and let him have them as soon as possible.

Mr. DUNSTAN—I am indebted to the Minister for his remarks about Point Pearce, but I

stress that, although the appointment of a building inspector is a step in the right direction, the provision of sufficient vocational training for these people to enable them to take their place outside is a step which has yet to be taken. Although domestic art work may be now available at Maitland area school and some plans were made in that regard, there were other children who wanted transport to the school at Port Victoria because they found that they could not get on very well at the Maitland school. There were about six aborigine children on the station who wanted transport for secondary education at Port Victoria. They were qualified for secondary education but none was available to them at the time. I understand that the Maitland area school was very crowded and for some reason or other it was not a place where they could reasonably go for secondary education. The conclusions I drew as to the nourishment of the children on the station did not come merely from observations of the children, but from many other quarters on the station. There was abundant evidence of undernourishment, as I am sure the member for Whyalla will agree. Some of the children were simply not receiving enough food. I understand that this was one season when many of the families had not been able to earn as much outside the station as they had on other occasions, and consequently they had to attend the call-up more often and had to manage on the £4 5s. a week base rate longer. Even the increase to £6 5s. a week base rate which has taken place is not coping with the situation, as far as my information goes.

The honourable member for Stirling referred to a family in his district. I am acquainted with these people, and I can say that they are a very fine family indeed. I draw members' attention to one particular instance of something about which I warned this House in 1953 when we were considering the Police Offences Act. It is now an offence for anybody to consort with an unexempt aborigine. "Consort" has been legally defined and it means nothing more than "associate with." It implies no criminal purpose or intent whatever. Therefore, it is an offence to associate unless there is a reasonable excuse. The reasonable excuse must go to something other than the desire to associate. We cannot say that a person shall not sit under a tree without reasonable excuse and then find it a reasonable excuse for sitting under the tree that an offender wanted to sit under the tree. Similarly, if we associate with an aborigine it is not a reasonable excuse under

the Act for doing so that we wanted to associate with that aborigine. There must be something else. In the case of the family mentioned by Mr. Jenkins the daughter associated with an European youth, and I am instructed by the family that it was a perfectly proper association. There was nothing that could be objected to in any way. The youth was warned by the police about his association with the girl, but that sort of thing will not bring about assimilation. This is a fine family and it is regrettable that the action was taken. Strictly according to the law it is allowable, but it is unfortunate that the provision is in the Police Offences Act. If we allow it assimilation will be made much more difficult. It is something that we must look at from time to time or instruct the Police Department to wink its eye at.

Mr. TAPPING—This aboriginal problem will become the greatest Australia has had to face. Recently I visited Alice Springs and, as much as I could, I observed the conditions under which the aborigines live. I found that the Department for the Interior deserves commendation in some respects, but that it had failed in others, and in South Australia we, too, are failing. The Commonwealth Department built 35 homes for aboriginal people about two miles outside Alice Springs. By motor car I went round the block four or five times and found that there were flies everywhere, doors off hinges and window panes broken. I felt that the desire to isolate these dark people was entirely wrong. The Commonwealth Government benefited by the experience and recently built groups of houses, with a white family in one and a dark family next door. This has worked very well and the assimilation is successful. At Alice Springs one night is set aside for the aborigines to attend the local picture theatre, and that is wrong. They should be allowed to go on the same nights as the white people. On another night there is a sort of mixing, but the aborigines are allowed to use only one third of the accommodation. They should all sit together in the interests of assimilation. I had the pleasure of going to a station conducted by the Government about 50 miles from Alice Springs. I saw there what is being done to educate the dark children, who do excellent work in writing, drawing and handwork. On the Friday afternoon the dark children go back to their own colony and indulge in filthy habits. They are there until the Monday morning when they come back and associate with white children. A home at Semaphore

conducted by church organizations has brought out some of the best in the dark children. Some are apprentices at the Imperial Chemical Industries works, others are motor mechanics and doing very well. Several members in this place have studied the position of the aborigines and we all have a desire to help them. Anything that will bring about an assimilation should be adopted. Isolation must fail miserably. I hope as a result of this debate a method will be evolved to make the lot of the aborigines much better.

Line passed.

Public works, £1,036,850, and miscellaneous, £42,480—passed.

#### MINISTER OF EDUCATION.

Education Department, £6,838,380.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I want to refer to the lines dealing with primary and high school education, and technical schools for girls and boys. On behalf of primary school scholars and their parents residing in my district I express regret at the death of Mr. Bill Leach (Superintendent of Primary Schools). His fine work was appreciated, and I extend, through the Minister of Education, sincere sympathy to his relatives in their bereavement.

The increase in the grant for technical school education is less than that for other types, and although I realize that the larger increase in the grant for primary education is due to the large increase in the number of scholars in those schools, I believe that the variation in the increases should be considered by the Department. Although I give full marks to the Department on its policy of determining future requirements, I consider that more money must soon be spent on technical education. Many scholars now leaving primary schools are enrolling in high schools and receiving an education that will be neither to their benefit nor to that of the State generally, for many will eventually find themselves engaged on technical work rather than following an academic course. Further, technical education will be even more essential with the future development of industries and the introduction of automation. Parents should be encouraged to consider more fully the future occupations of their children. If they did so, more scholars would be enrolled at technical schools, which offer more advantages for use in adult education than do other types of schools. Will the Minister see that the greatest possible sum is spent on technical education?



The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Although I agree with the honourable member I remind him that the large increase in the grant for primary schools arises from the greater number of scholars and teachers in those schools. The largest single item of cost is the salaries of teachers. In primary schools 3,485 teachers receive about £3,332,000, whereas in high schools 669 receive £731,000 and in technical schools 489 receive £546,000. Last year the average cost per scholar in the various types of schools was as follows:—Primary schools, £40; higher primary, £52; area, £63, boys' and girls' technical, £86; high, £86. We have tried to give the best possible education to boys and girls in technical schools. I am anxious to extend the range of work of those scholars and believe that they should not be regarded as any less important than high school scholars. We have adopted that attitude in the past and will continue to adopt it.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—The sum of £60,009 is provided for the salaries of the Principal, lecturers and staff of the Teachers' College. Does this amount include the salaries of the staff for the new Teachers' College at Wattle Park? If not, are such salaries included in any other line?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Applications have been called for the positions of the Principal, Vice-Principal, Women's Warden, lecturers and assistant lecturers at the new college and close either today or tomorrow. The positions were referred to the Teachers Salaries Board, which notified me of the salaries fixed for them. These salaries are in the process of being made into an award which will probably be published this week. I hope that the persons concerned will be selected in the very near future so that they will have ample time to acquaint themselves with their positions and make preliminary arrangements for opening the college early in the New Year.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—This year £331,500 is provided for conveyance of pupils in buses. Last session I was concerned because one person who drives a bus to a high school in my area was not satisfied with his remuneration, as it did not provide for depreciation and other things and did not allow him to make a go of his business. A very representative committee was appointed to inquire into this matter, but its findings have been held up because the chairman, Mr. Poole, has had very onerous duties imposed on him because of the floods. Has the Minister

received the findings of the committee or, if not, has he any idea when they will come to hand?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—One reason for the delay is that the services of the chairman were required urgently because of the flood. Another member is the Chief Engineer of the Highways and Local Government Department, and the third member, Mr. Kay, who was an investigating officer in the Department of Industry, was appointed Registrar of Motor Vehicles and another person appointed in his stead. The committee has taken evidence from a large number of associations, transport authorities, representatives of school committees, high school councils, and individuals, and at my request visited several States in order to make a proper comparison. I have been expecting to receive the report for some considerable time, and I hope it will be available very soon, perhaps during this month.

Mr. KING—Has the Minister considered subsidizing refrigerators in school tuck shops operated by school councils and providing air conditioning units for schools situated in areas that have less than a 10in. rainfall? Air conditioning equipment is subsidized in some outback places, but in others summer conditions are so unpleasant, particularly in timber framed buildings, that the children often have to be taken outside under the trees. Would the Minister consider subsidizing that type of equipment?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Refrigeration for tuck shops has been sought on several occasions by individual schools, the School Committees Association and members of Parliament. I have a certain measure of sympathy for the requests, but it must be realized that a certain amount is allocated for subsidies, and if I let my heart run away with my head and agreed to a large sum being voted for one class of subsidy, all other applications from the 700-odd schools for subsidies for various other laudable undertakings would necessarily go short. I have considered subsidies for refrigerators in tuck shops, and I am not unsympathetic, but I have not been prepared to grant them because there are so many other more urgent avenues for subsidies. I have agreed to the provision of refrigerators in domestic art centres, but the girls who use them are being taught something that will be of great benefit to them and to their families. I have also agreed to subsidize water cooling systems in arid parts of the State, more particularly outback. These systems operate at Leigh Creek, where I was convinced

they were necessary and desirable. I have laid it down that air conditioning units will be installed where necessary.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I regret that the Minister is unable to provide subsidies for refrigerators in tuckshops. It is appreciated that he has only a limited amount of money available. The provision of refrigerators in tuckshops results in greater incomes for the school committees and councils who run these shops for the schools. I ask the Minister to give the matter further consideration to assist these very willing and sacrificing people who are prepared to give their services in the interests of advancing education. Many thousands of pounds have been raised by tuckshops, and this can continue only if the food sold in them is equal to or better than that available in nearby shops.

Mr. KING—I understand that school buses were introduced in conjunction with the development of area schools, and that at that time it was thought the cost of educating these children would be lower and the standard of teaching would be higher than was available to children attending numerous small schools. Since the scheme came into operation it can be admitted that the cost of transport must have risen considerably. Can the Minister say whether the system is still cheaper than the Department estimated it would cost to run local schools, and has he any idea as to the effect on the health of the children who have to travel on buses, particularly small children who sometimes are on the road a considerable time, whereas under the old system they could leave home later? The matter was brought up yesterday regarding children attending the Paringa School, and it was stated that they were in better health than when they had to catch an earlier service to attend the Renmark school. Can the Minister say how many school buses are operating, and how many are standing by for emergencies?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—There are two schools of thought regarding the consolidation of small schools into what is known as area schools. From the departmental point of view consolidation is the ideal because educationists consider that country children receive a much better and more advanced education in the consolidated schools than in the smaller local schools. In addition they are not so isolated, being brought together in much larger communities and receiving many social and other benefits as a result. They also form widespread friendships. I have my own view, and perhaps it is old fashioned, but I think that

many small communities have lost something, and will continue to lose something, by the closing of small country schools.

In the three years since I became Minister of Education I have refused to agree to the closing of any school without a most thorough investigation myself, apart from receiving reports and recommendations from my officers. Very often I have sent the matter back to the school committee or to the parents. As many members know, I have been only too pleased to consult the member for the district who is prepared to take an objective view of the whole matter. Even where it has been decided to close a school, I have been prepared to reconsider the decision on further information and, sometimes, even where a school has been closed, I have been prepared to reopen it. It would be very difficult to give a proper comparison as to costs. I have already given the cost per pupil in primary, higher primary, technical and high schools, and on numerous occasions I have given the cost per pupil of the transport of children. It is formidable. Last year school transport cost more than £330,000, and frankly I do not quite know where it is leading us, because we have got to the stage where we have a large fleet of buses of our own besides having a large number of contractors operating school buses for us.

Mr. John Clark—There would be the saving of quite a number of teachers.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—There is a very large saving. I think the honourable member knows that the shortage of teachers, for a variety of reasons, will remain for a considerable time. We could not carry on unless we had consolidated a large number of schools. The department has about 84 services, and we have just about reached the limit there. We had only one bus in reserve which, at the urgent request of the honourable member some weeks ago, was sent up the Murray. In the Estimates provision is made for the purchase of three more buses, but they will not be used for three more services, but to replace those which are worn out, or be in reserve when a bus is undergoing repairs.

Line passed.

The Libraries Department, £124,791.

Mr. DUNSTAN—After a great deal of agitation by persons interested in libraries, last year Parliament passed a new Act, or what appeared to be a new Act, but it was much the same as an Act passed many years ago which proved to be a dead letter. We had a lengthy

debate on that measure, but we were told by the Treasurer that it would lead to good library services. He said that according to the Grants Commission's report we were spending more *per capita* on libraries than any other State, and that the Act would lead to the decentralization of library services and would be a step in the right direction in library development. However, the Libraries (Subsidies) Act has done precisely what members on this side of the House said it would do—nothing at all. I understand that until very recently, and probably until now, not one application had been received for a subsidy under that Act, and it is easy to see why.

I do not think it was ever intended that any application would be made because the Act laid down that the cost of establishing libraries would be a cost on local government which, of course, is not in a position to establish libraries. In other States with free library systems the cost of establishment is met by a grant by the Free Library Service Board. After libraries have been established councils contribute to running costs on a 50-50 basis, and they are largely responsible for the running of the library. In those States far more has been spent *per capita* than in this State.

In his second reading speech on the Libraries (Subsidies) Bill the Treasurer quoted figures in the Grants Commission's report, and when they were questioned he said he had asked the Government Economist to examine them to see whether they were comparable, and the Government Economist said they were. I do not know what that officer compared, but as an economist examining comparative spending he proved to be pretty small potatoes, because I will quote some figures about libraries in other States that have free library services. In Box Hill in Victoria the expenditure is 4s. 9d. a head. Box Hill is a flourishing outer suburb of Melbourne, and 37.82 per cent of its population are registered and regular users of the local library. No area in this State uses our libraries to anything like that extent.

The figures relating to other places in Victoria are:—Kew City, 7s. a head; Port Melbourne, 10s. 5d.; Flinders Shire (a country area), 11s. 10d.; and Mildura City 12s. 6d. Of course, the amounts being spent in those areas by local government on library services are not taken into account in the comparative figures of the Grants Commission's report, and that is why the Commission's report does not show comparable figures of what is being spent

as between the States on library services. It only shows what is being spent by State Governments.

Any library expert will say that in South Australia we have the most outdated library system. Anybody with any association with the Institutes Association of South Australia knows how bad is our library service. A comparison of the library system in this State with that of Victoria under the Free Library Service Board there is laughable, for even in long-established libraries in South Australia the material offered is poor and the patronage is small. Last year an expert report was prepared by the Principal Librarian and a member of the Libraries Board on a scheme that should operate in South Australia. As a result a Bill was prepared and printed, and it had the approval of the Libraries Board, but the Government did not proceed with it. For some reason the Treasurer did not feel it contained the right scheme, and he brought down a scheme similar to that previously in operation and which had proved to be unworkable.

The Premier said his measure would be of great benefit, but I do not know of any area that will make use of its provisions. Recently there has been a spate of correspondence in the press about that measure, and the chairman of the Libraries Board and the Principal Librarian both took part. The chairman gave the impression by his letter that the one member of the Board who had written to the press on this issue was out on his own. Mr. Skipper has done more for the free libraries movement in South Australia than anyone else, and there is no doubt about his devotion to the cause of library betterment. He has given sterling public service, but he was not the only member of the Board bitterly dissatisfied with the situation. Other members have expressed to me their extreme disquietude at the attitude taken over the Libraries (Subsidies) Act last year, which has proved a dead letter.

From my information the chairman of the Board and the Principal Librarian are more likely to be in the minority than Mr. Skipper. The Principal Librarian quoted in the press comparative figures of the central library in South Australia to population as compared with the Mitchell Library in Sydney. Of course, in New South Wales they have a large number of regional libraries which were not taken into account in Mr. Brideson's comparative figures. Once a certain point in library development has been reached the law of diminishing returns operates as against the concentration of books in a large library.

It is ridiculous to suggest that our library—good as it is for the size of our community—can in any way compare with the Mitchell Library in Sydney. That library has a collection of international renown, but it is wrong to compare our library with it because we can show a greater concentration of books per capita. The Mitchell Library is a central reference library. Our library, within its limitations, is trying to perform two duties: firstly, as a central reference library and, secondly, as a lending library. It is unequal to the task. It cannot possibly meet the needs of the populace of the State.

Mr. Skipper has frequently referred to the number of hours, days and weeks books are travelling around South Australia instead of being in the hands of users. The only way we will ever secure an adequate library service is to have regional libraries, supported by local government, but established from a central libraries board and worked through the joint finances of the State Government and local Government. In their scheme the Libraries Board suggested the initiation of these regional libraries by the central board. That provision is not in the present Act. The regional libraries could be established and the board could make agreements with council areas which could combine. There could be bookmobiles for the outback areas. In fact, we could have had all this at no enormous cost.

I hope that by now—after a year since the Libraries (Subsidies) Act was passed—the Government has at last realized the present set-up is useless and that it should proceed with the task of providing adequate library services. The Government should have learnt the lessons other States have to teach it. These lessons have been learnt by the members of the Libraries Board and the Principal Librarian and their recommendation as contained in the Bill prepared by the Board could have been adopted by the Government last year. I hope the Government will institute the system recommended by the Board and supported everybody with any close association with libraries in this State.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The honourable member has suggested that everybody knows that the legislation enacted last year is absolutely useless. He is entitled to his opinion and I treat it with respect, but it seems to be totally at variance with the opinion expressed by His Honor Mr. Justice Abbott, the Chairman of the Public Libraries Board of South

Australia. He is on record in the *Advertiser* of August 14, 1956, as saying:—

Mr. Skipper complains that I am unkind in my criticism that instead of trying to make the Libraries (Subsidies) Act a success he has embarked on an unjustifiable campaign of hostile criticism. The Libraries Board believes that the Act will prove to be a successful step in the right direction. The period that the Act has been in force is much too short to warrant the expectation that local governing authorities would have had time to persuade their rate-payers to permit the initial steps in establishing lending libraries under the Act.

I pit that opinion against the opinion expressed by the honourable member, without making any comment either way. The honourable member, with some air of knowledge, said that instead of Mr. Skipper being the lone voice, Mr. Justice Abbott is the odd man out and that the other members of the Board are in opposition to him. Most members knew Mr. Abbott as member of Parliament for Burnside and they know that he is a respected member of the Supreme Court and as he weighs his words carefully, particularly when he puts them on record in a newspaper. It is for the House to decide whether Mr. Skipper or Mr. Justice Abbott is out on a limb.

I am not in the confidence of the Board to the same extent as the member for Norwood. I just happen to be the Minister under whose jurisdiction the Board operates. My young and learned friend seems to get inside information about happenings in the meetings of boards and other institutions which I am not privileged to attend or to receive their reports. He said that the amounts mentioned in the report of the Grants Commission reveal only what has been spent by State Governments on library services. That is admitted, but it is of great interest to this Parliament because that is what it wants to know. It is of vital interest to Parliament to know what the Government is spending on a particular service in comparison with the expenditure on similar services by other State Governments. When we return from our refreshment to labour I will quote some of these interesting figures.

[*Sitting suspended from 6 p.m. to 7.30 p.m.*]

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Prior to the tea adjournment I was setting out one against the other the opinions and assertions of two experts in the field of libraries, namely, the honourable member for Norwood on the one hand and Mr. Justice Abbott, the Chairman of the Public Libraries Board of South Australia, on the other. I had quoted part of a letter in the *Advertiser* of August 14 from Mr.

Justice Abbott, when he very clearly signed himself as Chairman of the Public Libraries Board. In that letter he spoke very definitely and unequivocally on behalf of the board, and said:—

The Libraries Board believes that the Act will prove to be a successful step in the right direction. The period that the Act has been in force is much too short to warrant the expectation that local governing authorities would have had time to persuade their ratepayers to permit the initial steps in establishing lending libraries under the Act.

The member for Norwood said that the Chairman of the Libraries Board is in a minority of one on the board.

Mr. Dunstan—I did not say that.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The honourable member said that, in effect, and went on to say that Mr. Skipper, the other member of the board, is speaking with the voice and authority of the majority of the members of the board. As I said earlier, I do not enjoy the benefit of listening in to the discussions at the board table, nor does the Chairman of the board or the Principal Librarian communicate to me what goes on at the meetings of the board, and in that respect I appear to be at a disadvantage compared with the honourable member for Norwood.

I quote another letter which appeared in the *Advertiser* of August 10, 1956, under the signature of C. Lempriere Abbott, Chairman of the Public Libraries Board, Adelaide, in which he said:—

In his recent circular letter to members of Parliament and in his address to the St. Peter's Collegians' Association, as reported in the *Advertiser*, August 8, 1956, Mr. S. H. Skipper's personal views on the work of the Public Library are apt to be wrongly considered as representing the opinion of the Public Libraries Board of South Australia.

If the information conveyed to the member for Norwood is correct, the statement of Mr. Justice Abbott is obviously incorrect. I quote again from the last paragraph of the same letter:—

I would like to remind Mr. Skipper that before the Libraries (Subsidies) Act was passed last November, he personally promised the Premier to give his loyal support to the Government's endeavours to make that Act operate successfully. Yet before eight months have expired, he has passed from the stage of damning it with faint praise to the stage of damning it outright, at the same time condemning the Libraries Board, of which he still remains a member, and all its works.

I had no idea of intruding into this debate. I did not have the honour of introducing the Bill to Parliament last year, and Mr. Skipper

is a great personal friend of mine of very long standing and one for whom I have the greatest respect. It seems to me that if I heard the member for Norwood correctly—and I think I did—he really did Mr. Skipper a very great disservice by pitting him against Mr. Justice Abbott in his remarks before the tea adjournment. I was also stating at the adjournment that my friend had said that the latest report of the Commonwealth Grants Commission showed only the amount being spent by State Governments on library services, and not the amounts in some other States contributed by local governing bodies. That may well be true, but what this Parliament and the people of South Australia are primarily interested in is what the Government is spending on libraries service. The report for 1955, which is the latest available to me, shows that the per capita average expenditure of the six States is 3s. 4d. The New South Wales per capita expenditure is 3s. 3d., Victoria 3s. 9d., Queensland 1s. 10d., South Australia 4s. 8d., Western Australia 2s. 11d., and Tasmania 6s. 1d.

Only this afternoon one or two members, including no less an authority than the Leader of the Opposition, stated once again how many good things come out of the State of Queensland. I am sure that Queensland should be the spiritual home of the honourable member for Norwood, because that State has had nearly 25 years of unadulterated Socialism. That modern Utopia of Queensland, however, has the worst system of education in the whole of Australia, and the lowest per capita expenditure on libraries.

Mr. O'Halloran—What is the Minister's reason for saying that Queensland has the worst system of education in Australia?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I have ample grounds for saying that, having made a close study for nearly three years of all the systems of education throughout Australia, and having had the benefit of reports not only from the Directors of Education in the various States, but also from a large number of disinterested persons.

Mr. O'Halloran—Do you say the Director of Education in Queensland condemned his own system?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—It might be another instance of being in a minority of one. The Leader of the Opposition seemed to express some surprise when I said that Queensland enjoyed the worst system of education in Australia. It has the lowest per

capita figure of any State. It has easily the lowest per capita figure for libraries. I do not suggest that all is as it should be in South Australia in relation to libraries. I would like to see the position greatly improved, and that is the earnest desire of Mr. Dunstan. There is, however, between us a disagreement on basic objectives, but perhaps I am not so impatient as I was in the days of my youth for I realize now that there are other pressing claims for an infinite variety of worthy objectives; therefore, we cannot achieve everything we want as quickly as we would desire. I agree with the opinion expressed by Mr. Justice Abbott that the legislation enacted last year has not yet been given a long enough trial. Mr. Dunstan will say that up to the present he knows of no application by a council under the legislation. Again we are in substantial agreement, for I know of no application. I do not condemn the legislation because no council is so far ready to come within the provision.

Mr. Davis—When did Mr. Justice Abbott give his opinion?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—He wrote three letters to the press, on August 10, 14 and 15 of this year, after Mr. Skipper had written to the press and circularized members of Parliament concerning the deficiencies of the libraries legislation. On each of the three occasions Mr. Justice Abbott wrote as chairman of the board and purported to speak with the full authority of the board except Mr. Skipper. Mr. Dunstan says Mr. Skipper was speaking with the authority of the board. Apparently he enjoys information that is not available to me. That, however, is a side issue that does not warrant taking up much time. I would not have referred to the matter if the honourable member had not brought it up.

Mr. DUNSTAN—The Minister was forced to approach the matter as if he were arguing before the bench as a counsel in a case in which he knew he was about to be non-suited. He did it without much fervour, which is hardly surprising. He quoted extracts from letters written by Mr. Justice Abbott. I give to that learned gentleman all the deference that his position as a judge should require when he speaks as a judge, but when he enters the field of public controversy as chairman of the Libraries Board he must be regarded as engaged in a public controversy. His statement that the legislation has not been given an opportunity to work because the councils have not had a chance to persuade the ratepayers to

adopt such a scheme does not show a knowledge of the working of local government. Can the Minister or any other member point to a council that has attempted to persuade its ratepayers to adopt such a scheme? As far as I am aware councils have not set out to persuade their ratepayers because they are not in a position to raise the necessary finance.

Mr. John Clark—If the scheme had been any good they would have rushed it.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Of course.

Mr. Hambour—Don't be too sure. The ratepayers will assert themselves when they want to.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Under the legislation the ratepayers will be called upon to bear the cost of establishing libraries at a time when the finances of councils have never been worse. The scheme did not work when it was previously on the Statute Book and it is not working now. Regarding the views of members of the board, it was not Mr. Skipper who last year provided me with the information I gave the House during the debate on the Bill. Other members of the board were then dissatisfied and in due deference to Mr. Skipper I believe he did promise the Treasurer, as was stated in Mr. Justice Abbott's letters, that he would try to assist the legislation as far as he could. He is a man of honour and sticks to his word, and I believe he has tried to do his best for the Libraries Board. He is not as youthful as myself. It is not surprising that Mr. Skipper, after many years' endeavour to get a regional library service and a free lending service, has become impatient. It is not the impatience of youth but the impatience of a man who has given years of service to the board. He is not the only one who is impatient, nor am I. Many people are impatient. During the last election campaign I was besieged with telegrams asking for our Party's policy on the free lending library service. I said we supported the attitude of the board that was put forward originally. This has been the Labor Party's policy for many years: the establishment of free regional lending libraries. Many letters were written to the paper by persons interested in the provision of such a service. Before the legislation was introduced, the Institutes Association, the body to which will go a fair proportion of the money the Minister has talked about, overwhelmingly resolved to support the scheme advanced by Mr. Skipper—free regional lending libraries. Yet we have this extraordinary legislation.

The Minister said that the people must be primarily concerned with State Government expenditure, but their concern is with the service they are getting. How much library service is the community getting? The answer is that it is the worst service in the Commonwealth, and anybody who has had anything to do with institutes knows their position. In my district a regional library is needed and with the co-operation of other local councils an excellent regional library could be established in accordance with Mr. Skipper's scheme, but now we have a destitute institute with insufficient money to repair the building.

Mr. Hambour—What do you want?

Mr. DUNSTAN—I want what the Library Board, the Institutes Association, the Labor Party and all other people interested in libraries want: a free regional lending library system administered by a Libraries Board that can make establishment grants and give pound for pound subsidies to local councils that co-operate in establishing libraries on the condition that such services shall be provided free.

Mr. Hambour—Something for nothing.

Mr. DUNSTAN—There we hear the voice of the sort of person who demands that children should pay for State education. Libraries are as much a part of the State education system as primary schools. A community that does not read cannot think, and that is the sort of community many members opposite want. The patron saint of the present administration in this State (Edward Gibbon Wakefield), in laying down the scheme on which this colony was founded, wished to prevent people from growing up free and democratic as they did in other colonies. The only way in which we will get a free library service is to return to the Board's recommendations. All people who are really interested in this subject desire to see this wretched legislation repealed so that something useful can be provided. Nothing has been done under this legislation and we still lack real library services.

Mr. DAVIS—In replying to the member for Norwood (Mr. Dunstan) the Minister quoted the opinion of Mr. Justice Abbott, but the opinion of the learned judge will probably have changed by next year. I do not know of even one council in favour of the existing legislation. Every council is anxious to establish a library but cannot do so, whereas if money raised by councils were subsidized something might be done. The Port Pirie library is in difficulties and the local council will have to assist

it, but no subsidy will be given by the Government and it will cost the council many hundreds of pounds to enable the library to carry on. Some members on this side are just as capable as members opposite of expressing an opinion on this subject. Probably some of them have had greater experience in library matters than Mr. Justice Abbott. The fact that he is chairman of the board does not necessarily mean that he knows everything about the subject. Many members on both sides of the House are disappointed about the subsidies paid to libraries.

Mr. HAMBOUR—The honourable member for Norwood complained about the assistance the Government is giving to libraries, but the difficulty is to keep librarians to look after them. The town in which I live would set up a library and supply the books free if the librarian could be paid. I do not think the Government should make everything available without charge. Although members opposite maintain that the Government should do everything, I believe that people should help themselves. I was brought up in Gawler, where a library was carried on without assistance for many years, and is still operating. I would like to see other towns help themselves, and when they become established they can come to the Government for a little help. I am opposed to the Government subsidizing libraries pound for pound, because it has more to do with the money available.

Mr. BROOKMAN—I agree with the principle that free libraries should be established in this State. I do not believe that libraries can operate completely satisfactorily unless they operate under a free system. Although local effort is very satisfactory in other fields it is inadequate in relation to libraries, which need a system big enough to provide sufficient books. Each library should be part of a network extending throughout the State. Most people interested in libraries want a free system. Since the Munn-Pitt report in the late 1930's most of our thoughts have been guided by the criticism contained in it. Unfortunately, the present law is not of much use, and has not been availed of much. Although I supported the Bill last year I criticised it because I thought it would not be of much use. The only thing stopping us from having a comprehensive and good library service is the cost. The figure of 8s. a head of population was mentioned several years ago, and it is probably greater now. The present library service is a very good one and of great use to those who use it, but of no use to those who do not know the benefits they can obtain

from it. I would like to see a free library service, but I do not think we have the money to institute such a system.

I would like to see the Government show some interest in the fate of last year's Act. If it feels that there has not been sufficient time to test it we could wait a little longer to see whether it has been effective or not. I do not think it has been effective, and I believe the Government should investigate what can be done to improve it. I do not think that will result in a free library service immediately or in the near future, but I would like the Government to inquire enthusiastically into ways in which our library service could be improved, how much it would cost, and whether a free service at some time in the future can be foreseen.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The Government is not apologizing for the legislation enacted last December, nor is it saying as a Government that sufficient time has not been allowed wherein to test that legislation. It is not the Government saying that, but the Libraries Board, and I shall quote from its annual report for 1955-56 which, pursuant to Statute, I laid on the Table as late as September 25 last. As there have been so many assertions concerning the views alleged to have been expressed by the majority of members of the board and that the very learned Chairman of the Board (Mr. Justice Abbott) is in a minority of one, it would be as well to place on record not what the chairman has said but what the board as a board says. The board is comprised of Mr. Justice Abbott, B.A., LL.B. (Chairman), who is not an unlearned or unlettered gentleman, J. J. Bray, LL.D., and I do not think anyone who is a doctor of law is unlearned, H. J. Finnis, M.B.E., E. S. Kiek, D.D., M.A., A. G. Price, C.M.G., D.Litt., S. H. Skipper, LL.B., S.M., and R. K. Wood. The report was signed only by the Chairman and the Principal Librarian, Mr. Brideson. Although it does not say "We unanimously subscribe to this opinion," there is no minority report and therefore we must take it as having been unanimous, or at any rate the majority report of the board. On the first page under the heading, "Legislation" appears the following:—

In December Parliament passed the Libraries (Subsidies) Act which provides that the Treasurer may, on the recommendation of the Libraries Board, subsidize libraries established and maintained by a municipal authority. The Act also empowers the board to establish a lending service for such libraries. This Act constitutes a praiseworthy step by Parliament

towards enabling those towns and communities in the country to obtain financial assistance from the Government and such expert advice and guidance as they desire from the Public Libraries Board and its staff, in establishing their own lending libraries on a sound and sensible foundation.

The value of such assistance is not always readily appreciated, and although no municipal authority or district council has yet approached the board on this subject, it is perhaps too soon to expect that applications should have been received. The board, however, sincerely hopes that it will not be long before the benefits offered by the Library (Subsidies) Act are fully comprehended throughout the State, and is eager to assist in the establishment of useful general libraries in such municipal and country centres as wish to avail themselves of the opportunity offered by Parliament.

I say with the best of good will toward my friend, the member for Norwood, that he really did a disservice not only to Mr. Skipper, but to the various members of the Libraries Board whom he did not name specifically, and by that subtle innuendo of his own purported to say that they had privately communicated to him their disagreement with the attitude adopted from the inception of this legislation by Mr. Justice Abbott, and as recently reported by Mr. Justice Abbott in his letters to the *Advertiser* in reply to Mr. Skipper and in the last report of the board tabled within the last fortnight. I think it is most regrettable that this state of affairs has occurred because none of that information has been communicated to me. I am dealing very constantly with the board Chairman and the Principal Librarian, and never has any suggestion been made to me either directly or indirectly that the board, if not unanimously, is not in substantial agreement on all matters which affected the well-being of the library movement in South Australia, and in relation to this legislation in particular.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—It is probably well known to honourable members that I am a lover of books. I think that a nation which has not a very high percentage of people who read and like to read is a nation in very dire straits. With great respect to the member for Light, in this debate we could take him as a very good example of the need for free libraries, because it was obvious to me, and it must have been to others, that the honourable member apparently did not read last year's debate on the subject, or read the Principal Librarian's report or the Libraries (Subsidies) Act. He was kind enough to mention that Gawler had a particularly good library. It is carried on only under the greatest of difficulties, and that situation is common to all institute libraries or



other libraries conducted not only in the country areas, but in the metropolitan area too. The Munn-Pitt report mentioned by the honourable member was made in 1935, and was a scathing indictment of the libraries system throughout Australia. If I remember rightly, the Munn-Pitt report was a little kinder to the South Australian system than to systems in other States, although it was not very complimentary to our institute system, which still exists. I think that directly as a result of that report Dr. Grenfell Price, in 1937, presented a report of an inquiry commissioned by the Government, and he too made some uncomplimentary remarks about our library system, with the result that in 1938 the then Minister of Education (Hon. S. W. Jeffries) introduced a Bill on libraries. It lapsed, but another was passed in the following year. The Minister's remarks, in his second reading speech, were prophetic, for he said:—

In other parts of the world, such as Great Britain and the United States of America, there are great systems of free libraries. It will probably be many years before South Australia can hope to emulate these examples, but in the meantime there is much that can be done to improve our existing library services.

What he said proved to be the case, because after 1939 nothing was done until the legislation passed last year. Members on this side of the House opposed that Bill because we could see no merit in it. However, we hoped against hope that some good would come out of it, but none has.

Mr. Hambour—Did you vote against it?

Mr. JOHN CLARK—If I oppose a Bill I do not vote for it. Nothing has come to my notice since to convince me that the legislation is any better than I thought it was. I was happy to hear the member for Alexandra (Mr. Brookman) speak in the strain he did. I know he believes in free libraries and is interested in books. Mr. Hambour said the people should be prepared to do something for our libraries, but I have always thought that the people were the Government, or at least they should be. I do not know whether that is the case in South Australia, but at any rate Government functions do not come out of the air, but from the people. The old story of getting something for nothing is just eyewash. I shall be only too happy if some good comes out of the Libraries (Subsidies) Act, but I am afraid we shall have to wait a long time for it.

Line passed.

The Museum Department, £41,836; Art Gallery, £18,848—passed.

Miscellaneous, £1,070,549.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I regret that the amount for the Workers Educational Association has not been increased. Last year £1,750 was provided and spent, and this year a similar amount is provided. Officials of the association submitted a plan to the Government before the Estimates were prepared showing that for the expenditure of about £3,000 more they could materially extend the splendid work being done by the association, but apparently the Government does not desire to extend it. For many years I have believed that our adult education system should be enormously extended, and I have repeatedly stressed that the amounts spent by South Australia on it were pitifully low compared with the amounts spent in other States. Even Tasmania is spending many times more on workers education than we are. I realize that recently the work of country technical schools has been expanded somewhat to include some adult education, but that expansion does not go far enough and does not touch the field that could be effectively exploited by an organization such as the W.E.A.

We read much in the press about juvenile delinquency and in the Estimates of the necessity to provide more and more money to build bigger and better gaols, but there is some relationship between our inadequate system of adult education and the increase in juvenile delinquency. The W.E.A. encourages the cultivation of dramatic and artistic talent, various types of handicraft, and many other activities that promote a fuller life for the individual. This is something that cannot be effectively done through our technical schools, which can only reach those places where they are established, whereas the Workers Educational Association, if the increased grant it sought had been provided, could have employed a country organizer who would have been able to visit smaller localities where there are no technical schools, thus enabling the people of those districts to benefit from adult education. Apparently the Government is not concerned about educating the people. Perhaps it fears the consequences of educating the people to be more discerning in their judgments, particularly of Governments and public policies. We should realize that the aim of this Association is to build better citizens and a better nation. I suggest the Government reconsider increasing this grant to the amount requested by the Association.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I share the Leader's disappointment that it was not possible to increase the grant to the Association this year. I join issue with him on his suggestion that the Government does not desire to do so. I remind him that last year the grant was more than doubled. I would have liked to maintain that increase, but the Leader has touched on one of the reasons why it is not practicable. This year the grant to country technical schools and adult education centres is £54,300, an increase of £8,739 over last year's grant. Unfortunately the Government has not sufficient funds to enable it to support these miscellaneous items as it desires. I have had friendly associations with both the president and secretary of the Association, both in my office and at their displays which I have attended. As soon as the opportunity occurs I hope to increase the grant as much as possible.

Mr. BYWATERS—The Workers Educational Association deserves a much larger grant. The Minister regrets that more money is not available for it, but it is fulfilling a great need in the country. Last week I went to an arts and crafts exhibition and observed some outstanding work. Two elderly gentlemen had regained a lively interest in life by participating in the W.E.A. classes. One of them had completed some pottery work which was on display. I thought it rather astounding that a man of 85 could do what he did, but I was more surprised to see the lovely paintings of a 96-year-old man. I suggest that the life span of these men has been increased as a result of their association with the W.E.A. The Association desires to extend its activities in country areas, but unfortunately it cannot because of financial limitations. It recently submitted a budget for this year's work and sought an additional grant of £3,050. This would enable the appointment of a country organizer to assist in areas where adult education centres are not functioning.

The Association recently conducted a tour of country areas, presenting plays. They were extremely well received in country areas and provided entertainment and culture for people under-privileged in this respect. The Association has purchased a small motor van to transport its equipment and this has proved a boon. However, I believe the Association will be financially embarrassed because it will not have sufficient money to carry out the programme it has planned. Even at this late hour the Government should seriously consider increasing the grant.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—I was delighted to hear the Minister say that further grants would be made as soon as possible, but I rather fear that opportunity may be some years hence. Is it not possible to consider increasing the grant at this last stage? The amount of £1,750 proposed is grossly inadequate. For some years the Association has desired the appointment of a full-time country organizer. From the £3,050 sought, the Association proposed to pay £1,100 to a qualified country organizer. This would not be a princely salary.

I commend the Workers' Educational Association because it has attempted to raise extra money to help itself. It has realized on some of its assets to purchase the van mentioned by the member for Murray, and it did this with the idea of bringing to country groups and country students particularly the benefits of a travelling theatre and possibly its film projector and films. I have previously commended the work being done by Adult Education Schools, formerly technical schools. I know of my own experience the good work they are doing, and in fact I have been of some assistance to their drama classes in the town of Gawler. I maintain, as the Leader of the Opposition has done, that there is no real parallel between the work they are doing and the work being done by the W.E.A. There is no reason why the W.E.A. should be starved in this regard.

I will give the committee an idea of what the W.E.A. has planned to do in the forthcoming year, particularly in country areas. I fear that some of this work cannot possibly be done, and that is the main reason I am adding my voice to the plea that has been made so well by the Leader of the Opposition and the member for Murray. The programme is in three categories, namely, community art services, discussion groups and evening classes, and summer and week-end schools. With community art services the first thing planned is the travelling art exhibition. The W.E.A., in conjunction with the National Gallery of South Australia, arranged six exhibitions of paintings in country towns in 1955. Now that it has a motor van it intends to arrange longer and more frequent tours of country towns. No admittance charge is made, but catalogues can be sold. It is the practice to invite schools to send parties to see these exhibitions, and they are accompanied by a guide lecturer.

The second thing planned is music recitals in country towns, and eight such recitals are arranged for 1956. It is also hoped to hold musical recitals for children when musicians

visit a country town to give adult recitals. This supplements the visits of the South Australian Symphony Orchestra, and admission charges are made, but these by no means defray the total expenses involved. I am sure the committee will agree that the bringing of such musical treats into the country is an ideal to be striven for. The third thing is the travelling theatre companies mentioned by the member for Murray. The first theatre tour which took place in August of this year included six towns, and it is hoped to extend this to more towns. It is proposed at first to use experienced producers and experienced first grade amateur actors, and later to use professional actors who will give the benefit of their added experience. It is also hoped very soon to present children's matinees, including puppet shows and suitable plays, and here again a small charge will be made. I stress once again that the charge will not be enough to cover expenses.

The fourth thing is country film screenings. These are mainly of documentary and feature films, and six such screenings have been arranged for 1956. As the W.E.A. now has transport as a result of its own efforts, it hopes to enlarge the scope of its work because it can take its own projector instead of having to borrow one in the towns visited.

The second section I mentioned is one which must suffer from the shortage of money, and that is the discussion groups and evening classes. This needs the co-ordinating presence of a country organizer. At present there are eight groups of classes in drama, literature and current affairs, and the chief towns in which these are conducted are Keith, Renmark, Loxton and Balaklava, fairly widely scattered over the State. These towns are usually visited by lecturers once a month. The classes have plays and rehearsals and receive advice and instructions about the plays. In music, guidance is given in arranging graded programmes and recorded music, and members also attend the recitals that I mentioned earlier. It was hoped to accomplish more by lending gramophone records to the group, but that is not a cheap undertaking.

I was particularly pleased to hear the member for Murray mention the work being done in art. Practical demonstrations are given to the classes, which also go on painting excursions. Some very remarkable work has been done, and it is a credit to the instructors and also a credit to the work of the W.E.A. In addition, films on art are sent to the class, and it was hoped to introduce a lending service

of 35mm. coloured transparencies showing significant works of art.

Current affairs is a very necessary and important part of the work in country areas, and one which has aroused intense interest in most of the groups. Members do reading on the topic to be discussed and then meet to discuss it, usually under the visiting leader, perhaps from Adelaide, or with their own local chairman. Similar work is done in literature, and short stories, novels or plays showing some significant trend in literature are studied with the assistance of tutors from the city. It should be obvious to members that a country organizer for that particular group would be a very great asset indeed.

Finally I come to the work in connection with summer and weekend schools. These are most important because they enable country and city people to get together and exchange their ideas, and members know that the ideas of country people are not always the same as those of city people. It provides a concentrated period of residential study for country people where discussion groups and evening classes are not held. It also provides a course for country adult education groups when holidays may interfere with adult education. This year they are holding one summer school for seven days and two week-end schools for drama and art at Mount Lofty and Christies Beach. In coming years they plan to hold residential schools for adults on various subjects in country towns where there is suitable accommodation. Victor Harbour and Renmark have been mentioned. It is maintained that the schools can also provide opportunities for country and city students to meet and exchange ideas. I have referred to this matter briefly to give members an idea how necessary it is to appoint a country organizer to co-ordinate the various activities. At present the general secretary is the only full-time executive officer. He, with the assistance of a typiste, has the responsibility of organizing the work throughout the State and it is regarded as almost an impossible task.

Mr. Bywaters—They are not overpaid.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—No. Without further grants it is not likely that much of the proposed expansion work can be carried out. Expansion needs money and that is denied for this year at least. The Government should consider the matter further with a view to increasing the grant to the W.E.A. to enable it to carry out the necessary work I have mentioned.

Mr. COUMBE—I commend the work of the W.E.A. I know firsthand the value of it because for four years after the war I was enrolled as a student. I take it that the proposed grant of £1,600 to the S.A. Oral School is to be spent amongst retarded children in regard to speech. Many children are born deaf and there is great trouble in teaching them to speak. They have to be taught by the manual method and the oral hearing aid, or one or the other. In the State there are four schools and two are in my electorate. With the advent of the North Adelaide Hard of Hearing Centre the work is going ahead tremendously. I have had an opportunity of meeting and conferring with the committee set up to advise the Education Department on the matter. I commend the department for its work in the interests of both the children and their parents. Can the Minister give any information regarding the proposed grant of £1,600?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I assure the Leader of the Opposition and the members for Murray, Gawler and Torrens that I would be pleased to carefully and sympathetically consider the case they have made out on behalf of the W.E.A. I shall endeavour to scrape the bottom of the pot to see if anything can be done to help directly or indirectly during the financial year. The grant to the Oral School is to replace the existing payment of salaries of two teachers by the Education Department and also to meet the fees for the special training course of £100. I share the sentiments expressed by Mr. Coumbe concerning the laudable work done untiringly by the committee and the staff of oral schools. In their particular field they are experts and their work is having a beneficial effect on a large number of children.

Mr. BROOKMAN—It is pleasing to see in this time of financial difficulty that the State Government has been able to increase the grant to the Kindergarten Union. The Government recognizes that it is a good investment to make the grant because of the great amount of local effort put into kindergarten work. Although kindergartens are well over 100 years old it is only recently that their value has been acknowledged widely as a part of the education of children. I am told it makes a big difference in the first few years of the child's school life if it has attended a kindergarten. Of course, kindergarten is only organized play, but the organization of it is done by people who understand the position. It eliminates the need for hard

discipline and by the time they get to school the children are enthusiasts and willing to learn. It goes a long way towards helping children to become well adjusted to modern life and in later years to become decent men and women capable of facing life without undue stress. Kindergartens are not as widely spread as they will be eventually. In my district at McLaren Vale there is one that has only just been able to operate although it has been in existence for nine years. The building and furnishing of it was done by local people. When it was completed the kindergarten committee feared that it would not share in the subsidy, but because of grants in the Supplementary Estimates and in these Estimates the future of that kindergarten is assured and the people of the district are grateful for the assistance given. The kindergarten movement is growing and this money is well spent in helping children and facilitating their later school careers.

Mr. GEOFFREY CLARKE—The Leader of the Opposition (Mr. O'Halloran) suggested that in Tasmania substantially more is spent on adult education than in this State, but from my perusal of the Tasmanian Budget for this year I find that on a *per capita* basis Tasmania spends the same on education generally as this State, so there must be a reason for the discrepancy in the grants for adult education. The Leader omitted to mention that the University of Tasmania is in a deplorable financial state because much less is spent on it *per capita* than in this State. In addressing themselves to the lines members should put things in their proper perspective, whereas on this occasion no member has suggested where the extra money should come from to finance the things they have suggested. The Government, already concerned with balancing the Budget, has had to find £800,000 extra because of the calamitous flood, and this line should be debated in the light of the amount available to the Government this year after exhausting the few avenues of taxation open to it. I recently saw a praiseworthy example of self-help in Mount Gambier where, through the enterprise of one man, an art exhibition was held, to the delight of townspeople. That example could well be followed in other centres.

Mr. LAUCKE—Can the Minister say what films will be provided with the £8,000 to be spent on documentary films?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Shortly before my appointment a documentary film committee was set up comprising representatives of the Education Department, Public

Library Board, and many other learned authorities. Its object was to purchase and make available for distribution a fairly wide range of documentary films. It was desired to make a grant to the committee for that purpose, but although last year the committee recommended that it be granted £4,000, the recommendation was received too late for approval and inclusion in last year's Budget, therefore the £8,000 represents £4,000 a year for last year and this year.

Mr. TAPPING—A grant of £300 is to be made to the Swimming Association and £500 each to the Royal Life Saving Society and the Surf Life Saving Society. Last year the grant to the Royal Life Saving Society was raised from £300, whereas the grant to the Swimming Association has remained stationary. As the Association does yeoman work in teaching people, particularly school children, to swim, can the Minister say why a discrimination should be made between the life saving societies and the Swimming Association? Next year will the Association be granted £500, the same as the life saving societies?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I do not want it thought that there was any discrimination by the Government or myself. The Amateur Swimming Association received the grant for which it applied—there was no cutting down and no discrimination. I have a very high regard for that organization, its office bearers and high officials. It has co-operated to the fullest in the drive to teach children to swim. If an application is made for a higher grant, I shall be pleased to consider it.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Recently I was reported in the press as having said that some university students stood on my motor car during the staging of a rag in front of Parliament House, but I did not make such a statement. The member for Burnside (Mr. Geoffrey Clarke) said something to this effect:

It is always fair game to attack university students in the mistaken view that they come from the privileged classes, thus indirectly having a crack at their parents.

I resent this; in all the time I have been in this House I have never opposed any grant to the university or anyone who would benefit by any grants made to the Education Department. I resent the suggestion that I was having a crack at some particular section of the community. That statement is a misrepresentation of my remarks. During the three years in which I had the honour to represent the Opposition on the University Council I attended meetings as regularly as possible, and I think

my record shows that I have an interest in the university. Mr. Clarke said that no suggestions for improvement had been made by the Opposition, but it is not our job to do so. We could suggest a complete examination into the excess profits made in hire purchase business, which are an imposition on the people.

Mr. TAPPING—The Minister's statement that the grant of £300 to the Amateur Swimming Association was the amount asked for is not correct, as this letter from the secretary of the association shows:—

I want to draw attention to the disparity between the grants to the Royal Life Saving Society and the Surf Life Saving Association, both of whom receive £500, and the Swimming Association whose grant is £300. Until recently these three bodies received the same amount for the work each did in its own particular sphere of activity. The grant to the Surf Association was first raised to £500 and this year the Life Saving grant has been raised from £300 to £500 but the Swimming Association has been left on £300. In view of the important work that this body does, could the Minister review the position and put the Swimming Association back on the same footing as the other two organizations.

This makes it clear that the association depends on the good graces of the Government and receives a hand-out.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—This year a grant of £4,500 will be made to the National Fitness Council. In my district there are certain organizations that wish to establish community halls for gymnasiums and the running of boys' and girls' clubs. The best assistance that could be obtained from the National Fitness Council for a hall at Edwardstown was a loan of £100 for 12 months, but if £250 could have been granted for five years a fairly up-to-date hall could have been provided to establish a boys' club. When it was discovered that the hall was on land that could perhaps be regarded as private property, as it belonged to a church, it was doubtful whether even £100 could be granted. Also there is no public hall at St. Marys, and for meetings the people have to depend on the structure erected by the school committee. I should like a greater amount made available to these people to assist them in the erection of a suitable hall. This would probably solve some of the problems associated with our young people.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I will be pleased to discuss the matter with the honourable member and later with the Treasurer.

Mr. HUTCHENS—As one who has had a long association with school committees and

the South Australian Public School Committee's Association executive, I express thanks on its behalf for the increased amount of £100 which has been allotted. No doubt the Minister has appreciated that this body is working in the interests of schools.

Line passed.

Department of Industry, £89,624—passed.

Factories and Steam Boilers Department, £52,496.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Mr. Lawn has mentioned this session the need for an amendment of the Scaffolding Act. With this I heartily agree, and consider there should be closer supervision of scaffolding used on buildings, particularly in Adelaide. Tubular scaffolding is now in general use on big structures. Prior to the war in the construction of such buildings as the A.M.P., the C.M.L. and Elder, Smith & Company Ltd. in Currie Street overhanging scaffolding was used which permitted masons to work on the outside of the building in the setting of stone, but today men are asked to build over-hand from the inside of the building. In the Postmaster-General's Department during the construction of a building employees are expected to traverse stairways which have no handrails or any other safeguards to prevent them from falling.

On tall buildings some type of overhanging scaffold that can be raised or lowered from floor to floor should be provided. After all, life is more important than any building. The provisions of the Act relating to the safety of workers are no different today from what they were many years ago. The great need is for further supervision in the interests of their safety. If buildings are to be faced with cut stone, a veneer of stonework, or plaster on the facade, an overhanging scaffold is necessary. If workers have to view their work on the outside of the building from the inside they must have some protection. I do not know whether the Act should be amended to assist scaffolding inspectors in their work, but the Government knows when big buildings are to be erected and it should see that the employees are adequately safeguarded.

A tall building is being erected on the corner of Victoria Square and Franklin Street, but the stairways that are now in position do not provide the same degree of safety as the measures taken when the A.M.P. building was being erected. I should know, because I worked on the marble veneer on the inside of that building. Does the Treasurer consider he has enough inspectors to supervise the scaffolding on these big buildings? I do not want to

hear of any more fatal accidents as a result of inadequate scaffolding.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Mr. Lawn has asked questions about the Scaffolding Inspection Act, but I believe we have enough inspectors. He asked whether the Act gave the department sufficient powers to ensure the safety of workers, but it is not possible to provide for every contingency, and accidents happen even in the best-regulated homes. I have received a preliminary report about scaffolding, and I am awaiting another on whether the provisions of the Act go far enough. If an accident occurs it is an offence to alter the scaffolding before the accident has been investigated.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—The Treasurer said that scaffolding must not be altered after an accident before it has been inspected, but that has applied for many years. I have no criticism of the scaffolding inspectors and I accept the Treasurer's assurance that there are sufficient. Will the Treasurer suggest, however, that they insist on the provision of swinging scaffolding to obviate accidents?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government will examine members' requests and when a decision has been reached I will notify them. I am quite certain that the Chief Inspector is as anxious as anyone to guard against the possibility of accidents.

Line passed.

Miscellaneous, £2,260.—passed.

#### MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FORESTS.

Minister of Agriculture Department, £8,020; Agriculture Department, £590,775—passed.

Agricultural College Department, £109,839.

Mr. STOTT—I appreciate that the college is rendering a valuable service to the State, but I have received some complaints concerning students' accommodation there. Will the Minister ascertain whether better sleeping accommodation and toilet facilities can be provided?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I am rather surprised at this question. I recently made an official inspection of the college and, although I did not inspect all the quarters, the impression I gained was that the students were comfortably situated. One of the buildings will require new roofing tiles, but the honourable member's question relates to interior work. I have enjoyed many meals in the dining room and I am quite certain there have been no complaints about that provision. The college principal is most jealous of the conditions under which his students are housed and I

am certain that had he any complaints he would have voiced them on my visit. However, I will make inquiries and if any matters require attention, due consideration will be given to them.

Line passed.

Produce Department, £223,347.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Last year £1,915 was provided as salary for the manager of the Port Lincoln Freezing Works. No money was spent and no provision is made for such a salary in these Estimates. What is the explanation? Has the work of the Manager been merged in the greater item, works manager, works engineer, etc?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The position is as outlined by the Leader. Upon the retirement of Mr. Siggins, the former manager, his duties were divided between the then chief clerk, Mr. Mortimer, and the works manager, Mr. Jeanes. The appointment of an overall manager has not been made. I do not feel that it is intended to make such an appointment for the present arrangement appears to be satisfactory to all concerned. There are two functions—clerical and administration, and technical—and in the absence of requirements to the contrary I do not think it will be necessary to reinstate a manager as such.

Line passed.

Fisheries and Game Department, £16,860.

Mr. JENKINS—I take it that the line "Research—deep sea fishing," for which £10,766 was voted last year, refers to the work done by Jangaard Bros. in connection with tuna fishing, and that the line "Research work, purchase of instruments and equipment and sundries" relates to the purchase of a depth recorder, etc.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The amount of £10,766 is related to the experiment conducted by the Jangaard Bros. last year. The revenue side of the business was credited with £5,586 representing the proceeds from the fish caught, so the net cost of the experiment was £5,180. The other amount includes the cost of purchasing a depth recorder, but it is only a small portion. The total amount is for general research work in connection with crayfish and the Chief Inspector hopes to visit the vicinity of the Victor Harbour area before long to undertake research work.

Line passed.

Chemistry Department, £41,136—passed.

Miscellaneous, £157,921.

Mr. STOTT—I pay a tribute to the work done by the Waite Agricultural Research Insti-

tute. Could the institute conduct an inquiry into the possibility of using in South Australia nitrogenous fertilizers of the ammonia type? In the United States of America they are used with a great deal of success, one place in particular being just outside San Francisco in California. The colleges there have improved the technique of applying these fertilizers and they have been found to be applicable to certain soils. This is a matter in which the scientists in the laboratory and the farmers in the field have to work together. The Minister knows that the demand for fertilizers for top dressing is increasing. The cost of fertilizers is becoming a headache to the man on the land. In the United Kingdom a tremendous amount of fertilizer is used, particularly in the trace element field, and producers are subsidized to the extent of £17 a ton. The scientists in the laboratory might take several years to obtain information and try out the fertilizers on South Australian soils, but it is something that must be done. The need for it has been realized in the United States of America and some Continental countries. Could the Waite Institute undertake an inquiry of this nature?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The honourable member's remarks are pertinent and can be adapted to what I term the high powered type of fertilizer in various phases of agriculture. I will direct the remarks to the Principal of the Waite Institute for his consideration. The application of the nitrogenous fertilizers of the ammonia group is limited under our conditions because broad acres are involved and the cost of a modest application of a nitrogenous fertilizer to a wide area would be great. At a demonstration a few weeks ago this matter was given some prominence by the Soil Conservator and it was shown that sandhills could be treated with a nitrogenous fertilizer in conjunction with superphosphate. Through the department we have tried to emphasize that nitrogen is most cheaply supplied by growing leguminous fodder plants, and that policy has met with much success. We have introduced nitrogenous plants in areas where subterranean clovers proved unsuccessful earlier. I agree that there is some scope for experiments on highly nitrogenous fertilizers, probably more particularly in the field of vegetable production and intensive farming practice. South Australian soils generally react rapidly to concentrated nitrogenous fertilizers. I will direct the honourable member's suggestion to the department so that it may be given attention.

Mr. GOLDNEY—Is provision made at the Waite Research Institute for research in animal husbandry, or are only agricultural problems tackled? I have in mind a recent outbreak of heliotrope poisoning in sheep that has occurred in the Lower North.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The Waite Research Institute is primarily an institute for research into pasture plants and the breeding of wheats and other grains: it does not deal directly with animal research. I am aware of the problem raised, and departmental officers are busy trying to solve it.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Some years ago when I suggested that nation-wide research be conducted into the elimination of the grasshopper the then Minister of Agriculture (Sir George Jenkins) said the matter would be listed for discussion at an Agricultural Council meeting with a view to an approach being made by the States to the Commonwealth Government to establish a fund for research into the eradication of the pest. Will the Minister again refer this matter to the Agricultural Council?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The sum of £500 has been left on the Estimates to keep the line alive and as a contingency to clean up one or two outstanding accounts. Moreover, under the heading "General" £200 is provided for a grasshopper control trial, and I think that line applies to a joint scheme of research. I will take up the matter, however, and let the honourable member have the information later.

Mr. HARDING—Can the Minister say in detail what items are covered by the £7,000 provided for the prevention of bush fires?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The grant of £7,000, which is an increase of £2,000 from last year, is a subsidy towards the purchase of fire fighting equipment by volunteer fire fighting associations, and is part of the arrangement made when the legislation was brought down under which the Government undertook to subsidize on a pound for pound basis the contributions made by insurance companies to this particular fund. These organizations submit a budget of proposed expenditure for each calendar year. For the present calendar year they will need £14,000 to maintain expenditure at the same rate as in 1955. The insurance companies have agreed to increase their contributions to £7,000, so the Government will do the same. The subsidy of £1,000 to the Volunteer Fire Fighters' Fund is the

usual contribution for the assistance of those injured in accidents when engaged in fire fighting.

Mr. LAUCKE—Is the £2,000 provided for advances to local government authorities pursuant to the Local Government (Forestry Reserves) Act a compensation to councils that have non-ratable Government properties in their areas?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—That is not the intention of this grant. The Act has a provision for interest-free advances from revenue to councils for the establishment of forests.

Mr. KING—The sum of £400 is provided for expenses of the Fruit Fly Compensation Committee. I am glad that the Government has seen fit to subsidize this committee, which is the body that handles the publicity of the fruit fly campaign. If fruit fly got out of control the damage sustained would probably equal that caused by the flood.

Mr. RICHES—Can the Minister explain the reason for the decrease of £1,000 in the grant to the Fauna and Flora Board? With relation to grants for fire fighting, has any policy been adopted about the rich growth of wild oats and other fodder on the sides of the Main North Road? Many who have seen that growth believe that arrangements could be made to cut it for fodder because, if it is not dealt with in some way, it will be a severe fire hazard.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—When the Fauna and Flora Board tendered its balance-sheet, it was found that it had a very handy surplus in its accounts and would not require a grant as great as in previous years. About two years ago the grant was substantially increased because of special work, mainly fencing, that had to be done. Although that work is not completed, the board would not be able to spend a grant equal to last year's grant. The board was fortunate in securing a new jeep last year as a gift from the Government, and this has reduced its requirements this year. The reduction is not intended to evidence a lack of sympathy by the Government in relation to the work done by the board.

I have noticed the rank growth on the northern roads and realize what a fire hazard it will be. However, this matter is not within the ambit of the debate, so I suggest the member might mention the matter to the Minister of Local Government. It is extremely difficult to make a satisfactory job of cutting hay on the rough roadsides.

Line passed.



Department of Lands—Irrigation and Drainage Branches, £452,112.

Mr. HARDING—We have a new and real menace threatening highly developed areas at Coonawarra and Penola. Large quantities of water are draining through from Victoria, where levels are 50 to 60 feet higher than at Penola. The water has inundated beautiful pasture country. In one case an owner has lost 500 out of 600 acres. On this area last year he got 8,000 bales of meadow hay. His land is now 12 to 15 feet under water. He has been compelled to sell all his stock and is now working for wages to support his wife and four children. There are similar cases in the area, although not so serious. I have already mentioned that there is need for further drainage in the South-East. Water is seeping through from an area of 800 square miles in Victoria.

Some 20 miles south of the affected area in South Australia the position is the reverse and water is flowing from this State back to Victoria. It is a question for close co-operation between the two States. The surplus water at Penola and Coonawarra will have to be taken by drain across the Bakers Range drain, connecting with drain M. It will require 40 miles of channel. Also, some of the existing drains will have to be widened. It is estimated that it will be necessary to move 7,000,000 cubic yards of earth and this would possibly cost £2,000,000. I hope that early consideration will be given to this matter, that the Drainage Board will be directed to make a complete examination of the area and that there will be an inquiry by the Land Settlement Committee, so that the House can be apprised of the true position.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—An amount of £400 is provided for the investigation of developmental proposals. What the honourable member has said about the huge quantities of water coming through from Victoria is quite correct. I have had officers inspecting the area and am now awaiting their report. During the last few years the Government has spent several million pounds in drainage work in the South-East, and undoubtedly this has resulted in considerably increased production. I will get a report from the Drainage Board on the best methods of dealing with the problem.

Mr. KING—Can the Minister give more information concerning the amount of £10,000 provided for the maintenance of embankments in the irrigation areas, and their restoration to approved levels?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—Each year sums have been made available for the restoration and repair of irrigation banks.

Mr. BYWATERS—Is this amount for the purpose of restoring banks, because I cannot see its going very far, or will this work be done out of the amount of £500,000 provided under Miscellaneous?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The amount of £10,000 is to keep irrigation banks in repair, and any further expenditure will come out of the £500,000.

Line passed.

Miscellaneous, £500,300.

Mr. STOTT—I understand that the proposed £500,000 for flood relief is only the first instalment and that much depends on the Commonwealth's subsidy. Can the Treasurer say to what extent the Commonwealth Government will assist in flood relief?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The State Government has already given £50,000 to the Lord Mayor's Fund, and I have now received a cheque from the Commonwealth for the same amount and paid it to the Lord Mayor. We have not yet received a reply from the Commonwealth on further assistance.

Mr. KING—Is the Minister of Irrigation considering using Crown Lands for re-establishing flooded settlers and whether housing can be made available for those whose homes have been flooded?

The Hon. S. C. HINCKS—Those matters are being considered.

Mr. KING—The Government should consider appointing a committee to investigate the prevention and control of floods and the repair of the damage that has been done. The committee should be drawn from Government officers and other people qualified to act on it. It should be authorized to co-operate with Commonwealth authorities and departments of other States because the prevention and control of floods is a matter largely beyond the control of the State. South Australia cannot afford to continually lose capital and income as a result of floods.

Line passed.

#### MINISTER OF MINES.

Mines Department, £781,219.

Mr. LOVEDAY—It is proposed to increase the vote for "Boring and Mechanical Engineering Branch" by £9,316. Is that a general increase, or is it for the purpose of stepping up boring and drilling operations with a view to finding further deposits of high-grade iron

ore? The Treasurer has stated that the department is already using all its available resources. Will he increase the vote to step up boring and drilling for iron ore?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—This line does not deal with any specific proposal, but with all drilling investigations taking place in various parts of the State. One reason for the increase is increased wages costs, but there has not been a large expansion in the department's activities.

Mr. RICHES—The Director of Mines' report contains a strong recommendation that steps be taken to establish treatment works at Port Pirie to carry out treatment of uranium ore to the stage of producing metal. He pointed out that the United States Atomic Energy Commission will not guarantee to purchase uranium oxide at existing rates after 1962. He also said that the price will probably drop then and that the Radium Hill project will become uneconomic unless uranium metal is produced. Are steps being taken to give effect to the director's recommendations?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Some of the department's scientists are investigating the production of metal from uranium oxide, but whether they can do it successfully and economically has yet to be proved. In any case, the uranium oxide produced from the Radium Hill ore is all under contract until 1962, so even if we had the necessary plant now we could not produce uranium metal unless we had other ore.

Mr. RICHES—Private companies are installing plant in the Northern Territory for this purpose.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—At Rum Jungle, in the Northern Territory, there is a plant for producing uranium oxide. It is not exactly the same type of plant as at Port Pirie, but it is similar. That uranium is under contract to the Combined Development Agency and would not be available for treatment in South Australia. There are other activities in the Northern Territory and I understand the Federal Government is arranging overseas contracts for the uranium oxide produced thereat. There is no overseas market for uranium metal. Overseas plants are established for the conversion of the oxide and if metal were produced here those plants would be rendered obsolete. We are conducting experiments at present, but they have not proceeded beyond the early experimental stages. We do not know what results will be achieved or whether it will be economic to produce uranium metal. We would have to discover a source of raw material

and, after the production of metal, a source for sale. English scientists have examined the work we are undertaking and have expressed surprise at its calibre. The experiments are not conclusive.

Line passed.

#### MINISTER OF MARINE.

Harbors Board Department, £1,425,889.

Mr. DAVIS—There appears no reference in these Estimates to work on the Port Pirie harbour. Some time ago the Minister showed me the programme of work planned there. It included the deepening of the harbour to allow a low water mark of 27ft. and a high water mark of 34ft. Provision was also made for renovating and altering the wharves. Can the Treasurer indicate whether that programme is still under consideration or whether it has been shelved?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The matters referred to come under the Loan Estimates, not the Revenue Estimates. I will ascertain the programme for the Loan Estimates and advise the honourable member in the near future.

Line passed.

Miscellaneous, £7,500—passed.

#### MINISTER OF RAILWAYS.

Railways Department, £15,249,142.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—My question relates to the Way and Works Branch, the item "Assistant Chief Engineer, Signal and Telegraph Engineer, etc." Last week I asked the Minister of Railways whether the present signalling system was sufficiently adequate for the faster diesel services on suburban lines. That system was designed to cater for a maximum speed of 40 miles an hour, but I understand that the new diesels can attain that speed within 40 seconds and a maximum speed of 55 or better. Has a report been received on whether the present signalling system is adequate for the safe working of rail services? A recent publication said that both the Minister and Commissioner agreed that in the three accidents the drivers concerned had long experience and excellent records. The Railways Commissioners of the various States who are meeting in Adelaide realize the need for improved services in order to meet competition from road traffic. Has the new equipment to speed up services been proved to the satisfaction of the Commissioner? If the accidents were not due to fault on the part of the drivers they must have been due to the faulty control of services. Is the present system of signalling able to cope with the increased speeds? I want to see an efficient

service. Not so long ago the Railways Department had some trouble with derailments on the hills line when the new diesel engines were used. An inquiry resulted in improvements and the problem was solved. Now, apart from a few landslides, little trouble is experienced. Are the men working the new type suburban trains being overtaxed and are they becoming fatigued through long hours of work? Is six or seven the number of train trips a day now compared with three or four in the days of steam? There is a big responsibility on the drivers in keeping to timetables and at the same time watching signals closely.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The item referred to deals only with salaries. I understand the honourable member wants a report as to whether the present signalling system is efficient for the more speedy suburban services and whether the department has discovered the reason for the three accidents. The only report I have seen showed that the signalling devices were in order but had not been heeded. I will get a report on whether the devices are effective now and whether the men concerned in driving the trains are kept on duty for long hours and become so fatigued that they cannot carry out their duties efficiently. Those matters are not covered by any information I have on behalf of the Minister because they are not included under this line.

Mr. HUTCHENS—Can some of the vacant timber-frame homes owned by the Department be removed to house employees now occupying substandard solid construction departmental homes? Can some relief be given to passengers at present travelling under unfavourable conditions on the Henley Beach line?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I am unfamiliar with both those topics, but I will have them investigated forthwith and give the honourable member a reply, probably on Wednesday or Thursday next.

Mr. TAPPING—In view of the fact that some country refreshment rooms have been let to private contractors over the past year, why has the grant under that heading been increased?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The increase is due to an increase in the basic wage and the payment of some arrears.

Mr. KING—I refer to the shuttle service which is being used to cope with traffic problems over the River Murray at Renmark and which is now the only link between districts south and north of the river. Thousands of pounds were spent in keeping ferries and roads open as long as possible and we hoped that

the railways would be used as an extension of the highway. The position may continue, however, for another six months and existing facilities may not be able to cope with the needs of summer traffic. On the Paringa Road the water level must drop another 7ft. before we can attempt to restore road services, therefore it may be a long time before we can use either the road or the ferries. The Railways Department, as a State instrumentality, should be authorized to equip the Renmark and Paringa railway yards with dead-end ramps or other suitable loading equipment and rolling stock to enable a much larger volume of vehicular traffic to be moved than is possible at present. Passenger arrangements are satisfactory, but the position concerning vehicular traffic is approaching a crisis. If these facilities were provided the patronage would be worth while and the cost would be a small premium for rendering what is after all a public service. The State Government has a great responsibility in this matter and I trust it will do something about it.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Government has already provided in these Estimates £800,000 for flood relief. Consequently, we have gone heavily into deficit and we will be embarrassed to find the cash necessary even to maintain the departments. The Railways Commissioner cannot increase transportation facilities on the river except on receipt of a subsidy. The State has come forward with flood relief of an amount never before provided. We have strained every resource to try to assist, and having done that, that must be the amount of assistance we can give. We cannot add on and on to it in extraneous ways. We will do the utmost to assist, but if the Railways Commissioner asks for a subsidy to carry out this service we have no way of providing it except from the line already voted on by Parliament, which would mean that it would come out of the assistance granted to settlers in other respects. We have no spare resources, and are already subsidizing the railways very heavily to maintain present services.

Line passed.

Transport Control Board, £16,517—passed.

MINISTER OF ROADS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

Office of Minister, £5,641—passed.

Highways and Local Government Department, £298,921.

Mr. BROOKMAN—Can the Minister inform me whether the Highways Department will employ private contractors to a greater extent than in the past? We are short of money

and have had very great difficulty in getting some jobs done. I believe the department has been too slow to use private contractors, whose use would alleviate some of our difficulties. It has a great deal of equipment but it is not always in the right place, so a tremendous amount is lying idle all the time. I would like this amount reduced and some work turned over to private contractors or done on private hire. We have to pay heavy costs for capital equipment, and although contractors would have to pay as much the equipment would be used more regularly. We cannot use equipment as efficiently as private contractors, who depend on efficiency to make a living.

The department has to maintain expensive camps for the men hundreds of miles from Adelaide, and the employees have to travel miles each day to get to their work. I am not criticizing the department, but I cannot see how it can run such an organization efficiently. I have often heard it said that contractors, not knowing what types of material they will need, have to allow safe margins in their tenders, but nevertheless the system of hiring men and plant is a very satisfactory one. With an efficient staff of qualified men in the employ of the Highways Department to supervise private contractors there would not be the necessity for such a tremendous organization as the Highways Department. When the present Minister of Roads was appointed he mentioned that private contractors would be used more and more, but I have not noticed any increase in the work given to them. Some schemes in America are so large that they must be handled by combined companies, but we would not have such large schemes. If the Government encouraged private enterprise in this respect we would have far more contractors and better use would be made of the machinery. We would not have expensive bulldozers doing only a very few hours work. I do not say that the Highways Department is not getting work done, but much of its equipment is not being used efficiently.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The department has many activities. It makes money available to councils for the construction and maintenance of roads. Councils generally arrange for contracts and submit them to the Highways Department for approval. I understand that the supply of materials is by contract. I know of no Government department supplying them. I believe that 90 per cent of cartage is also done by contract, and in almost every case the spraying of bitumen is by contract.

For some work special equipment is necessary, and private contractors have not been prepared to buy this equipment on the assumption that contracts will be available to them. There has been tremendous pressure by councils on the department to supply plant for certain types of work. Great pressure has been exerted on the department for the grading of ovals, school grounds and the preparation of recreation grounds.

It is found that contractors cannot be readily found to go into places away from settlements at rates which would be competitive with the cost at which the work could be done by the department. During the war years intolerable pressure was placed on the Highways Department to do work which councils themselves would normally undertake. No contractor would undertake to buy some of the huge plant necessary on the supposition that he would get a contract. Some equipment was purchased for a contract in the Adelaide Hills and when it was completed the contractor claimed that he should be given additional work immediately. We have another type of case which arises not infrequently where a private contractor, having secured a contract, then comes to the Government and asks it to finance the purchase of plant. The whole question is not as simple as Mr. Brookman assumes.

The Highways Department has called and will continue to call for tenders wherever that is practicable, but the Government reserves the right to undertake a job itself if it is found that the contract price is above a reasonable cost, allowing for the contractor to make a reasonable margin of profit. The honourable member will find that a large percentage of the money provided for road-making is for the supply and carting of materials and the spraying of bitumen. As far as I know the Highways Commissioner is not maintaining one crushing plant. The materials are supplied by contract. Much of the money provided to the department is not spent by it, but by the district councils. Grants for this year were reviewed by Cabinet only last week, and they constitute a major portion of the money provided for road-making. Councils are using the services of contractors to a large extent. I assure the honourable member that the position is being closely watched.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I consider that if anything we have gone too far with the contract system. Where we have a regular Highways Department gang working with efficient machinery we get a better and cheaper job done than if the work were undertaken by a

contractor or a district council who may not have such efficient machinery. One aspect which does not receive sufficient consideration from sponsors of the contract system is that much of the work being done and much of that necessary in the very near future relates to repairs. How is a contract price to be set for that type of work? I am not satisfied with the supervision of the Highways Department over country roads generally, and particularly over the expenditure by district councils on country roads. I am not casting any reflection on the department's inspectors. The trouble is that we have not enough inspectors. Their districts are too large and I am sure if we had more inspectors we would save much money on road construction and maintenance. The inspector in charge of the northern areas has an impossible job, for he has to supervise all road work on the West Coast and north of Clare. The Government should make the inspectorial districts much smaller and station resident inspectors in them to supervise the work of the Highways Department and assist council engineers. The Treasurer said the Highways Department did not own one stone crushing plant, but it should establish one in the north in conjunction with district councils and the Railways Commissioner, all of whom would benefit by not having to cart stone such great distances.

Mr. HAMBOUR—The item "Salaries and Wages, £298,000" represents four per cent of the money available to the Highways Department, but we should be told how all that money will be spent. Much has been said about the work performed by private contractors and the work carried out by the department and councils. All the metal required by district councils is crushed by private contractors, and almost all the bitumen is supplied by private enterprise, but why does the department intend erecting a bitumen depot in the South-East? The bitumen firms can supply bitumen from their mobile depots, and I am afraid this will be another Government department that will increase the cost of administration beyond the present four per cent of the money available to it. It is wrong that members of Parliament do not know how the department's £7,000,000 will be spent. It has equipment worth about £2,000,000 and we do not know where it is being used, and I doubt whether the department does.

The CHAIRMAN—To which item is the honourable member referring?

Mr. HAMBOUR—To the cost of administration, £298,000. That is too much because

it is four per cent of the department's total allocation of £7,000,000. I am afraid the department is not carrying out its work to the satisfaction of the people. I have the greatest admiration for most of its officers, but the Leader of the Opposition said that district resident inspectors should be appointed, and I agree that the State should be divided into smaller areas for this purpose. However, if more inspectors are appointed the cost of administration will be increased further. More than 20 years ago the Government of the day drew up a road programme, and one road in my district was prepared for sealing. It has been graded to such an extent that the base has disappeared. The department suggests it costs £80 a mile to maintain a loose surface road. I can quite believe that. However, I disagree with the suggestion of one of the department's senior officers that it costs £300 a mile annually to maintain a sealed road.

The department should prepare a long range programme of road works—say, for a period of 10 years. People would then know what they could expect and when. People in my district want sealed lateral roads because the rainfall is high and although a road may be in good condition one week, after heavy rainfall it depreciates quickly. A cap should be placed on the roads to keep the moisture from them. It is useless for the department to suggest that it cannot plan ahead. It is aware of the approximate amount of revenue it will receive and could plan on that basis.

Mr. RICHES—I can remember two statements being made last March: one to the effect that the department planned to expend £20,000,000 in a three-year period and the other that it planned to spend £50,000,000 in 10 years. The proposed programmes were a disappointment to my district because no provision was made for the Quorn and Port Augusta roads. Mr. Brookman suggested that more work should be undertaken by private contractors and less by the department. I hope the Government will not do anything that may place it in the hands of contractors. Some work is essential for the State's development and we should not have to wait until somebody can make a profit from the work before it is undertaken. I would like the department to acquire greater pools of machinery and make them available to councils when possible. It is false economy unnecessarily to duplicate heavy road-making equipment.

The experience of councils with which I have been associated is that work cannot be under-

taken more satisfactorily or cheaper by private contract than by the councils. The same would apply to a much greater degree in respect of work carried out by a properly supervised Government department. If a number of people are profiting from road-making in South Australia it is obvious that our expenses are heavier in proportion to the work actually performed. As the Leader pointed out, it is beyond the capacity of district engineers to perform their duties. The districts should be reduced in size to enable the engineers to render more practical assistance to councils which at present find it beyond their financial resources to engage the services of an engineer.

Mr. SHANNON—I was perturbed, as was the member for Alexandra (Mr. Brookman), to notice the proposed increase of £28,305 in the administration costs of this department. Upon his appointment, the Minister said it would be his department's intention to pursue a more energetic policy of private contracting for much of its work. I am not surprised that members opposite want to increase the activities of the Civil Service. It is always their policy to speak of pools of plant scattered about the State for the benefit of councils. They do not consider what it would cost the State. We would not have to buy many big earth-moving machines to run into an expenditure of thousands of pounds. I agree with Mr. Brookman's comments about the inefficient use of our existing highways plant. Every day I pass work being undertaken on the Princes Highway and I have noticed sufficient plant lying idle to have constructed an entirely new road. Had that plant been owned privately it could have been used to have constructed a new road up through the spur of Waterfall Gully to the Crafrers Summit—as was suggested by the ex-Commissioner, Mr. Fleming—in the time it has taken in the attempt to render the existing highway capable of carrying the present traffic. I realize that the actual sealing of a road should be undertaken at the direction of a properly qualified road engineer, but private enterprise could easily engage in the earth-moving work that is necessary in the formation of roads. We have had a wet winter and that has caused much of the loss of time in the work in the hills district but not all of it. On occasions when a gang has been working there has been enough equipment lying idle to do as much work again, if not more. If we pool equipment as proposed we will get less work done on our roads. I support Mr. Hambour in one respect. I am opposed to the Highways Department

trying to take over the supply of hot bitumen for the sealing of roads. If the department does the work we will have a greater cost per mile of road.

Mr. Hambour spoke about mobile equipment being available to move the bitumen to any place in the State where needed. If the department did this work costs would be greater. Stone crushing should be the last work to be done by the department. The Stirling District Council has a very good stone in its quarry and much of it is supplied to the department. I favour councils, where they have suitable stone, establishing crushing plants. Then when the plants were idle men usually engaged in them would be employed elsewhere. If the department did the work there would be men to operate only the crushing plant and when it did not work besides idle plant there would be idle men. The multiplication of the department's activities as proposed would not be successful. I would rather water down its work so that private enterprise could do it. Mr. Brookman referred to the formation of roads. In his district there is a good private contractor who does work usually done by the department and at a reduced cost per mile. I agree with Mr. O'Halloran that the district engineers have to supervise areas that are too large and in consequence they do not make a careful and correct survey of work to be done.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Mr. Hambour suggested that the Highways Department should take members into its confidence regarding work being done. I agree that it is necessary for members to know something about the activities of the department. Each year the Commissioner presents to Parliament a comprehensive report on the department's activities.

Mr. Hambour—It is 12 months too late.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It is a continuing report. I agree that this year's report has not yet been presented, but if the honourable member looked at last year's report he would have found the answers to three-quarters of the questions he asked.

Mr. Hambour—I said I knew the answers.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—If the honourable member knew them he gave no indication of it. Last year the report of the department contained the following about the difficulties associated with bitumen:—

Production of bitumen from Australian refineries continued to increase and approximately 6,000 tons were received during the year from the Vacuum Oil Company Refinery at Altona, Victoria, and 600 tons from the Shell Company in South Australia. As expected,

increased production has resulted in a further reduction in price paid by the Department and this year the price was £2 16s. per ton less than that paid during the previous 12 months. Consumption during the year was approximately 7,100 tons, an increase of 200 tons over that used during 1953-54. Following the use in New South Wales and Victoria of bulk bitumen, in lieu of bitumen supplied in drums, an investigation was made into its possible introduction to this State. An inspection was made by Departmental officers of methods in use in those States, as a result of which it was decided to accept bitumen in bulk as much as possible, as it is estimated that a saving of at least £6 per ton can be effected. During the year a small quantity of bulk bitumen was used at Port Wakefield for the pre-mixing of screenings in a "continuous mix" Barber-Greene plant. The heated bitumen was carted in bulk from Adelaide by the Shell Company in road tankers and pumped into the Departmental bitumen heating kettles at Port Wakefield, from whence it was transferred to the mixer in the normal way. It was not possible to make use of this method extensively as the Department does not yet have the necessary road tankers and storage tanks.

[Midnight.]

That comprehensive report sets out the trend of costs, where and how the money is spent, and other information. Some criticisms by honourable members are entirely contradictory. For instance, the member for Light (Mr. Hambour) said that the 4 per cent overhead was too high, and another member who professed to agree with Mr. Hambour also said that more district engineers should be appointed to supervise the work, but those statements seemed contradictory to me. As Treasurer and Minister in charge of prices, I know that in price fixation a margin of 40 per cent for overhead is not regarded as excessive. I would be happy to trade on four per cent as a general average. Without any direction from the Government the Highways Commissioner has divided his department into several districts, appointed an engineer in charge of each, and trained as many efficient engineers as possible to supervise the work. He even visited Great Britain and other countries to recruit officers. His report contains all the information and figures required by honourable members.

Mr. Hambour—I read them every year; we receive them in councils.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I am pleased that the honourable member is so well informed; I had not realized it.

Line passed.

Miscellaneous, £41,333—passed.

#### APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2).

The Estimates having been adopted by the House, an Appropriation Bill for £35,191,153 was founded in Committee of Ways and Means, 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 is for the appropriation of £49,191,153, details of which are set out in the Estimates which have just been dealt with by the House. Clause 2 provides for the further issue of £35,191,153, being the difference between the total of the two Supply Bills passed (£14,000,000) and the total of the appropriation required in this Bill. Clause 3 sets out the amount to be appropriated and the details of the appropriations to the various departments and functions. This clause also provides that increases of salaries or wages which become payable pursuant to any return made by proper constituted authority can be paid and that the amount available in the Governor's Appropriation Fund shall be increased by the amount necessary to pay the increases.

Clause 4 authorizes the Treasurer to pay moneys from time to time authorized by warrants issued by the Governor and provides that the receipts obtained from the payees shall be the discharge to the Treasurer for the moneys paid. Clause 5 authorizes the use of Loan funds or other public funds if the moneys received from the Commonwealth and the general revenue of the State are insufficient to make the payments authorized by this Bill. Clause 6 gives authority to make payments in respect of a period prior to July 1, 1956, or at a rate in excess of the rate in force under any return made by the Public Service Board or any regulation of the South Australian Railways Commissioner. Clause 7 gives the authority to make the payments, and is in the usual form.

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

#### LOAN MONEY APPROPRIATION (WORKING ACCOUNTS) BILL.

His Excellency the Governor, by message, recommended the appropriation of such moneys as might be required for the purposes mentioned in the Bill.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 12.17 a.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, October 10, at 2 p.m.