

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, February 5, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.**RAILWAY STANDARDIZATION.**

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Government had an opportunity to consider the Government members' Rail Standardization Committee report, better known as the Wentworth Committee report, presented to the Commonwealth Parliament late last year, and have any conclusions been reached on the advisability of South Australia's accepting it? Further, if it is accepted will it be necessary to amend the legislation dealing with general standardization proposals ratified by the State Parliament in 1946?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The committee's proposals presented to the Commonwealth Parliament have not been formally sent to the State Governments for consideration, but Mr. Wentworth supplied me with a copy of the report and it has been examined. I believe similar action was taken in Victoria and that that Government has also examined it. The South Australian railway authorities have said that it would create great confusion to introduce a third gauge into our Adelaide railway station, and they do not favour the proposal. From the point of view of the State the proposals are not nearly so satisfactory as those already ratified by both Parliaments for the complete standardization of the South Australian railways, which give a much more practical and permanent basis for standardization. If the report is formally submitted to us our reaction will probably be adverse.

FLOOD RELIEF.

Mr. JENKINS—My question deals with flood relief for settlers on private swamps along the lower Murray. Recently the Premier was good enough to furnish some members who are interested in the matter with a copy of a letter he had written to the Prime Minister requesting further financial assistance for flood relief along the Murray. Has he received a reply to that letter and will further assistance be forthcoming? I understand a report has been called for and submitted on the damage and on the rehabilitation needs of settlers on private swamps. Can the Premier say what assistance can be rendered

to them in dewatering pastures and re-establishing themselves, and when? A deputation of settlers to the Premier recently said they had received a bill for £1,600 for work done by the Engineering and Water Supply Department for protection of the banks. The Premier said he hoped the settlers would not have to meet this commitment. Can he say whether they will be relieved of the liability? Will the work of dewatering the Woods Point and Lower Murray private swamps be carried out concurrently with the work on the Jervois Government swamps?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—An approach has been made to the Commonwealth Government for further financial assistance and also for greater interchangeability in connection with the purposes for which amounts have already been provided. At present those amounts are listed under four headings and do not by any means cover all requirements. It means that the State would have to spend more than a similar amount in order to get the Commonwealth contribution of £800,000. For example, the Commonwealth relief does not cover private swamps, only Government swamps. A further application has been made but no reply has been received. I believe the Commonwealth Government will hold a Cabinet meeting in the near future and I hope a conclusion will be reached on the matter then. Only recently, when the water receded, has it been possible to assess fully the extent of the flood damage. Regarding the other matters mentioned by the honourable member, the Government asked the committee administering relief to examine private swamps and indicate what relief should be given in respect of them. The committee has made a decision and so that members will have the opportunity to study it I will read it in full:—

1. Applications should be made by individual settlers and apart from claims in respect of general flood damage, should include claims in respect of rates charged by the "board" of the swamp, or of the individual's share of any expense incurred in respect of restoration of banks.

2. These applications to be dealt with on lines similar to all others.

3. Applicant must be prepared to supply the fund committee with information on the following points:—

(1) The ratable acreage held by such settler on the swamp concerned; also of all other settlers on that swamp.

(2) The cost of repairs or restoration necessary.

(3) Actual or estimated cost of any dewatering.

(4) Any other information called for.

4. These costs and estimates to be submitted to an approved officer of the Engineering and Water Supply Department for report.

5. From this report and other information available committee to arrive at a cost per ratable acre.

6. In all respects these applications to be treated in manner similar to all other applications.

The committee has set out the line of approach for dealing with community private swamps, so that the fact that they are merely individual private holdings will not deprive those settlers of consideration. If additional funds can be made available from the Commonwealth Government with greater interchangeability between the items, it will probably be possible to deal with this matter later in another way, but pending the decision by the Commonwealth that is the best solution I can offer at present. I do not know what the amount of £1,600 mentioned by the honourable member is concerned with, but if representations are made I have no doubt that can be waived.

Mr. STOTT—My question relates to applications made for the relief of hardship and for the rehabilitation of settlers in the Upper Murray area. Many of my constituents have applied for relief, but such applications must go through the local district officer. On making representations to the department's head office in Adelaide I have been informed that some applications have not yet been received, which means that there has been some delay in the local offices in forwarding them. Will the Premier look into that matter? Further, regarding the general overall question of financial relief for these settlers, the Premier in his letter to the Commonwealth Government asked for an additional £500,000. Many of these people are prepared to indulge in self-help to rebuild their homes and replant their orchards if the Commonwealth or State Government, or the two combined, will offer them money on loan at a low rate of interest for the purpose. I understand that this matter is to be taken up on a Premier-Prime Minister level, and I ask the Premier to discuss this suggestion with the Prime Minister and see whether the Commonwealth Government is willing to make such loans available?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The Government regrets very much that there has been some delay in the distribution of hardship relief funds, but His Honor Sir Kingsley Paine explained that he could not fix a closing date for applications until the lower river became sufficiently dewatered for settlers to

know what amounts they should claim. While the area was under water it was impossible for settlers to lodge their claims, and until the total of the claims was available it was hard to make anything but a provisional release of money, because the amount available would not meet all the claims made. We hope that matter will be speeded up and every effort made to make the machinery work as quickly as possible, subject to proper investigations before the money is disbursed. On the second matter, I have been negotiating with both the State Bank and the Commonwealth Bank to see whether they can lend money to assist settlers who are prepared to help rehabilitate themselves. Those negotiations have advanced considerably and the conditions under which advances may be made will be available in a few days. I do not want the honourable member to think from that that we have found a new El Dorado and have unlimited money, but the State Bank is prepared to make certain amounts available on the guarantee of the State Treasury that it will not make losses, and the Commonwealth Bank has indicated that it is prepared to assist the State Bank to a limited extent. I am afraid the rate of interest will not be what the honourable member would call low, for normal interest will be charged.

Mr. BYWATERS—It has come to my knowledge that pumps, tractors and other plant are available and held either by the Lands Department or the Engineering and Water Supply Department. It is claimed that the plant was purchased during the flood period and is now idle. Can the Minister of Irrigation say whether that is a fact and, if so, can the plant be made available to private swamp holders to assist in dewatering their land and repairing banks?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The plant belongs to the Engineering and Water Supply Department, which is at present considering means of dewatering in the near future.

Mr. JENKINS—Has the Minister of Lands a reply to the question about which I spoke to him this morning with regard to the dewatering of Government, and in particular private, swamps?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The honourable member did communicate with me this morning about this matter. I have a lengthy report which will be of interest to members representing river areas. It states:—

Dewatering will be carried out in the initial stages by 14 stationary units, one floating unit, and 15 temporary units. These will

pump 7,510,000 gallons per hour. Allowing for reasonable evaporation (and some lost time) this means that every 24 hours 700 acre feet of water will be pumped out. This programme involves the purchase of 12 new pumping units and the conversion of a number of older diesel units to electric drive, together with the reconditioning of practically all pumping units which were submerged. The river has now fallen sufficiently for reconditioning of flooded pumping stations to be carried out on nearly all areas and this is being done. As the river falls lower, further permanent pumping stations will be immediately reconditioned.

Blocking off and preliminary repairs to damaged levees has commenced on Jervois and Burdett. This has been completed. Work on Monteith and Long Flat will commence next week. As the river falls, so this process will continue upstream. Local dairymen are being employed on this work to provide them with income until their areas are replanted.

Actual pumping out will commence when it is economically possible. Obviously it would be silly to pump an area out if the river is falling faster than the pumping out. However, floating plant "Argo" is being installed at present at Burdett and will commence dewatering this area within a week. The first batch of special pumps for dewatering Jervois is being forwarded by road transport from Melbourne within a few days. They will be installed immediately they are received. If the river behaves as normally, dewatering of all other areas will follow within a few weeks and it is anticipated that pumping out will be in progress on all areas at the one time. The only priority which is being given any area is that determined by the pumping units being available and by the relative river level, falling river level and capacity of dewatering equipment available.

RAILWAY SIGNALLING SYSTEM.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Can the Minister of Works, representing the Minister of Railways, say whether the Railways Commissioner intends to put into operation any improvement of the signalling system or safe-working appliances on the Adelaide-Port Adelaide line, and, if so, what are they and when will they be made?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—As the honourable member was good enough to indicate that he would ask this question, I have received a reply from my colleague. The improvements will be effected and the overlap system of signalling will be provided. I will get a reply to the latter part of the honourable member's question as to when the work will start.

PENOLA SCHOOLS.

Mr. HARDING—Can the Minister of Education assure me that consideration will be given to surveying the boundary of the Oval

Block at the Penola Area School when the land recently purchased for a new secondary school is being surveyed? Further, is it likely that plans for the proposed new secondary school at Penola will be sufficiently advanced to include the work in next year's Estimates?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I am happy to give the honourable member an assurance in reply to his first question, but I am not in the same happy position in regard to the second.

CARE OF ABORIGINAL CHILDREN.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Since the House last sat there has been much publicity about the conditions in the Colebrook Home, which is situated in my electorate and conducted by the United Aborigines Mission. I visited the home on several occasions, but I understand that since my last visit fresh arrangements have been made about the conduct of the home by the mission and also between the United Aborigines Mission and the Government, which owns the property. Can the Minister of Works indicate the Government's policy in relation not only to Colebrook Home but to other similar institutions, and what action has been taken about Colebrook Home?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—Rightly, I think, much publicity has been given to the question of aborigines throughout the Commonwealth, and I am glad of the opportunity to give a considered statement in regard to not only Colebrook Home but to the Government's policy and treatment of natives generally. As Colebrook Home contains only about one-tenth of the children under the care of the department I think I should deal with the matter generally, especially in view of the honourable member's request that I do so.

There are 205 children in 19 institutions subsidized by the Government. There are 25 children living with foster parents, and three were adopted last week. The amount paid to institutions is 25s. per child, and in addition childhood endowment of 10s. is collected. Children living with foster parents are allowed 25s. per week minimum plus endowment. Up to £3 per week, again plus endowment, is paid for students attending high school. The total Government expenditure on missions outside Government institutions last year was £34,570. The United Aborigines Mission received out of this sum £12,160. The total expenditure inclusive of Point McLeay and Point Pearce amounted to £127,323. Earnings from the

Point McLeay and Point Pearce Mission Stations reduced this figure to a net expenditure of £76,508. Therefore, it cannot be said that the Government has not done a great deal towards the alleviation of the conditions of natives.

The Government is prepared to increase the maintenance of children in every case from 25s. to 30s. in keeping with the increased allowance for children under the Children's Welfare and Public Relief, and to expend quite an appreciable sum on improvements to Colebrook Home in putting it in first class order. Structurally, the building is in a sound condition, but maintenance has been sadly neglected by the mission whose function it was to keep it in good order and condition. To use a hackneyed phrase, this home is now "under new management." The new Superintendent and his wife have moved in with their two teenage daughters, and their quarters have been renovated. They seem very happy as regards the future of the home, and I think they are first class people. In addition, Miss Curtis has been appointed as Matron, and with her vast experience gained in many spheres, I feel that the home is now on the road to being what it could easily be, namely, a showplace rather than a reproach.

The buildings and grounds are quite adequate for the purpose, and I think they would be worth about £30,000 on the open market. I have asked the Architect-in-Chief and the Acting Secretary of the Aborigines Protection Board to go thoroughly into what the Government could be reasonably expected to do. They have made a preliminary investigation. I have inspected the premises myself and will now carry on discussions with the United Aborigines Mission as to the future of the home. Speaking generally, I would say that I hope the unsatisfactory conditions which rightly caused common concern to all interested parties will be entirely rectified. The Government is withholding its judgments as regards the ultimate control of the home until it can be assured that the very valuable premises occupied by the home will be adequately cared for, and we are negotiating to that end now.

Regarding the children, it can be stated that there has never been a suggestion that their physical welfare has been in any way neglected. On the other hand, the atmosphere of the home has been one of neglect and want of discipline. This must of necessity have a reflection on the outlook of the child. The Government, in association with the U.A.M. hope to remove any cause for despondency in

this direction, and is prepared to spend quite a substantial sum to give the home a brighter outlook in every way. The home today contains children of both sexes, but the Government does not believe that the older boys and girls should remain in the same home, although there has never been any suggestion that their morals have in any way suffered therefrom.

However, in order to give the boys a better chance in life after they are discharged from such homes, the Government has acquired the freehold of Campbell House at a very considerable expenditure and is fitting it up so that the older boys, not only from this home but from elsewhere, can come in and learn the rudiments of agriculture and pastoral work. Negotiation is now taking place to ensure a basis of reciprocity between the department and the U.A.M. for the future placement of the older boys in the institution. The big determining factor is how best to deal with the often conflicting human interests involved, both as regards the natives and those good people who have so many diverse opinions as to how the problem of "native affairs" can be solved. We have the Aborigines Protection Board (officially established by Act), the United Aborigines Mission, the Aborigines' Friends Association, the Aborigines Advancement League, the Evangelical Lutheran Mission, and the Ernabella Mission, plus, of course, many well-disposed people who do not agree with any of the above.

Although there are certain restrictions on the association of native and non-native for the purpose of protection of female aborigines, the whole emphasis of the Aborigines Protection Board's policy lies in total assimilation of aborigines into the white community. This emphasis commences with compulsory education of children under the Education Act up to the age of 14 years and from that stage onwards in vocational training of youths, assistance in securing employment and accommodation in country towns, rental homes, in Adelaide suburban areas and to further assist in this assimilation the board have already erected 13 homes in country towns where a continuity of employment is available and orders have been placed with the South Australian Housing Trust for a further six such homes. Without any reservations whatever, I say that the Government has not been behind the times in dealing with this difficult problem.

SECONDHAND CARS AND HIRE-PURCHASE.

Mr. HUTCHENS—A constituent of mine went to a secondhand car dealer, traded in his car, which the dealer valued at £525, and paid a further £30 on another car that was for sale at £555, for which amount he received a receipt dated September 7, 1955. About 9 months later a finance company advised him that on the car he had purchased the dealer still owed the company money, and unless he (the purchaser) entered into a hire-purchase agreement with the company and paid a further £350 the car would be repossessed. Two legal firms gave the opinion that it would be most difficult to protect the purchaser under the present law. On January 21 last bailiffs called on the purchaser to repossess the car. In spite of the legal advice given, the purchaser resisted, and at his request the bailiffs went with him to police headquarters, where it was discovered that the order the bailiffs were operating under was for them to repossess the car from the dealer, not from the purchaser. This was in the early hours of Tuesday, the 22nd.

Later that morning, after the purchaser and the bailiffs had discussed the matter with the dealer, all three parties went to the finance company's office, where the principal admitted that there was a hire-purchase agreement between the company and the dealer in respect of the car in question and the dealer stated that when he sold it he was acting as agent for the company. After this interview the bailiffs advised the purchaser to hang on to the car and forget what had happened. The purchaser is prepared to give full details to any authorized persons inquiring into the matter. The honourable member for Semaphore has been told of similar experiences other purchasers have had with this dealer. If I supply the names of the parties and particulars, will the Premier have inquiries made to see whether a racket is operating warranting some action, and whether it is desirable to amend the law to protect purchasers in such circumstances?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Yes.

TRAFFIC LIGHTS.

Mr. COUMBE—Will the Premier further consider the question I asked on November 8, concerning assistance to metropolitan councils that desire to erect traffic lights on roads included on the main roads schedule and on sites approved by the Commissioner of Highways?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Yes.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT INQUIRY.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Has the Minister of Education received the report of the committee inquiring into school transport and, if so, is it intended to table it or make it public?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I have received the report, which is most comprehensive and voluminous. I am now studying it with the intention of making my own submissions thereon to Cabinet. I cannot say what Cabinet will do with the report and whether it will be tabled or made public. Over a year ago the Public Service Commissioner, with my approval, appointed a committee to investigate school transport services. It comprised Mr. Poole, Engineer for Construction; Mr. Jackman, Chief Engineer in the Highways and Local Government Department, and Mr. Kay, Registrar of Motor Vehicles. It held about 50 meetings and thoroughly examined the whole system of school transport operations in this State, as well as those in other States. Though I do not necessarily agree with all or any of the recommendations, I express my indebtedness to the committee for producing such a valuable report. It contains one important aspect, which may be highly controversial because it envisages the adoption of a practice already in operation in New South Wales, which would involve the discontinuance of the wholly paid for transport services and in substitution the payment of a subsidy. The Government would pay a pre-determined subsidy and the parents of the children availing themselves of the services would pay the balance of the cost of operation.

Mr. John Clark—Some of that goes on now.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—There are three classes. One is where it carries on its own system of transport; another where it pays the whole cost of some services operated by independent transport operators. The third is where the Government subsidizes services operated by parents or committees of parents.

RENTALS OF GOVERNMENT-OWNED HOUSES.

Mr. JENNINGS—I understand that some time ago His Honor, Sir Kingsley Paine, was appointed to inquire into the rents of Government-owned houses occupied by Government employees. Can the Premier say whether he has presented his recommendations to the Government, what they are, and when they will be given effect to?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Sir Kingsley Paine's report has been in the hands of the Government for several months. Cabinet has approved it and, as far as I know, rents have been adjusted in every instance. If however, any rent has not been adjusted I will inquire into the matter. Sir Kingsley recommended the reduction of most of the rents of applicants for reduction. Some applications were granted in part and some not at all, but most reductions were approved retrospectively by Cabinet in accordance with the recommendation. Some reductions were contingent on the fact that repairs were required and in such cases the recommendation stated that the rents should be reviewed at an appropriate time. I would have thought that all the adjustments had been made, but I will inquire into that matter.

Mr. JENNINGS—From inquiries I have made I believe that the Premier quite inadvertently supplied me with wrong information concerning adjustments to the rents of Government houses. Will he table Sir Kingsley Paine's report so that members can examine it?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The report has not been made public because it deals with the applications of individuals. Sir Kingsley Paine inspected every house individually with one exception—a house at Leigh Creek or elsewhere in the far north. Each application was considered separately as it concerned only that applicant and the Government. Under those circumstances the Government does not intend to make the applications or the report available. I can assure the honourable member that Sir Kingsley Paine's report has been accepted *in toto* and that if the adjustments have not been made it is due to departmental administration rather than any lack of approval by the Government.

FOOTROT IN SHEEP.

Mr. LAUCKE—As the scourge of footrot in sheep is extending to the drier parts of the State, including the northern part of my electorate, and may extend further unless precautionary measures are taken, will the Minister of Agriculture have the disease declared a notifiable one and ensure the isolation of infected sheep in certain pens at saleyards and the disinfecting of trucks in which infected stock have travelled?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The honourable member's comment that footrot has spread very much in the State during the past year is correct. The depart-

ment is aware that during the last wet winter and wet spring the incidence of footrot increased materially and that it spread to areas hitherto considered clean. Active steps have been taken to prepare regulations for the control of the disease and the department has appointed several inspectors whose sole duty is to become proficient in the treatment of footrot so that when it is declared notifiable expert departmental advice on its treatment may be made available. The problem is not easy and the further we go in preparing regulations the more difficulties become apparent. The disease is easily contracted and is eradicated only with great difficulty; therefore, as it will inevitably result in some restriction on the movement and handling of sheep affected thereby, great care has been taken in preparing regulations. Only this morning the Chief Inspector of Stock submitted proposed regulations to me. I examined them and tomorrow will confer with departmental officers. The matter is well in hand and, when drafted, approved by Cabinet, and gazetted, they will cover all the points mentioned as well as others.

JUSTICES OF THE PEACE AND VISITING MAGISTRATES.

Mr. LAWN—The *Government Gazette* of January 17 published the appointment of a person as Justice of the Peace and visiting magistrate to the Adelaide Gaol and the Yatala Labour Prison. It is claimed that this person has said he did not know he was to be appointed visiting magistrate to the Yatala Labour Prison, but that he had an idea he would be appointed Justice of the Peace. Further, he understands he will be coached in his duties by the Comptroller of Gaols and Prisons (Mr. Allen). Will the Premier investigate this matter and such appointments generally and consider whether such appointees should have previous experience in such work? Further, will he inquire whether everything in this appointment has been above-board? Can he say why the Government does not consult the Justices Association concerning the appointment of visiting magistrates?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I do not know the name of the person concerned, but if the honourable member lets me know it I will have the file examined to see whether there were any unusual features about the appointment. Two associations dealing with Justices exist at present and I do not believe they agree on all matters. In any case the

responsibility for the appointment of Justices is vested in Executive Council and such appointments must be made in accordance with the law.

MIGRANT DOCTORS.

Mr. SHANNON—Prior to the recent conference of Health Ministers in Hobart, the Minister of Health in this State (Sir Lyell McEwin) said he had suggestions to make concerning the registration of migrant doctors. Further, although no agreement was reached at Hobart between the States on this vexed problem, the New South Wales and Victorian Governments have since announced that they intend to act in the matter. Can the Premier say whether his Government has considered the ideas Sir Lyell had in mind when he made his statement, and if so, has any action been taken here to assist some of these people to get into the profession for which they have been trained?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will have the question examined, consult Sir Lyell on it, and give the honourable member a reply tomorrow.

SPALDING-JAMESTOWN ROAD.

Mr. QUIRKE—Work on the Spalding-Jamestown Road has been proceeding at a slow pace for a few years and at present 10 miles remains to be sealed. This work is to be undertaken by the Jamestown and Spalding councils, the latter having the major part of the task. These councils can operate only when money is made available by the Highways Department, because the work cannot possibly be paid for from rate revenue, and it now seems that the remaining 10 miles may be held up indefinitely. Because of the decrepit railway system between Riverton and Spalding it was found necessary to run a road bus in lieu of the rail car. I know the difficulties associated with the railways, but there is no necessity to have a bad railway and a bad road surface. The man operating the road service is working under difficulties, at least on the 10-mile unsealed section. He wishes to put on a new bus, but he is unwilling to do so because he thinks it will be shaken to pieces. Can the Minister say when money will be made available to complete the 10-mile length between Jamestown and Spalding, and whether there is any likelihood in the near future of the reconstruction of the road between Jamestown and Mannanarie? That is a road which wrecks shock absorbers, many of which one can see

lying alongside the road. I ask the Minister whether something can shortly be done to provide money for the completion of that road, particularly from Spalding through Jamestown and Mannanarie.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—When I obtain the full report of *Hansard* with regard to the numerous questions asked I shall be glad to consult the Minister of Roads and bring down a reply as early as possible.

BUSH FIRE WARNINGS.

Mr. BROOKMAN—Can the Minister of Agriculture say how well the system is working whereby bush fire warnings are given by Ministerial radio statements on days of extreme fire hazard?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The machinery is very involved. The honourable member knows that arrangements have been entered into between the Government and the Deputy-Director of the Weather Bureau (Mr. Hogan) to enable arrangements to proceed. I have had many conferences with Mr. Hogan, and I think he is to be commended for doing a very good job under very difficult circumstances. Generally speaking, I think it can be said that the system is working very well. We do receive a lot of criticism, but there are just as many who criticize us for having too many banned days as there are who criticize us for having too few. The people in some areas would be very glad if the lighting of fires were banned on every day during the summer, particularly in the lower north and parts of the South-East. Parliament in its wisdom considered this matter, admittedly as experimental legislation. I think the consensus of opinion would be that crying "Wolf" on too many occasions has the opposite to the desired result, and that the present system has engendered in the public mind a very healthy respect for fire hazards. It would be fair to say that the public is more fire-minded in this State than in the other States. At present a ban is imposed, when the conditions justify it, in accordance with what is known as the Luke scale. That is not the only scale to be used, but we are using it for the time being to see how it works. If a better system can be evolved it will be adopted.

TANKER CONSTRUCTION SITE.

Mr. TAPPING—Recently the Painters and Dockers Union made a request through the Port Adelaide City Council that the proposed tanker construction site be along the Port

River. Will the Premier consider this request at the appropriate time?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will have the request examined.

HOUSING TRUST SITE NEAR GAWLER RACECOURSE.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—About four years ago an area of land about a mile south of the Gawler Racecourse was purchased by the Housing Trust. I understand that in the very near future building operations are to commence on this land. Can the Premier ascertain from the Housing Trust whether the trust proposes to build on this area in the near future, whether contracts have been let for the first of these houses, and how many houses are likely to be built?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will obtain that information for the honourable member.

RIVER MURRAY FLOOD.

Mr. STEPHENS—Can the Premier say whether the Government has considered any scheme to reduce the damage that may be caused by future floodings of the Murray River? I would like the Government to ask its engineers or the Public Works Committee to report whether it is possible to divert some of the Murray waters in order to minimize any damage done by the floods.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The Government has had reports upon this matter. I regret to inform the honourable member that there has been no practical suggestion to materially minimize a major flood such as we have had recently. There is a tremendous catchment area, and if there is heavy rain over the whole of the catchment area the inevitable result in South Australia will always be a very high river and flooding on the lower reaches of the river. The engineers have not been able to advance any schemes which will materially alter this state of affairs. It has been suggested that the Snowy River scheme can assist on occasions, but it has also been suggested that the Snowy scheme could add to the problem. The huge volume of water coming down is almost uncontrollable in a flood such as the one we have experienced recently.

Mr. BYWATERS—I read in the press last week that the Minister of Agriculture had toured the lower river areas to study the problems arising from re-seeding the swamps. I am sorry I did not know he would be visiting

those areas because I would have been glad to accompany him. Has he a report for the House on his visit?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I made a hurried trip to Murray Bridge late last week, but I think that rather more was made of the purpose of my visit than was attempted. Had I been making an official visit I would have contacted the member for the district and also the member for Stirling, for I went through part of his territory too. My trip was to see how the stock that had been displaced from normal pastures to high land were faring. It is not my function to venture into the field of re-sowing the swamps, for my colleague has full control of that, though I was interested to see how the water was falling and whether there were any prospects of pastures being re-established in the foreseeable future. I was pleased to see the amount of hay that had been stored in the areas through which I passed, and I think the dairymen are to be commended on the good condition in which they have maintained their stock and on the way in which production has been maintained.

MOUNT GAMBIER WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. FLETCHER—In a recent article in the *Border Watch* under the heading "Water Came a Long Way" the following appeared:—

Water from the Blue Lake, little more than a quarter of a mile away, had to take a long route to reach his home on Thursday evening, Mr. J. B. Bell of "Grandview," Lake Terrace, said yesterday. For the past month it had been rare to obtain water from taps during the day, and he had to rely on storage tanks, which filled overnight, to provide the bare necessities for domestic purposes, Mr. Bell said. However, even this arrangement failed on Thursday, when tanks did not fill overnight, and Mr. Bell was forced to take desperate measures. After making 16 telephone calls, he was at last able to locate a man at Compton, who had the necessary equipment to cart water. As a result, 340 gallons of water were brought from that point and pumped into Mr. Bell's tanks.

An assurance was given that a scheme for laying larger mains to most parts of Mount Gambier would be completed before this summer, but nothing has been done. The Minister of Works will realize the seriousness of the position. Will he find out whether it is likely that the work will be completed this summer?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—When I can read the full question in *Hansard* I will take up the matter with the Engineer-in-Chief and bring down a reply. Speaking generally, I would

say that Mount Gambier has had at least its fair share of public expenditure on water supplies in South Australia in the last three years.

RIVOLI BAY FISHING FACILITIES.

Mr. CORCORAN—Some months ago the Government announced that the work of constructing a jetty and boat haven at Rivoli Bay to provide for the needs of fishermen in that locality could be put in hand by October last. Can the Minister of Works say whether a start has been made on this work or on roadways leading to the proposed jetty, and if not, when it is likely to commence?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I shall inquire of the Harbors Board the reason for the delay. Discussion has taken place between the Fisheries Department and the Harbors Board, and I think one or two complications have arisen. One probably related to access to that point and to land acquisition.

APPROACH ROADS TO WHYALLA WEST SCHOOL.

Mr. LOVEDAY—On December 12, I received a letter from the Minister of Roads stating that the matter of improving the approaches to the Whyalla West School had been referred to the Minister of Education. Has the Minister of Education yet considered that matter, and if so, when will something be done?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Offhand, I cannot give a reply because I have no clear knowledge that the matter has been referred to me. However, I will obtain a report.

BRIDGE ACROSS RIVER MURRAY.

Mr. KING—Will the Chairman of the Public Works Committee inform me whether his committee will be visiting my district in the next month? It was reported in the paper recently that the committee was considering a proposal to construct another bridge over the Murray.

Mr. SHANNON (Chairman, Public Works Standing Committee)—This matter was discussed by my committee this morning, and an itinerary for the visit is being prepared. The Committee will proceed to the river on March 5 and remain there until March 7. A second trip will be made on March 25, and I have asked the members of the committee to set aside the whole of that week. I hope we shall then be able to conclude the necessary evidence on the river, and we will then lose no time in proceeding with the balance of our inquiry to bring the matter to a conclusion.

MAPS IN ELECTORAL ROLLS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Some years ago it was the practice of the State Electoral Department to print subdivisional maps in House of Assembly electoral rolls, but in recent years the practice has been discontinued. It has been suggested to the executive of the Labor Party by many electors that these maps would be a convenience to electors, particularly those living on the boundaries of subdivisions. Can the Premier state whether the Government will consider including these maps again in electoral rolls?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will take up this matter with the Electoral Department. I know of no reason why they should not contain maps, which I agree are a great advantage, particularly to people living on the margins of districts. My only criticism is that they have not given enough detail on where districts commence and finish.

EMERSON CROSSING TRAFFIC LIGHTS.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Does the Government intend introducing legislation this session to amend the Road Traffic Act to enable the new traffic lights at the Emerson crossing to work satisfactorily without infringing the provision that buses must stop at railway crossings and the provision about the right-hand turn?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I do not think any amendment has been requested by the Minister. I believe there was some difficulty about the interpretation of the law, but I understand that traffic is now flowing smoothly at the Emerson crossing. Last year the House considered a number of amendments to the Road Traffic Act, and they may require further consideration next session, which is not so far ahead. The question raised by the honourable member is probably amongst them.

ADVANCES TO SETTLERS.

Mr. STOTT—Early in January a farmer in my electorate applied for a loan of £1,250 to build a home on his farm, but he was told his application could not be considered until after June 30. This implied that the department was short of money to meet such applications. The House passed the Loan Estimates on September 5 and voted £100,000 to this department. Can the Treasurer say whether it is short of funds and cannot consider further applications until the next Estimates have been passed, and will he see that

the next Estimates provide adequate finance to meet the department's commitments?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The amount of money Parliament can vote to each department depends on the allocations from the Loan Council. As far as I know, all departments are meeting their commitments and carrying out the programmes allotted to them. If the honourable member will let me have the name of the person concerned I will inquire to see whether there are any unusual features about the application but, frankly, I would not have expected that answer to be given.

RENMARK HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. KING—Can the Minister of Education say whether the repair work on the flooded Renmark High School has progressed sufficiently to enable the school to be re-opened on February 12?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes.

OIL REFINERY FOR SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

Mr. TAPPING—On August 28 last I asked the Premier whether an oil refinery was likely to be established in South Australia, and he said that two firms had been negotiating with him. Has he any further reply to my question?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I cannot take the matter much further except to say that it is not by any means dead. Only about a fortnight ago one firm told me it was still intensely interested, though it was considering three locations in various parts of the world, but I was told the South Australian location was gradually assuming top priority.

UNLEY GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—For some months a new girls high school has been in the course of erection at Urrbrae. It was hoped that it would be ready for occupation next Tuesday. Can the Minister of Education indicate what progress has been made with that building and whether it will be ready for occupation when schools re-assemble?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Last Friday afternoon I inspected this school in company with the Director of Education, the Superintendent of High Schools, the Architect-in-Chief and the Principal Architect for Schools. I satisfied myself that it was not ready for occupation and could not be made ready by next Tuesday. Accordingly, temporary arrangements will be made for the scholars to be accommodated at the existing Unley High School for a short period. I hope the school will be ready for occupation in a few weeks.

WATTLE PARK TEACHERS TRAINING COLLEGE.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—In the press recently the President of the South Australian Institute of Teachers was reported as saying he understood that the Wattle Park Teachers Training College would not be ready to open at the beginning of the school year. Can the Minister of Education say whether this is the case and, if so, what has caused the delay?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I inspected this property and satisfied myself that it could not be ready for occupation next Tuesday. Arrangements have been made with the Adelaide University for the temporary use of university lecture rooms during the university vacation. As soon as it is possible—and I hope it will not be long—the Teachers Training College will be occupied. I do not wish to seem impolite to the honourable member, but at this stage I do not think any good purpose would be served by holding post-mortems into the causes of delays. The fact remains that the property is not yet ready for occupation.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—Men are falling over one another trying to make it ready.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—That is so, but it cannot be ready by next Tuesday.

MILLICENT POLICE STATION.

Mr. CORCORAN—On November 8 in reply to a question the Premier promised to investigate the possibility of providing a new police station at Millicent. He said he would advise me by letter when the results of the investigation were known. I have received no communication from him. Has he anything further to report?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will advise the honourable member tomorrow.

QUORN WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Last year representations were made to the Government for an inquiry to be made into the practicability of a water scheme being established on the Booleunda Creek to provide Quorn with a more adequate water supply and to enable surface irrigation. An early report dealt only with the provision of additional water for Quorn, and last year the Premier said he would have the question of providing water for irrigation investigated. Has he anything to report on this subject?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will bring the docket down tomorrow and the Leader will be able to see what reports have been obtained in connection with this matter.

TAKING OF UNDERSIZED FISH IN LAKES.

Mr. JENKINS—I have received a letter from the Secretary of the Strathalbyn Fishing and Game Club which has a membership of about 90. In relation to the taking of undersized fish from Lake Alexandrina and the River Murray, the letter states:—

There are literally thousands of these fish under 8in. being caught. We view this with very grave concern, for if the practice is allowed to continue it will, in a short time, reduce the supply of fish which are being taken before they grow sufficiently to spawn. We would respectfully suggest all anglers should be registered and required to pay a fee, the amount of which should be fixed at a reasonable figure, and that the money so raised should be utilised in paying inspectors.

Several other matters raised in the letter are worthy of consideration. If I hand this letter to the Minister of Agriculture will he examine it and have investigations made with a view to preventing anglers from taking undersized fish?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I shall be pleased to examine the letter.

METROPOLITAN DIESEL RAIL SERVICES.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—In connection with the diesel train services on the Adelaide-Woodville and Adelaide-Commercial Road railway lines can the Minister representing the Minister of Railways say whether it is a fact that—

- (1) The distance between Adelaide and Woodville is $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles?
- (2) The timetable used prior to 17/12/56 allowed a running time, including stops, of 11 minutes, with an average overall speed of 24.54 miles per hour?
- (3) The running time since 17/12/56 has been 13 minutes, with an average overall speed of 20.71 miles per hour?

Can he say also whether it is a fact that—

- (1) The distance between Adelaide and Commercial Road is $7\frac{1}{4}$ miles?
- (2) The timetable used prior to 17/12/56 allowed a running time of 17 minutes, with an average overall speed of 25.6 miles per hour?
- (3) The running time since 17/12/56 has been 21 minutes with an average overall speed of 20.71 miles per hour?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—It would appear that the honourable member has had a timekeeper and surveyor on the job. Obviously I could not have the information he seeks at my finger-tips but will endeavour to get it for him.

SPARK ARRESTERS ON LOCOMOTIVES.

Mr. STOTT—Emergency fire service units are doing a magnificent job and the Minister of Agriculture is co-operating splendidly in providing incentives for the people in trying to prevent the outbreak of fires and extinguishing those which have started. Some instances have occurred very recently where fires have allegedly been caused by sparks from railway engines. Will the Minister take up with the Minister of Railways the question of installing spark arresters on locomotives so that the Government, through the Railways Department, can play its part in the prevention of bush fires?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I understand that the Minister of Railways is doing all he can to see that precautions are effective, but I will have further discussions with him on the matter.

METROPOLITAN TAXICABS ACT REGULATIONS.

Mr. TAPPING—Can the Premier indicate when regulations under the Metropolitan Taxicabs Act will be gazetted?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The regulations have been approved by Cabinet and I think they were gazetted last Thursday.

MURRAY RIVER LEVELS.

Mr. BYWATERS—Is the Minister of Lands able to say what the pool level will be dropped to in the lower Murray, and what is the position regarding the replacing of logs in the Mundoo barrage?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I have not those particulars available but will get them for the honourable member tomorrow or Thursday.

STIRLING-HAWKER RAILWAY LINE.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Last year the question of the State's taking over the Commonwealth railway line from Stirling to Hawker was raised by the local authorities and myself, and in November the Premier, in reply to a question, stated that the Railways Commissioner was not very favourably disposed towards the proposal. Have any further investigations been made since then, or has the Premier any further information on the subject?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have no further information. Cabinet discussed the question briefly on one occasion but, firstly, the railway line probably is unprofitable and, secondly, probably still carries a fair amount of capital debt which the State could not meet. Under those circumstances Cabinet considered that, although the suggestion might be all right in some ways, it was not from the State's financial point of view.

Mr. O'Halloran—I suggested a Commonwealth subsidy.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—If that were forthcoming it would be an entirely different matter, but recently the Commonwealth Government has shown no disposition to make subsidies available to the States.

LANDLORD AND TENANT (CONTROL OF RENTS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL (No. 2).

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Landlord and Tenant (Control of Rents) Act 1942-56. Read a first time.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (PUBLIC SALARIES) BILL.

His Excellency the Governor's Deputy recommended to the House the appropriation of such amounts of the general revenue as were required for the purposes mentioned in the Bill.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer) moved—

That the Speaker do now leave the Chair and the House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole for the purpose of considering the following resolution:—That it is desirable to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Agent-General Act, 1911-1953, the Audit Act, 1921-1951, the Police Regulations Act, 1952-1955, the Public Service Act, 1936-1954 and for other purposes.

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

LAND SETTLEMENT: HUNDRED OF MACGILLIVRAY.

The SPEAKER laid on the table the report of the Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement on land development in the hundred of MacGillivray, Kangaroo Island.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORTS.

The SPEAKER laid on the table the following reports of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, together with minutes of evidence:—Blackwood and Belair

New Water Supply System, hundred of Cummins Water Supply, Myponga Reservoir and Trunk Main, Port Pirie Hospital Additions, and Supreme Court Building (New Wing).

Ordered that reports be printed.

MARRIAGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 1. Page 1364.)

Mr. JENKINS (Stirling)—During the previous debate on this Bill I listened with a great deal of interest to the arguments for and against it and must confess that both sides adduced points that swayed my opinion. However, at the present stage I express my intention to support the Bill. The member for Light (Mr. Hambour) in opposing the Bill hinged his arguments mainly on what he considered to be the great injustice to the child born to young people under the prescribed marrying age, and considered that a stigma was attached to such a child for life. I do not agree with that view, for by adoption the child has a better chance of a happy life by being reared in a good family instead of, perhaps, in an atmosphere of unhappiness caused by a marriage of convenience. Both my wife and myself have occupied the bench on numerous occasions on applications for adoption, and our impression is a good one. Before adoption is granted complete investigations are made into the lives of the people applying to adopt a child. If the officers of the department are satisfied that a couple are likely to be suitable the child is given to them for a probationary period, and if all goes well during that time the court may grant the adoption.

In the year ending June 30, 1956, 820 children were placed out for adoption, 80 of whom were legitimate children. I understand that there are more married couples without children of their own awaiting to adopt babies than there are babies available of a suitable medical standard. Under the Maintenance Act all homes with illegitimate children in them are visited by officers of the department and I would say that with these conditions prevailing and the good homes available for children born of young parents of tender age there are greater prospects of happiness for the child and the young mother, who is thus given a chance to reach a more mature age and marry a man of her choice instead of being forced into a marriage of convenience which so often results in disaster. I support the Bill.

Mr. HUTCHENS (Hindmarsh)—I intend to support the Bill. At present we have no law in South Australia regarding a minimum marriage age, but follow the common law of England which has been handed down from church law. Young people in South Australia cannot marry under the age of 21 without the consent of their parents, guardian, or the Registrar of Marriages. Mr. Jenkins made a very good point in reply to those who expressed fear regarding young people who find themselves in unfortunate circumstances. I admire those members for their concern, but I suggest that they further examine the position and investigate how many of these marriages finish up on the rocks. I am not in a position to give figures on this position, but I am assured by those who have studied the problem that a substantial proportion of these marriages fail before the younger member of the party is 25 years old. These young people are thrown together and although they take a very sacred vow, which should not be treated lightly, often after a brief period the marriage is dissolved. In a second marriage one of the party who is divorced may have the suggestion thrown up by the other party, "You have something to live down as you have been involved in the court."

I believe that the proposed legislation can do nothing but good. A girl under 16 or a boy under 18 is practically only a school child. In 1929 in England the law was amended to make the minimum age for both sexes 16, in New Zealand in 1933 the law was altered to make the minimum age 16 for females and 18 for males and in Tasmania in 1942 similar legislation was passed. Mr. Millhouse indicated that he intended to ask the House to accept an amendment to permit people to marry under the minimum age in certain circumstances.

Mr. O'Halloran—A very good amendment.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I shall not say whether it is good or bad, but if it is introduced I am prepared to give it a trial. I know of instances in my electorate of people under the age of 21 being denied their parents' consent to marry, but they have evaded this opposition by some means or other and married. I know of one case where the parents gave an assurance that they would take no action against the marriage, but others had different ideas regarding the protection of the seducer of a girl of only 15. That marriage was on the rocks within 12 months. The only way to prove the value of Mr. Millhouse's proposal is to try it. France, Germany, Norway, Japan, Turkey and Spain have a minimum age, some as high as 21 years for males.

The Bill should be given serious consideration. The request by the groups which want the alteration to the law should be considered. They work only for the social good of the people. The organizations supporting the Bill are the Adelaide University Graduates' Association, Business and Professional Women's Club, Church of Christ, Civilian Widows' Association, Housewives' Association, League of Women Voters of South Australia, Methodist Church Women's Welfare Department, Salvation Army, Country Women's Association, Medical Women's Association, W.C.T.U. and the Women Justices' Association. The Bill was the subject of considerable discussion in another place in 1955 and since that time not one word of objection to it has come from outside Parliament. If there were any real objection to the proposal by serious thinking organizations it would have been made known to us. In the interests of girls under the age of 16 the Bill should be passed. In 1945 there were 5,321 marriages and only 11 of the females were under 16. In 1951 the figures were 6,646 and 17; in 1953 they were 6,149 and 17. In 1950 there were 6,585 marriages and only eight of the males were under 18. In 1954 the figures were 6,190 and 18. Only a few people under the minimum age have been married in the past, but as most of the marriages finished on the rocks I think this Bill should be supported.

Mr. SHANNON (Onkaparinga)—There is no doubt about the aims of the Bill being in the interests of society, and we can give general support to them. I would be the last to do anything to break down the high standard of married lives in British communities. It may be said that it would be desirable to allow people who develop early in life to decide whether or not they should take a partner and have a family. That should be appreciated. We must realize that some individuals develop much more quickly than others. A male under 16 can be a man, although most of them are still boys. I have known males at 16 years of age to have all the attributes of a man. It applies also to females. These are factors that should be considered. We are asking for trouble if we fix an arbitrary age at which marriage may be contracted and ignore the differing physical development that takes place in human beings. I am not altogether happy about the amendment on the file and I hope Mr. Millhouse will consider substituting a stipendiary magistrate for the Minister. If we are to depart from the age in the present law we should have an experi-

enced person on the panel making the decision. A stipendiary magistrate with experience in juvenile courts would be such a person. When some present members were young men they were told of instances, some in their own families, in which a grandmother or great-grandmother married at 15, had 10 children, lived a full life until she was 80 years of age, and although she started her domestic responsibilities at an age at which this Bill would deny marriage, she made a success of her life. We should therefore approach this problem with caution and not rush in merely because this move meets with acclaim from some people who have not bothered to consider all the angles.

For instance, a man may be in his middle twenties, well established in life, and competent to provide for a family. Further, he may be more than willing to contract marriage with a girl below the legal age. Surely the denial to these people of the right to wed is not in the best interests of society generally. It may be said that by the time the girl reaches the age of legal eligibility one or the other of the parties to such a marriage may have suffered a change of mind and a divorce may result, but I am not so certain about that. Most broken juvenile marriages are those in which both contracting parties were juveniles, and where one or the other party has been of the age of discretion the marriage has generally worked as well as that between two average adults. After all, it must be remembered that all marriages are not made in Heaven; occasionally marriages contracted between two adults go on the rocks. I was amazed to hear the member for Hindmarsh (Mr. Hutchens) suggest that a divorcee had something to live down, for in many cases the party taking proceedings to secure a divorce is innocent and does not have to live down a black mark. Indeed, many are reputable people and some come into my home as my friends.

It has been said that the raising of the minimum age for marriage will reduce the divorce rate, but I believe that the divorce rate fluctuates according to prosperity, which is one of the greatest wreckers of home life. In these days young people have been given too much freedom of action; unlike those of the older generation, they have not had to go through the hard school of experience where both the husband and wife had to work together as a unit and look after the household budget, making certain that they could pay the tradesmen. Indeed, the love of freedom

these days tends to lead some people off the track. This legislation will not reduce the divorce rate, but society may be harmfully affected if we deny some marriage that should be approved under proper conditions. The fore-shadowed amendment is one way of tackling this problem. With the one reservation I have made I support the Bill, and if such a modification is not made in Committee I will oppose the Bill on the third reading.

Mr. QUIRKE (Burra)—The problem of whether any marriages go on the rocks is not the thing to be mainly considered when dealing with this Bill. If we prohibit young people from marrying it is a direct prohibition and the child of the union must be illegitimate. If, on the other hand, a couple marries and the marriage goes on the rocks, the child of the marriage is legitimate. There is nothing else in the Bill. Until they are 21 years of age children are controlled by their parents and cannot marry without parental consent. If parents choose to accept the responsibility, it is theirs by right of their parentage and should be carried by them. I do not care how this matter is looked on in other States and other countries. There is a basic principle in this matter, that you should never force illegitimacy, and unless that aspect of the Bill is altered I will not support the Bill.

Mr. KING (Chaffey)—Like many other members I consider that I should support the principle behind the Bill because it is a forward step. I have only one regret, which is overcome by the amendment of the member for Mitcham: that no provision has been made to enable the parents of children to give their consent in circumstances in which it is desirable that the juveniles should marry and in which no objection could be taken. The Bill sets out to meet the social problem arising from the growth of civilization and the unsettled conditions of the past 15 years. In Australia today we have conditions of high prosperity, with both parents working and the children being sent off to school. This often results in children being neglected, and that has been a breeding ground for delinquency. Where children have good home conditions and a real welcome awaiting them they prefer going home to going out, but without these amenities and agreeable conditions they seek their pleasures elsewhere, and that is often where they get into trouble.

It has been said that if there is a mesalliance of an older man and a younger

girl and a marriage of decorum the man should not escape the consequences of the breach of law. My reply to that is that the man may not be as black as he is painted. In any case, where is the greater hardship to society as a whole: to the man who may not be as black as painted or to the offspring whose name this Bill would take away? The member for Stirling made a few points on the adoption of children, particularly illegitimate children. These adoptions are not necessarily the result of illegitimate unions. They may be the product of a broken home, and there are a number of circumstances in which children may be placed in the care of the court. I also remind the House that there are many children who do not get adopted; the mothers are prepared to keep them and they are brought up with the stigma which will remain with them to their dying day. Other children may not know they are adopted, but the adopted children still do not know whether they are illegitimate children or not.

The member for Onkaparinga pointed out that there are degrees of precocity for both sexes, and the age of puberty varies in individual races and climates. In some countries where marriages are made by arrangement rather than by mutual attraction the ages of the children concerned are often much lower than those proposed by this Bill. Even in England the marriage ages have remained low for marriages of arrangement, and the same thing applies in many other countries. While some of us regard this as being civilized, other people may not have the same point of view, and we should consider this. We cannot amend the laws of nature, and we cannot assume that the marriages that would take place normally without the passage of this Bill would necessarily fail. Many countries have carried on with the lower marriage age and marriages may have failed, but that is not necessarily due to the incompatibility arising out of the junior condition of one of the parties.

Statistics disclose that there are not many children born to mothers under the age of 16 years, but rather than that one of these innocents should be made to suffer, the parents and their next of kin should be provided with an opportunity to allow the children concerned to marry if in the opinion of the proper authority that is desirable, as is envisaged in the amendment which will come up. Subject to the amendment which I will move, I support the Bill.

Mr. CORCORAN (Millicent)—I rise to indicate my attitude to this Bill. I am opposed to it and I heartily agree with the sentiment expressed by the member for Burra. I am not worried about what they do in Japan or China or anywhere else. The controlling of the age of marriage is legally in the hands of the parents, because they can agree to it or otherwise; in some cases the Chief Secretary can over-rule that, but generally speaking it is in the hands of the parents and will remain so as far as I am concerned. I will not be a party to any legislation that will brand a certain child illegitimate for the rest of its life. It may be said that failures are likely to occur in cases where persons are forced to marry, but marriages between people of any ages are not always successful and the divorce courts are getting more crowded every day. I strongly oppose the Bill, and I hope the House rejects it.

Mr. DAVIS (Port Pirie)—I oppose the Bill. My main reason for opposing it is that if this legislation is passed we are going to penalize two persons, namely the child and the mother of the child. A good deal has been said about people who are forced to marry. The honourable the Leader, when speaking on this Bill, said that the seducer should be placed in gaol. I disagree with that, because there are many men who are unfortunate enough to make a mistake and are only too happy to marry the girl and save her name and that of the child. It is not always the man that does the seducing. I know of a recent case where a woman on the West Coast tried to seduce a boy of 16 years, and I suppose that boy was as innocent as many girls. This boy was a clean living and good boy, and the woman could quite easily have spoiled his life and led him astray. In another recent case a school teacher tried to take advantage of the bigger boys at the school, and there again their lives could be corrupted. My main reason for opposing the Bill is that it is always the woman who pays in these cases. A young girl who gives birth to a child is always looked upon as bad, but that is not always the case, because it is generally the innocent girl who falls, not the one who knows all the tricks of the trade. Through the innocence she has to suffer for the rest of her life, whereas after a few months everyone forgets what the man has done. It has been said that the stigma is not so great in these days, but I have always found that people do not forget when a child is illegitimate.

If a young couple are going together for a long time and have this misfortune, they should

be able to marry if their parents consent. It must be remembered that the burden will probably be placed on the parents, who usually have to look after such children. I agree with the member for Millicent (Mr. Corcoran) that many marriages between very young people fail, but so do many other marriages. I do not think the circumstances of the marriage affect the position.

Mr. JOHN CLARK (Gawler)—I support this Bill, which I am glad has not been treated on Party lines, as members from both sides have spoken freely on it. I support it, however, with reservations. I listened with much interest to the member for Mitcham (Mr. Millhouse), and particularly to his reference to the discretionary clause contained in the Tasmanian legislation, which I am inclined to favour. However, I will support the Bill whether or not it contains a discretionary clause, because I believe anything is better than our present legislation under which girls of 12 and boys of 14 can marry, and as the Premier said when introducing the Bill, theoretically they can marry younger than that. Marriages of people of this age are simply a mockery of the sanctity of the marriage vow.

Mr. Corcoran—They married at that age in the days of our grandmothers.

Mr. CLARK—I have yet to be convinced that even in those days it was for the good of either party. One of the things of which we have always been proud is the sanctity of the marriage vow. In 1951 one girl aged 13 was married, and I wonder whether she as a married woman could be compelled to attend school. I had intended to mention the ages at which people in other countries marry, which I have been told do not count, but as the member for Hindmarsh (Mr. Hutchens) quoted those figures I shall not repeat them. I am prepared to support a discretionary clause such as that contained in the Tasmanian law, which provides:—

If, after such inquiry as he thinks necessary, the Registrar-General or Police Magistrate is satisfied that for some special reason it is desirable, he may make an order dispensing with the requirements of subsection (1) hereof. I believe there is also a discretionary clause in the New Zealand Act. Before the short recess of Parliament I was rather anxious to speak on this matter, particularly on matters raised by the member for Light (Mr. Hambour), because I disagreed almost entirely with most of his conclusions. Every member has a right to his convictions, but others have a right to disagree with them. The member for Mitcham

(Mr. Millhouse) stressed that the family unit is the basis of our national life, and I agree with this, as I think all members who owe so much to their wives will agree. He said that although he had received letters from a number of women's organization about this matter he intended to disregard them. Most of the organizations that recently wrote a letter to the press also sent letters to members, and these bodies are primarily concerned with the wellbeing of women. If the proposed amendment is a bad move, as we have been told by so many members, and would do so much harm to young girls, we would naturally expect women's organizations to be the last to support it, yet a considerable number of them are keenly in favour of this Bill. In fact, I believe it was greatly owing to their efforts that it was introduced, although I believe that when they originally proposed an amendment they suggested a discretionary clause such as I have mentioned earlier.

We have been told over and over again with great sincerity by different members that we are not considering the welfare of the unborn children in legislation such as this; but I feel that this is the very thing that we are doing. Many people are inclined to pat the man concerned on the back and say, "Marry the girl and live happily ever after."

Mr. Hambour—And many do.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—The honourable member would be nearer the truth if he said, "Some of them do." I believe that during his speech he made an appeal to our baser instincts. I think many of the points he attempted to make were based on the idea that if there were a sexual attraction between two people their marriage would be a success. He made his point very well, but I disagreed with much of what he said, though I think it was the best speech he has made in this House. I think more than half the marriages of young people are made to avoid prosecution, which has been justly earned in most cases.

Mr. Corcoran—What are the figures about the failures of these marriages?

Mr. JOHN CLARK—I hope the honourable member will be able to give me the number of successful marriages. A few months ago I heard a talk by a prominent welfare worker. He told a large audience that juvenile delinquency usually arose from divorce or broken homes, and he said that many broken homes were caused by youthful marriages.

The member for Light (Mr. Hambour) said that people could be happily disinherited, but are the children of divorced parents any better off than are illegitimate children?

Mr. Hambour—They have not the same stigma.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—I remind the House that many famous people overcame the stigma of bastardy. It is incredible that girls of 12 and boys of 14 are allowed to marry in a civilized community. Apparently love is not considered by some as necessary to a happy marriage. Some people think that a biological urge must be satisfied, and if it is satisfied with the full and ultimate result they say “Good luck, get married and live happily ever after.” Unfortunately, in most cases they do not remain happily married. We were told by the member for Light that this Bill was a deterrent to the laws of Nature; but what did he mean by that? Perhaps he will explain to me the whole cause of attraction between men and women, but the attraction that leads to happy marriages is more than sex. I think the member for Light suggested that illiterates are happier than other people, but I do not know that is an argument in favour of illiteracy. I am sure the honourable member did not suggest that the sexual matings of illiterates are the best. Of course, people who do not know much are probably happier than those who do.

Mr. Hambour—Read my remarks!

Mr. JOHN CLARK—I do not have them here.

Mr. Hambour—You have misquoted me twice so far.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—I made my notes while I was reading the honourable member’s speech, but I do not misquote a man and then criticize him. I emphasize that there is more to happy marriage than the sex instinct. The honourable member said:—

If two young people are attracted physically there is a great chance of their marriage being a success.

Probably any girl and boy of 14 or 16 would be attracted to each other physically if they were healthy. The future of any child is paramount, and I am sure that my friends who have opposed this Bill believe that. I believe that children will be better protected by the Bill, because as a result of its passing there will be fewer illegitimate children. I believe this is the best way to protect children. One member suggested that we cannot

re-arrange the laws of nature, but this has nothing to do with nature. I believe a genuine marriage is more than the result of the satisfaction of a purely sexual instinct. There is more to it than that. The Bill will result in fewer, not more, illegitimate children. It will decrease unhappy and disturbed homes and will serve to protect young children from possibly hopeless marriages.

My attention has been drawn to at least one quotation concerning illiteracy in the speech of the member for Light recorded at page 1549 of *Hansard*. He said:—

People living in civilized countries are supposed to be enlightened, but are they any happier than illiterates with no education and with but one entertainment in life?

I do not think I need specify the “one entertainment in life” suggested by the honourable member. I support the suggestion that the Bill should include a discretionary clause. There may be some young people who prefer to marry and others whom it would be an absolute sin to prevent from marrying. However, there are many others whom it would be a sin to force to marry. I support the Bill but ask the Government to accept an amendment to provide for a discretionary power.

Mr. LAUCKE (Barossa)—I support the Bill. Whilst it is well nigh impossible to legislate adequately for very personal intimate happiness, I believe that the responsibilities of marriage, material and intangible are, even in this era of high employment and good remuneration, beyond the capacity of boys under 18 and girls under 16. The immaturity of persons younger than those years can result only in misery, mentally and physically, for the couple and their unfortunate issue. If there be issue at these immature ages then, in my opinion, it would be better that the child be offered for adoption into an approved home where there is every chance of its receiving loving care and good upbringing. Should a couple find, with the passing of years, that there is an abiding love and affection between them, they could then marry with the expectation of a happy future life. This is humane legislation and I support it.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1, 2 and 3 passed.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.57 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, February 6th, 1957, at 2 p.m.