

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, September 29, 1953.

The PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir Walter Duncan) took the Chair at 2 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

WHEAT MARKETING PLAN.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—As the Victorian Government is adhering to its policy that the price of wheat for home consumption shall be the cost of production price, 12s. 6d. a bushel, has the Government given any further consideration to fixing a similar price in the interests of the flour milling industry which is suffering a severe reverse?

The Hon. R. J. RUDALL—The Government has the whole matter under consideration.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I was given the same answer a week ago, but as the position is becoming serious is it likely that legislation will be introduced at an early date to deal with the matter?

The Hon. R. J. RUDALL—I have no doubt that legislation will be introduced, but as to its provisions I can only repeat that the whole matter is under consideration.

GRANTS TO PRIVATE SCHOOL COMMITTEES.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—In the preparation of the Budget will the Government consider provision for making grants on a pound for pound basis to parents' committees of private schools who work to provide school equipment, on the same basis as is done in connection with State schools?

The Hon. R. J. RUDALL—I understand that the Budget will be introduced into another place on Thursday and I am afraid the honourable member will have to wait for details until then.

AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT.

The PRESIDENT laid on the table the report of the Auditor-General for the year ended June 30, 1953.

WILD DOGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

PUBLIC SERVICE SUPERANNUATION FUND ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 23. Page 756.)

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Central No. 2)—This is a very small measure to deal

with the remnant of the Public Service Superannuation Fund established 51 years ago and superseded by the Act of 1926. The original Act provided for a board of seven, of which four were to be elected by subscribers or pensioners. I understand only 11 pensioners remain and that it is becoming almost impossible to fill the elective vacancies from their number. This Bill simply empowers the board to direct that vacancies need not be filled and that the Government may appoint nominees to carry on the work until the fund ultimately completes its purpose. I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY (Central No. 2)—This is simply a machinery measure to enable the board to overcome the difficulty of filling vacancies on the board due to the few remaining pensioners and subscribers eligible for election. In a few years I should say that the fund will be wound up when the remaining pensioners have died, and this is simply the means of carrying on the functions of the board in the interim. I support the second reading.

Bill read a second time.

Clause 1 passed.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

DOG FENCE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 23. Page 757.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—This Bill amends the Dog Fence Act 1946-1949, and provides for protection against the destruction caused by wild dogs. A dog fence has been established in the northern areas of the State and clause 2 increases the amount to be paid by the board to owners of any dog fences for maintenance and inspection from £8 to £16 a mile. Last year the Government paid a subsidy of £6,434 on a pound for pound basis for rates imposed under the Act. The administration costs were high—£1,065. The total payment to owners for maintenance was £10,787, and the funds held by the Treasurer £5,509. Section 26 provides that the board may impose an annual rate not exceeding 1s. 3d. a square mile but clause 3 increases that amount to 3s. Clause 4 provides that where the rate on land within 10 miles of a fence is less than 1s. 3d. a square mile, any additional rate shall be of the same amount, and clause 5 provides that the Government subsidy is not to apply to rates declared at an amount greater than 1s. 3d. a

square mile. The Stockowners' Association and the taxpayers are the only persons concerned and, as the legislation has the benediction of the association, I support the second reading.

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON (Northern)—The Bill proposes two amendments to the principal Act. Because of increased costs of maintenance provision is made for an increase from 1s. 3d. to 3s. a square mile payable by landowners and an increase from £8 to 16 a mile to be paid from funds for the maintenance of the fence. I was not in the House when legislation was passed in 1946 but from an examination of a map outlining the fence it is apparent that it takes a zig-zag course from the New South Wales border across the northern areas of this State, down Eyre Peninsula and across the West Coast. I estimate that it extends for almost 2,000 miles. It acts as a buffer between the outside and the settled country and protects the settled country from the depredations of wild dogs. Any person with experience of the havoc that can be caused from an invasion of dogs, and even tame dogs, into a flock of sheep and the subsequent mutilations will agree that this is a measure bearing on the economy of the State. The Leader of the Opposition said that the only persons concerned in this measure are the landowners and the taxpayers of this State but the taxpayer is not concerned because although section 31 provides for the payment of a subsidy by the Government on a pound for pound basis, it precludes any increased payments by the taxpayers. This fence is of great importance to the State and I have pleasure in supporting the second reading.

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

CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL (MINISTERS).

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 23. Page 756.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—This is the fourth occasion, to my knowledge, that a similar Bill has been introduced. This is an important measure which increases the number of Ministers from six to eight and as it is provided that not more than five Ministers will be in the House of Assembly, one can assume that one of the additional Ministers will be in the Legislative Council.

The maximum total remuneration is raised from £14,250 to £19,000, although this does not mean that the present Ministers will receive an increased salary. Under the Bill, every Minister must be a member of Parliament except for the period of three months previously mentioned, and every Minister will be a member of Executive Council. Section 66 was originally enacted to meet circumstances that existed nearly 100 years ago and is out of harmony with present practice, a position which relates to not only the present legislation. When the Constitution was formed it provided that no elector under the age of 30 years could be a candidate for the Legislative Council, and that provision still remains. I oppose this Bill being submitted to a referendum because this matter should be decided here. I have given it serious consideration, and intend moving an amendment in Committee that one of the additional Ministers must be from the metropolitan area.

Today there are six Ministers representing the country, which is entirely wrong, because 60 per cent of the electors are in the metropolitan area. I do not suggest there should be more than one for the city in this Bill because every member of the Liberal Party in this Parliament is capable of satisfactorily carrying out a Ministerial position. I appreciate the work and services rendered by the present Ministers. The duty of the Opposition is to endeavour to keep the Government on the right track and to advance constructive criticism where necessary, but that does not prevent giving credit where it is due. I compliment the two Ministers in this Council on their efficiency and devotion to duty. Often due to absence from the State on public matters or from ill-health on account of strain, one Minister has had from time to time to carry out the duties of both. If our Ministers were not young men they could not carry the strain. When explaining the Bill the Attorney-General enumerated his duties. I say unhesitatingly that he has performed them with credit. He has a big responsibility in his portfolio as Minister of Education and I trust that due consideration will be given to retaining that portfolio in this Chamber. The Chief Secretary's job is a big enough one in itself, but he is also called upon to carry out duties as Minister of Health and Minister of Mines. I trust that consideration will also be given to the position he occupies when there is a reshuffle of the Ministry.

It has been argued that the two extra Ministers should be in another place. I strongly

oppose that suggestion because the importance of this Council warrants their attendance here. The Ministers I have mentioned have been rather too modest in submitting to this House their numerous duties. Every member knows the work involved in their portfolios, but I would like to point out the numerous works which have been dealt with in the last 12 months which have imposed extra strain and work on them. The report of the Public Works Standing Committee tabled on August 18 referred to the number of new schools which come under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Education—Mount Gambier East, Mansfield Park, Darlington, Salisbury North, Enfield High, Gilles Plains, Croydon Boys Technical schools. Work to be done on projects controlled by the Minister of Works are Happy Valley reservoir inlet works enlargement, Encounter Bay water district improvements, Onkaparinga Valley and Radium Hill water supplies, Salisbury sewerage scheme and sewerage schemes for Port Pirie, Port Augusta, Port Lincoln and Mount Gambier—11 such schemes in all. Then there are the Mannum and South Para water schemes, the Glenelg and Brighton foreshore improvements, a plan for harbour development at Port Adelaide, augmentation of metropolitan water supplies, and Mount Gambier central saw mill. Works done by Departments under the supervision of the Chief Secretary included Parkside Mental Hospital (Men's Admission Block), Dental Hospital extensions, new nurses quarters at the Royal Adelaide Hospital (Northfield wards), and a number of others. All these undertakings have imposed an extra strain on Ministers. One reason for the necessity of such work is the increased population and establishment of industries. Other inquiries by the Public Works Standing Committee included Kingscote harbour improvements, uranium plant for Port Pirie and various water supplies. In all 18 reports were submitted and there were 16 earlier references. The reports before the committee are too numerous to mention.

A little history will not be out of place: this is the fourth time that I have taken part in debates of a similar nature. I shall not traverse the earliest stages of this kind of legislation, but in 1930 a Bill was introduced by a Labor Government to increase the size of the Cabinet and, speaking on that Bill, I said, "If the measure provided for increased expenditure I could understand members opposing it." I also expressed the view that savings would be effected if additional Ministers were appointed, but it was then pro-

posed that the two additional Ministers should participate in the Cabinet pool without increasing it, and consequently all members of the Cabinet would have suffered a reduction of salary, a policy with which I did not agree. That Bill was defeated by 12 votes to five. Only you, Sir, and I remain in this place of the members of the Legislative Council of that day, and so I want to place on record what was done then as I feel it could not happen today. In the same year another Bill was brought down entitled "The Ministers Salaries Reduction Bill," providing for a 10 per cent reduction in Ministers' salaries. You will remember very well, Sir, that during the debate Sir David Gordon, then Leader of the Liberal Party and who later became President of this Council and, like you, held in respect by every member, moved—

That it be an instruction to the Council that it have leave to amend the Bill to provide for a reduction of 10 per cent in members' salaries.

In Committee I challenged his right to do so, as I considered the subject matter of the instruction was outside the scope of the Bill, but the then President, Sir Lancelot Stirling, ruled that I was out of order. I then challenged the President's ruling, but it was upheld by 11 votes to four. I feel sure that, faced with similar circumstances, you would not have ruled against me in view of the decision you gave last week, Sir, and I say again that it was wrong to have included in a Bill brought down to deal with Ministers' salaries a provision for the reduction of all members' salaries. At that time I was in receipt of the magnificent salary of £7 13s. 3d. a week and this was reduced to £6 15s. 4d. The revenue of the State was then under £10,000,000, whereas today it is nearly five times greater, so if I supported the appointment of additional Ministers in 1930 it is only reasonable that I should do so today.

As I have already said, the work of Ministers has increased enormously and an additional Minister in the Council would relieve the strain on our two Cabinet representatives here. I am very sorry to learn that opposition to this legislation has been expressed in another place. I have seen men elected as Ministers whose health has suffered after a short term of office because of the heavy strain upon them. I have also known men who have held the high and honourable position of Minister of the Crown compelled to take pick and shovel work after ceasing to be members of Parliament. In one instance an ex-Minister became a cleaner

in a public institution. Parliament has a duty to see that men who are called upon to make heavy sacrifices in order to carry on the work of the State are not humiliated in this fashion, and that they should be compensated in a monetary way in order to preclude this possibility.

What I am about to say now will possibly not concern myself, but I hope that when a change of Government occurs—as it is bound to do some day—the first thing that a Labor Government will do will be to recognize the position of the Leader of the Opposition in this place by some monetary consideration. Only those who have carried out the duties know the work and research, and the long hours of strain entailed. Whilst on this aspect I pay a compliment to Mr. Cudmore, the Leader of the Liberal Party, because I recognize the value of his work to this institution. With additional Ministers it is obvious that the work of the Opposition's chief spokesman will increase. Some electors and even some members of Parliament are under the

impression that the Leader of the Opposition in this place receives something extra for his services; let me disabuse their minds. The Opposition is a very important part of the Parliamentary institution and I say with great respect—and all my colleagues support me—that it is not fair or reasonable to expect any Leader of the Opposition to accept a salary lower than that of country members, although country members are entitled to all they receive. I trust that at some future time consideration will be given to my suggestion. I support the second reading.

The Hon. C. R. CUDMORE secured the adjournment of the debate.

LICENSING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.
(Continued from September 23. Page 753.)

Read and discharged.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 2.43 p.m. the Council adjourned until Wednesday, September 30, at 2 p.m.