HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, October 16, 1956.

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

QUESTIONS.

HIRE-PURCHASE INTEREST RATES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Did the Premier notice a report in last Friday's *Advertiser* that the New South Wales Government was considering amending its hire-purchase legislation to provide for a limitation of interest rates that may be charged on hire-purchase transactions? Has his Government considered the advisability of introducing legislation to control hire-purchase transactions, particularly to regulate interest rates?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I saw the report, and I think it stated that fluctuating rates of interest would be fixed—the larger the loan the lower the rate of interest; but the Commonwealth Government has called a conference of State Premiers for November 9 when general questions on steps to be taken to stabilize the economy will be considered, and this may be one for discussion. Generally speaking, the demand for hire-purchase commodities has fallen in some instances, and as hire-purchase presents a valuable outlet for the sale of many commodities produced in our factories the Government is anxious not to disrupt their sale at this time because the employment position is involved. The matter raised by the honourable member will be discussed and I will advise him of the decision if the Government decides to make any alteration of the present practice.

FLOODED AREAS REHABILITATION.

Mr. JENKINS—Has the Government yet considered work that will be involved in reclaiming pasture areas on the Murray, and when that work is commenced will the Minister of Irrigation consider employing some of the settlers in those areas who are trying to re-establish themselves with small herds, as they would be glad of this work to keep themselves going?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—Those matters will be considered when the work is commenced, which I hope will not be in the far distant future.

Mr. JENKINS—There is a move by settlers at Jervois to irrigate high ground unaffected by the flood. If this can be done it will enable them to bring back their milking herds several months earlier than if they have to wait for the dewatering of swamp land. Holdings of high ground vary from 50 to 100 acres which, if irrigated, would produce millet within six weeks of sowing, and lucerne, if sown in October, could be cut in February. The lift from the river is from 50 to 70ft., and a 35 horsepower pump would do the job. It is estimated that over 100 cows can be maintained on 50 acres of millet and lucerne, and even when the swamp land is reclaimed this augmentation of the swamp lands will provide a continuity of fodder, which will be invaluable and enormously increase the milk output, as well as future insurance against flood. Settlers are willing to undertake this development and are certain of the economics of the proposal once these crops are established. Can the Premier say whether long-term loans can be made available to the settlers through the State Bank, or any other lending institution, for this purpose?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will have the honourable member's suggestions examined, but I do not think it would be possible to give a general answer because the conditions applying in each holding would have to be considered by the bank. Some settlers may have a good equity in their holdings, but others may not have good security. Some may not be able to assign any security because another lending institution may have a prior mortgage. The question of how much money is involved would be important from the bank's point of view. I do not know how much each settler would require to carry out the honourable member's suggestions, but I will have them examined by the Lands Department and then see whether any steps can be taken with the assistance of State Bank money.

GARDEN SUBURB COMMISSIONER.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—When I asked a question on September 5 about the appointment of a Garden Suburb Commissioner the Minister of Lands replied:—

Applications have not yet been called for the position of Garden Suburb Commissioner, following representations made by a deputation which waited upon the Minister of Local Government urging that steps be taken to amalgamate the garden suburb with the Mitcham Corporation. It is understood that a committee representing the garden suburb and the Mitcham Corporation is now conferring.

The press reported today that a meeting of 250 Colonel Light Gardens ratepayers last night unanimously decided to ask the Government to appoint a new Garden Suburb Commissioner and that the meeting was called by a group

of citizens headed by Mr. R. S. Lee. It now seems clear that the ratepayers of Colonel Light Gardens desire to retain the garden suburb as constituted at present. Will the Premier ascertain from the Minister how soon applications will be called for the position of Garden Suburb Commissioner?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—Yes.

UNIFORM TAXATION.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Does the Government intend to join with the Victorian and New South Wales Governments in a challenge to uniform taxation legislation before the High Court?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—It is not the Government's intention to join that action at present. If the challenge to the High Court were successful it would not in any way limit the Commonwealth Government's power to tax on exactly the same standard as at present, so the challenge to the High Court cannot in itself solve any problem. We would still have to make an agreement with the Commonwealth, if we went into the taxing field, so that taxes would not be boosted to an unwarranted degree. I think the solution of this problem is for the Commonwealth to have one uniform tax law and to retire from the income tax field to the extent of 35 per cent of the present collections and enable the States, within the framework of that same tax law, to impose the rates they believed to be necessary for the management of State enterprises and activities. That would mean that a State which was careful in its administration could bestow some advantage upon its citizens, and that the States' financing activities could be continued without the present difficulty that every time there is an increase in the cost of living the Commonwealth Treasury gets additional revenue from taxation but the States get additional financial hardship.

TENNYSON WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. TAPPING—An extract from a letter I have received from a doctor states:—

I am writing to draw attention to the grave condition of our local water supply: I live at Seaview Road, Tennyson, and two days ago we had our first warm day and the supply of water to my house was reduced to a mere trickle.

Several people have complained about the water supply to this district, and I ask the Minister representing the Minister of Works whether he has any information on this subject?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The Minister of Works has supplied me with the following reply:—

The 12in. main in Military Road is closed down at present to enable it to be cleaned and cement lined to improve the supply to this area during the coming summer, and while the work is being carried out services in the district are being supplied from a small temporary bye-pass main. This temporary main was of insufficient capacity to meet the heavy demand for water on Saturday last when hot weather was experienced, and pressures in the locality were therefore unsatisfactory. It is anticipated that work on the 12in. main will be completed by the end of this week when it will be restored to service and satisfactory pressures will then be available again.

MISTLETOE SPRAY.

Mr. DUNNAGE—Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to the question I asked recently concerning the effectiveness of a spray that has been developed for killing mistletoe where attached to trees, particularly in some of our reserves?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The Conservator of Forests has advised me that the spray 2,4D has been found reasonably effective in controlling mistletoe as an injection and as a spray. Spraying has not been tested in South Australia, but experience in Western Australia on certain eucalypts has resulted in an almost 100 per cent kill of mistletoe. Considerable care, however, must be taken with the hormone concentration to avoid killing the host tree. In South Australia the injection method has been tried following C.S.I.R.O. work, and approximately 50 per cent of mistletoe have been killed and a further 25 per cent were affected severely. If it is desired to remove any possibility of affecting the host tree, however, manual removal would be the best method. The second recommendation would be spraying and the third would be by the injection method.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS.

Mr. HUTCHENS—In this morning's *Advertiser*, under the heading "People Blamed for Operations," the following article appeared:—

It was partly the fault of the Australian people that general practitioners performed more operations than they should, noted British gynaecologist and obstetrician Professor Andrew Claye said yesterday. . . .

"In Australia, a doctor loses face if he won't undertake an operation." . . .

"If he doesn't feel capable of performing an operation, the right thing to do is to refer it to someone who can." . . .

"I have seen quite a number of women with the scars of operations which should never have been done."

Has the Premier seen this article? Can he say whether our general practitioners are qualified to undertake most operations before they are permitted to practice? Do they have to satisfy examiners that they are qualified before being permitted to practice, and is it not a fact that if they run the risk of undertaking an operation they are incapable of performing, they may be struck off the roll of medical practitioners?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I did not see the article referred to and would not express any views upon it. The qualifications of medical practitioners are set forth in an Act of Parliament. I have been informed by outside, as well as South Australian, authorities that the South Australian Medical School is extremely good, that it has a high standard and that the medical practitioners trained there are also of a high standard. I believe the South Australian standard is indeed high.

RENMARK WEST SCHOOL.

Mr. KING—Has the Minister of Education a reply to the question I asked last Thursday concerning a water supply for the Renmark West school?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The Architect-in-Chief has reported to me that his building inspector is at present obtaining prices for the installation of a septic tank system and also for the water supply to the school yard at the Renmark West primary school. If a satisfactory price is forthcoming, the work will be put in hand as soon as possible thereafter.

PAYNEHAM SCHOOL FENCE.

Mr. JENNINGS—Recently, after correspondence with the Minister of Education, I was informed that it was proposed that the fence around the new Payneham Primary School should consist of one side cyclone and the other three sides ordinary posts and wire. Because of its situation the school has three main frontages and it is felt that because of its beauty there should be a cyclone fence all round it. Will the Minister of Education take up the matter with the department to see whether that can be done?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes.

FRANKTON BUS ROUTE.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Has the Minister of Education anything further to report from the Minister of Roads regarding the Frankton bus route?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes, I have a further instalment in the series. The Minister of Roads has supplied me with the following report from the Commissioner of Highways:—

The Education Department's Transport Officer has not requested assistance for the Frankton bus route. The district council requested a subsidy of £750 for a deviation of the Neales school bus route but this was not granted as the council had received substantial assistance on other roads up to the limit of the funds available.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I am not at all satisfied with the replies I have received. I intend to pursue this matter until I get satisfaction, not on the question of importance but of principle. Can the Minister of Education say whether his transport officer approached the Highways Department concerning the new Frankton bus route? Will the Minister obtain from the Highways Department its reasons for considering that the council in question had received its share of the Federal rural grant in view of the £400,000 increase this year?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The subject matter of the question appears to have all the elements of a typical who-dun-it or who-hasn't-dun it. It seems to me that the plot thickens or the mystery deepens. However, I shall be only too pleased to obtain replies to all the honourable member's questions.

SEALING OF NORTHERN ROAD.

Mr. LOVEDAY—Has the Minister of Education a reply to the question I asked on October 10, about the sealing of the road from the Nelshaby turnoff to the Bungana transformer?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The Commissioner of Highways reports as follows:—

This department recognizes the advantages which will be gained by the construction of a by-pass road from Nelshaby turnoff to the Bungana transformer. As part of this section is through low-lying swampy ground the cost of road construction would be comparatively high and the allocation of funds for this work cannot be justified in the near future. On account of the clayey nature of the soil it would not be advisable to encourage traffic to use this track until such time as an all-weather road can be provided.

WOMBATS IN ELLISTON AREA.

Mr. BOCKELBERG—Can the Minister of Agriculture say whether wombats are protected in the Elliston area and, if so, when was it done?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—My information is that wombats are not protected in the

Elliston area. A proclamation dated some years back provided that in the electoral district of Flinders, as then constituted, wombats were not protected. I think the question has arisen in the honourable member's mind because the electoral district has been altered and he wonders whether the proclamation was affected thereby. The reply is that the proclamation as issued in 1923 in respect of the areas in which wombats were protected has remained unaltered despite the alteration of the electoral district, and therefore at present there is no close season for wombats in the Elliston district.

MURRAY RIVER FLOOD RELIEF.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Premier received a communication from the Federal Government about the amount of money by which it will subsidize the efforts of the South Australian Government in providing relief in flooded areas along the River Murray and, if not, when does he expect to receive a reply? Will the Commonwealth money cover losses occasioned by the floods in some of the low-lying areas, particularly the townships flooded out, and the cost involved in removing portions of the townships to higher levels?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have received no communication as to the amount the Commonwealth will provide towards flood relief, except, of course, that we have received £50,000 for the Lord Mayor's Relief Fund to deal with hardship cases. I have discussed the matter with the Federal Minister and I am hopeful that a decision may be reached this week. I understand there has been a delay because the Federal Treasurer has been absent overseas and will not be back until later this week. We do not know yet the conditions that the Commonwealth may attach to any grant it makes, so I cannot say what items will be considered for flood relief when the money is available. I think it extremely unlikely that money would be provided by the Commonwealth for altering or resiting towns. I believe we would probably damage our case in asking for assistance for this purpose because applications by the other States for money for this purpose have been repeatedly rejected. A large demand in connection with the Hunter River floods, for instance, was completely rejected, and I believe to make a claim along those lines would in itself not be advantageous to our general claim, so I have not advanced it.

SIZES OF SHEETING.

Mr. COUMBE—Has the Minister of Lands a reply to the question I asked last week regarding short lengths of sheeting?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—This matter has already been dealt with by the Lands Department. I have a report which says:—

By circular issued on September 20 the Warden of Standards drew the attention of all corporations and councils to the alleged practice of some traders selling hemmed bed sheets short of the stated length and asking that the matter be investigated and appropriate action taken to ensure that it was discontinued. Councils are responsible for enforcing the provisions of the Weights and Measures Act. A copy of the circular as issued is attached. Information to hand from councils indicates that once the attention of traders has been drawn to the fact that this practice is contrary to the Weights and Measures Act there has been ready compliance in correctly stating the length.

I have a copy of the circular and will be glad to make it available to any honourable member who wishes to see it.

WINNINOWIE TRAVELLING STOCK RESERVE.

Mr. RICHES—With the construction of the bitumen road between Port Augusta and Port Pirie the former stock route was rendered unnecessary and closed. It took place several years ago.

The Hon. C. S. Hincks—Are you referring to the Winninowie Reserve?

Mr. RICHES—Yes. Since then applications have been made from time to time by adjoining landowners to have a portion of the stock route allotted to them in order that their holdings can be increased to something more approximating living areas. Earlier this year the Lands Department advised applicants that the department would seek the approval of Parliament for such action. Can the Minister of Lands say whether the department has taken any action and what has transpired in the matter?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I understand that the honourable member conferred with the Director of Lands, who has given me the following reply:—

In terms of section 136 of the Pastoral Act, 1936-1950, it is necessary for plans to be laid before Parliament for 60 days. The plans were laid before Parliament on August 21, 1956. The period will expire on October 19, 1956. It will then be necessary for resolutions agreeing to the resumption to be carried by both Houses of Parliament before the area can be dealt with as Crown lands.

CRASH HELMETS FOR MOTOR CYCLISTS.

Mr. QUIRKE—On September 19, in reply to my question regarding the compulsory use of crash helmets by motor cyclists, the Treasurer promised to refer the matter to the State

Traffic Committee. Recently a motor traffic constable was killed in a regrettable motor cycle accident, and I believe it is time something was done in this matter. Has the Premier received a reply from the State Traffic Committee?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—No.

HILLS HIGHWAY.

Mr. SHANNON—The Highways Department has virtually completed the formation work on that part of the hills highway from Measday's Hill to Crafers and the surveyors have their pegs in place on that part of the road leading to Adelaide from the Devil's Elbow, on the property known as *The Elbow* purchased by the Government. My constituents are anxious to know the programme for widening those parts of the road not already dealt with, namely, those below the *Eagle-on-the-Hill* section, some of which present difficulty. Will the Minister of Education, representing the Minister of Roads, obtain a report on this matter, indicating the time likely to be involved in the work?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I shall be pleased to ascertain the position from my colleague and let the honourable member have a reply as soon as possible.

TOWN PLANNER.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—According to this morning's press Cabinet has approved the appointment of the new Town Planner, and as there is much interest in this matter, can the Premier say how many applications were received for the position and who is the successful applicant?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The press forecast that the Town Planner would be appointed on Thursday next, but it is not usual to anticipate the decisions of His Excellency the Governor in Executive Council; therefore such appointments are not announced until they have been actually made. That is a courtesy extended to His Excellency. I will, however, advise the honourable member confidentially tomorrow of the number and names of applicants, and who is likely to be appointed.

EMPLOYMENT IN AIRCRAFT INDUSTRY.

Mr. LAWN—I wish to bring to the Premier's attention an important and disturbing matter. About 12 months ago Chrysler (Australia) Limited employed nearly 1,000 employees at Finsbury on the production of aircraft for the Commonwealth Government, but production gradually slackened off until about a week ago only 600 were employed. Sir Eric Harrison, the Commonwealth Minister in charge of aircraft production, advised that his Government was going out of the business of aircraft production and that the necessary aircraft would be purchased overseas. Last week more men were put off and a strong rumour is current that soon all production will cease. During the last fortnight, however, the Prime Minister has said that the information given by Sir Eric Harrison was incorrect, but the employees still at Finsbury are worried about their future prospects. The press reported last week that Vickers Limited at Penfield had indicated that work on aircraft for the Commonwealth Government had ceased. Further, yesterday 62 employees of the Department of Aircraft Production at Parafield received notice. In order to inform employees in aircraft establishments, will the Premier ascertain from the Commonwealth Government its future intentions concerning aircraft production, particularly in this State?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I recognize the importance of the honourable member's question: how necessary it is for persons engaged in any activity to know whether their employment is reasonably secure. I will do my utmost to ascertain the programme of employment that may be followed in South Australia, and advise the honourable member.

ATOMIC TESTS AND CIVIL DEFENCE.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Has the Premier a reply to the question I asked the Acting Leader of the Government last week concerning the possibility of Parliamentary representatives from this Parliament being present at the next atomic bomb test at Maralinga?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Minister referred this matter to me but I have not communicated with the Prime Minister on it. The problem of invitations to Maralinga is causing the Commonwealth Government considerable concern because once the door is opened it is open for everyone in the class concerned to seek representation. I will, however, examine the problem to see if there is some method whereby Parliamentary representation can be arranged. I believe that it is an important experience for a member to be able to see the type of work being carried out for it is of unusual interest to this State and will have a great bearing on our thinking in future wars, and on defence measures to meet this new type of weapon.

Mr. DUNNAGE—The Premier was present last week at an atomic explosion at Maralinga. Can he say, subject to security precautions, what took place and what was his reaction to the explosion of the bomb?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—From the military point of view the testing of weapons is important, but on that matter I have no information to give the House beyond saying that the blast from the bomb appeared to me to be very powerful, though I was assured it was not a large bomb. We were standing probably seven miles from the explosion, facing away from it, but the effect was exciting and momentous. What impressed me was the steps being taken in connection with civil defence. I am sure the information being obtained will be of great value for military authorities and for the protection of civilians.

Mr. Riches—Making the use of atomic bombs safer?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I do not think it will ever be safe to use them because many countries have atomic bombs, but the tests at Maralinga will enable our authorities to judge what protection can be provided for civilians, and surely that is of great importance. These tests also enable experts to judge the radiation from atomic weapons and what precautions should be taken in this matter. A most careful check was taken of the after effects of the blast. Almost immediately after the explosion air force planes flew through the cloud and continued to do so as it drifted across the desert until there was no radio-activity discernible by their instruments. The observations provided information of inestimable value regarding the shifting and protection of civilians. Frequently radiation is not immediately dangerous: it becomes dangerous in many instances only if a person is subject to it for a considerable time. I believe that, with these explosions, every possible precaution is being taken in the interests of public safety and that there is no danger to any centre of population or established community. The tests are held in a remote area and I believe that even the most unfavourable wind, from a safety viewpoint, would have no more effect than to make it impossible to use the range itself for a relatively short period.

Mr. LOVEDAY—Is it the Government's intention to provide the House with detailed reports on the effects of such a blast on human life, vegetation and buildings within the area?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I have no specific information on that point. I was given general information from medical officers and others, but it was not sufficiently detailed to enable me to make an authentic report. Commonwealth authorities are making a close study of the position and the information gained has been most valuable. For instance, it has been proved that shelters which were expected to be relatively safe were completely unsatisfactory. They had two entrances, with the result that the blast swept right through them. I believe that type of information will be available in due course through civil defence authorities. If other information becomes available from the Commonwealth I will advise members.

SECONDHAND MOTOR VEHICLES.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—For some time complaints have been made to the Opposition by various persons about the roadworthiness and general condition of motor vehicles sold to the public by secondhand dealers, and recently a vigorous complaint was received from the Council of Trade Unions at Mount Gambier. I suggest that a form of licensing controlled by a board similar to that under the Lands Agents Act might be seriously considered. Can the Premier say whether the Government will consider appropriate action in this matter, particularly regarding the representations made by dealers on the general condition and roadworthiness of secondhand vehicles?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—I will have the honourable member's suggestions examined to see whether they are practicable and to what extent they can be accepted, and advise him in due course.

HARBOUR CHARGES.

Mr. TAPPING—The outward wharfage in Sydney is 3s. 8d. a ton, in Adelaide it is 5s. 6d., and in Melbourne there is no charge for outward wharfage. As an inducement to exporters and a means of correcting Australia's adverse trade balance, will the Premier examine the possibility of granting wharfage concessions in South Australia similar to those in Melbourne and Sydney?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The honourable member's question was all right until he gave the reasons actuating it. South Australia has consistently had good overseas trade balances, but neither Victoria nor New South Wales has been able to achieve that for many years; in fact, they have had bad trade balances for some time. Obviously, wharfage charges do not have a great bearing on overseas trade balances. It is true that no charge is made in Victoria for outward wharfage, but double

charges are put on all goods coming into that State. That helps the exporter, but not the consumer, because he has to pay more as a result. I believe both import and export wharfage is charged in New South Wales, but I am not so familiar with the position there. I cannot offer the honourable member any hope that it will be possible this year to lower any of our harbour charges, for they were imposed only after the most careful consideration of the State's cash position.

PARINGA-RENMARK RAILWAY SERVICE.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Minister, representing the Minister of Railways, a reply to the question I asked on October 9 relating to the Paringa-Renmark railway shuttle service?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The Minister of Railways has supplied the following report from the Railways Commissioner:—

The substitution of a larger type railcar for the present one used in the service between Paringa and Renmark would enable two rail trucks to be hauled instead of one, but it would take twice as long to load and unload the trucks, with a consequential increase in the train running time of the railcar, from 40 minutes, as at present, to 70 minutes. There are more than 3,000 passenger journeys being made each week, and this lengthening of the time between trips would be to the considerable disadvantage of the passengers, who are certain to object.

The feasibility of providing new loading ramps has been examined, but because of the restricted space available at Paringa the prospect is not promising. However, a senior railway officer will visit Renmark this week, to make an examination on the ground as well as explore other possible ways of improving the position. A greater number of tourist cars are using the service than hitherto, and instructions have been issued that tourist cars are to give way to commercial vehicles and cars belonging to business people in Renmark and district.

LAND TRANSFERS TO NEW AUSTRALIANS.

Mr. RICHES—I understand that in cases of land transfers to New Australians it is necessary for the Minister of Lands to consent to the transactions. I have been advised that in Port Augusta land has been sold to New Australians for more than three times the amount of recent assessments which are regarded as representing the sale value of property. The current feeling is that some New Australians are not getting a fair deal. Can the Minister of Lands say whether, before he gives his consent, an investigation is made into the price paid for the land and, if not, will he take action to ensure that New Australians are not exploited?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The Lands Department has no power to control the price charged for land purchased by New Australians. The department checks the *bona fides* of New Australians to ascertain whether they are suitable persons to own land. It also endeavours, as far as possible, to keep New Australians separate and not congregated in any one locality. The department checks with the immigration authorities and the police whether the New Australians are suitable persons.

RAMPS ON PASTORAL ROADS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Minister representing the Minister of Works a reply to the question I asked last Thursday concerning the advisability of constructing ramps on certain pastoral roads east of Burra?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The Minister of Works has supplied me with the following lengthy report:—

A programme of installing ramps at fence crossings on roads outside district council areas in the northern and western districts has been followed for some years. The extent of this programme is determined by the availability of materials, labour, and funds. Under these limited conditions, the ramps that can be constructed are placed on the more important roads which carry the largest volume of traffic in the northern district. Many ramps have already been placed on the Port Augusta-Woomera Road, on the Hawker-Leigh Creek Road and at the present time they are being placed as opportunity offers on the Hawker-Oraparinna-Blinman Road and on the Blinman-Parachilna Road.

In 1952 a road construction and maintenance organization was established to construct roads serving the station country east of the Burra and to date something like 300 miles of graded roads have been constructed in this area. The honourable member has suggested that consideration be given to placing ramps at the fence crossings on the route traversed by the mailman serving the pastoral country east of Burra. He stated that the mailman serving this area has to pass through 110 gates on his weekly round trip. The cost of installing a ramp with the necessary pits and approaches suitable for this area would be approximately £300 each. To ramp all the fences on these roads would therefore represent an expenditure of about £30,000. When it is realized that the total funds available for the district roads outside of district councils in the northern area this financial year is only £30,000, it is obvious that a programme of extending ramps to the pastoral roads east of the Burra cannot be attempted at present. Even if spread over five years, it would still represent about 16 per cent of the available funds. The rate at which the ramp programme is being carried out will not

allow the department to undertake any ramping of the roads east of Burra for some years at least and there are many other roads which are more important than these and which carry heavier traffic and which are still without ramps.

MURRAY RIVER FLOOD WORK.

Mr. JENKINS—When the flood work by the Engineering and Water Supply Department along the Jervois banks ceased the engineer in charge, Mr. Poole, visited various settlers who had supplied tractors and other machinery for work on the banks with a view to compiling a table of the hours they worked so that they could be compensated for the cost of fuel used. Is the Minister of Lands able to say the amount that will be paid and when?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I have no information on the matter.

ROSEWORTHY COLLEGE ACCOMMODATION.

Mr. STOTT—Has the Minister of Agriculture any further information following on the question I asked about accommodation at the Roseworthy Agriculture College?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—Before the war boarders at the college numbered 70 students. Since the war the number has increased to a maximum of 115 in residence. Temporary accommodation was provided in 1946, and it was, of course, recognized as such. It was planned then to build a modern dormitory block with ablution facilities, etc. The matter was investigated by the Public Works Committee and approved. For several years it was not possible, because of finance, to go on with the building programme. Cabinet approved the acceptance of a tender in March last year and the building is now under way and is expected to be completed within a few months. The accommodation block will provide excellent bedrooms, common rooms, bath rooms and lavatories, and the accommodation then should be in good shape.

TEROWIE MAIN ROAD.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Is the Minister representing the Minister of Works aware that a substantial deterioration in the bitumen road which is the main street through Terowie has taken place recently, and has the Highways Department any plans for re-coating the road in the near future in order to prevent further deterioration?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I will be pleased to get the information for the honourable member.

MAIN ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

Mr. QUIRKE (on notice)—

1. How long has each of the following main roads been under construction:—(*a*) Spalding-Jamestown; (*b*) Saddleworth-Burra?

2. How are they being financed?

3. What part of the construction of each is the responsibility of the district councils concerned and what part of the Highways Department?

4. What is the total cost to date of each?

5. When is it anticipated that they will be completed?

The Hon. B. Pattinson for the Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—The Commissioner of Highways reports—

1. (*a*) Spalding-Jamestown construction commenced January, 1950. (*b*) Saddleworth-Burra construction commenced May, 1951.

2. Finance is being provided from the Highways Fund.

3. (*a*) Spalding-Jamestown—In addition to the overall supervision of the work this department has undertaken the survey, design, setting out, and provision of crushed metal and bituminous sealing. Actual base construction has been carried out by the councils concerned. (*b*) Saddleworth-Burra—In addition to the overall supervision of the work, this department has undertaken the survey, design, setting out and provision of crushed metal. Actual base construction has been carried out by council up to the present. A departmental gang is now continuing with the base construction. No bituminous sealing has yet been done.

4. (*a*) Spalding-Jamestown, £210,185; (*b*) Saddleworth-Burra, £54,167.

5. (*a*) Spalding-Jamestown.—It is anticipated this road will be completed this summer. (*b*) Saddleworth-Burra—The date of completion is indefinite and is dependent upon funds which can be allocated to this work. It is not anticipated that this section will be completed before 1959.

CENTRAL ABORIGINAL RESERVE: MINING RIGHTS.

Mr. Tapping for Mr. DUNSTAN (on notice)—

1. What area of land which was formerly the Central Aboriginal Reserve has been taken over for the purposes of the rocket range?

2. Have mining rights been granted in this area?

3. If so, what number of licences has been granted?

4. Could a list of persons or company of persons who are interested in mining operations in this area be made available?

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

1. Nil.

2. Yes.

3. One.

4. Southwestern Mining Limited, 44 Grenfell Street, Adelaide.

UNEMPLOYMENT RELIEF.

Mr. Tapping for Mr. LAWN (on notice)—

1. How many males and females were registered with the Commonwealth National Service Office as unemployed on March 30 and September 30, 1956, respectively?

2. How many were in receipt of Commonwealth unemployment relief on each of these dates?

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The Regional Director of Labour and National Service reports:—

1. In March, 1956, the number of persons registered for employment with the Commonwealth Employment Service was 586 males and 522 females, and for September, 1956, the numbers were 1,701 males and 714 females.

2. Unemployment benefit.—March, 1956—31 males, 33 females; September, 1956—529 males, 145 females.

SOUTH-EASTERN DRAINAGE AND DEVELOPMENT.

The SPEAKER laid on the table the report of the Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement on South-Eastern Drainage and Development (Western Division, northern areas), together with map.

Ordered that report be printed.

HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING TIME.

The Legislative Council intimated that it had amended its Standing Orders to alter the meeting time of the council, and future sittings would commence at 2.15 p.m.

STOCK LICKS ACT REPEAL BILL.

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

That the Speaker do now leave the chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to repeal the Stock Licks Act, 1931, to amend the Stock Medicines Act, 1939, to amend the Stock Foods Act, 1941-1948, and for other purposes.

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

ENFIELD GENERAL CEMETERY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands) brought up the following report of the Select Committee, together with minutes of proceedings and evidence:—

The Select Committee, to which the House of Assembly referred the Enfield General Cemetery Act Amendment Bill 1956 on September 20, 1956, has the honour to report:—

1. Your committee met on two occasions and examined the following witnesses:—

Mr. J. P. Cartledge, Assistant Parliamentary Draftsman.

Mr. E. H. Richmond, chairman, Enfield General Cemetery Trust.

Mr. V. F. Roberts, secretary, Enfield General Cemetery Trust.

2. There was no response to advertisements inserted in the *Advertiser* and the *News*, inviting interested persons to give evidence before the Committee.

3. Your committee approves of the proposals contained in the Bill and recommends that it be passed without amendment.

Ordered that report be printed.

Bill taken through Committee without amendment. Committee's report adopted.

ROAD AND RAILWAY TRANSPORT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 11. Page 1014.)

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Edwardstown)—I support the Bill (which is long overdue) as a measure to produce revenue from interstate hauliers who carry heavy loads at high speeds over our roads. Although the maintenance of our main roads is costly, interstate hauliers who have registered their vehicles in other States have been able to operate without contributing to their upkeep. Some interstate hauliers use suburban streets when delivering their loads, therefore district councils should share in the revenue collected under this legislation. True, grants are made from time to time by the Government to councils for the construction of certain roads, but I point out that many of those roads were once the responsibility of the Highways Department.

Most suburban streets were not constructed to carry heavy loads, but in my district I know of a case where a haulier carting a load of more than 15 tons crossed the concrete kerbing and the footpath on to a vacant block, yet no action was taken. The local council argues that the imposition of a five-ton limit on vehicles using its roads would mean a hardship on local residents ordering loads of metal, sand or garden loam, but it should be easy to adopt a reasonable approach in such cases.

The revenue collected under this legislation will go directly to the Roads Fund. What is the Government's attitude on the maximum speed limits of vehicles covered by this legislation? What has been the expenditure of the Police Department in policing the provisions of the Road Traffic Act applying to hauliers, and what fines have been collected as a result of court actions under that legislation? Additional expenditure may be incurred by the department in the purchase of more motor vehicles to police the Bill.

Although I do not know how many interstate hauliers use the South Road, I point out that firms in the Cudmore Park and Edwardstown areas are producing commodities that are transported to other States by interstate hauliers, who must use some sections of that road, the widening of which is long overdue. Although it is not used at week-ends to the same extent as the hills road, I point out that the average motorist is entitled to use any main road at the week-end and to enjoy his outing in safety. Although most people endeavour to drive carefully, the roads are not wide enough to cope with the heavy traffic they carry. This is particularly so during week-ends and holidays on the South Road, which is very popular because it leads to seaside resorts.

The greatest volume of heavy traffic could be expected on the road from Adelaide to Bordertown. When this traffic reaches Cross Road it can branch out in any of three directions—Glen Osmond Road, Cross Road or Portrush Road. Although probably a fair portion of Glen Osmond Road is the responsibility of the Highways Department, I think the other two roads are the responsibility of the Unley and Burnside councils, so they would be affected by heavy vehicles using the roads. Every metropolitan council must be affected to some degree, because heavy vehicles use roads in every district. Some of these vehicles deliver their loads at night when there are no officials on duty to police the weight limit laws.

Metropolitan councils have faced colossal expenditure because of the conversion from trams to buses, because many of the roads now used by buses were not constructed to carry heavy vehicles. If heavy transport vehicles also use these roads, their owners should make heavy contributions to the councils' funds. A central depot should be set up for receiving goods, and lighter vehicles could then be used to make deliveries around the suburbs. The Treasurer should say whether councils will participate in the revenue derived from this legislation, and if so, what portion, or whether they will have to go cap in hand to the Minister or the Commissioner of Highways for grants for maintenance of roads used by hauliers. I support the second reading, and hope that I shall get further information later.

Mr. MILLHOUSE (Mitcham)—Like other members who have already spoken, I support the second reading, but with a reservation, because I believe it is not constitutionally possible for this Parliament to pass such legislation and for it to survive an examination by the High Court. The object of this Bill is to oblige interstate hauliers to make some contribution towards the cost of construction and maintenance of our roads, and yet not contravene section 92 of the Constitution. The obligation of interstate hauliers to contribute seems to be unanswerable, and I doubt if anyone would deny that. The honourable member for Edwardstown (Mr. Frank Walsh) may be pleased to know that I do not put myself forward as a constitutional lawyer, therefore my opinion on the constitutional validity or otherwise of this Bill is not an expert one; nevertheless, I do doubt its validity.

Mr. Frank Walsh—In other words, your opinion could still be challenged.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Of course it could, as any opinion could. Section 92 of the Constitution lays down that trade, commerce and intercourse between the States shall be absolutely free. That is an unqualified and definite prohibition, couched in language as brief and terse as possible. The honourable member for Onkaparinga (Mr. Shannon) seemed to imply that the section applies only to the States.

Mr. Shannon—I did not say that; I said that laws passed by various States have been successfully attacked.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Laws passed by the Commonwealth Parliament have also been attacked. This is one of the few constitutional

provisions in Australia that are binding on both the Commonwealth and the States, which is why it has been so difficult to get around. It is a definite and unqualified prohibition put in the shortest possible form, and the shorter and more definite a provision the harder it is to get around it. The only qualification is the word "absolutely," and not even the greatest constitutional lawyer we have been able to produce in the last 50 years has been able to tell us whether that word means anything at all.

It is absurd to blame the High Court or the Privy Council for the difficulty we have experienced because of section 92, and I am very much afraid that was the implication in the Minister's second reading speech. After all, the High Court did not put this clause into the Constitution. All it is there to do is to act as the interpreter of the Constitution. If we are to blame anyone, we must blame the Founding Fathers, and the people of Australia who approved of the Constitution in this form. If they did not mean to say what they did say, they should have worded the section in a different way. The Leader of the Opposition spent some time discussing just what was in the minds of those who drafted this section. He may be right or he may be wrong—nobody knows. All we know is what has been written, which is all the High Court, the Privy Council or any judicial authority has to go on when trying to interpret the Constitution.

This Bill is the latest of a long line of attempts to get around section 92. The Premier seems confident that at last he can do so, but I do not think he should be quite so confident. In his second reading speech he said:—

> Members will appreciate that the conditions which have to apply are most onerous and it took some time to determine what was the best method of providing a law that would stand a challenge on any one of those grounds.

It would have been far better if he had said, "would have a chance of standing" because he cannot go any further than that. It is almost certain that this legislation, like all its predecessors, will be challenged in the courts of South Australia and the High Court. That means legal expenses and costs for the legal profession. I do not suggest that the profession is not entitled to reasonable costs, and section 92 has kept a number of legal practitioners well off in the last 50 years. However, it seems to be a very bad thing that the Government, unless it has had the best possible legal advice obtainable in Australia, should introduce a Bill such as this, which is certain to attract litigation. If it is challenged not only the Government, but private citizens who exercise their undoubted right to challenge it, will be involved in heavy costs. I do not know what advice the Government has had on the validity of this legislation.

Certainly we have in South Australia very able constitutional lawyers. I hope they have been consulted, but there are able constitutional lawyers in other States with perhaps greater experience in these matters than those in this State. The expenditure of a few guineas on obtaining their advice would be a flea bite compared with costs incurred in any litigation. In other words, it pays to get the best advice on such a knotty problem concerning section 92 of the Federal Constitution. I hope the Government has left no stone unturned in getting the best possible advice in Australia, for if it has not it has failed in its duty. I support the second reading with my fingers crossed because I am afraid that before long, perhaps next session or the one after, we shall have to make another attempt to circumvent successfully section 92.

On the general problem with which this Bill deals I have not much to say. The ground has been well traversed, not only in this debate, but on many occasions even since I have become a member, and I can probably add little to what has been said by other members from time to time, but I regret that apparently no national policy on road construction and maintenance has been evolved. I think that an improvement in the quality of our roads would be one of the best investments the country could make. I understand that about £80,000,000 a year is being spent on our roads, but that is not enough. If we equate the amounts being spent with the cost levels of 1939 we find we are spending only about 3 per cent more than then, notwithstanding there is twice as much traffic.

The question of competition with the railways is another important matter on which I hold strong views, but I shall not go into that now. The member for Alexandra (Mr. Brookman) expressed some satisfaction with efforts being made to improve our roads compared with those in the United States of America, but I am not sure whether he was altogether justified in saying what he did. I understand that about 70 per cent of our roads are not surfaced, but in the United States of America 64 per cent are sealed. That shows, as I would have thought from my observations when

in the United States of America for some months, that their roads are better than ours. I hope the money that will be collected as a result of this Bill will enable an improvement to our roads. Certainly, that money will go into the Highways fund, but I regret that the Treasurer did not say how much will be collected.

Mr. Jennings—He does not know how long he will get money under this Bill.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Exactly, and apparently it is impossible to estimate how many vehicles will be caught in the network being deftly, or otherwise, woven around them under this legislation. I support the second reading, though with a strong fear that the Bill will not be held valid if it is challenged.

Mr. TAPPING (Semaphore)—I support the Bill, and I hope the fears of the member for Mitcham (Mr. Millhouse) about its validity will prove unfounded. The support accorded it is fully justified in view of the condition of roads throughout the State. Heavy transports have damaged them considerably, and many are potholed. I am not a lawyer, but I think this legislation will be held valid because it attempts to recoup losses sustained through hauliers cutting up our roads. The fees to be charged will not be a burden on hauliers, but they will considerably help the State in maintaining our roads. The cost of maintaining railway lines, platforms and stations is huge, so road hauliers hold a decided advantage over the railway system. The railways of all States incur huge losses, but they give fine service to the people. Road hauliers make huge profits, and they should be prepared to pay a fair contribution towards maintaining roads.

Proposed new section 271 states that the money received shall be paid into the highways fund for the maintenance of roads, but we do not know how it will be allocated. Certainly a proportion will be spent by the Highways Department, but many council roads are used by hauliers. For instance, many transports travel to Port Adelaide and Semaphore to pick up or put down cargo. I support the Bill because it will provide further funds for the construction and maintenance of roads.

Mr. COUMBE (Torrens)—I think every member will support this Bill. Members know my views on road construction and maintenance. I have referred before to the tragic happenings earlier this year on the Hume Highway when road transports operating between Sydney and Melbourne were held up for several days. That emphasized the necessity of closing a loophole in existing legislation. After all, heavy transports cause most damage to roads, although they pay little towards their maintenance. The Bill provides that any person who operates an unregistered commercial vehicle on public roads in South Australia shall pay a charge for the use of those roads. Therefore, if the vehicle is registered it does not come within the scope of the Bill. If it is registered in another State the owner will have the option of registering it in this State or paying the charges set out in the Bill.

Owners will pay a contribution towards the maintenance of our roads, but not necessarily towards road construction. Doubts have been expressed about the validity of the Bill in the event of its being challenged before the High Court by hauliers or other interested parties. An opinion was expressed on the Hughes and Vale case that the States have power to levy charges for the use of their roads by vehicles engaged in interstate trade. Such charges could only be justified if certain conditions were carried out, the main condition being that they did not discriminate against interstate transport. The Bill ensures that there will be no discrimination between intrastate and interstate hauliers. The State must also ensure that it does not in any way hamper free trade between States. The rate to be charged is set out in the Bill and is fixed by this Parliament and not by an administrative authority. Provision is made for it to be calculated on a mileage basis, and the revenue derived therefrom must be devoted towards maintaining the roads on which these vehicles operate.

The Bill has been introduced with the object of obtaining revenue from hauliers who at present pay nothing towards the upkeep of our roads and who are responsible for most of the damage to them. All monies collected from them will be paid into a Highways Fund and used exclusively for road maintenance. Under those circumstances, I heartily support the Bill.

Mr. QUIRKE (Burra)—I support the Bill, but with some reservations. Some members have emphasized that the imposition of charges will not hurt the road hauliers in that it will not cost them much. It will not cost them anything. They will pass on the charges to the persons who employ them and thus it will be another charge on industry. Let me illustrate that point. The firm I represent has

three steel tanks and these are carried on one semi-trailer. The charge on that vehicle will be £7 10s. each way for trips it makes in South Australia. It will pay a road toll of £15. My firm will have to meet that cost. We contract with a carrier and agree to meet certain charges. We are satisfied with that contract. If he profits from it—and he should because otherwise he would not be in business —we cannot complain. His costs are enormous and if he did in two big tyres on one trip it would take the gilt off the gingerbread in regard to that particular journey.

Under normal conditions our three tanks—which, incidentally, are lined inside—are carried by road from Clare via Mildura to Hay. There they are loaded on to a train and taken to Sydney. They are emptied, without being removed from the truck they are on, and returned to Irymple. The trip to Clare covers a distance of 180 miles and the road charge will be £15. As a result, and because of the conditions of our contract, my firm will be obliged to meet that cost.

Mr. O'Halloran—What would be the cost of sending those tanks by rail?

Mr. QUIRKE—They cannot be sent by rail because they would have to be transshipped and constant transshipping soon renders them unserviceable.

Mr. O'Halloran—They have to be transshipped at Hay at present.

Mr. QUIRKE—But that is undertaken by the road transport people, who are responsible. They are not transshipped in Sydney, but are returned on the same rail truck. They will not handle this type of merchandise at Albury and if we desired to send it by rail it would have to be via Terowie and Broken Hill which would double the transshipping. These tanks cost about £500 each and if they were damaged the whole interior would have to be sand blasted and relined. We cannot taken the risk of such damage occurring. In some instances these tanks go all the way by road. That is being done at the present because of the difficulty of linking up with any railway system. They are delivered from our cellar in Clare to our Sydney cellar which is an undoubted advantage.

We must realize that the consumer will be called upon to meet any increased licence fees or road tolls. An unknown amount will be collected for rebuilding our roads, but we do not know on what roads it will be spent. Those who are called upon to pay these fees use our interstate highways, but there is no guarantee that those roads will benefit. Our interstate communications are disrupted because of the action of heavy transport tearing up the roads, therefore the revenue received from this proposal should be devoted to maintaining those roads, and not used for any other purpose.

In the September issue of the *S.A. Road Transport,* an interesting article headed "The Washo Road Test" refers to what is regarded as the minimum requirement for roads in the United States. The article suggests 18 inches of crushed metal covered with a four inch seal. According to the Washo test, tandem axles can carry 90 per cent greater loads than can single axles and do 5 per cent less damage to the road.

Mr. O'Halloran—Does the article refer to any binder being provided prior to sealing a road?

Mr. QUIRKE—It does not refer to the technical method of applying the crushed metal. The total thickness of the road is 22 inches and in respect of various American roads the article stated that the 22 inch section represented a 25 per cent greater than normal depth; the 14 inch section a 25 per cent less than normal depth and the six inch and 10 inch thick sections were included as representative of a considerable mileage of existing highways with what would be considered subnormal depths for the test road conditions. They call that a subnormal road, but here we get six inches of mullock with a bitumen skin of one inch and it is called a highway. If we were to take transport off the roads our railways would be jammed within a week. They could not possibly carry what is carried on the roads. For instance, at present they carry only a fraction of our wool. In America they have rigid axle weight control. They consider that a road should be at least 18 inches thick with a four inch bituminous seal, but they sometimes have a minimum of two inches.

On one occasion when we had trouble on our railways it was necessary to engage road transport to Victoria on the road through Keith. It was smashed to powder within a week, and I believe the Minister of Works said at the time that £500,000 worth of damage had been done. The money was wasted before transport went on the road, because it was not a road in the first place. It consisted of small marl and dust which could be crushed even under the wheel of a wheelbarrow. It was watered and rolled and after

a primer coat it was sealed with only a bituminous skin with a dressing of screenings; and that was supposed to be a road to take heavy weights. It was remarkable the weight it actually carried. I should like to know to what extent the life of such a road could be extended if instead of a skin there was a seal of two inches. That would save millions of pounds in the long run. It is time that we got away from our present method of making roads. It would be far better to put down sections of road which would stand up to traffic year after year instead of laying down highly expensive long stretches of road which has no life in it and needs constant maintenance. I support the Bill not because I agree with the policy involved but because we have the present footling method of making roads.

The report from America to which I have referred makes a plea to members of Parliament to take notice of the findings so that they can, when the opportunity presents itself, try to get road building in this State of a standard somewhere comparable to that considered as a minimum in the United States of America. It is because of that plea and my knowledge that something should be done that I bring the matter forward. I support the second reading.

Mr. GOLDNEY (Gouger)—I also support the second reading. Unlike the member for Mitcham, I shall not express any opinion as to the constitutional aspects. I was interested in the remarks of Mr. Riches regarding a section of road which was completed early this year and which has, he said, already many worn patches. This particular road carries heavy traffic to Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Woomera and to the West Coast. One peculiar feature is that although this section has already broken up badly, yet that section between Snowtown and Redhill, which was constructed several years ago, has not deteriorated to anything like the same extent. This would indicate there is something faulty in the construction of many of our roads. The southern section of the road between Adelaide and Two Wells, which was constructed more than 20 years ago, was reconstructed a few years ago, yet another section has required little maintenance and is still in good condition. It would appear, therefore, that there is need for research into our road-making methods.

Mr. LAUCKE (Barossa)—I support the Bill, which embraces timely measures to remove a most annoying and frustrating anomaly in that vehicles engaged on interstate transport and considerably adding to the wear and tear of our highways have for some time made no contribution towards their maintenance. The disintegration of our highways in recent years has been alarming, and the deterioration is in no small measure due to the great volume of heavily laden interstate transport. The cost involved in the restoration and maintenance of the highways will become an increasing burden to the State as our population grows and interstate trade increases; also there is a growing need, in the interests of safety of all road users, for wider roads, which will increase highway costs. One wonders whether the railway system, which has played a vitally important part in the development of Australia, and which so often is not given anything like the full marks it deserves, could be encouraged and enabled to attend to more of our long distance transport. When we consider the huge sum required for our highways system, the much publicized railway deficit appears in a much more favourable light.

Interstate transport owners have expressed willingness to meet a natural obligation to reasonbly assist in the provision of funds to maintain the roads over which they travel. As the existing law provides that vehicles engaged in interstate commerce are not subject to the Road and Railway Transport Act and do not have to be registered in this State, a choice is now to be made available to interstate transport—either to pay normal South Australian registration fees in common with all local transport owners, or pay a road charge of 1d. per tare ton per mile travelled. The former choice achieves instant equality with local owners; the latter appears to be a fair and reasonable contribution. Should this contribution be assessed by the owners to exceed the annual registration fee, I have no doubt they will plump for this fee, which in effect will mean that in the majority of cases the maximum paid by any owner will be the amount of registration fee applicable to a given vehicle in our registration schedules.

It is most necessary in the interests of this State's economy that an eye be kept on the costs of transport—be it road or rail transport, and particularly long distance transport. We depend so heavily on the exports of our products, either interstate or overseas, that we must at all times watch our costs of transport interstate. I do not think that the charges proposed will detrimentally affect that trade, but will make a valuable contribution to our depleted highways fund. I support the Bill.

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

BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 16. Page 316.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The second reading explanation of this Bill has been before members since August 16 and there is no need to discuss it at length. I understand the Minister intends to move amendments in Committee: I shall then be able to discuss them. District councils should be the recipients of the assistance provided for other organizations. Actually, they have been receiving it, but because of a legal doubt this Bill makes the position clear. The Minister said:—

It is not intended that the extension of the subsidy to district councils shall do any more than remedy a doubt that existed in the previous legislation as to eligibility; nor is it intended that subsidies to councils shall in any way replace, duplicate or supersede the operations of existing fire fighting organizations, which have rendered signal service to the sum total of bush fire prevention in this State.

I agree that voluntary organizations have rendered signal service in recent years and their efficiency is increasing. If conditions develop this year as they usually do in the summer months, their efficiency may be taxed to prevent a disastrous outbreak of fires. In my memory there has not been a period previously when there has been such a dense growth and once it dries it will become highly inflammable. The voluntary organizations are well aware of the position and are taking all steps to see that equipment and organization are geared to meet the needs. Difficulties face members of the voluntary organizations in my district, most of which is outside district council areas and comprises sparsely populated pastoral land in the main. It is difficult to form voluntary fire fighting organizations in those parts, but I learned last week that the organizations that cover tremendous areas have held meetings and appointed supervisors and deputy supervisors, and taken all steps to meet any emergency that might arise. There appears to be a doubt amongst the personnel of the organizations as to whether they can procure from the State emergency fire-fighting organization warning placards to place alongside roads and at other points of advantage to warn people of the danger associated with fires. Warnings are placed alongside roads in district council areas. I do not know whether they are paid for by the councils or the organizations, but some of the money available for fire-fighting could be spent on providing an effective standard type of warning notice.

The Hon. C. G. Pearson—The Apex Club is providing a few.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes, and the J.C. organization has provided some. I am concerned about the outback roads, where it would be wise every 50 miles or so to draw the attention of the travelling public to the danger of fires. Will the Minister consider providing this standard type of warning notice? Probably each organization would need only eight to ten notices, but in the areas I have specially mentioned it would be a considerable cost to the organizations who rely on the contributions of pastoralists. In the hope that the Bill will be a further worthwhile contribution to the efficiency of our fire-fighting organizations and enable them to deal with the danger that might arise in the coming summer, I support the Bill.

Mr. TAPPING secured the adjournment of the debate.

FRUIT FLY (COMPENSATION) BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from August 16. Page 317).

Mr. TAPPING (Semaphore)—I support the Bill, which continues the payment of compensation following on fruit fly infestations. This system of compensation was commenced in 1947, but the Bill applies particularly to damage caused in the Unley district last year. The administration of the legislation has been carried out most satisfactorily and the department realizes the seriousness of the matter. I pay a tribute to Sir George Jenkins (one-time Minister of Agriculture), the late Hon. A. W. Christian (his successor), the present Minister (the Hon. C. G. Pearson), and the officers of the department, for the work done in the campaign against fruit fly. Last year the cost to the State was £109,119, and since 1947 it has been £1,095,529. In recent years the State has had to spend many millions of pounds in meeting damage caused by bush fires, fruit fly and flood damage, and if the expenditure could be avoided it would mean so much more money available for the building of homes, hospitals, etc. The Bill is not contentious.

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

HOMES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 20. Page 676.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—This Bill provides for increases in the maximum rates of interest on housing loans in respect of which the Government will guarantee lending institutions, namely, from 5 per cent to 6 per cent where the interest is paid within 14 days of the due date and from 5½ per cent to 6½ per cent where the interest is not so paid. It is interesting to note that since this legislation was passed in 1941 the maximum rates of interest have varied as follows:—In 1941 the maximum rate was 5 per cent and 5½ per cent when the penalty rate was applied for non-payment within the period of 14 days; in 1947 it was reduced to 4½ per cent and 5 per cent respectively; in 1952 it was increased to 5 per cent and 5½ per cent respectively, and now we are proposing to increase it to 6 per cent and 6½ per cent respectively.

It will be seen from these figures that the rate of interest was reduced from 5 per cent to 4½ per cent in 1947; in 1952 it was increased to 5 per cent, and now we see the largest variation of interest since this Act was first introduced, namely, an increase from 5 per cent to 6 per cent. This is in conformity with what has been going on generally so far as the housing of the people is concerned. The Housing Trust was compelled to increase rents by a very substantial figure because of the increase in interest rates on the money being borrowed by the trust for housing. We had the increase in emergency housing rents, which was the subject of a vigorous debate in this house a fortnight ago. The last section of people dependent on public finance to some extent in order to procure homes for themselves are now being victimized—and I use the term advisedly—as the result of the financial ineptitude of the Commonwealth Government. I am not blaming the State Government for this because, like this Parliament, it has no alternative when the rate of interest on the money it borrows is raised, irrespective of what purpose the money is spent on. There is no alternative but to increase the rate of interest charged to the undertaking or the people who may be assisted under the Homes Act.

Honourable members know that there is a provision for a guarantee of the difference between the 70 per cent usually advanced by lending authorities to persons desiring to purchase or build a home and 90 per cent of the cost, and that means that the purchaser in the final analysis has to provide 10 per cent by way of deposit. A point which is worthy of note is that under the prevailing circumstances the increase of 1 per cent on the interest rate will not only apply to the 20 per cent difference between 70 per cent and 90 per cent which is the subject of the guarantee provided by this Act, but it will apply to the whole £1,750 which is provided as the maximum which may be considered under the Homes Act.

The question of whether this maximum should be increased has been the subject of debate in this House from time to time. I feel strongly that the time has arrived when the maximum should be increased. I know that the argument advanced by the Premier and other opponents of that suggestion is that there is only a limited amount of money available and therefore if we increase the maximum we reduce the number of houses which can be financed under the scheme, but I point out that a total of £1,750 under a scheme of this description is totally unrealistic when we recognize that a decent working class home costs about £4,000 today. The result is that the people who are most in need of assistance are precluded from taking advantage of the provisions of this legislation. Those who are able to take advantage are the people who already have a fairly considerable deposit to put down to cover the difference between the amount provided under the legislation and the total cost of the house. I do not think that is a desirable feature, and the Government should give serious consideration to raising the limit of the amount which can be provided.

The Opposition has no alternative under the circumstances but to support the Bill, but I do it most reluctantly and look forward to the time when we will have in control of the finances of this country a Government which will not bend the knee to the kings of usury but will have some consideration for the real needs of the ordinary people of the community.

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Edwardstown)—Like the Leader, I reluctantly support the Bill. The Housing Trust has indicated, in the basic wage case now before the court, that people desire to purchase homes. The trust is in a position to make an advance of £1750 under this legislation, and it is giving evidence to the effect that it can arrange for second mortgages at the same rate of interest. The increase in the rate

of interest proposed under this legislation is putting the purchase of a home beyond the reach of people in the average wage earning group, namely, those earning between £15 and £16 a week. I noticed in today's *Advertiser* that it is claimed that some people in Housing Trust homes are earning £30 a week.

Mr. Fred Walsh—There would be very few of them.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I agree. We are told that the increase in interest charges has been responsible for the increased rents. Does it mean that after the adoption of this legislation there will be a further increase in Housing Trust rents? In his 1953 report, the Auditor-General, in reporting on the Housing Trust's temporary housing scheme, said:—

These temporary prefabricated dwellings which are not a conventional type of house consist of units of three, four, or five rooms, and a number of two rooms (for aged or childless couples) are let at rentals ranging from 22s. to 27s. 6d. per week according to the size, the average rent being 24s. 7d. per week . . . The revenue account for the year ended June 30, 1953, shows a deficit of £106,839, after providing £123,000 for depreciation of the dwellings based on a 12 year life, with a recovery of £200 per dwelling for materials at the end of that time. Provision for maintenance is made at the rate of 5s. per week per dwelling. The provision made for maintenance for the year ended June 30, 1953, was £30,703, and the accumulated provision for future maintenance at June 30, 1953, was £38,980. The actual maintenance for the year which is charged against the provision for maintenance account was £6,508.

From that statement I assume that rents were based on certain costs, including over £30,000 for maintenance provision, despite the fact that the actual maintenance charged for that year was only £6,508. What happened to the extra £24,000? Should not the rents have been reduced because of the failure of the Trust to spend that sum on maintenance?

I cannot understand the Treasurer's refusal to increase the maximum advance under this legislation from £1,750. After all, in addition to a loan of that amount on first mortgage, many purchasers of Trust homes are advanced an additional amount on second mortgage. The State Bank has proved the value of its group building scheme, but the Government has assisted the Trust at the expense of the State Bank. The evidence in the current Industrial Court inquiry into living costs proves that the Trust is the only Governmental authority empowered to lend money on second mortgage. One would expect Trust homes to be cheaper than State Bank homes, yet I remember when the State Bank was able to produce more cheaply a unit with more equity than a Housing Trust home.

An increase of ½ per cent or 1 per cent in the interest rate will embarrass a person who must pay 6½ per cent on portion of his loan, particularly as water and sewerage assessments and rates have been increased. Further, many purchasers of Trust homes are moving into homes that have no made roads, and these may not be provided for many years. An increase in the maximum advance from £1,750 is long overdue. True, this would result in advances on first mortgage of more than £1,750, but that would be preferable to the present practice of lending £1,750 on first mortgage and some hundreds of pounds at a higher rate of interest on second mortgage. I believe that the higher interest rates resulting from this legislation will have an adverse effect on home purchasers and also on the tenants of Trust rental homes.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clause 1 passed.

Clause 2—"Interest on loans."

Mr. RICHES—Although I recognize that under the economic circumstances existing in Australia today difficulty might be found in obtaining money to guarantee loans under this Act, I object to an increase of 1 per cent in the interest rate. I think an increase of ½ per cent should be considered, particularly in view of the meagre explanation given by the Premier when introducing this Bill. The provisions of this Act are excellent because they enable an advance of up to 90 per cent of the valuation of a home, but although there is an overall advance the Premier did not mention that. An increase of 1 per cent in the interest rate is a big rise, and I will not vote for it without some explanation. Unless the Premier is prepared to give further information, I will move that this clause be amended to provide for an interest rate of 5½ per cent instead of 6 per cent.

The Hon. T. PLAYFORD—The interest rate charged is governed by the interest rate that has to be paid. We have no alternative; if we cannot secure sufficient interest to cover the cost of administration on the one hand and the cost of the interest we have to pay, obviously we cannot continue with this activity. That is all that is involved in this increase. At present the bond rate for Government bonds is 5 per cent, and the yield is

actually £5 1s. 7d. Semi-governmental loans have an interest rate of 5½ per cent, plus the cost of flotation. As an example of the difficulty of raising money, I mention that the Brisbane City Council recently tried to float a loan at 5½ per cent, which was a complete flop. Today a loan at 5½ per cent is advertised as a trustee investment. The interest rate under the Bill is the maximum amount that can be charged, and under those circumstances the matter is self-evident—unless we are prepared to enable a rate of this extent to be charged, the money will not be available. This State has consistently opposed high rates of interest at meetings of the Loan Council, but it has always been outvoted. The rate laid down is governed by what other people are prepared to pay for money. It was discussed with my Treasury officers, who told me that any lower rate would be futile.

Clause passed.

Title passed.

Bill reported without amendment; Committee's report adopted.

LOAN MONEY APPROPRIATION (WORKING ACCOUNTS) BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 10. Page 989.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—The Bill, at least on the face of it, is merely a machinery measure, and contains nothing to warrant opposition. However, it indicates that the Government has at last agreed to what the Opposition has suggested on many occasions, that the accounts of the Forestry Department and the Radium Hill project should be treated as ordinary trading accounts instead of debiting costs to the Loan Fund and crediting revenue to that fund.

Mr. Jennings—Once again the Government is following our excellent lead.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Exactly, but it is a pity it does not follow our lead in other important matters, particularly on the question of electoral reform. In future, instead of appearing as loan works, the Forestry Department and the uranium project will now appear as they should be, and that is, as business undertakings. This is a principle which we have been urging the Government to adopt for many years, especially in connection with the State's forestry undertakings which reached the productive stage years ago. In this connection, it might be of interest to recall what the Treasurer said in introducing the Loan Estimates earlier in the year. He then drew attention to the fact that the estimated loan expenditure on afforestation and timber milling for 1956-57 was £910,000, as compared with the actual loan expenditure of £1,773,000 during the year 1955-56. He explained the considerable difference between these two figures as being due to a "different method of accounting."

He went on to say that the total expenditure (including loan and revenue expenditure) for 1956-57 would be £1,700,000, but that £790,000 of that amount, described as "expenses of utilization," would be met from "other than loan funds." I interpret this to mean that running expenses incurred in felling, hauling and milling timber, together with a proportion of overhead, will be debited to a trading account and that the proceeds of the sale of timber will be credited to that account, instead of being debited and credited respectively to loan funds. This is as it should be, and to the extent that these transactions will thus be placed in their true perspective, the proposed new method of accounting is entirely satisfactory.

In general, that is what the Premier outlined when explaining the new accounting method in the course of his Loan Estimates speech, but there was one item in that explanation on which I was not sure. The Treasurer said that "except for the amount taken into Consolidated Revenue as a surplus on exploitation, the balance will be paid to the credit of the Loan Fund to offset the cost of growing the timber which is taken from the plantations." This implies that there will be a surplus—and I suppose there is every justification for expecting a surplus—but one would have thought the obligation to the loan fund would be met before any amount was taken into Consolidated Revenue, and perhaps the Treasurer will explain at some convenient time what procedure is to be adopted in this connection.

I would like to make one or two further observations on the new method of keeping the accounts of our timber and uranium projects. There will still be a difference in what might be called the status of these accounts and the status of the accounts of the railways, for example, in relation to the Budget. In the case of the railways, all revenue and all expenditure figure in the State Budget as such. In presenting the estimates of revenue

and expenditure, the Premier told us what the Government expects to receive and what it expects to have to pay out in respect of the railways; and there does not appear to be any good reason why the forestry accounts and the uranium accounts should not be taken into the Budget in exactly the same way.

In introducing this Bill, the Treasurer said that as the volume of operations of the forestry and uranium projects has increased, it has become more difficult to handle it through the loan account; but the real reason for the changeover in accounting method seems to be his desire to have more loan funds available for other purposes, and the only comment I wish to make on this aspect of the matter is that it is a wonder that this expedient was not thought of before. In one sense, it would seem that this Bill is unnecessary, and it was certainly not necessary to receive Parliamentary sanction for the actual changeover in the method of accounting. For years now the Treasurer has appropriated loan funds almost as he pleased, notwithstanding the appropriation set out in the Loan Estimates and afterwards authorized by the Public Purposes Loan Act. On the other hand, in view of the fact that that Act appropriates all the available loan funds, one would think that some reference to it in this Bill was necessary. That, of course, arises from the fact that £100,000 is provided in clause 3 for the purposes of the Uranium Production Working Account and the Woods and Forests Working Account. The Bill represents an improvement in the practice heretofore adopted and is something that we have advocated for years. I support the second reading.

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

ADMINISTRATION AND PROBATE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 11. Page 1015.)

Mr. DUNSTAN (Norwood)—I support the second reading. The Minister clearly explained the proposals in the Bill, firstly to alter the provision relating to the inheritance by spouses in cases where there is intestacy and, secondly, for payments which the Treasurer may make in certain cases of intestacy to persons within the Public Service. The Bill is perfectly proper and no exception can be taken to it on any ground. I can add nothing to the Minister's lucid explanation.

Mr. MILLHOUSE (Mitcham)—I, too, support the second reading and endorse the member for Norwood's compliment to the Minister. The explanation he gave was lucid and proper. This Bill deals with a problem with which most members are not familiar. Under the present legislation if a man dies leaving a widow and without issue then she takes the first £500 of the estate and half the remainder and the rest goes to the next of kin, whoever they may be. The amount of £500 was fixed in 1891, and, as the Minister suggested, that figure was apparently pulled out of a hat. It is difficult to fix any figure as being more just than any other. At that time £500 was probably an appropriate amount and, if it were, then obviously a far larger amount would be appropriate today.

This is the last State in the Commonwealth to increase that amount and the Bill proposes to make it £5,000. In other words, if a man dies, and has been unwise enough not to go to a solicitor to make a proper will, his widow will take the first £5,000 of the estate and half the remainder. If the estate is less than £5,000—as many small estates undoubtedly are—she will take the lot. I believe that to be just and proper.

I often wonder whether our table of intestacy should not be thoroughly revised. I suggest that it should be more closely examined and that the present provisions be brought up to date. In many cases it seems unjust that a widow should get as little even as we propose to allow her in this Bill. If a man wanted portion of his estate to go to other than his wife and children surely he would go out of his way to make a will to ensure that. If he does not make a will the presumption can surely be that he prefers his widow and issue to get the lot. That, of course, is supposition and could be argued one way or the other.

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

ROYAL STYLE AND TITLES BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 20. Page 677.)

Mr. DUNSTAN (Norwood)—Mr. Speaker, I support the Bill.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clause 1 passed.

Clause 2—Royal style and titles.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—The brevity of Mr. Dunstan's speech took me unawares, otherwise I would have spoken on the second reading. I support the clause, but with regret. It seems to me just one more of those measures, both legislative and otherwise, that will whittle away the British Empire as we knew it. One by one those links we had with the Mother Country are being broken, almost imperceptibly. It is only when one considers the accumulated effect that one realizes the damage being done. Here we have a good example of just that kind of thing. The Royal style and titles are now being altered to suit the altered conditions. I believe it is an alteration for the worse, and regret that it has been necessary. If ever I am in a position to do so I will try to reverse that process.

Clause passed.

Title passed. Bill reported without amendment and Committee's report adopted.

LIMITATION OF ACTIONS AND WRONGS ACTS AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 20. Page 678.)

Mr. DUNSTAN (Norwood)—I support this Bill, and welcome the provision which brings the limitation into line with the general law in relation to trespass of the person, and also welcome the alteration which will save solicitors from deciding the extremely vexed question of ancient law as to whether a particular case of negligence falls under the heading of trespass or trespass on the case. There can be few solicitors in South Australia who have not been concerned in the bringing of actions, particularly road action cases, as to what the proper period of limitation is under the Limitation of Actions Act. As to fatal accidents, under the Wrongs Act of 1944 an action brought by an executor or next of kin had to be brought within the period of one year, and many were the cases where solicitors were rushing about at the last moment to get their writs issued. I have been in that unhappy position myself and know how difficult it can be because of the limitation of one year, particularly in a fatal accident case. Often the period is far too short for the bringing of an action.

The amendment is one which has been long called for by the South Australian profession. I only regret that the Bill does not go much further, because the limitation of actions in South Australia is still a grievously mixed situation. In South Australia we have not only a limitation of actions under the Limitation of Actions Act, but a limitation of actions arising out of many Acts, particularly those relating to certain Government departments. For instance, in the event of an action against the Railways Commissioner, not only must the action be brought within a short period, but in addition a notice must have been given to the Railways Commissioner beforehand, and unless this notice has been given and an action brought within a strictly limited period, then there is no action. I am at a loss to understand why there are so many provisions restricting the bringing of an action. The bringing of actions should be made easy, not difficult. The restrictions placed on the bringing of an action in many cases gives no advantage to the ordinary person.

The increase in technicalities associated with the bringing of actions and the multiplicity of the limitation provisions are not in the best interests of the State. As an example, there is a limitation under the Justices Act to certain actions under the Fences Act. We have the extraordinary situation where a person wanting to bring what is tantamount to a civil action under the Fences Act, in order to get a contribution from his neighbour, does not issue civil proceedings but criminal proceedings in order to recover the money. He issues a complaint under the Justices Act and it is heard summarily. Presumably he must prove his case beyond reasonable doubt, but because no time is specifically fixed by the Act he must have laid the complaint under the Justices Act within six months of the time of the cause arising under the Fences Act, although in many cases under the Fences Act it is difficult to determine when the cause of the action has arisen. This is another example of what faces the people in regard to the limitation of bringing action. The secretary of the Law Society recently compiled an enormous list of the various kinds of limitation of action facing the people.

Mr. Millhouse—Particularly in connection with Government departments.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Yes. A short while ago. I gave an example in relation to the Railways Commissioner, but there are other departments. There is a provision under the Workmen's Compensation Act whereby a certain notice must be given, and unless it is given action cannot be brought. That sort of thing is not in the best interests of the people. We ought

to provide a fair time for the bringing of an action. Three years, which has been enacted in respect of injuries to persons, is not too long a period in all cases. If we could get a standard limitation such as that it would be to the very great advantage of the ordinary person. It would save what happens from time to time, even in the best-regulated solicitor's office. I have known competent solicitors who, through pressure of work, have gone a day or two over the limitation and have had to compensate clients because of it. We should have a simple limitation of action that will cover practically everything. I hope this Bill is only the forerunner of a general review of the limitation of action in this State.

Mr. MILLHOUSE secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.55 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, October 17, at 2 p.m.