HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Tuesday, October 29, 1957.

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

QUESTIONS.

SNOWY RIVER WATERS AGREEMENT.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Premier anything further to report regarding the Snowy River Waters Agreement following his discussion last week with the Prime Minister? Is it intended to issue a writ to protect South Australia's interests and, if so, when?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The Prime Minister invited me to Canberra last Thursday to discuss further the problems arising from this agreement. Quite frankly, I do not believe the long discussion got us anywhere except that, in relation to the suggestion made on a number of occasions that South Australia would benefit from the proposed diversions by the regulating of the Murray itself, I asked the Prime Minister to supply details. It was agreed that these would be supplied by next Friday. I have since learnt from the Engineer-in-Chief that as much difficulty is involved in securing these details it will probably be a month before they are prepared. The Government will delay issuing the writ until Friday.

EMPIRE GAMES.

Mr. COUMBE—In view of a recent press statement that moves are being made in Western Australia for the Empire Games to be held in Perth can the Premier indicate what recent moves have been taken to attract the games to Adelaide and will the Government continue to press Adelaide's claims?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The City Council and not the Government will issue any invitation for the games to be held here. The Government has informed the council that it will support the games to the extent of 25 per cent of the cost of running them, and that information is no doubt being used by the council to press for them. It is proposed to ask the Commonwealth to contribute to the cost in the same way as it contributed to the Olympic Games. I think the council proposes to take steps to arrange the additional finance.

OVERSEAS TRAINING FOR MEDICAL OFFICER.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Can the Premier say whether it is correct that an amount was placed on the Estimates to provide for the overseas training of a medical officer who will take charge of a paraplegic centre to be established in South Australia and, if so, has the Government appointed the officer? If not, will it do so in the near future?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will obtain a reply for tomorrow.

CLARENDON COURTHOUSE.

Mr. SHANNON—Recently, when in Clarendon, my attention was drawn to the condition of the courthouse which, in my opinion is one of the surviving gems of architecture from our early days. The date on the foundation stone is 1868. The building badly needs painting throughout, but I am not sure whether this alone would be sufficient for its rehabilitation. Work may be required on the two stone parapets leading up the staircase to the main entrance, as well as to the ornamental fascia. Will the Minister of Works instruct the Architect-in-Chief's department to take appropriate action as soon as possible?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—Like the honourable member, I hate to see ancient buildings falling into disrepair and I will ask the Architect-in-Chief to consider the question. I do not know whether many cases are heard there, but if it is worth preserving I will ascertain what can be done.

TEMPORARY HOMES FIRE HAZARDS.

Mr. JENNINGS—On Friday last another fire occurred in a Housing Trust temporary home, making the eighth in this type of home in the last 12 months. Recently, following a fire in a temporary home in my electorate, I asked the Premier whether he would have a full and independent investigation made into the fire hazard of these homes, but he did not seem well disposed to that suggestion. I now ask whether he will reconsider his attitude and have such an investigation made?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Following the honourable member's previous question the matter was examined by the Housing Trust which submitted recommendations to the Government last week in regard to the electrical wiring of the houses and these have been forwarded to the Electricity Trust for report. If the trust supports the proposals the Government will put them into effect, but if not, the Government will accept

the Electricity Trust as being the most competent authority to advise on these matters. I wish to clear up one point in connection with this matter. Our reports have never indicated any structural reasons for the fires, although other reasons have been indicated. Quite a few of these houses are left unoccupied at times and fires have occurred at such times. A number of things could start a fire, but I will check up with the report and let the honourable member have the information as soon as possible.

MILANG WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. JENKINS—I recently asked the Minister of Works whether water could be supplied to the properties of 12 farmers near Milang. Will he now investigate the possibility of running a small service pipe off the existing Milang township supply in order to alleviate the position of those farmers?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will ask the Engineer-in-Chief to give me an early report and will let the honourable member have a reply as soon as possible. This is an engineering project and I have no knowledge of the problems involved.

HENLEY-GRANGE RAILWAY LINE.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Has the Minister of Works, representing the Minister of Railways, a reply to my recent question concerning the resiting of the railway line between Henley Beach and Grange?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—The Minister of Railways has furnished me with the following reply:—

The Railways Commissioner has advised that the land referred to just east of the built-up area between Grange and Henley Beach is being reserved. Having regard to the present state of development of the area in question, the Commissioner is of the opinion that the construction of a railway could not be justified at present.

HOSPITAL AND MEDICAL BENEFITS.

Mr. QUIRKE—My question concerns hospital and medical benefits. When people apply to join a medical society they sign a form on which they give particulars of any complaints from which they have suffered in the past and which may be recurring. The rules of such organizations state that those illnesses are excluded from benefits, but today many people who sign these forms conclude that, once they are accepted as members, the illnesses of which they have given notice on the application form will be subject to benefits. After two or three years, however, when they again suffer from an illness of that type they find they are not subject to benefit. Will the Treasurer investigate the advisability of requesting these organizations, when they receive an application form upon which one of these complaints is listed, to notify the applicant that the application is approved, but that those illnesses will not be subject to benefit?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The setting up of these insurance societies is part of the national health scheme developed by the Commonwealth Government under the Commonwealth legislation. I will seek from local associations a report setting out their procedure and let the honourable member have it. If he then desires, I will make representations to the Prime Minister for an alteration of the existing procedure.

HEARING OF LARCENY CASES.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Under the Justices Act justices of the peace may only hear cases of larceny up to a limit of £5 and special magistrates up to a limit of £200. Petty cases of larceny which come before justices and which are only a little over the £5 limit are now being sent from country courts to the Supreme Court for sentence, because the justices are unable to deal with them. Mr. Justice Ligertwood has more than once pointed out from the Bench the undesirability of this procedure, saying that it involves considerable inconvenience and much more cost than if the justices returned such cases to appear before a special magistrate. Will the Minister of Education ask his colleague, the Attorney-General, to have justices and clerks of court, especially in country areas, circularized to the effect that cases of that nature should be returned for hearing before a special magistrate?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I shall be pleased to ask the Attorney-General if he would comply with the honourable member's request.

MELTON VALLEY SCHOOL.

Mr. HUGHES—Has the Minister of Education a reply to my recent question concerning the proposed closing of the Melton Valley public school?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—There is no ground for the rumour referred to by the honourable member concerning the proposed closing of that school.

VISITS TO PARLIAMENT HOUSE.

Mr. HUTCHENS—During and following on the week of the celebration of the centenary of

responsible government in this State, Parliament House was open for inspection by the general public during the evenings, and I have learned from many who took advantage of that privilege that they were amazed to learn many things about Parliament, particularly that they were permitted to come into Parliament House at any time Parliament was assembled. In view of the great interest created by those visits, will you, Mr. Speaker, consider making it possible for the public to visit Parliament House of an evening and to be instructed regarding the procedure of Parliament?

The SPEAKER—I think the honourable member, together with other honourable members, realizes that members of the public are entitled to sit in the galleries of the House when it is in session, either during the day or the evening. I realize that the publicity given during the centenary celebrations of responsible government was instrumental in attracting to the House many members of the public, and I shall be happy to consider the honourable member's request to see whether it is possible to accede thereto.

SOLDIER SETTLEMENT BLOCKS.

Mr. CORCORAN—My question, which is directed to the Minister of Repatriation, concerns the non-availability of land to satisfy many applicants for soldier settlement blocks. I have received the following letter, which was forwarded by the Penola sub-branch of the Returned Servicemen's League to the secretary of the State organization in Adelaide:—

This sub-branch recently had before it a circular letter from the Director of Lands forwarded to, we understand, a very large number of qualified applicants for land under the War Service Land Settlement Scheme informing them that they will not obtain a farm under the scheme. Following a full discussion this sub-branch voted unanimously that the very strongest protest be made through (and by) headquarters against this course using all means available and exploring all channels to have the scheme continued—even speeded up—until all men who have been classified as suitable and who still desire to participate are settled. This sub-branch appreciates the motive behind the Department of Lands in notifying applicants of non-success in the general scheme, but is very far from satisfied that best efforts have always been made at all levels to obtain the land necessary—much was heard earlier regarding compulsory acquisition but after 12 years of waiting action seems to have been sadly lacking.

The department's letter suggests the single-unit method of acquiring a holding. It is considered in view of the singularly small number of single-unit purchases existing after this period of time that avenue is to all intents and purposes non-existent. It has been stated that the staff and plant now under control of the L.D.E. is shortly to be transferred to closer settlement work. This would appear to be a "dropping overboard" of the ex-servicemen in favour of the general public and we urge earnest consideration be given to the full settlement of qualified and anxious applicants.

Can the Minister say whether the contents of that letter are true and, if so, is it the intention of the department to drop the scheme or make any further effort in regard to compulsory acquisition, for I know that many holdings in the South-East, if compulsorily acquired, could settle many returned soldiers?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—It is rather a long topic to reply to but, briefly, this matter was considered carefully at the last sub-branch conference, at which I made a statement on the number of applicants still requiring land, and I gave the figures in this House some time ago. It is definitely not the intention of the department to cease its efforts to secure land for ex-servicemen applicants. We are gazetting the opening up of large areas of land for returned soldiers and others who are keen on land settlement. This week, or next week, we will be gazetting an area of about 20,000 acres on Kangaroo Island, and shortly after other large acreages on Eyre Peninsula and then in the South-East. There are not many applicants left who are qualified: many who qualified earlier have not followed up their land work at all, and they have entered other occupations. This morning I dealt with one from the South-East who complained bitterly that he applied in 1948 and had not yet got a block. That soldier had been offered five blocks on different occasions, but had refused them all.

Mr. Corcoran—Some of them may have been on Kangaroo Island?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—No, in three different places. Many applicants have refused to assist in the clearing of land to prepare the block, and that is one of the conditions, namely, that they must come to the L.D.E. and help to clear their block. If the honourable member knows of any individual who is still interested I will be pleased to see him with the honourable member and see whether we can do anything for him.

ASSISTANCE FOR AN ABORIGINE.

Mr. RICHES—Is there any fund at the disposal of the Minister of Works from which he could assist Winnie Bamara to accept an invitation that has been extended to her to attend a demonstration of Arts school in

Sydney in the near future? This aborigine has been invited to go to Sydney as the result of the excellence of her work carried out under correspondence tuition, and if she can go it will give much satisfaction to those who know of her work at the Umeewarra Mission. I have been asked by her well-wishers whether her fares and expenses could be met from any fund?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I think that probably something could be done under the line "Miscellaneous," but I would like to have more particulars from the honourable member. I will take up the question with the Chief Protector to see whether we can or should assist this person.

MEAT PRICES.

Mr. STOTT—Has Cabinet considered further the lifting of the control on the price of meat, in view of the growing support from organizations and others that this control should be removed?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I think that Mr. Heaslip asked a question on this topic some time ago, and I said that the Government would look at this problem after the next month's price determinations had been announced. I did not say definitely that Cabinet would release price control, for there are a number of things involved. There will be no alteration until after the new prices have been determined.

PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE REPORTS.

The SPEAKER laid on the table the reports of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on Thevenard bulk loading plant, Port Pirie harbour improvements (progress) and Onkaparinga Valley water supply (final).

Ordered that reports be printed.

SEALING OF ROADS.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—For some years past promises have been made that the main road to Broken Hill would be sealed where it passes through the towns *en route*, and this has been done in all towns except Mingary and Cockburn. There is a particular difficulty at Cockburn because of the dust nuisance where heavy traffic passes through the most populous part of the town. Is there any possibility of the sealing of the roads through Mingary and Cockburn being done before the present summer becomes too acute?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will take the matter up with my colleague but I doubt whether there will be any chance of having a reply here before the House gets up but immediately after that I will reply to the question.

STRATHALBYN-WOODCHESTER ROAD.

Mr. JENKINS—Has the Minister of Works received a reply from his colleague the Minister of Roads regarding the bitumenising of the Woodchester Road?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—The Honourable Minister of Roads has now furnished me with the following report from the Commissioner of Highways:—

The existing pavement of the unsealed section mentioned by Mr. Jenkins is not satisfactory for sealing. At present, investigations into the availability of suitable material are in hand. The work of sealing will have to be carried out by the district council of Strathalbyn, and that body has a more important project on hand at present, viz., the sealing of a one-mile section of the Finniss-Milang Main Road No. 397. When the investigations are completed and the district council of Strathalbyn is available for this work, the small section near Woodchester will be sealed. It is expected that it will be possible to do this work early in 1958.

TAYLORVILLE-WAIKERIE ROAD.

Mr. KING—Prior to the 1956 flood a Highways and Local Government Department gang was sealing the road between Taylorville and Waikerie but the work was abandoned when water covered part of the road. A considerable amount of the road had been prepared and it is breaking up. Can the Minister of Works obtain a report as to when that work will be proceeded with?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I will ask my colleague for a reply.

SCHOOL BUS SERVICE.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Has the Minister of Education a reply to the question I asked recently about school bus services?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes. Recently the Under Secretary called the attention of heads of Government departments to an instruction issued several years ago to the effect that all Government officers travelling on Government business who are making use of public transport facilities should book through the Government Tourist Bureau. Some doubt had arisen whether this applied to school bus tours which are organized intrastate for either sporting activities or for instructional tours and which are paid for in the main by the parents, and some of which are partly paid for by the Government. Therefore in order to clear up any doubts which are

causing some confusion in the minds of a large number of people I have given instructions for this notice to be inserted in the next issue of the *Education Gazette*:—

As the above instruction is intended to apply to all Government officers, it should be carefully observed. Heads of schools who have been accustomed to arranging school tours whether within South Australia or interstate, and for which the Government makes any financial contribution, are instructed to communicate with the Director of the Tourist Bureau before completing any such arrangements. He will then advise the head of the school whether it is necessary for the details to be handled by the bureau or locally by the school.

This is the important part:—

This instruction does not apply to school trips such as local educational excursions and sporting trips for which the parents pay in full.

CONTAMINATION OF BEACHES.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Last Tuesday the member for Semaphore asked whether it was possible that an oil refinery was to be established offshore between Brighton and Port Noarlunga following reports that survey ships had been off the coastline. The member for Wallaroo asked whether the Minister would bring before the proper authorities the claims of Wallaroo when considering the establishment of a refinery. The member for Semaphore also raised the question. As a result of this publicity considerable concern is being caused among those people responsible for the maintenance and preservation of our beaches, particularly as to the possibility of contamination and ultimate destruction of them from the point of view of bathing and other purposes, and that has caused me to bring the matter up again. Will the Premier take up the question with the local councils responsible for the maintenance of the metropolitan beaches from Semaphore to Port Noarlunga with a view to ascertaining their views on the advisability or otherwise of establishing an oil refinery along that part of our coastline, and if they favour it, will he take the necessary steps to bring the objection before the companies who may be contemplating the establishment of a refinery in the position indicated last week?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I heard over the air this morning that one councillor has raised some objection to a proposed refinery. The Government would not under any circumstances take action that would in any way lead to the pollution of the beaches. Secondly, negotiations only are proceeding and there has been no decision to establish a refinery in South Australia. With regard to the suggestion that Wallaroo might be considered I am advised that the shipping facilities available at Wallaroo would not be adequate for the proposal.

SUPERVISED BOARDING FOR STUDENTS.

Mr. LAWN—I have received a letter from the Adelaide Boys' High School Parents and Friends Association (Men's Executive), the relevant part of which is as follows:—

However, we feel there is a great potential of students in our country areas, if these students had the facilities of supervised boarding and study in the city. The case applies particularly to girls whose parents do not feel disposed to send daughters to the city without a proper institution for their care. Student teachers' hostels are a vital necessity, and that the Government of South Australia would be doing a very great service to education if immediate action was taken to provide these hostels.

Has the Government considered establishing hostels as suggested and, if so, what decision has been made? If not, will it be considered?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The question has been considered from time to time by the Government and is still under consideration. No decision has been reached and one is not likely in the near future. If and when a decision is made, I shall be pleased to announce it.

ILLUMINATION OF RAILWAY ROLLING STOCK.

Mr. KING—Country railway crossings are sometimes protected by stop signs, flashing lights or warning bells, but nowadays longer goods trains hauled by the more powerful locomotives now in use take a considerable time to pass over a crossing and the rolling stock does not have reflecting lights. I understand that it has happened that drivers of motor vehicles have not been able to clearly see passing trains, particularly when the crossing is near a corner. Will the Minister of Works ascertain from the Minister of Railways whether it would be possible to attach reflecting tape to the sides of rolling stock so that it may be picked up by the lights of vehicles under the conditions I have described?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—Yes.

SOUTH ROAD WIDENING.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Now that a house on the western side of South Road at Tonsley has been vacated, will the Minister of Works

take up with the Minister of Roads the question of widening the road to ensure greater safety for traffic, particularly in view of the expected volume of traffic at Christmas?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—Yes. I doubt whether a reply will be available before the House rises, but I will supply it as soon as possible.

MOUNT GAMBIER SAWMILL.

Mr. HARDING—Has the Minister of Agriculture a reply to the question I asked last week concerning the opening of the Mount Gambier sawmill?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—Last Thursday I inspected the new mill at Mount Gambier and was pleased to note the progress being made. It is undertaking a small amount of work at present, but it will be some time before it is in full operation and it is impossible to say when it can be officially opened. It is not desirable to take a party of members down for an inspection before it is in full production.

WORKING OF WALLAROO PORT.

Mr. HUGHES—I understand the Minister of Marine has a reply to my recent question concerning the working of the Wallaroo port?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—The member asked whether it was a 24-hour port or otherwise. The general manager of the South Australian Harbors Board reports as follows:—

Vessels can be and vessels are piloted in and out of Wallaroo at all honrs of the day and night, but there are occasions when regard has to be taken of the circumstances at a particular time and then it rests solely with the Harbourmaster to exercise his discretion. With his expert knowledge of local conditions, he is the best judge as to whether any risk is likely to be involved in manoeuvring a vessel either in or out of a berth at the jetty. There is no tug at Wallaroo, therefore weather conditions such as the force and the direction of the wind, the state of the tide, the draft of the vessel, its manoeuvrability especially if another vessel has to be passed at an outer berth, and sometimes the efficiency of the crew, are matters that have to be taken into account, particularly at night time. The number of hours that a vessel works during a day discharging (or loading) cargo is a matter for arrangement between the vessel's agents and the waterside workers, and so far as the board is concerned, there is nothing to prevent vessels working 24 hours per day.

CATCHING OF UNDERSIZED FISH.

Mr. BYWATERS—Last Wednesday I asked the Minister of Agriculture a question concerning the taking of undersized fish from the River Murray. Since then I have received a letter relating to the shooting of wild ducks at week ends. Has the Minister a reply to my question and will he investigate this further matter?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I have a report concerning the taking of undersized fish from the Chief Inspector of Fisheries and Game as follows:—

Under Section 47 (1) (*a*) (II) of the Fisheries Act an amateur fisherman may take underweight fish when fishing from other than a jetty or when fishing from a jetty or wharf in the Murray River on condition that the species taken is not prescribed. The only species of River Murray fish prescribed is the Murray Cod (*vide* proclamation published at page 915 of the *Government Gazette*, 20th April, 1939). Mr. Bywaters has mentioned 10in. fish, so I assume he is speaking of callop and Murray perch, for which the prescribed minimum size is 10in. Callop and Murray perch are not prescribed under section 47 of the Fisheries Act, so amateurs commit no offence by taking small ones.

I will take up the new matter with the Chief Inspector and let the member have a reply.

SOUTH-EASTERN DRAINAGE.

Mr. QUIRKE (on notice)—

1. How many of the recommendations made by the Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement in their First Report on South-Eastern Drainage and Development (Parliamentary Paper No. 17 of 1948) have been given effect to?

2. Is it intended to take any action on recommendations (*d*), (*e*) and (*f*) contained in this report?

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS—The replies are:—

1. All have been given effect to.

2. Action has been taken.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT.

Mr. HUTCHENS (on notice)—

1. How many whippings have been given since 1940 as a result of orders by courts?

2. Since 1940 how many persons have been whipped twice on account of further offences?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—The replies are—

1. Eighteen whippings and one birching have been given since 1940 as a result of court orders.

2. No person has been whipped for a second time for further offences.

SWIMMING POOL SUBSIDIES.

Mr. TAPPING (on notice)—

1. How many swimming pool projects in South Australia have been assisted by Government subsidies for each of the years 1955-56 and 1956-57?

2. What were the totals of such subsidies paid in each year?

3. What subsidies have been applied for since July 1, 1957, and by whom?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The replies are—

1. Projects assisted—1955-56, 1; 1956-57, 16.

2. Amounts paid—1955-56, £182; 1956-57, £15,273.

3. Subsidies applied for since July 1, 1957—Jamestown, £1,500; Gladstone, £1,500; Hamley Bridge, £1,500; Pinnaroo, £1,500; Eudunda, £1,500; Crystal Brook, £1,500. On approvals given prior to July 1, 1957, the amount of £8,290 has not yet been paid.

WOMEN JURORS.

Mr. TAPPING (on notice)—Is it the intention of the Government to introduce legislation to provide for women jurors?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—It is not proposed to introduce a Bill on this matter during this session.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 24. Page 1316.)

Mr. HAMBOUR (Light)—I support the Bill, which has been introduced to continue the original legislation for a further 12 months. I believe I could put up a good argument in favour of the Bill and also a good argument against it. I have some knowledge of the implications of this legislation and I will try to treat it without prejudice. Price control is necessary because some lines are still in short supply. We still have import licensing and while we have that we will have shortages. Any person who holds an import licence is virtually presented with an annuity from the Federal Government. Import licences are in much shorter supply than the demand for them and that gives to certain people a privilege that can be abused. I believe that during the coming year the situation will be aggravated, that our export income will be down, and that the further curtailment of our import licensing system will automatically follow. While that position still exists the public must be protected by such legislation as this.

Last year I spoke about the lack of control over prices in certain industries and I find that one line—machinery—no longer needs control because the situation has changed completely. Whereas 12 months ago supplies were difficult and the price was particularly high, supplies are now plentiful and sales particularly scarce, and I do not believe a line should be controlled in those circumstances. I am confident that the Government and the administrators of this legislation could considerably reduce the number of lines under control and that this would have two beneficial results: firstly, it would satisfy those who oppose this legislation, and secondly, it would allow the officers of the Prices Department to pay more attention to lines needing stricter supervision. It has been said in responsible quarters that, as goods become plentiful and there is competitive selling, those goods should be released from control, and I agree with that; but unfortunately, that situation has not yet been reached completely and I support the Bill because the Government should have the power to regulate prices where the public may be held to ransom or taken advantage of.

I was surprised to hear the other day that the charges of electricians were still controlled. I believe these tradesmen are in plentiful supply and are looking for work in most places. It is completely wrong to apply controls to one particular industry. We may say, "Why shouldn't the builder be under price control in building a certain structure?" After all, the prices of building materials are controlled and we may agree with that because it has been shown that the cost of building in South Australia is much lower than in other States, but the man doing the building is not controlled. He is at perfect liberty to pay his masons £30 a week if he wishes. True, there is a minimum, but I doubt whether any good builder receives it, and I think that situation is acceptable to everybody because, if a man is a good tradesman, he is entitled to more than the ordinary tradesman.

I deplore the publicity given last year to firms in the metropolitan area that were accused of abusing the de-control of a line. It may be true that they abused de-control, but I am sure that would only be in one or two rare instances, yet the way the newspapers brought out the headlines all the people in the industry were condemned. That was completely improper because, if the Prices Department wants to deal with anybody, it has the power and should deal with the individual or the organization and not condemn the industry for doing something wrong, which was implied

if not actually expressed. I trust the department will be a little more discreet in its accusations. If accusations are to be levelled at anybody, let them be levelled and the necessary penalty imposed. The Government and the administration are completely wrong if they believe that members of the public are unable to assess values and judge for themselves. I have absolute confidence in the housewife and believe that she knows what she is doing. If there is a bargain offering she will find it.

Mr. Fred Walsh—If it were left to her judgment she would pay much less than she pays under price control.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Then the honourable member opposes the Bill?

Mr. Fred Walsh—No.

Mr. HAMBOUR—When the honourable member speaks he will probably enlarge on his interjection for I do not understand what he is trying to indicate. I presume, however, that he means that many housewives avail themselves of prices much lower than those fixed under price control, and I agree. Numerous lines could be de-controlled without any disadvantage to the public.

There is another important aspect, namely, that this legislation penalizes only a small section of the community, and I deplore that. No doubt, there are many lines that the Minister would like to control, but they are beyond his control, and this legislation applies only to this State. If a manufacturer cannot obtain what he thinks is a satisfactory price in this State he can sell his commodities in another State. That is often done to the detriment of South Australia, for it can be done only with lines in short supply. On the other hand, manufacturers and merchants in other States can sell their products in this State at a price they consider satisfactory, and we have no control over them.

Last year I spoke at considerable length on the question of monopolies, which cannot be controlled by the State Government. About a month ago the Prime Minister said in the House of Representatives that it would necessitate a meeting of the State Premiers and the Federal Government to implement legislation to control monopolies and abuses of privileges. It would be an excellent thing if that could be done, and then we could possibly repeal our prices legislation. In his second reading speech the Minister said that the Government thought this legislation was necessary for the economic development of South Australia, but I do not accept that, for we are controlling a small section only.

Mr. Fred Walsh—You have no confidence in the Government?

Mr. HAMBOUR—I say that this legislation is possibly the most difficult of any law to administer to everyone's satisfaction. It is chock full of anomalies and I will make suggestions to remove them. I have been chided for being critical of the Government.

Mr. Jennings—No, we admire you for that.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Members opposite have room to admire the Government. If one of them makes a statement all other members opposite have to agree with him, but I can express my own opinions. Then the Minister's second reading speech stated that price control was necessary for the prosperity and expansion of our industries, but I do not accept that. The speech then went on to say that this prosperity had resulted in a high level of employment. I point out that two years ago we had a seller's market, when anything could be sold, but last year the position was more stable. However, this year there has been a downward trend and things are getting difficult. Unless business people can carry on satisfactorily there may be some unemployment. I do not say there will be wholesale dismissals, but there may not be replacements, for business men will have to cut down their expenses. I think everyone admits that costs are higher in other States, and I think that this legislation is partly responsible for the lower costs in South Australia.

I do not object entirely to this legislation, for it results in some benefits, but I am trying to make a fair assessment of its effects. The Minister said that the individual benefits from this legislation, and I agree because I have had personal experience of those benefits. Primary producers benefit because superphosphate would immediately rise in price if it were removed from control, and that is one of the main commodities used in primary production. Perhaps fuel would rise in price if it were decontrolled. I could name dozens of manufacturers who are not under price control, and I am not suggesting that they should be brought under control, but an investigation should be made of this legislation to see that the burden of price control does not have to be carried by the few.

There has been considerable discussion fairly recently about the price of petrol and other

fuels. Petrol companies have urged men on the land to install fuel containers. Many primary producers have done so at their own expense, but the oil companies have not made any concession in the price of fuel delivered in bulk to those tanks, which cost about £70, but the companies have saved considerably because this practice obviates the necessity to handle and clean drums, which works out at about eight shillings a drum. I hope that the Government and the Prices Commissioner will examine this aspect and see whether the companies should grant these primary producers a concession, perhaps, of a half-penny or one penny a gallon.

The Minister's second reading speech said that tyres and tubes were under control, but I do not think that they are made in this State. It seems strange to me that tyres and tubes are a standard price regardless of brand. Does this legislation encourage manufacturers to establish industries in this State, or does it repel them? I think there would be arguments for and against. A Gallup poll showed that 69 per cent of the people favoured price control, but I was surprised that the figure was not 80 per cent, because price control puts money into the pockets of most people by keeping prices down, so those who oppose price control probably oppose it on principle. If members' salaries were the subject of a Gallup poll would the people be in favour of an increase or decrease?

Mr. John Clark—What has that got to do with the Bill?

Mr. HAMBOUR—If the honourable member will be patient I shall tell him. A Gallup poll on legislation such as this carries little weight. It is a question that must be decided on its merits or demerits. Probably the public would be prejudiced in favour of the retention of price control. I point out that what was a fair price for a commodity last year may not necessarily be a fair price for this year. Conditions have changed, and expenses are higher, but most business people have found that sales are lower. I know that the production and sales of one large milling company are down, but overhead costs are the same and the profit margin in South Australia is the same.

Mr. Davis—That company is not going bankrupt.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I am not suggesting it will, but some of the smaller companies may go out of business because business is not as bright as it was. I think that the Prices Commissioner uses balance-sheets too much in determining prices. Some businesses turn over their stock only once or twice a year, whereas others turn it over 12 times a year, so how can we compare the margin of profit in those businesses? Again, the same profit margin applies to the chain stores as to general stores, but the chain stores select the lines they are prepared to sell. On the other hand, the general merchants and the big emporiums have to stock all sorts of lines because they have to satisfy the public demand. I am quite sure that if they could select the line they wanted to stock they would not have a grudge against price control as it is today. Some consideration should be shown to different situations so that profit margin could be measured to some degree with their requirements, selling costs and expenses. I think members will agree that this financial year all traders and business merchants have had a lower turnover. In most cases, unless they have put off staff, their expenses are up. I will leave that statement with members and they can work out the consequences. The small man, unfortunately, is the one who will suffer because he has only one or two on his staff and if he dismisses one he loses 50 per cent of his staff, whereas a bigger employer could dismiss one or two without affecting his organization.

I wish to mention the disadvantages of a percentage of profit. In the schedule will be found specific items listed with a specific percentage registered against them regardless of any variations that may exist. I will give an illustration. Consider a man's shirt: It could be a utility shirt similar to those usually worn by members. On that shirt the storekeeper is allowed a margin of profit. In addition to the utility shirt there are the bodgie-type shirts, such as the Sinatra Reds and the Mitchell Blues, and these shirts carry the same percentages of profit as the utility shirts. I suggest that the administration should apply its mind to these luxury class articles and not to utility garments. Certain exemptions were made last year, but that action could be taken much further without having any impact on the economy. Anything of a fashion note should be exempted from price control. Why should anyone requiring anything of an exotic nature receive the benefit of price controls? When one sees the type of clothing worn by some young men one sometimes wonders what sex they are. The price of their clothes is included in the schedules and I think they should be exempt.

I think, too, that some attention could be paid to overseas purchases which have a margin of 2½ per cent. That margin is not sufficient for several reasons; (*a*) the merchant has to purchase more than six months in advance of receiving the goods; (*b*) he must make the purchases on small samples; and (*c*) he has to find the money far in advance of that required for local purchases. All that he is allowed is 2½ per cent. That margin should be increased to a minimum of five per cent to bring it up to its true value.

Much has been said about the impact of this legislation and I think it was suggested by the member for Mitcham that traders could play ducks and drakes with it. That is perfectly true. If anybody wished he could almost completely ignore this legislation by making purchases at a higher price from one place and at a lower price from another, and combine the two. That could be hard on the honest man and most of the traders are honest and stick religiously to those schedules. This type of man would be prejudiced as against the man who did not stick to the schedules. I was a little disappointed in reading the Estimates to see that the vote for the Prices Department was increased from £74,000 to £84,000, and that is not a good sign. I hoped it would be the other way around, with a gradual lessening of the expenditure and the ultimate elimination of this department.

A little more attention should be paid to the release of items which are plentiful. If items in the luxury class or high price bracket were released from price control and importers given another 2½ per cent margin, I think it would satisfy many people and obviate a lot of objection to the Bill. I support the Bill in the hope that it will be altered on the lines I have indicated.

Mr. DAVIS (Port Pirie)—I support the Bill because I consider that price control is of benefit to the majority of the South Australian people. The member for Mitcham challenged members on both sides of the House to reply to his criticism of the Bill. I have very little to say in reply because the arguments put forward by that gentleman were ridiculous. He called the Bill ridiculous or idiotic, but his arguments against the Bill were equally idiotic. He claimed that if price control were continued it would reduce production. He claimed that it is not fair to have price control where it will reduce production, but he went on to contradict himself by saying that as far as the workers are concerned he considers price control would make a greater demand for the goods and therefore they would become in short supply. My answer to that is that the more goods there are purchased, the more the employment which is created. A demand for goods is of itself an encouragement to industry to produce the articles needed by the people.

He also stated that the people had price control in their own hands; if they desired to keep price control there was no necessity for them to purchase articles too expensive for them. I claim that everyone is entitled to purchase what they desire, and it is not right to say that one section of the community should be able to purchase goods when another section cannot. I am not speaking of luxury goods, but of necessities. The worker in industry should have the same right to have on his table such foods as the owner of the industry, because the man working in industry is the one who produces the articles for the owner. The member for Mitcham also does not encourage industry to develop in the State of South Australia.

I would not be supporting this Bill if I thought that it did an injury to anyone or was a penalty on the employer or on the employee. When prices were first fixed the whole matter was gone into carefully in order to give a fair profit to the manufacturer. The member for Mitcham must not forget that those who produce an article have had their wages fixed for a long time; indeed they have been fixed for all time. The only alteration that has taken place for many years has been the automatic adjustments to the living wage brought about by the increased cost of living. I challenge the member for Mitcham to say that when price control was under the Federal Government we were not all very happy. It did check inflation at that time. Unfortunately, the powers of the Federal Government were challenged by certain States and the people were not prepared to give the Federal Government any further power. The Premier at that time stated that if it were left to the States they would be more effective, but that has not proved to be so. We find that the cost of living has gone up ever since. Under the provisions of this Bill certain things are under control, but many things which have risen very steeply in price are not. Who are the sufferers? Are they the employers? I say "No," but the working class people of this State. Isn't it right to control pices so that the

housewife can balance her budget? If we did not have price control we would not know where we were half the time. At every opportunity traders would be raising the prices of their articles. The member for Light (Mr. Hambour) said that if certain things happened many of our small people—I think he was referring to storekeepers—would go out of business. I challenge that statement also. When we had price control under the Federal Government I did not hear of many people going out of business whether they were small or large. Since the war—and particularly during Federal price control—many businessmen have made fortunes and under our system of price control the same is happening. I do not know of any small trader who has been forced out of business through price control.

Mr. Hambour said that housewives know where to go for bargains. I have not seen many bargains in the last 10 or 12 years. In fact, those articles that are advertised as bargains are usually "catch lines." The poor unfortunate housewife who goes after that bargain usually leaves the store with a light purse after making many other purchases. If the storekeeper makes a loss on the so-called bargain, he makes it up on the other commodities he sells. I support the Bill, but am sorry that price control is not operated on a Federal basis. I hope the Premier will consider bringing many other articles under control because, by so doing, he will help the community as a whole.

Mr. BROOKMAN (Alexandra)—In opposing price control I well remember nine years ago when it was first introduced on a State basis. The Federal Government, by referendum, sought power to control prices under the Constitution. The public rejected the suggestion, not because it opposed price control but because it did not favour the Commonwealth controlling it for all time. As a result of the referendum the Prime Minister, Mr. Chifley, dropped price control on a Federal basis.

Mr. Fred Walsh—He had no alternative.

Mr. BROOKMAN—I suggest he was unduly hasty in dropping it. Interstate conferences were held and every State then imposed price control, but since then the States have discontinued such control and now South Australia is alone in retaining it. Two arguments are frequently used in criticizing price control. They both contain merit and must be considered. The first is that the States which have discontinued control are not suffering as a result. The Premier quoted figures suggesting that South Australia, under control, was better off than the other States. I would not lose much sleep over that argument, because I do not believe it is conclusive. The other argument against price control is that we managed very well without it prewar and could do so now. That is a good argument. We must admit that there are strong inflationary pressures which have been created as a result of the war and as a result of circumstances since. However, I believe the present inflationary trend is being adequately coped with by means other than price control. During the war most people supported price control because were were confronted with a national crisis. Many people are opposed to it today. I would not be interested in the results of a Gallup poll on this question because they can be used as desired. If the poll reveals a good result it is referred to as "conclusive," but if the result is not as expected it is "inconclusive." One need only remember the Gallup poll on a recent American Presidential election.

In the past I have supported price control because it does have a delaying effect on inflation. We cannot permanently block the streams of inflation by price control because there is always some leakage by which the aims of control are defeated. Price control is ineffective and cannot have a permanent effect on inflation. The forces of supply and demand cannot be denied. The delaying effect of price control has undoubtedly helped the stability of the country, but we have never been able to completely overcome inflationary pressures. The Korean war and the high prices for wool set off a strong inflationary trend and price control partly curbed the effect of that. We are not in the same position as the United States of America which has a huge home-consumer market and which can stand inflation to a greater extent than Australia. However, it is apparent that the United States has been worried by inflation. We must admit the effect wool has on our economy. Apart from wool-growing there are many small primary industries which have dropped out of prominence and are of doubtful value. Costs in our secondary industries have always been so high that we have never been able to enter the competitive market with other countries. Wool accounts for about one-third of our export trade and wool, mining and cereal growing combined for four-fifths.

The point I make is that price control has served a purpose but the Federal Government has now introduced other measures to counter inflation. It has introduced a series of Budgets—much criticized—designed to attack inflation and they have had a steadying effect. The fact that those States which have discontinued price control are not suffering indicates the value of other counter-inflationary factors.

I am well aware that the C series index is frequently used in discussing the cost of living, but I have listened to the Premier too often to rely on the index as a complete indication of the cost of living. It is actually a list of costs of various commodities and does not indicate the cost of living. If, for instance, the price of potatoes increases by 400 per cent—as occasionally happens, despite the efforts of the Potato Board—does any sane person continue buying the same quantity of potatoes as before? The normal reaction is to purchase something else. Most members have probably heard the story of the starving multitudes during the French Revolution. When told that they could not buy bread Marie Antoinette said, "Why can't they eat cake?" That has been held up as an absurd remark, but today it is not so absurd as it was when first uttered during the French Revolution, for today we live in a period of general prosperity. There can be no argument about the number of motor cars and home comforts possessed by people, and we are enjoying the greatest prosperity we have had, with the exception of the few years immediately behind us. The country is still remarkably prosperous and the C series index does not worry people as much as is commonly stated. If it did, any rise in the index would be reflected in attendances at football matches and race meetings and in the sale of home appliances; yet a fluctuation in the index is not much reflected in any of these things.

Experience in the eastern States has shown that this State could drop price control without causing strong inflationary pressure and that our costs of living would not rise unduly as a result of such action. Price control is no longer an effective barrier against inflation. Other reasons given in an attempt to justify the retention of price control include the necessity to eliminate any restrictive practices that might be adopted by people having commodities to sell. Price control, however, is only an approximate way of dealing with such practices and I do not suggest that the occasional occurrence of such practices can be held up as a justification for the retention of controls. Indeed, there may be other ways of dealing with such practices and it only requires some effort to work out some other method. Even if we cannot control them, that is no justification for price control. After all, restrictive practices are on a far greater scale than simply in connection with the prices of commodities. Anybody who doubts that has only to offer for work on the waterfront to see how much chance he has of getting a job there.

Mr. Fred Walsh—You don't know from personal experience.

Mr. BROOKMAN—I suggest that anyone who doubts my statement should offer for work at a rate lower than that enjoyed by the waterside worker and he will soon find that he cannot get a job there. I consider that to be a fair example of restrictive practices that are far more detrimental to the economy of this country than any type of restrictive practice associated with the sale of commodities over shop counters. The restrictive practices to which I refer occur in various types of employment all over Australia. In many cases wages are fixed by courts or by agreement, but the fact remains that it is a restriction of a far greater importance than any restrictive practice that might be mentioned as a possible justification for the retention of price control. Further, those wages, of course, are not affected by price control legislation.

Other countries have the same problems but they do not resort to price control to deal with them. This is a new reason given in defence of price control, and I think it has come as a result of experience in administering the legislation. Indeed, these cases of restrictive practices may have come even as a result of the existence of price control. So far I have referred to the argument that price control has delayed the onset of inflation, but it cannot do so for ever. Its effect on monopolistic practices is so small that those practices should be attacked, if necessary, by some method other than full scale price control.

Let me now point out what is wrong with price control itself. The main reason why I oppose it is that it stultifies initiative and discourages the industrious person from making a profit, while at the same time it protects the person who, in many cases, does not deserve to be protected. Further, it gives a sense of false security to our people. After a few

years of control they get into the habit of thinking they will always be protected, but I point out that we are always in danger—indeed, today we are in very great danger—of finding ourselves engaged in a struggle for economic survival. That struggle depends particularly on world markets and what we can sell in them, and I do not think price control has a beneficial effect on those conditions. It simply slows up the incentive of our people to do better for themselves.

Other drawbacks are associated with price control, one of which is inefficiency. Previously in this debate hire-purchase commodities were mentioned and we were told that, although the price of a commodity might be controlled, the rate of interest on hire-purchase was not. That is inefficient control. Further, price control is expensive to the taxpayer and thousands of pounds must be spent each year by the State Government in administering the control. Even this is not a complete statement of the position for each year additional thousands must be spent by businesses in setting up their books for price control and preparing schedules of prices for the Prices Commissioner. Such expenditure must affect the interests of people in this State.

Another objection to price control is that it encourages evasions of one kind and another. It is not strictly dishonest to find out the best method at law to evade price control, and even the most honest person will engage in this practice. The main drawback, however, is the stultification of initiative. We have the example in other States where price control has been dropped; no adverse effects have followed that action. On the other hand, I believe we will derive many intangible benefits when we follow that example. Those benefits affect, to a large extent, the character and welfare of the people. I hope this legislation will not be accepted as a permanent feature. Its effect will be worse if people begin to regard it as a permanent measure than its effect at present when they believe it will last for only a year or two. I oppose the second reading.

Mr. FRED WALSH (West Torrens)—I support the Bill and cannot understand the attitude adopted by some members opposite in respect of it. Some members opposite, however, are consistent in their attitude towards this legislation, which their Government has introduced. I refer particularly to the members for Mitcham and Alexandra, who have strongly opposed various forms of control, particularly price control, although they subscribe to some controls that benefit the people they represent more than other sections in their districts. Price control was not originally introduced hurriedly but because of the action of certain people who exploited the public and enriched themselves at the expense of others at a time when demand exceeded supply. The war-time Federal Labor Government saw the necessity of introducing controls over all matters within their power.

The Menzies Government, when in office for about the first 15 months of World War II, took no steps to control such matters, but I suggest that during war-time it was absolutely necessary to control prices. What would have been the position had the Federal Government not applied price control? Those who had the money to pay the exorbitant prices being charged would have got all they desired and those who had not would have almost reached the starvation level in respect of essential commodities. It was not forced on us, as some people suggest, but was carefully thought out and applied in the best interests of the people as a whole. Members on this side of the House contend that it was necessary to continue certain controls after the war because of the avarice of the type of people I mentioned earlier, and it was also necessary to a lesser extent because of the shortage of certain commodities.

Until a referendum was taken the Federal Government was prepared to continue controls. After the referendum price control came under the control of the State Government, but because of lack of co-ordination between the States the inflationary trend has been accentuated. I am prepared to admit that certain Labor Governments in other States were remiss, and I also admit that the Government of this State still desires to retain price control of a limited extent. Although South Australia has one of the lowest basic wages in the Commonwealth, workers in other States have received quarterly adjustments. If it is good enough to peg wages to retard inflation, surely it is good enough to peg prices.

Fluctuations in prices make little difference to the worker so long as his wages are adjusted in accordance with the rise and fall in the cost of living. There have been periodical reviews of the basic wage since 1953, when quarterly adjustments were abolished. I think there have been two rises of 10s. a week, one fairly recently, but during the intervening periods, when quarterly adjustments were not made to the basic wage, employers and manufac-

turers gained the benefit because wages did not go up in accordance with the cost of living figures. Since the Commonwealth Government handed over price control to the States the basic wage has more than doubled. It is now £12 11s. a week in South Australia, but according to the C series index figures it should be £12 14s., so employers are paying their workers 3s. a week less than they should have to. Some people believe in controls so long as they bestow advantages on a certain class of the community. Yesterday's *News* contained some comments by the Federal President of the Master Builders' Association, who said that people were being defrauded over homes. He said:—

People wanting homes built were being defrauded because there was no national control over home builders. Registration under Government Act would be expensive and probably not very effective. We think we can protect the public in the same manner as the Institute of Architects and British Medical Association.

He wants control of a national character, but control by his association, not the Government. An article in yesterday's *Advertiser* stated:—

The Commonwealth Government has taken the unusual step of restricting exports of feed grains because of widespread drought condition. The Minister for Primary Industry (Mr. McMahon) said today the Minister for Customs and Excise (Senator Henty) had agreed to the temporary licensing of exports of feed grains from Australia. Exports would be allowed only with the approval of the Commonwealth Government until feed conditions became normal.

The Western Australian Wheatpool Secretary said:—

Western Australian oat and barley growers could be sacrificed in the interest of drought-affected eastern States wheatgrowers, unless the feed grain export restrictions were applied intelligently.

There again, we see the necessity and the desire for control, not only for the wheat industry, but for the people as a whole. If controls are not exercised we may find ourselves without wheat, and I think the member for Barossa (Mr. Laucke) would be one of the first to appreciate the need for control over the export of wheat. I am not criticising controls, but point out that many controls are necessary. Those who would like more freedom from controls should take all factors into consideration before criticising others who believe in controls.

The member for Mitcham (Mr. Millhouse) said that price control was undesirable, unjustified, and an interference with the law of supply and demand. That sounds all right, but anyone who has studied economics knows that the law of supply and demand does not always fix prices, especially in these days, and the member for Mitcham knows that. Many prices are controlled by manufacturers, or merchants, particularly the wholesalers of proprietary lines. For instance, the price of any proprietary line in a chemist shop is the same throughout the State. If one chemist wanted to sell it at a lower price he would not get any further supplies. Therefore, it is ridiculous to say that the law of supply and demand governs prices.

The member for Mitcham also said that the people should not be mollycoddled. He did not explain that term, but when controls were first introduced he was probably being mollycoddled by his parents, and from some of his comments I doubt whether he has got past that stage yet. The member for Alexandra (Mr. Brookman) said, in effect, that wool prices had been the saviour of Australia. No one will deny that, but those prices have been attained at the expense of the consuming public. Woolgrowers are getting 25s. for every Australian pounds worth of goods they send overseas, but the people who purchase imported goods have to pay 25s. for every one pound's worth they get. That applied and has applied ever since the depression years of 1929-1930 when the Scullin Government altered the rate of exchange, and importers in this country have been under the disadvantage of having to pay the 25s., and the exporters have gained the 25s. on the sale of exports by reason of the rate of exchange being varied. When the British pound was devalued some years ago virtually equating it to the Australian pound the Commonwealth Government applied the same devaluation to the Australian currency and thereby retained the ratio that previously existed. Other countries—New Zealand, South Africa and Canada—did not alter their exchange rate, and the currency of Canada is one of the highest valued in the world; it is probably only second to Switzerland's. The member for Alexandra in his opposition to price control referred to France. I do not know what he meant by that, but France has since the war always had control. When I was in that part of the world in 1947 the French Government issued a decree that all prices must be reduced on a certain date by 10 per cent. Irrespective of the size of the shop or the articles it sold that 10 per cent had to apply to the price previously obtaining.

That was carried out very effectively in France. We have only to study the currency of France to get some knowledge of the serious position of the French franc. Those of us who were in France during the first World War will remember that the franc was worth 10d. at par, but today it is worth only about one farthing. That will give some idea of the way in which currency can depreciate. In yesterday's press it was reported that France, which has applied the same system that we have applied in Australia to the difference in the exchange rate—20 per cent in their case—is going to decree that that should be eliminated to bring the value back to that previously existing.

Mr. Jennings—That Government was defeated yesterday.

Mr. FRED WALSH—That is not unusual. Their rotten electoral system brings that about. My Party advocates proportional representation. I know that.

Mr. O'Halloran—The French system is not proportional representation.

Mr. FRED WALSH—I have yet to learn the difference. That is all I wished to say on this matter. I hope the Bill will pass the second reading and go through the Committee stages and be agreed to by another place, for I feel that it is absolutely necessary to continue at least some form of price control, even if it is only of a partial character.

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

MARINE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 24. Page 1312.)

Mr. STEPHENS (Port Adelaide)—I intended to support this Bill, but it is a pity that it was brought down so late in the session because it has not given the House much time to consider what I think is an important measure. I found some difficulty when I noticed the title of the Bill and found it was the Marine Act, 1936-1947. I could not see any reference to the Marine Act having been dealt with there at all. I found subsequently it was part of the Harbors Act, and the Marine Act was joined to it when some alteration was made. The Bill was laid on the Table of the House on October 22, and the second reading was on the 23rd, and members should be given more time to examine a Bill of this description. Two previous speakers wanted to know if certain vessels or places were covered by the Bill and I can understand why they asked those questions. The important part of this Bill is new section 67 (*g*). This gives the Governor, on the recommendation of the board, power to make regulations. But the Governor or the board do not only have the power to make these regulations. Section 67 (*b*) says the regulations may provide for an exemption from this division, and while making regulations covering a certain class of boat the Harbors Board could make another regulation exempting certain boats from that regulation, and I am rather afraid that that may bring discontent and trouble in the very near future. I do not think it would be right for the Harbors Board, or any other body, to say that because one boat belongs to John Smith it shall come under the regulations, but that another boat of the same sort belonging to J. Brown shall not come under the regulation.

Mr. Shannon—Would it be possible to frame any regulations on those lines?

Mr. STEPHENS—They may be able to.

Mr. Shannon—The regulations have to come before this House and have to be approved.

Mr. STEPHENS—That is one saving grace. Although I would not object to the present board having this power objections could arise if the board were reconstituted. I know the present board members personally and both I and the late Mr. Oates had dealings with them on the question of land resumptions and other matters. We found them to be very fair and not one case which we dealt with had to go before the court. Not only are they to get that right of exempting some of the boats from this, but they can fix penalties. Section 67 (*e*) provides a penalty of not more than £100 for a coast-trade ship that breaks these regulations. I say that penalty is too small. If a coast-trade ship goes to sea without a wireless or wireless operator and risks the lives of passengers and crew the maximum penalty should be more than £100 if the court thinks fit. A hundred lives may be lost or risked through these people not having wireless on the ship, and yet the fine is limited to £100. It could be a fine of £10, but the court could not make it more than £100, and I suggest that the Minister consider whether the penalty should be a minimum of at least £100.

Mr. Shannon—Isn't that what the section actually says?

Mr. STEPHENS—That is one thing I am not sure of—whether they can duplicate the fine.

Mr. Shannon—I think the master and the owner can be fined.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—They do not have to be fined at all, so I do not think the fine will come into it, whether is is £100 or £10. The thing is to see that they go to sea properly equipped.

Mr. STEPHENS—I merely want to see the law enforced and in the absence of a fine many laws would be ignored. The power of the court should not be limited. I have heard judges and magistrates say certain fines are not high enough. More discretion should be given to the court and the figure of £100 is not enough. Years ago some boats were loaded until the very decks were awash and many lives were lost. Then the Plimsoll mark below which the vessel was not to be loaded was enforced. No penalty is provided for a second offence, but the Harbors Board will probably find ways of dealing with a man and possibly cancel the certificate of anyone who breaks the law more than once. Proposed new section 67f states:—

In this division "fishing vessel" means any vessel not propelled solely by oars and used in the taking of fish or oysters for sale and includes trawlers, pearling luggers and whale chasers.

It seems to me that under that provision a vessel propelled solely by oars is exempt, but that a vessel propelled by steam or oil engine and taking fish or oysters for sale is covered.

Mr. Shannon—So is a sailing vessel.

Mr. STEPHENS—I thought so at first, but I ask the Minister to explain the position for it is a little uncertain. As the clause stands at present, unless fish are taken for sale, a vessel propelled by steam is not covered.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—We are concerned with people plying for hire.

Mr. STEPHENS—This provision would be very hard to police. Should a man with a little outboard motor on his craft have to comply with it? I am afraid that a wrong interpretation may enable a guilty person to escape punishment. Proposed new section 67a provides that Division XA shall apply to every coast-trade ship, which is defined by the Act as "a ship that is trading from one port to another." Proposed section 67a (*b*) provides that every ship which carries passengers for hire on a voyage beginning and ending at the same port in South Australia shall be subject to the provisions of Division XA. I think I know the reason for this provision. An attempt has been made to have a pleasure boat ply on the Port River. Although I have conferred with the Minister and with the chairman and members of the Harbors Board, I do not think the matter has been finalized. Perhaps this section is included to cover such a ship if a berth is found for it.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—This provision was framed long before that arose. If you want it, why object to it?

Mr. STEPHENS—I do not, but I hope a berth will be found for that vessel because the people of Port Adelaide want to see the pleasure boat on the river. I see no objection to it, nor do I think the board objects to it, yet it cannot find a berth for such a small boat although it has miles of wharves. I support the Bill, but I am afraid the Government will have difficulty in administering the regulations if the board goes too far with the exemptions..

Mr. JENKINS (Stirling)—I, too, support the Bill and agree with the provisions of proposed new sections 67a and 67b for the installation of a transmitting and receiving wireless set and that each ship shall carry a qualified wireless operator. This should come well within the scope of small coastal ships these days, for the cost of these sets is reasonable. Further, a crew member could probably qualify as operator and combine those duties with his usual job. Frequently on fishing cutters of a reasonable size an officer transmits on a given wave length at certain times to coastal stations. The figures quoted by the member for Semaphore (Mr. Tapping) concerning recent fatalities were enlightening and proved that this Bill is both timely and necessary.

Proposed new section 67g (1) provides that the Governor may make regulations concerning the survey and inspection of fishing vessels, the equipment of fishing vessels, prohibiting fishing vessels from going to sea or being used while in an unseaworthy condition, and generally to ensure the safety of fishing vessels and officers and crews thereof. There is nothing specific set out in the Bill, but the Governor is to rely on recommendations of the board and I have every confidence in its ability to fulfil this duty efficiently in the interests of all concerned.

I cannot agree with the member for Port Adelaide (Mr. Stephens) that the board would on any occasion discriminate unduly between vessels of a similar nature in applying the regulations. We must remember that two similar vessels may go to sea under different conditions. For instance, one may carry passengers and the other not. They may go to different ports. One may go miles out to sea, whereas the other may follow the coast

and remain well within sight of the shore and, although quick weather changes occur, an exemption may be warranted if the ship's course follows close inshore.

A number of conditions may prevail under which it is considered that a ship may be exempted. When it is necessary to survey or inspect a fishing vessel, a month's notice should be given prior to the vessel being required to go on to the slips for overhaul, as this would save both the board and the owner much inconvenience. The board would be concerned with three things: the seaworthiness and soundness of the hull; the strength of the working gear; and the efficiency of the engine. The notice I have referred to would eliminate much inconvenience.

Paragraphs (*d*), (*e*), (*f*) and (*g*) all deal with the safety of officers and crews of fishing vessels and with the seaworthiness of the vessels. However, I suggest to the Minister that the Harbors Board should give earnest consideration to other safety measures, such as the need for vessels over a certain size to carry lifeboats. I realize that 45ft. fishing vessels could not carry a wooden lifeboat because it would take up too much room, but other boats, such as folding boats or inflatable rubber dinghies, which take little space, could be carried. Smaller vessels, say 20ft. or more, should carry lifebuoys, lifebelts, or "Mae Wests." In very rough weather they could be worn without much trouble.

Mr. Brookman—How much do they cost?

Mr. JENKINS—I do not know, but it would not be much. I hope that the Harbors Board will consider my comments when it is next submitting regulations or recommendations to the Government. It will be interesting to see how this legislation works out in practice, but I am confident that the Harbors Board has the knowledge and ability to overcome any difficulties or anomalies that may arise. I support the Bill.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3—"Enactment of Divisions XA-XB of Part IV of principal Act."

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH (Minister of Marine)—I move:—

In proposed new section 67b and 67c to strike out "coast-trade."

If we delete that word those provisions will apply to every ship that carries passengers for hire.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Title passed. Bill read a third time and passed.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT ADVISORY COUNCIL ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from Legislative Council and read a first time.

SOUTH AUSTRALIAN RAILWAYS COMMISSIONER'S ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from Legislative Council and read a first time.

JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from Legislative Council and read a first time.

REGISTRATION OF DOGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Legislative Council intimated that it had agreed to the House of Assembly's amendment.

BUSH FIRES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 22. Page 1200.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—Before saying a few words on the Bill I want to draw attention to the position which has developed in recent years as a result of frequent amendments of this legislation. In 1954 the Act was reprinted, but there have been so many amendments since that it is almost unrecognisable again, and now we propose to make further amendments. It is about time we settled on a definite policy as regards this legislation and allowed it to continue for some time so as to give it a thorough test. The Bill makes three amendments to the Act, the first one relating to permission being granted in certain circumstances to burn off on days when the lighting of fires in the open has been prohibited by the Minister under section 13a. The amendment says that councils shall have the power to appoint committees of two or more members who shall have authority to grant a permit for burning off scrub or newly cleared land, even on a day that has been proclaimed as a day of high fire hazard.

When I first saw this amendment I had some misgivings, but I discussed it with people who take a keen interest in these matters and they assured me that the position is safeguarded. Further, there are certain natural safeguards in that there are not many parts of the State where people will want to burn off scrub or newly cleared land. When section 13a was being debated I said it would be a wise plan

to impose a blanket prohibition on the lighting of fires in the open and give some authority the right to grant permits to light fires, subject to certain safeguards. In effect, that is what is being done now.

The Bill says that the authorized persons appointed by councils shall grant permits in quadruplicate, one copy going to the person receiving the permit, one to the clerk of the district council, one to the local police officer, and one to the Minister. Therefore, so far as the actual notification is concerned it looks as if it is reasonably watertight, but it seems to me that the actual fire would have occurred long before these copies could have reached their various destinations.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—They would provide legal evidence.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—They are to provide legal evidence in cases where it is necessary for action to be taken. After all, in matters of this nature the local authorities are the best judges. I remember one occasion where the Minister declared a fire hazard over the greater part of the State including the north-east. It was raining heavily in the north-east and a fire could not be lighted there under any circumstances, but the Minister was not to know that that rain would come out of the blue. It was a monsoonal rain which came from the north and north-east and inundated a considerable portion of this State. I have come to the conclusion that the amendment sought by the Minister is worthy of support. The second amendment refers to certain precautions which must be taken by owners of sawmills. I agree with that entirely because the danger does not only accrue to the actual sawmill itself. They are situated, in many instances, in forest areas and if a serious fire breaks out in a sawmill there is very great difficulty in preventing its spreading to the various areas near the sawmill. I think all reasonable precautions should be taken in these circumstances, and what is suggested in the Bill is reasonable. The third one widens the possibility of agreement between the fire control bodies in our State and in another State. The Act now provides that it shall be restricted to local authorities. The amendment provides that any authority in the adjoining State which is responsible for fire control shall have the right to appoint joint fire control officers with the body in our State and so I see no objection to that. The fourth amendment is that which increases the amount of insurance cover that must be provided by fire control authorities for fire controllers and persons manning fire appliances. I think that the amounts provided in the original Bill were totally inadequate. The amounts were £500 in the case of death or £2 a week in the case of disability. Those amounts were totally inadequate and it is provided in the Bill that the amount should be doubled from £500 to £1,000 in the case of death and that the weekly payment shall be increased from £2 to £10 a week. I still contend though that is not enough. I think legislation of this kind should provide as nearly as possible the conditions which apply under the Workmen's Compensation Act.

Mr. Jennings—They should provide nothing less.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I agree, they should provide nothing less. There are certain conditions under bush fire control which should be taken into consideration and while I should have liked to amend this Bill to provide the complete workmen's compensation cover for all fire controllers and all persons manning fire appliances I appreciate the fact that many of these persons could be self-employed persons such as farmers and storekeepers. In such cases there would no wage base to work on, and a wage basis is required to work on under the Workmen's Compensation Act for total payment for death or disability or for weekly payments in the case of temporary incapacity. I think workmen normally engaged in other occupations for which they are insured, who are appointed fire controllers or who may be manning fire appliances, are specifically excluded from any workmen's compensation cover whilst on those duties. If they met death or injury as the result of something happening in the fire the compensation should be the same as if they were injured or killed in the course of their normal employment. At the appropriate time in Committee I propose to move an amendment on those lines, which I feel is about as far as I can go at this juncture, although as I have indicated earlier I would prefer to go further. With that reservation I support the second reading.

Mr. STOTT (Ridley)—This is a very desirable amendment to the Act and the Government should be commended for giving consideration to certain parts of the State which under the Act would have imposed on them a total prohibition when the Minister declared that a fire hazard existed. The amendment is necessary because there are certain portions of the State such as Eyre Peninsula, the Murray Mallee and portions of the South-East where settlers are now busy clearing the land of

scrub. Honourable members will realize that the ideal day for burning scrub is a day which is hot but has a moderate breeze, and on odd occasions that is the day the Minister would declare burning prohibited. Consequently, these settlers are unable to burn their scrub on these particular days. The amendment is desirable because it enables the district council to employ two fire control officers who can issue permits. The necessary safeguards are provided because the fire control officers appointed under this section would necessarily have to make an investigation of the property to be burned to see that the breaks were carefully prepared and that all the other provisions of the Bush Fires Act regarding the burning of scrub were complied with before a permit was issued. The Act applies a total prohibition between the end of October and February 1 and no permit can be issued during that very hazardous period when harvesting is going on. There has been some opposition to the amendment to the Bush Fires Act, and rightly so, by persons living on the mainland where no more clearing is going on, but where grass fires and stubble fires can occur. This legislation has now reached the very good stage where it is left to the local government authority to determine whether it should in the interests of the district concerned exercise its power under this clause by appointing fire control officers. If the local council does not employ fire control officers under this section then the total prohibition of the Minister on those days still applies because no council has taken steps to appoint a fire control officer. Therefore the claim that we are whittling down the Bush Fire Act is not very realistic. We have seen comments in the press deploring any amendment but a study of this Bill empowering councils to take this action will reveal we are not taking any unnecessary risk or breaking down any powers. I think it is a very necessary amendment particularly in view of the requirements of those settlers concerned. Members will realize there are thousands and thousands of acres being cleared in those portions of the State, Eyre Peninsula, Murray Valley and parts of the South-East, and it is all to the good of the State that this is taking place because it is adding greater production and greater wealth to the State and on that account we should not by a total prohibition prevent these men from clearing scrub on those days. We do encounter weather hazards in primary production. In some areas there are very few days in some seasons which are cool and yet ideal for scrub burning. There may be a day when the temperature is about 90 degrees and the Minister, taking into account the general welfare of the State and weather reports, declares a total prohibition. Another day might come along with nearly the same set of circumstances and in his wisdom the Minister again declares a total prohibition and so it may go on until we get towards the end of February or March without striking an ideal day. Unless he gets an ideal day for scrub burning plus a mild breeze to carry over the bare patches the farmer is faced with the necessity of having to employ extra labour, or have a very bad burn off. He then has to do a lot of hand burning at considerable expense, and even then he may not get an ideal burn. An ideal burn is one which is done when the sap is about to flow again in the mallee stumps. The effect of the fire on stumps is to retard their growth and cause them to dry off with the object of facilitating their removal at a later stage. That is the problem that faces us and the returned soldiers on the south-eastern scheme. They are finding, after clearing the land, that the young suckers are growing too fast because they were not properly burned off initially. This amendment will enable scrub burning to take place on the right day. A man will approach the clerk of the council or the local fire officer for a permit and if the fire officer is satisfied that all necessary precautions are being taken a permit will be issued, but not otherwise. The provision relating to sawmills is desirable and necessary. Whilst I have not seen the Leader of the Opposition's amendment, that can be considered in Committee and I support the second reading. I commend the Minister for introducing the Bill.

Mr. LAUCKE (Barossa)—I support the Bill because it contains desirable amendments to the principal Act. The resiliency of the amendments will enable us to meet the varying conditions throughout the State. What would apply appropriately to the West Coast would not apply to the hills area. On the West Coast the councils have a common interest; but in the hills there are a number of councils with varying days for fire lighting. The lack of uniformity in the hills has led to uncertainty among the public. The closing day for lighting fires in the Gumeracha area is November 5, but at Onkaparinga it is November 30 and in Stirling December 31. The public is unable to determine what can be done and when, and it is desired to have uniformity. Small sections or component areas of a common

geographical unit—such as the Adelaide hills area—should not have different dates, and if a zone could be declared with Ministerial prohibition from the end of November to the end of February uniformity would be achieved. It is almost impossible to obtain a unanimous decision between councils, and in areas of high fire hazard it would be advantageous to have Ministerial authority prohibiting fires for a defined period.

Section 13 of the principal Act enables a fire to be lit for the purpose of boiling a billy under certain conditions from October 31 to May 1, but under another provision stubble cannot be burnt from October 15 to May 1, nor from January 31 to May 15 except under certain conditions. If it is necessary to prohibit stubble fires, many hills residents believe there should be a similar prohibition on the lighting of fires to boil a billy. The public must be educated and should not be confused by different provisions relating to various types of fires. Last year the Forestry Department bulldozed and burnt stubble land on the northern boundary of Birdwood in a prohibited period to the great dismay and concern of adjoining landholders and I suggest that the Minister take every possible step to ensure that forestry burning off is not conducted in a prohibited period.

Mr. LOVEDAY (Whyalla)—I support the Bill because as regards the question of burning scrub it complies with the wishes expressed at last year's annual conference of the Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association. The Bill will afford flexibility to those concerned with scrub burning in that area. There are only certain days when scrub can be burnt effectively and such days are rare. It was pointed out at the meeting to which I have referred that weather conditions on Eyre Peninsula can be completely different from those in other parts of the State, and a district council should have sufficient power to grant a permit as set out in the Bill to enable persons to burn when it is considered desirable under local circumstances.

Mr. BOCKELBERG (Eyre)—I commend the Minister for introducing this Bill which will be of great assistance to settlers on Eyre Peninsula. In the past we have experienced considerable difficulty in burning off. Eyre Peninsula extends from 200 to 500 miles from the metropolitan area and when it is hot here it is often cool there. I have discussed these proposals with most of the councils on Eyre Peninsula and they are happy and quite prepared to pull their weight in controlling fires. I realize that what applies in my district does not apply on the mainland and if I lived here I would probably be opposed to this proposal as are some members. The difference between a good burn and a bad burn can represent hundreds of pounds, particularly to young settlers. Good days are not so plentiful that we can afford to prescribe a total prohibition on burning, thus possibly crippling some young settlers. I know only too well the value of a good burn. I agree that stubble should not be burned indiscriminately. In fact, sometimes it should not be burned at all. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

Mr. HEASLIP (Rocky River)—I support these proposed amendments to the Act. I was dubious about the Bill because for many years we have aimed at tightening up regulations relating to burning. However, I was enabled to examine the Bill when it was being drafted and had an opportunity of discussing it with many firefighting organizations in the north. When explained to them they agreed that it would not in any way endanger the mainland. Conditions vary throughout the State, and possibly on the mainland we would never consider burning on days regarded as eminently suitable by people on the West Coast. The only way some landholders can get rid of the scrub and develop new areas is to burn on what we might regard as hazardous days. Under the Bill a council is enabled to appoint authorized persons. I cannot visualize many councils, particularly in the north, taking advantage of that amendment because there are very few areas of scrub left in the old settled areas. This provision is safeguarded because although a council may appoint two authorized persons the Minister will not approve their appointment unless all adjoining councils approve of their selection. The position is well covered and cannot be abused. In order to help those who desire to burn scrub in prohibited periods I support the Bill.

Mr. SHANNON (Onkaparinga)—I have some fears about this matter. I point out that we are dealing with a section which gives the Minister power to totally prohibit the lighting of fires—even to boil a billy or to burn rubbish in an incinerator—when conditions are hazardous. It has been the practice to impose a total ban on all fires in the open, and any relaxation in the power of the Minister may have a harmful effect in many areas. Indeed,

if we have one bad outbreak of fire this amendment will be torn out of the legislation as quickly as we put it in. I know the difficulties applying to the broad acres of level mallee country on Eyre Peninsula and in the Murray mallee lands, where, if a settler cannot take advantage of the day set aside for burning, he may be involved in hundreds of pounds for labour to clear his block and I would have preferred an approach by the Minister along the lines of permitting this release from a total prohibition to apply only in those areas where maximum benefits would accrue to the settler because of burning off. I do not believe it should apply to areas, such as our hills areas, where there are comparatively many houses.

Mr. Heaslip—Would any council in your area apply it?

Mr. SHANNON—Councils come and councils go, although at present I have every confidence in councils in my area. I point out that bush fires do a tremendous damage when they occur. Although I appreciate the advantages of this provision to certain settlers on broad acres of scrub land, I point out that the same provision will apply to every part of the State. For instance, a few acres of the hills land may have been cleared and the valuable timber taken. The rubbish may have been left awaiting a favourable day for burning off, and under this legislation, even if a total prohibition applies, the opportunity may be taken to burn off those few acres at the risk of starting another Black Sunday. I do not know why members representing people on Eyre Peninsula and in the Murray mallee are so happy, because, if all the provisions of proposed new section 13b are complied with, by the time a man gets his permit the conditions necessary for burning off may have disappeared. In other words, the settler must predict weather conditions a couple of days ahead and get a permit in the hope that the day will be suitable for burning off. If a man does not get a permit he breaks the law by burning. A permit must be issued before he strikes the first match, and in some cases by the time a permit is obtained conditions may have changed.

The Minister would be well advised to have another look at this new idea of getting around a total prohibition on lighting fires in the open in unsuitable weather. The Minister's power to impose a total ban has been widely and wisely used since our sad experience of January 2, 1955. Indeed, he has had the utmost support of all people who have suffered in any way from bush fires. If a person were seen lighting a fire on a day when a total prohibition had been issued by the Minister he would be quickly dealt with because everybody is a policeman on a day of a total ban. That is the sentiment abroad today and I would hate to break it down by giving a loophole to the public to believe that it is not such a heinous crime to light a fire on a hot day when a north wind is blowing.

In saying that I refer particularly to the feeling applying throughout our hills area. The districts of councils contiguous to councils in my district run from hilly country to the plains and, although the provision is that all contiguous councils shall agree on this matter, I ask members how they can be expected to reach agreement? In enacting this legislation are we not building up a set of circumstances that will create ill feeling? Why are these provisions necessary in the Bill? I suggest that this privilege be granted to only two zones: the area west of Spencer's Gulf and the area east of the Murray River.

Mr. Brookman—How about Kangaroo Island?

Mr. SHANNON—I would not want Kangaroo Island to be given the privilege of burning on high fire risk days. Although I have experienced one hot night on Kangaroo Island—the night of Black Sunday—I realize that night temperatures there are fairly low.

Mr. Harding—Would you go as far afield as the South-East?

Mr. SHANNON—No, I would apply these provisions only to the two zones to which I referred. We could see how the exemptions operated in those areas and let the total prohibition apply to the rest of the State. The major effort to secure relief from total prohibition comes from those two areas, so we should not get into a local warfare among councils in our well-developed and thickly populated areas on whether we should or should not appoint the officers referred to. I do not think the legislation is desirable. In fact, I have a great antipathy to this breaking down of what, in the opinion of the rank and file public, is a sound provision—the total prohibition of fires in the open.

Most fires are caused by thoughtlessness. One has only to read the signs placed on roads all over the State that draw the attention of the travelling public to the danger of careless acts to realize the seriousness of the fire hazard. The signs are also an indication that we must educate our public in a knowledge of the risk involved in their lighting a fire under certain conditions.

The legislation, however, is in the reverse order, because the Minister may issue an order that no fires are to be lit in the open; a fire will be seen 10 miles away; and then someone will say, "I can't light a fire. How do they get away with it?" This will tend to break down the fire consciousness we have tried to inculcate in our public, and I therefore ask the Minister to redraft the proposed new section so that it will be confined only to the areas that seek this relief from the total prohibition on burning.

Mr. BROOKMAN (Alexandra)—I applaud the way in which the Minister has used his powers to proclaim days of extreme fire hazard. The member for Onkaparinga (Mr. Shannon) referred to clause 3, and I wish to point out that usually the weather on Kangaroo Island is much cooler than that on the mainland. On some days that were proclaimed by the Minister I received inquiries from people on Kangaroo Island who wished to burn. They pointed out that the weather was much cooler there, and I found that to be correct when I checked their statements. This Bill should adequately cater for those people, and the conditions under which they can obtain permits to burn are so rigorous that I cannot imagine that the powers under this Bill could be used to break down the legislation. The area on Kangaroo Island that I have in mind is not one that could be reached by large numbers of tourists in a day. The people concerned would have a greater sense of responsibility than most other people because they could not move out of the area easily, and I do not think that people seeing burning-off operations would be encouraged to light fires themselves. In view of the strong safeguards provided in regard to obtaining permits I think we should give the Bill a trial to see how it works. I support the measure.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3—"Exemption from provisions of section 13a."

Mr. BROOKMAN—I am not quite clear on whether permits will have to be obtained before the day on which a ban on lighting fires applies. I take it that the Minister applies a ban early in the morning, and I am wondering how long it will take for a person to get a permit to burn.

The Hon G. G. PEARSON (Minister of Agriculture)—Obviously, a permit could not be issued on the day prior to a prohibited day because nobody will know, until it has been broadcast that a prohibition has been placed on the lighting of fires, that it is a prohibited day. A person desiring to burn will have to ascertain whether or not circumstances are propitious for his burning. If he finds there is a prohibition on that day he will have to take immediate steps to get a permit. This may involve him in some trouble, but he will not mind that if he really wants to burn. We do not propose to issue permits lightly. The amendment will provide relief from the prohibition only where such is necessary. I take it that district councils will see that authorized persons are available in areas where land is being cleared. For instance, much of the area of the Port Lincoln district council has been cleared, but there are some parts where new land is being cleared. Therefore, the district council would probably appoint authorized officers that are reasonably close to the people concerned. Not many prohibited days are proclaimed, so it will not be necessary to get permits very often.

Mr. HARDING—In what manner will landowners be informed of prohibited days?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—Reports are put over the air at about 6 o'clock every morning.

Mr. HARDING—Will a permit be in writing or will it be given over the telephone? Does a permit have to be obtained through a district clerk? If so, it would not be possible to get a permit on a Saturday morning.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The Bill provides that the permits will be issued by authorized officers appointed by councils. The permits will be issued in quadruplicate in case of any legal action for the improper lighting of fires. They will not be issued over the telephone because there would then not be a legal document. The person issuing the permit must, as soon as possible, notify by telephone or orally the local police officer and the district clerk. The police officer will not then have to investigate a burning-off to see whether the landowner has broken the law.

Mr. SHANNON—I move—

After subsection (6) of proposed new section 13b to add the following new subsection:—

(7) This section shall apply only to Kangaroo Island and every part of the State of South Australia west of Spencer Gulf.

This Bill should apply only to those parts of the State that are seeking it. I point out

that we have already zoned the metropolitan area for certain purposes and we have divided the State into various zones for various other purposes. Therefore, we have often legislated so that Acts will apply only in certain areas, and that is how we should approach this matter. I appreciate that this legislation should apply to overcome problems on Eyre Peninsula and Kangaroo Island, and my amendment will enable people there to burn off when there is a total ban throughout the rest of the State. It will also overcome a problem that I think may arise on the mainland as a result of disagreement between adjoining district councils with totally different problems.

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

Mr. SHANNON—Before the ajournment I was putting forward my suggested amendment that would, in effect, provide this facility which is being asked for by certain people who have a just claim for some relief from the total prohibition which the Minister has the power to enforce at the moment. I also pointed out that the two areas that sought this relief were Kangaroo Island and Eyre Peninsula. The fact the fires were lit in these areas on days proclaimed by the Minister to be prohibited days would not in any way affect the morale of the people on the mainland. It would be possible for people at Cape Jervis to see a fire on Kangaroo Island without perturbation. Although the Minister must make the final decision I do not think it is good legislation to provide for the avoidance of this prohibition on lighting fires in areas where there is a danger of fires, even though we hedge it around with restrictions. I think it is bad for those people interested in fire fighting, because it is the voluntary fire fighter who bears the burden if a mistake is made and a fire spreads, as it can in certain country, to a very dangerous terrain. The unfortunate people who suffer are the fire fighters and after all I do not propose to measure up a property loss against injury to the fire fighter himself. Those are the reasons which compel me to put forward this amendment.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I ask the Committee not to accept this amendment for various reasons. In saying that I do not wish to imply that the Government is in any way unsympathetic to the ideal of the member for Onkaparinga, but the facts are that clause 3 has been very carefully drafted to avoid any of the dire circumstances to which the member directs his amendment. I think a perusal of the clause should satisfy even the most fearful, or the most bush fire conscious people that what the honourable member has outlined will not occur. The machinery in this clause cannot operate unless the councils desire it, and I think most of the members of the Committee will agree that the local people whose property and interests are located in the area would be the most conservative in the approach to this. I am prepared to trust the wisdom of the local authorities in this matter. Unless they desire this amendment to operate they will not appoint the authorized officers, and therefore no permit will be issued and no fire will be lit except in breach of the law, in which case action can be taken against the culprit. Further, the Minister has to approve of the appointment of these people and the Minister shall not under clause 2 give any such approval unless he is satisfied that it is in the public interest so to do and that the councils of all areas adjoining the area of the council making the appointment agree thereto. It needs only one council to indicate that it is not in accordance with this direction of the Minister and the Minister has no power to approve the appointment of the authorized officers. So, if they want to put a spanner in the works that is a spanner which blocks the whole machinery. I go further; the authorized person shall not issue a permit unless he is satisfied that the applicant could not satisfactorily burn the scrub or newly cleared land on any other day. That is to say, the authorized person—who is a specialist appointed by the council because of his knowledge of scrub clearing and burning-off operations—if satisfied that the scrub is even and dense and could be burned on a day of normal temperature when a fire ban would not be issued would refuse to issue a permit and therefore on that day the fire would not be lit. I think that it is unnecessary to restrict the matter. Although I admit that the difficulties under the clause as drafted occurred mainly in the areas of Kangaroo Island and Eyre Peninsula there are people in other parts of the State who are engaged in clearing land. I refer to Yorke Peninsula and large areas of the district represented by the member for Ridley and I think he will express his views on it. To cut the State up into divisions is bad legislation and is unnecessary and undesirable and I ask the House to oppose it.

Mr. STOTT—I hope members will not accept the amendment. The reasons behind it may be

very desirable from the point of view of taking all absolutely necessary steps to ensure that no fire is lit on a hazardous day, and one can understand the anxiety of the honourable member in view of the hazards in the district in which he lives. To overcome his anxiety he has seen fit to move an amendment that this section shall only apply to Kangaroo Island and that part of the State west of Spencer Gulf. With very great respect I point out that he has left out the most important part of the State which really desires this amendment, and that is the district I represent, Ridley, and part of the area which the honourable member the Minister for Works represents, namely, Pinnaroo. A fortnight ago I travelled from Lameroo to Pinnaroo and from there to Loxton and saw hundreds of acres already rolled down ready for burning. The honourable member's anxieties should not debar councils in other parts of the State from exercising the powers given them under the Act after taking all the necessary precautions. A district council cannot appoint fire control officers without the concurrence of the adjoining council. That is a very necessary safeguard. Even then the Minister has power under this clause not to appoint them if he thinks fit. In answer to the member for Victoria the Minister said something about the method of obtaining permits. Let us assume that the control officer is appointed. The farmer who has scrub to burn would approach the clerk of his council and before he could get his permit it would be necessary for an inspection of the property to be made by the control officer. He would have to do that before he issued a permit. Notwithstanding that any sensible fire control officer would not issue a permit if the conditions did not comply with the rest of the Act, that is, that the required amount of break has been made, and that the applicant has other men to help him. The controller has to make himself acquainted with all those details long before the total fire ban is declared. Having a knowledge of the land that is to be burnt and further ensuring that it complies with the Act, the farmer would say before the total ban was declared, "I may want a permit for this particular area." The day arrives, and proves to be a very hazardous day with very high north wind.

The fire officer may advise the landholder that he will not grant a permit because of the danger. The farmer would accept the ruling. However, a week later, as a result of radio broadcasts, he may know that a total ban on burning might apply, so he immediately communicates with the fire officer and secures a permit in writing, returns to his property and commences his burning. There is no danger in the clause as drafted. If a council does not favour this provision it does not appoint a fire control officer and as a result total bans apply and no permit can be issued in that area. The effectiveness of the legislation is safeguarded and I oppose the amendment.

Mr. SHANNON—I am only concerned with our major bush fire hazard area, which includes the counties of Adelaide, Light, Eyre, Sturt and Hindmarsh. That is where the greatest difficulty is experienced in controlling fires. On a bad day with high temperatures and high wind, fires in the hill scrub country can jump half a mile. I realize that the Minister has tried to safeguard the situation, but I have grave fears of accepting any provisions that may present loopholes and permit fires to be lit on prohibited days. I ask leave to withdraw my amendment.

Leave granted.

Mr. SHANNON—I move—

To insert at the end of clause 3—This section shall not apply to the counties of Adelaide, Light, Eyre, Sturt and Hindmarsh.

This obviously takes in the major portion of the ranges where our greatest fire risk lies.

Mr. LAUCKE—Bearing in mind the fire hazards in part of the area I represent and in view of discussions I have had with prominent fire fighters, I support the amendment.

Mr. HEASLIP—I hope the amendment is rejected. This Bill has been well conceived and properly drafted and at this late hour we should not mess around with it. The member for Onkaparinga has referred particularly to the fire hazard in the Adelaide hills, but I point out that there is as much dangerous country in the Flinders Ranges.

Mr. Shannon—There are not many homes scattered throughout the Flinders Ranges.

Mr. HEASLIP—There are pockets of population. I have sufficient confidence in councils to leave the matter to them. The councils and the authorized appointees are familiar with local conditions and are in a better position than the Minister to determine whether or not a fire should be lit.

Mr. STOTT—I can understand Mr. Shannon's desire to exclude those areas with which he is concerned, but I point out that County Eyre adjoins County Young. If his

amendment applies to County Eyre and not County Young the Minister will have difficulty in persuading the district council to agree to permits being issued in that area.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—Council boundaries do not align with county boundaries.

Mr. STOTT—That is so. My constituents in County Young would want to come within the category of getting a permit to burn their scrub; therefore, there are difficulties in laying down a zoning area. District councils need not appoint a fire officer and then the existing provisions will remain in force. No council in the Counties of Eyre, Light or Adelaide would appoint an authorized person, therefore, as nobody would have the power to issue a permit, all those council districts would come under the ban applied by the Minister. I would support the honourable member in any approach he might make to those councils not to appoint authorized officers, which would achieve the object desired by the honourable member.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I have complete sympathy with the purpose of the member for Onkaparinga (Mr. Shannon), but the more amendments he moves the less support I am able to give him. Prescribing a zone such as the honourable member suggests in his amendment will create other difficulties. For instance, in the range country stretching from Hamley Bridge through Clare to Jamestown there exists a serious fire hazard, and the same applies to the lower Flinders Ranges. If these five counties are exempted, I suppose the assumption is that remaining councils will appoint authorized persons, yet they may refuse to do so. The safeguard lies in the fact that the council would not appoint such officers if their appointment and the granting of permits to burn on days of total prohibition would lead to any fire risk. We should all trust the local authorities in this respect. Further, conditions may alter with changing seasons and what constitutes a fire risk in one district in one year may not constitute a fire risk in the next year. The zoning that will be produced automatically by the wisdom of councils in possession of all the facts is a safer method than that proposed in the amendment, therefore I oppose the amendment.

Mr. HARDING—I, too, oppose the amendment. I lived in the Adelaide hills for many years and was burned out three times. Although I appreciate Mr. Shannon's anxiety, I feel we would be here all night if we tried to enumerate all the danger spots throughout the State and we would be wasting our time.

Amendment negatived; clause passed.

Clause 4 passed.

Clause 5—"Fire control officers."

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I move—

After "other" in paragraph (*b*) to insert the following new subclauses:—

(*b*1) by inserting after the word "not" in line sixteen or subsection (6b) thereof the words "except as herein provided";

(*b*2) by inserting after the word "namely" in line twenty-six of the same subsection thereof the words "such amount or amounts as would have become payable in respect of such person under the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1932-1956, or any amendment thereof, if the accident had arisen out of and in the course of his ordinary employment in respect of which he was at the time of the accident insured by his employer in accordance with the provisions of that Act or where such person was not so insured."

Clause 5 provides that the amount of compensation for which a council must insure fire control officers and those who man appliances under the legislation shall be increased substantially. Although I agree entirely with the proposal that the minimum in the case of death shall be increased from £500 to £1,000 and that the weekly payment shall be increased from £2 to £10 a week, there is still an anomaly which I mentioned in my second reading speech and which my amendment is designed to overcome, namely, that in cases where these volunteers who are appointed as fire controllers, or as members of the crew of a fire appliance, are employees, in the case of their being unfortunate enough to meet with an injury, whether fatal or otherwise, as a result of their participation in quelling a bush fire, common justice demands that the compensation paid to them or their dependants shall be the amount that would have been payable under workmen's compensation legislation had they met with the accident in the course of their ordinary employment. Dependants' benefits in the case of his death are also increased accordingly. Although some slight administrative difficulty may have to be overcome between the insuring council and the insuring company as to how the premium will be fixed, I see no insuperable difficulty in that regard. For instance, I employ a person casually to clear up weeds on my property and I have no difficulty in securing insurance cover for that person for a small premium, and it seems to me the principle that applies in the case of casual labour in ordinary employment could be applied by the companies to the

insurance required to be effected if my amendment were carried.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The Government does not object to the amendment, but I see some difficulties in application of the provision, namely, the arrangement of the basis of the insurance and the computation of the premium. The preamble to this section sets out the responsibility of district councils to effect insurance policies, and it will be necessary for councils to consult their insurance offices and work out the premiums on an actuarial basis.

Although councils will be obliged to pay higher premiums as a result of the amendment I do not think they will object. We circularized councils to ascertain their attitude on additional compensation for their fire control officers and others, and 62 out of 144 councils replied, a large majority being in favour of increasing the compensation, some even to the extent of three times the amount specified in the Act. There is the anomaly that self-employed persons will receive no additional benefit under the amendment, but they will under the Bill. I think the Leader of the Opposition will appreciate that there is no way of assisting these people except by increasing the statutory benefits under section 29 *in toto*, which would place too great a burden on district councils.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 6—"Registration of voluntary fire fighting organizations."

Mr. STOTT—This is a desirable amendment, but I think insurance companies should consider increasing their contributions towards fire fighting organizations, which are doing a wonderful job. Then we may have even more efficient fire fighting organizations, which could save the companies a lot of money. Some farmers have purchased fire fighting units themselves. If a control officer knows a farmer with such a unit he can ask the farmer to go to a fire and the blaze may be brought under control even before the fire fighting organization gets to the spot.

Clause passed. Title passed.

Bill read a third time and passed.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 23. Page 1273.)

Mr. FRANK WALSH (Edwardstown)—This Bill does not involve Party policy, therefore members on this side of the House are free to express their own opinions, and whatever I may say need not necessarily be supported by my colleagues. We must approach the problems of local government while keeping in mind the demand of modern times. I am concerned with the question of urban lands. I do not blame the Housing Trust for having purchased large sections of land, for it purchased the land believing that at some future date it will erect houses on it. In the meantime the trust leases out this land, which may be used as urban farm land, and it is rated accordingly.

When the Act was amended to provide rating for urban farmlands there was an unimproved rating system under which the land was rated at less than £300 an acre on broad acres, but those who are most hostile to this provision were able to purchase land at £1,000 an acre from other primary producers so as to continue in primary production. One area of land will be auctioned about the middle of next month, and a notice board on the property says that some of it will be sold as an industrial site. It may even be leased later by an industrial firm to the people who now offer it for sale. Who is to be the judge of what is urban farmlands? Such problems should not have been allowed to arise when the legislation was before the House.

Clause 2 will ensure that the Adelaide Children's Hospital will not be ratable, but what of the homes run by religious bodies for the benefit of the aged? The inmates pay a portion of their pensions to these institutions for their maintenance, so these institutions are not freed from the payment of council rates. I know that some councils are sympathetic and grant substantial concessions to these homes, but let us see what is happening in my district and in the district of the member for Glenelg, which have a considerable number of schools. The Forbes primary school occupies ten acres of land, and the girls technical school to be erected at Vermont will have about 12 acres. The Ascot Park primary school could occupy 15 acres, the Mitchell Park Boys Technical school 13 acres, the Marion high school 20 acres, Morphettville Park, 10 acres and other schools could cover anything from 10 to 20 acres of land. In addition, we are endeavouring, in this amending clause, to further exempt properties such as the Adelaide Children's Hospital. It is proposed to alter the definition of "ratable property" appearing in section 5

of the principal Act. As it stands the section exempts land used solely for religious or educational purposes (other than lands used for the purpose of any school or academical institution at which fees are charged), or solely used for the purposes of affording gratuitous tuition, assistance, or relief to poor or helpless persons. The proposed amendment allows some latitude in this matter and extends the exemption to institutions at which fees are charged. What was meant when the question of fees charged was introduced? Did it mean that some of the smaller schools should be rated because they charge a small fee—if they can get it from the parents—or did it mean that they should be entirely exempt? It is not the exemption of these properties from rates that concerns me so much as what effect it will have on other ratepayers in the area. That is why I mentioned schools in the Marion area. Because so many institutions are are built in the council area and are exempt from rates, the people living in those areas are forced to pay more rates to make up for the exemptions. I think it follows that the Government will have to provide extra money to the local government authorities in such cases. That also applies to roadmaking, and in that regard I would be pleased to know if there is ever going to be a reply to my question, asked during the Budget debate of the Minister of Minister of Education, as to whether he could find out what was the position referred to in the Auditor-General's report that certain moieties had been paid. Where did they occur? That has apparently become a Treasury matter since I sought the information; we are still waiting for the answers, and I think we should have them.

The new clause before us applies only where some charge is made. I think serious consideration should be given to some relief for those denominational organizations that are attempting to care for the aged and the young who are left destitute and homeless.

Clause 3 provides that where a mayor or chairman is re-elected to his office it shall be unnecessary for him to again take the oaths necessary to act as a justice of the peace and so on. Clause 10 is a fairly important matter if it is intended to build new homes in old-established areas and the system of rating is either under unimproved or rental values. It could mean that a new house could be erected and be valued at an amount out of all proportion to that existing in the particular area. Therefore, this clause could have some bearing. Land values have gone up in recent years and I quote as an example a block of land near where I am living. This land measures 60ft. by 120ft. and it was purchased for £180 in 1942. This block is still lying idle as a building allotment. I know that £1,000 has been offered for it and I believe that another person has been trying to get it for a figure at something like £1,500. I cannot see how the value of land could jump to that figure. If the rental value of this land were the assessment basis the council rates per year would probably not amount to more than £2. The person who could afford to pay £1,500 for this block of land would probably build a rather elaborate house, and if we adopted the unimproved land value method of assessment the rates must automatically increase. There is room for a new approach in these matters.

New clause 11 is introduced to amend section 287 of the principal Act and it refers to revenue which the council may spend. I understand this to mean that the council may spend up to £200 by way of assistance for certain purposes not necessarily specified. Without going into the merits of this matter I understand there will be an amendment on the files to insert a further new provision to this section and I do not propose to speak on those amendments at this stage. Having given very serious consideration to what may be concerned in this amendment, I think it may relate to the establishment of such things as community centres which are being built in many new areas. I believe that the activity displayed in community welfare work generally is more important to the residents than any town hall which is in existence in their area. Every new house which is now built means there is that much less land on which the young peope may play and exercise. At Clovelly Park community effort raised a certain sum of money, but because the council was not able to stand as guarantors for the fund, the project has reached a stalemate. In other areas people have got deeds to property and are denied the assistance that may be given to them. The assistance which will be provided by new clause 11 may help in that direction, but I do not think it goes far enough and when the amendment is before Committee I will have more to say on that.

Clauses 22 and 23 have some merit, and I think they would have more effect on country people than metropolitan people, because there are only isolated areas in the metropolitan

area where a septic tank system operates. We certainly do not have night carts operating in the city. Country people are wondering when their areas will be sewered. Some areas, by law, are defined as septic tank areas. Blackwood and surrounding districts are developing rapidly, and it is time the question of sewering that locality was reconsidered. Some parts of the electoral district of Glenelg are still unsewered, but if an oil refinery is established therein will sewerage be provided for employees of that industry? Clauses 22 and 23 may assist in areas where the soil is unsuitable for septic tanks.

Clause 25 is another approach to the question of unsightly chattels. From time to time councils submit by-laws concerning the subject, but up to the present none has been acceptable to the Subordinate Legislation Committee. This clause is eminently suitable for a Committee debate. Clause 26 is aimed at enabling councils to approach local residents to care for reserves, halls and other property that otherwise would be neglected. Clause 27 is primarily aimed at the clearing of inflammable growth from vacant building allotments. At present councils have authority to give notice to landowners to clear inflammable growth from their properties, but this is designed to enable the clearing of such growth before it reaches the inflammable stage. I am not opposed to increasing the powers of councillors, but councils should exercise such powers. In about 1948, by legislation, we gave councils power to regulate the height of fences, hedges and hoardings erected within 20ft. of an intersection to provide greater visibility for approaching motorists, but what have councils done in this respect? If we pass this clause I doubt whether it will be implemented. If a council gives notice and the ratepayer does not clear the growth will the council supply labour and charge for such clearing? I am not a licensed bookmaker but would be prepared to bet that the work will not be done.

Mr. Hambour—Councils can do the work.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—A council will say that it has not sufficient labour to undertake the work or that it cannot employ casual labourers because it has not sufficient revenue to do so. It is essential that such growth be removed before it dries off. We need only consider the effect it has on industry. Many people are unable to work at times because of the effects of hay fever. On some vacant building blocks in the metropolitan area wild oats are 6ft. high and Salvation Jane 5ft. to 6ft. high. Excuses will always be made as to why the clearing has not been carried out.

Clauses 28, 29 and 30 do not call for much comment but clause 31 relates to the depositing of rubbish on roads. Unfortunately, there are some people who think that because a road is not frequently used it can be used for dumping rubbish. This clause is designed to assist councils in preventing this practice. Too much of this is going on, particularly in the less densely populated areas; yet even within a short distance of the G.P.O. people dump rubbish on side roads. If councils can catch up with those people I will not sympathize with the offenders. Prosecutions have taken place from time to time and I hope this provision will help promote civic pride both in the country and the suburbs.

This Bill is a Committee Bill and will receive detailed attention in the Committee stages. Although I am not permitted at this stage to refer to amendments to clause 33, I wish to refer to postal voting. Both the Commonwealth and State Electoral Acts provide that any elector may make a declaration on behalf of another elector for a postal vote application, but that privilege is particularly limited in respect of local government elections and I believe it should be extended under this legislation. Any ratepayer should be able to witness the signature of another ratepayer for an application for a postal vote, but I do not say who should be the authorized witness to the declaration of the vote itself.

The Government generally introduces similar legislation to this in the dying hours of the session. I understand this House is likely to prorogue some time on Thursday, and I believe Parliament should have a greater opportunity to discuss this legislation because most members have had experience in local government. I do not know how many district council areas are included in some country members' districts. I am fortunate in having only parts of three council districts whereas I used to have parts of four, but I have been concerned in many negotiations with those councils and expect to be concerned in more with regard to the proposed drainage of the south-western districts.

Mr. HAMBOUR (Light)—I do not wish to speak at length on this Bill. Although I do not know who sponsored clause 10, I consider

it may cause councils much trouble because it states:—

The following section is enacted and inserted in the principal Act after section 207a thereof:—

207b. If any appeal is made to the assessment revision committee or the local court on the ground that any ratable property is assessed above its full and fair value and the committee or local court, as the case may be, is satisfied that the ratable property is not assessed above its full and fair value but is satisfied that a substantial number of comparable ratable properties included in the assessment have been assessed at less than their full and fair value, the committee or local court, as the case may be, may decrease the assessed value of the property to which the appeal relates so that its assessed value conforms with the assessed value of the other properties.

In the past the escape for the appeal committee has been the fact that the assessment has been much below the actual value of the property assessed. Most appeals fail unless the council sees some justice in the appeal and varies the assessment. Although I believe the ratepayer should be able to base his appeal on a fellow ratepayer's assessment, I point out that it will be difficult in country areas, particularly in town wards that incorporate both farming and residential properties, to compare a house built on a farm half a mile from a residential area with a house in the town itself. For instance, I know of a house built at a cost of £7,000 that is assessed at only £1,000, whereas not far away a house costing £3,000 is assessed at £2,500.

True, the word "comparable" may provide an escape and the council may say that a house in the town cannot be compared with a house outside the town, but to me a house is a house wherever it is and if it provides convenience and comforts for the residents it is a comparable house. Councils generally consider that houses on farms should be assessed at a lower value than houses in the town and if this clause is passed there will be appeal after appeal and in all justice the council will have to uphold them. At present the council sits as an appeal committee and when the appellant is not satisfied he may appeal to the local court which will give its decision on the basis of the wording of this clause.

On the wording of the clause the court would have to accept the comparison provided the properties were comparable. Many members who have been concerned with local government must have sat on appeal revision committees and they know this will be the case. This clause deals with the whole of a district council area and leaves the scope for appeal much too wide. Parliament would be wise to confine the comparison to a ward where the properties would at least be in close geographical proximity. As it stands, the clause would be a lawyer's picnic and we should not provide them with any ammunition. Later I will move to localize the comparison, but I would prefer to see the clause eliminated. I know of several instances where farmlands and residential areas are included in the one ward. Most of the revenue raised in a ward is generally spent in that ward and if the word "ward" were included in the clause it would enable an extension of that principle. Any anomaly that might be caused could be dealt with by a differential rating in the ward. I support the Bill.

Mr. RICHES (Stuart)—I, too, support the Bill and wish to comment on its introduction. As long as I have been a member it has always been a source of amazement to me that the Government reserves to the dying stages of the session the introduction of a Local Government Bill. Almost without exception we get these measures as late as this, even though they call for much debating. Such legislation gives members an opportunity to introduce amendments that have been asked for by constituent councils, but such amendments are invariably talked out or not even considered because time does not permit. My firm conviction is that insufficient consideration is given to the representations made by local government bodies, nor can sufficient consideration be given to them because the legislation is dealt with so late in the session. I do not blame anyone in particular for that; circumstances are probably difficult to overcome because we have been faced with them so often. Nevertheless, we have this Bill with many clauses, each dealing with different but important subjects, and it lends itself more to discussion in Committee, as previous speakers have said. When explaining the Bill the Minister said that these clauses had been recommended by the Local Government Advisory Committee.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—I said that most of them had.

Mr. RICHES—I accept that, but my point is that many requests have been before the committee for a long time, but clauses meeting those requests have not been included in the Bill. I think that the committee rejects more requests, without giving reasons, than it

accepts, and many councils believe that the committee should be broadened. The Eyre Peninsula Local Government Association, which represents a vast area of South Australia and is an active and efficient organization, has no representation on the committee. It has asked for representation because it could get nowhere with the committee when it made certain suggestions before it.

My third comment about the Bill is in regard to the provision that doubles councils' borrowing powers. This is necessary if local government is to continue in some parts of the State. A competent authority should be set up to investigate local government finances. Every council facing a programme of expansion is in financial difficulties and has had to approach the Government for special financial assistance. This is usually done after councils have given much time and thought to their problems and have prosecuted every other means of financing their undertakings. No new settlement of the past eight or nine years has been able to function solely under the Act. When Whyalla was established as a township special consideration had to be given to the construction of roads, for the people there could not take the full financial responsibility of constructing roads. Townships have been established at Woomera, Leigh Creek and Radium Hill, but none of them could establish services and provide amenities under the Local Government Act. How much of Elizabeth would we have if we said to the people there, "You must provide the roads and footpaths, just as the people of the older towns have done?"

I do not know the answer to this problem, but I do not believe it is beyond solution. If a competent body could provide the answer many councils would be anxious to follow the lead. All people interested in local government are worried about the drift that is taking place in local government finance where development is taking place. By giving councils additional borrowing powers we shall assist them considerably because they will be able to carry out works programmes with loan money instead of from revenue. Councils are told by the experts that all capital expenditure should be met from loan money and that if it is met from revenue there is an indication that the costs of services are too heavy. I support the second reading, but I urge the Government to consider the points I have raised.

Mr. MILLHOUSE (Mitcham)—I am glad that the Government has inserted clause 5, which repeals section 155 (2). This section deals with the searching of council minute books, and the subsection to be repealed limits the time of a search to 30 minutes, which is too short. I have been told that minutes do not always contain the information sought. For instance, they often refer to reports which have been placed before the committee, but the contents of those reports may not have been inserted in the minutes. Provision should be made to allow the reports to be searched in the same way as the minutes if the minutes refer to reports. Then, as much information would be be divulged as if the minutes had been written in full. I support the second reading.

Mr. DAVIS (Port Pirie)—I support the second reading, though I am not satisfied with every clause. For some time there has been a controversy over the Act, and this has placed many people in an invidious position because different interpretations have been placed on certain parts of the Act. I refer particularly to section 214, and I hope that the Government will clarify the position about that section in Committee. During the last 12 months it has been claimed by many people that a differential rate can apply within a ward. I was accused by the Minister of making false statements, and I accused him of not knowing the Act. When he was accused of making two statements about this section he said he had done nothing of the sort, but had tried to get the ex-mayor of Port Pirie out of his difficulties. I emphasize that I was never in difficulties over this section because my interpretation of it was the same as the interpretation the Minister finally accepted.

In the first instance he told the people of Port Pirie that differential rating could apply within a ward; in fact, he almost urged people associated with sporting bodies to bring it into effect, but I argued that there was no power to do that. Quite a number of opinions were sought in connection with this section. The Crown Solicitor said that the Minister was right, but weight of public opinion later caused the Minister to change his mind and he then stated that a council had no power to rate an individual block. If the Government does not clarify this section I am afraid action may be taken against some councils which accepted the Minister's first opinion. Some claim that because the words "a portion" are used in the section, it could apply to an individual block, no matter how small, in a ward. During the last session I attempted to clarify the position by seeking

to amend the Act, but unfortunately the Government did not accept the amendment. I hope it will seriously consider this matter when we get into Committee.

I am in complete agreement with a number of amendments contained in this Bill because they have clarified matters that have caused councils some concern. Clause 24 enables councils to deal with vehicles that have been left in streets. Quite recently a vehicle was left in one of the main streets of Solomontown but the council had no power to remove it. It remained there for several months and eventually it disappeared. It is wrong that people should be permitted to discard an unwanted vehicle in the main street of a municipality. This clause will enable a council to take action against the owner of such vehicle, but if he cannot be found the council can dispose of the vehicle and pay the expenses involved. The balance of money from the sale is to be paid into the Treasury. I would prefer it went to the council.

Clause 26 relates to the appointment of controlling bodies for reserves and such like. In Port Pirie a number of hardworking committees conduct the playgrounds and the beach committee has done a wonderful job for the town. The Auditor-General challenged the council's action in permitting one of these bodies to collect money and spend it. It is in the interests of any town to permit such bodies to operate for the benefit of the community and the clause provides that such bodies can be appointed and that a council has the right to decide the complement of the committee, draw up its rules and determine its period of office. These bodies should be encouraged in every way. The council does not lose any control.

I agree with the provision which increases the penalty for damaging council property. It will assist councils in protecting their property. I will have more to say when the Bill reaches the Committee stages because I want the Government to amend the section I have referred to. The Government should give every possible encouragement and assistance to councils which at the moment are struggling. I support the second reading.

Mr. QUIRKE (Burra)—The only clause with which I am concerned at the moment is clause 10 which will have a tremendous impact on councils in respect of appeals against assessments. The clause reads:—

If any appeal is made to the assessment revision committee or the local court on the ground that any ratable property is assessed above its full and fair value and the committee or local court, as the case may be, is satisfied that the ratable property is not assessed above its full and fair value but is satisfied that a substantial number of comparable ratable properties included in the assessment have been assessed at less than their full and fair value, the committee or local court, as the case may be, may decrease the assessed value of the property to which the appeal relates so that its assessed value conforms with the assessed value of the other properties.

In other words a property that has been assessed at its full and fair value is brought down to the level of those not so assessed.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—They are all placed on the same level.

Mr. QUIRKE—Yes, but a property is being brought down to below its fair value. If the court orders it be reduced to a lower level, can a council then ask the court to lift the properties not assessed at their fair value? The clause hits against councils. As the Act stands at present if the court finds that a property was assessed at its fair value an appeal would fail. Under this provision everybody—except those with the lowest assessments—will appeal and councils will be driven mad as a result.

Mr. Davis—In Port Pirie recently, when a man appealed against his assessment it was increased by £60.

Mr. QUIRKE—I entirely disagree that, in order to get a levelling out, the court's decision must reduce it to the mistakes made in the lowest assessment. How would that be determined? Comparable ratable properties included in the assessment have been included at less than their value. That is not necessarily one value but it could be 50 different properties. What do you do? Do councils strike a mean over the whole of them or do they reduce the properly assessed property to the mean of a dozen others? I would be perfectly happy if anyone could tell me how it is going to work without the local government bodies resigning *en masse* in future. This thing would reduce itself to the assessor running around to see if one place had a tiled bathroom and another didn't. That is what it would amount to and there would be no end to it. I hope that we will not inflict that on those people who give their time and energy in an honorary capacity as councillors on corporations and district councils in the service of the people. This provision will impose an intolerable burden on them and I cannot see anything else to it. I am prepared to listen

to those who can prove me wrong but I do not think it right that this House should pass it.

Mr. COUMBE (Torrens)—I wish to comment briefly at this stage because I will have something more to say in the Committee stage. I regret that the Bill has been brought forward at this late hour in the session when it is rather unfair to expect members to give it the consideration it deserves. This Bill is an extremely important one because it deals with the tertiary form of government which is, after all, decentralization in its ultimate form. It is the form of government that is closest to the people and anything affecting that type of legislation is of extremely vital importance. The majority of the clauses in the Bill have been recommended to the Government by the advisory committee either by the municipal association or the local government association. They deal with the cities and the corporations and the district councils. Some that they have proposed in the past have not been included but I do congratulate the Government on at last bringing the Local Government Bill up for re-consideration. It has been suggested by the organizations for some years but we have not had a comprehensive measure such as we have now. There are some very important clauses in the Bill. I do urge the Government to give some consideration in future to the suggestions put forward by the Municipal Association representing the cities and the corporations and the Local Government Association representing the district councils. After all the proposals are not recommended lightly. They are often the result of long debate and consideration by councillors and aldermen who serve the people in an honorary capacity. They give up a good deal of their valuable time to serve the people and do a magnificent job, seeking no reward. They are very glad to do this, but they do expect that their mature opinions and considerations should receive the consideration they deserve. I want to pay a tribute to the work done throughout the State by these people in an honorary capacity. They form the very basis of local government, and if these men did not perform such a fine job of work this tertiary form of the Government would collapse and we would lose that form of decentralization. These amendments are not brought forward lightly but they are brought forward by men of some standing and calibre. I do plead with the Government to give some consideration to these matters and not to brush them aside lightly. Local government and its responsibilities are increasing year by year. As our population increases so does the responsibility of many of the local government bodies. We get more and more wards springing up in the towns and new councils being formed. Some are formed into cities, with aldermen and other responsibilites. Many of the responsibilities and activities of councils nowadays embrace things not dreamt of years ago. For instance, in the metropolitan area we have cities dealing with traffic control, embracing traffic lights and zebra crossings, and parking meters were introduced early this year. Those things were not dreamt of when many of the provisions in this rather unwieldy Local Government Act were compiled, and there is a new responsibility on local government today, namely traffic responsibility which is assuming major importance in the metropolitan area. The maintenance of adequate and safe traffic control without imposing too many restrictions is of extreme importance. Nothing so stirs the people or undermines their confidence in the members of the council so much as a feeling of restriction of their liberty, or a feeling of being pushed around, and I submit the responsibility of councils is therefore great but the responsibility of this Parliament is greater to ensure that the powers of the Local Government Act are brought up to date without making them too wide and open to abuse. The ratepayers can rectify this to a certain extent through the ballot boxes, but we have to see that adequate power is given to the councils without allowing abuse to creep in. These are a few wide and varied observations on the Bill as a whole. I have purposely not gone into detail but will endeavour to do so in Committee. At this stage I support the Bill.

Bill read a second time.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I move—

That it be an instruction to the Committee of the whole House that it have power to consider new clauses relating to advertisements in streets, remission of rates, the survey of building allotments, the payment of the costs of roadways, and the expenditure of revenue for community centres.

Motion carried.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I move that Standing Orders be so far suspended as to enable me to move an instruction to the Committee without notice.

Motion carried.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I move—

That it be an instruction to the Committee of the whole House that it have power to consider a new clause relating to postal voting.

Motion carried.

Mr. DUNSTAN— I move—

That it be an instruction to the Committee of the Whole House that it have power to consider amendments relating to the erection of drive-in picture theatres.

Motion carried.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—I move—

That it be an instruction to the Committee of the Whole House that it have power to consider a new clause to repeal section 676 of the principal Act.

Motion carried.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 4 passed.

Clause 5—''Inspection of minute books.''

Mr. MILLHOUSE—I move:—

To number the existing clause as subclause (2) and to insert the following subclause (1):—

(1) Subsection (1) of section 155 is amended by adding the following words at the end thereof—

''and where such minutes refer to or adopt the recommendation of any committee of the council, to copies of such recommendation.''

The purpose of my amendment is to allow the search of any report referred to but not incorporated in the minutes. I do not think the matter is contentious.

Mr. DUNSTAN—I support the amendment. Some councils seems to adopt the attitude that some matters coming before them must be kept entirely confidential to council members. I have even known of councils trying to condemn councillors who reveal to their ratepayers the contents of reports made to the council. Information available to councillors on which they are expected to act should be as open to the public as are proceedings in this House and I commend the honourable member for his amendment.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH (Minister of Works)—I judge from the acquiescence of members that the amendment will be accepted. Copies of reports may be incorporated in the minutes if that is desired, and a report on which a resolution is based is properly disclosable, therefore I do not oppose the amendment.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 6 to 9 passed.

Clause 10—''Powers on appeal.''

Mr. HAMBOUR—I move:—

After ''properties'' first appearing to insert ''in the same ward.''

I move this amendment as the lesser of two evils. I am not happy with the clause, but if members think the principle in it should be applied this amendment will at least confine it to a ward. Distances in country districts are vast and a council as a committee of appeal would be vulnerable in 95 per cent of its assessments. The amendment confines any appeal to comparable properties in a ward.

Mr. QUIRKE—I oppose the clause entirely, because it will drive councils mad and help in their final dissolution and destruction. There may be 20 lower assessments than the assessment appealed against, so which is the lower assessment that is referred to? The amendment would at least restrict the evil to one ward, but there will still be plenty of evil consequential on this amendment. It will result in an assessor going through each house with a fine tooth comb and ascertaining the value of fittings in order to assess the fair value of the house. Months could be taken up in appeals, therefore I oppose the clause.

Mr. LOVEDAY—I support the member for Burra (Mr. Quirke) in opposing the clause, which is entirely wrong in principle because it seeks to bring the correctly assessed properties down to the level of those that are not correctly assessed, which must be the reverse of the procedure that should be followed. The clause would merely encourage people to defeat the object of correct assessment and has nothing to justify it. Councils have enough trouble now in defeating people who wish to have their assessment reduced, and this clause merely assists such people.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—A wrong conception has been taken by honourable members who have spoken. The cost of a new property is known and it may be assessed on that. There may have been no assessment on other properties for seven years, yet the new owner is assessed on present-day costs. The council may make an assessment annually, although it is only compelled to make one every seven years. How unfair would it be for the owner of a new house to have his assessment made so much out of proportion with assessments on other comparable properties. The clause merely means that the assessment on the property may be reduced after comparison with comparable ratable properties. The second reading explanation of the Bill stated:—

Clause 10. A ratepayer has a right of appeal against an assessment on the ground that his property is assessed above its full and fair value. He also has a right to appeal against anybody else's assessment on the ground that his property is not properly assessed. It sometimes occurs, particularly in the case of new

properties, that a property is assessed at its full value although the other older properties in the area are assessed at a very much lower level. If a ratepayer of a new property appeals he is faced with the position that his assessment is correct and his appeal must fail and he is therefore under the obligation of appealing against everybody else's assessment. He can do that under the existing provision.

Mr. Riches—Where is the obligation there?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—There is no obligation on the person, but he can do it. Clause 10 provides in such circumstances where the appellant's property itself is properly assessed but the tribunal is satisfied that a substantial number of comparable properties are assessed at less than their full and fair value, the assessment appealed against may be reduced to a value comparable with those of the other properties. Surely that is fair enough. Other properties will not be interfered with. Mr. Quirke was right when he looked at this clause first and thought it was fair, but on second thoughts he deemed otherwise. If this clause is defeated the existing provision will stand—that a ratepayer may appeal against everyone else's assessment.

Mr. Riches—Has that been done?

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I know of one case where it was done. An appellant has to convince the tribunal under this clause that his assessment is out of relation to the assessments on surrounding properties. This provision is better than the existing one, and I hope the Committee will not defeat it. I cannot see that it will involve councils in difficulties. It would be unfair for one person to be singled out and assessed highly because he has built a new house.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I respect the Minister's opinion, but I ask him to refer this clause back to the Parliamentary Draftsman for an interpretation. A ratepayer is entitled to appeal each year, and we could have people appealing against lower comparable assessments. I think there is more in the clause than meets the eye.

Mr. STOTT—I agree with Mr. Hambour that this clause should be reconsidered by the Government. If a man built a new house and was assessed substantially above other comparable properties he would appeal. Mr. Hambour's amendment breaks the provision down, but it does not achieve what he desires. He wants to confine the operation of the clause to assessments in each ward. If a man built a house in a ward and appealed against the assessment, and there were many people in that ward assessed below him, there might be appeals in other wards, too. Mr. Quirke was right when he said that the amendment would give councils a headache.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I was not convinced by the Minister's explanation of how this clause found its way into the Bill. Was it suggested by the Municipal Association, the Local Government Association, or the Advisory Committee, or was it thought up on the spur of the moment to deal with some injustice that had been brought under the Minister's notice? Unless it is shown that a substantial body of local government opinion believes that an escape clause of this nature is necessary I shall vote against it. I like Mr. Hambour's amendment less than I like the clause. Under the amendment there would be even greater argument on the proper interpretation of comparable properties. Who is to determine what are comparable properties? It has been said that a man might build a new house and be given a high assessment, but is it not fair that he should be rated at a fair value until the next assessment comes along, when other properties can be reassessed?

Mr. QUIRKE—Industrial areas do not usually contain houses of a high value, but someone may build a mansion in such an area. Under this clause the assessment of the mansion may be reduced to the assessed value of other properties, but I will not have a bar of that. The Minister's explanation did not help the Committee, and I will vote against the clause.

Amendment negatived; clause negatived.

Clause 11—"Expenditure of revenue."

Mr. FRANK WALSH—I move—

In the first line after "amended" to insert the following paragraph:—

> (*a*) by inserting after paragraph (*f*5) of subsection (1) thereof the following paragraph:—
>
> (*f*6) subscribing for the purpose of assisting with the construction and maintenance of any building and grounds adjacent thereto within the area for use as a community centre:

I propose this amendment firstly, to provide encouragement to those people who are attempting to build community centres and, secondly, to cover situations such as occurred when the Plympton Sub-branch of the R.S.L. converted its clubrooms into a youth club. In the Marion council area an incorporated body is anxious to build a community hall, but the

council is unable to act its guarantor. It endeavoured to secure a loan from another organization and was informed it could obtain finance if it produced the deeds of the property. It increased its capital from £79 to £1,072 with the assistance of the *Advertiser*. In the West Torrens electorate the council owned land which it made over to a committee to develop. The committee was able to obtain a loan but still required additional finance and returned to the council which said, "We no longer have an interest in this land. You have the deeds." The purpose of this amendment is to enable councils to subscribe to the construction and maintenance of centres which can be used by our younger population.

In the Marion council a special rate of ½d. applies to assist community effort and the total amount subscribed annually is divided between the various wards. However, I assume that the Marion council, like the West Torrens council, will not be able to donate any of that rate to the construction of a community hall if it gives the deeds of the property to the incorporated body.

We must do our best to encourage community effort and to foster civic pride, particularly among the young people. In another clause we are giving councils the right to appoint controlling bodies over halls and reserves, and it is fitting that we should enable them to financially support community effort. We must do our utmost to provide adequate facilities for our young people. With the rapid expansion of industry and the development of built-up areas, land which could normally be used as playing areas is disappearing. There are many young people in my electorate. At Forbes school there is an enrolment of 1,600, at Ascot Park 1,200, at the South Road school over 1,000 and at least 900 at Marion high school. We must cater for these children and provide for their entertainment and education in a civic sense. This amendment is designed for that purpose.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—One could have sympathy with the object of this amendment, but members have suggested that every council is stumped for money and requires Government assistance. This amendment suggests that councils have so much money available that they can divert it to community effort. When community effort becomes a burden on a council it ceases to be a community effort. In isolated country areas the community centre may be in the major portion of it and the outlying areas get nothing from it.

Mr. Lawn—You are allowing £200 now.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—Yes we do that.

Mr. Lawn—The council would fix a limit.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—No, there is no limit on this. It is a purpose for which the council could subscribe funds.

Mr. Lawn—There is no obligation.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—No, but there will be very heavy pressure put on councils. If they are all short of funds it must be another burden placed on them. They could reject it and they could be subject to high pressure from boys' clubs and recreational centres of all kinds simply because they call themselves a community centre. I do not think I can elaborate on it any further except to say that it will be casting another liability on councils. Already we have been told they are over-burdened with their present liabilities.

A council should not be subjected to high pressure by groups that want to call themselves the community centre and I ask the Committee not to accept this amendment which will cause a great deal of trouble to a council and which may not in the end perhaps achieve its purpose because the council may or may not grant funds. In some cases they will and in others they will be under high pressure to do so and they will do it out of their funds and finally will have to come to the Government and the Government will have to allocate more funds to keep them financial.

Mr. Riches said he doubted whether any council could carry on today. If we cast more burdens and functions on them I doubt whether they will carry on. I ask members to be sympathetic but not to let their sympathies run away with their judgment.

Mr. FRED WALSH—I support the amendment and feel it fits the Bill admirably. I do not think the Minister was fair in saying that the amendment imposed a burden on councils that they were unable to bear. The provision does not place an obligation on the councils to make funds available for the purposes mentioned in the amendment and I hope the Minister will reconsider his attitude because if a council has not the money it will not subscribe. On the other hand, if councils are sufficiently wealthy, and some, such as Burnside and Glenelg are, they may subscribe.

I appeal to the Minister to reconsider his attitude. As the member for Edwardstown said that there are many organizations formed for the purpose of establishing community

halls, centres and recreation reserves besides other matters associated with the social interests of the people. Councils should be responsible for many of these things. The Minister said if councils became short of funds they would ask the Government for assistance. Councils carry many of the responsibilities of the Government in the matter of finance, particularly on roads and lighting and that applies particularly in the metropolitan area. Certain roads which are deemed to be within councils boundaries are in reality and justice the Government's responsibility.

Local people form themselves into organizations and endeavour to raise money by means of gala days, fetes, gymkhanas and other social functions and they reap the benefits from the funds raised. Although they are not exactly responsible they are the ones ultimately called on to pay, so what harm is done by including the amendment proposed by the member for Edwardstown?

At present councils, because of legal difficulties involved, are unable to contribute although they may desire to do so. I have a special interest in the amendment because I am concerned with the North Glenelg Returned Soldiers League sub-branch and Community Centre. This is an incorporated body which came into existence because of the combined efforts of the Glenelg Council, the Glenelg North Progress Association, the Golflands Progress Association, and the North Glenelg branch of the Returned Soldiers League. As a result of a conference held in August, 1956, each body became represented on the incorporated body and the express purpose of the body is to build a community centre for the benefit of all living in the area. The council made a block of land available in Allison Street which did not cost the council anything because the Housing Trust had originally set it aside as a reserve. That is a policy which the Housing Trust has adopted to make provision for reserves but they let it go at that. They accept no further responsibility for the provision of amenities to make it useful. The Housing Trust which built a great number of houses in the vicinity materially assisted the project by the preparation of plans and specifications approved by the Glenelg Council. To assist in financing the project the council agreed to transfer the title of the land to the incorporated body, and in consequence the board of management arranged for a loan from the Savings Bank of South Australia. Whilst this body holds the title the council's interests have been protected by certain provisions in their constitution that cannot be altered without the consent of the council. For example, the board of management cannot sell or mortgage its property without the council's consent, and in the event of dissolution, the property would revert to the council. The lowest tender to build the centre was £8,014, and the Housing Trust recommended its acceptance. Furnishings could cost up to £1,000, making the total cost of the centre about £9,000. The board of management felt that it could raise £2,000 within the near future which, with the £5,000 from the bank, left it £2,000 short of the objective.

The board of management approached the Glenelg Council asking it for a grant of £2,000, spread over four years, towards the project. This proposition meant that the community would pay seven-ninths of the cost and the council two-ninths. The board felt confident that no council could expect a better proposition than that, bearing in mind the fact that it is really the council's responsibility to provide the facilities. The board received a letter from the town clerk explaining that the provisions of the Local Government Act prevented the council from granting the request. This letter from the town clerk stated:—

Further to my communication of 12th ultimo, I am to say that the council has given this matter long and serious consideration, and the majority of the members are sympathetic and favourable towards your project. However, they have been advised by the council's solicitors that it would be contrary to the Local Government Act to either give or loan the sum of money suggested, and therefore regret that your request must be refused.

A copy of the solicitor's opinion was forwarded. According to the men associated with the organization there has never been any doubt as to the need for the community centre, it being generally accepted that such a building is needed to provide for the public and especially the youth population. In the area from Anzac Highway to the beach, right up to Camden and over to the airport, there is not one public hall in which a meeting can be held. There are one or two small halls belonging to lodges and churches, but they are not generally let for public purposes. In the small area north of Anzac Highway there are over 1,000 children attending primary schools. If ever a place requires a community hall it is this particular area, but it is impossible for the board to construct a building unless it receives some assistance in the not far distant

future from the council, so it is proposed that the council, if it so desires, could lend the money. I do not know what arrangements could be made in that regard, but because of the legal difficulties some provision should be made for this in the Act, not only for this project, but for many others.

My district encroaches on the boundaries of four different council areas, and I know there are other centres in addition to the one I have mentioned where similar projects could be brought forward. Probably the same position applies in many other districts, particularly where they are associated with the Returned Soldiers League, with which I am connected. The league desires not only to assist its own members, but also to further the interests of the community in which it sets up sub-branches, hence it has joined with the board of management to form the community centre at North Glenelg. This Committee will be doing no harm in passing this amendment, but will be doing some good in assisting these people by providing very necessary amenities, and leaving it to the council to determine, in accordance with the finances at its disposal, whether it makes any grant or not. Although an amount of £200 is mentioned in another part of the clause, I ask members to consider only this aspect of the amendment. I hope the Committee will view the whole matter in the way I have suggested, and will adopt the amendment.

The Hon. Sir MALCOLM McINTOSH—I know of no council that has asked for this, and I again repeat that it would be a burden on councils. They would have to stand up to high pressure from certain groups trying to establish a claim, and before the year was over they would find that a good deal of their rates were appropriated for purposes other than those intended by the Act. For these reasons I ask the Committee to reject the amendment, although the honourable member has made out quite a strong case for one locality. However, in other localities funds have been raised voluntarily and the people are proud of that fact. This amendment asks ratepayers to provide money, and thereby go without roads, to give something that should be the result of community effort. This is casting another difficulty on councils already overburdened with their responsibilities.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I hope the Committee will not be guided by the Minister's concern for the peace of mind of councils and for the preservation of their financial solvency. Under the Act councils have very great powers to spend money for a number of things, but frequently those powers are not exercised because they in their wisdom believe such expenditure is not necessary. Paragraph (*f*) of section 287 (1) provides that councils may spend money subscribing for the purpose of acquisition or maintenance of, or for the provision of equipment for, any place within the area set apart for public recreation, any public hospital, any public asylum, any charitable institution, any charitable society, or any institute, so they can now spend money for certain types of places used for public recreation. The amendment provides that to those powers shall be added the right of councils to spend money to establish community centres. The Minister said that many communities had by their own efforts raised the money to establish such centres, but after all these community efforts have usually been made by the ratepayers of the locality.

Peterborough has a fine town hall, but unfortunately, the revenue derived from it has been insufficient to pay for its proper maintenance and now, after very little having been spent on its maintenance over the past 30 years, it has been found necessary to renew the roof and effect certain improvements. To this end the town council had to strike a special rate of 3d. in the pound and, so far as I know, no ratepayer opposed that special rate because all ratepayers realized the value of a town hall and were prepared to subscribe to its maintenance.

This amendment imposes no obligation on councils; it is left to their wisdom to decide whether they will subscribe to community centres. I am prepared to trust the councils for I believe that no council will spend money on a community centre that should be spent on roads, footpaths or other urgent public needs of the community. On the other hand, I see the great value of these community halls and the spur to a community effort that would be derived from a subscription by a council for such a purpose. Local government, under a true form of decentralization, should be able to accept the right to contribute to the welfare of the community and the stabilization of its youth by establishing such centres. Only in such a way can we prevent the necessity of spending more on our police force to look after the youth of the community who have no halls in which to meet as youth clubs.

Mr. KING—What is a community centre within the meaning of this amendment? The

term may cover a wide variety of organizations. I think Mr. Frank Walsh had in mind youth clubs and places where people can meet for community purposes, but the Local Government Act deals with the spending of public moneys for public purposes. Unless the term "community centre" is properly defined it may turn out to be a sectional establishment or a hotel. A community centre could be whipped up overnight, yet local government is to be asked to subsidize the erection of the buildings on somebody else's property, which in turn will have the effect of adding to capital values. Further, in such a case the council would have no right to reclaim the property or the money, and that is not a good principle.

Section 380 of the Act provides that a council may acquire property for public purposes and if the sponsors of this amendment are genuine they may be happy to do as we did on the River: knowing that these community centres have a habit of dying out and becoming a burden on the community, we vested the title of the property in the district council. In such cases the property reverts to the council in the event of the organization folding up. Further, the council, as the landlord, has an interest in maintaining the property. In this way, the Returned Servicemen's League at Berri has its property on council land. It has a lease of the property and the responsibility to look after it.

As the amendment does not define "community centre" the whole thing would be capable of being abused if a property fell into wrong hands. Although I believe the feeling behind the amendment is genuine, I point out the practical difficulties that might arise if it were passed in its present form.

Mr. O'Halloran said that if the property is vested in the council, the council can maintain it. If a community centre is to be established it should be vested in the council in the first instance.

Mr. QUIRKE—The question arises as to what is a community centre. It could be a swimming pool, a hall and all kinds of things. In the country someone might have the idea of setting up a community centre and consider there is a chance to get the money from the council so that it can be started. If that were done in one place, how could it be refused at others? For instance, at Clare about 1928 or earlier someone got the idea that it was necessary to have a new town hall, which would cost many thousands of pounds. With debentures from citizens, the money was raised, but debenture holders have a habit of dying, and in this instance some of them died and to save the project the corporation had to take up all the debentures and get a loan from the Savings Bank. The hall has now become the responsibility of ratepayers. A similar position could apply to other projects. Provision has to be made for maintenance and such things; there is no end to it. A rather dangerous principle is involved, and therefore I cannot support the amendment.

Mr. STOTT—If the amendment were carried it would cause much embarrassment to the Loxton Council, which covers a huge area, including among other places Kingston, which is a long way from Loxton, Taldra, and Taplin. All may want a community amenity of some type. If one started a community centre, other towns would demand the same treatment. Recently the Loxton Council decided that a new town hall was required, but before it could impose a special rate for this purpose ratepayers had to be approached. A visit was made to one town and the ratepayers who were called together said they would not agree to an increased rate to provide a hall for Loxton, as they wanted an institute. I shall have to oppose the amendment.

Mr. DUNSTAN—There is need to have community centres built which would include a library. Although we have the Libraries (Subsidies) Act, under which the Government may provide subsidies to councils for libraries, I see nothing in the clause which allows a council to spend money to provide them. A council may provide money for an institute.

The Hon. Sir Malcolm McIntosh—The provision would permit a council to make a donation.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Yes, but under the Libraries (Subsidies) Act a council has to provide the library and maintain it, but where is the power to do that? The Libraries (Subsidies) Act does not give that power. The general provision for the spending of £200 a year for similar purposes is not sufficient to provide a library.

Mr. HARDING—In the outlying districts of my electorate we have many small centres, such as Padthaway, Keppoch, Lochaber, Bool Lagoon, Joanna, Kybybolite, Francis, and Hynam. In the last five years or so they have

established community halls, ovals and sporting grounds. The people there have a real community spirit that could not be developed by Government assistance alone. It would be wrong to place councils in the invidious position of having to decide what amounts they should allocate for various places, and I oppose the amendment.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Parliament has previously amended the Act to give councils the power to subscribe to what have become known as community hospitals. Some members have complained about the definition of "community centre." I have referred to the difficulties of some people who want to establish a building for community purposes. If they had the title deeds to the property they could go to the Superannuation Board to get sufficient money to erect a building, but at present the council has not the power to ask ratepayers to subscribe to the community centre by asking them to pay a little more in rates. I have no objection to requiring the people who want to erect this building to form an incorporated body, but they have my sympathy because they are trying to do a good job in the interests of the community generally. The Government has not given my amendment the consideration it deserves. I have not suggested that councils will be compelled to subscribe ratepayers' money towards community centres.

The Committee divided on the amendment:—

Ayes (15).—Messrs. Bywaters, John Clark, Davis, Dunstan, Hughes, Hutchens, Jennings, Lawn, Loveday, O'Halloran, Riches, Stephens, Tapping, Frank Walsh (teller), and Fred Walsh.

Noes (20).—Messrs. Bockelberg, Brookman, Geoffrey Clarke, Coumbe, Fletcher, Goldney, Hambour, Heaslip, Hincks, Jenkins, King, Laucke, Sir Malcolm McIntosh (teller), Messrs. Millhouse, Pattinson, Pearson, Sir Thomas Playford, Messrs. Quirke, Shannon, and Stott.

Pairs.—Ayes—Mr. Corcoran. Noes—Mr. Harding.

Majority of 5 for the Noes.

Amendment thus negatived.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

VOLUNTEER FIRE FIGHTERS' FUND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 11.36 p.m. the House adjourned until Wednesday, October 30, at 2 p.m.