HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, October 8, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.

GOVERNMENT BUILDING CONTRACTS.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—My question relates particularly to educational buildings. I understand that the Government has adopted a policy of calling for separate tenders for foundations and for structural work, although it is possible for the one tenderer to be appointed contractor for both works. I have already visited one job where this type of contract work was let and discovered men engaged in chipping off at least one inch from the concrete foundations. The area involved would be considerable. Has the Minister of Works received any report from the Architect-in-Chief's Department concerning incompetency in the carrying out of the foundation work? Further, is it the Government's intention to suspend this type of contracting and engage in the more normal method of calling tenders for the complete works or having the Architect-in-Chief's Department undertake it?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I have received no report from the Architect-in-Chief about any incompetent work. The idea of having separate tenders for foundations and superstructure was to enable work to proceed more speedily than if both works combined were contracted for. I will obtain a report from the Architect-in-Chief and advise the honourable member accordingly. If he will let me have particulars of the case in point it will assist me.

METROPOLITAN MILK SUPPLIES.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Last week in the *Advertiser* an article headed "Milk Shortage blamed on Farmers" stated:—

Dairymen who failed to take measures to maintain production during the off season months of March and April were to blame for milk shortages in the autumn, the president of the S.A. Dairymen's Association (Mr. I. R. Elliott) said yesterday. He was commenting on the statement in the Metropolitan Milk Board's annual report that the present milk supply position in South Australia is causing the board concern.

Mr. Elliott said the only shortage occurred in the autumn, and this was because too many farmers did not want to go to the trouble and extra expense of maintaining production. For the remainder of the year only 50 to 60 per cent of production was consumed by metropolitan users. The rest went to manufacturers. It will become necessary for the industry to adopt a suitable contract system whereby all licensed producers will contribute their share during the off season period, he suggested. The cow population is quite sufficient to supply our needs, he added.

Will the Minister explain the limitations of supplies to the metropolitan area as there are plenty of producers who would be happy to supply and enjoy the increased price they would receive?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The article to which the honourable member refers does not bear directly on the problem. The article, of which the president of the South Australian Dairymen's Association, Mr. Elliott, is apparently the author, discusses the problem of seasonal supplies of milk rather than supplies of milk *in toto*. There is no shortage of milk over most of the year and usually there is not even a shortage of milk in the autumn period, although last year there was because production from the River Murray areas was cut off by the flood. The problem to which Mr. Elliott refers is the question of equity as between producers —those who produce in the lean season and those who produce in the flush season. The metropolitan milk supply area was originally defined as that within which the wholesalers were collecting milk for the purposes of the metropolitan area, and that was taken as the original area established under the metropolitan milk supply arrangement. Jervois, I think, was not in the original area, but the area has been increased from time to time as metropolitan requirements have dictated. There are facilities whereby any person can apply for a licence from the Milk Board for metropolitan milk supply and when he does so various factors are taken into account—the suitability of his premises, the geographical location of his property in relation to existing milk rounds, and whether it is practicable to include him in a circuit. In point of fact there is no real shortage of milk. The question to which he has referred is merely the continuity of supply over the whole 12 months.

SNOWY RIVER WATERS AGREEMENT.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—In the absence of the Leader of the Opposition, and on his behalf, I ask the Premier whether he has anything further to report concerning the Snowy River Waters Agreement, particularly as a result of the conference he attended last Friday in Canberra.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The Prime Minister invited me to confer with him

last Friday on the disagreement that has arisen regarding the distribution of the Snowy waters and the subsequent matters arising out of the diversion of the Tooma River into the Murrumbidgee. The discussions extended over a period of four hours. I explained in detail our objections to the present proposals of the Commonwealth and stated what we believed to be the legal objections. The Prime Minister said he would communicate with me not later than Thursday, setting out the Commonwealth's views on these matters and what it was or was not prepared to do. Two main matters are at issue: the distribution of waters diverted into the Murray River, and the diversion of the Tooma River into the Murrumbidgee. We will have a considered reply from the Prime Minister on Thursday and I can then advise the House what further action the Government intends to take.

HYDATIDS IN SHEEP.

Mr. JENKINS—The Rotary Club of Victor Harbour has done a wonderful community service throughout the year in the eradication of hydatids in stock throughout the district. Much work on this subject has been done by the Wool Board, which has prepared a 16 mm. black and white film on the evolution of hydatids, which club members wish to show to interested people. Is the Minister of Agriculture prepared to lend this film, which is under the control of the department, for screening?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I am aware of the activities referred to and agree with the honourable member that the people concerned are performing a worthy service. The department has certain films on permanent loan from the Wool Board and I will arrange to have the film mentioned available to members of his organization.

GAWLER ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—Recently, in the debate on the Loan Estimates I drew the attention of the Minister of Education to the excellent work being done by the Gawler Adult Education Centre and said that a new building was urgently required on land already purchased to meet the requirements of the centre. Has the Minister of Education a report on this matter?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I agree with the honourable member's statement concerning the excellent work being done by this centre, but unfortunately the Director reports that no provision was made in the Loan programme this year for new buildings for the Gawler Adult Education Centre. Land was recently purchased, and it is most desirable that, as soon as possible, the classes should be held on this site. They are at present held in rented quarters in other parts of the town. These are congested and not satisfactory. However, the pressure of the demand in new schools, particularly secondary schools, has made it necessary to concentrate on these buildings for 1957-58 and, for this reason, work on new buildings for the Adult Education Centre was not included. The Director considers it most desirable that the work should not be delayed beyond this year and hopes that it will receive high priority for the 1958-59 programme.

MUCOSAL IN CATTLE.

Mr. HARDING—Yesterday I attended a meeting at Naracoorte of the South-Eastern Stockowners' Association, where great concern was expressed about the serious loss of young cattle from a disease known as mucosal. Arising from that meeting, today's press contains an article on the disease. Has the Minister of Agriculture a report on it?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I saw the press article referred to. About three months ago this matter was brought to my notice by a departmental officer, and since then active steps have been taken to investigate the incidence and causes of the disease, which is apparently new. Only the other day I approved of the purchase by the department of a small number of calves for further experimentation on the disease. At present I do not think we are able to offer any definite conclusions on it, but we are actively pursuing inquiries.

Mr. FLETCHER—Mr. Harding regards this as a serious problem, and so do I. As this disease has been reported for about six months or more, stock owners, especially those in the South-East, should be told what is being done to combat it. Today's press stated that this disease was similar to foot and mouth disease. Can the Minister of Agriculture say what serious investigations have been carried out on this matter?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I do not think I can add anything to the answer I gave to Mr. Harding. As far as I am aware this disease is of very recent origin and it was promptly reported and prompt action was taken to investigate it. This morning's press referred to some possible

relation between this disease and foot and mouth disease. That, if true, is serious, but so far none of my officers who have been concerned in this matter has suggested such an association. The department is actively pursuing its work on this problem. Apparently there is no immediate and prescribed remedy, but we are doing all we can to find one.

RELIEF FOR FLOOD VICTIMS.

Mr. BYWATERS—People on reclaimed swamps are perplexed and dismayed at what they believe to be anomalies in the distribution of the Lord Mayor's Relief Fund to the victims of last year's Murray River flood. Whereas some have received large amounts—some as high as £2,000—others have received little or nothing. I shall briefly quote one or two examples. Mr. A. purchased his property two months before the flood; he had a mortgage of £4,500; 45 acres was inundated; his dairy was a complete loss; materials cost £1,000 to replace; his mortgage was increased by £2,500; he has received no grant. Mr. B. purchased his property two years ago; his mortgage was £5,465; his dairy was extensively damaged; he received £78. Mr. C. has had to increase his mortgage to £6,000; he lost heavily in production; 15 of his cows died when agisted; he received £29 7s. 6d. I could quote many more cases. Can the Treasurer say how the money from the fund has been allocated and what amount is left in the fund to assist cases such as these?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—As far as I know, the distribution of the fund is practically complete. Indeed, I heard the Minister say a few days ago that the fund had been distributed with the exception of a small amount. The fund was distributed in accordance with the terms of its collection: on a hardship basis. Every applicant was required to state his assets. The honourable member has quoted some figures concerning certain cases, but if he will get the permission of the persons concerned to disclose the full facts of their applications, I shall be pleased to let him have the full facts of the cases so that he may see the grounds on which the applications were dealt with by the judge.

LEAD POISONING FROM TOYS.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I understand from news items in the press and on the radio that in certain States action has been taken to prohibit the sale of certain imported toys with a high lead content which, it is claimed, could be dangerous to people, particularly to children playing with them. Can the Premier, as Acting Minister of Health, say whether similar action has been taken in South Australia, and if so, what action?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have seen the reports referred to, particularly that emanating from Victoria concerning toys of oriental origin. No fatality or accident has been reported here, but I expect soon to receive a report from the Director-General of Public Health on whether regulations should be introduced here. I am not quite sure whether our present regulations cover the matter. I shall advise the honourable member, probably next week, whether any additional action is necessary.

EGG PRICES.

Mr. LAUCKE—Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to my recent question about the fall in egg prices?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The further information I have received from the acting Chairman of the Egg Board does not add much to what I previously said. I have received from him a schedule of the comparative prices paid by the Egg Boards in various States. It is too voluminous to read, but I will show it to the honourable member. It shows that the net prices paid to South Australian producers from July 1 to September 30 compare very favourably with those paid by Egg Boards in other States.

Mr. Quirke—But they are still too low.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—They are too low for the producers, but I said before that the board cannot continue to pay to producers a price that the product does not realize. Egg Boards cannot operate at a loss indefinitely, although the South Australian board has, out of its small reserves, been able to cushion the rapid fall in prices to some extent. The acting chairman of the Egg Board stated that last season the realizations for export eggs in shell were very poor indeed in the United Kingdom, which has been in past years the Australian traditional market. Production of eggs in the United Kingdom has been encouraged by Government subsidy estimated at over £40,000,000 per annum to such an extent that eggs have been exported to the continent from the United Kingdom for the first time. This year Australian eggs in shell have been diverted to other markets, mainly to Germany and Italy, where slightly better prices have prevailed, and few have been sold in the United Kingdom. I think it is obvious that

the position is as I outlined in my earlier reply and that the board is doing its best, in the circumstances, to keep up prices to producers.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I have the greatest confidence in the Department of Agriculture's branch at Parafield. Information which I received recently from the branch shows that recent tests have disclosed that on the average our fowls lay 203 eggs a year, and top grade fowls are laying 279 first grade eggs. Figures for previous years were 192, 194 and 210. Yesterday's *News* stated that drunken fowls lay more eggs than sober fowls, and if that is correct it seems that drunken fowls would lay 406 eggs a year. Will the Minister ascertain whether that statement is correct and whether the feeding of wine to fowls would cause the production of bad eggs?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I appreciate the honourable member's confidence in our Poultry Research Station at Parafield, which I am sure is justified. I do not know whether it would be profitable to keep fowls in a permanent state of intoxication. However, I will refer the question to the authorities.

IRON KNOB SCHOOL RESIDENCE.

Mr. LOVEDAY—A new residence for the headmaster at Iron Knob school was on the list of 53 houses that were supposed to be built in 1956. It was not built, and the present house is in poor condition, so I ask the Minister of Education whether there is any prospect of construction being started this year or whether he can do anything to expedite it.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I shall be pleased to ascertain the position and let the honourable member know. I cannot remember the details about this house, but there are a large number of houses on the lists of the various superintendents that are regarded as important and urgent. However, there is only a limited amount of money available each year for school houses, and a small sum was allocated this year.

PETROL STATIONS.

Mr. DUNNAGE—Some time ago, when petrol stations were being discussed in this House, the Premier said he had an agreement with the oil companies that they would not build any new service stations except to replace those sold or demolished. Does that agreement still stand?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I did not say that I had an agreement with the oil companies. I said the oil companies had given me certain assurances, which is quite a different thing. If the honourable member desires I can bring down the actual wording of the assurance. It was unsolicited and was contained in a letter. In broad terms, and generally speaking, it was that in the metropolitan area the companies would not increase the number of their selling outlets to the public. In other words, they would not establish a new outlet unless one of the existing outlets was closed.

NOARLUNGA MEAT WORKS.

Mr. STEPHENS—In last Friday's *News* an article headed "Beef Goes Begging: May be Dumped" states:—

More than 2,000 lb. of beef is going begging at Noarlunga. It most likely will be dumped in the sea. Works manager of Noarlunga Meat Ltd., Mr. N. W. Ives, said today: "This is wicked. Because of an antiquated Act of Parliament, the people of Adelaide are being deprived of beef which they could buy for 9d. a lb. After killing and packing for export all the week we were left with 30 80 lb. pieces of crop and shin from forequarters.

"These pieces, passed by a Federal meat inspector, we proposed sending to our wholesale depot in West Beach Road, Richmond, to be declared for sale to Adelaide butchers," said Mr. Ives. "However, the abattoirs advised us that this would not be permitted under the provisions of the Abattoirs Act, because the pieces were not complete forequarters," he added. His firm tried to communicate with the Agriculture Minister, Mr. Pearson, but found he was not in Adelaide, said Mr. Ives. Unless something happened in the meantime to alter "this ridiculous situation," his firm would be dumping more than 2,000 lb. of beef each week for the next two months, Mr. Ives said.

Has the Minister of Agriculture any reply to make to that statement?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—It is correct that I was out of town on Friday. As is, I think, known, I was attending the opening of the Bordertown Show on behalf of the Government. However, I did see the report late Friday evening. Since then we have been in touch with the company. The Act to which the gentleman refers as being "ridiculous" was one which this Parliament, in its wisdom, placed on the Statute Book, namely, the Metropolitan and Export Abattoirs Act. Further than that, the Metropolitan Abattoirs Board has, I think, at all times met the reasonable needs of the company in respect of its reject meat and attempted to help it when, through circumstances beyond its control, it had no outlet for some of its meat. Had the company made an approach to the board in the first

instance, setting out the reason for its request and explaining the problem that had arisen, it would, I am sure, have had full consideration. On advice we have given to the company it has I think now requested the board to consider the problem and the board is at present doing so. I understand the company has not previously entered into the export beef trade in a big way and therefore the problem of what to do with pieces of beef not acceptable for export has not previously arisen. The company was aware of the legislation and it would have been wise to make an approach in the ordinary way, as it is now doing. Until a reply to its request has been received from the board there is no further comment to make.

GLENELG SEWAGE TREATMENT WORKS.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Recently the Public Works Committee had before it a proposal to extend the Glenelg Treatment Works, the proposal also embracing the question of the disposal of sludge. The committee issued a progress report approving of the land work but, in respect of the sludge disposal, suggested investigations concerning currents and the probable movement of sludge if taken out to sea. There have been persistent rumours in my district that recently sludge has been taken out to sea. I could not say whether or not that is correct but the rumours have been referred to me by a chief officer of the Henley and Grange Council. I was unable to communicate with the Chief Engineer, but was in touch with a responsible officer of the department and was able to glean from him—although not satisfactorily—that there had been a change in the policy of discharging effluent from the works. He said it occurred during peak periods when, because of the need and the inadequacy of the plant, they bypassed certain processes, resulting in the effluent becoming heavier, but this had been combated by heavier chlorination. Will the Minister of Works obtain a report from the Chief Engineer of Sewers as to whether there has been any change in recent months in the effluent, and, if so, the nature of the change and the possible effects of pollution of our beaches?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will bring down a report as early as possible.

DRIVING TESTS FOR MOTORISTS.

Mr. TAPPING—Has the Premier a reply to the question I asked on August 6 concerning driving tests for motorists?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have received the following report from the Commissioner of Police:—

Our records show that for 12 months ended 30th June, 1956, there were 12,530 accidents on South Australian roads. Of these, 137 involving motor vehicles were classified as "inexperience" and resulted in five deaths and 46 injuries. For the year ended 30th June, 1957, there were 13,189 accidents, of which 239 were classified as "inexperience" and resulted in three deaths and 95 injuries. The question of driving tests for motorists, prior to their obtaining a licence, was rejected by the State Traffic Committee on 6th July, 1956 (six voting against tests and five in favour of them).

It would be most desirable from the authorities' point of view to know that before a person was issued with a driving licence, he or she had passed a driving test, but it is difficult to say whether this would have a major effect on the reduction of accidents. In most traffic accidents the causes were "fail to yield right of way" and "inattentive driving" by experienced drivers. The number of new driving licences issued averages over 2,000 per month, and I estimate that 14 constables, all trained to the same standard, would be necessary to effectively cope with the testing and the attendant administration if tests were applied. A matter which causes this department considerable concern is the number of migrants involved in traffic accidents. It may not be politic to discriminate between "New" and and "native born" Australians, but my own opinion is that a licence should not be issued until a person can read sufficient English to understand signs, notices and directions.

I obtained that report as a result of the honourable member's question and will forward it to Cabinet for consideration because I intend to have certain of the Commissioner's suggestions further examined to see whether they can be implemented.

SUPERANNUATION BENEFITS.

Mr. DUNSTAN—As a number of superannuated civil servants are finding difficulty in making ends meet on their pensions, can the Treasurer say whether the Government intends to increase the value of superannuation units this year?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The Superannuation Act has been amended twice in recent years and the Government does not propose to deal with the superannuation benefits of public servants this year. It will, however, introduce legislation regarding police pensions, provided agreement can be reached between the Police Officers Association and the Government negotiators. The Government has asked the Public Actuary to prepare an altered schedule of benefits for police

officers to bring them more into line with what they should be. The schedule has been prepared and, although it has not been to Cabinet, I have asked the Public Actuary and the Police Commissioner to submit it to the association for its approval. I hope to get agreement on that matter. I have marked the docket "Most urgent" because the House will probably not be sitting beyond this month and I hope to have more information on the matter for honourable members next week.

ENFIELD HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. JENNINGS—Has the Minister of Education a further reply to my question concerning the grading and levelling of the grounds of the Enfield High School?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I have received the following report from the Architect-in-Chief's Department:—

As has been stated, a survey has been carried out at the Enfield High School to enable investigation of the possible means of levelling and grading the school grounds so that playing fields may subsequently be developed. Levelling, bitumen paving and storm-water drainage around the new buildings have already been provided for in plans for the building contract. The preliminary planning of a scheme for levelling the grounds has been delayed due to the shortage of trained surveyors and survey personnel necessary for this type of work. The existing survey staff of the Architect-in-Chief's Department are hard pressed to keep up with the urgent work upon which they are engaged. Every endeavour is, however, being made to have the necessary work at Enfield High School carried out as soon as possible.

Mr. JENNINGS—I appreciate the difficulty of the Architect-in-Chief's Department because of the shortage of surveyors and other skilled officers, but I point out that the Enfield High School is in its fifth year of operation and virtually nothing has been done about the levelling and grading of the grounds, which places the students at a grave disadvantage in sporting activities. Will the Minister of Education personally investigate the matter to see whether he can justifiably and conscientiously ask the Architect-in-Chief's Department to give some special priority to this school?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes, I shall be pleased to do so, but at the same time I appreciate the great difficulties of the Architect-in-Chief in relation to surveyors. There seems to be a State-wide shortage of surveyors and until the lag is overtaken a large number of services must be left.

STRATHALBYN-WOODCHESTER ROAD.

Mr. JENKINS—The road from Strathalbyn to within a mile or so of Woodchester is of bitumen, but from then onward through the township it is a gravel road, which has recently been graded by the district council. As much traffic uses the road, clouds of fine dust are created and settle on and in houses adjacent to the road. Residents dread another summer under these conditions and I ask the Minister representing the Minister of Roads to ascertain from his colleague whether the Highways Department intends to seal this road soon, as residents were told 12 months ago it was listed for attention.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will refer the honourable member's question to my colleague and bring down a reply as early as possible.

MONARTO-SEDAN RAILWAY LINE.

Mr. BYWATERS—Recently I read press reports that the Murray Lands District Councils had asked the Minister of Railways to receive a deputation concerning the closing of the Monarto-Sedan railway line. Employees of the Railways Department and residents of the district who are concerned about this have contacted me, and I ask the Minister representing the Minister of Railways to ask his colleague to ensure that, if this matter reaches the stage of a serious discussion, members of the Australian Railways Union and other interested parties will have a chance to state their case.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will address the question to my colleague and any subsequent action will be at his discretion.

PORT PIRIE DREDGING.

Mr. DAVIS—As I have been informed that over £80,000 is to be spent on dredging the Port Pirie Harbour, can the Minister of Marine say when this work will start?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—Discussions have taken place between the Treasurer, the General Manager of the Harbors Board and myself on this question. The member for Semaphore (Mr. Tapping) recently raised the question of the retrenchment of the second shift on a dredger at Port Adelaide, and the question now arises whether we could not employ those men at Port Pirie when their work at Port Adelaide ceases. In ordinary circumstances that work will last for some weeks yet, so, if the Treasurer can see his way clear to grant the sum required, it would

be early in the new year before those men and the attendant fleet of the board could go to Port Pirie. I shall be pleased to discuss the matter of accommodation with the honourable member, as we have at Port Pirie a hostel capable of accommodating only 14 men, and more would be required for this work. I am sure the honourable member will assist in that regard.

MILLICENT COURTHOUSE.

Mr. CORCORAN—Has the Premier a reply to my recent question regarding the provision of a courthouse at Millicent?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have received a report from the Special Magistrate and head of the department, as follows:—

I am surprised to read the above comment. Millicent has a very satisfactory courthouse which is in reasonable condition. So far as I am aware there has not been any suggestion of another building. On the land some foundations were placed some years ago, but I have understood that these were for a police building. With all respect to the honourable member I suggest that he may have mistaken the town and intended to refer to Naracoorte.

OIL SEARCH IN SOUTH-EAST.

Mr. FLETCHER—Has any report been received from the Zinc Corporation on its search for oil in the South-East? Is this company required to report on its scout boring and research?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Any person or company with a search lease or licence must spend a certain amount of money on exploration work and report to the Director of Mines on the work done. No report on this company's work has reached me, so I assume that no oil has been found because I think the Director of Mines would immediately communicate with me if there were any significant information. I will make a specific enquiry into this case and advise the honourable member, probably tomorrow.

WORKMEN'S COMPENSATION ACT.

Mr. LAWN—Has the Premier a reply to the question I asked on September 19 about the Workmen's Compensation Act?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have not received a report, but I will make further investigations.

GUMMOSIS IN APRICOTS.

Mr. QUIRKE—Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to the question I asked about gummosis in apricots?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I have received the following report from the Director of Agriculture:—

In view of the recent discovery of fruiting bodies of the gummosis fungus on hosts other than apricot, it is considered inadvisable at this juncture to prescribe compulsory measures for control of the disease. The fungus has been found extensively on the dead wood inevitably associated with the butts of living and productive grape vines. A practicable method of dealing with this source of infection will not be easy to devise. The fungus has also been found on apple, and it is likely that other alternate hosts will be found. Until research has disclosed the full facts concerning host range of the fungus and other matters, it is deemed advisable to confine our activities to advocating destruction of old apricot wood and modified pruning methods which together have achieved a high measure of control of the disease.

RABBIT-PROOF FENCES.

Mr. Frank Walsh for Mr. O'HALLORAN (on notice)—When the Forestry Department plants trees on land adjacent to farm lands, do the ordinary provisions of the Fencing Act apply or does the department insist on landholders meeting half the cost of rabbit-proof fences?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The Forestry Department has not found it necessary to attempt to invoke the provisions of the Fences Act. The department has found in practice that it can arrange for rabbit-proof fencing between plantations and adjoining farm lands by mutual agreement with adjoining landholders.

PINE PLANTATION: FIRE DANGER.

Mr. Frank Walsh for Mr. O'HALLORAN (on notice)—

1. Is it intended that an area of land will be planted with pines in the hundred of Talunga during the year 1957-58?

2. If so, is the area to be planted surrounded by farm land?

3. If a forest is established in this area, will it not constitute a danger to adjoining landholders in case of fire?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The replies are—

1. Yes.

2. No, but farm lands may abut two or three sides depending on the area to be planted.

3. The forest will be protected by properly maintained firebreaks which are not now provided.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION: SNOWY RIVER WATERS AGREEMENT.

Mr. LAWN—I ask leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

Mr. LAWN—On September 24 the Premier attributed to me a statement which I did not make and the Chairman of Committees asked for its withdrawal. Because of noise on the Government side of the House I did not hear four or five words of the statement the Premier made in requesting a withdrawal. He said:—

I object to the statement the honourable member has made that I said in this House that I knew the contents of the agreement before I received it.

I did not hear the Premier use the words "that I said in this House." I did not make that statement; therefore I did not make the statement that I withdrew. The statement that I made has not been denied and I make that explanation to the House.

MITCHELL PARK BOYS' TECHNICAL SCHOOL.

The SPEAKER laid on the table the final report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on the Mitchell Park Boys Technical School, together with minutes of evidence.

Ordered that report be printed.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION: MILLICENT COURTHOUSE.

Mr. CORCORAN—I ask leave to make a personal explanation.

Leave granted.

Mr. CORCORAN—I made an error when I referred in a question this afternoon to a courthouse at Millicent. I should have said "police station." I agree with the Special Magistrate that the courthouse at Millicent is adequate for court purposes. When I asked a question about the Millicent police station on October 30, 1956, I stated:—

During a recent visit to Millicent the chairman and clerk of the district council and other citizens drew my attention to the fact that there is actually no police station there. The old courthouse, which was built about 70 or 80 years ago, is used for local court purposes and as accommodation for the police officers who are carrying out their various duties in serving the town and district, and there is not sufficient accommodation. There is no provision in this year's Estimates, but will the Premier ascertain the Government's intentions concerning the erection of a new police station at Millicent?

I am sorry that when speaking on the Loan Estimates I referred to the courthouse instead of the police station, but I point out that the office accommodation at Millicent is inadequate for the needs of the officers concerned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS.

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

That for the remainder of the session, Government business take precedence over all other business except questions.

I assure the Opposition that a couple of hours will be devoted to cleaning up the private members' business on the Notice Paper before the session ends.

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Edwardstown)—On behalf of the Opposition I accept the Premiers' assurance. Had he not given it we would have opposed the motion. I hope he will give us reasonable notice as to when the opportunity will be presented for us to dispose of this business.

Mr. DAVIS (Port Pirie)—I oppose the motion. The Government should not take away rights from members on this side of the House. The Premier has assured us that he will give us two hours to dispose of private members' business, but it is the right of all members to express their opinions and to introduce legislation in this House. I know that the Government does not like the unfinished private members' business and I suspect that it hopes to avoid voting on it. I hope members will strongly oppose the motion.

Mr. BYWATERS (Murray)—I oppose the motion. We have not been in session very long and there are many matters members would like to place before the House for consideration, but, because of the shortness of the session, are unable to do so. I am placed in such a position. I believe we do not sit long enough and the only opportunities we have to express our views are while we are in session.

Motion carried.

BRANDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON (Minister of Agriculture), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Brands Act, 1933-1935. Read a first time.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Section 54 of the Brands Act provides for the keeping of registers of the various kinds of brands and marks to which the Act relates. Section 55 provides that the Registrar of

Brands, at the end of every quarter, is to publish in the *Government Gazette* a statement setting out the brands and marks which have been registered, transferred or cancelled during the quarter. In addition, section 55 provides for the publication at intervals of two years of brands directories containing particulars of all registered brands. It has, in practice, been found impracticable to publish these brands directories. The Government Printer, for several years past, has been unable to divert sufficient men to the work and the cost of keeping up the directories would be over £5,000 per annum. Furthermore, a directory becomes out of date very quickly and needs to be supplemented by the statement of changes in brands, etc., published in the *Gazette* every quarter.

It is considered, therefore, that the provisions of the Act requiring the compilation of the brands directory should be repealed and this is accordingly provided for by the Bill. However, it is realized that the public should be able to obtain without delay information as to registered brands and the Bill provides that, if information is required as to any brand whether the request is made by letter, telephone or otherwise, the information is to be supplied by the Registrar. In addition, the Bill contains evidentiary provisions under which the certificate of the Registrar as to whether a brand is or is not registered and as to extracts from any of the registers, is to be *prima facie* evidence of the fact stated in the certificate.

This is a simple Bill designed to meet changed times. Whereas in the past the Act required that directories were to be published, it is now considered unnecessary because they are almost obsolete before printing. The public has access to the Brands Department and can readily obtain the information desired. It has been considered advisable to re-organize the provisions of the Act in order to overcome the difficulties of printing and to obviate the cost incurred. Public access to reliable and up-to-date information on brands will be maintained.

Mr. FRED WALSH secured the adjournment of the debate.

CROWN LANDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. Sir Thomas Playford, for the Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Crown Lands Act, 1919-1944. Read a first time.

The Hon. Sir Thomas Playford, for the Hon. C. S. HINCKS—I move —

That this Bill be now read a second time.

It deals with a problem which arises mainly as a result of action taken by South Australian Governments last century with the object of establishing new townships, mainly in the northern parts of the State. Between the years 1860 and 1890 many proposed town sites in areas of sparse population were surveyed and subdivided into building allotments with roads and park lands. The allotments were offered for sale to the public and in the aggregate some hundreds of them were sold, though only a small proportion of the total. For example, in one town 90 out of 360 blocks were sold, in another 26 out of 130, in another 14 out of 350 and in others only one or two out of about 100. These are typical cases.

The townships with which this Bill is concerned did not develop according to expectations. In practically all of them there are no buildings at all nor, as far as can be foreseen, are there likely to be any. The titles to the allotments which were sold by the Crown are now in some cases in the names of deceased persons, since the executors or administrators have not bothered to register transmissions or transfers. In other cases the owners are in other States or overseas and apparently have lost all interest in their blocks.

From time to time however owners or lessees of other lands near these old towns apply to the Government for a lease or grant of some of the vacant and unused township allotments. The problem then arises whether the Government can do anything to help such applicants. In 1913 an attempt was made to solve this problem by legislation. An amending Crown Lands Act was passed containing provisions for the cancellation of superfluous townships and these provisions have been incorporated in section 261 of the consolidating Crown Lands Act of 1929. They provide, in effect, that when Crown lands have been set apart and subdivided as a town site but, in the opinion of the Minister of Lands, no town has been built and the land is no longer required as a site for a town, the Governor may cancel the proclamation creating the town, and the Minister may acquire all or any of the township allotments. The Act also lays down the procedure to be adopted for acquisition, and it is this question of procedure which is dealt with in this Bill. The procedure which now has to be followed is that laid down in Part X of the Crown Lands Act. However, Part X was designed for the acquisition of large estates for subdivision and closer settlement and is completely unsuitable for the acquisition of isolated town allotments. It

takes years to go through the necessary steps and it is by no means certain that the Crown can ever obtain a clear title at all. It seems that Part X was passed not to facilitate acquisition, but rather to make it very difficult. The Land Board, which has the task of dealing with cancelled towns, has asked that the law should be altered so as to provide a practicable method of acquisition.

The Bill sets out to achieve this object. The proposal is that in cases where it is intended to cancel the proclamation establishing a town the Governor shall have power to acquire town allotments by proclamation. Proclamations will be made only where the Minister is satisfied that the land is no longer required as the site of a town. A proclamation will declare that the allotments to which it applies will be vested in the Crown as from a named day. On that day the Crown will obtain a clear title and everybody having any estate or interest in the allotments will have a claim for compensation. Notice of the acquisition must be given to every person having a right to compensation who is known to the Minister or who, after diligent inquiry, becomes known to him. If a person who is entitled to be given notice of acquisition cannot be found the Minister can serve the notice on the person in occupation of the land, and if there is no occupier the notice can be affixed in a conspicuous place on the land itself. After the preliminary procedure any person claiming compensation may bring an action for such compensation in any court of competent jurisdiction. The compensation will be the value of the land at the time of the acquisition and any other damage which the claimant suffers by reason of the severance of the land from other land owned by him.

Under this Bill a person entitled to compensation will be better off than he is at present. In most cases the amount involved will be well within the jurisdiction of a local court and if the amount is not settled by agreement, as no doubt it will be in most cases, an action can be brought in a local court. Under the present law, however, disputed claims for compensation have to be settled by arbitration, the arbitrators being a judge of the Supreme Court and two persons appointed respectively by the claimant and the Crown. Past experience has shown that arbitration under Part X of the Crown Lands Act is an unsatisfactory procedure. Furthermore, there are no special provisions in this Bill intended to protect the Crown by limiting or defining the basis of compensation and owners will be entitled to the full value of their blocks.

The Bill will remove difficulties which have confronted the Land Board for some time and in the opinion of the Government will not cause injustice to anyone. On the other hand, it will enable town blocks which at present are not being used by their owners to be allotted by the Crown to persons or authorities who will make better use of them than has been done in the past. It should be pointed out that this Bill is not in any way related to the question of decentralization. The cancelled towns to which the Bill will apply are places where there have not been any industries and where industries are not likely to be established within any time that can now be foreseen.

Mr. FRANK WALSH secured the adjournment of the debate.

MARRIAGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

VERMIN ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. Sir Thomas Playford, for the Hon. C. S. HINCKS, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Vermin Act, 1931-1954. Read a first time.

The Hon. Sir Thomas Playford, for the Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Among other things, it provides that an owner or occupier, after receiving notice so to do, must destroy all vermin on his land and half the width of adjoining roads. During what are termed the simultaneous vermin destruction months the land holder is under an obligation to destroy vermin whether or not he receives specific notice for the purpose.

In 1945 the law was extended to provide that a landholder must destroy rabbit burrows on his land and adjoining roads but this duty is limited to a case where notice to destroy is given by the council or other appropriate authority. There is no general duty to destroy burrows during the simultaneous vermin destruction months and the purpose of this Bill is to provide that such a duty will apply.

Accordingly, a number of amendments are made to the Vermin Act for the purpose of imposing on landholders the duty to destroy burrows during the simultaneous vermin destruction months without notice. However, as is

now provided in the Act relating to the destruction of burrows after notice, it is provided that it is to be a defence to show that, owing to the physical features of the land in question, it is not practicable to destroy the burrows.

The only other amendment made by the Bill is contained in clause 2 and clause 3 (*b*). The Act provides that the months for simultaneous vermin destruction may be changed from time to time with respect to any area and it is felt that adequate notice of what months are simultaneous vermin destruction months should be given to landholders. Clause 2 therefore requires the council to give at least a fortnight's notice of the advent of a simultaneous vermin destruction period by publication of a notice to that effect in a newspaper circulating in the locality. Clause 3 (*b*) provides that it is to be a defence to proceedings if it is proved that the requisite advertisement was not given.

Mr. FRANK WALSH secured the adjournment of the debate.

METROPOLITAN MILK SUPPLY ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON, having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Metropolitan Milk Supply Act, 1946-1956. Read a first time.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its purpose is to enable the Government to extend the metropolitan area, as defined in the Metropolitan Milk Supply Act, 1946. The general objects of this Act are to regulate the production and treatment of milk sold for human consumption in the metropolitan area so as to ensure a supply of milk of good quality produced under hygienic conditions, and to provide for the stabilization and equalization of the returns to the producers.

The metropolitan area, within the meaning of the Metropolitan Milk Supply Act, consists of the municipalities and districts within which the Food and Drugs Act operates. For purposes of this Bill it is not necessary to mention them all. The relevant point is that no territory north of the municipality of Enfield is included in the area. The northern boundary of Enfield is a line running roughly east and west a little way north of Dry Creek.

Since 1946, when the metropolitan milk scheme was introduced, settlements north of Enfield have extended considerably, and there have been important developments at Salisbury North and Elizabeth. It seems reasonable to expect that as time goes on there will be substantial further extensions of the northern suburbs. All these rapidly developing areas are outside the territory within which the Metropolitan Milk Board controls the retail milk supply.

The Government has received a request from the board asking that the metropolitan area should be extended so as to take in the towns of Salisbury and Elizabeth. The same request is supported by the representative organizations of the milk producers who supply the metropolitan area. The Government has not yet decided what extensions of the Act should be made, but it seems likely that as residential settlements extend, the ambit of the Board's jurisdiction will also have to be extended. The Government by this Bill accordingly seeks power to do this. The proposal is that any alteration of the metropolitan area will be made by regulations approved by the Governor on the recommendation of the Metropolitan Milk Board. Under this arrangement the Government and the board will have to reach agreement on the question of what extensions are desirable, and in the last resort Parliament will have control over any proposed changes.

Mr. BYWATERS secured the adjournment of the debate.

LANDLORD AND TENANT (CONTROL OF RENTS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its principal purpose is to extend for another year the operation of the Landlord and Tenant (Control of Rents) Act. Although the housing position has eased substantially by virtue of the house building rate which has been kept up in South Australia and the position is by no means as urgent as it was some years ago, the demand for rental housing is still very much in excess of the supply. This is the case even though the Act has not since 1953 applied to new houses and anybody who builds a house for letting now is not subject to any control either as regards the rent to be charged or the terms upon which the tenancy may be terminated.

It may be said that, apart from house building by the Housing Trust there is no new building taking place for the provision of rental housing for the workers. There is quite considerable activity in the building of flats, but the new flats which are being completed these days are commanding rents beyond that

which the working man can afford. That the demand for rental housing is still very heavy is shown by the fact that during the last financial year the Housing Trust received 5,417 applications for rental houses and 1,720 applications for emergency housing. In addition it received 2,547 applications for purchase houses. The Government is therefore of opinion that the Act should be extended for another year and that, with some exceptions to be mentioned later, the existing control should be continued. Accordingly clause 8 extends the operation of the Act until December 31, 1958. However, the Government is of opinion that the time has arrived when an increase in basic rents as fixed by the Housing Trust is justified. At present when rent is to be fixed by the trust or by a local court, the law provides that the trust or court is to have regard to the general level of rents obtaining at September 1, 1939, plus an increase of 33⅓ per cent. In addition, of course, regard must be had to increases in outgoings such as rates and taxes, maintenance and so on, so that the rent fixed at the present time would be substantially more than 33⅓ per cent above the 1939 rent. The 33⅓ per cent was fixed by the amending Act of 1955 when it was increased from 27½ per cent. Since 1955 there has been an increase of 20s. in the living wage and the Government feels that it is now time to increase the percentage fixed by the Act. Clause 2 therefore provides that the 33⅓ per cent previously mentioned is to be increased to 40 per cent.

Sections 24 and 38 of the Act provide that if a landlord charges rent beyond that to which he is entitled under the Act the tenant may recover any amount which has been overpaid during the preceding six months or may deduct it against rent becoming due to the landlord. The experience of the Housing Trust is that in very many cases the overpayment of rent is not ascertained until a longer period than six months has elapsed and it follows that in instances the landlord is, under the present law, entitled to retain what amounts to an unlawful rent over a period of years. Clause 4 proposes that as regards rent paid after the passing of the Bill the period of six months is to be increased to 12 months. It should be realized that as the clause is drafted it will not have any retrospective effect as regards rent overpaid in the past, but as regards future overpayments of rent the tenant will be entitled to a refund of rent paid during the preceding 12 months.

Clause 5 corrects what may be termed an omission in the present Act. Subsection (9) of section 42 says that an alien is not to give notice to quit to his tenant on the ground that he wishes to reside in the house or that he desires possession to enable him to allow a member of his family to reside in the house unless he has continuously resided in the Commonwealth for three years. Section 55c was enacted in 1955 and provides that the landlord may give six months' notice to quit on the ground that the premises are needed for occupation by himself, his son, daughter, father, or mother, but the restrictions provided under section 42 (9) in the case of an alien do not apply to section 55c although obviously the two provisions should be uniform in this regard. The effect of clause 5, therefore, is to provide that an alien cannot give notice under section 55c on the grounds mentioned unless he has resided in the Commonwealth for three years. The amendment, however, will not have retrospective effect and the amendment is limited to notice to quit given after the passing of the Bill.

Clause 6 deals with another matter arising out of section 55c. Section 60 provides that where a notice to quit is given on one of a number of grounds and the court, in due course, makes an order granting possession of the premises to the landlord, it is an offence if the landlord lets the premises or sells them within 12 months after the premises are vacated unless the court authorizes the lease or sale. The purpose of this, of course, is to prevent a person recovering possession of premises on the ground that he wants to occupy them himself or on some similar ground and then proceeding to let them to someone else. Section 55c again runs counter to section 60 as the limitations imposed by section 60 do not apply to proceedings under section 55c. The purpose of clause 6, therefore, is to bring proceedings under section 55c which are taken after the passing of the Bill within the scope of section 60.

It has sometimes occurred in the past that a tenant who has customarily paid rent to an agent or somebody else on behalf of the landlord has been informed by the agent or person that he will not accept any further rent and the tenant is not informed to whom the rent is to be paid. In fact, in the case of many small properties the tenant frequently does not know who is the landlord and cannot ascertain that fact without some difficulty. Other cases have arisen where the landlord is living in the country and has insisted upon the tenant paying the rent to him at his place of residence.

In one case the tenant has sent the rent by post in the form of money orders and the landlord has refused to accept delivery of the letter. The ordinary law relating to this matter is that it is the duty of the tenant to pay the rent in legal currency to his landlord and it will be seen that under the circumstances mentioned, if the tenant fails to pay the rent, although he has attempted to do it, he becomes in arrears in his rent and proceedings can be taken against him for recovery of possession of the premises.

Clause 7 deals with these two matters. It provides that where rent is customarily paid to a person by the lessee and the lessor has not given him notice that the rent is to be paid to some other person, then payment or tender of the rent to the first mentioned person is to be valid payment or tender. The clause also provides that if the lessee forwards by post to the lessor or the person to whom the rent is customarily paid a letter containing bank notes, postal notes or money orders of the value of the amount of rent payable and the lessor or other person refuses to accept delivery of the letter then that is to constitute a valid tender of rent. If the rent is tendered and not accepted by the landlord the position, of course, is that, under those circumstances, he has no right of action for recovery of possession on the grounds of non-payment of rent.

Mr. DUNSTAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

SCAFFOLDING INSPECTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

In Committee.

(Continued from October 2. Page 921.)

Clause 3—''Interpretation''—to which Mr. O'Halloran had moved the following amendment:—

After paragraph (*c*) add new paragraphs:—

(*c*1) the following definition is inserted:—
''scaffolder' means a person in charge of the erection, alteration or demolition of scaffolding.

(*c*2) The definition of ''scaffolding'' is amended by adding the words ''unless the workman is required to work thereon at a height of more than ten feet above ground level or floor level.''

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Acting Leader of the Opposition)—Will the Premier agree to postponing discussion on clause 3 until after we have dealt with clause 4? I think we could then short-circuit debate on clause 3.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—If the honourable member desires, I will move in that direction.

The CHAIRMAN—The Acting Leader of the Opposition will have to first ask leave to withdraw the amendment to clause 3.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—In that case I think we shall have to proceed with clause 3. Many builders, including the Architect-in-Chief, may be involved in building several large premises. It is reasonable to assume that the foreman in charge would be qualified to supervise the work of a scaffolder. If we do not provide for ''scaffolders'' as defined in this amendment, we will have no provision for qualified people to direct the erection of scaffolding that would meet all safety requirements. I know there has been a vast change in the type of scaffolding used and that now there are people who can be classed as experts in tubular scaffolding which contractors can hire. However, it is desirable to have qualified persons to supervise scaffolding erection.

Mr. Quirke—Would people in the bush have to employ a qualified scaffolder, and what qualifications would be necessary for a scaffolder?

Mr. FRANK WALSH—The qualifications we suggest are that he should have a least 12 months' experience in the erection of scaffolding and pass written and practical tests as to his capabilities before being issued with a licence. We should have men licensed to decide whether scaffolding is suitable. I do not suggest that if a person erects scaffolding to undertake work on his own home in the country he should not be allowed to do so. He would have to take the risk of injury, but he would be well advised to secure the services of a scaffolder, and should do so if other persons are to work on the scaffolding.

We also seek to extend the definition of ''scaffolding'' to relate to heights more than 10ft. above ground floor level. In most houses of modern construction the height from floor to ceiling is 9ft. or 10ft. whereas in the past the ceilings of many homes were over 12ft. above floor level. If a painter works on scaffolding inside a room we are not particularly concerned, but when he is required to work on the outside of a building we should ensure that the scaffolding is safe. An accident recently occurred in Rundle Street. I do not know whether the inquiry into the cause has been completed or whether the matter is still *sub judice*. Nor do I know

whether the scaffolding was safe or whether perhaps because of health the man had a turn and fell.

The Hon. Sir Thomas Playford—Is the honourable member referring to the incident at the Myer Emporium?

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Yes. The Premier may have seen the report, but I do not know what the cause of the accident was. I can only assume that an inspector has made an investigation and a report. During the second reading debate I referred to the responsibility of inspectors. An inspector could be all-powerful and could direct that no work be done on a scaffolding until it was made safe. However, I am concerned with whether inspectors have sufficient time to examine all scaffolding before it is used. One inspector, since transferred to another Government department, was one of the best men we have ever appointed to undertake this work. From the point of view of ordinary cottage work, scaffolding comprising trestles and planks is quite safe, but we believe that when scaffolding is to be used at a height beyond 10ft. the definition should be extended. I ask the House to accept the Leader's amendments.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—When this matter was before the House last week I doubted very much whether I could accept the amendments, for they appeared to create a new type of person and to divide the responsibility. I have now had a chance to confer with the department concerned and have received the following report:—

The second amendment seeks to include two new definitions in clause 3 of the Bill (section 4 of the Act). These definitions are consequential upon the new clause 5a which the Leader will seek to include to provide for the licensing of scaffolders. In 1955, the Builders Labourers Union and the Cyclone Company of Australia made joint representations to me regarding this matter. I submitted a full report on 14th May, 1956, after seeking the views of the Builders and Contractors section of the South Australian Chamber of Manufactures and the South Australian Builders and Contractors Association and obtained information regarding the licensing of scaffolders in other States.

New South Wales is the only State where all scaffolders must be licensed although in Queensland and Western Australia, the person in charge of the erection or demolition of scaffolding (in Queensland exceeding 14ft. in height and in Western Australia exceeding 27ft. in height) must be licensed, whilst in Victoria and Tasmania, no provision has been made for the licensing of scaffolders. The two employer bodies mentioned above who were invited to comment on the proposal both opposed the introduction of any scheme for the licensing of scaffolders. They were of the opinion that such a scheme (*a*) would not result in any advantage to the building industry, (*b*) could interfere with and disrupt the organization of labour and building construction work, (*c*) would result in claims for increased wages, (*d*) would result in higher costs to the building industry and (*e*) could result in certain firms (*e.g.*, Cyclone Company of Australia) obtaining a virtual monopoly of the erection of scaffolding.

Statistics of the number of accidents because of defective scaffolding in the last eight years indicate that a high standard of efficiency and safety has been maintained in the erection and use of scaffolding. Last year when reporting on this matter, I indicated that in my opinion the request for the licensing of scaffolders was one which should be resolved on the question where licensing is necessary in the public interest and for the safety of employees engaged on building construction work. Under the Act as it stands at present, it is the employer's responsibility to see that scaffolding is safe. This means that an employer must employ competent men to erect the scaffolding, so at present the effect of the Act is that only competent people can be employed in charge of this work and it does not appear that there is any necessity for scaffolders to be licensed. I might add that when the Builders Labourers Union made this request to me in 1955, the secretary of the union made it clear that if any system of licensing was introduced, the union would use that fact in an effort to secure increased service for builders labourers. If scaffolders are required to be licensed, it is possible that applications for a licensing system from many other trade groups would be received, as the skill which scaffolders are required to exercise in the performance of their work is of a lower order than that required of tradesmen.

That report confirms my opinion that the amendment has the effect of dividing the responsibility. At present the employer is responsible, whereas if a subsidiary person is licensed and placed in charge of the erection of scaffolding the employer must be relieved of the obligation because two persons cannot be responsible for the same thing. It would be grossly improper to license a person, put him in charge of the erection of scaffolding and then say that some other person was responsible if the scaffolding was not erected properly. The moment the control is divided the responsibility is automatically divided. As the Government considers that new paragraph (c2) is desirable, I ask that new paragraph (c1) be considered separately.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I agree with the suggestion that these new paragraphs be considered separately. The Premier said that the effect of the amendment was to divide

responsibility, but I cannot see how it does that.

Mr. DUNSTAN—The Premier said that if we had a system of licensing people in charge of jobs there would be a division of control and therefore the owner would be relieved of responsibility, but that is a fantastic argument to be put forward by anyone who knows anything about master-servant relationships, because it is normal to license people who are responsible for the safety of other people in the exercise of their avocations. It is normal —indeed necessary—to license a master of a ship, a bus driver, or the driver of a motor vehicle; but if the licensed master or driver is guilty of a breach of duty, the owner of the ship, bus or motor car (where the owner of the motor car is the employer of the driver) is liable for the torts of his servant, and it is perfectly proper that that should be so. That does not mean, however, that the people in charge of those things need not be licensed. On the other hand, however, if the Premier's argument is followed to its logical conclusion there would be no need to license the master of a ship because, the Premier would say, it is necessary under common law to employ a competent servant, therefore there is no need to licence anyone to take a ship to sea because the onus is on the shipping company if anything untoward happens.

Where people have to exercise their qualifications in such a way that they involve the safety of other people, it is necessary to see that they are properly qualified, therefore three other States provide for—and the users of scaffolding in this State seek—the licensing of people erecting scaffolding. I am not surprised that the Builders and Contractors Association does not think this is a good idea. True, as a result of such a system of licensing the Builders Labourers Union might be able to point out that certain people in their industry were required to have qualifications beyond those demanded of ordinary workers under the award, and the union could ask why such workmen should not receive extra pay because of those qualifications. I think the Builders and Contractors Association is concerned more about that possibility than with the desirability of seeing that qualified personnel are employed, but that attitude should not concern us. If it is necessary to have qualified workers to erect scaffolding—and it is obviously necessary—how can it be said that we should not have a system of licensing? There is no reason why an adequate system cannot be provided for and qualifications laid down.

The other objection by the inspector is that under ordinary law it is necessary to employ competent people, but, although that is so, it does not in all cases move the employer sufficiently to see that properly qualified people are employed. It may be that unqualified persons could put up scaffolding and that no accident would result, but the safety of workmen must be paramount.

The objection by the industry that the Cyclone Wire Company will get a monopoly for the erection of scaffolds as a result of this amendment is not valid. That could only be possible by saying that the only scaffolds to be erected shall be those erected by the company, but that is not suggested. All the amendment suggests is that the Government, by regulation, shall prescribe the qualifications of scaffolders, and it does not necessarily follow that the Cyclone Wire Company will be the only firm approved. The Premier's remarks about divided control constituted a poor argument. Employers will always be liable for the safety of scaffolds. Under the mining regulations qualified persons must be employed on certain works, and the department's inspectors see that the regulations are carried out. I hope the Committee will not be persuaded by the selfish and narrow interests of the Builders' and Contractors' Association, but will concern itself with the safety of those in the building trade.

Mr. HAMBOUR—If the amendment is passed will it be State-wide in application? I discussed this question with the Leader of the Opposition and he was not sure on that point. Will scaffolders be licensed only for proclaimed areas?

Mr. DUNSTAN—The Act applies only to defined areas. Of course, in our view those areas should be widened, but the amendment relates only to the general provisions of the Act. A scaffolder would have to be licensed to erect scaffolding in any area to which the Act applied.

Mr. LOVEDAY—I endorse what Mr. Dunstan said about the Premier's objection to divided control. The responsibility of a scaffolder would be analogous to that of a rigger. If it is necessary to carry out a heavy lift a rigger must be employed, but that has never caused any problem in industry. A rigger must have the necessary knowledge and skill to do rigging properly because the safety of the workmen is involved. Scaffolders should be properly qualified, and that justifies inserting a definition of "scaffolder."

Mr. FLETCHER—We should have a provision to enable a building inspector to ask a contractor, "Who has erected your scaffolding?" It would not then be necessary for a scaffolder to be employed continuously on erecting scaffolds. Perhaps the foreman in charge of the work would do the scaffolding, and he could then be held responsible for the work.

Mr. DUNSTAN—That is what the amendment proposes. It does not create an entirely new avocation.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—That is what the amendment does.

Mr. DUNSTAN—No. A foreman could get a licence as a scaffolder. The amendment merely ensures that the person erecting scaffolding shall be competent to do so. It does not mean that there will be men going from one job to another doing nothing but erecting scaffolding.

Mr. HEASLIP—It seems that Mr. Dunstan is now arguing against himself. He said first that the amendment will not spread responsibility. He told us that the captain of a ship may delegate authority but not pass responsibility. He then compared that man with a builder who is compelled to employ a licensed scaffolder, but there is a big difference between them. If a builder is compelled to employ a scaffolder that employee becomes partly responsible for the work, so there would be two persons partly responsible for the one job. Therefore, there would be divided responsibility. Later Mr. Dunstan sided with Mr. Fletcher, so I do not know where Mr. Dunstan stands. If the amendment is passed we shall have another class of so-called experts who have had to serve two years in the trade and obtain a licence from the Government. These men, without any doubt, will require additional pay.

Mr. Loveday—A rigger has a margin. Is there anything wrong with that?

Mr. HEASLIP—A rigger is quite different from a licensed scaffolder; he does not have to serve an apprenticeship and is not licensed. If I could prove that I could do the work, I could be employed as a rigger without being licensed. There is no doubt that licensing scaffolders would entail further expense.

Mr. Corcoran—It would not be a skilled job, would it?

Mr. HEASLIP—It would be partly skilled, and would add to the cost of house construction. As he would have to be licenced, he would have to be paid a margin, which would be paid by the people who build houses. There would not be any more safety because, as far as I know, no accident has been caused by incorrectly erected scaffolding collapsing, slipping or falling.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—A scaffolder who has to tie ropes could be called a rigger. In shipbuilding yards a rigger is required, but he is in a different position from a scaffolder. Timber scaffolding is a thing of the past, so the man we are calling scaffolder is very important. It has been said that safety has not been the responsibility of a scaffolder. A scaffold erected at the University, which might have been satisfactory if the necessary precautions had been taken, collapsed a short time ago causing injury to the workmen and loss of materials. This scaffold would have been satisfactory if the work had had time to set, but before it did the scaffold was reloaded, and collapsed as a result.

Even with sufficient experienced inspectors there would still be a need for licensing scaffolders. How can the Government know whether scaffolding has been safe when it has not enough inspectors to investigate it? The only time scaffolding is inspected is when it collapses and causes injury or death. The contractor must then immediately notify the authorities, and is not permitted to make any alterations until an inspector has made an examination, but there have never been enough inspectors to supervise the erection of scaffolding to know whether it is safe.

Mr. Heaslip—That is not the fault of the Act.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—But it is the fault of the Government. If we had been able to discuss clause 5 before dealing with this clause we would have had a better understanding of what is intended, but because of the procedure we must follow we cannot know just what is a scaffolder until we discuss a later clause. This amendment is an attempt to overcome some of the disabilities that now exist, and should be carried.

Mr. LAWN—I support the amendment. All it is designed to do is to provide that some person of experience shall erect scaffolding. The employer is now responsible at common law for any damages outside the Workmen's Compensation Act if an accident resulted from faulty erection of scaffolding. The amendment is not designed solely for the interests of workmen, but also as a protection for employers, because, if they have competent

licensed scaffolders, there will be much less chance of accidents for which claims for damages can be made. We on this side of the House do not feel that it is right to wait until an accident happens so that an employee can make heavy claims; we would like to prevent accidents, because a man might lose his life or be permanently disabled by an accident, and no amount of compensation could recompense his wife and children. In the interests of both the employer, the employee and the employee's family we want this definition of a scaffolder and a provision that he shall be licensed.

The usual practice among responsible builders is for the foreman, who is an experienced man, to erect scaffolding. This man would have only to apply to the department and a licence would be granted, yet we were told by the member for Rocky River (Mr. Heaslip) that we have only introduced the amendment so that these men can apply for higher wages. That statement showed how little he knows about secondary industry. Parliament has seen fit to provide an Act to cover the erection and supervision of scaffolding, but unfortunately not to make the Act cover the whole State. Parliament should go further and make this provision in the interests of safety. A person erecting scaffolding should have some experience approved of by the Factories Department to ensure that as far as humanly practicable scaffolding is safe.

Mr. LAUCKE—The important thing in this portion of the Bill is safety, and it does not matter who supervises or erects scaffolding so long as it is adequately inspected once erected. The structure should be inspected by a competent inspector. I think the amendment is superfluous. A ''scaffolder'' as such is not required, but a competent inspectorial staff is of vital importance.

Mr. LAWN—I take it the member for Barossa believes that the Government's proposal meets the situation and that there should not be so much emphasis on the erection of the scaffolding as on an inspection of it.

Mr. Laucke—The appointment of inspectors becomes more resilient. Provision is made in the Bill for the appointment of inspectors.

Mr. LAWN—But there is nothing to say they shall be experienced.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—It provides that they shall be ''suitable.''

Mr. LAWN—What does ''suitable'' mean?

Mr. Laucke—Competent.

Mr. LAWN—Not necessarily. A suitable person could be a person who has a suitable approach and who can suitably confer with employers and employees alike. ''Suitable'' does not necessarily mean experienced.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—A person must be experienced to be suitable.

Mr. LAWN—If that is so the Minister must agree with a later proposal of the Opposition that inspectors must be experienced. In view of the Minister's assurance that a man must be experienced to be suitable—

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—It is not a question of assurance, but of common-sense.

Mr. LAWN—The Minister has said that a man cannot be suitable unless he is experienced. I take that as an assurance that the Government will accept our later amendment.

Amendment to insert new paragraph (*c*1) negatived. Amendment to insert new paragraph (*c*2) carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 4—''Inspectors.''

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I move—

In new section 5 (2) after ''persons'' to insert ''having not less than two years' experience in erecting, altering and demolishing scaffolding.''

At present section 5 (1) of the Act states:—

The Governor may appoint one inspector, and such acting or assistant inspectors as he may think fit, to carry out the provisions of this Act. No person shall be appointed as aforesaid unless he has had at least four years' experience in the erection of scaffolding.

This clause repeals that provision and makes the Chief Inspector of Factories and Steam Boilers the Chief Inspector of Scaffolding. I point out that such an officer is a person who grows up in the Public Service. He possesses certain academic qualifications, but has he experience in the erection of scaffolding? Before a person can enter the Public Service he must have reached a certain standard of scholastic attainment: he must have the Intermediate Certificate. But what persons have had most experience of scaffolding erection? In most cases they are people who were deprived of the opportunity of attaining the necessary scholastic requirements but from the commonsense viewpoint would have far more knowledge of scaffolding than a person with the necessary scholastic requirements. I do not reflect on the Chief Inspector of Factories and Steam Boilers, but if we are to appoint suitable inspectors we should appoint experienced men. We seek to provide that an inspector shall have not less than two years' experience in erecting, altering and demolishing scaffolding. That is most important. If the Government will agree to accepting two years' experience we will at any rate be getting somewhere towards

restoring the safeguard that was in the Act for many years. Another aspect of this trade involves the climbing of ladders and the Act provides that any ladder shall extend four feet above the landing stage. However, because of the lack of inspectors, some builders are neglecting this provision. One has only to visualize a workman who is compelled to climb, say, 20ft. or 30ft.—which after all is only two or three storeys—to see that it is only reasonable that this simple precaution should be observed; despite all our modern inventions sky hooks have not yet been invented, so it is very necessary that this provision of the Act should be observed. I am sure that very suitable inspectors could be found who had not reached the Leaving standard of education, and perhaps not the Intermediate standard, but who, through practical experience would be most suitable. I ask the Government to accept the amendment.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I see no necessity for it. The mere fact that a person has had two years' experience does not necessarily make him a suitable person. The onus is on the Chief Inspector to recommend suitable persons, and I would say that whoever was appointed would be a person who, by experience, was suitable, and I cannot imagine a person being regarded as suitable, unless he had had some practical experience. A man with less than two years' experience might be very much more competent than the man with three years' experience, and consequently the amendment only limits the benefit of this Act by making an arbitrary provision. There is no real virtue in two years; the ability of the man should count rather than his actual experience.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Until a man has learnt by doing a thing, theoretical knowledge does not count for much. In my profession it is required of an articled clerk that he shall have practical experience in law and, indeed, after a man has been admitted to practice it takes many years of experience to get even a working knowledge of law. I am not suggesting that this particular matter is one in which anything like so long a period of experience is necessary, but it is perfectly clear that a man might well learn out of a book about erecting scaffolding, but until he had actually done the job he would not have the experience to be able to tell whether a scaffold was properly erected or not. That is why we suggest that there should be a minimum of two years working with these things, and that is not too great a minimum to impose. After all, it is the safety of the lives of workmen that is involved and in providing for two years we are being eminently sensible.

Mr. HUTCHENS—I agree as to the necessity for practical experience. A man may have all the theory in the world and be able to talk at length in a most convincing manner, but until he has had a period of practical experience he is unable to say whether a thing is right or wrong. For instance, a man must know by practical experience the right knot to use in given circumstances. As a simple illustration, a knot tied with a wet rope is not safe, and a man with only theory at his command might not notice some moisture in the air that would affect a knot, whereas a man with experience would sense it instantly. Two years' experience is not an over long apprenticeship and we must ensure that an inspector shall be able to carry out his work in an efficient manner.

Mr. FLETCHER—I sincerely hope that we shall so provide that only a man with practical experience shall be appointed an inspector. I should like to support this with something from my own experience. At the time I was operating a stone quarry in the South-East I had 17 men employed and these men took it in turn to load the cut stone on to the trucks. We were constantly receiving complaints that the ashlars were not arriving at Wolseley, and were being thrown off the trucks *en route*. One day one of the younger employees returned from loading a truck and told me that he had solved the problem and that it was in the manner of tying the load. I accompanied him when loading another truck and found that his claim was correct. That is an illustration of the benefits of practical experience. I would like to see the Act applied throughout the State and I agree with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition that there are not enough inspectors. I suggest that in the Architect-in-Chief's Department there must be inspectors who know men who have had practical experience and whether they are capable of carrying out the duties of inspector under this Act.

Mr. LAUCKE—I oppose the amendment because I do not agree that any rigid time qualification is necessary in the appointment of an inspector. We have just heard that a new avocation will be set up under this measure and that a leading hand could become a scaffolder. What would constitute two

years' experience? I think we are safeguarded by the words "may appoint suitable persons" in clause 4 (2).

Mr. Lawn—You used this argument against the insertion of a definition of "scaffolder."

Mr. LAUCKE—I favour this clause as it stands, without any time qualification, because I feel that the appointment of inspectors would be more resilient and ensure equal competency in those appointed.

Mr. LAWN—I support the amendment. I am surprised at the views just expressed by the Minister of Works and the member for Barossa (Mr. Laucke). When I was supporting the other amendment that a scaffolder must be licensed, the member for Barossa said there were ample safeguards in clause 4 (2) that the person appointed as an inspector would be a suitable person. He felt there was more importance in the scaffolding than in the actual erection. He said that "suitable" meant "competent," and that it was more important to have a competent inspector than an experienced scaffolder. I said then I would prefer experience to even competence, and the Minister said that that was only commonsense. Both these members were assuring me that it was only commonsense to provide that a competent or experienced person should be appointed an inspector. Now they are saying that "suitable" is sufficient. If the member for Barossa thinks that "suitable" means "experienced" he should support the amendment and leave no doubt about it. I do not claim to be a lawyer, but I do not think "suitable" means "competent" or "experienced." I would like to be sure that any person appointed is experienced. The Minister admitted that a man must be experienced; he was a little bit more honest than the member for Barossa because he said that the period of experience could be less than two years. The Opposition has suggested a minimum of two years.

Mr. Hambour—Couldn't a good man study and learn the job in six months?

Mr. LAWN—I would not say so. It may be possible for a man to be experienced in less than two years, but the Leader of the Opposition is submitting the views of people experienced in the building industry, and I accept their viewpoints because a man knows his own trade better than I do. I do not accept the viewpoint of the member for Barossa that "suitable" means "experienced." I cannot support him and the Minister in their argument that it is not necessary to have an experienced inspector and that any person appointed will meet the position. The Minister has admitted that a man should have some experience, and if he feels that the period should be less than two years he should stipulate what it should be.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—I say that a man with a year and 11 months' experience might be better than a man with two years' experience.

Mr. LAWN—The Minister should tell us upon whose advice he suggests one year and 11 months so that we can judge whether it is good. In view of the debate on the previous amendment and on this one, I suggest that Government members are not sincere if they do not carry the present amendment.

Mr. HAMBOUR—The question of sincerity does not come into it, and I suggest that the word is used improperly. I have absolute confidence in the Government to see that inspectors are competent. The member for Adelaide (Mr. Lawn) said that a man should have two years' experience in erecting, altering and demolishing scaffolding. A man may have worked on the construction or manufacture of scaffolding for 10 years. Would he then have to turn round and spend two years erecting, altering, or demolishing? I feel that this amendment is unecessary.

Mr. BROOKMAN—The authorities have already tried the provision for four years' experience and have rejected it. Who would know better than the Government, which has already tried something and now wants to remove it? The Government does not do these things capriciously: it decided that this was an unnecessary restriction. The number of years' experience is a very poor gauge of a man's qualifications. Plenty of men with 10 years' experience would not be suitable as inspectors, and a great many others would make very good inspectors with less than two years' experience. It would not be satisfactory to ask an already highly qualified man to gain another two years' experience in order to qualify as an inspector. He would have gone past that and be unable to go back to it, and under the amendment his valuable services would be lost. With all due respect to the experienced people in the building industry I consider that the Government is well qualified to decide this question.

Mr. LOVEDAY—Mr. Brookman asks members to act on the experience of the Government, but should not we act on the experience of those engaged in the industry? More attention should be paid to the viewpoint of those

who have had personal experience of operating in the industry. Mr. Hambour said this was merely a battle of words, but I point out that this definition is important, otherwise the Act means nothing. The Minister said "suitable" implies experience, but if that is so what is the Government's objection to stating it in the Act? It is necessary to have a reasonable period on the work before being appointed an inspector. Mr. Laucke tried to tell members that "suitable" was synonymous with "competent" or "experienced," but the dictionary does not bear out his statement. An inspector might be suitable but not necessarily competent or experienced.

Mr. Laucke—The implication is there.

Mr. LOVEDAY—That is a matter of opinion. The dictionary definition of "suitability" has nothing to do with competence or experience, and I point out that this legislation may be argued before the court. As the Government's case seems to rest on the argument that these three words are synonymous, it should now not object to the amendment, because they are not synonymous.

Mr. DUNSTAN—The Minister has given a clue on his attitude to experience by saying that a man with little practical experience could suitably be appointed; therefore he does not take the same view as Mr. Laucke. However, Mr. Laucke may not realize the mode of administration of the Factories Department. Inspectors will not be required to inspect only scaffolds but also other matters such as late closing. A person who knows something about the Early Closing Act, various awards, and the provisions of the Industrial Code may also be appointed as Inspector of Scaffolding. That is no doubt behind the desire of the Government because it is much easier to appoint as an Inspector of Scaffolding somebody engaged on other activities of the department. The legislation merely requires a person to be suitable to the Government: he needs no experience. Members on this side want to ensure that "suitable" means "experienced" under the legislation. To say, as the Minister said, that a man may be suitable after one year 11 months is merely a pettifogging argument. An arbitrary minimum is required and two years is a fair minimum in this case.

Mr. SHANNON—Three words in the amendment have a restrictive effect: "erecting," "altering," and "demolishing." These days scaffolding is as much an engineer's job as that of the scaffolder. Tubular steel is commonly used throughout the State, although wooden poles are sometimes used. A man with some engineering knowledge and experience may be a desirable person to appoint inspector, although he has never been employed in the building trade. That view is supported by people I have consulted, including two big contractors. Such an appointee might be better than a man who has had four years' experience in the industry. Those big contractors say that some inspectors who have come on to the job did not know much about it, although under the existing legislation they had four years in the trade.

I suggest that the amendment merely restricts the field of choice, which is not wise. What about the Chief Inspector of Factories under whose direction these inspectors work? If a serious accident occurred as a result of faulty inspection the Chief Inspector would have to shoulder the responsibility, and I am sure he would not appoint an unsuitable man as inspector. Taken in its context, "suitable" is a good word to use to describe a person for this work, whereas if qualifications are stipulated the field will be limited and the Chief Inspector will be denied the right to recommend a suitable person merely because he has not had two years in the building trade.

Mr. Stephens—What about apprentices?

Mr. SHANNON—There is no analogy between apprenticeship and this matter.

Mr. STEPHENS—Today the scaffolding on bigger buildings comprises tubes, pipes and connections supplied by scaffolding manufacturers, but we must look further than that because this provision will cover not only the people using that type of scaffolding but also those who use planks, posts, and even old casks in which to stand the posts. Ropes of certain size must be used to do certain jobs. A scaffolding inspector must have had practical experience in the erection of scaffolds and he must know how to use the various materials required in scaffolding. For instance, he must know whether short or long splices should be used. Often the union secretary inspects scaffolds and sometimes he points out that they are not safe. Two men were killed some years ago at the university because the scaffolding was not safe.

The amendment will ensure that suitable men, with at least two years' experience in scaffolding, will be appointed as inspectors. Every inspector should be experienced in the use of timber, ropes, wires and ladders. This experience cannot be gained in 12 months. I have had some experience on scaffolding, but

not enough to be a competent scaffolding inspector. Before any firm employs a man it always wants to know what experience he has had, and it is essential that we employ only experienced men as scaffolding inspectors.

Mr. LAUCKE—I draw Mr. Loveday's attention to a definition of "suitable" in Webster's International Dictionary, which says that it means "competent."

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I am surprised that the Minister did not tell the Committee that a qualified engineer has been appointed a scaffolding inspector because he has a knowledge of lifts and hoists.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—Wouldn't you say that the engineer was experienced?

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I have no objection to the appointment of that officer, but the last inspector was appointed on the recommendation of the Public Service Commissioner. I understand that most of his experience on scaffolding was on tubular scaffolding, but because he possessed certain qualifications that he attained at school at Broken Hill he got the appointment. A Mr. Hurst retired from the position of Chief Inspector of Scaffolding on account of age, but his assistant was removed to another department. He was appointed to the Superannuation Department, and I think he was transferred there because he knew the Act backwards and the qualifications necessary to become a scaffolding inspector. Apparently he knew too much and was a thorn in the side of the department. I do not want to mention the names of all the officers concerned, but I have given some instances of what has taken place in the department since the late Mr. Riley retired.

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

Mr. FRANK WALSH—We must consider adding the words "having not less than two years' experience" in the knowledge that the provision for four years' experience is to be repealed. An important matter now is the meaning of the word "suitable." What experience or suitability did the present Inspector of Scaffolding have before his appointment? He had experience in the erection of scaffolding and proved that he was a suitable type to be an inspector, but what superannuation qualifications did his predecessor have when he was transferred to the Superannuation Department, where he now is? He had never been associated with superannuation business before he entered the Public Service as a scaffolding inspector.

The member for Light (Mr. Hambour) asked what experience a man would need to erect tubular steel scaffolding. I do not think the manufacturers of this type of scaffolding know anything about its erection. I know it is not intended to appoint an engineer as regards the requirements for lifts, hoists, etc., but in the interests of safety definite qualifications are required of people who are engaged either in the supervision or the actual erection of scaffolding. The only time the Scaffolding Act is challenged is when an accident occurs, after which it is necessary to examine the causes. In the interests of safety, before an inspector is appointed he should have at least two years' experience in erecting scaffolding or under the direction of those who have been erecting scaffolding.

Mr. LAWN—The present provision requires an inspector to have had at least four year's experience. The Government proposes to abolish that, and to provide that he need not have had any experience. Earlier the honourable member for Barossa pointed out that scaffolders should be competent. I said they should be more than competent, and the Minister agreed. The Act now provides that an inspector shall have had four years' experience, and the opposition says he should have had at least two years' experience. The Minister said it is only commonsense that he should have had some experience, but it does not necessarily follow that appointees will have had some experience. Mr. Laucke shifted his ground, and went to the Parliamentry Library to see if there was some means of justifying his word "suitable." He looked at four dictionaries before he found one in which "suitable" was shown as meaning "competent." Webster's International Dictionary is the only one of the four that gives this definition. The small Webster's does not, nor does the Concise Oxford Dictionary or Chambers.

Mr. Millhouse—What conclusion do you draw from that?

Mr. LAWN—How can we be assured that those responsible for making these appointments will appoint competent persons as inspectors? The two English dictionaries do not state that "suitable" means "competent" although an American dictionary does. This afternoon the Minister of Works said that it was only commonsense that a person should be experienced before being appointed. I took that as

an assurance that an experienced person would be appointed. However, the Minister now suggests that two years' experience is too long. The Government proposes abolishing the four-year period at present applying. However, it admits that some experience is necessary and should stipulate a period.

Mr. JOHN CLARK—I support the amendment. I always considered that all members believed that inspectors should possess qualifications and that those qualifications should be high. Apparently I was wrong because in this case no qualifications are required of an inspector except that he should be "suitable," whatever that means. Several members have defined "suitable" to suit their own convenience. If no qualifications are stipulated what will inspectors be like in years to come? Contractors will not be kindly disposed to inspectors because after all, they are to some extent watchdogs. I object to the words contained in the clause. "Suitable" could mean anything and it leaves the gate wide open. This amendment merely seeks to define a suitable person. Who decides whether or not a person is suitable and what are the standards of suitability? The Bill does not tell us. In his second reading, when referring to the shortage of inspectors, the Minister gave some slight meaning, but after all those who determine such matters usually do not have the Minister's second reading speech to guide them. We define a suitable person as being one with not less than two years' experience in erecting, altering or demolishing scaffolding. Most of us would prefer the present four-year period. An inspector should not only be able to find fault with scaffolding, but should be able to put his shoulder to the wheel and show how the fault could be corrected. Obviously a man would need practical experience to be able to do that.

The clause establishes a dangerous precedent. In the future can we look forward to inspectors in various occupations being appointed irrespective of qualifications? Can we anticipate that examiners in the law school, for example, will be appointed by the Factories and Steamboilers Department? Will the same apply to the medical school? Will inspectors of schools no longer require qualifications or will they be appointed from the Factories and Steamboilers Department? On the face of it this may seem an absurd argument, but it is not as absurd as members opposite would suggest. This clause completely removes qualifications from inspectors.

Mr. Quirke—Does the Education Department lay down the qualifications for teachers and inspectors?

Mr. JOHN CLARK—It would require a book to lay down the qualifications of a teacher. An applicant for an inspectorship does not expect an appointment unless he has qualifications. Although possibly considered by some to be a minor matter, this is a very grave matter indeed. Government members may say that there is a qualification there, but the only qualification is the word "suitable." All we seek to do is to define "suitable" and so make clause 4 clear to everybody, because at the moment it is not clear. I support the amendment.

The House divided on the amendment—

Ayes (14).—Messrs. John Clark, Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan, Fletcher, Hughes, Hutchens, Jennings, Lawn, Loveday, Stephens, Tapping, Frank Walsh (teller), and Fred Walsh.

Noes (16).—Messrs. Bockelberg, Geoffrey Clarke, Coumbe, Goldney, Hambour, Harding, Jenkins, King, Laucke, Sir Malcolm McIntosh, Messrs. Millhouse, Pattinson, Pearson, Sir Thomas Playford (teller), and Messrs. Quirke and Shannon.

Pairs.—Ayes—Messrs. O'Halloran, Riches, and Bywaters. Noes—Messrs. Hincks, Heaslip, and Brookman.

Majority of 2 for the Noes.

Amendment thus negatived.

The CHAIRMAN—Does the Acting Leader of the Opposition intend to proceed with the second amendment on the files—to add new subclause (4), dealing with regulations?

Mr. FRANK WALSH—With regard to that, I imagine the Government would only make regulations in harmony with what it has already adopted.

Clause 4 passed.

Mr. LAWN—I support the adoption of proposed new subclause (4) in clause 4, which reads:—

The Governor may make regulations prescribing the qualifications required of persons to be appointed inspectors of scaffolding.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—On a point of order, Mr. Chairman, clause 4 has just been passed.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I was about to deal with the provision in subsection (3) that the Chief Inspector shall have an office in the City of Adelaide.

The CHAIRMAN—Clause 4 has been passed.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—You, Mr. Chairman, asked me if I were going to proceed with the proposal to add new subclause (4) dealing with regulations to be made by the Governor.

The CHAIRMAN—I put it to the Committee that clause 4 be carried and it was carried on the voices. We are now about to deal with clause 5.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Had I known that the question of passing clause 4 was before the Chair I would have opposed it in its entirety because it affords no protection to workers engaged on building construction.

The CHAIRMAN—I have already put clause 4 and it was agreed to. There was no vote against it.

Clauses 5 to 7 passed.

Clause 8—"General powers of inspectors."

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Can the Premier say whether under this clause a workman, such as a welder who is engaged on the erection of a steel building on which a crane or hoist is operating and who must usually straddle the steel joist on which he is working, will be protected? Will the suitable inspectors to be appointed have, under this clause, power to ensure that protection?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Yes.

Clause passed.

Clauses 9 and 10 passed.

New clause 2A—"Application of Act."

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I move to insert the following new clause:—

2A. Section 3 of the principal Act is repealed.

The Opposition believes that this Act should have State-wide application, particularly as "suitable" inspectors are to be appointed by the Government. Having seen some of the bulk handling silos being erected in country districts, I point out that it is desirable that the Act apply to their construction instead of only to areas specified. Might not even a reputable firm engaged on work in the country become lackadaisical in the erection of its scaffolding and an accident result? As the Government apparently has suitable people available for appointment as inspectors, it should agree that the Act apply to the whole State.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—There are practical difficulties in applying the Act throughout the State, and I am sure it would disrupt building operations in many country districts. Strangely, we have not been told the position in other States, but the New South Wales Act applies only to the eastern part of the State and to Broken Hill. In Victoria the scaffolding laws apply only to certain cities, and have not been extended to any borough or shire. I do not think the Western Australian Act applies throughout that State, though the scaffolding laws do apply throughout Tasmania and Queensland, but the law in Queensland has not been particularly effective because its record of accidents is worse than South Australia's. In this State areas have been proclaimed whenever there appears to be a necessity for it, and that will be the position in the future. I ask the committee not to accept the amendment.

Mr. LOVEDAY—Who decides the necessity for proclaiming any area, and does the responsible authority receive applications from anyone about the need for a proclamation?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Every application is examined to see whether there is any necessity to proclaim the area concerned, and proclamations have been made from time to time. Again, if the Chief Inspector reports that there seems to be a danger in any area, that is considered by Cabinet.

The Committee divided on new clause 2a:—

Ayes (13).—Messrs. Bywaters, John Clark, Corcoran, Davis, Dunstan, Fletcher, Hughes, Hutchens, Jennings, Loveday, Stephens, Frank Walsh (teller), and Fred Walsh.

Noes (16).—Messrs. Bockelberg, Geoffrey Clarke, Coumbe, Goldney, Hambour, Harding, Jenkins, King, Laucke, Sir Malcolm McIntosh, Messrs. Millhouse, Pattinson, Pearson, Sir Thomas Playford (teller), Messrs. Quirke and Shannon.

Pairs.—Ayes—Messrs. O'Halloran, Riches, and Tapping. Noes—Messrs. Hincks, Heaslip, and Brookman.

Majority of 3 for the Noes.

New clause thus negatived.

The CHAIRMAN—Does the member for Edwardstown wish to proceed with new clause 5a?

Mr. FRANK WALSH—In view of what has happened to other amendments, it would be useless to move for the insertion of this new clause.

Title passed. Bill read a third time and passed.

HOMES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 3. Page 939.)

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Edwardstown)—The matters I wish to discuss are not really mentioned in the Bill. The Government desires to terminate the session this month, but it has always been customary for us to determine our attitude on Government legislation. It is well known that members of my Party meet on Wednesday mornings, when we decide on the amendments we wish to introduce. The second readings of the four Bills following this measure on the Notice Paper were all given on Thursday last. Ws also expect an amendment to the Local Government Act to be introduced, but as this has been on the Notice Paper for a long time, I wonder if the Government really intends to go on with it.

This Bill deals with an amendment to the Homes Act whereby the maximum loan is increased from £1,750 to £2,250. Let me now trace the history of this matter. In 1941 we provided for an advance of £1,000. In 1947 this was increased to £1,250, in 1941 to £1,500, and in 1951 to £1,750. It is now proposed to increase the advance to £2,250, an increase of 125 per cent over the 1941 figure. When this matter was debated in 1941, members of my Party agitated for an increase in the advance to give people an opportunity to borrow extra money, but the Treasurer said that as only a certain amount was available, if the maximum advance were increased some people would have to be denied loans for home building. I do not know how much extra money has been made available now—possibly the Treasurer will be able to tell us—but the Auditor-General indicated that the Housing Trust is showing a loss of £12,000 in collections on home repayments. That does not sound very much in view of the large number of homes that have been purchased, but when the position is examined more closely, we find that interest rates have been advanced. As the interest rate in England has been increased to 7 per cent, we can be excused for wondering if there will be any further increase in the interest rate here.

I am wondering if the increase from £1,750 to £2,250 means that fewer people will be able to receive loans. Nothing is mentioned in this Bill about a reduction in the interest rates, and in view of what I have mentioned, I cannot see that this will happen. Does this amendment mean that the Housing Trust will be in a position to make greater advances by means of second mortgages? I ask this because the trust is already charging £3,250 for its homes. The member for Whyalla (Mr. Loveday) mentioned how home building costs have increased. When the State Bank was in competition with the Housing Trust it erected homes with a greater equity than did the trust and at a lower cost. The Government determined that the State Bank should not indulge in group house-building because there was not sufficient money available. Apparently in respect of education buildings the Architect-in-Chief's Department proposes competing with private contractors, presumably with the object of reducing costs. If competition reduces costs on departmental buildings, surely competition from the State Bank with the Housing Trust would reduce costs of home building. It is well known that the State Bank had a major programme for group house-building and could have purchased land for it, but obviously the Government said it did not want it to compete with the Housing Trust. When the interest rate was lower this proposed increase in the advance would have been more beneficial to the home builder than now. We should encourage people to purchase their own homes. It creates a greater interest in life and fosters civic responsibility. The proposed increase in the maximum advance is late, and I hope it will not mean that fewer people will benefit.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—The Acting Leader of the Opposition has posed two or three questions that I will briefly answer. In the first place, this legislation has nothing to do with the State Bank, which operates under the Advances for Homes Act. The Government at no time requested the State Bank to discontinue its group housing scheme. That was a decision of the State Bank Board. The Housing Trust was undertaking a massive group housing project and catering for people who wanted homes but did not own land. At the same time there were people who owned land and wanted homes built thereon. The State Bank decided it should cater for those people and concentrate on building houses on individual blocks scattered throughout the community. Incidentally, that was the traditional policy of the bank. The bank had never engaged in group house-building until, shortly after the war, the Government asked it to do so for a period.

Mr. Fred Walsh—What about the Thousand Homes Scheme?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Those homes were built by private contract and I do not know the circumstances of their building. They may have been financed by the State Bank. I think the original contract was let by the State Government and the State Bank took the scheme over after it had been in progress for some time. I do not believe that the increase in the maximum advance will mean that fewer people will get a guarantee. Some time ago the Commonwealth Bank increased the amount it advanced to £2,500 and within a short time the Savings Bank—the principal operator under the Homes Act—announced that it was prepared to increase its maximum advance to £2,250.

The two biggest operators are the Savings Bank and the Superannuation Fund. The Savings Bank has always been the very big operator, and it is already operating on a £2,250 advance but on a 60 or 70 per cent security. If a person today were building a house for £4,000 he would be able to get £2,250 from the Savings Bank, but if this legislation is passed a smaller builder will be able to get the traditional 90 per cent advance that is provided for under this Act. This amendment therefore helps the person with the smaller security. The whole purpose of the Act is to enable a 20 per cent more advance to be made on the value of a house than is provided under ordinary banking practice. People will be able to get a bigger ratio of advance on the smaller-type house. It will not mean additional or fewer houses being built, because the Savings Bank is already providing £2,250 on a 60 or 70 per cent security. In my opinion it will help the person who is most in need of help by enabling the State's guarantee to operate in regard to these additional amounts.

If any real question of policy had been involved I would have been quite prepared to accept the hint from the Acting Leader of the Opposition to defer consideration of this measure to enable his Party to consider it further. However, I cannot see any possible objection to it because it merely enables the smaller builder to get the 20 per cent Government guarantee which is provided under the Act. I believe this measure will alleviate the difficulty which I am informed is being experienced by some people in raising the necessary finance to meet additional costs. Interest rates are not involved in this legislation because they are fixed by the lending institutions that operate under the Act. I accept the proposition advanced by the Acting Leader that in fixing these amounts we must take into account what is being taken out of pay envelopes each week to meet the cost of interest and such like. That is a very material point, but unfortunately, as honourable members know, this Parliament has very little control over interest rates, which are fixed by the Commonwealth Bank and depend on economic circumstances over which we have no control.

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

AMUSEMENTS DUTY (FURTHER SUSPENSION) BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 3. Page 939.)

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Acting Leader of the Opposition)—I raise no objection to this Bill. The Premier's second reading speech indicated that amusement tax can be imposed next year if this Bill is not passed. The Government indicated that its policy was not to re-enter the field of amusement tax. I point out that although amusement tax is not payable on entry to racing or trotting meetings, a tax is payable on the stake invested, and I think that is wrong. I support the second reading.

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

ADJOURNMENT.

At 8.51 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, October 9, at 2 p.m.