

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Thursday, September 17, 1959.

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

QUESTIONS.**PREMIER'S TERM OF OFFICE.**

Mr. DUNNAGE—Some press and radio publicity has been given this week to the record length of service of the honourable the Premier. From the Parliamentary records under your control, Mr. Speaker, could you inform the House authoritatively as to the nature of this record?

The SPEAKER—Constitutional authorities agree that it was under the reign of the first two Hanoverians, George I and George II, that the first prototype of the modern Prime Minister or Premier emerged in the person of Sir Robert Walpole. Walpole virtually created the office of Prime Minister and made possible the evolution of the modern system of Ministerial responsibility. Walpole was Prime Minister of England from April 3, 1721 to February 11, 1742. On his resignation from the office of Prime Minister in 1742 Walpole was created Earl of Orford. Walpole's length of service as head of the Government of one country continuously for a period of 7,620 days remained a record for the British Commonwealth of Nations until surpassed yesterday by the Treasurer, who has held office as Premier of this State continuously from November 5, 1938—a period of 7,622 days or nearly 21 years.

I should also like to show the Premier's service in local perspective. Our Parliamentary records disclose that the longest period of continuous service as head of the Government of this State, prior to the advent of the present Premier, was the term of the Right Hon. Charles Cameron Kingston, Q.C., son of the first Speaker of the House of Assembly, the Hon. Sir George Strickland Kingston. C. C. Kingston was Premier of South Australia from June 16, 1893 to December 1, 1899, a period of 6 years 186 days, and it is of interest to note that during part of that time the Treasurer in his Cabinet was the Hon. Thomas Playford, grandfather of our present Premier. The previous Premier of South Australia with the longest—although not continuous—service as head of the State Government was the Hon. Sir Richard Butler, whose two terms as Premier totalled eight years, 210 days. The Chair conveys its felicitations to the honourable the

Premier in the achievement of a record unique in the annals of the British Commonwealth of Nations.

Mr. STOTT—Sir Godfrey Huggins completed 20 years as Prime Minister of Southern Rhodesia on September 6, 1953. He was created a Viscount in 1955 and became Lord Malvern. On October 31, 1956, he announced his resignation as Prime Minister of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, but retained his seat in the Federal Assembly, thereby creating 23 years' unbroken office, firstly in the State of Southern Rhodesia from 1933 to 1953, and then in the Federation for three years. In your capacity of Chairman of the Joint House Committee, Sir, will you place the Hon. Sir Thomas Playford's record before that committee with a view to having something placed in the dining room to commemorate his outstanding service and as a recognition to this Parliament?

The SPEAKER—I will convey the honourable member's wish to the Joint House Committee for consideration.

SOUTH-EASTERN PRIMARY SCHOOL SITES.

Mr. HARDING—Some weeks ago I drew the attention of the Education Department to the existence of land for sale at Kalangadoo, which land I considered would be the most suitable site for a school. Can the Minister of Education state whether a valuation has been made of this site and of a site at Naracoorte South with a view to erecting primary schools there soon?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—An officer of the Architect-in-Chief's department is at present in the South-East inspecting the property at Kalangadoo to report on its suitability for the requirements of the Education Department. If the report is favourable, the matter will then be forwarded to the Land Board for valuation. As to the primary school at Naracoorte South, Cabinet approval has been given for an offer to be made for a site. The offer, which was communicated to the owner of the property concerned, was based on the Land Board's valuation. A counter-offer has now been received from the owner and is at present being considered.

FIRE PROTECTION IN OSBORNE-TAPEROO AREA.

Mr. TAPPING—On August 4 I asked the Premier a question regarding fire protection for the Osborne-Taperoo area and he promised to bring down a report. Has he received that report?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have a report for the honourable member, which I will make available in a few moments.

ABORIGINAL SCHOOL CHILDREN AT COOBER PEDY.

Mr. LOVEDAY—Has the Minister of Education a reply to a question I asked recently regarding the qualifications for aboriginal children who might attend school at Coober Pedy?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I discussed the honourable member's question yesterday with the Director of Education who again emphasized the extremely difficult educational and adjustment problems that might face some aboriginal children who perhaps are tribalized or semi-tribalized if they were to come to the proposed school at Coober Pedy without any knowledge of the English language. It is a real problem which we will endeavour to overcome. Fortunately, the Assistant Superintendent of Primary Schools, who is, in effect, the superintendent of rural schools, will be visiting Coober Pedy next Monday and Tuesday with the Protector of Aborigines, where he will investigate the whole problem and be in a better position to advise the Director and me when he returns.

ASSEMBLY CHAMBER LIGHTING.

Mr. HALL—A song commencing with the words "In a Cavern in a Canyon" reminds me somewhat of this Assembly Chamber. I am not the only member who regards the illumination here as far from sufficient and I think we are entitled to as much light on the subjects we deal with as one would get in an ordinary typing room or in the upstairs offices in this building. The lighting here is inclined to make us take an even dimmer view of the members opposite than is necessary. In this State the Electricity Trust has officers expert on the question of illumination. Will the Minister of Works arrange for such officers to measure the quantity of light falling on our desks and then, perhaps, accept their recommendation that we increase the degree of illumination until it reaches their standards?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—This is a matter with some history, even in my short term as Minister of Works, and last year it was the subject of some discussion which arose at the instigation of the member for Burra. During the recess we made an effort to improve the Chamber lighting—I think with much success. Until yesterday I was not aware that any member was feeling any disability

because of the lighting. I shall be happy to get experts down to measure the lighting, but I point out that experts spent much time measuring the lighting prior to the change-over to the indirect lighting we now have and subsequent to its installation. The light tests showed that the intensity of illumination was greater than it was prior to the installation of the new lights, and I think it will be generally agreed that the quality of the lighting is very much better. I have extremely capable officers in the Architect-in-Chief's Department—and, in fact, they were responsible for the installation of the present lighting—and in case there has been a falling off in efficiency of the lighting since it was installed I will ask Mr. Doig to send officers here to measure the light intensity to ascertain what it now shows.

TRANSPORT OF MAIL BY AIR.

Mr. RALSTON—This year the Federal Budget provides for an increase of postage rates, to operate from October, from 4d. to 5d. a letter—an increase of 25 per cent on current rates. In an attempt to justify this substantial increase it was announced that in future all letters would be carried by air where such a service was available. Has the Premier considered the effect this Commonwealth policy will have on State railway revenue and, if so, can he indicate what decision has been reached on this issue?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will get a report from the Railways Commissioner on the financial effect on the railways and let the honourable member have it next week.

HOTEL LICENCE FEES.

Mr. HEASLIP—In reply to a question by the member for Burra (Mr. Quirke) yesterday regarding hotel licence fees the Treasurer said:—

The Government will closely examine the honourable member's remarks and will submit the matter to the L.V.A. to see whether it desires any alteration in the present system.

During the Address in Reply debate I advocated that the licence fees should be on a more equitable basis and have relation to the trade of a hotel whereby the hotel with the big trade paid a bigger licence fee than the country hotelkeeper who did not sell much liquor but whose establishment was a vital part of a small town. I suggested that the fee be based on a percentage of the liquor sold. Rather than going to the L.V.A.—which I feel sure will not want the fees altered, because the maximum

fee at present is £450 irrespective of the quantity of liquor sold—will the Treasurer investigate introducing new legislation to fix licence fees on the basis of the quantity of liquor sold?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I prefer not to answer the question today because it involves taxation policy and should not be answered on the spur of the moment. Incidentally, I think that even in the event of the Government considering some alteration of policy it would be necessary to consult the L.V.A. about it, because obviously it has a much better knowledge of its industry than we could have. I have submitted this matter to the L.V.A. and I have a letter of acknowledgment stating that my communication will receive consideration as soon as possible, so I would prefer to leave this matter in abeyance until I have had some further communication from the L.V.A. about it. The *Hansard* report was submitted to the L.V.A. together with a letter from one of the northern district council associations setting out the special anomalies that were complained of. I will advise the honourable member later what action, if any, the Government will take.

BOTTLES ON ROADS.

Mr. CORCORAN—On many occasions questions have been asked about the menace of broken bottles on roadways and I have received a letter from the South-Eastern Local Government Association, as have the members for Victoria and Mount Gambier, Messrs. Harding and Ralston, and the Legislative Council members for the Southern district. Since this matter was last considered new members have entered this Chamber and they may be able to do something about solving the problem. The letter, addressed to me, is as follows:—

Following unsuccessful endeavours over a considerable period by this association in an attempt to deal with the problem of bottles left lying on roads and consequent danger to the public from broken glass, I am instructed to communicate with the south-eastern members of Parliament to request that they submit for legislation the compulsory imposition of a deposit system on bottles to discourage this practice.

That letter is signed by the secretary of the association. The letter does not suggest any amount as a deposit. Almost every avenue has been explored in this problem, but the new members may be able to help us in our efforts and some of the old members may have new ideas for tackling the problem. Will the Minister of Works take the matter up with the

Minister of Local Government with a view to giving effect to the request made in this letter?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I will refer the question again to my colleague. This matter has been considered at length in the past. It is correct to say, I think, that there are very much drier places in South Australia than the South East, and in consequence the problem is perhaps greater in some other parts than it is in the honourable member's district. Time brings new angles on these problems, and I will accede to the honourable member's request and refer the matter to my colleague to see whether any new thought has occurred and there is any possibility of solving this problem.

TRANSPORT OF PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED CHILDREN.

Mrs. STEELE—For some considerable time negotiations have been proceeding with a view to providing transport for physically handicapped children attending special centres in the metropolitan area. This is a matter in which I am particularly interested. Will the Minister of Education ascertain what progress is being made and when it is expected that this scheme will operate?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—This is a subject in which several members, including the Leader of the Opposition and the honourable member, are vitally interested. They have been seeking information from me and I, in turn, have been seeking information from a special committee, but that committee has encountered difficult problems because of the variety of the individual problems of the various children and their parents. I had hoped that the committee would have placed me in a position to introduce the system during the last term of this school year, but its final report has not yet reached me and I cannot do anything until I receive that report. It now appears that the scheme cannot operate until the beginning of the next school year. However, as soon as I have information to communicate to the House and the public I will do so in order that the necessary arrangements can be made in ample time.

NEW MARRYATVILLE INFANT SCHOOL.

Mr. DUNSTAN—Has the Minister of Education a reply to the question I recently asked the Premier concerning the Marryatville Infant School?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Yes, the proposed new infant school at Marryatville will be erected on the site in Kensington with a frontage to Shipster's Road, Regent Street and Dankel Avenue.

BARLEY SHIPMENTS.

Mr. SHANNON—A tragedy faces the State in the almost certain very large losses of sheep that will result in this abnormally dry year, and conditions will worsen without some great fall of rain occurring now to revive our pastures. It has come to my knowledge that the Barley Board has made forward sales of barley for shipment in January and February 1960. I understand from well informed sources that it would be possible to repurchase some of those shipments from purchasers, some of whom, I believe, are more or less gambling on the overseas market for barley and would be willing to take a reasonable margin of profit on the sale of the barley here. I am again informed that most of the sales range between 8s. and 9s. a bushel, which puts it well within the farmers' reach from the point of view of supplementary feed for stock compared with purchasing wheat from one of the other States if it were procurable. Will the Government itself consider entering the field and repurchasing some of this barley, which at the moment has been committed to go to overseas buyers, and thus make available a considerable amount of barley for the supplementary feeding of stock? Such an action could mean increased wealth to this State next year.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Cabinet has considered this matter. True, the Barley Board has made forward sales and delivery of some barley will probably not take place for a considerable time. The Government has been informed that for the payment of £100,000 it can secure one shipment of barley and retain it in South Australia. If people desire to purchase barley and are prepared to take the financial responsibility, the Government will enter into negotiations with the Barley Board in the matter. The Government has not £100,000 to buy barley which may or may not be wanted or which will be used as a convenience. People who desire it should come forward and tell the Government their requirements. The Government will then do its utmost to get the best deal possible for those people and see that their requirements are met to the greatest possible extent.

Mr. Shannon—Would the £100,000 be the price required?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—That was the suggested price that would be required to retain a cargo here. It may be that when negotiations take place we will be able to do something better than that, but we want to act on behalf of somebody, otherwise the Govern-

ment has no brief at all in this matter. If any firm or company or person desires to have barley retained here and is prepared to enter into a commitment to purchase it, the Government will do its utmost to arrange with the board to cancel some contracts so that supplies may be retained.

UMEEWARRA MISSION.

Mr. RICHES—I was interested in the reply the Minister of Education gave to Mr. Loveday today and his statement that possibly the Assistant Superintendent of Primary Education and the Protector of Aborigines would visit northern districts next week. Can he say whether, in the course of that visit, they will be able to call at the Umeewarra Mission and have discussions on the policy to be adopted by both departments in relation to improvements to buildings, accommodation and the teaching of Mission children?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I do not know the proposed itinerary, but these officers will be at Coober Pedy on Monday and Tuesday. I cannot commit the Protector of Aborigines, but I know that Mr. Whitburn will be interested and pleased to visit the mission if it is possible to do so. I will inquire either late this afternoon or tomorrow morning to see whether it can be done, without making a definite commitment.

CEMENT ROADS.

Mr. LAUCKE—Has the Minister of Works a reply to the question I asked recently about a greater quantity of cement being used in the future construction of roads?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The Minister of Roads has supplied information from the Commissioner of Highways on the relative costs of bituminous and cement concrete construction of roads. The report is as follows:—

Estimates recently prepared gave comparative costs for heavy duty pavements as bituminous construction £16,500 per mile, and cement concrete £28,000 per mile. With lighter pavements in rural areas, the percentage difference in cost would generally be greater. These costs are purely comparative—many factors vary both prices.

I should intimate that the Commissioner underlined "comparative" and added "many factors vary both prices." There are wide variations in these factors and, therefore, wide variations in prices. This information is supplied as a comparison of costs for heavy duty pavements.

OVERLOADING OF ROAD VEHICLES.

Mr. QUIRKE—Has the Premier a reply to the question I asked on August 19 regarding falling aggregate from trucks carting material on main roads and the hazardous conditions that ensue when it is shed on to the roads in front of oncoming motor cars?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The Commissioner of Police has forwarded the following reply:—

The fitting of boards to the sides and rear of trucks will not obviate the danger, as carters are then tempted to load to the top of the boards and, in addition to spilling metal, are overweight on their trucks. Instructions have been issued for traffic police to pay attention to these offences, as far as it is practicable. It must be realized, however, that in order to obtain a conviction it is necessary for the police officer to actually see the metal fall from the truck and it is virtually impossible to provide sufficient police to follow every truck, even for short distances.

I assure the honourable member that the Commissioner has given his officers instructions to see whether this nuisance can be obviated.

NEW BUILDING METHOD.

Mr. CUMBE—Is the Minister of Works aware that it was recently announced that a new hotel of about eight stories would be built at Brougham Place in my electorate and that construction would be by the jack-up lift floor method? One floor is built and jacked up in position and then another floor is built and jacked up underneath until the proper height of the building is reached. Will the Minister refer this construction method to the Architect-in-Chief's Department to see whether it is of value to Government departments, especially as the design work is now being done on the 13-storied Teachers' College building on Kintore Avenue?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The method of construction has not escaped the notice of the department or myself and we have discussed it. We are not sure at this stage whether the method saves cost or time, or both. I appreciate the honourable member's suggestion and I will take an early opportunity to discuss it further with the Principal Architect to see whether it offers any advantage in the building the honourable member referred to, and other buildings that may be erected.

PORT PIRIE SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

Mr. McKEE—Has the Treasurer obtained a reply to the question I asked recently regarding high school accommodation at Port Pirie?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The Minister of Education has forwarded the following report:—

(a) A site of 20 acres has been acquired at Port Pirie for the erection of a separate secondary school, to be called the Port Pirie Technical High School. The building of this school will be recommended for inclusion in the next Loan programme, namely the one for 1960-61.

(b) On the completion of the two new wooden classrooms which have already been asked for and approved, all secondary students attending the Port Pirie High School in 1960 will be satisfactorily accommodated. Provision is also being made for the erection of additional science laboratory accommodation.

(c) Negotiations for the acquisition of additional land immediately adjoining the high school grounds are proceeding. In addition an investigation is being made to ascertain what, if any, permanent additions are likely to be required at this school.

SCHOOL TRANSPORT RATES.

Mr. KING—My question arises out of a deputation that waited on the Minister of Education last Monday from the Upper Murray school transport operators. During 1956 a committee of inquiry investigated the costs and conditions under which private contractors provide school bus transport. The committee issued a comprehensive report in that year, and it included schedules of standards and maximum mileage rates based on 1956 costs, which were related to types of vehicle, passenger capacity, daily mileage, number of buses used, etc. These mileage rates are still used as a guide by the Education Department's school bus transport advisory committee when the rates for individual contractors are reviewed. The basic wage in the fruit industry has risen from £12 9s. in June, 1956 to £14 4s. in June, 1959, an increase of £1 15s. a week, and long service leave benefits have also been granted to employees. There have been other changes too, which have affected the cost structure of operators. I refer to registration and insurance. As most of these men are owner-operators who should be entitled to share in the general prosperity, as indicated by various indices, will the Minister of Education consider having reviewed the basis on which mileage rates were established, in the light of the changes in costs and living standards, which have altered since the present mileage rates were laid down?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I am prepared to have the rates re-investigated without promising they will be increased. I take the opportunity to point out that the transport branch of the Education Department is an

extremely large undertaking in itself and controls 450 school bus services, of which 340 are operated by contractors and 110 are departmental vehicles. Over 16,000 country children are transported a distance of 22,500 miles to and from school daily. The cost of the service for the calendar year 1958 was nearly £370,000, and it is expected that for this calendar year it will exceed £400,000. If it is to be materially increased, that increase must come out of the pool for education generally whereas, as the honourable member pointed out, these maximum rates were recommended by an advisory committee independent of the Education Department and, following its recommendations, I set up a transport advisory committee within the department consisting of the Deputy Director of Education, the Secretary of the Education Department, and the Accountant, with the Transport Officer as the executive officer to the committee. That committee has worked on the basis of the maximum contract rates recommended.

Mr. Stott—When was that recommendation made?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—At the end of 1956 but, since these maximum rates were fixed and the Transport Advisory Committee was set up by me, I have received comparatively few complaints from operators considering the many contracts I approve each year. "Few" is a relative term, but they are few in comparison with the widespread complaints and protests that I encountered before the new contract rates were adopted. The complaints go to the committee and are ironed out by it. Mr. Harris, Transport Officer, does an excellent job when he visits country school committees and operators in person, and he is able to get a proper appreciation of their problems.

Mr. Stott—He says "No" in a diplomatic way.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—Very often he says "Yes." He is a fair man but also able and shrewd, and it is not easy for him to say "Yes" unless convinced that it is desirable to do so.

Mr. Corcoran—My experience with him leads me to support those sentiments.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I thank the honourable member for that encouraging interjection because I feel that a general feeling of admiration for Mr. Harris is shared by practically all country members who have had experience of him. On the other hand, of course, inequalities arise from time to time and it

may well be that the scale is now out-of-date. As I promised earlier, I shall be only too pleased to set the machinery in motion to have the whole matter re-investigated.

ENTRANCE STANDARD FOR PUBLIC SERVICE.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—During the debate on the Loan Estimates I asked the Treasurer whether the Intermediate Certificate was still recognized as the measuring rod for entry into the Public Service or whether a higher certificate was necessary for clerical work. Has he a reply?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have obtained the following report from the Public Service Commissioner:—

(1) The minimum qualification for admission to the Clerical Section of the Public Service is prescribed by Regulation as the Intermediate Certificate. We prefer boys with the Leaving Certificate for clerical positions if possible, and as compensation for the extra year at school, a boy with the Leaving Certificate receives a salary one step higher to start than a boy with the Intermediate. Also in terms of the classification structure a clerical officer cannot proceed beyond a salary of £1,195 per annum unless he holds the Leaving Certificate or some alternative qualification.

(2) For appointment as a Junior Draftsman the Leaving Certificate of the University Public Examinations Board is required.

(3) Certificates granted by the Education Department technical schools are not recognized at present as equivalent to the Public Service Board certificates.

UNLEY HIGH SCHOOL PRINCIPAL.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Some months ago the then Principal of the Unley High School, Mr. McPherson, was appointed an inspector in the Education Department. Since then that school has been without a principal, and this is causing perturbation amongst parents on the council and, not least, to the acting Principal of the school. Can the Minister of Education say when this most important vacancy is likely to be filled or, if he cannot, will he be willing to meet a deputation from the school committee to discuss the matter?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—In reply to the doubleheaded question of the honourable member, firstly I am not yet in a position to say when this vacancy will be filled. I am at present discussing the matter with the Director and Deputy Director of Education and the Superintendent of High Schools, but I shall be only too pleased to receive a deputation from the high school council at any suitable time—the sooner the better, because filling this very important post is a difficult problem as it will

set a precedent for what we will be doing for the rest of the year and next year. Members will remember that during the last couple of years several members of Parliament, members of high school councils, school committees and other parents' bodies have complained and protested to me in the public press and elsewhere against the transfer of heads of schools, particularly secondary schools, during the year, and particularly during the second half of the year.

Mr. Millhouse—That is just what has happened at Unley High School.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—It has not happened yet, because no new head has been appointed. A year or so ago I promised in the House that I would have the whole matter investigated when the Director of Education returned from his tour abroad. We have had it investigated, because there was a whole chain of changes, including one to and from the Unley High School and, if I remember correctly, the members of the Unley High School council were then protesting against the changes. My personal view is that we should endeavour to reduce these transfers, particularly in secondary schools, and in the second part of the year, to an absolute minimum. That is why I have not made any decision on the Unley High School, other than to say that a very excellent gentleman has been selected to fill the position and it is only a question of when he will take up his duties.

PLYMPTON HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Has the Premier a reply to a question I asked recently concerning the purchase of portion of the Birkalla Reserve from the polo club for the construction of the new Plympton high school?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The report on this matter states:—

In brief, the position now is that the notice to treat was served on the owner of the property as well as on the intending purchaser and in view of the difficulty of both parties in formulating precise claims at present, approval has now been given to give notice of intention to take possession of the land. This notice is to be given immediately. In the meantime, the necessary survey of the land has already been begun. The use of portion of the land by the polo club for a further period of approximately 18 months will not in any way affect the siting of either the temporary or the permanent school building.

COUNTRY TROTTING.

Mr. JENKINS—A move is afoot to establish a new trotting club in the Willunga area and an option has been taken over the desired site.

I believe an investigation is taking place and I understand the Premier has a report from a police inspector as to the area's suitability. Can the Premier say whether it would be Government policy to enable another trotting club to be set up, particularly as local residents consider it would provide a facility and an amenity for the proposed oil refinery area? If the club is established will it be necessary to amend the Lottery and Gaming Act to provide additional dates for meetings for this club?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have a report in connection with this matter, the relevant part of which is:—

At the present time it is usual for the whole of the 60 meetings as mentioned to be allocated by the Trotting League, so that if the new club is to operate it will be necessary to amend the Lottery and Gaming Act to provide for extra meetings, or the activities of other clubs in this area will have to be curtailed.

The meetings provided under the Act have already been fully allocated and there will either have to be some curtailment of other clubs' activities or an overall increase in the number of meetings permitted. The Government does not desire to submit the Lottery and Gaming Act for amendment this year and, unless a private Bill is introduced, action will not be taken.

Mr. FRANK WALSH—Will the Treasurer ascertain whether all the dates approved for certain country trotting clubs were used last year or the reasons for any cancellations?

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

INDUSTRIAL SAFETY CONVENTION.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Can the Premier state what progress has been made in organizing the Industrial Safety Convention to be held in South Australia early in November, and whether any difficulties that might be associated with the gathering can be overcome?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I welcome this question, which enables me to make a statement that I hope will be publicized. I appreciate the support that has come from all sections of industry—employers and the Trade Union movement—and from all political organizations. The prepared statement is as follows:—

Arrangements are well in hand for the Industrial Safety Convention which will be held on November 4 and 5, 1959. The objects of the convention are to assist in the advancement of industrial safety consciousness;

encourage industrial establishments to form and improve safety movements; impress upon workers the need for adopting safe work procedures, and to indicate the need for co-operation between management and workmen alike in this matter. An exhibition of safety appliances, safety posters, machine guards, protective equipment, etc., will be on display at the convention.

Brochures have been printed setting out the programme of the convention and inviting persons to register as delegates. The registration fee is £1 ls. which covers the cost of luncheon and afternoon tea on both days of the convention. A brochure was yesterday posted to every factory and building firm in the State which employs more than 10 employees and further copies are available from the Department of Labour and Industry. A great deal of interest is being shown in the convention and it is hoped that it will attract a large number of delegates.

Cabinet has decided that the heads of each of the Government departments in which there are workshops or which carry on civil construction work may nominate officers and foremen from these departments to attend the convention. They will be granted leave to attend and the registration fee will be paid by the department. It is hoped that private industries will follow this lead of the Government and that Trade Unions will also be well represented at the convention. The convention is not being designed as a publicity stunt and the programme has been arranged in the hope that all who attend will obtain information and ideas which will help them in their own particular places of employment to reduce the number of accidents which have been occurring during working hours.

THIRD PARTY INSURANCE.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Has the Premier a reply to the question I asked on September 1 concerning third party insurance on prospectors' vehicles?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Sir Edgar Bean has forwarded the following report:—

The question of applying country primary producers' rates of premium to prospectors' trucks was discussed at meetings of the Premiums Committee held early this year. At that time the insurers' representatives did not object to this idea, but as it involved an alteration of the business classification of vehicles, they did not feel able to agree to it without consulting the representative association of insurers. Such consultations have now taken place, and I am informed by Mr. G. H. Leech, who represents the Fire & Accident Underwriters' Association on the Committee, that the association approved of the proposal and will take the necessary steps to carry it into effect. It is possible that other insurers will do likewise.

I am surprised to hear that the premium paid by the prospector referred to by the honourable member was increased by £5 5s. This is not in accordance with the decision of the Premiums Committee. If the honourable mem-

ber will supply the Government privately with the name of the prospector and the insurer concerned, one of the insurers' representatives on the Premiums Committee (Mr. G. H. Leech) would be willing to look into the matter to see if anything can be done by way of adjusting the premium.

I think that the last paragraph of the report arises from a slight mistake in *Hansard*. The honourable member was reported as saying that the fee was increased by £5 5s., whereas I think he intended to say that it had been increased to £5 5s.

RAILWAY EXPENDITURE AT PETERBOROUGH.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—During the debate on the Loan Estimates I sought information regarding items on which expenditure was to take place in the Peterborough railway division, particularly relaying, housing, ore waggons, rail cars, and plant and machinery. I understand the Premier has information to give the House on this subject.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Yes, I now have details relating to the Leader's requests:—

1. Relaying, Port Pirie-Cockburn line.—Actually, a very active programme of relaying has been in hand over the past five years on this line. During that time 62½ miles of 50 lb. rail has been relayed with 80 lb. second-hand rail for a total expenditure of £291,000.

2. Housing.—The provision of £80,000 on the Loan Estimates includes the erection of 12 houses in the Peterborough division, as follows:—Gladstone 5, Port Pirie 3, Peterborough 3, and Orreroo 1.

3. Ore waggons.—The provision of £12,000 for improvements to narrow gauge ore waggons covers the South Australian proportion of the purchase of "ride control" packages for 100 "ON" cars. The fitting of these "ride control" packages will be carried out at Peterborough.

4. Rail cars.—The provision of £12,000 on the Estimates covers the conversion of eight model "75" rail cars to diesel operation. Five of these cars operate on the Peterborough division. With the exception of the manufacture of minor details at Islington, the work will be carried out at Peterborough.

5. Plant and machinery.—Of the amount of £136,000 allowed on the Loan Estimates for machinery, plant and motor vehicles, approximately £5,000 will be spent on new equipment (air compressor, drilling machine and small tools) for the Peterborough locomotive depot. This does not, however, represent the full value of the equipment which will be installed at that depot during the current financial year. In addition to the new equipment, a lathe and a drilling machine will be forwarded from Islington to Peterborough, to replace obsolete equipment at the Peterborough depot.

LOFTIA PARK.

Mr. SHANNON—Many parents are worried about the delay in getting the Loftia Park pool in suitable condition for the training and swimming instruction of school children during the coming Christmas holidays. I understood from what the Premier told me that this work had been approved and that it would be carried out. Can he say whether there is any chance of this work being completed for the coming Christmas break, as it is the only hope many children in that area have of obtaining swimming instruction?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Estimates for the work at Loftia Park were very high indeed, so high that it was impossible for me to approve the work with the amount of money at the Government's disposal this year for that type of activity. The matter has been returned to the department to see whether some modification of the work can be suggested which might cut down what I consider the exorbitant expense proposed. I will advise the honourable member on this matter as soon as possible.

NARACORTE SOUTH BORE.

Mr. HARDING—Has the Minister of Works a reply to my question regarding a bore at Naracorte South?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—Information on a series of questions asked by the honourable member is as follows:—

1. The Mines Department have just completed the deepening of the bore at Naracorte South to a depth of 576ft.

2. Whether the supply will be satisfactory is not yet known as the bore is still to be tested. The Mines Department expect the sand screen to be delivered to Naracorte today and when this is installed in the bore, it will be ready for testing. The district engineer has men at Naracorte at present who are looking over the equipment at Nos. 1, 2 and 3 bores to see that it is in good order for the coming summer, and these men are available to replace the pump in the Naracorte South bore as soon as the Mines Department have the screen placed and indicate to us that the bore is ready for testing. It is expected that the bore will be ready for testing some time next week.

3. If the test gives a satisfactory result, the bore can be immediately used for pumping into the system.

ROYAL ADELAIDE HOSPITAL CHARGE.

Mr. TAPPING—I was recently approached by a man who had a daughter in the Royal Adelaide Hospital for a considerable period suffering from leukaemia until her death about two months ago, and whose wife a few years

earlier, had died of the same complaint; consequently his financial position is very grave. Last week he received an account from the Hospitals Department totalling £504, and under the regulations that account is quite in order. The department is willing to allow payment by instalments, but I ask the Treasurer whether in view of the special circumstances it would be possible for him to consider writing off part of that obligation.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—If the honourable member will let me have the name of the person concerned so that I can trace the matter through, I will investigate it and advise him.

MEAT PRICES.

Mr. STOTT—At early sales at the abattoirs market on September 9 lambs made from 1s. to 1s. 2d. a lb.; later they dropped to 10d. to 1s. for the best quality and 8d. to 10d. a lb. for medium quality. On those average prices the cost of a 31 lb. lamb would be 41s. 9d., which the wholesaler would pay to the producer. The wholesaler gets the skin value which is about 15s., and then when he pays his slaughtering and delivery charges of about 10s. his actual cost is about 36s. He then sells his meat to the retail butcher, who retails lamb at 4s. a lb. That butcher would sell 8 lb. of chops totalling 32s.; 10 lb. of leg at 4s. totalling 40s.; 10 lb. of forequarter at 8s. 4d.; 3 lb. of flap and kidney, 1s. 8d.; making a total of 82s. for an average 31 lb. lamb.

Mr. Shannon—My butcher is selling sides at 2s. a lb.

Mr. STOTT—It depends on how much side you have got. Since then the price has deteriorated considerably, and lambs, which admittedly are not as good quality as those I have mentioned, are 10d. each. People have been in touch with me on this matter and have disclosed that in some retail butchers' shops, although there has been a slight reduction, there is still this terrific margin of from 36s. to 82s. on average for good quality lamb, although probably not on the sides the member for Onkaparinga would buy.

Mr. Shannon—Those sides would be the best you have seen.

Mr. STOTT—Will the Premier investigate these prices, which are now not controlled, with the idea of pointing out that it is not right and proper for a section of the community to make a profit out of the disaster of others?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have received reports from the Prices Commissioner regarding present meat prices, and those reports are not entirely satisfactory. Some butchers are charging reasonable prices; some are charging prices that would normally be within the range fixed by the Prices Commissioner if he were fixing the prices of meat. However, other butchers are charging very much higher, and in some cases exorbitant, prices. As there is no delivery to the housewife, she is often tied to a butcher because of the location of the shop. This problem is giving the Government much concern. I am not yet in a position to announce any decision upon it, but I assure the honourable member that this matter is causing concern to the Prices Department and the Government, because while one section of the community is doing a reasonable thing other sections of the community, unfortunately, appear to be taking advantage of the conditions, as mentioned by the honourable member.

MAIN NORTH ROAD TRAFFIC PROBLEM.

Mr. COUMBE—A traffic problem exists on the Main North Road adjacent to the junction of Nottage Terrace, which has been considered by traffic authorities as a future natural outlet for traffic along the North-East Road. Is the Minister of Works aware that earlier this week the Royal Automobile Association of South Australia featured in the press a sketch plan of traffic islands at this junction, and will he ask the Minister of Roads to ascertain whether the Highways Department agrees with this plan and what its views upon it are? Secondly, will the Minister refer to his colleague the early necessity, irrespective of what plan is finally adopted for that junction, of acquiring land on the western side of the rather sharp bend that occurs on the Main North Road at this junction so that the present bottleneck, which causes considerable danger, can be eliminated as an immediate step?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—Yes.

COOBER PEDY WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. LOVEDAY—Has the Minister of Works a reply to my question regarding the Coober Pedy water supply?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The Minister of Mines has supplied me with information from the Director of Mines on this subject. The Mines Department is currently continuing geological investigation into the possible alternative water supply at Coober Pedy, and the report is expected within a week or two.

PUBLIC SOLICITOR.

Mr. RICHES—On August 26 I asked a question about the appointment of a Public Solicitor when it appeared to me, on reading letters from the Law Society, that the society was concerned at the amount of work that it was being asked to undertake under the present arrangement with the Government. Since then I have noticed that the Anglican paper for Adelaide has said in a leading article that the South Australian system of legal aid for poor persons is not satisfactory, and that it is a matter that should receive the close attention of the Executive. Has the Premier had an opportunity to consider the suggestion, either for the appointment of a Public Solicitor or, failing that, a Public Defender as is available for poor persons in other States?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The honourable member knows that in connection with the Royal Commission now sitting the Government offered to make counsel available to represent Stuart. I have a full report of the matter mentioned in the press. It was forwarded to me this morning with the comment that the press report dealt only with a certain portion and that other aspects had been omitted. I have had a report from the Secretary of the Attorney-General's Department to the effect that no specific representations have come from the Law Society to alter the present system. Personally, I believe that the system, with any adjustments proved to be necessary in the light of experience, should be continued. I do not know whether that view is shared now by the Law Society because I have not gone into the matter to that extent. I believe that the present system has worked satisfactorily in the past and under it persons accused of crime and appearing before the court probably get much better representation by having people assigned to them than by having a Government Department represent them. In my experience the solicitors who have been assigned by the Law Society have done extremely conscientious work, notwithstanding that no payment has been received. The case that has been prominently before us in the last few weeks emphasizes the amount of work Mr. O'Sullivan and Miss Devaney have done and shows that there is much better representation under that system than is possible under a system where an officer is appointed by the Crown to represent all and sundry. There is a choice in the matter now and the Law Society assigns people particularly qualified to

deal with the cases. If specific proposals are submitted by the Law Society they will be considered by the Government.

Mr. Riches—The Law Society are not the only people interested.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I realize that, because the taxpayers are also interested. The Government is also prepared to examine any proposals emanating from this House, but I do not believe that a case has been established for a change in the present procedure.

Mr. RICHES—When the Government considers the overhaul of the scheme of legal aid for poor persons will it consider the establishment of a fund for the purpose of meeting expenses of witnesses in cases against accused poor persons?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I did not catch whether the honourable member indicated the way in which the funds would be contributed, but if he informs me how such a fund may be brought into operation I shall be happy to consider it.

MENINDEE WATER STORAGE.

Mr. JENKINS—Has the Premier any information to give, following on the discussions with the New South Wales Premier, on a water supply from the Menindee storage?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Mr. Cahill, Premier of New South Wales, has not yet officially replied but I have heard from other sources that he is favourably disposed to the proposal, although there has been some opposition from people living along the River Darling below the Menindee storages, because they hope that in the future they will be able to develop an irrigation scheme from the river. I have not received a reply from Mr. Cahill on the representations. In fact, a reply is overdue.

GLENELG TREATMENT WORKS.

Mr. FRED WALSH—Has the Treasurer obtained a report on the question I raised during the discussion on the Loan Estimates about the Glenelg Treatment Works?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have obtained a full report from the Engineer for Water and Sewerage Treatment, as follows:—

The construction of the extension to the Glenelg Sewage Treatment Works, but not including the proposals for sludge disposal, has been divided into two near equal parts, mainly to facilitate preparation of plans. These have been the subject of two contracts,

the first being awarded to S. Haunstrup & Company (S.A.) Pty. Ltd. and the second to J. Grove & Son Ltd. The first contract was completed on 30/6/59 and indeed work was sufficiently advanced for part of the extensions to be put into use in November, 1958. This gave us badly needed relief and enabled us to produce a greatly improved effluent. As a result, and employing chlorination of the effluent, we have been able to maintain bathing waters at all times at or better than best bathing pool standards. The laboratory has the waters of this coast line under constant observation and these waters are regularly sampled for bacteriological examinations. The contract for the second part of the work has been let and work is proceeding satisfactorily. This should be near completion by 30/6/60. Contracts have been let for all machinery and deliveries are regularly taking place and, indeed, a substantial amount has already been installed. Altogether the job should be at least 90 per cent complete by 1960 and should be fully completed within a few months after this. The exception, as indicated above, is the sludge disposal. This is being handled at present, with much improvisation, in crude lagoons in the sandhills and early action is necessary on this aspect. The department's proposal is that this should be pumped out some two miles and disposed of into the gulf, and on 16/3/59, Cabinet approved of the construction of a small temporary pipeline for carrying out the necessary experiments to determine the suitability or otherwise of this method of disposal. Preliminary designs have been prepared for this proposal and it is now intended to lay the line and proceed with the experiment as quickly as possible. The experiment is designed to extend over a period of four to five years. It might be added that other preliminary experiments have already been carried out, which have contributed to our overall knowledge of the problem.

MARREE WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Has the Premier any information to give on proposed improvements to the water scheme for the township of Marree in order to make additional supplies of water available to the residents during the coming summer?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The department has forwarded the following report, dated August 28, 1959:—

The elevated tank and stand required for the Marree water supply are being loaded on to motor trucks at Crystal Brook today and these trucks will leave for Marree on Monday, August 31. The contractor for the erection of the stand and tank is due to leave for Marree on Friday, September 4, and it is anticipated that this phase of the work will be completed early in October. The pump is at Crystal Brook and the Commonwealth Railways have promised to have the electric power extended to the Abdul Bore by the end of October. Since the original approval was given for the department to take over the responsibility for

the Marree water supply it has been found that the condition of the main between Abdul Bore and the railway station yard is in a very poor condition and approval has been given for the replacement of this old main with 1,400ft. of new 4in. main at an estimated cost of £1,000. In my minute of June 11, 1959, it was advised that as far as could be seen at that time the necessary work would be completed by the end of November, 1959. Now that the work has advanced to the present stage there should be no difficulty in having the new scheme in operation by this date.

PORT AUGUSTA-WOOMERA ROAD.

Mr. LOVEDAY—I have a copy of a letter dated July 8, 1958, addressed to the Hon. A. G. Townley, Commonwealth Minister for Supply, by Senator Shane Paltridge, Commonwealth Minister for Shipping and Transport, regarding the Port Augusta-Woomera Road, and portion of it states:—

A proposal for work on the road between the Port Augusta town boundary and Woomera in 1958-59 has now been examined and the grant under section 12 of the Commonwealth Aid Roads Act of £15,000 has been approved. Last year £24,000 was provided but only £17,000 was expended. The balance added to the current grant will therefore make £22,000 available for expenditure this year.

In the *Gibber Gabber*, published in the Woomera area, dated May 29, 1959, appeared the following:—

In the House of Representatives recently, as a result of a question asked by Mr. E. H. D. Russell, Mr. Hulme, the Minister of Supply, said that although only £17,000 was spent on the Port Augusta Road last year it was expected that over £30,000 of the £37,000 made available by the Commonwealth would be spent by the end of the current financial year in June.

Recently during the discussion on the Public Purposes Loan Bill, in answer to a question by the Leader of the Opposition, the Treasurer said that the Highways Department has to spend money in accordance with the directions of the Commonwealth Government, and that certain amounts are assigned for certain purposes. He assured the honourable member that those purposes were inquired into. Mr. Riches asked whether the Commonwealth had last year earmarked for the Woomera Road money that was not spent. That was followed by the Treasurer's stating that under the Commonwealth Aid Roads Agreement the Commonwealth has no power to allocate money for any particular road. Can the Treasurer clear up what appears to be a confusion here regarding who allocates the money, and can we have an assurance that the money allocated is fully spent in the respective year in view of the very bad condition of this

road so that we can get the utmost service in a particular year on the road?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I shall be pleased to get a report on the two aspects mentioned—expenditure on this road last year and what is proposed this year, and upon the means by which the Commonwealth diverted the money to this road. It may be that my information to the honourable member was incorrect, although I believe it was in accordance with the Commonwealth Aid Roads Agreement.

PORT AUGUSTA COURT SEATING.

Mr. RICHES—Questions have been asked by Mr. Loveday and me concerning accommodation for jurymen at the Port Augusta court house. Has the Premier a reply?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have received the following report from the magistrate:—

I have obtained a report from the clerk of court at Port Augusta regarding the seating accommodation for jurymen. He states that the upholstered leather seat covers appear to have been in the court room for many years and probably since the building was erected some 80 years ago. They have become hard, lumpy and uncomfortable. He has arranged an inspection by a local upholsterer, who considers that new covers should be fitted and will prepare a quote, which will be forwarded.

It seems to me that if the seating is made more comfortable for jurors the question of whether any other matters should be undertaken could be left until an architect is in Port Augusta when he could recommend what improvements, if any, might be made.

The court house is a fine building and is in good condition. The clerk of court, Mount Gambier, reports that jurymen have expressed satisfaction with the facilities provided. About eight years ago the forms were removed and a separate bucket type of seat was provided for each individual member of the jury. It may be that this would be an appropriate improvement at Port Augusta.

PORT AUGUSTA POWER STATION STACK.

Mr. RICHES—Can the Premier report on the progress being made on the erection of chimney stacks at the Port Augusta power station, particularly in relation to the stack at "A" station, as the public are hoping for some relief during the coming summer?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have received the following report from the General Manager of the Electricity Trust:—

Chimney stack, "A" section Port Augusta power station.—As you are aware, the trust is constructing a single high chimney to replace the six short chimneys at the existing "A"

section of our Port Augusta power station. This alteration, which was to have been completed October of this year, is expected to make a substantial difference to the dust nuisance in the town of Port Augusta.

A similar high chimney is also being constructed for the "B" section which will be commissioned in March of next year. A contract was let to S. Haunstrup & Co. Ltd. to construct the two single chimneys for the "A" and "B" sections concurrently, that for the "A" section to give early relief to the town and to reduce the nuisance at site to men engaged on the construction of the "B" section.

Until recently, construction work on the two chimneys has proceeded together as planned. However, some time ago we realized that the manufacturer of the special bricks required to line these chimneys might be unable to meet his promised deliveries. Immediate discussions were held with the contractor and with the brick manufacturer but in spite of assurances of improved deliveries, the stage has now been reached where the manufacturer admits his inability to provide the required output of bricks.

As a result, it is barely possible to meet the brick requirements for the "B" section chimney by diverting all production to it. However, it is imperative that this plant be ready for service by March, 1960, because of load commitments. On the basis of present brick production, it is doubtful if the new "A" section chimney can be in service before the middle of 1960. We are greatly concerned about this late completion date and are examining all means of improving the position. You may be assured that we will continue to take all possible measures to ensure the earliest completion of the "A" section chimney.

TOWING OF CARAVANS.

Mr. SHANNON—I have just discussed with the Chairman of the State Traffic Committee (Mr. Millhouse) the problem that I and many others have observed of the swaying motion of certain types of caravans, some of which are on hire. There is a very grave risk in traffic that a swaying caravan will cause an accident. I do not know how many have already done so. Some are drawn by very light motor cars, which have not sufficient strength to draw such heavy caravans, and this could cause an accident to the hauling vehicle. Could the Premier have this problem investigated by the State Traffic Committee and produce a recommendation as to standards of this type of vehicle, which are now becoming very popular?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will get a report from the Traffic Branch of the Police Department as to what has been observed in this respect. If it appears necessary for any further action to be taken, I will submit the matter to Cabinet.

SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE.

Mr. KING—Can the Premier indicate whether it will be necessary to sit during the evenings next week?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The Government hopes to have the Budget papers printed in time to enable me to introduce the Budget on Thursday next. I should be obliged if honourable members were prepared to expedite the Budget by sitting during the following week up to, say, 10 p.m. It is not intended to sit in the evenings next week.

Mr. Frank Walsh—Will the Auditor-General's annual report also be ready then?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—We have always made a practice of getting the Auditor-General's report and the Budget papers printed concurrently. I understand that the Auditor-General's report is also in a very advanced stage and that it will be available to honourable members before Estimate items are dealt with.

HEALTH ACT.

Mr. STOTT—On August 6 I asked the Premier a question regarding amendments to the Health Act following on reports from Loxton that builders had installed in new houses substandard plumbing and drainage, and he promised to obtain a reply. Has he that reply?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have a report from the Director-General of Public Health as follows:—

A report from the Principal Medical Officer (Public Health) indicates that where the Building Act applies or in other places where section 123 of the Health Act applies, local authorities must approve means of disposal of night soil and sullage water from any building. There are some areas where neither the Building Act nor section 123 of the Health Act applies. The Department of Public Health is aware of this difficulty and is preparing a submission for appropriate amendment to legislation.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION: CAPITAL PUNISHMENT.

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

Leave granted.

Mr. HUGHES—In this morning's *Advertiser* I was misreported. The *Advertiser* report stated that yesterday afternoon I said:—

Another larger gathering of people on Yorke Peninsula a few weeks ago had also carried a resolution supporting hanging.

What I actually said—and I compliment *Hansard* on reporting me correctly—was:—

At a larger gathering of country people held on Yorke Peninsula a few weeks ago, in the district represented by the Minister of Lands, a motion was carried supporting the abolition of capital punishment.

I ask that the *Advertiser* take steps to have me correctly reported.

SUPREME COURT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer) obtained leave to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Supreme Court Act, 1935-1958.

PASTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. C. S. HINCKS (Minister of Lands) obtained leave and introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Pastoral Act, 1936-1953. Read a first time.

LIMITATION OF ACTIONS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

MENTAL HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The object of this Bill is to make three amendments to the Mental Health Act. The first amendment is designed to avoid the position which now arises when patients are admitted to the Enfield Receiving House. As the law now stands, it provides that the Public Trustee automatically takes control of the patient's affairs and administers them, and this irrespective of whether the patient is so mentally disordered as to be incapable of managing his own affairs or not. Probably about half of the patients admitted to the Enfield Receiving House are not incapable of managing their affairs and in this case, apart from the unnecessary extra work entailed by both the Superintendent and the Public Trustee, the fact that the patient's affairs are automatically taken over by a Government officer is not welcomed by the patient himself and is not conducive to the treatment of his condition. Under the proposed amendment this position will be rectified in that the provision for the Public Trustee to take over the patient's affairs will operate only where the Superintendent so certifies.

The second proposed amendment will empower the Public Trustee, without an application to the court, to take up new issues of shares in companies on behalf of patients by virtue of their existing shareholdings. Many patients desire the Public Trustee to take up such new issues and frequently near relatives have asked the Public Trustee to do so.

The third proposed amendment will enable the Public Trustee to sell personal effects not claimed within two years from the date of death or discharge of a patient and retain the proceeds. It is also provided that the Public Trustee may pay to the Treasurer, for the general revenue, any unclaimed moneys in his hands six years after death or date of discharge of a patient. An additional provision will enable the Treasurer to refund to the Public Trustee any such moneys, on the Public Trustee's certificate that the identity and whereabouts of the persons entitled have been ascertained. The amounts involved are often fairly small and it is considered desirable that refunds should be obtainable without expense. Provisions similar to those suggested in relation to the taking up of shares and dealing with unclaimed moneys and effects are contained in the relevant New South Wales legislation.

Mr. O'HALLORAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 15. Page 716.)

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I do not intend to detain the House for very long on a discussion of this Bill. I agree with some of the Premier's remarks in introducing the measure, and I certainly agree that it is necessary that the modicum of protection that is afforded to the public at the moment under our price control legislation should be continued. When introducing the Bill, the Premier said:—

In seeking an extension of the Prices Act for a further 12 months, the Government is motivated by strong evidence of inflationary tendencies. At the present time economic activity throughout the Commonwealth is at a high level. Manufacturing and trading companies are, in many instances, recording higher returns both as regards a higher percentage of shareholders' funds and on substantially increased capital. This State has the lowest level of unemployment in the Commonwealth and increased spending power in the hands of the public of this State for the next 12 months is calculated to exceed the amount spent last year by no less than £27,000,000.

There is room for much consideration of those remarks. I have urged repeatedly when enabling legislation has been before the House to extend the provisions of the prices law for a further 12 months, that it should be made a permanent feature of our Statutes. I will not go into the matter this afternoon as fully as I have done on previous occasions in comparing the results in Queensland (where for many years there was a fair prices law on the Statute Book) with the results in other States, particularly in South Australia, where we have had this temporary legislation which has assumed a degree of permanency by being re-enacted from year to year.

Mr. Millhouse—I think the position in Queensland would not bear out your remarks now, would it?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—At the moment it would not; I am thankful to the honourable member for his interjection. During the long and successful regime of the Labor Party in Queensland fair prices legislation was maintained, and it had a salutary effect on profiteering in that State, so much so that down through the years its basic wage—which, after all, is a fairly effective test of primary costs to the ordinary person in the street—was considerably lower than South Australia's. As a matter of fact, it remained considerably lower until, by reason of unfortunate circumstances, there was a change in Government. A Government that no doubt the member for Mitcham would applaud was returned to the Queensland Treasury benches for the first time in many years, and one of its first actions was to repeal the old fair prices legislation and make substantial amendments to the principle established by Labor with the result that prices have begun to get out of hand there to the same extent as in other Australian States.

When I say that this should be a permanent feature of our legislation I am not suggesting that prices should be controlled on all articles. I do not know whether it would be necessary to control the prices of many articles, but I suggest that the law should be there to act as a deterrent to those who might be inclined to exploit the community. As a matter of fact I think that is substantially what it does in South Australia at present and will continue to do if this legislation is re-enacted for a further 12 months. The Premier also said:—

At the present time economic activity throughout the Commonwealth is at a high level. Manufacturing and trading companies are, in many instances, recording higher returns

both as regards a higher percentage of shareholders' funds and on substantially increased capital.

We are accustomed to the lament from members opposite and from the citizens they represent that wage costs are forcing prices up, but the Premier has unequivocally admitted that shareholders' funds are receiving a higher reward on a substantially increased capital and, therefore, it becomes necessary to protect the consuming public. I agree entirely with those sentiments. Yesterday I was pleased to hear the member for Rocky River (Mr. Heaslip), who is not noted for revolutionary or semi-socialistic expressions, up-end himself and complain about the take-overs of South Australian companies by interstate firms which are cluttering up our landscape at present. That is an interesting aspect because it shows that although the workers' wages are used as the stalking horse for those who complain about our high cost of production and the fact that we cannot compete overseas—

Mr. Millhouse—Do you think that the rise in the basic wage has had any effect?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I will come to that presently, but at the moment I am dealing with take-overs.

Mr. Clark—Not take-downs?

Mr. O'HALLORAN—So far as the public is concerned I think they are take-downs because companies that have been established and functioning well for a number of years, and which have provided reserves against possible contingences and for expansion, have had to face competition, not by someone from another State who by capital expenditure creates competitive assets in order to keep that company on its merits, but by what might be termed the surreptitious purchase of shares in that company in order to secure control of it. As a result the capital of the company is inflating without any of the new money being used in expanding its activities and consequently there is superimposed on the existing capital of an undertaking another burden of capital that expects to receive dividends of the same percentage as the old rate of dividends. That is a most objectionable feature and a most pernicious system which I hope the Government will be able to deal with when it has conducted a full investigation into this aspect.

I remind honourable members that when I delivered the policy speech on behalf of the Labor Party prior to the last election I featured this matter and said that we were

gravely concerned with this investment activity, and if returned would use the Constitutional resources of the State to the fullest extent to prevent it. I believe that was one of the reasons that gave us a huge majority of votes over what the Liberal and Country League received, but, unfortunately, not a big enough majority under the rules as they are implemented by the present Government party.

The Premier also said that the Governor of the Commonwealth Bank recently stated that inflation was a serious and growing threat to the health of our economy. If that is so it is due to those points I have mentioned. Let us consider the question of wages—and I am happy to be able to oblige the member for Mitcham with some reference to the effect of wages on the price structure. As members know, there have been no automatic adjustments of wages in South Australia in accordance with cost of living variations on a quarterly basis (which had been the basis for many years dating back to the commencement of conciliation and arbitration law and the administration thereof) since the practice was discontinued with great eclat by the Liberal Government here. The automatic adjustments were continued by Labor Governments in various States and, as far as I can see, did not make any difference to the price structure in New South Wales or Victoria as compared with our price structure. The net result was that those workers in South Australia working under State awards—that is, awards of the State industrial tribunals—and who could have been compensated by this Government for the abolition by the Commonwealth of quarterly cost of living adjustments lost millions of pounds in the interim. I want to quote the Premier again on this matter:—

From all reliable reports the basic wage increase of 15s. per week appears to be causing considerable concern to primary producers, industry and the consuming public alike.

The recent basic wage increase of 15s. a week was, of course, granted by the Federal Commission after a very full inquiry, after taking lengthy evidence. All the time this inquiry was dragging on the cost of the worker's living was increasing, so that, when he received his 15s. a week increase, already the bulk of it had been taken from him in the interim since the previous increase.

Let us see what happened in South Australia. The workers got an increase of 15s. a week. The Municipal Tramways Trust promptly increased tram and bus fares and the Government increased the charges for water. More

recently—the by-law was tabled here on Tuesday last—the Railways Department provided for an increase in railway fares. If all these things were added up, one would find—and this applies to workers who have to travel by public transport some distance to their work—that they affected particularly the workers who have to live in the town of Elizabeth which, of course, can be treated as only a dormitory town. In spite of all the boom and propaganda about this new self-contained city, the plain fact is that most of those domiciled there still have to come to the metropolitan area for employment. As far as I can see that state of affairs will continue for many years to come.

The 15s. has been absorbed mainly by those items alone but, of course, there are other things too. There is the general rise in costs. We shall feel another impact shortly when the recent fortuitous increase in the price of wool—something that I applaud and which was necessary to keep the woolgrowers of Australia solvent—is passed on to the public. It is remarkable that, when the price of wool dropped to below cost of production levels and remained there for the best part of two years, there was no reduction in the cost of wearing apparel manufactured from wool. I venture to say that in the not distant future we shall find that the present recovery of prices, though not great, will be used as an excuse further to inflate the price of garments made from wool.

The Premier said that this 15s. a week appeared to be causing considerable concern to primary producers. I venture to say that what is causing the most concern to primary producers at the moment is not the basic wage because, after all, they are not compelled to pay it. Under the archaic industrial laws promulgated by the Liberal Party in this State and maintained by this Government, despite Labor's repeated attempts to improve them, employees in rural occupations are not entitled to be paid the legal basic wage, except of course in the case of the pastoral industry where they are covered by a nation-wide organization that enables them to have access to and obtain awards from the Federal Court. What is worrying the primary producers most at the moment is not the basic wage but the lack of rain. I do not think that altering the basic wage either up or down will affect the cloud formations that we are looking for so anxiously as the weeks pass to bring the rain so badly needed at the moment.

Then, of course, reference has been made to the consuming public. Who are the consuming public? Who are the people who provide the markets for our Australian manufactures in particular, and for those who deal in imports from overseas? In the main, the consuming public is the working public, those who have benefited temporarily from the increase in the basic wage and have now practically lost those benefits. I cannot understand this howl from people who say they want to see business prosperous and at the same time keep wage rates down because, as I pointed out before, if we reduce the workers' standard we reduce the purchasing power of the most important portion of the consuming public.

Mr. Quirke—The workers are up for about £350,000,000 of hire-purchase, representing about three years' wages.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—As the honourable member for Burra remarks, the position is that, taking Australia as a whole, they are up for about £350,000,000 of hire-purchase debts of one kind or another, which represents about three years' value of wage packets. One remark made by the Premier I agree with entirely:—

We have not yet reached the position where, in the interests of the State, we can afford to do without this legislation. Investigations carried out by the department continue to show that there are still people in the trading community who would exploit others.

I need not mention items that bear out this statement to the full. Only this afternoon we had an illustration of it in the question of the honourable member for Ridley (Mr. Stott) relating to the price of meat, and particularly to the price of lamb meat. Some of these half-lambs might seem to be rabbits. I have seen them; they just make the grade. I understand that any lamb under 12 lb. is not considered to be killable as it is not fit for public consumption.

Mr. Millhouse—The honourable member advocated the removal of price control.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I did, and I stand by that advocacy, but I did not advocate the repeal of the Prices Act. All I am saying now is that I believe there are some butchers—there may be many—who are doing the right thing. I have not investigated the position but, if there are butchers who are not doing the right thing, then under this legislation we have the power to deal with them. That is why I desire to see this legislation retained on the Statute Book. We had an example here 18 months or so ago when the

price of woollens was decontrolled and the retailers promptly jacked up the profit margin considerably, so that the Premier had to threaten them with re-control to get them to reduce their profit margin to that which applied prior to the decontrol of prices.

I think the House will accept this Bill. I am certain the second reading will be carried, because even my friend, the member for Mitcham, will vote for that in order to have the opportunity to produce his forceps and try to remove some of the teeth from the Bill. I also believe the Bill will pass in its present form, extending price control in South Australia for a further 12 months, and that it will be beneficial to the community. I support the Bill.

Mr. HAMBOUR (Light)—I, too, support the Bill. Much as I dislike controls, I realize that this control is brought about by other controls that have been placed on our economy. I know that this Bill contributes in some measure to keeping our costs down, and I do not think anyone in this Chamber will refute that statement. I also think that the powers under this Bill are more necessary today than they were at this time last year because there is now a tendency towards inflation, which is something we must guard against. My constituents are as vulnerable as any other people in Australia in this regard.

Some members will criticize the administration of the Act. When I first came into this Chamber I criticized the administration, but in the past year or two I have found it much more tolerant. The Prices Commissioner has used his powers judiciously. Early this year he came to an arrangement with traders that proved satisfactory to them and, I am sure, to the consumers and all concerned, because he decontrolled some items and placed them under honourable agreement.

Mr. Millhouse—On parole.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Call it what you like, but that word does not appeal to me because it is not appropriate in this sense. Lines have been released, and if any group of people abuse their profit margins the lines can be recontrolled. They are not on parole, because I have always understood that being on parole means that a person may be called in for committing the slightest misdemeanour.

Mr. Loveday—On his honour.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Yes. Numerous lines have been decontrolled because they are in plentiful supply and competition is handling the situation quite well. I pay a tribute to the Prices

Commissioner who has probably been the most maligned public servant in our employ. South Australia is possibly more concerned with this legislation than any other State because this State relies to a great degree on the export of its manufactures. It is very important both to our manufacturers that they be able to keep their costs down and to our primary producers who have to sell on an unprotected market.

I do not know whether members noticed the remarks of the Prime Minister on September 10, but I think those remarks should be noted because to me they have a great deal of significance and are a warning. The report states:—

The Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies) tonight warned leading New South Wales manufacturers about the danger of inflation. He said that a two per cent to three per cent growth a year would appear to be all right "if you are dealing in equities," but from the point of view of the nation it was not a very healthy thought. If there were a growth of inflation the financing of public works would become more and more difficult because people would not normally invest in fixed interest securities when the value of the currency had fallen. Mr. Menzies was addressing more than 40 guests at the annual dinner of the New South Wales Chamber of Manufactures.

I am sorry there were not 400 guests, because I think the remarks were well directed. I believe these people will have to pull up their socks if they want to maintain the good economy of Australia. Those remarks of the Prime Minister fortified me in my statement that this Bill is more necessary than it was last year.

Mr. Millhouse—Do you think price control will halt inflation?

Mr. HAMBOUR—I think it is making a contribution to keeping costs down. I realize only too well that this State cannot handle the affairs of the whole of Australia. Even in this State the results of manufacturers are free from price control. I should like the honourable member for Mitcham to know that, in case he does not. I think that only ice cream and a few other lines come under price control and all the other lines are free.

Mr. Millhouse—The Prime Minister did not suggest price control.

Mr. HAMBOUR—No, but I am prepared to say what I think the Prime Minister ought to do. We on this side are apt to condemn and criticize the Labor Party and the unions for seeking increased wages. I will explain why they seek increased wages.

Mr. Ryan—Because they are chasing prices, and your Government opposed us in the court.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I am speaking for myself, not for my Government. On September 9 another article appeared, as follows:—

Australian company profits had risen from £594,000,000 to £630,000,000 in the past three years, Mr. R. J. Hawke, leading advocate for the Australian Council for Trade Unions, said today. He told the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission these figures showed a capacity to pay higher wages. Companies generally were even stronger than those figures disclosed, he said. Taxation allowances for depreciation had been raised in 1958. This meant a greater proportion of revenue was not shown as profit. Huge profits were concealed by the policy of conservatism—understating assets and over-stating liabilities. The Adelaide Steamship Company Limited illustrated this doctrine "at its worst." For years the company showed a profit of about £160,000, which varied little more than £1 from year to year. When H. C. Sleight Limited bid to buy it out, it offered its shareholders a dividend of £348,769—more than twice the biggest profit it ever declared. Companies had also been strengthened by the extending policy of raising capital by debentures instead of increasing share holdings. Interest paid to debenture holders was a taxation deduction.

That hearing was before Mr. Justice Kirby and Mr. Justice Moore. I only mention that so that those who oppose this legislation will realize that the people who could do the right thing are not doing the right thing.

Mr. King—Should capital profit be restricted?

Mr. HAMBOUR—I am not here to say what category one puts one's profits in. The fact remains that they are profits. Can we afford increased wages? The Labor Party not only asks for increased wages but goes further and seeks reduced hours. Can Australia afford these increases? It is all very well for the manufacturer who has a protected home market and who can pay these wages and pass on the increase. He will pass it on to the people who have to buy on world parity.

Mr. Ryan—He passes it on to the workers.

Mr. HAMBOUR—How can he pass it on to the workers if he has to sell on world parity? I said that the manufacturer could pass it on, not the primary producer whose products are sold on world parity. That is where the extra money must come from.

Mr. Ryan—Meat is regarded as a primary product.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Again the honourable member refers to something sold on the home market. Meat is the only commodity that is holding its own.

Mr. Ryan—Meat is sold on world markets.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Wheat is another, and we are exporting three times as much wheat as we

consume, and it is consumed in Australia on world parity prices. Wool is sold on world parity. The honourable member does not seem to understand this matter, and later in the afternoon I shall be pleased to give him a few minutes and explain it. I have analysed this matter closely and I do not think price control goes far enough. Unfortunately it cannot go far enough, but it meets the requirements of this State and does so very well. The Australian economy could be regulated in accordance with proposals in the book I have. I said that I could tell the Prime Minister how to regulate profits if they were regarded as excessive, and I suggested that it could be done through customs tariffs. Whenever there are excess profits it is obvious that there is over-protection. When some members mentioned General Motors-Holdens I thought that members opposite would have a look at the book, but all they did was criticize.

Mr. Ryan—We gave a solution.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I do not know of one being given. I hope the Bill will be passed for the Government at all times should have the power to regulate prices if it is considered necessary in the interests of the State's economy. The Government is responsible for the well-being of the people.

Mr. Fred Walsh—Don't you think we have reached the stage where profits should be controlled?

Mr. HAMBOUR—When I spoke of profits I was referring to excess profits by companies.

Mr. Millhouse—You have been talking about profits all the time.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Profits and companies. Of course, with price control it is possible to break down profits, but under our price control regulations there is room for profits.

Mr. Ryan—How do you reconcile that with the recent increase in the price of bread?

Mr. HAMBOUR—The Premier explained that matter. The price was based on the capacity of the small man to produce and get a reasonable return. I think the Premier said that the highly mechanized baker could produce at less cost, and that it would not be possible to have two bread prices. Again it is a matter of the highly mechanized concern making more profit than one not so highly mechanized. The small baker gets the same price as the other baker. He does not make much profit, whereas the other does, although he sells at the same price. Therefore, price control is not profit control. I support the Bill.

Mr. MILLHOUSE (Mitcham)—I do not suppose that anybody enjoys bashing his head against a wall year after year, but in the circumstances in which I find myself as a back bencher I shall continue to oppose legislation to control prices. Sometimes, in the light of argument put forward in this House, specious though it may be, in favour of the legislation one becomes a little faint-hearted, but after listening to the second reading explanation I am confirmed in the belief that the legislation is unnecessary and, indeed, harmful to the State. Before I deal with the reasons that were drawn out of a hat by the Premier this year in support of the continuation of price control for another 12 months, may I say how disappointed and, indeed, surprised I was with the views expressed by the member for Burnside. She is a housewife and I have no doubt an efficient one, and she may be therefore pardoned for looking no further than her shopping basket to get some support for her contention that price control is necessary, but I suggest to her and other members that when considering legislation of this nature we should look further than our own personal interests. Of course, it stands to reason that if a person can get an article more cheaply than would otherwise be the case, he or she is only too glad to do so, but that person should look at the wider implications of the matter. I suggest that the member for Burnside and other members should look not only at the direct results but at the wider implications. What were the reasons given by the Premier for the continuation of this control?

Mr. Ryan—The increase in wages.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—For once the honourable member agrees with the Premier. Of course, the Premier says there is the strong danger of inflation in this country. This is what he said:—

The Government is motivated by strong evidence of inflationary tendencies. Further inflation appears inevitable. Warnings to that effect have been given.

That is a most remarkable statement. It is heard more frequently from honourable members opposite than from members on this side. I wondered about this matter and I think that perhaps the most recent authoritative statement on it is that by the Federal Treasurer (Mr. Holt) when introducing his Budget. After all he is the Treasurer of the Commonwealth of Australia, and not even once did he in his speech use that term or even suggest that we were in for a bout of inflation. I do not believe that the trends the Treasurer

mentioned as warranting this legislation are, in fact, the trends we have in Australia.

Mr. Quirke—Doesn't Dr. Coombs say it?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—I do not know and I do not mind what he says. This is the statement of the Federal Treasurer on behalf of his Government:—

There is a remarkable basis of stability—economic, political, social and industrial.

We know that the danger of inflation is used as the excuse for the legislation now before us. It is, of course, the opposite to the reason put forward in 1957, which was that we needed price control to stimulate economic development. Be that as it may, inflation is the reason given this year. There is at the end of the Premier's second reading speech the suggestion which seems to me the reverse to one of inflation. It is that with falling prices for primary products, the man on the land has to be protected. That seems to contradict what he had said earlier. Let us assume for the purposes of argument that there are inflationary trends in this country. Perhaps this will satisfy the member for Whyalla. For the purposes of my argument, I will assume that the Premier is right in his argument about inflationary trends. A few weeks ago I had the advantage of seeing a little publication from America called *The Free Man*. That, incidentally, is a publication recommended by the previous member for Burnside as one worthy of consideration and I hope that the present member for Burnside will find time to have a look at it. In the July, 1959, issue is an article headed "Can Wage and Price Controls Cure Inflation?" This booklet is published by the Foundation for Economic Education at Irvington-on-Hudson, New York. The article is written by Dr. Harper, the former Professor of Marketing at Cornell University, whom we can assume has authority to speak on these matters. I said earlier that one becomes a little fainthearted occasionally when one meets such opposition to one's ideas on this matter, but I am fortified to find the ideas I have advanced, and I hope I shall continue to advance in this House, embodied in this article.

Mr. O'Halloran—It is nice to be the only one in step.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Perhaps the honourable member will listen to what I read and decide who is in step and who is out of step. The article contains the following:—

Continuing inflation inevitably poses the question: Are wage and price controls effective medicine for the illness? Does the bottle con-

tain a potent remedy, or is it filled with the false potions of quackery?

Mr. Quirke—Of course it does not.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Apparently I am not the only one out of step: I have at least one friend in the House. The article then goes on to discuss the theoretical exchange of goods between people in society and it comes to the question of a just price, and this is what the professor says:—

The question of a just price presumes certain antecedent questions: Says who? In whose judgment? By what right to speak? Justice always presumes a judge with some principle by which to judge. Who is to be the judge, and what is the principle involved?

And then further on we see this:—

Historically, the concept of "a just price dictated by a disinterested third party" has usually been offered as the solution of this seeming dilemma. This concept has persisted in the affairs of man since earliest times—since ancient man first congregated into groups of three or more, thus making it possible for one person to interject himself into the economic affairs of two other persons.

Then the writer goes back to the beginning of history and assumes a society with only two men in it. First, there was Jones and Smith and then a third man comes in whom he calls Joe Doakes and suggests that he may be the disinterested third person who can arbitrate and set the price. However, having rejected that suggestion, he then says:—

There is the appeal of simplicity, among other things, in having authority resided with one person—some Joe—empowered to establish a just price. Throughout all history this practice has been in evidence.

None can better tell us about that than the member for Norwood. The article continues:—

In Medieval times, for instance, kings or lords fixed prices for goods, and thereby supported the traditional thought of the time, which presumed a just price according to the powerful church influence and the ecclesiastical "logic" of the time. More recently, various arrangements of government have done likewise. But always there has been some Joe occupying the seat of authority. And therein lies the error of the search.

What is a just price for shoes or wheat or a day's work in this economy? There is no one just price for all shoes sold today. Justice, as already analysed, rests on freedom of exchange for each pair of shoes, between the store that offers it for sale and the consumer who considers buying it. So the only way to have justice in the price for shoes today is to have free trade and free terms of exchange for each and every separate deal. Justice in prices, then, precludes any legal or authoritative degree of price for any trade of anything. In a free economy where personal rights are concerned, there is no national price of anything; there are innumerable prices, trade by trade.

I challenge any member, either on this side of the House or on the other side, to refute what I have already said. The article states that the only just price is the free price. Perhaps members would like to hear this:—

For those who find the proof of the pudding only in the eating, history affords continuous and ample evidence, since the first known price control laws were enacted in Babylon 3,800 years ago. They failed in their purpose, as has every similar attempt in recorded history since that time.

We know we are pretty good in this State, although members opposite try to deery that sometimes, but I do not know whether they will go so far as to say that we in South Australia, just because we are so good, are outside the range of economic laws altogether and that our experience and our practice are going to be different from those of every community since the beginning of history. I do not know if members opposite pay the Government that compliment or not. I do not think we are immune from the workings of economic laws in this State any more than any other community has ever been. Perhaps this is not strictly relevant to the argument I am putting, but members opposite will possibly agree with it, although probably they will not, but the article states:—

Communism is merely Socialism in a hurry. The article ends with an extract from the *Journal of the Continental Congress* of 1778, (an American publication) but I defy members on either side to say that that is wrong. This extract states:—

... it hath been found by Experience that Limitations upon the Prices of Commodities are not only ineffectual for the Purposes proposed, but likewise productive of very evil Consequences to the great Detriment of the public Service and grievous Oppression of Individuals.

The answer that the author of the article gives to the question "Can wage and price controls halt inflation?" is "No" and, of course, we know that is so. Despite the Premier's second reading speech and what has been said in the past, we all know that price control can do nothing to halt inflation. May I remind members, as I have in the past, that at the time when the greatest inflation took place in Australia—at the beginning of this decade—price control was practised in every State, but it did nothing to mitigate inflation because the causes of inflation must be found elsewhere and must be treated and cured before inflation can be halted. All that price control can do—and surely the member for Gawler will not deny it—is merely to sanction

inevitable increases in prices brought about by extraneous causes. That is the position, and we all know it, whether members agree with the article I have read or laugh at it.

May I also at this stage mention very quickly the other arguments put forward time and time again by me and by other members of this House against price control? I am fundamentally opposed to control because I believe it is contrary to Liberal principles: it penalizes one section of our commercial community allegedly for the benefit of all. I do not know if you remember, Sir, that after I spoke in a similar debate last year, the Premier endeavoured to demolish me. He did so very charmingly and—I say this respectfully—he had the gall to quote from the constitution of the Liberal and Country League and to say that it was its aim to protect people against exploitation. Members who were in the House at that time will remember that he said that and, as this is the first opportunity I have had to reply to him, I refer him to another plank in the Party's platform—in fact, it is one of the principles of the Liberal and Country League in this State. This provides:—

The strictest limitation of powers to impose bureaucratic controls upon the liberty of the individual.

There is no greater bureaucratic control upon the liberty of the individual in this State than prices legislation; firstly, because it is entirely contrary to Liberal principle and, secondly, because it is an aftermath of war-time scarcities. The legislation was a war-time measure introduced to cope with a war-time emergency. Thirdly, and this may help the member for Norwood who is straining at the leash, I believe—and I think he will agree—that no form of price control can achieve even its primary objective unless it is applied over the whole economy, and that would be Australia-wide.

What is the position in Australia? Despite the rather hopeful sentiments expressed by the Premier, most States have abandoned, or are abandoning, price control. The only other State that has price control is Queensland and that State, which is awakening from the long night of Socialism, is abandoning it. In the two days since the Premier delivered his speech I have not had the opportunity to check upon his suggestion that other States, apparently in a panic about our economic condition, are proceeding to reimpose controls. I do not know what he meant by that, but I do know that Queensland, which used to be

held up by the Opposition as a shining example of Socialism in action, is abandoning price control as fast as it can. With the aid of Mr. Stirling Casson of the Parliamentary Library staff, I have gone to some trouble to ascertain the Queensland position. I have a report of the proceedings in the Queensland Parliament for August 20, 1958. For a moment let us leave aside the theoretical arguments I have been putting against controls.

Mr. Hambour—Are all your arguments theoretical?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—No, they are both theoretical and practical. I am now turning from the theoretical exposition of the principles to their practical application. The Hon. W. Power—and I assume from the way the question is framed that he is probably a Labor member of one brand or the other—who is the member for Barooka asked a series of questions on price control as follows:—

1. Was the decision to abolish price control on groceries and foodstuffs, clothing, manchester and household equipment, hides, leather, rubber and footwear, hotel services, boarding house services, lodging house services, supply of meals or meals solely, made on the recommendation of the Prices Advisory Board?

2. If the answer is in the affirmative will he (the Attorney-General) table the recommendation in Parliament?

3. If the answer is in the negative on whose recommendation was the decision made? The Hon. A. W. Munro, the Attorney-General and Minister in charge of the Queensland Act, made the following reply on August 20, 1958:—

In answering this question it is necessary for me to point out that the wording of the question asked by the honourable member is so incorrect and misleading that any direct affirmative or negative answer to it would also be misleading.

I might interpolate, with respect to the Opposition, that that is why I thought it was probably an Opposition member asking the question. The reply continues:—

There has in fact been no decision to abolish price control on the goods and services enumerated in the question. It is apparent that the honourable member has not examined the Order in Council published in the *Government Gazette* of August 1, 1958, which lists all items presently subject to price control.

I will deal with that Order in Council in a moment. The reply continues:—

However, to assist the honourable member, I will give the following answers based on the assumption that his question is intended to refer to goods and services which ceased to be declared goods or services as from August 1, 1958.

I need not read all of the answer, but the relevant part of it, which may be of interest to some members on this side, was:—

I would take this opportunity of emphasizing that this measure of decontrol is part of a general plan for the progressive relaxation of restrictive controls which are found to have had a harmful effect on the expansion of business enterprise and the attraction of new industries to Queensland. I may add that I expect to be in a position to recommend further stages of decontrol as and when it becomes desirable in the public interest to do so.

Mr. Hambour—Hasn't that happened here?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Just let me finish this line of argument: the member for Light will be interested in it. That was the deliberate expression of policy of the Queensland Government in August, 1958. I turn now to consideration of the Order in Council, which I think will be of interest to the Leader of the Opposition. This Order was made pursuant to the Profiteering Prevention Act, 1948-1957—and the Leader was incorrect in suggesting that the legislation has been repealed. In this Order we find set out a list of the items under control in Queensland in August, 1958. I will not read them all, but only the headings, which are:—Groceries and foodstuffs; fabrics, fibres and piece goods; clothing and wearing apparel; manchester and household equipment; hides, leather, rubber and footwear; oils and greases; and miscellaneous. A number of declared services are also mentioned. What was the position in February, 1959? Again, we refer to an Order in Council made pursuant to the Profiteering Prevention Act, and find that the list of goods under price control has been reduced to groceries and foodstuffs and miscellaneous.

Mr. Hambour—What does that prove?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Members opposite have often complained that the member for Light is too impetuous and impatient. If he will let me open my mouth, I will tell him. In February, 1959, the list had been reduced to the headings "Groceries and foodstuffs" and five items of "Miscellaneous" and a few declared services. In other words, the policy the Queensland Government enunciated in August, 1958, has been followed and we find—

Mr. O'Halloran—That the cost of living has increased in Queensland.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—The Leader of the Opposition has fallen right in and I will come to that in a moment. Let me read from the *Courier Mail* of Friday, February 6, 1959, and I will only refer to a heading in amplification of what I have said:—

Price control will be removed from 61 categories of goods and services in Queensland from tomorrow. Only 22 categories will then remain under price control; mainly basic groceries and foodstuffs, such as bread, butter, tea, sugar and fresh meat.

Following that article are comments by various people suggesting that this was long overdue, and I agree. Of course it would have happened earlier had it not been for a socialistic Government in that State. For the edification of honourable members I might also mention that the staff of the Queensland Prices Branch has been reduced from 54 to 20 as a result of these changes, and that is a good thing. For the benefit of the honourable member for Light, let us look at the results of the decontrol of these items in Queensland. I have here—and this may be of interest to the Leader of the Opposition—the *Industrial Information Bulletin* for June, 1959. I will lend it to the honourable member for Light afterwards if he would like to see it. On page 608 we see the quarterly retail price index numbers for the six capital cities in the various States. I am quoting these to show that in fact the removal of control from those items has not affected to any great degree the "C" series index figures.

Mr. Hambour—There may be an understanding there, too.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—That may be so, but I see no strings attached. Let us look at the figures. For the December quarter of 1958 the Brisbane figure was 2,525, for the March quarter of 1959 it was 2,550, and for the June quarter of 1959 it was 2,552. So it has gone up 27 points between December, 1958, and June, 1959.

Now let us look at the South Australian figures. In December, 1958, the figure for Adelaide—I am quoting the figures for the capital cities, which is important, and I hope the honourable member for Gawler (Mr. Clark) will listen—was 2,591—about 70 points ahead of Brisbane. In March, 1959, the figure for Adelaide was 2,609, and in June, 1959, it was 2,625. If the honourable member for Light will check me here, that is a rise of 34 points. Without making any comparison—perhaps in the heat of the moment I may have affected to make a comparison but I did not mean to; I apologise to you, Mr. Speaker, if I appeared to—what I am saying is that during that time the cost of living numbers for Adelaide went up more than they did for Brisbane, even though these controls were taken off.

Mr. Hambour—It may have been the decontrol of meat that really made them jump.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—These are the "C" series figures.

Mr. O'Halloran—What happened prior to December, 1958?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—I have the figures; I think I can help. I have taken three quarters over the period when decontrol took place.

Mr. Hambour—Will the honourable member get back to before we decontrolled meat?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Very well. These are the "C" series interim retail price index numbers. How far shall I go back? I can go back to December, 1955.

Mr. Hambour—A year or so will do.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Let us go back to December, 1957. The figure then for Brisbane was 112.9. It had gone up by December, 1958, to 120.2. Adelaide had not gone up as much, but it is not appreciably different when we remember the benefit of the removal of control from 61 items: it has gone from 111.3 to 117.

Mr. Riches—They are not in the "C" series index.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—But how many times have we heard that we have price control on the items in the "C" series index in this State so that we can keep our figures down? If the honourable member had returned to the Chamber earlier he would have been able to follow the argument. He can read it up tomorrow.

The SPEAKER—The honourable member must address himself to the argument.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—I beg your pardon, Sir. To get a comparison, let us convert those index figures from the mere figures that I have given to the basic wage under Commonwealth awards and see what we find. I am quoting from the same bulletin. These are the figures following the basic wage rise. They are headed "Adult Male Rate." The figure for Brisbane now is £12 18s., whereas the figure for Adelaide is £13 11s. I do suggest in all humility—I am the last to say that I cannot be wrong—that the figures I have quoted show that in fact the dire consequences of decontrol, of which we often hear, do not in fact follow, because here we have the only other example which we could have in Australia of the removal of price control—and what do we find? All these arguments, suggestions, and fears that come up year after year in this House to substantiate or support the continuance of control are just not valid.

Mr. Hambour—The honourable member is assuming that everything is controlled in South Australia. The number of items controlled is very few.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—Very well. I invite the honourable member for Light to compare the list of items now under control in Queensland (22) with the hundred or so under control in this State. I cannot give any further figures than that. I am content to rest on those figures and will welcome any correction from any quarter of the House to show where I am wrong. I always do that. I know I am in a minority here—at least, I was when I started speaking, but I may not be now—and I am always open to correction. But that is the experience of Queensland.

I remember very well hearing a wise old civil servant who has retired in this State saying to me a few months ago, "You know, the dire consequences that are always prophesied when controls are lifted hardly ever happen," and the fact is that we see from the experience of Queensland that they do not. There are a number of other reasons why I oppose control, although I have by now given most of them. Perhaps I may just complete the list of arguments so that honourable members will have more Aunt Sallies to knock down if they wish to. I believe that price control encourages trade associations and rings which are formed in self-defence, and that the only way in which they can be weakened and eliminated is by the ending of price control itself. I believe that price control distorts the market because it at once increases demand and reduces supply. Under price control, the maximum price that is fixed tends to become the minimum price. Finally—I will not labour this point because the honourable member for Light made it admirably in his speech—I believe our so-called price control is now merely profit control. It is so long since there was any free market for the items still under control in this State that there is no way of fixing the control other than by looking at a balance sheet and deciding whether the profit is too high or too low.

That completes my list of arguments. I suggest with great respect—and contrary to what has been said by the member for Light—that, apart from personalities altogether, this legislation is cumbersome, slow, and unjust. In my district lives a man who is a bootmaker, a member of the Master Bootmakers and Repairers Association of South Australia. Within a week of the granting of the 15s. increase in the basic wage his association applied to the Prices Commissioner for an increase in the prices for boot repairs.

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Mr. Ryan—Why?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—The association believed that it was justified.

Mr. O'Halloran—Wasn't the application related to the price of leather?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—No, it was an application following the rise in the basic wage. I understand the application in respect of the price of leather was dealt with quite expeditiously. I think the increase in the basic wage took effect on the first pay day after June 5, and I understand that the application I referred to was made about the middle of June. The association's letter and two follow-up letters were not acknowledged. I wrote to the Minister in charge of this Act on September 1, asking that something should be done about it. I received the acknowledgment of that letter on September 10. Three months after the application—today—that increase is listed in the *Government Gazette*. It took three months for this increase to go through, and during that time the association had heard nothing from the Prices Department. This illustration, which I believe is accurate, relates to small businessmen and not people who could by any means be called big capitalists. I say that advisedly, so that members will not think I am speaking now for big businesses and that big businesses were involved. The businesses in question are little ones dotted all over the State.

I suggest that this shows that both in practice and in principle price control is not justified, that it does not work as it should, and that it is entirely unnecessary for the well-being of this State, as all other States in Australia have found. I therefore oppose the second reading. The Leader suggested that I would vote for it so that I could have the opportunity to move certain amendments. However, I do not intend to canvass those amendments because I hope that we will never get as far as that, but if the second reading is passed I shall have an opportunity at the appropriate time. For the present I content myself with saying, for the reasons I have given, that price control should not be extended in this State but should be allowed to lapse forthwith.

Mr. TAPPING secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.15 p.m. the House adjourned until Tuesday, September 22, at 2 p.m.