

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY.

Wednesday, November 18, 1959.

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

### QUESTIONS.

#### RAIL STANDARDIZATION.

**Mr. O'HALLORAN**—Following on the Premier's recent visit to Canberra and the discussion which I understand he had with the Prime Minister concerning the unification of the railway system in the Peterborough division, can he say whether agreement was reached with the Commonwealth Government on this matter or whether he is closer to reaching such agreement?

The **Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD**—Obviously it would not be possible to reach complete agreement with one Minister of the Federal Cabinet: it is, of course, a matter Cabinet would have to consider, but the discussions were very helpful, and I think that a considerable number of points were cleared up. The Prime Minister undertook to take up the matter personally with his Ministry. I felt that we made considerable progress and came much nearer to a satisfactory conclusion.

#### DRILLING FOR OIL.

**Mr. HARDING**—Is the Premier aware that Santos is about to stop drilling for oil at Innaminecka and I understand, to commence activities in Queensland, and has he anything to report on this matter?

The **Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD**—I have nothing specific to report. In the area under investigation there are a number of large anticline sedimentary basins. The first hole put down was for the purpose of obtaining general stratigraphical information, and the company having got that the heavy drill will now be taken just north of the South Australian border to a place called Betoota to drill another hole there. I understand that it will not be necessary to drill to as great a depth at Betoota as was necessary in the Innaminecka basin. It does not mean that the investigation has been relinquished in South Australia. These first holes are necessarily very speculative, because it is hard to know what types of underground conditions will be met. The investigations up to now, I think, have tended to show that drilling in the future will take place probably more to the westward of the Innaminecka basin than the eastward. At one time it was considered that the Innaminecka basin was probably the western limit

of the attractive areas, but the boring at Innaminecka, I believe, has tended to confirm that the valuable areas will probably be in South Australia, with a possibility of some areas being attractive north of South Australia and in the Northern Territory. Although oil was not found in the first hole drilled I do not think that should be taken as an indication of failure.

#### FIRE AT MARION HIGH SCHOOL.

**Mr. FRANK WALSH**—This morning I paid a visit to the Marion High School and was perturbed to note the amount of damage done as a result of the fire at that school yesterday. I saw twisted metal and furnishings and galvanized iron that were damaged beyond recognition, and certain other damage was done to the buildings. I am sure we all extend our sympathy to the Minister of Education and the officers of his department. The headmaster told me that the 350 boy students who would be affected, some of them first year and some second year boys, would be accommodated in other rooms in the permanent structure, and I understand that provision for this was in hand before 9 o'clock this morning. Can the Minister say whether the parents of the children who lost their books in the fire have any insurance cover to enable them to replace those books, and will he ascertain the practicability of installing in all portable school buildings an automatic sprinkler system which, in the event of further fires, could operate until the Fire Brigade arrived? If a fire broke out when the classrooms were fully occupied, there would be little hope of a complete exodus of children. Can the Minister give any information on these matters?

The **Hon. B. PATTINSON**—As the honourable member is aware, the fire destroyed two quadruple blocks consisting of eight complete classrooms that had accommodated 350 first and second year boys. What is also important is that there was deliberate and wanton damage and disfigurement to a room adjoining these blocks, and occupied by a responsible senior master. I leave it for the Commissioner of Police and his highly specialized officers to make full inquiries. Every substantial loss of classrooms by fire has occurred at night and there has been evidence in every case of deliberate and wanton damage—that is, arson—and I do not see how in such circumstances a system of sprinklers would be of much use as any person wanting to commit arson, because of a

grudge or for any other reason, would turn the water off before he started his nefarious work. I do not think there is any real danger of not clearing this type of classroom. In a panic there would possibly be greater danger in the double or triple storeyed solid construction buildings than in single-storeyed structures. I will have complete investigations conducted into these two matters.

Mr. Frank Walsh—What about the insurance of books?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I will see what can possibly be done about supplying books straight away. The 350 boys will be accommodated in the present premises of the Marion high school, where a large and commodious solid construction building was completed during the year. The library and other rooms will be used. I have received some offers of assistance: one that I particularly appreciate was from Bishop Gleeson, former Director of Catholic Education, who telephoned me at my home early this morning and offered the use of a newly completed school in Hendrie Street, Oaklands Park, free of cost to the department. If we had the furniture we could have used that building immediately. We are not availing ourselves of the offer because we can accommodate the children elsewhere. The department has about 3,250 timber classrooms, or their equivalents, and it would be impracticable, if not impossible, to install sprinklers in all of them. I think there are other less expensive and more efficient remedies that can be adopted.

#### RE-INSTATEMENT OF ROADS.

Mr. DUNNAGE—New pipelines are being laid on the South Road between Anzac Highway and, I think, the Black Forest school and on the Glen Osmond Road between Bevington Road and the Big Tree, and the refilling of the trenches has been completed in some parts, but, unfortunately, the level of the road has sunk and a dangerous situation has arisen. Can the Minister of Works indicate whether the Engineering and Water Supply Department reinstates the roads or whether the Highways Department is responsible? Can he ascertain when the laying of these pipes will be completed and how soon it will be before the roads are reinstated? The condition of the road at the corner of Anzac Highway and South Road is most dangerous, as is also the road at the corner of Fisher Street and Glen Osmond Road.

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The honourable member was good enough to mention this

matter to me earlier today and in the short time that was available I made what inquiries I could. Where a road has been dug up for construction work by the Engineering and Water Supply Department reinstatement is primarily the responsibility of the department. The means used vary according to circumstances. In many cases it has been the practice in the past for the department to solicit the co-operation of the local council, when the road is under the control of such a body, and usually councils have preferred to do the work and charge the department. That arrangement has worked fairly well. With roads under the control of the Highways Commissioner the Engineering and Water Supply Department is again responsible for reinstatement but frequently the Highways Commissioner prefers to do the work and charge the department. Recently it has not been convenient for either of those two parties, particularly councils, to do the work and about 18 months ago the department established four gangs, mainly in the metropolitan area, to reinstate roadways, and these gangs do the work when it is not convenient to make other arrangements. Regarding the South Road, I think that would be a matter for arrangement with the Highways Commissioner. However, I will bring the matters before the Engineer-in-Chief and point out the condition of the roads as indicated by the honourable member and I think he will do all he can to reinstate them as soon as possible.

#### SCHOOL ENROLMENTS AND TEACHERS.

Mr. CLARK—In view of the rather disturbing press statement yesterday by the Minister of Education concerning the shortage of secondary school teachers in relation to the estimated enrolments for 1960, can the Minister of Education supply any information about estimated secondary school enrolments for next year and the comparative number of teachers available for them?

The Hon. B. PATTINSON—I have up-to-date and reliable figures about estimated enrolments in our secondary schools for next year and they show an increase of almost 5,680 above this year's figures—an increase of 16 per cent. The comparative figures are as follows:—

	1960.	1959.
For high schools . . . .	26,413	22,173
For technical high schools .	8,839	7,841
For area schools . . . .	2,049	1,663
For higher primary schools	1,083	1,026
Total . . . . .	38,384	32,703

If fires do not occur too often and classrooms can be built more quickly than they are destroyed we shall almost get by with accommodation, but we shall be sorely pressed for teachers. On the best advice I can get from the Director of Education and other officers I do not know how we can get by early next year with the tremendous influx of new scholars and the high rate of retention of existing scholars in secondary schools, particularly high schools.

#### LIQUOR LICENCES AT AIRPORTS.

Mr. KING—I have noticed that recent press reports of the Federal Parliament's proceedings show that the subject of airport liquor licences has been brought forward again and that liquor will be sold according to the laws of the State concerned. Has the Premier any information on the matter?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—No. I have had no communication from the Commonwealth Government on the matter.

#### RESEARCH ON DAIRYING.

Mr. BYWATERS—The following is an extract from this morning's *Advertiser* under the heading "Grant for Research on Dairying":—

Commonwealth and industry spending of £112,000 on dairying research had been approved by Cabinet, the Minister of Primary Industry (Mr. Adermann) said today. The money represented the first allocations to research and would be spent during the next seven or eight months on projects recommended by the Australian Dairy Produce Board . . .

Farm projects approved included investigations of pastures, cattle diseases, control of black beetle, farm management and animal husbandry.

Over the last three years I have constantly advocated that a research farm be set up in the River Murray swamp area between Manum and Wellington, where there are 17,000 head of cattle. This would be an ideal place in which to establish a farm for the purpose of research to aid the dairying industry. Can the Minister of Agriculture say whether my suggestion may be put into effect, and can he indicate the principal purpose in spending the money that will be allocated to South Australia?

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN—I will get a statement for the honourable member regarding the expenditure of the money. To tie it up with a research farm in the Murray River district is, I think, a little optimistic, because the cost of a research farm in these days is very high indeed. Compared with the money that will be available, it is an enormous sum.

#### MORGAN-WHYALLA PIPELINE.

Mr. HEASLIP—About a month ago the Premier announced that the duplication of the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline would be necessary because of increased water requirements at Whyalla. Since then the drought has still persisted and the position is becoming more serious. Already the use of water is restricted in northern areas, although they are not particularly harsh. I am concerned as to whether the restrictions will become more severe because if they do the position will be most serious. Can the Minister of Works indicate the progress made in relation to the duplication of the pipeline, and when a reference on the matter will be sent to the Public Works Committee?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The rather serious position in which the State is placed this year regarding water supplies should not be taken as a portent for the future. In other words, although there are restrictions in the northern parts of the State because of onerous circumstances, it does not suggest that they will be permanent under reasonable conditions. True, it is necessary to go ahead with the planning of the duplication of the Morgan-Whyalla pipeline and departmental officials have been engaged very heavily on preparing details of the project for the express purpose of placing it before the Public Works Committee as soon as possible. They have reached the stage where at least the details of the first part of the duplication are well in hand. I think that it would be possible to refer at least that part of the project to the committee some time later in this financial year. If that is done we may be able to look at the matter in connection with next year's financial provisions, but the whole project will take some time to complete and, of necessity, it will be done in stages. I understand from discussions with the Engineer-in-Chief that the first part of the project is well forward on the drawing board and that the details are pretty well worked out.

Mr. Heaslip—For the Hanson to Port Germein section?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I think the first part of the project being considered is Hanson to Jamestown.

#### MINING OPERATIONS AT OPAL FIELDS.

Mr. LOVEDAY—Has the Premier a reply to the questions I have asked about the bull-dozing for opals at Andamooka?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have a report which states:—

The accident in which a woman at Andamooka was injured has been investigated by an inspector of mines. He reports that the accident occurred when the woman undercut a face between two old shafts in a cutting left by a bulldozer. The face of the cut was safe when left but it had exposed the opal bearing band and a number of prospectors took advantage of this condition to undercut the face searching for opals. This procedure is dangerous and constitutes a breach of the Mines and Works Inspection Act, 1920-1955. Other bulldozer workings at Andamooka were examined by the inspector and instructions issued to make these safe where considered necessary. A special set of safety rules is now being prepared and copies will be sent to the field for distribution at an early date.

With regard to the other matters raised by Mr. Loveday, there is no power in the Mining Act to prescribe the method prospectors and mining lessees will use to work their holdings. Power equipment has been introduced on the opal fields in an effort to improve efficiency and if this is not successful the equipment will presumably be withdrawn and other methods substituted.

The honourable member will see that the accident occurred not because the work had been left in a dangerous condition but because the person concerned had used the cutting to retrieve some opal from a band which had been left exposed. The report is available to the honourable member.

#### HOUSING TRUST FLATS.

Mr. COUMBE—My question relates to the flat building programme conducted by the Housing Trust. Many inquiries have been made recently, and a certain amount of publicity has been given in the press to a report that certain interests desired to build in Adelaide, and in several places in North Adelaide, multi-storeyed flats to the limit height permitted, which is 10 storeys. I should like to know whether the Housing Trust has considered this type of construction as a matter of policy and whether it has any plans along those lines in view. The matter is important when we consider that the land in the metropolitan area available to the Housing Trust for the normal type of home construction is gradually dwindling and the average residents of those homes have to travel further and further between their dwellings and their places of work; therefore, it is suggested that flat buildings in and around the city would be advantageous. Can the Premier say whether the trust has considered this type of dwelling and, if not, whether it will be considered soon?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The function of the Housing Trust is to provide accommodation for persons in normal income ranges, and its efforts have been directed towards providing housing as cheaply as possible consonant with the maintenance of reasonable standards. Judging from the costs of multi-storeyed buildings of which I have some knowledge—and this has been borne out in other States—they are very costly, and any flats in such a project would obviously be at a high weekly rent. That is all right for people who can afford to pay, but they are not the people we believe the trust should worry about; we believe that the trust should rather be concerned about people with only moderate means. Under those circumstances I think the proper procedure is perhaps to leave the building of multi-storeyed flats, providing good accommodation that would obviously secure high weekly rentals, to private enterprise in much the same way as has been undertaken in other States. With the exception of New South Wales, multi-storeyed flats are normally built by private enterprise.

#### STUART ROYAL COMMISSION.

Mr. FRED WALSH—I do not have to remind the House of the widespread interest in the Stuart Royal Commission, so I do not think it is expecting too much for us to know when the report is likely to be brought down. Will the Premier say whether the report will be presented to Parliament before it is released for publication and, if not, whether South Australian broadcasting stations will be advised of the nature of the report simultaneously with its release to the press?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The report, of course, will go to His Excellency the Governor. If it comes when Parliament is sitting it will be the purpose of Cabinet to table it, which is the normal procedure. If Parliament is not sitting, the report will be released as soon as possible to the press and all authorities interested in publicising its contents. As far as the Government is concerned, it will not be a topic of one of my celebrated weekly broadcasts.

#### ROADMAKING METHODS.

Mr. BOCKELBERG—Before asking my question I wish to quote from an article that appeared in the current issue of the *South Australian Motor*.

The SPEAKER—Order! I take it the honourable member will not read a lengthy article. He can quote from it in explanation of his question.

Mr. BOCKELBERG—Yes, Sir. The article states:—

The Western Australian Main Roads Department is using a roadbuilding method that could save millions of pounds and yet result in a surface superior to metal. They are mixing sand and silt and using a vibrating roller to force the air from spaces between sand grains and the fine silt. One road is being built to Lancelin, 100 miles north of Perth, on this method. A similar road nearby supported heavy army traffic, summer and winter, for two years, yet the surface was soft enough to loosen with a shoe.

Will the Minister of Works refer this matter to the Minister of Roads and ask him to examine it, and to adopt it, if it is practicable, in some of the outlying areas in South Australia?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I think this method has been investigated, but I will ask the Minister concerned for further particulars. Most of these road construction methods depend for success on the availability of the required ingredients close at hand and also, of course, primarily on the composition of the materials, both structural and, to some extent, chemical. I think in the honourable member's district there are available on the coastal side certain soils which, when handled correctly, produce a very good road which does not corrugate and which carries a volume of traffic successfully. That is only possible, of course, where there are, close at hand, materials of the precise nature required. I believe that the success of the particular road mentioned in this article is due to the availability of materials that blended successfully into a suitable roadmaking material. However, I will ask the Minister of Roads for further particulars.

#### MILLICENT HOUSING.

Mr. CORCORAN—I understand that it is the Housing Trust's policy to build houses at Millicent for purchase only. I have been approached by people desiring to rent a home but not capable of buying because they have no deposit. As the Housing Trust builds homes for rental in other places, will the Premier indicate his reaction to the suggestion that the trust build rental as well as purchase homes in Millicent?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I will have that matter investigated, and advise the honourable member.

#### HIGHBURY AQUEDUCT.

Mr. LAUCKE—Has the Minister of Works a reply to my question concerning a cover for

the Highbury aqueduct in the interests of public safety?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—Yes, I have obtained a report from the Engineer-in-Chief on this matter. It is rather lengthy, and I will refer briefly to the first part, although the whole report will be available to the honourable member for perusal. Concerning the primary matter of public safety, there is also an associated problem of the drainage from the area itself when this area is subdivided and built upon. This concerns the Engineer-in-Chief very much, as he must exclude from the intake channel the drainage water from built-up areas that would be contaminated and unacceptable in the water supply system, so he is faced with a dual problem, and he is endeavouring to take care of both at once. In the latter part of the report the Engineer-in-Chief states:—

Obviously, the subdivision of the land along this channel, particularly on the high level side of it, will involve the department in considerable expense and, for the present, the department is thinking along the lines of a strip between the channel and the subdivisions which is to be kept in its natural state without the removal of any trees, and also providing the means to prevent any surface run-off into the channel and the provision of a manproof fence to keep the public from the strip mentioned above. These measures, it is considered, will give the required protection, and they would be very much cheaper than placing a concrete decking over the channel or alternatively providing a pipeline in place of the channel. Besides the cost, there are a number of other objections to a concrete decking over the channel. The channel is of considerable age, and from time to time repairs have to be carried out to the concrete lining, and as the channel is not deep enough, a decking over the top would prevent this unless the decking was first removed.

#### DROUGHT RELIEF.

Mr. STOTT—Questions have been asked in the House regarding the very dry season and possible assistance to farmers, and the Premier stated that he was interviewing the Prime Minister about this question. Since that time I have received several inquiries about the possibility of financial assistance being granted for the purchase of commodities to enable farmers in necessitous circumstances to continue production. Another important question concerns the availability of seed barley and the way it can be purchased from the Australian Barley Board by some authority which will pay the board and subsequently debit the farmers requiring it. The Barley Board must of necessity plan its programme and the policy on the quantity of seed barley to be made available for export and how any seed barley

is to be retained. This matter is becoming more urgent. Following the Premier's interview with the Prime Minister regarding financial assistance, can he make a statement on this matter?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The topic I discussed with the Prime Minister yesterday concerned the availability of wheat for consumption in the Port Adelaide Division and the availability of wheat to maintain the flour milling industry for export markets. That discussion merely concerned the availability of wheat for our population, and did not relate to any activity other than the question of the purchaser paying for the commodity for which he desired delivery. The question of relief was not discussed. I have not yet received any applications for financial relief. In fact, I think the amount of grain that will be available in this State for feed purposes this year will be in very short supply, and I very much doubt whether much wheat or barley will be delivered to the boards by the cereal growers of this State. If any person desires consideration of any particular case, I suggest that he send me a letter and I will examine what is involved.

#### WATERVALE WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. HAMBOUR—I believe the Mines Department has selected two sites at Watervale, with a preference for one, and referred them to the Engineering and Water Supply Department. Will the Minister of Works ascertain whether his department has authorized the Mines Department to begin drilling at Watervale, or whether it has made any other suggestion?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—I will obtain that information for the honourable member tomorrow.

#### MURRAY BRIDGE RAILWAYS PARCELS OFFICE.

Mr. BYWATERS—A letter I received from the Town Clerk of the Corporation of Murray Bridge states:—

I have been directed by my council to ask you if you would approach the Minister of Railways, in regard to the inadequacy of the present facilities at the Murray Bridge South Australian Railways parcels office. My council considers the space inadequate and the small counter area congested for its ratepayers who use the facilities as customers.

I know the inadequacy of the space at the parcels office. I have been told that some years ago a project was introduced for an extension of this parcels office, but for some

reason or other that project was not proceeded with. The position is becoming so acute that the customers of the railways are finding it difficult to get their parcels expeditiously. Will the Minister of Works obtain a report from the Minister of Railways in this matter?

The Hon. G. G. PEARSON—The Minister of Railways has handed me a short report from the Railways Commissioner to the effect that some time ago this matter was considered and deferred, but that as late as last year the stationmaster at Murray Bridge again raised the matter with the department. As the project involves considerable expenditure, the Commissioner desires, before committing himself to a programme, to inspect the premises and take stock of the situation, and this will be done soon.

#### MOUNT BOLD DAM-RAISING.

The SPEAKER laid on the table the report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, together with minutes of evidence, on Mount Bold Dam-Raising.

Ordered that report be printed.

#### LEAVE OF ABSENCE: MR. TAPPING.

Mr. HUTCHENS (Hindmarsh) moved—

That one month's leave of absence be granted to the honourable member for Semaphore (Mr. H. L. Tapping) on account of ill health.

Motion carried.

#### PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

Adjourned debate on the motion of Mr. O'Halloran.

(For wording of motion, see page 1058.)

(Continued from November 11. Page 1553.)

Mr. CLARK (Gawler)—I support the motion, which, I believe, anyone who stopped to think would do. In this debate last week I was preceded by the member for Gouger (Mr. Hall) and the member for Light (Mr. Hambour), and I commend those two Government members. I congratulate the member for Light on his careful scrutiny of the Auditor-General's report. He went to some trouble to tell us with some pride—I was going to say he boasted—of the careful scrutiny he gives the Auditor-General's report and kindred matters. I congratulate him on the ability he claims of being able to completely comprehend and dissect it. He is lucky to have adequate time to do so: most of us have not the time. Unfortunately, however, he seldom gives any concrete indication of having studied the

report. He may be an honest trier, and it may be that no amount of study can make him comprehend it, but, if he is an example of a person who carefully studies the Auditor-General's report and like matters, his contribution to this debate revealed him as the finest walking animated proof of the necessity for a public accounts committee. He has carefully considered the Auditor-General's report and obviously he has missed much, as have we all.

The Subordinate Legislation Committee, of which I am a member, is an example of assistance that can be given to members who so often lack time to go through papers, reports, regulations and by-laws, and it has helped members gain necessary knowledge of various matters without their having to wade through a ponderous mass of information. I thank the member for Light for crediting me with some knowledge of education. I do not claim to be an expert, but I appreciate his commendation because many of my colleagues thought he claimed to be an expert on everything. However, he admitted that he was not an expert on education. Because of the number of times he rises to speak—and there is very little he misses—we realize he is an all-round expert, but I regret that he said:—

If this committee were appointed I should like to know where the Opposition would get from its ranks persons qualified to be its members.

That was an unkind and unfair comment. I realize the Government would not have any difficulty in securing members for this committee because the member for Light combines all the virtues so necessary in a member of such a committee.

Mr. O'Halloran—He would be a "yes" man.

Mr. CLARK—That may be so. Often Government members who come here with ideas—even though perverted ideas—end up as "yes" men. I cannot see any justice in his suggestion that the Opposition has no members capable of serving on a public accounts committee. If he asked the chairman of the Public Works Committee whether he thought the Opposition members of that committee were worth their salt the chairman would admit that they were by no means the least valuable members. I think he would get the same reply from the chairman of the Land Settlement Committee and—and I say this with diffidence—from the chairman of the Subordinate Legislation Committee. To suggest that the Opposition is not capable of providing members for a public accounts committee is hitting below the belt. I think he would be prepared

to admit that man to man Opposition members acquit themselves equally creditably with Government members in debate. On this occasion I think he was unsuccessfully attempting to be facetious and made the mistake of using a club instead of a rapier.

I was impressed that both he and the member for Gouger (Mr. Hall) seemed to think that such a committee was necessary because they adopted the peculiar attitude of advocating that this work should be done by the Public Works Committee. I do not know what the chairman of that committee thinks of the idea but I know what some of his colleagues think, and I believe that the Public Works Committee has enough on its plate already, and possibly sometimes too much. If it is a good thing for the Public Works Committee to consider the matters mentioned in the motion, surely it would be better done by a committee that had adequate time to do the work. Obviously our arguments convinced those two Government members that work needed doing. The member for Gouger admitted that he was a newcomer to this House, but, unfortunately, he proved that he was indeed a newcomer because, after all, most old stagers have learned that, although it is admirable to say what one thinks, frequently it is better still to think before speaking.

Mr. Jennings—It is also an advantage to think.

Mr. CLARK—Yes, or to reveal some indication that one has thought before speaking. The member for Gouger said, when referring to the proposed committee:

It would not necessarily correct the wrongs found.

That suggests that there are wrongs to be found and, indeed, admits that there must be some wrongs. Surely everyone would admit that the knowledge that a check could be made would, itself, act as a check. Government members put forward various misconceptions about the purpose of this committee. We seek to establish a committee similar to that which has proved immeasurably successful in the Commonwealth sphere. The committee would have nothing to do with moulding Government policy. That was never envisaged, but, even if it were, would there be anything wrong in that? A large number of us put in about half our lives in this place attempting, in a small way, usually unsuccessfully, to mould or alter Government policy, which it is our duty to do if we think it is necessary. The motion aims at looking back and checking what has been done with public money.

If such a committee is necessary in other places, and has proved completely efficient in attaining its objects, why cannot we have a similar committee here? South Australia is no different from other places.

A few weeks ago I attended meetings of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Canberra. One of the subjects discussed, and it was an interesting subject because it was not controversial, was Parliamentary control of statutory bodies. Delegates came to the meetings from all parts of the world, embodying all shades of opinion and colour of skin. They spoke in high terms indeed of committees such as the one proposed. All the committees were not of the same type, but they were set up to get the best possible value for money expended. I spoke on the subject at one meeting, but not from the angle of having safeguards in connection with the spending of public money. For 98 years there has been such a committee in the United Kingdom and one in New South Wales since 1902. Victoria and Tasmania have similar committees, and in this debate Mr. Dunstan referred to a number of newer countries in the British Commonwealth that have adopted a similar scheme. There has been a committee of this type in the Commonwealth sphere for years. In fact, it was revived because it was found to be necessary.

This is not the first time that such a motion has been moved in this place. I think it is about the sixth time, and it has not been only the Labor Party that has tried to get it passed. The records show that in 1933 a Bill was introduced by the then Treasurer to set up a committee on public accounts. It was not the Hon. Sir Thomas Playford who was Treasurer at that time, but the Hon. R. L. Butler, as he then was. Our present Treasurer at that time was a back bencher, something difficult to realize. On this occasion he has vehemently opposed the motion, but on that occasion he supported his Leader. The Bill was passed in the Assembly, but, as is not unusual, it was lost in the unexplored vastness of the other place, and we did not hear any more about it. In 1954 our present Treasurer spoke in a similar strain to what he spoke in on this occasion. I did not hear his remarks this session, but I read them in *Hansard*. I heard his speech in 1954, but I did not receive it with much enthusiasm. On this occasion he spoke for 55 minutes, supposedly on the motion, but for 45 minutes or more he did nothing but praise the Auditor-General, the Public Works Committee, the Grants Commission and others.

We have no quarrel with these people and these bodies because they do their work well: that is not the move behind the motion. Despite what Mr. Hambour told us about our ability to deal with financial matters, every session we are faced with a mass of Parliamentary papers. We have the Auditor-General's report—when we get it—and many other papers, and no member, except Mr. Hambour, can absorb everything in those papers. It is not possible for the ordinary member to do it.

Mr. Hambour—That is sheer sarcasm.

Mr. CLARK—No. It is a straightforward statement of fact. The honourable member said that he gave a lot of attention to these things, but the member with only ordinary capabilities cannot do it, no matter how conscientious he may be, because he has not sufficient time. We get this mass of information on a multiplicity of subjects and it is difficult to sift the main points in the limited time available. The proposed committee could supply the information after a close investigation. We think that in a sense it could work like the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation.

A few days ago I read some remarks by the late Hon. J. McInnes, who was at one time Speaker in this place and regarded as a gentleman with a comprehensive knowledge of Standing Orders. For a period he was chairman of the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation. Prior to the setting up of that committee it was mentioned that members were faced at the beginning of each session with a pile of by-laws and regulations, and Mr. McInnes said that what was everybody's business was nobody's business. In other words, members looked at the by-laws and regulations in which they were interested and at nothing else—that is, if they knew the by-laws and regulations were there; but mostly the papers were not considered by members, and so a committee was set up to inquire into them. It has performed a useful purpose in going through by-laws and regulations for the benefit of members. This has been a great help to conscientious members who do the best they can. Members who were here prior to the setting up of the committee will agree with what I have said.

Now we seek to have a similar committee as a check on the expenditure of public money. It is trite but true to say that we are custodians of the public purse and this committee would help members to have all the details about the expenditure of public money, which details are not always readily available now.



That is all the motion aims at. It aims at assisting Parliament to make certain that public money is spent in the best way possible, which we all desire. Every member comes here with that object in view, and surely it is the aim of the Government, too. I find it hard to understand why the Treasurer should oppose the motion. He did not oppose the move in 1933. Possibly as we grow older we get wiser and possibly when you are in the Treasurer's seat you feel differently about a scrutiny of Government expenditure. Perhaps you feel a little different from the way you do when you are a backbencher. I do not know: I have never been in the Treasurer's seat; but surely the proposed committee would help the Treasurer. It would obviate his having to answer so many questions. He may still get a thrill, even after all this time—which to many of us seems much longer—out of giving long and involved answers to questions. He treats us to that often, and unfortunately it is catching. All of us have noticed that some of the junior Ministers are getting the same failing, and question time is about half as long again as it used to be. If the Treasurer does get a thrill out of answering questions in this way, I do not think anybody else does; and the setting up of this committee would help him and save much time.

I think the suggested committee is necessary, particularly in South Australia where more than in any other State we spend large sums of money. We vote huge sums to the Tramways Trust, the Electricity Trust, and the Housing Trust. These bodies are performing essential Government work, yet they are not directly responsible to a Minister, or to Parliament. Surely it is essential that South Australia should have a public accounts committee, and in saying that I do not reflect on any of the organizations mentioned. To be honest, I believe that at least two of them are doing a wonderful job. This State is developing, but I wonder if it is developing as much as we are told. I hope the development will continue, despite what the member for Port Pirie says about nothing being done up his way. I think he is right because his area has been neglected, and he is trying to do something about it. With rapid development there will always be increased expenditure, and in this State we have had mammoth expenditure. Surely that makes it more necessary for us to have the safeguards that would be provided by the proposed committee. I ask members to give this matter serious consideration, not in a Party spirit, but in the spirit

of doing the best for the State. Members who do that will support the motion. We all should agree to the motion with delight. I am pleased to do so.

Mr. LAUCKE (Barossa)—The expressed purpose of this motion is in itself highly commendable—that is, to obtain the best value for public moneys expended. In his explanation, the Leader said:—

The Parliament of South Australia has a responsibility to ensure that the Government gets 20s. worth of goods and services for every pound of public money it spends.

I heartily concur in that; however, I do not think this very desirable object would be achieved through the activities of the suggested committee. The Leader also said:—

As its name implies, it would look into accounts of public departments. It would have nothing to do with current policy of the Government.

That is, it would investigate matters after the expenditure had been incurred; but economies in outlay must be sought before the outlay is made, not after the work has been accomplished. The Leader further stated:—

That is to say, it would look back into what was done with public money, not forward into what the Government plans to do.

Therein I feel lies the whole weakness of the suggestion. This committee would be checking past history, which would serve no good purpose, in my opinion.

Mr. Dunstan—You don't think we ought to have a coroner's court, then?

Mr. LAUCKE—That is a different matter.

Mr. Dunstan—No. It is exactly the same in principle.

Mr. LAUCKE—In any business the expenditure must be planned carefully so that it is along economic lines. There is no post-mortem in business.

Mr. Dunstan—Oh, yes there is, even in the Bankruptcy Court.

Mr. LAUCKE—It is too late after the horse has bolted from the stable.

Mr. Loveday—You never look back to see if you have made mistakes?

Mr. LAUCKE—We note them as we look back, but the suggested committee would not serve any useful purpose, as we have a resume of the Government's activities in the Auditor-General's report. The duties of the Treasurer in respect of moneys expended are set out in the Audit Act Amendment Act of 1957. Section 36 (1) provides:—

The Treasurer shall, not later than two months after the end of every financial year, prepare and transmit to the Auditor-General the following statements:—

- (a) A comparative statement of the estimated and actual receipts and payments on Consolidated Revenue Account for that financial year classified under the heading and sub-headings and in the form used in the Estimates laid before Parliament;
- (b) A comparative statement of the estimated and actual payments from the Loan Fund Account for that financial year, classified according to the purposes for which the payments were made;
- (c) A statement of the sources and disposal of the funds of Her Majesty's Government as at the end of the financial year;
- (d) A statement of payments on Consolidated Revenue Account for the financial year classified and arranged in a form showing the net cost to Consolidated Revenue Account of each of the several functions of Government and the total net cost of all such functions and the receipts from taxation and other sources which have been applied to meet the total net costs.

There are very rigid requirements in respect of public moneys expended. Having spent the money, we have that estimable gentleman, the Auditor-General, to check closely every penny that has been spent. We have in this State an excellent accounting system in the Auditor-General's department, which gives complete reports to Parliament that we can follow individually, and we can make suggestions to the Government for any alterations we think should be made. We, as members, can do that, and we do it. I am now referring to the financial handling of accounts apart from the policy of getting the best value for the money spent. Section 37 of the Audit Act provides:—

The Auditor-General shall forthwith examine statements and prepare and sign a report explaining each statement in full, and showing—

- (a) In what particulars such statement agrees with or differs from the accounts of the Treasurer;
- (b) Full particulars of every case in which the provisions of this or of any other Act, or any prescribed form, have not been carried out or adopted, or in any manner have been varied or departed from;
- (c) Every case in which default has been made in delivering or sending accounts, or collecting or accounting for any moneys or stores;
- (d) All sums allowed or disallowed without vouchers or with imperfect vouchers, or upon incorrect certificates;
- (e) Any proceedings that may have been taken by or against any person in pursuance of the provisions of this Act.

That is a closely tied up system that ensures that money is spent correctly so far as the actual physical money is concerned. Receiving value for money depends in the first instance on the excellent work of the Public Works Committee, which reports to Parliament the acceptability of a given work at a price that is investigated and accepted, having regard to current costs. The variations mentioned by the Leader between the amounts of money finally spent and the original estimates are due to the effluxion of time and the increases in general costs of business activities known to each of us individually in our own lives. That applies to every person, department and business in this nation and throughout the world. As the Premier pointed out, with short-term works economic conditions cannot vary greatly because of the short time that elapses between the estimate and the carrying out of the work. He pointed out that the actual cost of carrying out 3,117 jobs was £4,300,000, and the estimate was £4,700,000. This indicates that there is complete control over work done immediately after a decision has been made, but, if the work is done at a much later stage, through effluxion of time and increasing costs—in effect, the inflationary tendency—there has been an increase in many of our public works. However, this applies to every individual and every organization.

So far as our accounts are concerned, the fact that the Grants Commission has referred particularly to them so often as being extremely well kept is an indication of the tenor generally within the financial accounting of this State, where there is no committee such as is sought by the Leader, but where there is a system that is worthy of the praise of the Grants Commission which deals with returns investigated by such committees as are sought in this motion. I should like to refer again to the Auditor-General's report in which he states, when he lays before us a complete resume of the public accounts for the year:—

Those statements, containing the customary information and in the usual form, have been examined, and found to be correct, and in agreement with the Treasurer's accounting records. For the year ended June 30, 1959, I certify pursuant to section 38 of the Audit Act, 1921-1957, that all Public Moneys spent by the Treasurer were properly authorized by Statutes.

Having in mind the perfection of the public accounting system, there remains only that very disturbing feature in public outlay, as in private outlay—rising costs—over which no committee or auditor could have any control.

Having in mind that the very basis and intention of this motion is to improve upon the accounting system to give us greater value for our money, I cannot see within the proposals enunciated anything that would be of assistance in that vital matter. I therefore oppose the motion.

Mr. QUIRKE (Burra)—There is nothing wrong with a public accounts committee, and some day South Australia will have one, but at present it is like using a sledge hammer to crush an ant. As the Leader mentioned, in 1861 Gladstone moved for the appointment of a public accounts committee; however, long before that there were urgent moves in the House of Commons in that direction. This matter goes back to 1828. The condition of Government finances in England at that time was, to say the least, chaotic, and something of this nature was needed. The Leader quoted a famous statement made by Gladstone when introducing the Exchequer Audit Department Bill, and this supports the motion for a public accounts committee. Gladstone said:—

The last portion of the circle, namely the circle of financial control, remains incomplete until the Public Accounts Committee has done its duty. He said that when he was introducing the Exchequer Audit Department Bill. The Public Accounts Committee in England could not function properly until the appointment of the equivalent of our Auditor-General, known in England as the Comptroller and Auditor-General. The committee there had extreme difficulty in doing anything until Gladstone found six years later that it was necessary to have the Comptroller and Auditor-General. Until that time, as stated in the debate I have referred to, a public accounts committee was of limited use.

I firmly believe that our accounts in South Australia are well kept. We do not have to take the Treasurer's word for that, because they are accepted in Australia as well kept accounts. Many people, and other Governments, endorse that opinion, and I believe that particulars of our accounting system have been requested as a model for other places. Under those circumstances I do not think it necessary at present to add another committee. Possibly such a committee will be necessary in the future, when our finances and the sum we handle are greater than they are today.

Let us have a look at the places where a public accounts committee is necessary. The United Kingdom has a system called Votes of Credit, in addition to Treasury bills. They used that system principally to finance wars

and the expenditure of the army, navy, and air force, and that system has now been extended. In 1944 the Votes of Credit totalled £5,225,000,000. It takes quite a while to even say that amount. Under conditions like that we can well realize that a public accounts committee is necessary. I have three volumes here and others in my room showing the activities of that committee.

Mr. Hambour—That is not as many as the member for Adelaide has.

Mr. QUIRKE—I have been going through these volumes, and I find that in every case the Public Accounts Committee in England acts upon the receipt of the certificate of the Comptroller and Auditor-General, who is the equivalent of our Auditor-General. I have here three volumes full of those details. We have nothing like that, and I do not think there is any necessity for it at present.

In England, until 1947, there was a sinking fund, similar to the one we have in Australia, to extinguish the National Debt. In 1947 they finally extinguished the sinking fund. Their debt is now so colossal that they are not attempting to pay it off by means of a sinking fund—they know that these astronomical figures are beyond hope. We in Australia, to a lesser degree because of our smaller population, are reaching the same position. It was the evidence given to the Public Accounts Committee in England that indicated the need for that action, and it was upon that committee's recommendation that a Bill was brought in to finally extinguish the sinking fund. That is a reversal of form: instead of extinguishing the debt a damper is applied on the means of extinguishing it. When we have Votes of Credit to the tune of £5,225,000,000, a public accounts committee similar to the one in England will be warranted.

I do not oppose the principle behind this motion, and I maintain that one day we will have a public accounts committee, but it is a completely extraneous thing to put on top of South Australia's accounts at present. I cannot see any necessity for it, particularly as we have our Auditor-General's report. I, too, read the Auditor-General's report, and find it very interesting. The member for Gawler (Mr. Clark) took two Government members to task for what they said in the debate, but he forgot to say anything in support of the motion. He spoke all around it. I was listening with considerable interest to see what point he was making, but if he made any point in support of the measure it must have occupied such a little time that I missed it.

Mr. Hambour—You should feel sorry for him; he does not understand it, and that is why he wants a public accounts committee.

Mr. QUIRKE—I will not enter into that argument. I have heard that type of argument and these innuendoes and clever sayings when a person is writing somebody else down and trying to belittle that person, and I do not think those are good tactics in Parliament. We can disagree without that sort of thing. I have gone to some research in this matter, and I am very glad that I did because I know much more now that I did previously. The Leader of the Opposition, in bringing this matter forward, has done me a good service, because in order to apply myself intelligently I had to go into the matter to find out what it was about and how a public accounts committee operates elsewhere. I have examined the Public Accounts Committee of our Commonwealth Government and I consider that committee is necessary, but I do not think the time is opportune for such a committee in South Australia.

I am not speaking as a member of the Public Works Committee on this matter, but as a member for Parliament. I support the member for Light and the member for Gouger in their suggestion that the Public Works Committee should have some oversight of expenditure, where, as the Leader has shown, approved expenditure has got completely out of hand. For instance, the Myponga Reservoir now has to be extended and radically altered because of the proposed oil refinery and the consequential development of that area, and that project has been referred back to the committee. However, the Queen Elizabeth Hospital was not referred back. I hope the procedure being followed in the case of the Myponga Reservoir remains part and parcel of the Public Works Committee activity in the future. When a committee approves of a project costing say, £250,000, and that project is then altered with consequential added expenditure, I do not think it is fair to the committee if the project is not referred back to it.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—You are referring to changes in design?

Mr. QUIRKE—Anything at all that involves considerably increased expenditure. I am not criticizing the increased expenditure on projects. For instance, the Myponga Reservoir project has increased out of all recognition, and the expenditure involved needs to be much greater. Sometimes projects are approved and it is two years before they are realized;

those projects should be re-submitted to the committee, even if only by way of explanation, and a report should be made to this House on the new estimate. Projects could then be kept track of. It would not be a very onerous task for the committee, and it would be one way of keeping a check on accounts through an existing medium.

I think the Government would be only too pleased to see that this suggestion is put into effect, because it could then answer any criticism levelled at it. The Leader called the Queen Elizabeth Hospital "the daddy of the lot," and it is. Tremendous expenditure was involved, and under my suggestion that project would have been referred back at intervals with an explanation of the increased expenditure. The committee could then have reported to the House, and there would have been no need for criticism. The same thing applies to the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline.

We have the machinery here to carry out this suggestion. Apart from major projects, comparatively small matters are involved and these could be adequately handled at present by the Auditor-General. I am not opposed to a public accounts committee in principle. At some time it will be necessary in South Australia, but under the existing machinery for controlling the finances of this State such a committee would be like taking a sledge hammer to crack the back of an ant. For that reason I oppose the motion.

Mr. RICHES (Stuart)—I support the motion. I was most interested in what the previous speaker said, together with what other speakers said in opposing the motion. However, I believe the time is opportune for the appointment of a public accounts committee. Some of the discussion on the motion has been at cross purposes because some members who opposed it adduced arguments supporting the necessity for a committee but suggested that the work should be carried out by the Public Works Committee. However, the proposed committee would not only concern itself with public works, but with works of a public nature whether carried out departmentally or by semi-Governmental organizations. There is a greater need for some supervision of works carried out by semi-Governmental bodies than over Government works. It is true that there is Ministerial control of Government departments and that the Minister can be questioned in this House during the progress of works and reports obtained from him, but even that is not entirely satisfactory, as I hope to show later.

There is need for oversight of expenditure of money voted by Parliament and in respect of which we do not receive adequate reports once approval has been given. The member for Burra expressed the need for progress reports after recommendations had been made by the Public Works Committee and approval given by Parliament. At one time South Australia did not have a Public Works Committee; Parliament established it to assist its work and has been well served ever since. Before its establishment there were what are commonly called "white elephants," but there has not been a single "white elephant" since, although in recent years expenditure seems to have got out of hand. That committee inquires into public undertakings and brings down recommendations to Parliament, which approves of the undertakings. However, once a scheme has been approved Parliament loses all control and it can be altered and added to. We know that an explanation was given, for instance, of the reason for the increased expenditure on the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, but the additions were not examined and reported on by the Public Works Committee. Mr. Quirke said that sometimes two or more years elapsed between the time of a recommendation and approval and the commencement of work, and in the meantime designs changed and costs altered, and the finished scheme often bore little resemblance to that approved by Parliament. There have been instances of works which have been inquired into and for which money has been voted, but which have never been carried out, and the money has been used in other directions without any report to Parliament.

The Auditor-General is required to inquire into the bookkeeping accounts of the various departments and to report to Parliament, but he would be regarded as having exceeded his authority if he dared to recommend action to be taken following his investigations, particularly if that action involved Government policy. An all-Party committee, after receiving the Auditor-General's report, could recommend what action should be taken, not only in relation to actual Government expenditure, but also local government and semi-governmental expenditure. In the smaller items of local government expenditure the Auditor-General has often referred to irregularities. His duty is to bring them to the notice of this House, and it is not competent for him to advise the House or the Government on what action should be taken, but it would be competent for an all-Party committee.

This motion relates to semi-governmental activities as well as departmental activities, and I remind members that on the score of expediency some of our largest undertakings have been carried out as semi-governmental activities, this Parliament finding most of the expenditure and exempting the works from any investigation by the Public Works Committee. The Electricity Trust has performed excellent work, but it has had hundreds of thousands of pounds voted to it by Parliament and has expended it on works that have not been investigated by the Public Works Committee. It does not have to report back to Parliament.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—It does report to Parliament.

Mr. RICHES—Does it? A power station was erected near Port Augusta without any provision for dealing with the smoke which has caused embarrassment to health and has affected land values and living conditions in Port Augusta. Had there been a proper investigation by the Public Works Committee, which could have called evidence from engineers from other industries, that mistake would not have been made. When it became necessary for the trust to grapple with the problem it found that the power station had been so constructed that it was impossible to do so and it is now building two chimneys 260ft. tall, one at the station already constructed and the second at the station under construction. In one of the chimneys an electrostatic precipitator is being installed, but not in the other. The layman asks, "If heightening the chimney stacks to 260ft. will clear the town of ash and smoke, why the necessity to incur expenditure on an electrostatic precipitator in the other?" It is reasonable to assume that the engineers do not believe that the chimneys are going to perform the work satisfactorily.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—If that were so they would put a precipitator in each.

Mr. RICHES—Well, why don't they?

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—I do not know, nor would a public accounts committee be able to give the answer.

Mr. RICHES—A public accounts committee, or some authority exercising control over expenditure, would want much more information than has been obtained up to the present. I have always been a great believer in numbers and the great value of the Public Works Committee is that it is able to check the opinions of one set of engineers with the opinions of another set, but where that cannot be done there is always a danger. I will not hold it

against the engineers if the chimney stacks are not a success, because they are trying to do their best to overcome an awkward situation, but there should be an avenue for investigations even after work has commenced. At present there is no provision for any investigation after the work has commenced or even before the work is commenced and where plans are altered.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—Are you dissatisfied with the results of the work done by the Electricity Trust and the results achieved?

Mr. RICHES—Not generally, but I am concerned about the building of a power station without any inquiry or without provision for dealing with the smoke nuisance which has already caused the expenditure of over £100,000. If the work is not a success it will be a major blunder. It is claimed that the chimney stacks will clear the town of the smoke nuisance, but an electrostatic precipitator is being installed in one chimney stack, obviously because it is doubtful whether the stacks alone will overcome the problem. I think they will have to install one in the other chimney as well, but who is going to carry the stigma if that is not a success? That is the sort of thing that is going on and can go on *ad infinitum* under the present system without there being any further investigation. The proposed public accounts committee would provide the necessary machinery for further inquiries. The Public Works Committee investigates projects and Parliament approves the necessary expenditure, but more money can be spent even on the items examined by the committee. There is no check on the increased expenditure.

Mr. Dunstan—Or on a report by the Auditor-General.

Mr. RICHES—He reports on irregular practices in accounting. He would be frowned on if he recommended that action be taken by Parliament, especially if it involved policy. In his last report he drew attention to the accumulation of funds by the Metropolitan Milk Board. It could be a huge or a small accumulation, and the position could be serious or minor. It was minor, but if it were serious the Auditor-General could only draw attention to the position. He could not recommend that action be taken. Parliament would pay attention to any recommendations by a public accounts committee. It has been said that we should not look to such a committee to do this work because it should be done by members themselves. It was also suggested that such a committee would ultimately abrogate the

rights of members, but the setting up of the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation has not taken away any rights or responsibilities of members. It has ensured that every by-law and regulation complies with the parent Act, and in that way we have government by Parliament rather than government by regulation of which we were having too much previously.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—You would substitute government by a public accounts committee?

Mr. RICHES—No. We have not got government by the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation, but there is an oversight of the drafting of by-laws and regulations. The people who do the drafting know that the by-laws and regulations will be under the scrutiny of the committee, and that is having a good effect. We are not bound to accept the report of the Joint Committee on Subordinate Legislation: it makes recommendations only. On several occasions I and other members have voted against its recommendations, but we were mighty grateful for the inquiries by the committee. That would be the position with a public accounts committee. I cannot understand the mind that reads into moves by members on this side for an inquiry a condemnation of someone. Some members have already made up their minds that if there is a public accounts committee the Auditor-General or a Government department will be condemned, and on that ground they oppose the move. They think that they are defending somebody. That is not the spirit in which the moves are made.

To make it abundantly clear, I point out that at this stage I am not criticizing the Electricity Trust or any other semi-Government body, or a Government department. If there has been any breakdown it has been here, because the machinery available is inadequate. No semi-Government department should fear the setting up of such a committee. I do not think a public accounts committee would be an encumbrance or any more expensive than the other committees we have. It could do work that is not now being done, and it could supply information that members do not now get. With all due respect to the members who have spoken in this debate, such a committee would provide them with information that they cannot now get because it would have power to call for witnesses and documents. However careful his approach, a member cannot expect to have the same rights of

investigation as would be vested in the proposed committee, and I hope that this motion will be carried.

Mr. O'HALLORAN (Leader of the Opposition)—I thank honourable members for the interest they have taken in this debate, and I particularly thank the members who spoke in opposition to the motion for the excellent reasons they gave in support of it. I think that on balance the argument which came from those opposing the motion about equalled the argument advanced by those supporting it. In every respect it was excellent argument. I do not know how the members who gave these excellent reasons why the motion should be carried are going to overcome the prejudice they appear to have when a move of a reform nature comes from this side of the House. Their remarks are on record and no doubt they will peruse them as time passes. Some members have not declared themselves in this debate and I am optimistic enough to think that silence on their part indicates consent. I hope they will support the motion when the vote is taken.

When I moved the motion for the establishment of a public accounts committee I dealt in broad general principles with the reasons why I thought such a committee was desirable, and I wish only to repeat the statement of the famed W. E. Gladstone when he moved for the establishment of the House of Commons Select Committee on Public Accounts in 1861. He said:—

The last portion of the circle, namely the circle of financial control, remains incomplete until the public accounts committee has done its duty.

That remark is particularly apt to the argument advanced by Mr. Quirke. He went farther back into history than I did and pointed out that there had been a struggle for 30 years to improve the method of Government accounting in England. He said that finally there had been an improvement in Treasury methods and that an Auditor-General had been appointed. That was where Gladstone came into the matter with his recommendation for a public accounts committee. Gladstone made his remark 98 years ago and a public accounts committee has existed in the United Kingdom ever since with untold benefits to the taxpayers because of its scrutiny of Government expenditure. The *Advertiser*, according to its sub-leader of October 16, also believes that there is a powerful argument for the establishment of a public accounts committee in South Australia. It said:—

The enormous increase in the State costs is one powerful argument in support of the committee plan. Presenting a Budget 12 years ago, the Treasurer estimated ordinary expenditure at £19,000,000. Last month, he estimated the current year's expenditure at £80,000,000. In the same period, spending on loan works has risen from £7,000,000 to £34,000,000. So that this year a total of £114,000,000 will be spent on departmental needs and special projects. It is clearly in the public interest that spending on this scale should be closely supervised, not merely by departmental heads and Ministers but by a competent body which can take a rather more detached view.

This paper has never shown any great leaning towards Labor.

Mr. Millhouse—It is absolutely impartial.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I have always suspected that if it leaned at all the bias was in the opposite direction, but Mr. Millhouse says that it is absolutely impartial.

Mr. Clark—On Sundays.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—Yes, for on that day there is no publication of the *Advertiser*. Whether the *Advertiser* leans a little the other way, or is strictly impartial as alleged by Mr. Millhouse, its view on an important matter of this nature cannot be lightly disregarded by members.

I will now proceed to remove the very weak objections raised by the Treasurer to the motion. He referred to an example I gave in relation to an investigation carried out by the Commonwealth Public Accounts Committee regarding the foundation work of a large block of Government offices in Canberra. The conclusion that the Treasurer came to was that, because the foundations had been condemned, they stood as a monument to the ineffectiveness of a public accounts committee for at least 20 years, but I do not agree with that conclusion. There were other reasons for the postponement of this building upon which I do not wish to elaborate now—reasons which the older members of this House will no doubt recollect. I fervently hope that similar reasons will not be found again: I refer to the great depression of the late 1920's and early 1930's. However, because of the Treasurer's reference to my example, I am forced to elaborate upon that. I have recently read the report of that committee and, to my mind, there were three main findings along the following lines—firstly, no tests of the concrete were made during the course of the construction of the foundation; and, secondly, the committee found that 1,094 tons of cement was used in the foundation instead of 1,725 tons—a deficiency of more than one-third. Is that a matter to be passed

over lightly? There was a deficiency of more than one-third in the amount of concrete prescribed and, of course, the contractors were paid for the additional amount. The third finding is that it is the practice of architects to make very liberal allowances for safety and, on account of this and also the ageing of the concrete which also gave it greater strength, the committee found that, even though not up to specification, the foundations were strong enough for the proposed building to be erected upon them.

Contrary to the Treasurer's statement, I would draw the following conclusions from my example. Firstly, steps should be taken in the department concerned to ensure that in all current and future contracts adequate provision is made for the supervision of the particular type of work concerned. Secondly, investigation could be immediately instituted to ensure that the specifications as laid down by the engineers or architects are either adhered to or there is adequate provision in them for the protection of the Government in the event of faulty work. Thirdly, there should be an immediate cash adjustment between the Government and the contractor for not carrying out the work to specification. Fourthly, the Public Accounts Committee can point to any inefficiencies, if and when occurring, and it is up to the Government of the day to institute policies and departmental administration to ensure that these inefficiencies cease forthwith.

Some members have remarked that it is no use holding an inquiry after the money has been spent—after the job has been done, so to speak—but I suggest that, here again, valuable information can be procured from the reports of the Commonwealth Public Accounts Committee on two of its most famous recent investigations. The first investigation was into the multi-million pound defence project at St. Marys in New South Wales. I have perused the report of this committee in which innumerable points were mentioned, but time does not permit me to refer to them this afternoon. However, I will give the main conclusions that I draw from that report. The original estimate for the job prepared by the architects was submitted in April, 1955, at £23,200,000, which included £1,000,000 to cover anticipated increases in costs, £950,000 for contingencies and £2,250,000 for fees and, when the job was completed in December, 1957, the expenditure absorbed all the extras allowed for and another £3,000,000 besides.

On the recommendation of the architects the Government agreed to a negotiated contract (that is, a cost plus contract) in the full appreciation of its inherent disabilities. The only fixed fee was the contractor's fee of £615,000, which was £385,000 less than the estimate of the architect. The major inherent disadvantage of a cost plus contract is that if the Government is to get 20s. worth of value for every pound spent it must have adequate cost controls and, *vide* page 21 of the 39th Report of the Commonwealth Public Accounts Committee, this control was lacking on the St. Marys project. A special report was submitted in September, 1955, which resulted in radical alterations in the design but no re-estimate was made at that time in order to provide the estimate base against which to measure actual costs of the project as it proceeded. In short, no basis was provided for the adequate control of costs which is so essential for the proper carrying out of a cost plus contract. The foregoing should provide very serious food for thought for any government when entering into any contract of this magnitude along the same lines in the future. These are illustrations of the considered opinion of the Commonwealth Public Accounts Committee along, as I have said, with innumerable others—that the mistakes of the past should be used as a guide to avoid the pitfalls of the future.

I turn now to the committee's report on Bell Bay which, as members know, is the aluminium project in Tasmania. With the Bell Bay inquiry and conclusions there is such a mass of constructive criticism that it is very difficult to select any one or two major items that stand out as the outstanding finding of the committee on this particular project and, therefore, I will content myself with giving a few examples of the benefits gained from the inquiry, *vide* the 21st and 22nd reports of the Joint Committee of Public Accounts. Conclusion 15, which appeared on page 49, was:—

The committee recommends that the whole question of the audit of statutory corporations should be reviewed when the amendments of the Audit Act are being made.

The reason for listing this particular point is that I believe it has particular applicability to South Australia where our statutory bodies are not answerable to Parliament for their expenditure. That, as the member of Stuart pointed out, is precisely the reason why I drafted my motion in the terms I did. I wanted accounts of semi-Government expenditure by statutory bodies to be investigated, either if the committee felt it should do so by its own resolu-



tion or if Parliament considered it should refer these matters to the committee for investigation. Conclusion 58, which appeared on page 51, was:—

The committee considers that the commission failed to observe its statutory duty when in October, 1952, it decided that "unless the Minister sought information, it would withhold the fact that more money was needed to complete the plant."

We have been told that we can depend upon Treasury and Ministerial control, but here is a statutory body deliberately using as an excuse for withholding information regarding its further financial requirements from the Commonwealth the proviso "unless the Minister sought the information"! Conclusion 19 (a) at page 74 was:—

Your committee are of the opinion that, generally, it is undesirable that members of commissions should have any pecuniary interest in transactions with their corporations.

There were several instances of this on this project. In general terms, regarding the purchase of various ships, the committee was of the opinion that the commission gave insufficient consideration to the use to be made of the vessels prior to their purchase, which resulted in wasteful expenditure. That is another striking example of the necessity to conduct inquiries such as this. From a knowledge of the past we may avoid making the same mistakes in future.

In opposing the formation of a public accounts committee in South Australia, the Treasurer stated that we had a rigid system of investigation of expenditure by the Public Works Standing Committee, implying that the functions I have suggested for a public accounts committee should be carried out by the Public Works Committee, or that a public accounts committee would supersede the functions of the Public Works Committee. I disagreed with this implication and interjected that I did not wish the abolition of the Public Works Standing Committee. The Treasurer immediately accepted this and made the general criticism that any committee designed purely to study expenditure after it had been made had not the same value as a committee such as the Public Works Standing Committee.

I believe these two bodies would be supplementary to each other. At the present time the Public Works Committee has public works submitted to it and thoroughly investigates them but we do not know whether the Government carries out the scheme—as submitted to that committee. For example, the

Mannum-Adelaide pipeline, when originally submitted to the Public Works Committee, contained an estimate of the steel plate required as approximately 20,000 tons (vide page 14 of the first progress report on this project). The Treasurer now has the effrontery when speaking on this project, to state blandly that the increase on this item alone was £1,840,000. On the figures he has supplied in debate, this would account for approximately 72,000 tons. Later, when referring to figures such as these, he stated that these figures showed increases because of changed economic conditions. I find this statement impossible to swallow.

I want to know why more than three and a half times as much steel plate was used than was originally estimated. The only inference I can draw is that the pipeline was carried out on a grander scale than was originally submitted to the Public Works Standing Committee and had not been referred back to it. On the original estimate of tonnage of steel plate and the average price increase as supplied by the Treasurer the increase for this item should have been approximately £510,000. The Treasurer stated that it was £1,840,000. Surely some explanation should be demanded by some authoritative body as to this discrepancy. I want to know where the extra £1,300,000 has gone. It would be for the public accounts committee to ascertain whether the increases have legitimate reasons, and whether there is adequate control over the public purse, as suggested by the Treasurer.

I have not adequate information to give a closer scrutiny of the other items of material, namely reinforcing steel, cement, etc., which the Treasurer has stated to have an applicable increase of £1,190,000. That would be a job for a public accounts committee to satisfy itself that this is a legitimate increase. As regards the other increases, some of them are reasonable in the circumstances but others on their face appear exorbitant.

After giving a long list of items showing us that the money has been spent, the Treasurer comes to the grand conclusion that we can account for all the money spent. To me it is self-evident that the money has been spent; the Auditor-General has referred to it annually in his report, and I have often referred to colossal Government expenditure. We know the money has been spent; I said so in my original speech on this motion, but what I want to know, and what a public accounts committee should want to know, is:—

- (1) Is the project carried out the same as the one submitted to the Public Works Standing Committee?
- (2) Are the cost increases due solely to the change in money values?
- (3) Has there been wasteful Government expenditure?

I now turn to the other major project I examined—the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. When speaking on this subject the Treasurer seemed most upset that I had criticized the cost of this hospital. If that is so, I am sorry. I am also sorry that the Treasurer was not able to come forth with a mass of information on this hospital to show that the money had been spent, as he did for the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline, as it would have given me great pleasure to show where he had drawn wrong conclusions. On this project he has spoken only in general terms, which leads me to the conclusion that he has no information to refute my criticism. Even these general terms are full of inaccuracies. His first statement, when speaking of the Public Works Standing Committee, was this:—

The committee recommended a hospital along certain lines and gave a general outline of the hospital the committee desired to be built.

As I read the recommendation from the final report of that committee dated May 14, 1948, I see nothing of a general outline. The recommendation reads as follows:—

The committee recommends that the revised plans submitted by the Architect-in-Chief for the erection of the western districts hospital, at an estimated cost of £1,369,636, be approved.

Surely that recommendation is definite enough for anybody. I have not seen any later report from the Public Works Standing Committee to support the Treasurer's statement that he received only a general outline of the hospital required. In the Treasurer's own words, the project as submitted to the Public Works Standing Committee is not the same as the project carried out. For example, when the hospital was built it contained an additional storey. Why was this not referred back to the Public Works Standing Committee as the continuation of a public work, or is the cost of an additional storey less than £100,000?

Mr. Hutchens—That would be a joke.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—I would say that judging by the apparent final financial results—I say "apparent" because we have not quite reached the end of the road yet—this addition will cost considerably more than £100,000. The Treasurer considered it most

unfair that we should compare the cost of the project as submitted to the Public Works Standing Committee with the present day cost of the hospital because the projects are not identical. If we are to believe what the Treasurer said later in his speech, namely, "The committee thoroughly investigates all projects referred to it and presents a comprehensive report to Parliament before any expenditure is incurred," then the two projects should be identical. I believe that the Treasurer, by these statements, speaks for, rather than against, the establishment of a public accounts committee. Such a committee would investigate this project and see that Government money had not been wasted. If money had been wasted it would be for that committee to recommend changes so that in any future projects of this type the procedures would be altered to ensure the protection of the public purse.

The Treasurer attempted to cloud the issue by saying that the figure for expenditure we quoted, namely, £7,050,000, included everything under the sun, but that is not so. That sum consists only of the Loan funds spent on this project. For instance, it does not include the original items of equipment of this hospital which have been charged to revenue over the years. The Auditor-General referred to this fact on page 91 of his annual report this year, and said:—

The payments on account of Consolidated Revenue for the Queen Elizabeth Hospital during 1958-59 totalled £761,664 . . . (and) includes considerable payments in the nature of establishment expenses mainly for original equipment, furnishings, medical supplies, etc. The increase is not justified, as the Treasurer claimed, by equipment, because some equipment and furnishings were provided during the last financial year—and, of course, other items of equipment were purchased in previous financial years—not out of the sum total of £7,050,000 represented by the cost to the Loan account, but out of Revenue as shown by the Auditor-General in his latest report.

As to the final point raised by the Treasurer regarding the highly trained Auditor-General and his staff I quote from the *Advertiser* sub-leader of October 16 as follows:—

Objections have been raised that an accounts committee would trespass on the work already done by the Auditor-General. Federally, this is not regarded as a disability. It seems more likely that a Parliamentary committee would give the State officer support he now lacks. It appears to be nobody's responsibility at present to study the Audit reports thoroughly and pursue any suggestions or criticisms the Auditor-General may make. And, while such a

committee would not formulate policy, it might well focus attention, as the Federal body has done, on matters which the Auditor-General would normally regard as outside his province. Isn't that precisely what we on this side of the House have been saying in the course of this debate in support of the motion? The *News* in its sub-leader of October 15, also had a few pertinent remarks to say about the proposed committee, and I quote as follows:—

Appointment of a Parliamentary public accounts committee is—to those who want to be fair—a necessity in this rapidly expanding State. Expansion means spending. It is essential that the spending should be supervised by the people's representatives. The Federal Public Accounts Committee has rendered notable service to Australia in its comparatively short life. Among other things, it directed attention to the colossal waste at Bell Bay and St. Mary's.

It seems to me that the general consensus of opinion is that a public accounts committee is required in South Australia, but the Treasurer opposes it. He has not substantiated, in any way, his opposition to the committee and he has not altered my opinion that I have an unanswerable case for the establishment of a public accounts committee, because I believe the circle of financial control remains incomplete without it.

Since this motion was moved a further development has taken place in this question of control. The Myponga reservoir, which was investigated by the Public Works Committee a few years ago and now for various reasons has to be enlarged, has been referred back to the committee. That is precisely what should have been done in the case of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, because the project the committee recommended was estimated to cost only £1,369,636, whereas the actual cost was £7,050,000, plus, of course, the other items from revenue I have referred to. That represents an increase of £5,680,364, yet it was not referred back to the committee for further inquiry on whether the grand scheme that has now been superimposed on the original one reported on by the Public Works Committee was warranted and the expense justified. However, when I heard that the Myponga reservoir had been referred back to the committee because of the substantial change in the proposals, I became interested and took the opportunity afforded of perusing the evidence. When I asked for the minutes regarding the Myponga Reservoir proposal I did intend to cite this as an example of where the Government had adopted the correct procedure when there had been a substantial

alteration to a public work and it had been correctly referred back to the Public Works Standing Committee but, when I examined the minutes, I found to my dismay that there were some features which appear unsatisfactory to me. Those features are:—

(1) The scheme as recommended by the committee was at a total cost of £3,036,000 based on costs as at August, 1953. This figure included a contingencies sum of 15 per cent, or £392,000. It is of particular interest to note the reply of one of the witnesses on page 18 of the committee's minutes of June 10, 1954, when answering a question regarding the profitableness of the scheme, namely, "You will notice in the estimates that we have allowed 15 per cent for contingencies. Our last big scheme before the committee was the enlargement of the Warren trunk main, and we then allowed 20 per cent for contingencies, because costs were rising steeply." The inference I draw from this reply is that the contingency sum is a reasonable estimate inserted to take care of rising costs.

(2) There were some price rises during the period August, 1953, and July, 1956 (that is, the period between the original estimate, which was submitted to the committee, and the re-estimate, which was submitted to the Minister), but there was nothing that would substantiate the increase of approximately £900,000 which was sent to the Minister for his approval and which made the total for the project £3,932,250—or an increase of approximately 30 per cent. I estimate that approximately only £200,000 would be due to increased costs. Where did the other £700,000 come from? That would be for a public accounts committee to find out.

(3) The original estimate of the cost of the land was £92,000 in 1953, but at present it is estimated at £185,000. One wonders where the increased value came from in that short time. It has been suggested that landholders started growing peas in the area, but peas must be an extremely profitable crop to justify such an increase in land values. I believe that in 1955 the owners of the land could have been served with notice of acquisition and they would not then have been entitled to any increase in the value of the land that has occurred since.

I do not charge our Public Works Committee with inefficiency in respect of the works I have mentioned. I believe that the Treasurer, obsessed with his grand schemes, has carried his Ministry along with him and from time to time works have been enlarged

without proper appreciation of the cost or any further inquiry by the Public Works Committee. The committee is a conscientious and capable body of men who thoroughly investigate all projects referred to them in the light of the circumstances of the day, but, of course, some works on which the committee reports to Parliament are not proceeded with for years and changed circumstances operate in the meantime. The Government is not bound to accept the committee's recommendations. Under the Public Works Standing Committee's Act the Government is only bound to refer to the committee all public works costing more than £100,000 and to obtain a report from the committee before it proceeds to appropriate money to carry out the works.

Mr. Shannon—That is so, but I think the same comment would apply to any financial committee.

Mr. O'HALLORAN—The Government can please itself whether it adopts a report of the Public Works Committee, but if the committee reported that a work should not be proceeded with and the Government proceeded with the work the Government would have a choppy sea to sail in the future. If a public accounts committee, after investigating Government expenditure on a project, reported that there had been wasteful expenditure and that certain steps should be taken to correct that form of waste in the future, I suggest that no Government could afford to ignore it. What is vital to this question is the growth of semi-Governmental institutions—and the Electricity Trust, Housing Trust, and Tramways Trust are three that come to mind. The first two are responsible for much of our Loan expenditure at present but their projects are not inquired into by the Public Works Committee nor is their spending subject to other than internal inquiry. The taxpayers of South Australia find the money and have to make good any deficiency that occurs in the accounts of either of these great undertakings. I do not criticize them, because I believe the Housing Trust and Electricity Trust have been efficiently managed and are doing a great service to the State and that they are a desirable example of the type of Socialism we want in this country, but, although I believe in Socialism and socialistic enterprises, I believe that even in that halcyon state it is necessary to have a watchdog in addition to the Auditor-General to look after the Privy purse and I hope the motion will be carried.

The House divided on the motion:—

Ayes (17).—Messrs. Bywaters, Clark, Corcoran, Dunstan, Hughes, Hutchens, Jennings, Lawn, Loveday, McKee, O'Halloran (teller), Ralston, Riches, Ryan, Stott, Frank Walsh and Fred Walsh.

Noes (19).—Messrs. Brookman, Coumbe, Dunnage, Hall, Hambour, Harding, Heaslip, Hineks, Jenkins, King, Laucke, Millhouse, Nankivell, Pattinson and Pearson, Sir Thomas Playford (teller), Messrs. Quirke and Shannon and Mrs. Steele.

Pair.—Aye—Mr. Tapping. No—Mr. Bockelberg.

Majority of 2 for the Noes.  
Motion thus negatived.

#### DIFFERENTIAL FUEL CHARGES.

Adjourned debate on the motion of Mr. O'Halloran:

That in the opinion of this House a Select Committee should be appointed to inquire into the effect on the community of differential charges for petrol and motor fuels, and to recommend any action deemed necessary or desirable to ensure a more equitable apportionment of distribution and other costs.

(Continued from November 11. Page 1558.)

Mr. RICHES (Stuart)—This motion seeks an investigation into the price of petrol landed at South Australian ports and into the freight differential charges levied in the various zones operating within the State. I have already instanced the differences in the landed price of petrol at Port Adelaide as against Port Pirie and Port Lincoln and as against Portland in Victoria, and have asked why this difference in the landed price of petrol should obtain. I submit that we have not had that satisfactorily explained. I am convinced that the Leader and the members for Mount Gambier and Port Pirie have advanced concrete arguments of sufficient importance to warrant this question being thoroughly investigated by a committee. There is little need to stress the importance of the price of petrol and the cost of transporting it to various parts of the State. When approaches are made for the establishment of industries in the country transport is always advanced as one reason for the concentration of industries in the metropolitan area. It has been said that disabilities are associated with establishing industries at Elizabeth because they would be too far from the business centre of the State, and that transport would be a disadvantage. If nothing is done to

reduce transport costs the outlook for the establishment of industries in the country is grim indeed. That is patent to everybody. There should be no need for me to refer to the great stress that is placed on this matter. Anything done to reduce costs must be to the benefit of the State.

It is proposed that the committee investigate the price structure of petrol and report to Parliament about steps to be taken to deal with the price and to bring about more effective means of distribution. It is impossible for an individual member to conduct a one-man inquiry in this matter. An investigation should be made by a committee having all the powers of a Royal Commission, although we feel that it is not necessary to have a Royal Commission, only a Select Committee. Representations had to be made to the oil companies to have Portland regarded as a freight free port. It did not just happen and there was nothing automatic about it, but the move has redounded to the benefit of the western districts of Victoria, and ultimately the south-eastern portion of South Australia will benefit. What was done at Portland should be done at South Australian ports. We admit that there may be information not at our disposal and that is why we suggest that a committee be appointed to collect it. The layman cannot see why petrol cannot be off-loaded at Port Pirie as cheaply as at Portland and Port Adelaide. The quantity of petrol handled at Port Pirie is greater than at Portland. The Premier quoted a report from the Prices Commissioner that ships calling at Port Adelaide could unload the whole cargo there, whereas ships at Port Pirie and Port Lincoln could off-load only a portion of the cargo and then go to other ports. That was the only reason given for the difference between Portland and Port Pirie. An examination shows that the statement is not correct because ships at Portland do not always off-load the whole cargo but continue to Port Adelaide and to Hobart. Ships calling at Port Adelaide do not always completely off-load there, some go on to Hobart. We have not been given an answer to our query as to why Port Pirie should not be on the same basis as Portland.

Are these the only two places in South Australia where bulk installations should be established? Wherever the installations have been put in there have been reductions in costs. Whose duty is it to make the inquiries and recommendations? A number of factors go to make up the price structure of petrol.

One is the landed cost at the port. Another is the establishment of bulk installations and another is the supply of petrol tanks. In determining the country prices the State has been zoned and the prices in the zones should have some relation to freight costs. I suggest that one-brand petrol stations have a bearing on the petrol price. The number of service stations is another factor. It has been freely expressed to me that service stations have been erected five years ahead of their time in a mad race to get the best positions and to cater for what is anticipated will be the position in five years' time. Because of that the motorists are paying the price. No-one will suggest that the costs of service stations are being met in any other way than by means of the price of petrol.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—The Premier said that the Prices Commissioner showed that petrol users were not paying for the service stations.

Mr. RICHES—Who is paying for them? That was said several years ago. Does the Prices Commissioner still believe it? Commonsense indicates that it must come from the prices that consumers pay for petrol.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—The honourable member says that the Premier has given incorrect information to the House?

Mr. RICHES—No. I said that statement was made two years ago. Does the Prices Commissioner still hold that view?

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—In effect, the honourable member is saying the Premier has given incorrect information to the House.

Mr. RICHES—I say that commonsense would indicate that the costs of service stations now being erected are being met by means of the price of petrol. The stations are being erected five years ahead of time.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—The Prices Commissioner says otherwise.

Mr. RICHES—If he does, he does not satisfy me. I have every confidence in him and I give him credit for the reduction in the price of distillate as from today. Generally I believe that the Prices Branch is doing an excellent job. I have tried to show that there are factors in the price structure of petrol over which the Prices Commissioner has no control. I think there are anomalies in the zoning of the State and the Prices Commissioner must accept some responsibility for that. There should be an investigation into the matter.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—You are saying that the information given to the House is not correct.

Mr. RICHES—If the Minister says that the Prices Commissioner wants us to believe that the cost of service stations is not met through the sale of petrol I repeat that he has not convinced me on that point, and I would like an inquiry by a committee.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—He says that he does not allow for that in his calculations.

Mr. Hambour—It comes from the reseller's profit.

Mr. RICHES—Resellers have written to the press expressing grave concern at the number of service stations being erected. Some petrol resellers have gone out of business. Most of those I have contacted believe that the oil companies are planning and building not for today but for five years ahead, and that they are not having much regard for the people in the industry. A number of those in business now are facing a difficult problem, which is a matter that needs investigation.

Mr. Hambour—They do not force resellers into petrol stations.

Mr. RICHES—I do not profess to know much about the matter but resellers who have approached me are worried about the situation. Obviously, the cost of these service stations must be met out of the proceeds of the sale of petrol. Where else can the money come from? It must affect the price structure. The decision to introduce one-brand petrol stations must have had an effect. It was said that their establishment would reduce the price of petrol but, although I do not know whether other members are convinced that that has happened, I am not. If someone wants to sell one-brand petrol it is necessary to build a service station, whereas previously it was only necessary to install a pump at an existing station. All these things affect the price of petrol, and not all are under the control of the Prices Commissioner. I therefore urge that somebody, somewhere, should investigate whether we should not have more than one port in South Australia at which petrol is landed at the same price as it is landed in other Australian ports; whether we should not have more bulk installations; whether anomalies in the prices charged in the various zones could not be ironed out; and whether the petrol tax could not be levied on the basis of zoning in order to bring about a more equal apportionment of taxation. Although other members may not agree with me, I think it is wrong that motorists, who, through other charges, are paying 4s. a gallon, should be taxed at the same rate as motorists getting petrol for 3s. 5d.

a gallon. I think one-brand petrol stations need investigating, and also the number of service stations.

Mr. Hambour—Don't you think Parliament should confine itself to protecting the consumer, or do you think Parliament should take over the administration and distribution of petrol entirely? Provided that the consumer is protected, aren't you satisfied?

Mr. RICHES—My whole concern is for the consumer, in giving service to the people, and for everyone else engaged in the industry. If the oil industry were taken over by the Government, it would be a fine thing for Australia as a whole.

Mr. Hambour—I thought that was what you were thinking.

Mr. RICHES—It was. Australia had the best deal when the Government had an interest in Commonwealth Oil Refineries and a grave disservice was rendered this country when the Commonwealth Government sold its interests in that concern. Why should the people not be permitted to engage in decent competition with private enterprise? Selling out the people's interest in industries that the people had a hand in establishing is, in my opinion, all wrong. If Standing Orders permitted I would say something about the assistance people are required to give private industry in this State on a basis on which the people must incur losses if there are any, but on which, when there are profits, none are returned to the people. I believe in a full partnership. I am not permitted to develop that argument in this debate, but I will do so when the opportunity presents itself. This motion is important, and should not be defeated merely because of prejudice against motions from this side of the House. Nothing but good could come out of the inquiry, and it need not be costly. All we are seeking is an inquiry by a committee with power to conduct an investigation. That is not possible by the individual member. This Committee could do no harm, but it could do much good; on that basis I support the motion.

Mr. HALL (Gouger)—I did not intend to speak but, during the debate, my electorate was mentioned, so I have carried out some research from which some amazing things have cropped up. The items quoted by members opposite in support of this motion were amazing. The biggest majority have been no more than so much nonsense and, if members opposite contest that, I will enlighten them. Any committee of inquiry should be soundly based, and there should be a need for it. I

implied this view by interjection last week when the member for Stuart (Mr. Riches) was speaking. He made a plea for committees of inquiry in general, but that has nothing to do with the matter now before the House. Each matter must stand on its merits. The member for Stuart said that mentioning the Prices Commissioner in this debate was a red herring. I refer him to his Leader's statement in moving the motion, when he said:—

It will be necessary to take steps to have outports rated differently by the Federal authorities so that Port Pirie and Port Lincoln could be regarded as freight-free ports similar to Portland.

The significant part of that is the mention of Federal authorities. One would not think that the Leader of the Labor Party in this House would make such a shocking mistake as to base one of his main arguments for this committee on a shocking inaccuracy. The differential prices in this State are fixed directly by the Prices Department under the Prices Minister.

Mr. Ralston—What is the landed price?

Mr. HALL—Does the honourable member know?

Mr. Ralston—It is 3s. 0½d. landed at Port Adelaide.

Mr. HALL—That is not the landed price. The honourable member needs some investigation himself; he is incorrect.

Mr. Ralston—What is the standard price of petrol in bowsers in Adelaide?

Mr. HALL—I do not know from whom members opposite got their figures, but someone has misled them. The price of 3s. 0½d. is the wholesale price, not the landed price. The honourable member cannot talk around that. As the Prices Commissioner has the full power over differential prices in this State, setting up the proposed Committee would be nothing more than investigating the price fixing on petrol in this State by the Commissioner.

Mr. McKee—Are you supporting the oil companies or your constituents?

Mr. HALL—I know very well whose side the Prices Commissioner is on, and the member for Port Pirie knows that also. The Prices Commissioner is on his side, yet in this motion the honourable member is expressing dissatisfaction with him. There has been much talk of the mystery about the difference between prices at Port Pirie and Port Adelaide. There is no mystery; it is simply the distribution charges fixed to cover country areas. It is well-known that there is a slight over-recovery in the city and a slight under-recovery in the country.

Mr. Ralston—How much is the freight differential in the city?

Mr. HALL—I will deal with the honourable member's allegations later. There have been so many misconceptions that I am rather at a loss to know where to start. I have dealt with the main misconceptions.

Mr. Riches—Explain the mystery of why the wholesale price at Port Pirie is more than at Adelaide.

Mr. HALL—It is to cover the price of distribution into the hinterland. Who does the honourable member think should stand that—the city people? Does he want to raise the price in the city to subsidize country distribution? The member for Mount Gambier said there had been a grave injustice in his area. His main reason for supporting the motion was to help his own area. However, the Prices Commissioner and his staff are at present inquiring into the position at Mount Gambier. The honourable member has raised the matter, and he is getting the inquiry. Let us inquire further into his statement about Portland. He has intimated that Portland is a freight free port for all petroleum products, but it is nothing of the sort. There is a differential charge of 4½d. at Mount Gambier, and the honourable member would have us believe that there is a terrific advantage in living in western Victoria because petrol, which comes from Portland, is so much cheaper there. Let me read some of the figures relating to the west of Victoria—and I ask members to keep in mind that Mount Gambier is 71 miles from Portland, and that there is a differential in the price of petrol of 4½d. At Casterton, the differential is 4d.; at Coleraine, 4d.; and at Edenhope, 4½d. I have figures of other petroleum products, but I will come back to Mount Gambier, where the differential works in favour of the consumer of other fuels. The differential at Portland for kerosene is 2½d. With the freight cost of 2½d. to Mount Gambier, it should sell at a differential of 4½d. there, but under the Prices Commissioner's fixation it sells at a differential of only 4d. The differential for distillate at Portland is 4½d. With 2½d. for freight added, on the honourable member's reasoning it should sell at a differential of 7d. at Mount Gambier, whereas in fact it is 4½d.

Mr. Ralston—That is the freight rate from Port Adelaide, whence it should come.

Mr. HALL—The 4½d. represents a saving of 2½d. Taking all petroleum products into consideration, Mount Gambier has been getting a fair deal. We now come to the tonnages

handled at the respective ports. The honourable member said that for Portland it was 127,732 tons of petroleum products and that at Port Pirie there was an overall total of 163,946 tons, but he refrained from telling the House that 75,000 tons of that was bought in bulk, under contracts, by the Broken Hill Proprietary Company and the Commonwealth Railways, and that they have nothing to do with commercial distribution in that area. The comparison now becomes 127,732 tons as against 88,946 tons. Whether it was intended or not, his statement was definitely misleading, therefore I think that any reasoning that the freight from Port Pirie should be the same as for Port Adelaide is false. Even if an inquiry were made, as suggested in the motion, the Select Committee would have to go through the books of the Prices Commissioner. I cannot countenance any motion that expresses dissatisfaction with that officer's activities. Mr. Riches has spoken of decentralization. There again I made a few inquiries. If he wants one price to operate throughout the State, how could that be done? That is the logical conclusion. The increase in the city would not be below 2½d. or 3d. a gallon.

Mr. Ralston—What freight do they pay now?

Mr. HALL—I think the honourable member is endeavouring to cover up past mistakes. After this statement, I think that the members for Rocky River and Mitcham will certainly review their statements in the House which I do not think they could possibly support. I do not think they could possibly support this motion when it is based on such a weak foundation. I oppose it.

Mr. BYWATERS (Murray)—I desire to get a more even price for consumers in my district. Obviously, the honourable member for Gouger is very uneasy about the position, because it will get back to his constituents that he is opposing something that will ultimately benefit people in his district and is trying to cover that up by making certain statements that I do not think are relevant to the position. There is no truth in the statement that we want an inquiry into the activities of the Prices Commissioner. Mr. Ralston and Mr. Riches said we did not want it, and that should be sufficient evidence that members on this side do not want such an inquiry.

Mr. Heaslip—Which figures are correct, those given by Mr. Ralston or by Mr. Hall?

Mr. BYWATERS—I accept the word of Mr. Ralston, who has had much experience in this respect. I believe that the honourable members

have crossed in their interpretation. We find that there is a gradual upheaval opposite because honourable members there did not realize what Mr. Ralston was speaking about. He put forward a very sound case when he spoke about freight-free ports. He mentioned that the price at these ports was controlled by the Federal Government under its tariff powers and that it amounted to 3s. 0½d. a gallon. We heard Mr. Hall say that the motion was a vote of no-confidence in the Prices Commissioner. What about Portland? That does not come under our Prices Commissioner. The price for Portland is arrived at in the same way as that for any port in South Australia. The object of the motion is to provide that the price at Port Lincoln and Port Pirie shall be the same. The Prices Commissioner has no say whatsoever outside South Australia.

Mr. Coumbe—Who fixes the price at Portland?

Mr. BYWATERS—It is fixed by the Federal Government as a freight-free port.

The Hon. G. G. Pearson—You are absolutely wrong; ring up the Tariff Board.

Mr. BYWATERS—Who fixes the price if the Tariff Board doesn't? Someone has to fix the landed price of petrol. The landed cost in the other States is fixed at 3s. 0½d., so I do not know how it can be said that the Prices Commissioner fixes the price in South Australia. The Leader of the Opposition and the member for Mount Gambier both put up excellent cases in support of Port Pirie and Port Lincoln having the same facilities as Portland and Port Adelaide, and I do not think that a request along these lines is too much to ask. Unfortunately, there is no sea port in my district; the only port I can think of is Port Mannum, and I do not think that would be declared a freight-free port.

Mr. Stott—Petrol is imported into Australia, so does it not come under the Tariff Board?

Mr. BYWATERS—I think so. It would be a tariff fixation, and the Commonwealth Government fixes that, so until I am convinced otherwise I accept that point of view. By way of interjection, the member for Light (Mr. Hambour) said that Port Pirie and Port Lincoln were helping pay for petrol for the hinterland. The cost of petrol at Port Pirie is 3s. 7½d., whereas at Port Lincoln it is 3s. 8d., although the petrol is delivered in bulk by ship at both these ports. There again, there is a difference.

The member for Gouger (Mr. Hall) put forward a rather remarkable point of view when he said that if petrol prices were reviewed



as suggested it would mean an increase in the price of petrol in Adelaide, as people in the country were getting the advantage of the cheaper rate because of the balancing and evening up by the Prices Commissioner over the various districts. I find that hard to understand, because prices are certainly not evening up in my district, which is only 50 miles from Adelaide, and where petrol delivered in that area costs an extra 2½d. a gallon. I suppose we are paying for the hinterland in that regard! I cannot accept that argument. The member for Port Pirie (Mr. McKee) presented figures relating to the various districts throughout the State and the prices existing there. He pointed out that at Yorketown, 160 miles from Adelaide, the price of petrol was 3s. 7½d. a gallon. It is the same price at Murray Bridge, which is 51 miles from Adelaide, and this to me takes some explaining. I do not think the people in the metropolitan area are carrying any cost at all to assist the consumers in my district, and I reject that theory, because within 50 miles of Adelaide the people are paying an extra 2½d. a gallon.

I am told that a tanker carries about 5,000 gallons, which means that the oil companies make a profit of £50 on each load they truck to Murray Bridge. I understand that the service station owners at Murray Bridge take a full tanker at one time, and as a half a day would be sufficient to cover the journey to and from Murray Bridge, it represents a handsome profit to the oil companies. It seems, therefore, that the price of petrol at Murray Bridge is far in excess of what it should be.

The member for Stuart (Mr. Riches) mentioned decentralization, which has always been a pet theory of mine. I have been told that no extra charge is made for delivery of petrol at Elizabeth, and it appears that this came about because of the Government's desire to see Elizabeth established as a satellite town. In those circumstances, I think the Government should have done something similar in my electorate, which is ideally situated for industrial expansion, but while this 2½d. price differential on petrol exists it will have a retarding effect on industries coming to that area. The Premier, when referring to the Leader's speech regarding the position at Mount Gambier, pointed out that the railways had lost £30,000 because petrol was now being landed at Portland. If that is so, something should be paid back to the consumers of that area, because that much less freight rate is being paid. A review of the position in the Mount Gambier area has been

promised, and I therefore feel that by his persistency the member for Mount Gambier (Mr. Ralston) has done a signal service to the people in his district, because if this motion does not get anywhere it will at least have fulfilled some useful purpose. We have heard about the poor unfortunate oil companies not being able to make things pay. It is therefore rather remarkable that at Murray Bridge, where there were previously 16 petrol resellers, the oil companies in recent months have either erected or propose to erect another three roadhouses along the Princes Highway.

Mr. O'Halloran—Which will sell petrol.

Mr. Jenkins—Isn't that decentralization, and isn't that good?

Mr. BYWATERS—I do not know whether it is a good thing to take from one and give to another.

Mr. Hambour—Quite true; you don't know.

Mr. BYWATERS—One of the oil companies has advertised for someone to take over a recently completed service station. Advertisements have appeared not only in the local papers, but in the *Advertiser*, asking for people to take over the service station, but the company is having difficulty in getting people interested because they realize there is not a living in it. Not only in my district, but in other districts, people who have previously been in the business are finding that some of the business is being taken away, and that is why they are not anxious to take this service station over. The oil companies establish these service stations merely to get a share of petrol sales; they do not care two hoots about the man who is sometimes working 20 hours a day to provide a service, very often on demand, and making very little above the basic wage. The oil companies are not concerned about that; all they are concerned about is seeing that their brand of petrol becomes available to the public.

As a country member it is my duty to support the motion, and I feel that all country members who desire to assist the consumers of their district should support it. Attention has been drawn to the fact that the price of petrol could be reduced in areas such as Port Pirie and Port Lincoln, and the hinterland would benefit if those ports were declared freight-free ports. Because of that I feel obliged, as a country member, to support the motion for an inquiry into the reasons why country people pay more than city dwellers for petrol.

Mr. HAMBOUR (Light)—I rise simply to answer some questions raised by the Opposition. It rather surprises me that those who submitted the motion should not know the

answers. It is useless to get up and say, "I support this, but I do not know," and that statement has been made by two or three Opposition members. It is strange that not even one metropolitan Opposition member has spoken on this motion and I should like to know why. If I am not told, I will tell them why. By opposing this motion I am protecting my constituents. The member for Murray (Mr. Bywaters) said that the Government was keeping the price of petrol down in Elizabeth because it was the Government's satellite town, but that accusation cannot be substantiated. I have said plenty about Elizabeth in this House, but surely members realize that where there is a concentrated population close to the city the prices applying there will be the same as in the metropolitan area.

The member for Mount Gambier (Mr. Ralston) wanted to know how the landed cost was arrived at, but that is an elementary question. The cost at the port of shipping, insurance, freight and duty become the landed cost. The landed cost the honourable member referred to was the wholesale price to the resellers and it included the profit to the petrol companies. Members opposite asked what petrol sold for in Adelaide. It is sold at 3s. 5d. a gallon, which gives a profit margin of 4½d. to the resellers. I want to protect the consumer because I am sure that the people who bring petrol here and who enter into the reselling business are quite capable of looking after themselves. The member for Norwood (Mr. Dunstan) and one or two other members opposite suggested that resellers were going out of business. True, many people are rushing into the petrol reselling business thinking it a bonanza.

Mr. Dunstan—I was talking about established people who were being forced out of the industry.

Mr. HAMBOUR—That can happen. A newcomer does well because he is bright and enterprising and the old stodgy bloke who has been on the corner for a generation or two gets run over by the smart fellow.

Mr. Stott—Then they put up another station 10yds. from him.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Yes, and that is competition. Members opposite say that petrol companies are building these stations out of profits. Members opposite should not be so foolish. The companies are not so stupid as to put money into petrol stations, but they will lend the money to people to build them.

Mr. Dunstan—Are you suggesting that these petrol stations are not being put up by the companies themselves?

Mr. HAMBOUR—The petrol companies put up the money but the liability is on the reseller.

Mr. Dunstan—How many new stations are put up for lease?

Mr. HAMBOUR—Close relatives of mine put up a station for a petrol company, but they were assured of their profit. Many of these "pop-ups" are not the making of the petrol companies.

Mr. Ryan—Whose are they?

Mr. HAMBOUR—The resellers get a site and decide to put a station up and the petrol companies help them.

Mr. Ryan—Why don't you stick to facts?

Mr. HAMBOUR—I have previously said that the companies put up the good ones, but investigations reveal that the surplus stations belong to resellers. Members opposite say that the companies put the stations up. Are they starting to feel sorry for the companies which put bowlers up but which cannot get people to occupy them? Surely their hearts are not bleeding for the petrol companies. I ask leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

#### MILLICENT AND BEACHPORT RAILWAY DISCONTINUANCE BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

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

#### WANDILO AND GLENCOE RAILWAY (DISCONTINUANCE) BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

#### NURSES REGISTRATION ACT AMEND- MENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

#### THE AUSTRALIAN MINERAL DEVELOP- MENT LABORATORIES BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

#### SOUTH-EASTERN DRAINAGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

#### LOTTERY AND GAMING (CHARITABLE PURPOSES) BILL.

Received from the Legislative Council and read a first time.

## HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the Legislative Council without amendment.

## LOCAL COURTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. B. PATTINSON (Minister of Education)—I move—

*That this Bill be now read a second time.*

Its object is to make certain desirable machinery amendments to the Local Courts Act. The first amendment concerns certain difficulties which arise from time to time in connection with orders of imprisonment for failure to attend on the hearing of an unsatisfied judgment summons, where doubts exist as to which is the nearest court to which the defendant in the proceedings resides or carries on business. The principal Act provides by section 114 that actions shall be commenced in the court nearest to the place where the cause of action arose or nearest to the place where the defendant resides or carries on business at the time of action brought. Section 175 provides that an unsatisfied judgment summons is to be issued out of the court nearest to the place of residence or business of the defendant and, as honourable members are aware, if a defendant fails to attend on the hearing of an unsatisfied judgment summons, the court may order imprisonment for a period up to 40 days; but the court must be the court having jurisdiction nearest to which the defendant resides or carries on business (section 179). A large number of such orders is made in the various courts each week under this provision. It will be appreciated that, if the court making the order for imprisonment is not the nearest court, the order is bad and this could possibly lead to proceedings for false imprisonment.

The question whether a court is the nearest court can frequently be one of some difficulty, particularly in relation to the jurisdictional boundary between the local courts of Adelaide and Port Adelaide. In many cases it is difficult to ascertain on precisely which side of the dividing line the particular defendant resides and indeed, in some cases, a circle drawn strictly in accordance with the existing provisions would bisect some houses. To cover these cases the Bill will allow a margin of one mile on either side of the dividing line.

Furthermore, strict compliance with the provisions of the principal Act can lead to hardship. Although the nearest court can be easily determined, means of transport to another court may be more readily available. For

example, some portions of the northern suburbs are nearer to Salisbury than Adelaide, while others in the south are nearer to Morphett Vale, but in either event transport to Adelaide would be easier for a defendant. To cover these cases and, at the same time, to enable a certain measure of flexibility in administration, the Bill will enable the local court judge by rules of court to define conclusively the area of jurisdiction of a local court, thus enabling the area of jurisdiction of the Local Court of Adelaide to be defined, having regard to both distance and availability of transport. Clauses 4 and 5 so provide.

Clauses 7, 8 and 9 of the Bill will amend section 175, section 176 (2) and section 179 (a) of the principal Act to provide, in the case of unsatisfied judgment summonses, that proceedings may be issued out of a local court situated not more than one mile further from the defendant's residence or place of business than the nearest local court.

The second proposed amendment concerns the provisions regarding registration in a local court of a certificate of judgment obtained in another local court so that steps for enforcement of the judgment can be taken in that other local court. The principal Act requires the clerk of each court in which a certificate of judgment is so registered to keep the original court informed of all proceedings taken or payments made on account of the judgment debt. In point of fact, in the great majority of cases no further steps are taken in the court which made the original order, the collection of the judgment debt being carried on in the second court where the certificate of judgment has been registered. This means that much time and effort are expended in keeping the original court posted to no good purpose. The amendment made by the Bill (Clause 6) will provide that the original court need not be informed as to any steps taken or moneys paid except on the request of either party, but there is a saving clause that no further proceedings can be taken in the original court except where that court has been informed on the request of either party or the plaintiff makes an affidavit as to the balance due and owing.

The third amendment is made by Clause 3 of the Bill. At the present time, where a warrant of commitment has been issued, a bailiff is required to execute it within five days. This gives rise in many cases to considerable hardship, for a defendant might be in a position within a relatively short time to pay the whole of the debt and costs, and the

bailiff might feel satisfied on this point; yet he has no discretion in the matter. Clause 3 of the Bill is designed to enable a little more flexibility in this respect. It provides that the bailiff shall execute warrants of commitment with all dispatch, but in any event within one month.

The fourth amendment will bring the amount of compensation which can be awarded to a defendant vexatiously summoned on an unsatisfied judgment more closely into line with modern conditions. Clause 10 amends section 181 of the principal Act by raising this amount from £5 to £20.

Mr. DUNSTAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### MOTOR VEHICLES BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from November 17. Page 1655.)

Mr. KING (Chaffey)—I rise to support the Bill, which is a very good instance of decentralization of administration in a particularly difficult matter that has been getting more and more complex with the passing of the years, as the number of registrations each year is increasing by about 10,000. To separate the registration and licensing portions from the other legislation is a good move. The Bill is wide in its scope and most of its provisions can be dealt with best in Committee. Under clause 90 the Registrar is given power to suspend or cancel a licence where the licence has been previously suspended or cancelled in another State. This is a wise provision in some instances, but the power is discretionary and may not be applied. Conversely, I consider that in other States the Registrars or similar officers should have the same power. It would be expected that if a driver had his licence suspended or cancelled in this State there would be the power to suspend or cancel it in other States, but that is not obligatory. When we inflict a disqualification here on an interstate driver it does not prevent him from continuing to drive his vehicle in his own State. I know of a case where a man was found guilty of an offence, fined and had his licence suspended for some months. He was an interstate driver, but only a casual visitor here. I gather that, unless the other State took the same action as this State did, our suspension would have no effect. This matter will come up for consideration in connection with the Road Traffic Bill, but it should be discussed now because it bears on the aspects of punishment and deterrent effect.

Another matter that concerns me is the

disqualification or cancellation of a licence, particularly where a driver loses his licence for a period of three months. I understand from a case that was brought to my notice that the driver suffered extreme hardship, which could not have been foreseen by the court when the punishment was inflicted, and applied by petition to have the period of suspension shortened or lifted, but he was advised that there was no power to permit the suspension to be lifted or varied. Clause 94 (2) says:—

If any such order of disqualification is quashed or varied by a court on appeal, the proper officer of the court shall forthwith send to the Registrar a notice in writing stating the date of the order made on the appeal and the effect thereof.

I take it that the appeal must be made within the time fixed by the regulation under which the case was tried. I am not sure whether this is a case where a person who has been disqualified can have the disqualification reviewed or lifted temporarily, perhaps during the pleasure of the court or to enable him to take off his harvest. In certain circumstances, unless there is provision for the court to look at a case where hardship is obvious and can be proved, some way should be found to relieve the hardship. Will the Treasurer consider these matters when the Bill is in Committee? Otherwise, I congratulate those responsible for the Bill and I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

Mr. MILLHOUSE (Mitcham)—I wholeheartedly support the second reading. It is obvious that this is a Committee Bill, but I want to mention one or two matters before we reach the Committee stage. I express, I am sure, the appreciation of the whole State to Sir Edgar Bean for the work he did in drafting this legislation. We are all very much in his debt. I was disappointed to see one matter omitted from this Bill and from the Road Traffic Bill. I hope to remedy the position, but I will not trespass on the second reading stage by explaining what I intend to do. I refer to a case where a person is injured on a roadway through the negligence of an uninsured driver. On occasions a motor car is driven without its being insured. That is an offence, but it does happen. Besides that, the driver may have no money of his own. It may be that there is no insurance and no money. A man may be injured in an accident and have a claim for damages. He may sue the wrongdoer and obtain a judgment, but the other man may have no money to satisfy it. Because he is not insured the injured person is left whistling for his

damages. That problem arises probably not more than once or twice a year.

Mr. Stott—Are you talking about a comprehensive policy?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—No, a third party bodily injury damage. Perhaps I had better illustrate the position by quoting two examples. A man was driving normally on the correct side of the road. He saw a car coming towards him weaving dangerously, and it came on to his side of the road. He moved further to the left-hand side, but unfortunately he had his right elbow leaning out of the window. The other car veered towards his and as it went past took off his arm. It did not stop. The driver who had lost his arm was, of course, incapacitated, but the driver of a following car chased the car that did the damage, stopped it, and got the name and address of the driver. It turned out later that he was driving under the influence, was not insured, and had no money. He was clearly responsible for the accident and the injured man was entitled to damages of some thousands of pounds, but he had no remedy.

The Hon. Sir Thomas Playford—Was the vehicle registered?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—I suggest that that is irrelevant. I do not know whether the car was registered or not, but it was certainly uninsured, and I presume it was unregistered. Let us assume it was unregistered. It was not covered by insurance, the driver was landed with a judgment against him for some thousands of pounds, he had no money, therefore the judgment could not be satisfied, and the injured man had no remedy.

Mr. Stott—How could you force him to insure if he was not registered?

Mr. MILLHOUSE—I cannot explain that, but if the honourable member looks at the amendment on the file—

The SPEAKER—The honourable member cannot speak about his amendment.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—I was going to say that I would explain it subsequently. The guilty driver did not stop, and it was only because a third person chased him that he was caught. If he had not been caught, the injured driver would have had a remedy under the hit-run sections of the Act against what we call a nominal defendant; he would have been able to get his damages, and the judgment would have been satisfied. Because the guilty driver was chased and his identity was established, the man who lost his arm was in a worse position than if the hit-run driver had not been caught.

That is a case that happened in this State in the last couple of years, and it shows that there is an obvious anomaly in the Act.

I have another example concerning a married man who was a passenger in a car involved in an accident because of the negligence of the driver. The passenger was killed. The car was uninsured, and the driver, who was a sailor, had no money. The widow of the deceased, of course, had no remedy at all. She lived in New South Wales, and her solicitors wrote over and said “We presume you have some such section as we have to allow this woman to obtain damages,” but there is no such section in this State. Here again the widow was deprived of many thousands of pounds of damages because of this anomaly in the Act. There are provisions in the Acts of Victoria, New South Wales, Western Australia and Tasmania that cover this very matter. I have mentioned this problem at this stage for the benefit of members, and I hope we shall be able to remedy it later.

Another matter that occurs early in the Bill is the definition in clause 5 of “primary producer.” Although I shall have something more to say about this later, I think it would be profitable to discuss it now, because it affects the constituents of many members. Under this clause “primary producer” means, among other things, a person who under a written share farming agreement works any land as a share farmer and not as a servant. I direct the attention of the House to the phrase “and not as a servant.” I think I am right in saying that we find in the construction of most share farming agreements that the share farmer is to some extent the servant of the other party to the agreement. That is the construction that has been put on many agreements in the past, and if we leave the words “and not as a servant” in the definition many share farmers under a share farming agreement will be robbed of the very benefit we are trying to bestow on them by including them in the definition of “primary producer.” I may be wrong, but I believe that is the case, and if we want to do justice to the share farmer I think we shall have to look at this matter carefully.

Mr. Hambour—Many share farmers do not have an agreement.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—They will be outside this provision, as it deals only with share farmers working under written agreements. I suggest we could delete the words “and not as a servant” without affecting the intention to include share farmers under the definition of

"primary producer." These are the only two matters I wish to mention now. Many other matters will require attention in Committee but, for the time being, I heartily support the second reading.

Mr. STOTT (Ridley)—I congratulate the committee responsible for drawing up this Bill, and particularly Sir Edgar Bean on its drafting. I think Parliament should pay a tribute to Sir Edgar, who was so willing after vacating his duties to go to the difficult task of drafting a Bill of this nature. I think members will appreciate that when they remember the debates that have taken place on difficult measures such as this. I think Sir Edgar Bean deserves our special recognition and thanks for the way he has drafted the measure.

Because of the large number of clauses in this Bill, the main debate will naturally take place in Committee, so I do not intend to speak at length on the second reading. The member for Mitcham (Mr. Millhouse) covered points that I wanted clarified and I am glad to have had his legal interpretations of the clauses that worried me. I had not realized the significance of the words "and not as a servant." However, I think we need to go further than striking out those words, as I have had some difficulty in getting the Registrar to agree to allow a share farmer to qualify for the reduction in registration fees. The Registrar is rather inclined to grant a reduction if the share farmer can produce a written agreement but to reject an application if he is of opinion that the share farmer is doing work under the complete direction of the owner. If he is doing work under direction, the Registrar is inclined to interpret that as meaning he is a workman and not a primary producer, and consequently not entitled to a concessional fee. After representations have been made, the Registrar has often reconsidered his decision and in some cases has granted concession fees, but I think Parliament should make it clearer who is a share farmer. In Committee I shall move an amendment to strike out the words mentioned by the member for Mitcham and to insert words to the effect that in the absence of a written agreement the share farmer must satisfy the Registrar with other proof that he is working as a share farmer.

Another clause relates to half registration fees being paid on vehicles used on Kangaroo Island and in those parts of the State that are not within a council area. I also have in mind such areas which may eventually be

included in a district council area, which would then be debarred from the benefit intended. In the Upper Murray districts, particularly in my area, many orchardists use a trailer behind a tractor to take their produce to the packing shed or distillery. The tractor is registered and therefore covered by third party insurance, but I was wondering whether a man would be permitted to use an unregistered trailer, and still be covered by third party insurance. Some orchardists use three or four trailers. One is filled with fruit and taken to the packing shed or distillery while another one is being loaded. In Committee I intend to move an amendment to provide that an unregistered trailer may be attached to a registered tractor for carting fruit to a packing shed or distillery so that if an accident occurred the trailer as well as the tractor would be covered by insurance. There are many good features in the Bill, which I am pleased to support.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—I agree with some of the remarks of Mr. O'Halloran that registration privileges enjoyed by primary producers are in some instances being abused. I am entirely opposed to Mr. Millhouse's suggestion, because if it were agreed to every vehicle in the country could become a primary producer's vehicle. The words referred to by the honourable member have always been included in the interpretation; and it has never been agreed that a person not genuinely a primary producer should be allowed to get the benefit of the reduced registration fee. We would get to the same position as on a previous occasion when amendments for wholesale registration concessions were moved and one district after another was eliminated, until at the end of the evening if all these amendments had been agreed to there would be no money left for roads. As a result all the amendments were disallowed. Primary producer registration concessions have been taken to their absolute limit. Any attempt to widen the field whatsoever would bring the legislation into disrepute and to such an extent that the concession would be wiped out. In the main the money is collected in the metropolitan area and spent in the country. Under those circumstances, how can we justify any extension of the concession?

There is considerable merit and justification in the Leader of the Opposition's statement. I should not under any circumstances support an extension of the type of concession one honourable member has mentioned, because it

would mean in practice that the person concerned would be a sharefarmer getting a small bonus at the end of the year. This is a clause that has had a wealth of experience behind its administration, and I personally would not under any circumstances support any suggestion for widening it by means of these eliminations.

The member for Chaffey (Mr. King) raised a point on which I can give some information. Obviously, we cannot provide in this State for the de-licensing of a driver in another State. Honourable members will realize that we could not include a provision that would have the effect of de-licensing a driver in say, New South Wales. What has happened is that when a person is de-licensed in any State the other States are advised that that person has been de-licensed, and they immediately take similar action in those States. Provisions in the Acts of some States are not identical in their provisions or in the matter of penalties, and it occasionally happens that a person returns to his home State having committed an offence in another State which in his own State would not be an offence at all.

Another factor that comes into it is that in one State a particular magistrate takes a great pleasure in de-licensing visitors, particularly from South Australia, and always makes a point of saying that the people from South Australia do not know how to drive. I have communicated with the Government concerned, and that Government has expressed some sympathy in the matter. One South Australian driver in that State crossed over the double lines on an open road, to the extent, according to the evidence, of one foot, and was de-licensed for six months. Another driver travelling on an open road in the country in that State at 60 miles an hour was de-licensed for three months. A motorist travelling at 60 miles an hour on an open road in South Australia is not committing any statutory offence, and our police would not act against that driver. It is, therefore, necessary that there be a little give and take in the administration.

As far as I can remember, South Australia has on three occasions during the past 10 years allowed drivers to continue on the road after they have committed offences in another State. That happened only after the evidence had been secured from the other State and the nature and seriousness of the offence had been examined, and where it was quite obvious that if that offence had occurred in South Australia it would not have been considered a serious traffic offence but quite a trivial one.

Almost without exception, when a driver has his driving licence suspended in one State it is automatically suspended in every State. In the case of the exceptions I have mentioned, I have found that the South Australian drivers concerned have undoubtedly been charged and penalized to an extent that, in my opinion, would not be justified under any circumstances.

The member for Chaffey raised another point which was partly covered by the member for Mitcham (Mr. Millhouse). We in this State regard as a very serious offence the driving of an unregistered and uninsured vehicle, and such a charge will always bring a period of suspension of a licence. If that person has an accident the victim is, in many cases, trying to collect damages from a person of straw who frequently has his vehicle under a hire-purchase agreement. I, therefore, would not subscribe to the view that we should regard that offence as trivial, because it is most serious. The two or three cases that I know of where hardship has been caused have resulted in the circumstances where a person, having received notification from the Registrar that it was time for him to re-register and insure his vehicle, has perhaps neglected to do it immediately, been sick, or gone on an interstate visit, and has forgotten all about it and proceeded to drive an unregistered and uninsured vehicle. That person does not regard it as a very serious offence as he has merely forgotten to register and insure, but the fact is that if he has an accident the victim is left with no opportunity for any redress and usually has to try to get damages from a person who often has insufficient means to meet the damages. I do not agree with the member for Chaffey that driving an unregistered and uninsured vehicle is a trivial offence.

Mr. King—The circumstances mentioned do not apply to the case I had in mind.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I am pleased to hear that, but that is the sort of case that is so frequently claimed to be trivial, whereas it is serious. The interesting question of a nominal defendant has been mentioned by the member for Mitcham. Under our procedure no motor vehicle can be registered and be driven upon the road unless there is produced to the Registrar, before registration, an effective insurance policy. Therefore, if a vehicle on the road is registered it must have been insured, because no registration can take place until a certificate of insurance has been produced to the Registrar. In the event of an accident and the driver of a vehicle not stopping, the Government has an arrangement with

the insurance companies collectively whereby the Treasurer nominates a nominal defendant who, if damages are awarded, collects the amount from those insurance companies. If the vehicle is registered there must be an effective insurance policy. They pool the damage caused by a hit and run driver, but the case the honourable member has mentioned is of an entirely different nature because the vehicle was not insured. Who would I nominate as the person to take the responsibility?

Mr. Millhouse—The same person as for a hit and run case.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I have nominated “Mr. Miller” so often that I know him very well. In fact, one of my officers once said, “This chap should have his driver’s licence suspended; he is always in trouble.” However, in this particular case, Mr. Miller is not the appropriate person to nominate because there is no effective insurance on the vehicle.

Mr. Dunstan—How would you know that?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Because the honourable member said the driver was apprehended and it was an uninsured vehicle.

Mr. Dunstan—How do you know in a hit and run case that the vehicle is insured?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—In such a case it is assumed that it is registered, because a vehicle would not be on the road otherwise. In this particular case it was an uninsured car, and it must also have been unregistered.

Mr. Millhouse—I realize that.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I doubt the validity of putting an obligation upon some insurance company to pay when a vehicle is not insured. Before compulsory insurance was introduced in South Australia no vehicles were insured and everybody was in the position the honourable member for Mitcham has described. That is why compulsory insurance was introduced. I do not see the justice of putting on someone an obligation that is not by any stretch of the imagination legally his. I thank honourable members for their attention to the Bill which will simplify our registration system and enable people to register more easily and which will break down much of the red tape frequently associated with any form of registration. The Bill will give motorists generally satisfaction and I express my appreciation to Mr. Kay and his officers who were responsible for many of the suggestions contained in the Bill.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 4 passed.

Clause 5—“Interpretation.”

Mr. O’HALLORAN—Subclause (4) is the first provision to legalize the registration fee of £1 on interstate hauliers’ vehicles that are not registered in another State. Will hauliers, when they register, be obliged to produce a third party insurance policy?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Premier and Treasurer)—Yes. I do not think there has been any evasion of the insurance policy provisions. Whilst these vehicles may not be registered, they are insured. I am sure that if a vehicle were not insured a heavy penalty would be imposed upon the owner. No doubt the registration procedure will involve a check on insurance.

Mr. STOTT—I move—

In paragraph (b) of the definition “primary producer” to delete “written.”

This part of the definition would then read “‘primary producer’ means a person—(b) who under a sharefarming agreement works any land as a sharefarmer and not as a servant; or.” The sharefarmer would then have to satisfy the Registrar that he has a share-farming agreement, although not necessarily a written one. Obviously the Registrar would ask whether there was a written agreement but if there were not, the Registrar would require proof that there was a sharefarming agreement. That should be sufficient to get the benefit of the primary producer’s reduction. There are dozens of agreements between father and son, and many share-farming agreements are not in writing. Leaving out “written” does not widen the provision: all it does is bring within its scope the sharefarmer without a written agreement.

Mr. McKee—He may have seven or eight sons.

Mr. STOTT—Quite so, but my aim is to ensure that the clause covers every share-farmer, not only those with a written agreement. Why should he have to produce a written agreement? All I want is that he satisfy the Registrar of Motor Vehicles that he is a sharefarmer and has a share-farming agreement. Had he not a written agreement, he would naturally get in touch with the local police officer or the post office. The Registrar of Motor Vehicles would not be idle on this; he would go into the whole matter, if there were no written agreement, and satisfy himself that there was some sort of agreement before he granted the concession.



Mr. McKee—If a sharefarmer did not have a written agreement, he would not be a sharefarmer for long.

Mr. STOTT—I know many who have carried on without written share-farming agreements. The member for Wallaroo (Mr. Hughes) knows about them as well.

Mr. Hambour—If the honourable member will sit down, I will support him.

Mr. STOTT—If the honourable member will support me, I shall get it through.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—This matter has a wealth of experience behind it. If concessions are to be granted, the method of getting them must be set out quite clearly. I do not think that some loose agreement between a father and a son that will qualify both of them for registration at half price is sufficient to justify the son being classed as a primary producer. If the son is a legitimate primary producer, he will have an agreement. There are available standard share-farming agreement forms, which in proper cases are always used. In any case, I point out that under the provision the sharefarmer still has to satisfy the Registrar of Motor Vehicles. In this clause we have tried to clarify the position so that applicants will know what is necessary to satisfy the Registrar.

Mr. O'Halloran—It is an improvement on the old provision.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Yes, when in many instances, people did not know what the qualification was, which meant that they had to go to a policeman to prove their *bona fides* and get a certificate. The provision in this Bill enables the Registrar to act quickly and without the applicant going to the bother of getting a police certificate. Every primary producer has to be registered with the Registrar in accordance with the Act. I hope that the amendment will not be accepted, because it would mean our getting back to the old position where we had to make a personal investigation into every case.

Mr. O'Halloran—And a statutory declaration.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—Yes.

Mr. HAMBOUR—In my district, generally speaking, sharefarmers do not have written agreements. For years there has existed an honorable understanding. Certain conditions are laid down for sharefarmers and they operate under them. I join with the member for Ridley (Mr. Stott) because I am sure that in his district much the same conditions apply. What constitutes an agreement? Would a letter from the owner of the land

saying that a man was a sharefarmer be accepted by the Motor Vehicles Department as an agreement?

Mr. Jenkins—No.

Mr. HAMBOUR—Does it have to be a formal agreement or can it be an undertaking between the owner of the land and the sharefarmer stating simply that he is a sharefarmer on that property? If it is as simple as that, I will accept the word "agreement." If it means a legal agreement, it is not making it much easier for the sharefarmer because it was easier for him to go to the police station than it would be to do this.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I am certain the Registrar will accept the simplest form of agreement that contains evidence that there was a formal understanding between the parties. It will not be necessary to get an agreement drawn up by a lawyer. All that will be necessary will be a simple statement that it is agreed between the parties that one shall provide the land and the other shall provide the labour, and that they shall share the proceeds. I have said that there is available a very simple type of agreement that is printed and can be purchased for a shilling. All one has to do is to make the alterations necessary to meet the particular circumstances of the case. The agreement could be in the simplest possible form.

Mr. STOTT—I am happy with the Treasurer's interpretation. If the Registrar will accept the simplest possible form of agreement "written" should be deleted. On the Treasurer's interpretation something set out in a letter would be satisfactory, because it would be an agreement in the simplest possible form. All I seek is that the Registrar must be satisfied that there is an agreement, but not necessarily a written agreement. Each sharefarmer should be entitled to the concession.

The Committee divided on the amendment.

Ayes (3).—Messrs. Hughes, Quirke, and Stott (teller).

Noes (33).—Messrs. Bockelberg, Brookman, Bywaters, Clark, Coreoran, Cumber, Dunstan, Hall, Hambour, Harding, Heaslip, Hincks, Hutchens, Jenkins, Jennings, King, Laucke, Lawn, Loveday, McKee, Millhouse, Nankivell, O'Halloran, Pattinson, and Pearson, Sir Thomas Playford (teller), Messrs. Ralston, Riches, Ryan, and Shannon, Mrs. Steele, Messrs. Frank Walsh and Fred Walsh.

Majority of 30 for the Noes.  
Amendment thus negatived.

Mr. MILLHOUSE—In nearly every share-farming agreement I have seen the share-farmer is to some extent under the direction and supervision of the owner of the property and, to that extent, is a servant. If the definition stays as it is, I suggest that in most cases it will nullify the benefit we intend to give.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I assure the honourable member and the Committee that this interpretation is not that which the department puts on the matter. The department's interpretation is that, where a person is working for wages, but it is also set out in his agreement that he will get a bonus, that is, to a certain extent, a sharefarming agreement. The fact that the agreement provides that the sharefarmer shall sow so many acres is not regarded as meaning that he is a servant.

Mr. STOTT—What the Treasurer has said is slightly different from my experience. I have taken cases to the Registrar, and I know that to obtain a concession a man must establish that he is not under the direction of his principal. As the principal can tell the sharefarmer just what work he must do and he must follow those directions, he is a servant. The clause as it stands could mean that he could be regarded as a servant. As I understand Mr. Millhouse has not moved an amendment, I move—

In the definition of "Primary producer" to strike out "and not as a servant."

Mr. SHANNON—I think the honourable member is unduly apprehensive. In practically every sharefarming agreement, written or oral, the owner is able to direct which areas can be cropped. If he did not have such protection the sharefarmer could give the land such a hiding in a short time that the owner would be glad to get it back to give it a rest. I do not think there is anything in the suggestion that, because the owner can give directions, the sharefarmer is a servant. I think what is intended is clear, and that we should leave the interpretation as it stands.

Mr. HEASLIP—As I have had much experience with sharefarmers, I oppose the amendment. If these words are left out, practically every sharefarmer will obtain concessional fees. Under some sharefarming agreements the sharefarmer does the work, provides half the superphosphate and seed, and shares the crop equally with the owner. Under another type of agreement the sharefarmer

is a servant, but gets a share of the crop. Some farmers tell their employees that they can work for wages and in addition they provide a bonus of perhaps one bag, five bags or 10 bags of wheat for each 100 bags reaped. Actually they are servants. If the amendment were carried such men would be entitled to registration concessions on their motor vehicles.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The usual sharefarming agreement provides that a certain area of land shall be farmed as directed by the owner and the proceeds are shared, the sharefarmer providing the plant and labour and portion of the superphosphate and seed. On some properties three or four men are employed and if the amendment were carried all would be eligible for the concession. Many of these employees work at a stipulated weekly wage and frequently are provided with a house, and at the end of the year receive a bonus in the form of so many bags of wheat or so many bales of wool. Every day such men work under the direction of the employer. If Mr. Stott is anxious that the concession should be safeguarded, we should retain the present provision. Generally a primary producer's vehicle is not on the roads day and night, but is mostly on the farm although sometimes it is used to cart farm produce to the nearest railway station. I agree with Mr. O'Halloran that in isolated cases the concession has been a little wide. I would oppose the abolition of the concession because at present primary producers are going through extremely harsh times and I believe that in 99 cases out of 100 the concession has not been abused. I hope the amendment will not be accepted.

Amendment negatived; clause passed.

Clauses 6 to 10 passed.

Clause 11—"Exemption of fire-fighting vehicles."

Mr. RALSTON—Many farm vehicles used in fire-fighting are not registered, but in the event of a fire they may go on the roads and may be involved in a serious accident. I should like information on whether it is necessary for these vehicles to be covered by insurance when they come out on the road.

Mr. SHANNON—I have on the file an amendment to the next clause which explains this very provision.

The CHAIRMAN—The honourable member cannot refer to that amendment now.

Mr. RALSTON—Clause 31 deals with a similar provision but provides for registration with-

out fee, so it seems that two lots of fire-fighters are dealt with under two different clauses.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—The member for Norwood (Mr. Dunstan) has drawn my attention to clause 103 which clearly sets out the obligation regarding insurance.

Clause passed.

Clause 12—"Exemption of farmer's tractors and implements."

Mr. SHANNON—I move—

In subclause (1) to strike out "or insurance."

The clause will then provide that a tractor may be driven without registration on roads within 25 miles of the farm. If a tractor did not have to be covered by third party insurance, and it was involved in an accident while on the road, the injured party might have some difficulty in recovering the appropriate amount of damages to which he may be justly entitled. The same obligation should attach to the owners of tractors as attaches to the rank and file of motor car drivers on whom we impose the necessity of third party insurance. Such a provision would not be very onerous on the tractor owner. I do not know why the provision for insurance in this case was excluded.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I hope the honourable member's amendment will not be accepted. I remember the debate that took place when these provisions were first inserted in the legislation. Two or three valid reasons exist for not including the obligation for insurance in this matter. These tractors are slow-moving vehicles and are used almost exclusively on country roads. They are not registered and it is extremely unlikely that they would be covered by insurance, even if we imposed such an obligation. It is only very infrequently that a tractor has to come out on a road, perhaps to be taken away for an overhaul, and under ordinary circumstances it would not be so covered. Further, the owner of such a vehicle is obviously a person of some substance who could be shot at.

Mr. Shannon—Not necessarily; he could be a sharefarmer.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—If it became necessary for action to be taken, the tractor owner could be proceeded against with every likelihood of an injured person recovering the damages.

Mr. Dunstan—What if he were a sharefarmer and his implements were under a bill of sale?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—He could be a sharefarmer. This provision has been in operation for many years, and in not one case has it presented any difficulty. I suggest that the moment we brought in the term "insurance" we would automatically be putting the driver of such a vehicle in the wrong, even if he were otherwise in the right, because he would be driving a vehicle unlawfully upon the road.

Mr. Dunstan—That does not affect his civil liability for negligence.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—On balance, after much debate the House accepted this provision some years ago.

Mr. Millhouse—How long ago?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—It was at least five or six years ago. It has been in operation for a considerable period, and not one case of hardship arising under it has been brought to my notice. In fact, I very much doubt whether any accidents have occurred.

Mr. Millhouse—Yes, there have been accidents.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—I certainly do not know of one case of any disputed liability or any problem regarding the securing of damages. Normally these vehicles would not be insured, and it is not necessary that they be registered. The question of insurance, therefore, is never brought to the owner's notice, and most likely if the police stopped these vehicles when they were on the road they would be found not to be insured in most cases. I hope this provision is not struck out, because it has stood the test of considerable time and I have never had any request for it to be altered in any way.

Mr. STOTT—I hope the Committee will follow the Treasurer's lead in voting against the amendment moved by the member for Onkaparinga. This is a very limited matter. The clause permits the use of a tractor on the road without registration or insurance when that implement is being delivered to a farm upon its acquisition. The tractor may also be so used when it is being removed to a workshop for repairs, which may occur only once every 12 months or two years. Does the honourable member suggest that an insurance be taken out for that one trip? It may also be used for drawing farm implements. The farmer may have a back road on which he wants to draw a harvester or a combine, or he may wish to move from one paddock to another.

Should we compel him to insure for that? I do not think it is necessary and I oppose the amendment.

Mr. BYWATERS—I know farmers who would find it difficult to meet any substantial claim for damages and I believe it would be a kindness to compel them to insure their tractors. A farmer could be taking a tractor to a garage to be repaired and in the event of a breakdown he might leave it in a dangerous position on the road and an accident could result. I support the amendment.

Mr. LAUCKE—"Motor vehicle" is defined as "a vehicle, tractor, or mobile machine" and clause 103 provides that a person who drives a motor vehicle on a road without a policy of insurance is guilty of an offence. I cannot see how under clause 12 a tractor cannot be insured and comply with clause 103.

Mr. HALL—I have much sympathy with the amendment, but I point out that many farmers would not know of their obligation to insure and clause 103 provides for disqualification from holding a driver's licence for not less than three months and a fine of not less than £20. If the amendment is accepted I believe the penalty will be too severe for the type of offence that may be committed.

Mr. RALSTON—The Treasurer said that tractors were slow-moving vehicles, but many lighter tractors are capable of speeds of up to 35 miles an hour and can be regarded as motor vehicles. The heavier slow-moving tractors are usually loaded on to some form of road transport and taken to a job. I have sympathy with the amendment.

Mr. DUNSTAN—I support the amendment. The Treasurer said that there would be some difficulty in ensuring that insurance policies were taken out because there is no compulsory registration, but this amendment will be no more difficult to enforce than the preceding clause and almost any section of the Criminal Law. It is not difficult to bring home to country people the necessity to insure. Before concessions and exemptions were provided people were aware that they had to insure before they could take their vehicles on to the roads. The Treasurer said that this section had stood the test of many years. I do not agree that the number of years he specified are many, and accidents have occurred, and fortunately, up to the present, people concerned were able to meet the damages awarded. A man is notified by his insurance company when it is time for him to reinsure and there will be no great difficulty on that score. The benefits that can accrue through this amend-

ment are so great compared with the difficulties the Treasurer envisages that the Committee should accept the amendment.

Mr. JENKINS—I have no wish to impose further burdens on primary producers by forcing them to insure their vehicles, but I have some sympathy with the amendment. It is not the odd tractor or implement being taken from farm to farm that is a menace on the roads. In the last five years there has been great movement on the roads by farming contractors who rent tractors for hire for hay baling and other farming operations. Tractors frequently draw implements almost 20ft. wide extending over the crown of the road and they could be responsible for serious accidents on main roads.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD—This provision is not new; it has been in operation for a very long time, and from time to time has been extended. Many primary producers have property on both sides of a road, and the provision was first introduced to enable a primary producer to use his tractor, when crossing from one side of the road to the other, without registration or insurance. If the amendment is accepted, the position will be that a primary producer will not be able to take his implements from one side of a road to the other without everything being insured. The penalty will be that he will be delicensed for at least three months if he is caught. I am as keen as other honourable members are on safety on the roads, but this would place an intolerable burden on primary producers. What the insurance rates would be on these vehicles I do not know. I hope that the Committee will not throw this extra work and expense upon the farming community, for that would not be justified.

Mr. HEASLIP—I agree with the Treasurer in this case. He says that this provision has existed for the last five or six years, but it has existed ever since tractors have been used on farms, because they have never had to be registered or insured while travelling from one paddock to another across a road.

Mr. Dunstan—They did not go 25 miles down the road though.

Mr. HEASLIP—Farm tractors do not have 25 miles to go. They would not be travelling from one district to another, for this applies only to a farmer who might have a property in one place and another paddock across the road, or another property two or three miles away.

Mr. Dunstan—It might be 25 miles away.

Mr. HEASLIP—He might want to move from one to the other, as he has been doing for years.

Mr. Dunstan—He has not been doing more than crossing the road.

Mr. HEASLIP—The honourable member is losing sight of the fact that, if the amendment is carried, everybody is compelled to be insured. It is not a matter of how much the insurance will cost: the primary producer is being compelled to insure all his tractors. Only half the farmers would insure, and half would be breaking the law, and we should be compelling them to break the law. I do not want them to do that unknowingly. By not compelling them to insure, we are leaving it open to them to insure if they want to.

Mr. Fred Walsh—Do you know any who are insured?

Mr. HEASLIP—No, because they do not think it is necessary and in years gone by they did not think it was necessary. Over the years there has been no need to. I oppose more unnecessary restrictions on the primary producer.

Mr. QUIRKE—I am not concerned about the 10s. or 15s. that would give a complete cover for these vehicles. Mr. Miller would not enter into this. If an uninsured vehicle or tractor drawing an implement were involved

in a crash that maimed or killed a motorist, how can we be sure he would not be a man of straw but a man able to pay substantial damages?

Mr. Dunstan—He could be up for £15,000.

Mr. QUIRKE—This amendment would benefit the farmer; it is not against his best interests.

Mr. Hall—What about the penalty?

Mr. QUIRKE—No matter what law is introduced, it is not broadcast over the air and notices are not sent out to everybody about it; it is published in the *Government Gazette* and everybody is presumed to know it. For instance, everybody knows he has to insure his motor vehicle. How did he get to know that? This provision is no burden on the farmer. The 10s. or 15s. is a mere bagatelle and should not influence the question at all. It is the third party, the other party, that can be damaged or killed that matters. The amendment protects both parties—the farmer in meeting any claim for damages and the other party in his claim for damages. I support the amendment.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 9.42 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday, November 19, at 2 p.m.