

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Wednesday, July 28, 1965.

The SPEAKER (Hon. L. G. Riches) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS

TROTTING.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: In a reply to a question on May 19 this year concerning the control of trotting, the Premier said:

I am hoping that certain approaches will soon be made on this matter with a view to giving more authority to the club that raises the bulk of the money from trotting in this State, so that it may distribute proceeds throughout the country. I do not believe that much overhead would be involved in this.

These remarks have been taken in the country to mean that there is a proposal before the Government to alter the composition of the trotting league, but I think that probably a slightly different interpretation has been placed on his remarks than he intended. Can the Premier say whether the Government intends to alter the composition of the trotting league?

The Hon. FRANK WALSH: Cabinet has not considered this matter. I believe that certain charges are to be imposed by the trotting league, but these will affect mostly owners and breeders.

The Hon. Sir Thomas Playford: There is no proposal at the moment to alter the composition of the league?

The Hon. FRANK WALSH: Not at this stage. The matter has never been before Cabinet. However, it may be necessary to bring a report to Cabinet concerning the charges that I mentioned, which are to take effect as from August 1.

FLUORIDATION.

Mrs. STEELE: Recently, the Minister of Works was reported as saying, when commenting on a dental survey conducted by the Reader in Preventive Dentistry at the University of Adelaide (Dr. Elizabeth Fanning), that the Government did not intend at this stage to fluoridate Adelaide's water supply. Was this statement the Minister's personal view (and, of course, honourable members know that he was a member of the Select Committee on Fluoridation, and was against the proposal), or was it made on behalf of the Government? If it was, was the statement based on the report of the special committee on fluoridation set up by the Australian Labor Party and

referred to by the Premier in his television interview on "Meet the Press"?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: The question is somewhat involved. First, the honourable member asked whether the statement "... that the Government did not intend ..." was mine or a Government statement. It was merely a statement of fact, because the Government has never considered fluoridation of our metropolitan reservoirs. At present, as it has not considered this matter, it does not intend to introduce fluoridation. The remainder of the statement referred to by the honourable member consisted of my personal remarks, and in no way related to any findings.

CITRUS COMMITTEE.

Mr. CURREN: Certain rumours are circulating in my district about the activities (or lack of activities) of the citrus inquiry committee set up by the previous Government six or eight months ago. Can the Minister of Agriculture report on the proceedings of that committee?

The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS: The honourable member correctly said that this committee was set up by the former Government to inquire into the citrus industry generally. This is an excellent committee: it has carried out its work assiduously and has made wide inquiries. It has taken evidence in all the citrus-growing areas of the State; it has visited the marketing set-ups of this State; it has taken evidence in Victoria and New South Wales; it has had evidence brought to it from Queensland; and it has visited the markets and marketing organizations in Victoria and in New South Wales. I should be sorry to hear any criticism of the committee, as it has worked long hours to bring down a full report to Cabinet when its inquiries are completed. The committee has done everything that could be desired of it, and has gone even further than that. I am sorry to hear of any criticism of this committee, as it intends to bring in a report towards the end of September. When that report is received it will be presented to Cabinet, which will consider any further action required as a result of the committee's investigations.

WEST COAST SURVEY.

Mr. BOCKELBERG: Recently the Harbors Board has taken soundings and conducted surveys on parts of Eyre Peninsula, especially at Streaky Bay and Arno Bay. Will the Minister of Marine obtain for members a report on these findings?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: The Harbors Board has made soundings in that area, but I do not have details. I will obtain a report and inform the honourable member.

NORMAN TERRACE.

Mr. LANGLEY: Has the Attorney-General a further reply to the question I asked on June 30 concerning land being procured to establish a freeway in Norman Terrace, Forestville?

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: I have two reports concerning Norman Terrace. First, the Commissioner of Highways reports:

Planning of proposed freeways in the metropolitan area is at a preliminary stage only. Although it is possible that a strip of land 85ft. wide could be required from the Norman Terrace frontage, the exact land requirements will not be known until the transportation study is completed. The study was commenced in March this year and will take at least two years to complete.

In addition, the Commissioner has reported concerning a specific question which the honourable member asked in relation to the Churches of Christ Christian Rest Home, as follows:

The property occupied by the Churches of Christ Christian Rest Home may be affected by the proposed freeway as shown on the attached plan. However, planning of the proposed freeway is at a preliminary stage only. The exact land requirements for the freeway will not be known until much further study, including a comprehensive transportation study which commenced in March this year, has been carried out, and this will take two to three years to complete.

I hope it will not be more than two. The report concludes:

If the present proposal eventuates, a section of land 85ft. deep from the Norman Terrace frontage could be required from the subject property.

FOYS BUILDING.

Mr. MILLHOUSE: On June 29 I asked the Minister of Works about the shabby state of Foys building, and reminded him that I had been told last session that it would be painted and otherwise renovated. Has the Minister a reply?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: The Director, Public Buildings Department, reports that in January this year £9,796 was approved to carry out renovations to the Rundle Street Government offices. It was proposed to commence this work in March. However, the departmental work force has been heavily committed on previously approved works, including renovations to Parliament House and the Treasury building, and it was not practicable

to commence work on the Rundle Street building in March as intended, but preliminary carpentry repairs were started early this month and other trades will attend prior to painting. The renovations to this building are scheduled to be completed by the end of 1965.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION.

Mr. HURST: Has the Minister of Works a reply to my question of June 23 concerning work on Bower Road, Semaphore Park?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: The Chairman of the Housing Trust reports that the trust recently received a letter from the Woodville corporation concerning drainage and other works in the area. The trust has informed the council that, if the Upper Port Reach Development Scheme proceeds, these works are a proper charge to that scheme. The council has therefore, I believe, decided to proceed with the works, knowing that if the Upper Port Reach Development Scheme proceeds, it will be re-imbursed; if not, the works will be a proper charge against the development of the district.

FLOODWATER DRAINAGE.

Mr. COUMBE: Does the Minister of Works recall accompanying me to a meeting in the Prospect Town Hall a couple of months ago when the question of floodwater drainage was discussed by representatives of the Hindmarsh, Prospect and Enfield councils? Does he recall further that he undertook at that meeting to see whether he could expedite the conclusions that were to be arrived at by a special committee that investigated the future use of the Islington sewage farm? Can the Minister report also on the request that the committee's findings be made public? If he cannot do that now, can he say when these conclusions will be available?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: I well remember attending the meeting with the honourable member and, since then, I have been pursuing the matter of getting the report finalized. Recently I saw a plan that the committee intended to submit, but at that stage it was discovered that there had been a slight variation to the report because of certain works being carried out by municipal bodies. I believe the amended report should be ready within a day or two. However, I shall again press the committee to furnish an early report, as I appreciate the urgency of making it available to the three councils.

MINISTER'S STATEMENT.

The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS: Yesterday, when the Leader of the Opposition was speaking on the Constitution Act Amendment Bill, he said:

In his policy speech the Premier waxed quite eloquent about the views of the Labor Party with regard to Executive control. As a matter of fact, since that time I have heard another side to this. If the report is correct, I believe that the other day the Minister of Agriculture attended a meeting in the metropolitan area and said that the Government had a very clever Attorney-General who had found a number of ways to do things without taking them to Parliament.

I strongly deny having said that. Will the Leader of the Opposition say where he obtained this information and to what report he was referring? The only statement I made last week was made after attending the Australian Primary Producers Union conference, which I had the honour to open. I checked both press reports of the conference, and there was no reference to any statement along the lines referred to by the Leader.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: The information was given to me in connection with a church meeting held in the eastern suburbs. However, if it is not correct I am willing to accept the Minister's statement and to withdraw my statement.

COOMANDOOK AREA SCHOOL.

Mr. NANKIVELL: On June 24 I asked the Minister of Works whether the Coomandook Area School could be connected to the proposed Taillem Bend to Keith water scheme at an early date. Has the Minister a reply?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: The Director and Engineer-in-Chief has advised that it will not be possible to consider any extensions of main from the Taillem Bend to Keith main until the 30in. trunk main is completed to Binnie's Lookout and the tank constructed. He has advised, however, that consideration would be given to providing an indirect service to the school when the trunk main reaches the rail crossing near section 50 in the hundred of Roby, which is expected to be in September this year, and provided the connecting main to the Taillem Bend elevated tank is completed. Such an indirect service would involve the laying of some 13,400ft. of piping from the point of connection to the school, and the Regional Engineer has advised that if 1in. G.W.I. piping is used, a supply of 3 gallons a minute could be expected at the school. He has pointed out, however, that supply under these conditions could be subject to interruptions caused by the

necessity to maintain adequate supplies in Taillem Bend township during peak periods, and by construction work on the main.

Mr. NANKIVELL: Although not stated in my original question, it was implicit that the supply to the Coomandook Area School would be as a result of an extension of a subsidiary main to the Coomandook township. Will the Minister of Works, in view of this additional information, consider the possibility of Coomandook township being given a priority for water supply, so that the school can obtain water at an early date?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: I am sorry that I did not give a complete answer to the honourable member's original question, but now that I understand it more clearly, I will consult with the Director and Engineer-in-Chief and obtain a report for the honourable member.

SOUTH PARA RESERVOIR.

The Hon. B. H. TEUSNER: In October, 1963, in a question to the then Minister of Works, I pointed out that the South Para reservoir had become a popular resort for tourists, particularly on Sunday afternoons when the weather was pleasant. I drew attention to the fact that some facilities and amenities were lacking at that site, and pointed out that, after inspecting the Maroondah dam in Victoria, I was impressed with the facilities and shady trees and lawns there. That area is also very popular with tourists. When I suggested that similar facilities be provided at the South Para reservoir, the then Minister said the matter was being considered. Can the Minister of Works say whether this matter has been further considered and, if it has, whether any of these facilities have been or will be provided at the South Para reservoir?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: I have not had an opportunity to inquire regarding this matter. I agree with the honourable member that the area is most attractive and very suitable for the tourist trade, and that it would be a great advantage if the facilities he mentioned could be provided. I will note the honourable member's question, have an inquiry made, and inform him of the outcome.

WATER RATING.

Mr. BURDON: On January 14 last I had the pleasure of introducing a deputation representing the Civilian Widows Association of South Australia, on behalf of the Mount Gambier Branch, to the then Minister of Works.

Basically, the deputation sought to impress on the Minister of Works the plight of civilian widows in having to pay water and sewerage rates, and it humbly requested that sympathetic consideration be given to the requests of these people for a reduction in those rates. Up to the present no tangible results of that deputation have appeared. Could the Minister say whether the department has considered this request? If it has not, will he now consider it, I hope favourably?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: I have not had brought to my notice the fact that the deputation was introduced on January 14. To the best of my knowledge, the rating system is laid down by legislation and regulation, and I doubt whether we could make special provisions of the nature requested by the honourable member. Nevertheless, as he has raised the matter again I will examine it and let him have a report as soon as it comes to hand.

CLARE HIGH SCHOOL.

Mr. QUIRKE: Will the Minister of Education say when the new Clare High School will be built?

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: I shall be pleased to obtain that information within a few days.

WATERVALE WATER SCHEME.

Mr. FREEBAIRN: Will the Minister of Works obtain a report on progress on a reticulated water scheme for Watervale?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: Yes.

CHOWILLA DAM.

Mr. CURREN: As the Chowilla dam is a matter of considerable interest to my district and also to the State generally, can the Minister of Works give the House a progress report on this important subject?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: I have a report on this matter which is somewhat lengthy, and I ask leave to have it incorporated in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

CHOWILLA DAM.

Investigation of the Chowilla dam site, particularly in regard to foundation conditions, has presented some of the most complex and difficult problems ever encountered. These investigations are nearing completion, although the time occupied has been longer than first anticipated. The London firm of Soil Mechanics Limited and Professor A. W. Skempton of the Imperial College, University of London, have been acting as consultants in connection with the foundations and embankment. Three

members of the staff of Soil Mechanics Limited are working on the site, carrying out foundation and materials investigations with the aid of the most up-to-date equipment available. Also three of the firm's senior engineers and Professor Skempton have visited the site on a number of occasions. One of the objectives is to make the most effective use of local materials, that is, soils, sands and stone, and it has been necessary to base the design of the dam on the use of these materials.

A complete absence of suitable stone for the major embankment protection and for concrete presents the most serious economic problem. With the excellent co-operation of the Mines Department, numerous stone deposits between Waikerie and the dam site have been examined geologically and tested by drilling. Unfortunately, these efforts have met with very limited success. In these circumstances it is necessary to give consideration to alternative methods of embankment protection, and, during his forthcoming visit to Europe, Mr. J. R. Dridan (Director and Engineer-in-Chief) will be inspecting and obtaining details of bitumen protection used on some important works in Western Germany, namely, protection of levees near Hamburg and the protection of Biggetalsperre Dam on the Bigge River near Dusseldorf. Use of this method could result in substantial savings, as present indications are that most of the stone required for rip rap and concrete would have to be carried a distance of 120 miles.

Design of the superstructure has been proceeding in the department's design branch concurrently with the foundation and materials investigation, and this work is nearing completion. Two of the department's engineers visited the United States this year to inspect a number of dams with features similar to those at Chowilla. They obtained a great deal of useful information from the United States Army Corps of Engineers (probably the largest engineering organization in the world), and the Bureau of Reclamation, Department of the Interior. In so far as work on the site is concerned, the following details are of interest:

- (1) Permanent concrete bridges are being built over Chowilla and Monoman Creeks.
- (2) A standard vehicle ferry has been purchased from the Highways Department and this is now being installed on the River Murray.
- (3) A camp, soils laboratory and other facilities have been established at the site.
- (4) Reconstruction and paving of the road from Paringa to Chowilla is in progress.
- (5) One of the main foundation problems is the cut-off under the dam, that is, an impervious barrier to prevent seepage and assure stability. Three overseas companies experienced in this highly specialized work were invited to submit offers firstly for experimental work on the site and secondly for the actual work itself. These offers are now being examined by the department and its consultants. The

offer accepted will be incorporated as a nominated subcontract in the main contract.

- (6) Experimental embankments have been constructed and tested.
- (7) Model testing of the concrete weir structure has been carried out at the Adelaide university, the department's laboratory at Hope Valley, and at the Harlow experimental station in England.
- (8) Land acquisition is proceeding in Victoria and South Australia, although little progress has yet been made in New South Wales.
- (9) The 150 mile perimeter of the water-spread area has been defined by survey and pegged on the ground.

Mr. Dridan points out that, literally and metaphorically, the Chowilla investigation has meant the breaking of fresh ground. There is no undertaking in Australia bearing any marked similarity to Chowilla, and in fact there are few projects in the world with many features comparable to those of Chowilla. However, all loose ends are now being gathered together, and it is hoped and expected that tenders for the main contract will be called by March of next year.

CLARE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

Mr. QUIRKE: Will the Minister of Education cause urgent work to be commenced on the drainage of effluent from the Clare Primary School to obviate what is now a most objectionable condition?

The Hon. R. R. LOVEDAY: I will have the matter examined and see what can be done to obviate the nuisance.

CLEAN AIR COMMITTEE.

Mr. LANGLEY: Has the Premier an answer to a question I asked recently concerning the operation of the Clean Air Committee in South Australia? In my earlier question I referred to the nuisance in the Unley District. Can the Premier say in which parts of the State this legislation will operate?

The Hon. FRANK WALSH: I have the following report:

- (1) The Clean Air Committee was set up in January, 1964, and has been functioning actively since that time.
- (2) The Health Act applies throughout the State. Regulations under the Act also usually apply throughout the State, but it is possible for regulations under this Act to be made applying to specified parts of the State.
- (3) A subcommittee of the Clean Air Committee is at present drafting regulations. These will be forwarded to the Government after consideration by the full committee.
- (4) Complaints arising from air pollution are investigated by staff of the Department of Public Health. Advice

is given to industry, when necessary, with the help of the Industries Assistance Branch of the Premier's Department.

- (5) If it appears that a nuisance is being created, prosecution may be authorized by the Central Board of Health under existing provisions of the Health Act.
- (6) Applications, closing 13/7/65, have been called for a fuel and chemical engineer who will act as technical executive officer of the committee. It is expected that an appointment will soon be made.

PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER.

The Hon. T. C. STOTT: Is the Attorney-General now prepared to lay on the table the docket referring to the appointment of the Public Relations Officer in his department?

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN: Yes, I am happy to do so. I furnished the docket for the honourable member and, if he will furnish it for me, I shall do so. I now table the docket of the Attorney-General's Office, "Creation of the position of Public Relations Officer under the Minister of Social Welfare."

COUNTRY BUILDING DEPOTS.

Mr. QUIRKE: A proposal was made some time ago for Public Buildings Department depots to be located in country areas. Can the Minister of Works say where these depots will be?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: I would rather give a precise reply to this question. I know that depots will be located in 11 country centres, but I will obtain detailed information for the honourable member.

LOXTON DRAINAGE WORKS.

The Hon. T. C. STOTT: Has the Minister of Repatriation a reply to my recent question about the details of Commonwealth moneys spent on the Loxton soldier settlement scheme?

The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS: Advice was received from the Commonwealth early in December, 1964, that funds totalling £1,085,000 had been provided for capital expenditure on all war service land settlement projects during 1964-65 in South Australia, both dry lands and irrigation. This amount included the following provision for drainage works at Loxton: internal drainage £30,000; comprehensive drainage scheme £10,000. Actual expenditure on drainage works during 1964-65 was as follows: internal drainage £35,250; comprehensive drainage scheme £28,885. The additional expenditure on drainage was included in a further provision of £85,000 for capital expenditure approved by the Commonwealth in March, 1965.

KIMBA WATER SUPPLY.

Mr. BOCKELBERG: Has the Minister of Works a reply to a question I asked some time ago seeking an earlier start on the laying of a main to Kimba?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: Following his representations in the House by way of question, the honourable member subsequently forwarded to me a letter from the District Council of Kimba asking that an early start be made on this work. I have conferred with the Director and Engineer-in-Chief, who advises that a camp is to be established for this project and it is expected that the department will be able to start main-laying early in 1966. The Regional Engineer, Western, is arranging his work programme accordingly.

CITY BRIDGES.

Mr. COUMBE: Has the Minister of Works a reply to my recent question about the progress on reconstruction of the Morphett Street and Victoria bridges?

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: My colleague the Minister of Roads reports that the design of the Morphett Street and Victoria bridges is nearing completion. Negotiations in respect of the acquisition of land adjacent to the bridge work are still being undertaken and as soon as a definite date for occupation has been reached, plans will be made for the calling of tenders. The design work for the associated projects is also nearing completion and some of them, including the re-location of services to permit the construction of the bridges and the construction of the North Terrace retaining wall, have been commenced already. The date of completion cannot be estimated accurately until the negotiations for land acquisition have been completed, but at this stage it is expected to be mid-1968. The estimated cost of the work remains unchanged at the figure previously submitted to the Premier, viz., £1,703,200, including the cost of the property acquisition.

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE.

Mr. NANKIVELL (Albert): I move:

That in the opinion of this House it is desirable that a public accounts committee be established to:

- (a) examine the accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the State and each statement and report transmitted to the Houses of the Parliament by the Auditor-General, pursuant to the Audit Act, 1921-1957;

(b) report to both Houses of Parliament, with such comment as it thinks fit, any items or matters in those accounts, statements and reports, or any circumstances connected with them, to which the committee is of the opinion that the attention of the Parliament should be directed;

(c) report to both Houses of Parliament any alteration which the committee thinks desirable in the form of the public accounts or in the method of keeping them, or in the mode of receipt, control, issue or payment of public moneys; and

(d) inquire into any question in connection with the public accounts which is referred to it by either House of Parliament, and to report to that House upon that question.

The history of this motion is a long one and harks back to about 1912, but more recently it has had a chequered career. In 1924 Mr. R. L. Butler, the then Leader of the Opposition, moved a similar motion, but it lapsed because of prorogation. In 1925 he moved once more for the formation of such a committee, the motion again lapsing because of prorogation. In 1926 Mr. Butler moved the motion a third time, and it was carried without a division. In 1933 (I understand as a result of an election promise, in keeping with the times, for it was, as we know, a period of depression) he must have introduced a Bill as part of his policy and as a means of ensuring that the finances of the State were being husbanded to the best of Parliament's ability.

In 1933 a Bill was introduced, slightly more limited in its terms than those of this motion, but, nevertheless, for the purpose of setting up such a committee. Certain amendments were made to the Bill in this House, one of which widened its terms, but the measure lapsed in the Legislative Council because of a series of amendments made to it in that House. I believe that the situation has not changed: last year the Loan Estimates and Estimates of Revenue gave a total Budget of £149,108,000, which is no small sum. That money was voted by this House, and the only comment on the way it is spent will be contained in the Auditor-General's Report when it is received.

Whilst a member of this House, I have always been aware that, although we receive the Auditor-General's report, and although it comments on the functioning of various Government departments, nothing further takes place in the way of debating such matters in the House. I think that, as private members, we have the responsibility of following up the report, but it is not always possible for us to obtain the information we require. In 1959,

when the late Mr. O'Halloran (the then Leader of the Opposition) moved a motion similarly worded to my motion, that motion was defeated, I believe purely because of the lack of understanding of what was implied in setting up such a committee.

Mr. Clark: It was defeated because it came from the wrong side of the House.

Mr. NANKIVELL: The suggestion at that time was that a committee be formed to criticize Government policy, and the items listed by the then Leader were subsequently replied to in rebuttal by the then Premier. However, as I pointed out, I think there was a complete misunderstanding of the intention of this committee by the then Premier.

Mr. Ryan: How did you vote on that occasion?

Mr. NANKIVELL: It is interesting to note, in reply to the honourable member, that the present trend of things is similar to the trend of 1933. In that year, when this matter was introduced, Mr. T. Playford, who was at the time, I think, the member for Murray, did not speak to the Bill but voted against it. Subsequently, in 1959, when speaking to the Bill he claimed, as a backbencher, that he had been instrumental in amending the Bill and thereby setting up the Subordinate Legislation Committee. In 1959 I was new to this House. I had not seen the Auditor-General's report; naturally, I was prepared to treat this matter as one of policy, and I voted accordingly. I have subsequently looked into the matter, and certain factors involved in forming such a committee should commend this motion to the House. I do not wish to speak at any length at this stage, for the Premier has given notice of a motion to introduce a Bill along these lines, and so that I can see from the context of that Bill whether it conforms to my motion (and if it does I shall be satisfied that I have achieved the aim of this exercise) I ask leave to continue my remarks.

Leave granted; debate adjourned.

ELECTRICITY.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Leader of the Opposition): I move:

That in the opinion of this House a Royal Commission should be set up to investigate and report to Parliament on what action should now be taken to ensure that adequate supplies of fuel are made available to the Electricity Trust of South Australia to enable power charges to be maintained on a competitive basis with those applying in other States.

First, I assure the Premier and members of the Ministry that this motion is not intro-

duced in any way as one of criticism. Secondly, although the motion refers to electricity charges, I should not like this to be taken in its narrowest sense, for I believe that all fuel charges are extremely important to the welfare and the future of this State. We will have to rely to a large extent on industrial development to maintain our growth of population and, in order to achieve that, we must have available to industry power and resources competitive with those available elsewhere in Australia and sufficient to enable this State and its manufacturers to compete successfully with markets in other States.

The motion arises, of course, because of the present circumstances obtaining at Leigh Creek. For 11 years Leigh Creek has been developing steadily; not only has it satisfied the increased demand for power in South Australia, but it has actually been supplying a larger percentage of the power here each year. For the benefit of honourable members I shall read the following paragraph from the Electricity Trust's report for the year ended June 30, 1964:

The total energy output of the station — referring to the Port Augusta station — was 15.7 per cent higher than last year and amounted to more than three quarters of the requirements of the whole system.

Leigh Creek, over the last 11 years, has been steadily expanding its production and the quantity of electricity supplied to the grid. As a result, there have been no increases in fuel charges, and the actual charges for electricity have been progressively reduced. The increased volume of Leigh Creek coal used has meant that more and more cheap fuel has been injected into the system and that electricity charges have been reduced.

The first reduction made by the trust enabled the number of districts to be reduced, and at the beginning of the year all of the State supplied by the grid system was brought into line with the metropolitan area. This arose from the fact that better equipment was available to the trust and that it had the advantage of low fuel costs as a result of the use of Leigh Creek coal. You are well aware, Mr. Speaker, that the Port Augusta power station is now completed. It was designed to take the total capacity of coal from Leigh Creek. Any increase now in generation in that area would mean that the life of the fuel available to power stations would be shortened, and consequently I do not believe this is desirable. Over 42,000 tons of Leigh Creek coal is now

burned every week. If this quantity were increased it would automatically shorten the life of the open cut coal available.

The trust's figures show the urgent need for something to be done about this; it cannot be left in abeyance. If honourable members take the trouble to study the trust's report they will see that the trust generated about 815,000,000 units (kilowatt-hours) in 1954 and last year generated over 2,361,000,000 units. In other words, in 10 years the quantity of electricity generated by the trust has increased by 200 per cent. This increase also applies to the quantity of electricity sold by the trust. The State now uses three times as much electricity as it used 10 years ago. This means that each year from now on the trust will be obliged to use additional quantities (and I think about 15 per cent a year would be a fair figure) of more costly fuel than it is using at present.

Although I do not have the precise figure (it could probably be worked out from the trust's report), I believe that imported fuel would cost nearly 50 per cent more for heat value than Leigh Creek coal costs. Only last week I visited the Leigh Creek field to refresh my memory about the reserves there, and I came to the firm conclusion that it has now been developed up to the maximum extent advisable. I believe that the trust concurs in that view because the new power-generating plant being installed by the trust is being installed not at Port Augusta but at Osborne and Torrens Island. Neither of those places would be the centre if there were going to be an extension of the development of Leigh Creek. Therefore, we are confronted with a position that will become more serious year by year. Each year there will need to be a bigger percentage of costly fuel in our power generation. Unless something is done within five years, South Australia will be priced out of the market for attracting new industries, particularly industries that are substantial users of electricity or fuel. Therefore, I believe that this matter is urgent. This motion is designed to focus attention on what will become an acute problem for the State unless active steps are taken.

Another reason exists for examining this matter. At present fuel oil is a cheaper fuel for electricity generation than is coal. Under ordinary circumstances South Australia will become more and more reliant upon fuel oil for its electricity supplies. I point out to Government members that fuel oil is a bad risk in time of emergency because it is subject to

international interruption; it is certainly not something upon which we should base our economy. Honourable members may wonder, if a Royal Commission were appointed, whether it would have anything to examine and whether the Government could act to alleviate this matter. They may be worried about the expense of having probably three highly competent officers investigating this problem.

I do not think, however, that there is a shadow of a doubt that sufficient evidence is available for an examination of the possible use of natural gas. It has been found not only in South Australia but in even greater quantities over the border, in the Northern Territory. I know honourable members are well acquainted with the amount of research that has been taking place in the interior of South Australia, and no doubt they are fairly conversant with the results. They know that major gas fields have been found at Gidgealpa and Mereenie, and that a third field which, although it has not been completely tested, is likely to be larger, has been discovered at Palm Valley. Through the courtesy of the Prime Minister and Ministers opposite, I was able to see at first hand the work undertaken at Mereenie and Palm Valley, and by the courtesy of the companies doing the exploration I was able to fly over a large area of the Northern Territory and see some of the prospects yet to be explored. I think it can be taken as absolutely proved that Gidgealpa has gas reserves to the extent of 450 billion cubic feet. They may be more, but I think that is a conservative estimate; I and other honourable members join issue with the Ministers on this. A senior American consultant, who unfortunately died last week, and all the authorities connected with Gidgealpa have agreed that the field has this large reserve. The Mereenie field has been proved to have greater reserves, and Palm Valley has probably bigger reserves than has Mereenie. However, it has yet to be proved.

On speaking to representatives of the companies controlling Mereenie and Palm Valley, I found that unlike South Australia, which has no plans at present for using all the fuel found, these companies are negotiating to put major pipelines from Mereenie and Palm Valley to Melbourne and Sydney. I have been informed that they have even examined the possibility of providing the necessary capital, which would be a large sum.

Mr. Casey: I think that has been cancelled now, as gas has been found just off the coast of Victoria.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: The extent of that find has yet to be proved. Overseas experience has shown that it is not possible to get enough natural gas. The United States of America has 500,000 miles of pipelines, and natural gas is taken from one side of the country to the other, but still not sufficient gas is supplied to meet requirements. In the United States natural gas has taken over from coal to such an extent that it now produces much more electricity than coal does; in fact, both oil and natural gas are now used there to a greater extent than coal in the generation of electricity. The reply to the honourable member's interjection is that the companies concerned have investigated the potential markets in Melbourne and Sydney and have assured me that they are satisfied that pipelines to Melbourne and Sydney are economically possible, even using private capital, which incidentally would cost much more than public capital. They would be able to supply gas for certain types of use, although they did not think they could get it to Melbourne in competition with brown coal or to Sydney in competition with black coal. I believe that is correct, because the New South Wales Electricity Commission is installing electricity-generating plant on the coalfields, as a result of which the cost of that coal is only half as much as the cost of Leigh Creek coal on a heat-value basis, so it is conceivable that natural gas will not compete with coal for generating power in those two States. However, it can compete with coal for household gas and industrial usage. I believe a case could be made out today for a pipeline in South Australia from Gidgealpa, even at the present standard of development that has taken place.

Mr. Hudson: Do you mean it could definitely be made out?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: I am attempting to say that I believe a case could be made out today for a pipeline from Gidgealpa to Adelaide. When it was decided by Parliament to establish the Leigh Creek coalfield, several of the present members, including you, Mr. Speaker, were in this House. You, Sir, will remember that the total coal thought to be available from an open cut was only about 300,000 tons. However, Parliament passed the first legislation to enable work to be commenced at that field. Gidgealpa has been proved to have a reserve of 450 billion cubic feet of gas. Let us see what that would represent in supplies. We could not use 100,000,000 cubic feet of gas a day at present; it would take us two or three years

before we could use that quantity. I believe the South Australian Gas Company uses 20,000,000 cubic feet a day at present, and that is equivalent to 10,000,000 cubic feet of natural gas. I believe that the Electricity Trust, by the time the pipeline could be brought to Adelaide, would probably be able to use 50,000,000 or 60,000,000 cubic feet a day, although it could double that quantity very quickly. For the next two or three years, however, I doubt whether there could be an immediate effective market for over 100,000,000 cubic feet a day, and probably for a year or two we could not use that quantity.

Mr. Ryan: Are you suggesting this pipeline should be run by private enterprise or be Government-owned?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: I am a slow thinker, and if the honourable member will let me develop my argument in my own way I shall be very pleased. In my opinion there is enough gas already proved at Gidgealpa to supply 100,000,000 cubic feet a day for 300 days a year for the next 15 years, and probably that would be the sort of use we could get from a pipeline. It has been said that a pipeline would cost probably £18,000,000 to £20,000,000 although on figures supplied to me from America it would cost slightly less than that. However, on making some allowances for additional costs that may be incurred in Australia, I believe it would be well covered within £20,000,000. That is an expenditure that this State can afford. In answer to the honourable member's interjection, I believe it should be a public utility. The whole purpose of the exercise is to get fuel at a low cost. The actual charges of running the pipeline after its establishment would not be more than £750,000 a year, probably not more than £500,000 a year. The important costs are the capital costs and interest and amortization charges.

I believe that this project is feasible. Prior to the disastrous defeat (if I may use that term) of my Government at the last election, I had examined ways and means to enable such a pipeline to be financed. I believe it could be financed at an interest rate not higher than our bond rate, and I believe not only that in those circumstances the pipeline would supply fuel to the Electricity Trust at favourable rates (probably rates not much higher, if at all higher, than the fuel cost of Leigh Creek coal) but that it would also be able to supply fuel to the South Australian Gas Company and to other industrial users at a lower cost than the present cost. I do not suggest for one moment that

the public authority would supply all fuel at the one price to all users. However, I believe that the various users of fuel in this State could be supplied at a rate more than competitive with the prices they are at present paying, that the pipeline could be paid for, that it could be profitable, and that it could be amortized over a relatively short period. The position would then be that as soon as the amortization were effected the well-head price would become almost the delivery price for Adelaide and for industries in this State.

I believe that a concrete case can be made out for the establishment of a pipeline, and not in the dim and distant future. Active steps should be taken to consider the financing and the establishment of such a pipeline. I think the most rapid advance that could be made would not mean that the gas would be available as soon as the Torrens Island powerhouse came under steam, but I believe that if the question was actively pursued the pipeline could be established in time to prevent a big hiatus between the commencement of power supply from the Torrens Island power station and the establishment of the pipeline. I maintain that, unless we do this, South Australia every year will slip into a more difficult position regarding the establishment of industry. Honourable members only have to look at the large volume of industry that has been established over the years to appreciate that a part of our economy now depends on the establishment of additional industries. We have built up an economy that is now largely industrial. However, we are still taking in large numbers of people from overseas and we want to continue doing so, but I believe that this can be done only if we maintain the expansion rate that has been a feature of the South Australian economy since the war.

What are the objections to the establishment of a competent authority to look into this matter? I know of none. I do not want my remarks to be construed as needling criticism or anything else; I make them purely and simply from the point of view of a problem that has arisen, and one that will continue to become more and more acute every year. Unless we take action of this sort inside of five years, the percentage of imported fuel will be so great as against the quantity of Leigh Creek fuel (which is a cheap fuel) that costs of electricity will start to rise when other States will be reducing their costs. It may interest honourable members to know that I have examined the position in New South Wales. I venture to say, as a firm forecast,

that industry in New South Wales in the next five years will have its industrial electricity charges reduced by 50 per cent. Already the process has started. The last reduction of costs in South Australia, as honourable members will recall, related to certain types of industrial consumption, and that reduction was made purely and simply to meet the changing circumstances in New South Wales.

I know of no reason why a Royal Commission should not be appointed in this matter, for I believe that there is a case to be substantiated. Although the Gidgealpa field may not provide sufficient fuel today to justify completely amortizing a line from that field, I point out that gas lines have been built in many places throughout the world with less than 15 years' guaranteed supply. There are many structures in South Australia that have not been tested, and I believe that the fact that we have discovered gas in one of the structures in the centre of Australia is a fair indication that we would discover gas in others. But let us take it at the worst and assume, just for the sake of argument, that the exploration work taking place in South Australia is not successful in finding some additional fuel. I maintain that the supply line to Gidgealpa is justified because obviously it would be a simple matter later, if necessary, to connect up with the Mereenie or Palm Valley fields, which have already been established. In fact, the firms operating in the centre of Australia are now talking, not about thousands of millions of cubic feet but about trillions of cubic feet of gas. I believe the results of such an investigation as I advocate would be well justified and that there are people already in the service of the South Australian Government amply qualified to undertake it.

It might be necessary to employ one or two people not in the Government service (in fact, that would be highly justified), but the money should be provided by the Government and the undertaking should be provided by a national authority—not necessarily the Electricity Trust but at least with elements of the Electricity Trust and the South Australian Gas Company. It should be a public undertaking with power to construct, maintain and operate, and to supply gas wherever wanted in South Australia. From inquiries I have made, I think Whyalla would be a market, not a large market yet but an expanding one. There would be a substantial market at Port Pirie, and I have no doubt there would be expanding markets in other directions. With the discovery of natural gas

in Australia (it has now been found in substantial quantities in four States and the Northern Territory), there is at present a considerable interest in the establishment of supplementary industries that have always gone hand in hand with natural gas supplies. The fertilizer industry is, of course, one that immediately springs to mind. It was interesting to note that, within a fortnight of its being established that there was natural gas at Gidgealpa, I received letters and overtures from a company which stated it was most anxious to establish a plant for producing nitrogen fertilizer in South Australia, it being a plant that would use a considerable quantity of natural gas.

I believe that similar approaches have been made to the member for Wallaroo (Mr. Hughes). It is an expanding market and, if the supplies are adequate and the price is right, it is an exporting market. This gas is capable of being exported provided we can get within the world price. It is something increasingly demanded by our primary industries. As a matter of interest, why should we be importing fertilizers for our industries from as far afield as Norway, Sweden and Germany when we can make those same fertilizers more cheaply in our own State and keep the money here?

Mr. Casey: You think the money should be kept, as far as practicable, in our own State?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: I believe that that money can be kept in our own State and, what is more, if the fields develop as they show promise of developing in the centre of Australia, we can get into the export market. But a problem is involved here: the larger the pipeline, the cheaper each million cubic feet of transmission. The problem is whether we can get sufficient gas to justify a very large pipeline. If we can justify it, there is not the slightest doubt that we can enter the export market in this field.

I have spoken somewhat longer than I wanted to, but I do commend again to the Government my request that a Royal Commission be appointed and that it be given wide terms of reference. While I have tied my motion to electricity, I believe that the cheapest fuel can be provided if electricity is tied to a system providing industry generally with fuel. That would be the cheapest way to operate the electricity supply in this State. Be that as it may, I hope that the terms of reference would be wide, that the Royal Commission would be appointed fairly soon, and that it would be given a chance to investigate

this matter. If it is handled correctly, public money can be provided in respect of this matter. I had some discussions on this matter with the Commonwealth Bank prior to the election, and I believe it would be necessary for public money to be available. Private money would cost, possibly, 7 per cent, or even more than that. If it is a private organization that undertakes it, the advantages of amortization do not come back ultimately to the public benefit, so I believe that, although it would be necessary to amortize the cost of the pipeline over a period of about 20 years, the pipeline would probably stay in operation for 40 to 50 years, with no trouble. So that the advantages of amortization should undoubtedly be preserved for the public good.

That may seem a radical view from someone on this side of the House. Nevertheless, this is something in the public interest that should be examined soon. I believe it is to the advantage of the economy of this State and (I know that this will strike some chord of sympathy with honourable members opposite) of the working class and the standard of living in this State. It is interesting to notice in the report of the Electricity Trust that over the 10 years I have mentioned the quantity of electricity used in the home has increased by 200 per cent; so that electricity charges are important, not only to industry but to the housewife. I thank honourable members for their attention.

The Hon. FRANK WALSH secured the adjournment of the debate.

DROUGHT RELIEF.

Adjourned debate on the motion of the Hon. D. N. Brookman.

(For wording of motion, see page 624.)

(Continued from June 30. Page 627.)

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN (Alexandra): This matter was last discussed just prior to a short Parliamentary recess, and at that time members of both sides of the House planned to visit the drought-affected areas in the north of the State. The Minister of Lands and the member for Frome were to make a trip shortly after the House adjourned, and the member for Gouger and I also planned to see some of the area. Although we covered about 2,000 miles, some of which was in south-west Queensland (although we did not go far across the border) we saw only a small portion of the northern areas. I am not a complete stranger to those areas and have been in other parts of the North over the years, but I decided to see the Far North-East of the State on this visit.

What we saw confirmed the statements that we had heard about the intensity of the drought, which is an extremely serious one. Most of the people we spoke to considered it to be the worst they could remember. I was given the rainfall figures for a property between Marree and Birdsville. In 1960 it received 388 points of rain, with more than half an inch recorded in February and in November. In 1961 there were three falls in February, April and November, of more than half an inch, and the total for the year was 285 points. In 1962 there were three falls of more than one inch, with a total of 487 points. In 1963 there were two falls of more than half an inch, with a total of 309 points. However, in 1964, there was only one fall of more than half an inch, and the total for the year was only 138 points. In 1965, up to the time when we visited the property, there had been a mere 36 points on one day in May. No other rain had been recorded since September 1964.

Those figures indicate how conditions have deteriorated and how seriously there is a need for more than one good rain. At present conditions are cool, and the animals are under no stress from the heat during the day. In these conditions, stock can walk a considerable distance from feed to water and back again, but in hot weather the distances are shortened by several miles. No doubt unless rain falls before the hot weather, stock will be lost in large numbers. At present stock are being lost, but it is difficult to estimate the actual numbers. One cannot go far from the road and it is difficult, therefore, to gauge the age of the relics of cattle. Without a following rain between now and the coming of the hot weather the stock will be in an extremely precarious condition. The attitude of property owners in the area varies considerably. Some owners are selling stock because they expect further trouble. Others are holding stock because they expect that should they get a rain they will be able to revive their properties. Should they not get a rain they are prepared to face the issue when it gets worse. They are worried that if they take all the stock from the country they will not know where to go to restock when the time comes, and they are also worried about the cost of restocking.

By looking at a relatively small portion of the area we confirmed, as far as we could, what we knew of the conditions. The problem of financing stock purchases by primary producers has been referred to in the press. If a grazier has a good year when selling stock he

can lose much in taxation, and this prevents him from restocking later. In a booklet dealing with income tax for farmers and graziers, it is stated:

If you are obliged to sell livestock because of the destruction of pastures or fodder through the ravages of fire, flood or drought, you may elect to spread over five years the profit on the livestock sale. This means that one-fifth of the profit would be included in your gross income of the year of sale and one-fifth in the gross income of each of the four following years. To take advantage of this concession you are required to declare that the sale was genuinely occasioned by the loss or destruction of pastures or fodder, due to fire, flood or drought. In addition, you must demonstrate that a substantial part of the proceeds of the sale will be used to purchase replacement livestock.

That provision may give some assistance, but it is largely a matter of approaching and negotiating with the Income Tax Department, and it would be better if an automatic system operated whereby graziers could lay-off (as it were) against restocking problems. It has been suggested that graziers should be able to buy "drought bonds" when they could afford them. I am not an expert on taxation, and I do not know whether this is the answer to the problems. A letter, written by a relative of mine, although not in consultation with me, appeared in the press. It referred to the possibility of graziers being able to buy such bonds, and I believe the suggestion has some merit. As it is a long letter, I ask permission to have it incorporated in *Hansard* without my reading it.

Leave granted.

DROUGHT BONDS.

Why don't graziers prepare for droughts? This question is often asked and the answer is seldom satisfying. The real answer is that it is far too wastefully expensive for him to do so. If a grazier has a good year and tries to put aside some of his income for the bad year, he can lose half to two-thirds of it in income tax. This is poor encouragement to be prudent. To overcome this, I propose that the Commonwealth Government issue "Drought Bonds" bearing interest at the ruling short term rate, but payable on demand or at short notice. The bonds would be deductible from the grazier's income in the year of purchase but would be assessable as income in the year of encashment. The drought bonds would be available to a grazier to purchase feed during a drought or to purchase livestock after a drought in order to restock. I consider that most graziers would far rather help themselves during the good times than be the recipients of Government handouts and concessions in times of drought. The advantages to Australia of this proposal are two-fold. Firstly, the Government

has the use of this money when there is no drought or when there is only a limited one. Secondly, graziers can make their own reserves, and this would reduce the amount required to finance any national fodder fund. These two advantages would surely offset the loss of revenue caused by the reduced amount of income tax paid in the good years.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I was pleased to see that when the Minister returned from the North he made several press statements that had a direct bearing on this matter. He stated, amongst other things, that he was confident that Cabinet would grant remissions in needy cases, and I think that remissions are necessary. Land in the North is no longer available at a low rental and the position had become quite unrealistic. Low rentals applied in relation to some properties in the past. The reason for the low rentals was that, after the Royal Commission into the pastoral industry in 1927, rents were offered to lessees for periods of, I think, 42 years in most cases, and provision was made for limited rental reviews only every 21 years.

In 1960 the Government introduced an amendment to the Pastoral Act that provided for new leases to be offered. They were to run for 42 years, with reviews of the rent after seven years. There were considerable opportunities for increasing or reducing the rents; in fact, I believe that the rent could be varied at the expiration of each period of seven years, by as much as 50 per cent. In addition, the Pastoral Board had been offering new leases at rentals greatly in excess of those applying under the old leases. It is impossible to give exact figures, because the rentals vary considerably, but in general terms, they had been increased threefold. Of course, there would be many cases where the rents had been increased more than that, and others where there had been a fairly small increase.

These leases have been handled sensibly and patiently by the Pastoral Board. Rents are a matter of much concern to lessees at present and I believe the Pastoral Board has done a particularly good job in placing them on a realistic basis. It is only fair at this time to forget the old idea that rents were next to nothing, and we must be prepared to grant remissions if there is a case for them. The Minister is considering the granting of freight concessions for stock in transport and also fodder and rent remissions and doubtless he will speak on those matters. However, I ask the Government to do one or two of the things it has already undertaken to do. First, will

it consider granting rent remissions and freight concessions? Secondly, will it approach the Commonwealth Government on the matter of taxation? I saw a press statement to the effect that the Minister is to do something of that nature. Finally, although this is not incorporated in the motion, will the Minister at the same time approach the Commonwealth Government on the matter of beef roads? Fruitless approaches have been made on this matter previously, but I cannot see why that Government should not agree. I think anyone in South Australia with any interest in this country would agree on the first beef roads to be improved; There would not be any debate at all on them, and we could go to the Commonwealth with a strong case.

The Engineering and Water Supply Department has done a magnificent job on roadmaking in the remote areas with the resources available, and all types of motor vehicles are now able to negotiate many of these roads, except, of course, in the type of weather which they have not received in those areas so far but which they are hoping to get. I thank members for the attention they have given to my remarks.

The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS (Minister of Lands): I do not want any remarks that I may make in the early stages of my address to be misconstrued. I do not want it to be thought that I am unsympathetic to the people of the North. I think that what I have said by way of public statements and what I shall say a little later in my speech will completely dispel any thoughts along that line. In the first instance, I must say that I was rather surprised when the honourable member for Alexandra moved this motion. I have no quarrel with most of his remarks, but the fact is that he, as Minister of Agriculture for a number of years, as Acting Minister of Lands for a time, and, of course, as a Cabinet Minister during those years with a full voice in Cabinet, did not do these things. After all, this is not a new drought; it has been going for about 10 years. People in these localities have been suffering hardship for some time, some even more so during the term of the former Government than today. I do not say that that applies in all cases, but it does apply in a number. In fact, I have been told by people in the North, and also by the Stock-owners Association, that the Government was approached on earlier occasions for the assistance the honourable member is now telling us to give. It is apparent from remarks made

earlier in this House that it is far easier for the present Opposition to tell the Government what to do than it was for the former Government to do the things itself. This is remarkably evident from the matters on the Notice Paper.

I inform the House that I met a deputation from the Stockowners Association a short time after my visit to the North. I received them in a friendly discussion, they submitted certain matters for my consideration and I think we parted on amicable terms. However, I was rather taken with the first part of the submissions. They were addressed to me as the Minister of Lands and were headed "Concessions for Drought Relief". The submissions state:

I refer to representations made to the Government on this question during last year and a letter received by our association from the then Acting Minister of Lands (Hon. D. N. Brookman) dated December 19, 1962, on the subject, since when we have heard nothing further.

They then elaborate on their request, and it is much in line with the terms of the motion now before the House, so honourable members will appreciate that I was rather surprised when I noticed this item on the Notice Paper. Dockets in connection with these matters are available to incoming Ministers, and the relevant one is here—

Mr. Casey: That must be one of the dockets they didn't take with them.

The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS: Yes, perhaps they would have been wiser to lose it. These people were suffering as much hardship in 1962 as they are today. Prior to any indication that the member for Alexandra (Hon. D. N. Brookman) would introduce this matter in the House, I received a deputation from some people in the Far North-West, near the Northern Territory and Western Australian borders, and they said they appreciated the work undertaken by the member for Frome and that he had been a real help to them in the time that he had been associated with them as their member. They said they had prevailed on him to introduce a deputation to the former Premier requesting much the same sort of thing as has been outlined in this motion. These gentlemen did not come complaining to me, but they asked for help by way of amending the Dog Fence Act with which they, as cattlemen, were concerned. Apparently, their neighbour intended to run sheep on his property, and under the Act they would have had to contribute a quarter of the cost of a dog-proof fence.

Although I was not able actively to assist them, because of the specific wording in the Act, I undertook to confer with the adjoining owner, Mr. McLachlan, whom I invited to see me concerning this matter. He promptly came to see me, and during a friendly discussion he somewhat surprised me by saying, "Mr. Minister, what would you want me to do in this matter?" I said, "I would be pleased if you would pay all the money required to erect this fence, as these people, who have had a hard time with the recent drought, are not in a sound financial position." He immediately said, "If you say so, Mr. Minister, I will do it." Mr. McLachlan has generously agreed to pay the sum to erect the dog-proof fence along the existing boundaries of the properties concerned, and this sort of co-operation is always appreciated; it certainly was appreciated by the gentlemen I have mentioned.

Among the stockowners who came into see me was a Mr. McAuley, a prominent figure in the Stockowners Association who had, just prior to seeing me, referred to the fact that people in the Far North were politically unimportant. I replied that this would hardly be correct, when he realized that only a few days previously the member for the district (Mr. Casey) and I had journeyed into the North to find out for ourselves just what the problems were. After all, we had been in Government only for a few months. He said, "I wasn't referring to you; I was referring to the former Government, because of their inactivity in assisting in any way."

Mr. Casey: I think he was a member of their Party, too.

The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS: Whether that is so, I cannot say, but not only was I surprised that this motion should be introduced, in view of the former Government's lack of action on this matter, but also the stockowners themselves were surprised that it should be introduced. They were amazed at the statement the honourable member had made on the Wednesday before he moved this motion; some of them laughed and said that this was certainly a turn-up for the books because they had received no sympathy before. This Government has shown to the people of the Far North and other parts of the State that it is sympathetic to the man on the land.

Mr. Clark: That is very different from what we were told yesterday.

The Hon. G. A. BYWATERS: I shall have more to say about that, too. About a fortnight after I took office I received a letter

from a group of people in the Frances district of the South-East, written by a Mr. A. H. Waters, who said that a minister of religion (I believe of the Congregational Church), who had formerly resided in the South-East had now been transferred to Newcastle in New South Wales, and had requested assistance from these people for certain farmers in New South Wales who were adversely affected by the drought. He cited instances of dairy farmers in dire straits, and he wanted to know whether, if the Frances people provided the fodder (and he suggested 40,000 bales of high-quality fodder), the South Australian Government would arrange to pay the freight for that fodder, because the farmers over there would be unable to do so. I took this letter to Cabinet, and it was decided by other members of the Cabinet, with whom I agreed, to take up this matter with the then New South Wales Labor Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Entieknap).

That Minister promptly telephoned me, and within a few days I had word to the effect that the New South Wales Government would provide the freight costs but it asked the South Australian Government to provide the rolling stock. This was so arranged with the Minister of Transport, and within a short time the fodder was on the rails and on its way to New South Wales. The clergyman wrote to the newspapers at the time expressing gratitude to the people in the South-East for their prompt action. Indeed, this was the first action taken by any State outside New South Wales to provide fodder for the drought-stricken areas in that State. He was most appreciative of the gesture; he kindly referred to my actions and to the Government's action in seeing that the matter was expedited. He said that the fodder had arrived in good condition and that the people, too, fully appreciated the move. In fact, he also said in a private letter to me that this matter had been given widespread publicity in New South Wales and had reflected much credit on the people of the South-East for their generous gesture.

I visited the North at the invitation of the honourable member for Frome (Mr. Casey), who suggested that it would be wise if I went there to see some of the conditions prevailing there for myself, and I was happy to do so. We made a rather hurried visit leaving early on a Friday and returning on the following Monday afternoon. However, in that time we travelled 2,500 air miles and about 500 road miles, although some of the tracks over which we travelled could hardly be termed roads.

Wherever we went we endeavoured to contact as many people as we could. This was arranged by the Pastoral Board and by Mr. Johnson, the Chairman of the board, who knew these people intimately and had been in contact with them, and we met as many as we could in the short space of time at our disposal. We journeyed to many stations, and I do not intend to elaborate on all of them. In each case, at Marree, Oodnadatta, Birdsville, and particularly at Tieyon, a group of people were there. None of these people had a real complaint, although they made certain suggestions. I was surprised at their general outlook and the way in which they accepted the situation in their stride, as it were. They all told me that they were aware that this particular country was drought-prone.

They did not tell us but we asked them what the Government could do to assist them. I do not think we had any real complaints in the way of a grizzle. These people were most anxious to talk about their problems and we were most anxious to listen. When we asked them what they believed the South Australian Government could do to assist them, one or two suggestions were made, and we have endeavoured to take notice of them. One suggestion was that fodder could be provided for their working horses which they used for mustering. Another suggestion was that fodder could be left at the railheads at Oodnadatta, Marree and Kingoonya to help when they were on the way down to a sale. They also referred to the remission of income tax to which the honourable member for Alexandra referred. I congratulate the honourable member on his modesty in this connection. The letter in question was written by his brother whom I congratulate on it. It was sent to the paper and has been included in *Hansard*. I believe that what he said was pertinent and was borne out by the comments that I heard while in the North.

A matter that concerned these people more than anything else was restocking. This is their real problem because the drought has affected not only the northern parts of South Australia but also the Northern Territory, Queensland and, of course, New South Wales. I believe that it will be difficult to obtain stock. This will be one of the major concerns and I am sure that it was the major concern expressed to us on this occasion. As the honourable member for Alexandra said, pastoralists may obtain a remission from the Taxation Department by spreading restocking costs over a

five-year period. However, it is a hardship if this is levelled against them before they sell their stock.

These matters were mentioned and we took notice of them. Representatives of the Stockowners Association suggested that there should be a part remission on freight for conveying fodder to these areas. The Government went a step further and agreed to pay the full cost to people who provided gift fodder for this purpose. I think all those we met in the North told us that it was totally impracticable and uneconomic to provide fodder for stock on the property, and when one visits these areas one can realize why. The stock is far removed and most of the time it is impossible to see even one head of stock for miles. I commend people in the agricultural areas of the State for their generosity, but perhaps some of them have not been able to fully absorb this point. One man from the West Coast was concerned because it was not possible to send fodder. Many people became concerned when they read articles in the *Sunday Mail* and saw the photographs published therein. However, I believe these articles gave a rather incorrect picture of the situation. Besides agreeing to pay the full sum for the transport of this fodder to the particular areas by way of the railheads, we then told the stockowners certain facts, a summation of which appeared in an article in the *Advertiser*. It was headed "Drought Relief Details", and read:

The Minister of Lands (Mr. Bywaters) yesterday announced further details of the Government's proposals to send fodder to help drought victims in the northern pastoral areas. He said that the secretary of the Pastoral Board (Mr. A. H. Walters) would act as liaison officer for the Government and would co-operate with the Stockowners Association in arranging the dispatch and distribution of fodder through depots at Kingoonya, Marree and Oodnadatta.

Departmental officers in the country would also help. Offers of hay should be made to the Stockowners Association. It would help if farmers could advise the amount and types available and the transport required. Applications for supplies also should be directed to the association. Details should be given. Mr. Bywaters said that fodder was being made available to enable stock to be moved out of drought areas and for station horses.

I went even further than that and said that the Government would be prepared to treat each case on its merits with regard to rental remissions, and we will do that. I believe it is right that each case should be treated on its merits. If those who lease these pastoral areas are examined it can be seen that some leases are held by large pastoral companies. I do not

believe that any member would suggest (and the general taxpayer would certainly not suggest) that the Government should assist those who are probably in a better financial position than those who are providing this assistance. Therefore, every case must necessarily be treated on its merits, and that is the reason for the statement along those lines. The same applies to stock on agistment, although it is most unlikely that stock would be sent on agistment, as here again most of the pastoralists have told us that it is uneconomic to have stock for agistment purposes because this is costly when spread over a long period. It is all right to have such stock for a short time, but who knows when the drought will break? It has gone on for 10 years and we hope it will break soon, but we do not know whether it will, and neither do they.

All these people, who are practical pastoralists, will claim that when feed is there the land should be stocked and that when conditions are as they are now they should get rid of stock. The member for Alexandra (Hon. D. N. Brookman) on his return from the North said that very little stock was left on many of these places. We went to stations at Innamincka and just out from Oodnadatta, which would probably be amongst the worst places in the whole of the northern part of the State. Very little stock is there now. Certainly, the properties we visited were owned by big pastoral companies that had other stations, and they had transported some of their stock to them. However, when sufficient feed is not available it is time for people to quit their stock. I believe it was Sir George Jenkins who once said, "Even though it hurts, still sell." Most people up there, even if they would like to hang on a little longer for rain, know that it is not practicable to do so. The man who really knows what to do quits his stock so that the matter does not reach the stage suggested by the pictures in the *Sunday Mail*.

We visited a station that I thought was a good example, as it was handling stock even in the present adverse conditions. The member for Alexandra referred to the Lake Eyre area as one of the driest parts of the North. Although that is true, Muloorina Station is still maintaining most of its sheep population. I think about 16,000 head of sheep was shorn this year, yet if one looks to see where the feed is one is left guessing about what the sheep have lived on. Despite this, the sheep were in perfectly good heart and quite fat. Some had been shorn and, although they do not look their best then, they were in very good

condition. I attribute this to the fact that there is very good underground water there from the underground basin. Many people in that area have this water, but the owner of this station has made full use of it. He is a most enterprising person. On the property was a dry creek about 18 miles long, and he connected the artesian bore to the creek and obtained a flowing creek over its whole length. He did this by using a burster from the bore to connect up with the creek.

Anyone who knows anything about the North realizes that where there is a creek, whether dry or not, there is always shade from the trees and there are pickings, and that that is where most of the sheep come. That is what happened in this case, and the sheep were keeping quite well. This man has shown by his enterprise that he can do something with his property. He is also putting down another bore and running piping in a three-mile radius from it. It struck me that one of the causes of sheep dying is that when they come in for a drink at a waterhole or at bore troughs naturally there is no feed for some distance around the watering places. After drinking a fair quantity of water they then lay down near the watering place, and I have been told that the crows take out their eyes and that they then die. The owner of this station is trying to overcome this problem by running out polythene piping on a three-mile radius. This takes in a big area and provides a much larger distribution of the available fodder. He has a plastic trough and, when it is not practical to leave stock any longer in the place where he has the trough, he moves it to another place within the radius and still provides water and some pickings to keep the stock alive. He has proved this can be done even in a particularly dry area.

The Government promised to take up the question of taxation and other matters relating to it with the Commonwealth Government, and as a result the following letter was written by the Premier to the Prime Minister after my return from the Far North:

Dear Sir Robert,

You will be aware that the far northern pastoral areas of South Australia have for a number of years suffered from drought conditions which have latterly reached extreme proportions. It would be uneconomic and indeed quite impracticable to attempt continuing sustenance of surviving stock in the stricken area by the supply of fodder from our southern areas. Whilst some movement of stock south for agistment is practicable, it is generally agreed that the correct management is to transport the stock out of the area for sale and then restock when it is practicable.

There is urgent need, however, for fodder for the support of pastoralists' working horses and for stock in transit out of the areas. We have had offers from farmers in our southern areas and Eyre Peninsula of fodder as a gift to be used for these particular relief purposes, and during the next month or two it is anticipated that some 1,000 to 2,000 tons will be available and sent north. My Government has indicated that as well as offering administrative help to the Stockowners Association it is prepared to meet the necessary transportation costs to distribution centres at Kingoonya, Marree, and Oodnadatta. This includes certain steamship movements (arranged at greatly reduced freight rates), wharfage and road charges, and South Australian and Commonwealth rail charges. These may amount to between £10,000 and £20,000. Of these costs probably some 40 per cent and possibly as much as 50 per cent would be for freights on the Commonwealth Railways.

In the circumstances I would request that your Government meet a share of these costs on a pound-for-pound basis. In view of the urgency of the matter there is no time to arrange for the Commonwealth to authorize free transportation on its railways, and accordingly I am proposing to pay all the essential transport and associated charges from a special State Appropriation, and would greatly appreciate your agreement to reimburse half those charges. Appropriate audit certificates would be made available in the ordinary course. When the question of restocking arises it may be desirable that the Commonwealth and the State both give some consideration to special arrangements for reduced rail charges.

Honourable members will see that the present Government has been most anxious to show its sympathy to the people of the Far North. I believe that those people will agree that this is the first time for many years that they have had such an expression; in fact, this was mentioned to me on many occasions. They appreciated very much the thought that I was even able to go there and look at their area and that we were at least aware of some of their difficulties. I appreciated very much meeting them and having the opportunity to look over the country in these adverse times. I trust I shall have the opportunity to go there again when conditions are much more favourable. One thing I wish for these people more than anything else is rain in large quantities. If they get 30 points in one week and nothing more for several months, the 30 points is not much use; they need much rain. If they can get that, there is nothing wrong with this country, and it will produce feed again. We saw mulgas that had died, and we saw regenerated mulgas that will be coming on to take their place. I have no doubt at all that if we get the rains the North will blossom again.

I appreciate very much the gesture of the people who through their kindheartedness have made fodder available. I refer particularly to a person on the West Coast whom I would term as a man of just ordinary means, a soldier settler—Mr. Moody. This man has gone out of his way to encourage people to provide fodder for these drought areas. If anything, I think possibly his generosity and big-heartedness have been overdone, through the fact that he was perhaps not aware of the actual situation. He has now been acquainted with the position. Nevertheless, his intention was indeed a good one. I also appreciate very much the co-operation of the Adelaide Steamship Company, which has offered to transport fodder at about one-quarter of its normal freight charges. Such co-operation as this is something we like to expect from people but very often do not receive, and I think that it should be recorded that these people are generous when the need comes. Their generosity has been much appreciated by the Government. A number of people have been most anxious to help, and the fact that we have people such as these in the community must give us great confidence in the future of South Australia. The generosity of these people is really something from their hearts, and it should be commended.

I know that the honourable member for Frome (Mr. Casey), who journeyed with me, will have something to say on this matter a little later in the debate. I know, too, that the people who have expressed gratitude for the action taken by this Government have been most sincere. Although it is good to have this matter aired in the House, where it gives me the opportunity to mention some of the things we have already done and the sympathy we have expressed in these matters, it did surprise me to know that the motion was brought forward by a former Minister of the Crown who had done very little of what he is suggesting that we do now.

Mr. QUIRKE (Burra): I am in full sympathy with this request for assistance for these people in the North. This is not a new question. When I was Minister of Lands the Stockowners Association approached me, not for the transport of fodder at that time but only for an alteration to the legislation so that when certain conditions arose they would be able to obtain concession rates. There was no lack of sympathy for them on my part, and I have no doubt that if the present conditions had existed when I was the Minister those people would have obtained the

concessions that they are now being given; there would have been no difficulty about that. The people all over the country have given thousands and thousands of bales of fodder for drought-stricken areas, and Governments would naturally do the same thing, for there is no difference between people and Governments in their attitude towards a problem of human privation, and that is what it is.

Mr. Casey: They did not do it three years ago.

Mr. QUIRKE: They were never asked to do it three years ago.

Mr. Casey: Yes, they were.

Mr. QUIRKE: They never asked for any fodder then.

Mr. Casey: Yes, they did.

Mr. QUIRKE: Not in my time; they just asked that provision be made so that if it were necessary to send them fodder the concessions would be given, and I have not the slightest doubt in the world that they would have been given. Governments do not refuse those things, so it is just a little off-side to suggest that somebody else would not have given what has been given now. The Government was never asked.

Mr. Casey: Yes, it was.

Mr. QUIRKE: Not in my time, and I do not think the honourable member will find that in the docket, the contents of which are well known to me. The Minister of Agriculture, who is very fair about these matters, said that plenty of rain was the answer to the whole problem. I do not think it is. The North has been gradually, and in recent years heavily, denuded of its bush cover, and thousands and thousands of square miles of it have died. There has been a little bit of regeneration of mulga, but that country is dependent upon its bush more than annual growth. If that country were dependent only upon annual growth, say, annual saltbush or bindi-eye and a few other things like that, it would not carry much stock, and I think the honourable member for Frome knows that as well as I do. It is the permanent bush cover that is the mainstay of the North. That bush cover has been broken down over 10 years of drought, but we know that it will come again because there have been instances in other parts of the country where it has regenerated. A famous example is Parachilna, where the country opposite the hotel was a windswept waste, so bad that it had almost silted up the hotel. The Pastoral Board closed down that section of land, and its regeneration is amazing. It is now a reserve with beautiful bush

cover on it. If we are to do anything for the North country it has to get back to that condition, and to do that it must have a spell. I think that if we hurriedly restock that country again now in an attempt to make up losses we shall make it worse.

It is time a nation-wide attempt was made to regenerate the centre of the continent of Australia, because we are the ones that are responsible for the wretched condition of much of it today. As our contribution to the well-being of the country, we should not permit heavy restocking of country following a drought of such devastating proportions as we have had. That country must be given a spell, and in my opinion a good rain of, say, four or five inches is not the answer to its complete rehabilitation; continual rain, yes, and that is a thing we are not likely to get, because we know from experience that that country is in a latitude where continuing good rains are not likely to occur. It can get two or three good years, but unless there is bush growth there it will not become regenerated. If we put too much stock, particularly sheep, on it when the regenerating bush comes, it can be eaten out before it gets properly started. I am not alone in that view. I am no authority on this country, but I have read extensively from the works of people who do know the country, and it is the general opinion that the time has arrived for the centre of Australia to have a complete spell from restocking.

Mr. Hughes: This would rest more with those up there, wouldn't it?

Mr. QUIRKE: I would not suggest that the people who had had heavy losses should be forced to refrain from stocking without receiving compensation.

Mr. Hughes: I am only seeking information.

Mr. QUIRKE: The people prevented from restocking should be compensated and, when restocking does eventually take place, there should be rigid controls on that stock. That is how in years to come that country should be handled. Some authorities say that, compulsorily, it should be at least one year in five when no restocking takes place and that, when there is a dry spell, stock should be removed from that country and not allowed to eat it out while the owners hope against hope all the time that it will rain. That causes two things to happen: first, it destroys the top cover of the country and, secondly, the cattle die in any case; so the result is that the cattle are all dead and the bush country is ruined. That sort of attitude must not be allowed to continue if we are to

regenerate our inland country. It is worth regenerating because it is one of our most valuable assets. The present drought has persisted for a long time but there has been much mismanagement in many directions, and not only on the part of the owners. Present-day evidence should indicate that we must introduce some reformative measures. I have not the authority to say what they should be but I cite the opinions of people well qualified to speak on this matter. They could produce a plan for bringing back the inland to something like its former state. The country there is entirely different now from what it was when we took it over. The greatest destructive force known to the universe is man. Particularly when something arises affecting his money or his mouth, he is a destructive force. What has happened in the inland is our fault, everybody's fault, and particularly the fault of legislation for allowing it to happen. We should not blame anybody but should learn the lesson. Now is the opportune time to say, "You shall not put 5,000 sheep back on to that country while it is in a state of regeneration immediately following rain." One thing that will prevent that from happening, anyway, is that there are not 5,000 sheep to be put back, in many instances, and cattle cannot be picked up as quickly as that. So the country probably has a chance, in spite of our inaction in that direction when action should be taken.

I, too, saw Muloorina Station. I join with the Minister in praising the attitude of Mr. Price—his fortitude, and his latitude and longitude, if you like! He has everything it takes, and inventions, some of which at first glance look like something that originated in the mind of Heath Robinson; but they all work and he is a mechanical genius. He is a man who generated electricity from the water flowing through a bore: he lit his station with his own generating plant with the water flowing from that bore. He has a hydro-electric plant built by himself. His idea of distributing water could be enlarged upon in other parts of the State. He has the idea of taking water out to the sheep, but it is expensive. Three miles is not all that is necessary: it is miles and miles of pipeline, all of which is expensive. I should like to tell the Government and the Minister of Lands something that I attempted to do for Mr. Price at Muloorina Station. I got knocked back on it. Perhaps the Minister representing the Minister of Transport will be able to do something in this matter. Mr. Price asked for concession rates for the rail transport of piping

for this very purpose. I could not extract any concession rates for him; perhaps he will have better success with this Government. He wants this polythene piping. Honourable members have seen it done up in great coils. Muloorina Station wanted some concession rates from the railways, but it never got them. I was in full sympathy with that suggestion, so I asked the Minister. If the proprietor of Muloorina Station has not approached the honourable member for Frome (Mr. Casey), perhaps he will and see whether he can get reduced freight rates for carrying that polythene piping into that country so that people there can get it and use it for taking water over their properties, which is a good idea.

At present, many people in that country are in trouble. The member for Alexandra (Hon. D. N. Brookman) went up there at his own expense; he drove his own vehicle to the North to see this country. When I went North I had the advantage of a Government car and when the Minister went North he had the advantage of a Government aeroplane. But the member for Alexandra drove his own vehicle, a costly business.

Mr. Casey: There is no need to tell me that.

Mr. QUIRKE: It is costly to take a two-wheel drive vehicle into that country. The member for Frome will know what efforts I made to have something done about the Birdsville track. When I was there, notwithstanding the best efforts of the engineer from the Engineering and Water Supply Department, who is responsible for maintaining the roads there, that main Birdsville track would have broken the back of a snake crawling along it. The first thing the track needs is engineering so that the crooked parts can be straightened. That wretched track winds across a dead flat plain. Why must it twist and turn? In places it has exactly the same round contours as the River Murray viewed from the air. It just twists and winds across the plain; there is no obstacle to its running in a straight line. But, no—it has to wind and twist. I think the member for Frome said that the road was made by an Aborigine chasing a goanna.

Mr. Casey: I think I used the word "dingo".

Mr. QUIRKE: A dingo. Anyway, I think it needed to run straighter than that road does. However, that is a fairly apt description of it, in whatever way it was made. There is no earthly reason why it should not be straight. When it winds and twists like that, what does it do to the animals being carried? A vehicle swerves around one corner at an angle,

lurching this way and that, and one cannot stop it; it goes weaving around the corners. It is a dreadful track. I do not know whether it is any different now but, whoever was responsible for it, the Commonwealth will not pay and we have not the money; but these beef tracks are a disgrace to Australia. Even if beef roads were not needed, we would need good roads between Queensland and South Australia and between Queensland and every State in the Commonwealth.

They need not be expensive, but at present the roads are made by grading from the centre outwards, the top is taken off, and the bulldust is left in the bottom. The roads need grading back with the good road-making material on the side of the road, but that is outside the capacity of the Engineering and Water Supply Department with the money available. The roads need to be engineered and re-formed and made into good, permanent tracks that need continual annual maintenance. A depot is needed much closer to Birdsville than Crystal Brook or Leigh Creek. One could be established at Marree, but I understand no-one wants to live there, except a few dedicated men living in a caravan on their own. I support the honourable member for Alexandra, and I do not agree with the politics that have crept into this debate. The statement that Mr. Brookman did this to embarrass the Government when he had the opportunity to do it three years ago, is not correct.

No-one here would be more sympathetic to graziers than is the honourable member for Alexandra: it is inherent in his life. These contributions by members opposite are untimely and certainly undeserved and I was surprised at the Minister engaging in that sort of petty niggling, as it does not do anyone any good. Many people have been associated with this matter. I was approached by Mr. McAuley of the Stockowners Association, who asked me whether it would be possible for pastoralists to receive a concession rate on fodder if it became necessary to have assistance. Before that time came I was not in office. Had I been there, I would have done the same as is being done now.

Mr. Casey: You would be more informed than you are today, if you had been.

Mr. QUIRKE: I would have done exactly what has been done.

Mr. Casey: What we have done!

Mr. QUIRKE: That is only what anyone would have done. The man who gives thousands of bales of fodder does not want a pat on the back. He knows that people are needy and that the stock need the fodder. He does not want his name sky-written to show that he gave so many bales of fodder.

Mr. Casey: It is a charitable act.

Mr. QUIRKE: Let this be a charitable act with a little less of the uncharitableness of snide remarks such as "Because you did not do it in your time, we do it, and the Angel Gabriel will reward us for it." That is sky-writing and rather like saying, "Thank God I am not as other men." The cockies give their fodder but do not want a pat on the back. I support the motion, and hope the necessary action will be taken to implement it.

Mr. CASEY (Frome): I speak against the motion, and should like to correct several statements made this afternoon. From what he said, the honourable member who has just resumed his seat has been misinformed even during the time he was a Minister in the previous Government. This matter dates back many years. It has been said in the House that the drought has been continuing in the north of South Australia and in parts of Central Australia for the past 10 years. We all know that, and we also know that the Far North, Far North-West and Far North-East of this State have, over the past 10 years, suffered severely from droughts. The honourable member for Alexandra spoke about the Far North-East. As I pointed out, there is much difference in topography between the North-East of this State and the Far North-East, the Far North and the Far North-West. I say today, as I did when I criticized the member for Alexandra earlier in the session, that if ever there was an occasion when the Opposition deliberately set out to use underhand methods in order to gain political propaganda for its own ends, this is it. I say that without reservation. About three years ago I led a deputation to the former Premier of pastoralists from the Far North and North-West of this State. On that occasion, all the evidence that could be collated by these pastoralists was placed before the Premier. It included rainfall gaugings (which were pitiful, to say the least) and the numbers of stock that had been lost over the past years. Towards the end of the deputation the Premier said to me, "What do you want me to do?" I said that, although the whole of the North of this State was not in the grip of a drought,

there were isolated stations that were, and I suggested that the Pastoral Board should send members into the area for an on-the-spot inspection of these stations so that a report could be made to the Government, and help given where it was needed. The help I asked for was a remission of rent on leases and rail freight concessions in respect of fodder sent in to the area for starving stock. When I asked a question in the House later as to the findings of the Pastoral Board, the then Premier did not even tell the House what those findings were. In fact, he had the Chairman of the Pastoral Board answer on the matter. The Premier was afraid to put his signature to the report. I think that, in fairness to any deputation to a Minister, the report asked for should be signed eventually by the Minister concerned. I took a dim view on the findings of the Pastoral Board when it went into that area. The report should have been submitted to the Premier, because at the deputation I asked the Premier to do this thing.

Of course, he did not want to sign the report and take the responsibility, because if he had, these people could have said, "We have come to you in all fairness and you have done absolutely nothing. You have wiped us off like a dirty shirt." Yet, we have the honourable member for Burra, who was Minister of Lands (admittedly only for a short time) and who has said that this sort of thing could not happen. Well, it did happen and that was the hand-out given to the people of the North by the former Government. I have some correspondence dating back to as early as 1961 dealing with drought relief. At that time, the former Government was asked by the Stock-owners Association of South Australia to consider the matter. I do not doubt that the matter had been taken up even earlier than that but I have letters to the former Premier and his answers in which he sidetracked the issue all along the line. He eventually took the matter up with the Prime Minister and, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I should like to read some passages from a letter signed by Mr. A. R. Downer, for the Prime Minister, dated February 2, 1962. The letter states:

Dear Sir Thomas—I noted with concern the difficulties which have been experienced by graziers in the north of your State because of drought conditions. I was, therefore, pleased to see, after receipt of your letter, press reports that good rains had fallen in parts of South Australia and the Northern Territory and I hope these rains will alleviate the position.

In connection with the other concessions sought by the Stock and Station Owners Association, the letter states:

I understand that in times of drought the Governments of Queensland and Western Australia provide rebates in respect of the cost of transporting starving stock and fodder. Similar rebates have been introduced by the Northern Territory Administration for the benefit of pastoralists within the Territory. The Commonwealth does not, however, directly participate in these arrangements, which are left to the State or territory administrations concerned. In these circumstances, I would suggest, therefore, that consideration of the proposal advanced by the Stock and Station Owners Association is really a matter for your Government.

Mr. Ryan: He passed the buck!

Mr. CASEY: And the buck was passed all along by the previous Government, but we have been in Government for only a few months and have done everything possible to help these people in the Far North. Unfortunately, there was a sort of climax with the big drought being experienced in the north and north west of New South Wales and in south-western Queensland. Of course, the newspapers build it up. It is a good gimmick for them to come up with this sort of headline. However, I say without hesitation that this was an underhand political move in order to undermine the present Government. I am pleased to say that we accepted the challenge, and it back-fired on honourable members opposite.

The honourable member for Alexandra said that he read about the drought in the *Sunday Mail* and came to the headline that stated, "Something must be done urgently to help the drought-stricken North and North-West of South Australia." He went on to say that this article struck him particularly forcibly. I do not know how forcibly it struck him, but when he went up, he journeyed into the far North-East! He did not go anywhere near the Far North or North-West and this goes to show how silly the whole matter is. If he were really genuine, why did he not go into the areas depicted by the *Sunday Mail*? He made reference here to stations that are outside Kingoonya.

The Hon. B. H. Teusner: He saw more than you did on your trip!

Mr. CASEY: I have never heard anything so ridiculous as that statement by the honourable member for Angas. In fact, I do not suppose the honourable member has even been in the Far North. I would have thought that the honourable member for Burra would have moved this motion, because he is a former

Minister of Lands and he travelled to that area at least once. To my knowledge (and I stand to be corrected on this) the honourable member for Alexandra has not been past Marree.

The Hon. D. N. Brookman: Be corrected.

Mr. CASEY: How far into the Far North has the honourable member travelled?

The Hon. D. N. Brookman: I will tell you in a few minutes.

Mr. CASEY: The honourable member has probably gone by train to Oodnadatta, or some such place, but I doubt if he has been past Marree by road in the last seven or eight years. I know that he was up there in connection with the matter of pleuropneumonia. However, getting back to the business in question, I would have thought that the honourable member for Burra would have moved this motion, because he was the man who travelled to the Far North. I would have thought the previous Government would have acted in this matter. I pointed out to the Pastoral Board several years ago that many of these stations in the Far North and North-East where difficulty is being experienced today were small holdings. I am not talking about stations such as those owned by the Kidmans at Macumba and Innamincka. In fact, the Kidman company has a number of stations in Queensland also. It is their policy to have these stations, because they know that if they become drought affected in some areas they can shift their cattle accordingly. However, for the small people of the Far North-East the former Government of this State did absolutely nothing for years. When I returned from the Pastoral Board on one occasion I advocated that these people with smaller holdings should have a frontage to the creeks in their area, one being the Diamantina River and the other more easterly one the Cooper Creek.

Many stations did not have a river frontage at all, but the former Minister of Lands appreciated this situation and rectified it, so that today we find these smaller stations have a river frontage. I believe that that was one of the best moves ever made, because those creeks are the life-blood of the Far North. If the stations concerned had access to these watering places they could tide over a certain sum of money to help them through the drier periods, because they could fatten many more cattle if they had river frontages. As the Minister of Agriculture said this afternoon, the places we visited covered the whole of the

North-East, the Far North and the Far North-West. We made a comprehensive study of the whole situation in those areas, and I shall prove exactly how the present Government has succeeded in meeting the requests of the people in those areas and how much they have appreciated what the Government has done. Only this afternoon I received a letter stamped at Alice Springs (because the mail goes through that centre) which reads as follows:

I would like you to know how we all appreciated the few days spared to make your recent trip up into this part of South Australia. It is good to read that together with Mr. Bywaters you have already given assistance in drought relief in the way of hay for store cattle. We thank you.

Mr. Lawn: The motion is a bit late; the Government has already acted.

Mr. CASEY: Yes, the motion is so ridiculous that I intend to seek to amend it. I move:

To strike out all the words after "that" second occurring and to insert "the Government of South Australia should be congratulated on its prompt action in providing assistance to pastoralists in the drought-stricken areas of this State".

Mr. Ryan: Hear, hear! About time!

Mr. CASEY: Indeed, that amendment reflects the opinion of the people in the North of the State, and they are the people with whom we are directly concerned. I make no apologies for saying that this motion was definitely a political move to hop on the band wagon, and it is a pity that the Opposition reverts to these tactics, for I think it is damaging to its own prestige as a Party. The member for Burra (Mr. Quirke) said something about the beef roads in South Australia being a disgrace to Australia, and he said he did not know who was responsible for them. In all my years in this House I have tried my utmost to get the former Government to take some responsibility for these roads and to get it to bring pressure on the Commonwealth Government to do something about them, but apparently without success.

I know the former Premier once said that his Government spent much money in this regard, and I agree with that. I know the workmen in the North are doing a wonderful job, but I think this is a national project and that more representation could have been made by the former Government to the Commonwealth Government for assistance for our beef roads.

Mr. Lawn: Queensland can get Commonwealth assistance.

Mr. CASEY: Yes. Many honourable members are not conversant with the set-up in the Far North. When a member is speaking, I am always wary of criticizing him, because I should then be getting out of my own territory, and once an honourable member does that he may well start on a subject about which he knows little. Unfortunately, my district tends to come in for many visits from members of this House, who seem to be cashing in on trips to the Far North, and who come back as experts on the Birdsville and Strzelecki Creek tracks. Then, someone else who has been there starts talking about cattle and sheep, etc. Honourable members should realize what a vast area the Far North is and how quickly it can change. I agree with what the member for Burra says about rehabilitating the Far North, but he included the central part of Australia, and I do not know enough about that to speak with any authority. He said we had to take all the cattle out of it and rejuvenate the area.

Mr. Quirke: But the area from Oodnadatta to the border is your territory.

Mr. CASEY: There is little bush around Oodnadatta; it is all grass country which extends right across to the Queensland and New South Wales borders. Most of the bush can be seen when we travel south into the sheep country.

Mr. Quirke: You will find mainly perennial grasses there.

Mr. CASEY: Yes, in much of the area, but once we cross the railway line at Oodnadatta and travel west we reach the bush country which is so vast that it varies considerably. One has to be careful when describing these parts, because one set of conditions in a certain area will not necessarily obtain in another area.

Mr. Quirke: The honourable member knows the most difficult to re-establish is anything that is perennial.

Mr. CASEY: The member for Burra does not have to tell me that. One does not have to travel far from Adelaide to realize what the droughts in the 1930's did to the country. In the North and the immediate North-East saltbush and bluebush were eaten out for two reasons: they could not get the stock out of the country as they can today, and the depredation of rabbits. Rabbits are the worst enemy of the pastoralists because they eat not only the stem of the plants but the roots as well. This leaves pastoralists with absolutely nothing. I definitely disagree with the member for Burra's remarks lauding the member for Alexandra and implying that the motion was

a fine gesture on his part. I think it is the opposite and that is why I have moved my amendment.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether the amendment is considered to be relevant, but if it is it will be easy for me to move an amendment to the amendment to strike out the word "congratulated" and to insert the word "censured". I point out to honourable members that the Government does not have sufficient members in the House for a vote on a censure motion because on such a motion there are no pairs. I suggest that the member for Frome might have different ideas about that matter now.

The SPEAKER: I saw the Leader of the Opposition before I saw any other member and I did not know the line he would take until he spoke. I must first ask whether the amendment is seconded.

The Hon. C. D. HUTCHENS: Yes.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: If the honourable member moves an amendment of this description then I point out that it is quite in order to strike out the word "congratulated" at any time, because if the amendment is in order then it is certainly in order to strike out that word. I suggest to the honourable member that instead of playing around with this motion and moving an amendment it would be better to take a vote upon it. We are prepared to vote on the motion as it stands but a motion congratulating the Government is a totally different matter. I point out to honourable members that if we play politics of this description I have a right to move a further amendment.

The Hon. G. A. Bywaters: On what basis would the Leader move a censure?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: All that I would have to move is that the word "congratulated" be struck out and the word "censured" be inserted in its place.

The Hon. G. A. Bywaters: What would be the Leader's reason?

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: There would be just as much reason for that as for congratulating the Government. What are the facts about this? The *Sunday Mail* drew the attention of the House to the fact that the drought had intensified, and there is no doubt that it had. By moving this motion the member for Alexandra very rightly drew the attention of the House to the fact that the drought had intensified. He stated his

intention of visiting the district and taking another member with him. The Minister went to this area at public expense but the honourable member went at his own expense. The fact that this motion was merited was brought out by the fact that immediately after the Minister visited the area he notified the community that he was prepared to take certain action. I commend him for taking that action; I do not criticize that. I also commend the member for Alexandra for bringing this matter before the House, but the member for Frome started to criticize the member for Alexandra for doing so.

Mr. Casey: I criticized him not for bringing it before the House but for acting on political expediency.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: The honourable member said that it was a political manoeuvre to discredit the Government. Actually it was a motion designed to focus attention upon this matter.

Mr. Casey: This problem was drawn to the Leader's attention three years ago when he was Premier.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: The honourable member is making a second reading speech. I admit that he brought this matter to my attention a few years ago. When he did that I obtained a report from the Pastoral Board, which made an intensive investigation and did not recommend any alterations. I listened to the Minister this afternoon and I did not hear him say that the Pastoral Board had not recommended alterations now. As a matter of fact, in the intervening period, all the leases have either been changed to a much higher value or they have been altered to the extent that the offer has been made. I advise Government members that if they commence making amendments of this description—

Mr. Lawn: You started it years ago.

Mr. Jennings: There will be more of them.

The Hon. Sir THOMAS PLAYFORD: If Government members start moving amendments of this description we also have the right to amend amendments. If this is going to be the sort of amendment moved then I give notice to Government members that they may expect at any time an amendment to their amendments.

The SPEAKER: The honourable member for Alexandra has moved:

That this House is of the opinion that in order to avoid further calamitous losses and to assist in the rehabilitation of the drought-stricken pastoral areas, proposals for assistance should be formulated and immediately put into effect to provide:

- (a) remission of lease rentals;
 (b) rail freight subsidies on the carriage of store livestock and fodder—

to which the honourable member for Frome has moved an amendment:

To strike out all the words after "that" second occurring and insert the following: "the Government of South Australia should be congratulated on its prompt action in providing assistance to pastoralists in the drought-stricken areas of this State".

The question before the House now is that the words proposed to be left out stand part of the question.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN (Alexandra): I am sorry that the situation has deteriorated to such a state of buffoonery as the amendment moved by the honourable member for Frome. I do not think that I can remember such a ludicrous situation before.

Mr. Ryan: You have a short memory.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: I say seriously that I strongly object to this amendment and I fully support the statement made by the Leader of the Opposition about the sort of thing that we can expect from this Government. I should like to reply briefly to one or two things said during the afternoon. One statement by both the Minister of Lands and Agriculture and the member for Frome was that in 1962 a request for assistance was not acceded to by the Government when I was Acting Minister of Lands. We did not hear what the Pastoral Board said about the situation in 1962 any more than we heard what it has said at present. The Pastoral Board did not recommend assistance at that time. If Government members do not appreciate it, that was three years ago, and the drought has grown increasingly worse since then to the stage where, since last September, on the property I have mentioned there has been no more than 38 points of rain, and this was in one fall in May. Anyone who compares this with the situation three years before is dodging the issue.

Whatever happened or did not happen in the past and whether conditions then were the same as they are now does not excuse members' rejecting a motion of this nature. As the Leader said, it was right and proper to move this motion, and I am pleased that I did so. I condemn some members opposite for their criticism. I do not object to what the Minister said, as many of his remarks were perfectly sound. I was pleased that he announced that he would do or would consider doing certain things. He has not promised to do all the things mentioned in this motion, however, and it is just begging the question to

pretend that it should be opposed because the matter has already been attended to. I contend it has not been attended to, that the necessary announcements have not been made by the Minister, and that Cabinet has not considered the matter except in certain cases. When these things are attended to I shall be happy, but in the meantime why on earth should this motion be rejected?

I should like to say a word or two about the honourable member for Frome. Although I do not presume that anyone will do so, if anyone takes the trouble to look through *Hansard* at statements I have made since I have been a member of this House they will not find one personal criticism I have made of anyone, although I have been criticized by some people. I would mind if I were criticized by some people, but criticism by the honourable member for Frome does not worry me as much as does criticism by some other members. He did, however, impugn my sincerity in this matter. He used the words "if he were genuine in this", and said some other things.

Mr. Casey: If I had thought of others I would have added them.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: If the honourable member makes personal statements like that he will find that he will cop a good deal more than he has.

Mr. Casey: Is that a threat?

The Hon. G. G. Pearson: The member for Frome is extremely uneasy about the whole matter.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member for Alexandra is entitled to be heard in silence.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We have a Constitution Bill before us that might easily be named the Casey Protection Bill.

Members interjecting:

The SPEAKER: Order! The honourable member is not in order in referring to other Bills before the House in replying in this debate.

Mr. CASEY: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker, I ask the honourable member to withdraw that last remark.

The SPEAKER: If the honourable member writes down the words he complains of and lets me have them, I will consider the matter. The honourable member has objected to the reference by the honourable member for Alexandra to the Casey Protection Bill. I have already ruled that that is irrelevant and out of order and, because of that, I consider there is

no point in pursuing the point of order at this stage. The honourable member for Alexandra will continue the debate and keep his remarks relevant to the motion.

The Hon. D. N. BROOKMAN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I should like to say just one more thing about the honourable member for Frome. He has taken a particularly egocentric attitude in this debate as if the motion were an assault on his district. That is wrong. I made it clear in my opening remarks that I was talking not about any one district but about the North. I specified some areas where I hoped to go. If I had had the opportunity I would have gone into the district represented by the Minister of Education, but I did not have time. The honourable member for Frome does not seem to realize that I had travelled extensively in the North previously, and that I had travelled into the district represented by the Minister of Education. It is just being egotistical for the honourable member to assume that the whole thing is an assault on him. I do not know that he said that he had been criticized; he had not been criticized before he spoke. Perhaps it was conscience, but he will get much more criticism if he impugns the sincerity of members on this side of the House. I strongly deplore the kind of speech he made.

I thank all members of the House, with the exception of the honourable member for Frome, for their courteous attention in this debate. I say that we now have a very serious situation as a result of this severe drought, that it is far worse than it has been before, that any argument that something might have been done three years ago is irrelevant to the present conditions, and that in any case we should know what the Pastoral Board thought then and what it thinks now before we make charges. The fact is that at present cattle are being lost up there, as well as sheep, and far more cattle will be lost in the next few months if rain does not fall before the hot weather comes. The graziers are faced with a dreadful problem of either holding on to stock and risking almost total losses or selling their stock. As I pointed out, although prices are high for beef they are not so high for store cattle at present, and it is a big sacrifice to sell stock and face the uncertainty of replacing it. Therefore, those graziers have an awful problem to face in the future, and they need assistance. I am glad that the Government, through the Minister of Agriculture and Lands, has promised some of this assistance, and I commend the Minister for it. I see no earthly

reason why this motion should be opposed. Finally, I reiterate that my motive in this matter is completely sincere. I have much pleasure in moving the motion, and I totally reject the buffoon-like amendment moved by the honourable member for Frome.

The House divided on Mr. Casey's amendment:

Ayes (19).—Messrs. Broomhill and Burdon, Mrs. Byrne, Messrs. Bywaters, Casey (teller), Clark, Curren, Dunstan, Hudson, Hughes, Hurst, Hutchens, Jennings, Langley, Lawn, Loveday, McKee, Ryan, and Walsh.

Noes (17).—Messrs. Bockelberg, Brookman (teller), Ferguson, Freebairn, Hall, Heaslip, McAnaney, Millhouse, Nankivell and Pearson, Sir Thomas Playford, Messrs. Quirke, Rodda and Shannon, Mrs. Steele, Messrs. Stott and Teusner.

Majority of 2 for the Ayes.

Amendment thus carried; motion as amended carried.

ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. T. C. STOTT (Ridley): I move:
That this Bill be now read a second time.

It contains a simple amendment, as honourable members have gathered, and all I need to do is explain why it is necessary. Honourable members will remember what happened in the last Parliament when, unfortunately, the then member for Stirling passed away and a by-election was necessary to elect a new member for that district. The member elected was Mr. McAnaney. At that time, as Speaker of the House I tried to get the Assistant Returning Officer to have the member sworn in on the Tuesday following the election on the Saturday, and this was done. The Assistant Returning Officer could see no difficulty in respect of outstanding postal votes, and consequently the new member was sworn in on the Tuesday. Members will recall that, later, a by-election was necessary for the District of Semaphore. However, in the meantime there had been a change in the office of Assistant Returning Officer for the State. As Speaker, I tried to get the newly elected member sworn in on the Tuesday the same as had happened in respect of the Stirling by-election, but, as I said at the time, my efforts were thwarted by the Returning Officer of the State, although I leaned over backwards to have the member sworn in. The officer placed a different interpretation on section 134 of the Act. He

said that in his opinion the declaration of the poll could not be made in less than seven days. He was referring to section 81 of the Act, but that had been amended in 1941 and again in 1955. Section 81 deals with directions for postal voting. In 1941, section 81 was amended by adding the following subsection:

Notwithstanding anything contained in this section, in any case in which a postal ballot-paper, if posted prior to the close of the poll, as provided in paragraph (e) or paragraph (f) of subsection (1) of this section, would not reach the Returning Officer for the district in respect of which the elector claims to vote, before the end of three—

the word "three" was later amended in 1955 to read "seven", so that it should read:

. . . before the end of seven days immediately succeeding the close of the poll, or, if delivered as provided in paragraph (e) or paragraph (f) of the said subsection, would not reach the said returning officer before close of the poll, the envelope in which the ballot-paper is enclosed may be addressed to, and posted or delivered to, any returning officer of any other district or to any assistant returning officer, or may be delivered on polling day to any presiding officer, and the returning officer, assistant returning officer, or presiding officer, as the case may be, shall deal with it in the prescribed manner.

"Prescribed manner" means the manner of counting the votes. The Returning Officer said at that time that the provision regarding seven days prevented the declaration of the poll. Obviously, there was a difference of opinion between the Assistant Returning Officer and the Returning Officer as to the interpretation and this Bill will remove the doubt. Section 134 of the Act states, *inter alia*:

Where the returning officer—

(a) is satisfied that any ballot-papers issued at some remote polling-place cannot reach him for the purpose of

scrutiny without unduly delaying the declaration of the poll; and

(b) is satisfied that the votes recorded on those ballot-papers could not possibly affect the result of the election— he may, with the concurrence of the returning officer for the State, declare the result of the election and return the writ without awaiting the receipt of the ballot-papers.

That section is very clear to me and that is why I insisted that the votes should be counted. It was obvious that the outstanding votes in the two by-elections could not have affected the result. However, the Returning Officer has some doubts about that section and this amendment will clear up the matter. Clause 3 enacts a new section 134 as follows:

Where the Returning Officer is satisfied that any ballot-papers—

(a) issued at a remote polling place, or
(b) posted or delivered to him in pursuance of section 81 of this Act,

could not possibly affect the result of the election, he may, with the concurrence of the Returning Officer for the State, declare the result of the election and return the writ without awaiting the receipt of the said ballot-papers.

That provision would prevent a recurrence of the embarrassing situation in which Parliament found itself in those two by-elections to which I have referred. I do not think there is need to debate the matter further. As I said, the Returning Officer and the Assistant Returning Officer have doubts about the present provision and Parliament should put the matter right. I commend the Bill to honourable members.

The Hon. D. A. DUNSTAN secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.50 p.m. the House adjourned until Thursday, July, 29, at 2 p.m.