

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, May 25, 1955.

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

QUESTION.**BUSH FIRES ACT.**

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Will the Government consider amending the Bush Fires Act in order to make it compulsory to have fire breaks alongside main highways where considered necessary?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—As already announced by the Minister concerned, the Bush Fires Act is under examination, and I shall refer to him the point raised.

ADDRESS IN REPLY.

Adjourned debate on the motion for the adoption of the Address in Reply.

(Continued from May 24. Page 32.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—A newly elected member may think it is customary for honourable members to offer their congratulations to those who have the honour of moving and seconding the Address in Reply. That is not so, but we are sincere when we say that it was our privilege yesterday to listen to a very fine address by the newly-elected member, Mr. Story, one that we appreciated very much. Knowing that it was made under strain, we appreciated it all the more. We all extend to him our sympathy in his recent bereavement. His speech was educational and judging by what he said I feel sure I can expect some support from him in certain directions in the future.

The seconder, Mr. Densley, is deserving of great credit in delivering a speech that was so well marshalled, so well thought out and full of merit. I think he is a man worthy of a Ministerial position because he has devoted a great deal of time and energy to the work of Parliament over a period of years. Naturally I congratulate those who have been honoured by being elected to the Ministry, but my remarks are none the less sincere when I congratulate Mr. Rowe on his appointment as Attorney-General. Of course, I have come to the conclusion that if a member gets a little unruly he is put into the Ministry; that is to say, if he expresses his opinion forcibly he has to be taken right off the floor of the House. We now have two tame lambs instead of one

supporting the socialistic legislation of which the Lieutenant-Governor's speech was full. The Opposition is very happy to know that it will not have such strong opposition in the future as it has had in the past. Naturally I feel sorry that my honourable friend Mr. Cudmore has lost some support. The mover of the Address in Reply referred to the late Lord Gowrie. As there are five of us here this afternoon who can well remember the opening of this building, I think it is not out of place to quote what Lord Gowrie said on that occasion. When declaring this Council open, he said:—

I am very happy to think that this last official act of mine should be performed in the State where I began my governorship of Australia 11 years ago, and where my wife and I spent six most happy and interesting years.

I think we can well take note of what he said then for future reference. Later he said:—

If democracy is to survive, it will entail a supreme national effort and the whole-hearted co-operation of every individual, of every section of the community, and of every political party. In other words, we have to show that democracy can deliver the goods. So let us inaugurate the opening of this new Parliament building by laying aside, for the time being, at any rate, party warfare for its own sake. Let us demonstrate to the world that the Parliaments of the young Dominions are capable of dealing with the tremendous problems which face mankind today. This is a testing time for the Parliaments and peoples of the Empire, and I am confident that they will not fail.

I, with other members, regret the death of a man whom we all loved and respected.

This afternoon for a few moments I want to defend a body of workers who probably have been abused more than any other section of the community. I refer to the waterside workers of South Australia. Over a period of years, in the press and in remarks made by Ministers of the Crown, these men have been referred to in very harsh terms. No organization has a better war record than these men, as the roll of honour in their hall bears witness. They have been blamed for the slow turn-round of ships; people say that they have not done their job. If the industry is so attractive as some assert why is it that so many men leave it and why is it so difficult to get a full quota? These men are called upon to work in all sorts of weather and often throughout the night in order to keep the wheels of industry turning. On behalf of the workers of South Australia generally I say that we should be very proud of their record.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—The best record in the Commonwealth.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Of course it is, as was pointed out in the press only a few days ago. According to the Maritime Stevedoring Industry Report port labour in South Australia is rated efficient. According to this report as published in the press, "Port Adelaide is the only major port in Australia in which employers are 100 per cent of the opinion that the waterfront labour is efficient." That is the reply to some of these arm-chair critics who condemn men who have rendered wonderful service to this State. I am here this afternoon to defend them and compliment them on the very important part they have played in industry, and I hope they will continue to do so.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—They are even being blamed now for the 10 per cent increase in shipping rates.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Unfortunately we have amongst us people who, as soon as some little thing goes wrong, blame the workers. I know these men and have worked amongst them. Great numbers of them have built their own homes in the district; they enjoy a good home life and they are just as anxious as anyone else to see this State progress.

I do not propose to refer to everything mentioned in His Excellency's speech, but rather to what has been omitted. It must be admitted that it portrays a socialistic programme. One learns every day; only yesterday I heard my honourable friend Mr. Densley congratulate the Electricity Trust on its performance, but I have a fairly good memory and I recall that in this House there was some very strong opposition to the setting up of the trust. However, every piece of Socialistic legislation that has been passed has in the end been praised by the people who first condemned it; they now want to take credit for it. It is only right to point out these things so that members may realize that even a little bit of Socialistic legislation is to the people's advantage.

Reference was made in His Excellency's speech to proposed legislation on workmen's compensation. Although advances have been made in this matter this State is still lagging behind other States, and I hope that the Government will refer to the committee the question of the inclusion under the Act of certain industrial diseases now omitted.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Your side is not very happy about its representation on the committee, is it?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I supported the legislation when it was in this place and my friend divided against me, and even against his own Government when it was proposed to delete from the Act the section which gave insurance companies the right to continue to deduct lump sum payments made during illness.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—I am talking about whether your own people support their own representative on the committee. You are dodging that.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The honourable member tried to dodge the question the last time it was before us. I hope that the Government will consider bringing certain industries that are not now covered under the scope of the Act, and I hope that even my friend will give me his support at that time.

There is considerable room for improvement in our arbitration laws. Arbitration has played an important part in Australian history, but in some respects seems to be deteriorating. Let me give an illustration. Although employers and employees sitting around a table may arrive at an agreement a Conciliation Commissioner has not the power to embody the full terms of that agreement in an award and the parties are compelled to go to the Full Arbitration Court to achieve that end.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—Why worry about it if it is an agreement?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Because the Conciliation Commissioner deletes certain things which have been agreed upon.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—But the agreement still stands.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—When an agreement is made it should be registered.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—That is the only difference.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The difference is that a fresh application has to be made to the Full Court, putting the parties to a lot of expense, worry and trouble, and this is causing dissatisfaction. This is one of the reasons why some people are losing faith in arbitration. I hope, therefore, that some of the things which were deleted from the Act when it was amended by the Menzies Government will be reinserted, for this has happened only under a Liberal Government.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—The tramways case is a classic example of what has happened.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The tramways have the right of appeal and others should have the same right. Some take the attitude "If there is anything which can be used against the worker, use it, but if it is the other way about, say nothing about it."

I now come to the subject of the Industrial Code, which covers only certain workers. The same also applies to the Scaffolding Act. Rural workers do not come under the provisions of the Code, and this is causing dissatisfaction. We cannot expect workers to remain in the country if we are not prepared to give them similar amenities to those existing in the metropolitan area.

The Hon. L. H. Densley—You would not suggest that they are not getting them today, would you?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes.

The Hon. L. H. Densley—You are completely wrong.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—There are plenty of people who are not, because the legislation denies them the right to apply to the court. It would be far better that there should be the right of appeal to a tribunal than to have a stop-work threat. For a number of years there has been no progress in extending certain legislation to country districts. If we want contentment and decentralization, then extend to country workers the same conditions that apply to workers in the metropolitan area.

Yesterday Mr. Story referred to the position of the dried fruits industry. I promise him that he will receive every possible assistance from the Opposition to carry out his suggestions. During the last two sessions I have fought for the flour-milling industry, which, unfortunately, has not received very much consideration, and I have pointed out on almost every occasion I have spoken in this Council that other industries would encounter difficulties. We do not want the primary producer to have to face up to such a position. Now he has keen competition on overseas markets. The export of flour from South Australia in 1922-23 amounted to 142,000 tons and in 1953-54 it fell to 81,000 tons. During the last six months of last year, compared with the same period the previous year, there was a fall of 11,150 tons. What I have said in the Council on more than one occasion has come true, and other industries known to honourable members are in the same position. What is the future for our primary producers? If I am any judge, the South Australian consumer will be called upon to meet the losses in these industries. Today there is a guaranteed price for home consumption wheat, but in the course of 15 months the consumer was called upon to pay an extra 1½d. for a 2 lb. loaf of bread to meet the position.

Now, with over-production of wheat in Australia and with other exporting countries

carrying large stocks, we are faced with a precarious position. The workers are told "Why don't you work extra shifts and produce more?" Has any increased production decreased the cost of production? If we are to meet competition from other parts of the world, is it necessary that we should lower the standard of living to a stage that we know nothing about yet? One industry I know which has worked three shifts and lowered its cost of production more than any other industry is today compelled to revert to one shift. Therefore, where is the argument in favour of additional shifts? Other industries that had worked two or three shifts are now back to one. No one in South Australia wants to experience the conditions which prevailed in South Australia many years ago. I want the man on the land to get the best price possible for his products. No one should be expected to sell an article below the cost of production, but we must produce better quality goods in order to compete with overseas countries. If we are to regain our lost markets there is another angle. Can the Government tell me of any instance, except one, where it has limited the output of a product? Is it in the interests of the public and this nation for the Government to limit output and adopt a go-slow policy? I am opposed to that, therefore I endeavoured to obtain the same consideration for one small industry as is given to any other by trying last year to have quotas lifted. A factory was forced to close down simply because it had manufactured the quota allowed by Parliament. I do not know of any other industry in which the Government limits production, and I say that this is unreasonable, unfair and not British. I hope this Government will realize that the moment it starts limiting production in one case it is making a rod for its own back.

For a number of years I have brought before this House the question of giving some consideration to the ratepayers of Port Adelaide, and I do not want my leg pulled any longer on this matter. Last year I was misled, whether intentionally or not I do not know. I asked repeatedly for some assistance to be given to the Port Adelaide City Council on behalf of the ratepayers, but I was told "Do not worry, be quiet, you will get something done," but nothing was done. Another member stated the case for those people from whom a considerable area of land had been acquired by the Harbors Board under the new plan for improving the wharves in the northern part of the district. Compensation amounting to £5,000 was paid and

I appreciate that, but I have been fighting for years for a council that has lost £550,000 in rates since the acquisition of land for wharves and cannot get a penny compensation. I take a very poor view of this.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—You are going back a long way, aren't you?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes, to the acquisition of the wharves.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—When was that?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—My honourable friend should know when it was. It was recommended by a Parliamentary Committee, of which Mr. Bice was chairman. The Government acquired the wharves, and since then—

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Fifty years ago.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—It is not.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—It is not far off.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—It is nearer 30 years, and £550,000 to the ratepayers of Port Adelaide over that period is a lot of money.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—But the Government keeps the wharves and approach roads in good repair.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes, but why should the Port Adelaide ratepayers pay for that?

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—They do not.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes they do, and what applies to Port Adelaide applies also to Port Pirie and other ports in a lesser degree. There is no justification for the Government refusing to grant assistance to the Port Adelaide Council. I have been misled when I have been told that the council would get something, because it has got nothing. I disapprove of such action of any Government, whether Labor or Liberal.

The Hon. N. L. Jude—Didn't the council get £5,000 last year?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes. I appreciate what the Government did on that occasion. However, I have been misled and I will not stand for that sort of thing. If a promise is made to me I want it honoured. In the Lieutenant-Governor's speech it is indicated what the Government proposes to do in relation to the Broken Hill Proprietary Co. Ltd. It was stated that there will be no form of repudiation. I hope the day will never come when we repudiate anything we do in this place. There may be other ways of dealing with any company, but the moment we repudiate we lose all sense of honour. In this respect might I say that a Government has certain

obligations to protect the people, and if it is called upon to spend a certain amount of money it should be protected.

I now come to what is proposed to be done at Cape Thevenard, where there are very valuable gypsum deposits. When we have deposits of minerals the interests of the people and the State should be protected and we should see that a certain amount of raw material is manufactured in this State. Why allow the other States to handle the products? I did not think it was necessary in a British community to mention in the Lieutenant-Governor's Speech that we are against repudiation because I am sure that no member of this House or the House of Assembly is in favour of it, although we are entitled to a certain amount of protection in our mineral resources, no matter what they may be. I hope that an amicable settlement can be made between all the parties concerned in the interests of South Australia.

Last year 30,000,000 bushels of wheat were harvested, and this was an excellent yield in the light of what was expected early in the season. During the current session a Bill will be introduced to deal with bulk handling, which is a very important question. I am not going to commit myself as to what Parliament should do because I am an adjudicator and wish to give a decision on the evidence submitted.

The Hon. L. H. Densley—How long have you been taking evidence on the proposal?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The Committee is still waiting for Government officials to give evidence. The farming community of South Australia ought to be grateful for the delay because a decision might have been given against them. If I replied to some of the criticism there might be one or two surprises, but I will have my opportunity when this legislation is introduced to say something that some people will not be too pleased about. However, that does not deter me from giving a fair and reasonable decision, because a man who accepts a responsible position in Parliament must not be a parish pump parliamentarian. He has to be reasonable and fair and must consider anything submitted, no matter from whom it comes. I have had a considerable amount of experience in these things that matter so much to the State. In 1927 the Public Works Standing Committee was appointed. In those days it had a very responsible position, as it still has today. When appointed, members of the Committee received a certain remuneration, and they

still receive the same amount today. From 1927 to 1948, a period of 21 years, 111 reports were presented, but from 1948 until the present day, a matter of only six years, the Committee has presented 134 reports. Since its last annual report, presented on August 30, 1954, 25 new references have been received. Twelve full reports and five progress reports have been submitted. Inquiries have been commenced on 19 projects but not completed, and evidence has not yet been called on nine projects. In reply to Mr. Densley I point out that the Committee is called upon to devote a great deal of time to the work of the State. It often meets five days a week and frequently not half days, but full days. How many other committees do that, with a staff consisting of only a secretary and an assistant? I say it is impossible for two men to keep pace with all the reports necessary to keep this Parliament fully versed in what is happening. It simply means, although I am not personally complaining, that much of our work has to be done after ordinary working hours; we do not work a 40-hour week. When people complain that the Committee is taking a long time to present certain reports it should be understood that it is utterly impossible for that body of men to do any more than it is doing. Members of the Committee are rendering a wonderful service to the State and have saved the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of pounds.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Do you think that the Act should be amended to alter the limit of £30,000?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—That is a matter which I understand Parliament will be called upon to discuss later, although there was no reference to it in His Excellency's Speech. It is a debatable point. If the amount is increased above £30,000 what amount should be decided upon? Would you raise it to £100,000? Remember that an important principle is involved. The Public Works Standing Committee was established to protect the interests of the taxpayer. Some of the projects the Committee is called upon to report on run into millions of pounds. Consider, for example, the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline, of which we were all very proud to witness the opening. It cost over £9,000,000. Other big works have been reported upon, but nothing has yet been done about them. Sometimes the Government even asks when the Committee is going to present its report when it has already been presented. We debate loan programmes of £27,000,000 and the like when

we know very well it is practically impossible for that amount of work to be done in one year, so why this carping criticism? Why should the Committee have to work long hours to submit urgent reports when they are merely pigeon-holed?

Before concluding I should like to say a few words concerning the police force, for which I have a great admiration. Today one of its officers retires after 38 years' service, for the last four of which he has been head of the C.I.B. A policeman's lot is not an easy one; he has to stand up to all sorts of criticism, but I think he is entitled to a few words of commendation from time to time. I refer to Detective-Sergeant Gill, whom I have known for many years. Like many other members of the police force he has rendered valuable service to the State and has my highest commendation. I thought I could not miss this opportunity to acknowledge publicly the respect in which I hold him, as I am sure do other members.

I trust, Mr. Acting President, that the matters I have mentioned will receive the thoughtful consideration of the Government, and although there are many others that I could have touched on I will have an opportunity to do so when dealing with the Supplementary Estimates. I hope that our efforts during this Session will be in the interests of the State.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON (Northern)—Last Thursday, after the opening of Parliament and the swearing in of our new colleague, Mr. Story, there was an atmosphere of sadness in this Chamber when references were made to the late Reginald John Rudall. The tributes paid to him by the Chief Secretary, the Leader of the Opposition and Mr. Cudmore are fully supported, I am sure, by all members in both Houses. Our late colleague was one of the best members that South Australia has ever known. He was loved and respected by everyone who had the honour of knowing him. Mr. Cudmore referred to his war service, and I would like to add that his fellow officers of the 50th Battalion have always spoken in the highest praise of his courage, of his legal advice, and of his valuable administrative knowledge. When he left France in 1918 that was not the end of his service to Australia. He carried on until the time of his death helping the less fortunate men who had suffered through the war. The greatest blow he suffered, of course, was when he lost his two sons in World War II. As one who can speak with some understanding,

I feel that that must have altered the whole of our late colleague's plans in life, but the manner in which both he and Mrs. Rudall carried on after that tragic happening was a credit to them. He was a very valuable legal adviser to the R.S.L., and he always gave his advice freely. His place will be very difficult to fill.

I also pay tribute to the late Mr. Steve Dunks, who represented Mitcham in the House of Assembly for so many years with credit to himself and the Party to which he belonged. However, losses have to be replaced, and I congratulate the Hon. C. D. Rowe on being elected Attorney-General and Minister of Industry and Employment. I heard a remark in this Chamber, not long after the honourable member was elected, that he would go further than an ordinary member, and now his ability has been acknowledged and rewarded. I am sure every one of us wishes him success in his important portfolios.

Our new member, Mr. Ross Story, comes to us with an excellent record. He has always taken a very keen interest in affairs in his own district, and I think his speech yesterday supports everything that has been said in his favour. He was under a great strain, and I extend my deepest sympathy to him and Mrs. Story in the loss of their infant daughter. I thought his speech an excellent one; it was a pleasure to listen to and was full of interest. I think we learnt more about irrigation matters yesterday than we have for many years in this Chamber. Mr. Story's experience of horticulture and irrigation is undoubted. He has taken an active part on behalf of returned men settled in the river districts, and I look forward to his co-operation in dealing with problems which are bound to arise in these very important settlements. I support what he said yesterday regarding our Lieutenant-Governor. We are indeed fortunate to have a man of the calibre of Sir Mellis Napier to take the place of the Governor whenever he is absent from the State. The speech he delivered on Thursday was a credit to him and was very well received by everyone.

Mr. Densley, who seconded the motion, also presented an excellent address, raising matters that call for much thought. The Address in Reply, as I see it, is an address by the representative of Her Majesty to be replied to by members, so my remarks will be within its ambit. However, it contained 36 items, so one can touch only on a limited number of them. Mention was made of the employment position in South Australia, and that evening it came over the air that South Australia has the

lowest unemployment figures in the Commonwealth. I think the number was 48. Where there is full employment there is prosperity. The demand for all our goods is still very satisfactory.

Land development in South Australia has made rapid progress in recent years. The influx of migrants is of great importance to Australia and therefore I was disappointed to see in the *News* last week a scathing article about the standard of some of the migrants reaching Australia by air. I feel sure it is not a fair comment on the average type of migrant. I often wonder what our railways, highways, waterworks and industry generally would have done without the labour of these overseas people. Although possibly the screening of migrants is done to the best of the ability of those responsible, undoubtedly a few undesirables will reach this country. I think Australians have assimilated these migrants very well indeed.

Our security and progress depend on an increase in population. Our own manpower has been insufficient to keep pace with our progress. Therefore, migrants are deserving of all the hospitality and help we can give them. I should like to see the New Zealand policy adopted in Australia, namely, that the majority of the migrants accepted should have an agricultural background. Most of those coming here have not such a background and therefore are not interested in working in the country. Manpower has never been so short in primary industries as it is today, therefore I hope that the migration authorities will give more attention to this important aspect.

Our returns from primary industries last season were very good considering the dry August and the indifferent weather during the spring. Wheat production amounted to 30,000,000 bushels and barley production to 18,000,000 bushels, and the average in each instance was 18.2 bushels an acre, an excellent return. Returns from wool dropped considerably during the last 12 months, but the number of lambs slaughtered for export increased to 840,000, of which number 760,000 were actually exported and at higher prices than ever before. These increased prices offset considerably the reduced revenue from wool. There has been an excellent opening this season and the feed position is fairly satisfactory, but the northern districts had a very severe setback because of grasshoppers. Some pastures have been completely cleaned up and stockowners have been forced to resort to

hand feeding. I feel sure that a good rainfall will revive the affected pastures. It is not the quantity of pastures eaten by grasshoppers that is the cause of the trouble, but the effect they have on the remaining pastures. They have laid untold millions of eggs, so if the weather is suitable in spring we shall see more of these pests during 1956.

Primary producers cannot assess the value of the work done by the Department of Agriculture. There have been great improvements in recent years, particularly during the term as Minister of Agriculture of the Honourable Sir George Jenkins, and I feel sure that we have in the Honourable A. W. Christian a Minister who will carry on the high standard set by his predecessor. Country women's bureaux and the Rural Youth Movement have made wonderful progress. The young people are fortunate in having the advantage of this youth movement to give them so much technical and practical knowledge in their early experience on the land. This was unknown before this movement started.

A total of 840 men have been settled on the land under the war service land settlement scheme, and an additional 87 are awaiting allotment. The fact that most of the settlers are meeting their commitments is a true indication of their progress. During the last six months there have been fewer problems than at any time since the scheme commenced. The irrigation settlements are not so buoyant. The remarks of Mr. Story yesterday are particularly valuable to anyone interested in irrigation. I understand that an area at Lyrup is receiving the consideration of the Land Settlement Committee, and because it is so suitable for horticulture I feel sure it will be recommended for settlement. There are still about 100 applicants awaiting allotment of land for irrigation, and it is expected that sufficient land will be available to enable all applicants to receive allotment. Practically all the men concerned have not been in any other occupation since their discharge, because they were promised land and have been awaiting to start in this field. I hope the scheme will be proceeded with despite the present depressed market. Prices fluctuate. I feel sure that Mr. Story will support me when I say that it takes five to seven years for a fruit block to come into profitable production. In seven years markets may be as buoyant as in the past. I think Mr. Story's suggestion for the establishment of co-operative canneries is the answer to many of our fruit marketing problems. I understand that much of the

fruit is now brought to the city for canning, and that must retard progress in this industry.

I believe that the Mannum-Adelaide pipeline will go down in history as one of our greatest achievements. It is a credit to the department concerned and to those who were engaged on the project. When he declared the main open the Premier commented on the great benefit it would be to those who would be connected with this project. Had this work not been rushed through, there would have been chaos and many country districts, as well as the metropolitan area, would have been adversely affected. The water is being piped as far as Moonta and Ardrossan, and the intervening districts are also benefiting.

The wharf at Port Lincoln has served its purpose for about 40 years, but I understand very little money has been spent on it in the meantime. Under the new wharf plan provision is to be made for a silo for bulk handling of grain, and if the work is not proceeded with quickly the system of bulk handling may not be introduced in the Lower Eyre Peninsula districts for a long time. I understand that the Public Works Standing Committee has not yet finalized its report on this matter. I know of nothing more obsolete than the methods adopted for freighting goods to Eyre Peninsula. Port Pirie is possibly becoming the most vital town outside Adelaide. The smelters there employ 1,900 men, and it is a most important industry from the point of view of our economy. It is expected that the uranium plant being erected there will be in operation in a few months, and it will certainly be another very important adjunct to the State's prosperity.

Yesterday Mr. Edmonds gave notice of questions concerning roads and I will be interested to hear the Minister's reply. In recent years there has been much severe criticism of our roads, and it has been said there has been no improvement of any consequence over the last 30 years or more. That is wrong. I often travel on many of our roads, and no-one can convince me that the Highways Department has not done a good job. The position is that roads built a few years ago are not capable of carrying some of the high speed and heavy vehicles now operating. One hears almost everywhere he travels districts claiming that they have the worst roads in Australia. I think there is some justification for that statement. I travelled on the road from Tumby Bay to Whyalla a few days ago. A portion from Arno Bay to Port Neill has always been

in a bad state, but it is particularly bad now. I noticed in the press that a grader went over the road a few hours before the Minister's visit. Whether that is so I do not know, but I am sure the Minister will not need to be told that the people on Eyre Peninsula have a just claim for the sealing of the road from Tumby Bay. A portion of about 12 to 14 miles from Whyalla towards Cowell has been sealed, and also about six or seven miles from Tumby Bay. Practically all the traffic from Kimba to Port Lincoln and districts comes along that highway. It is not all maintained by the Highways Department, some of it being maintained by district councils, but I hope something will be done about its condition. From my observations I am also convinced that if we are to make much progress in putting down roads we will have to have them laid by private contractors.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Why?

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—When a contract is let to a private individual he is not bound as people seem to think they are bound when working for the Government. The Highways Department cannot give the service as provided by private contractors.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—That is a serious statement.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—I do not think I am very wide of the mark in making it. I am speaking about what I have seen and heard, and I feel that we would get twice the length of road put down in any given time by private contractors.

I congratulate the Minister of Health and his department on the excellent progress made in the important matter of hospitals. Port Pirie is to have a new operating theatre, which it has badly needed for many years. A maternity block is to be built at Port Lincoln and that is very important for the people on lower Eyre Peninsula. Mental hospitals have caused much controversy lately and I feel the time has passed when something more should be done for people afflicted by mental diseases.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Have you seen the buildings at Parkside lately?

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—Yes, and I appreciate what has been done. I think the Government has indeed met the situation. It is strange that a stigma is attached to mental patients, because after all it is a disease. In the old days these people were put behind iron bars and stone walls, which had a bad effect on them. Until recently I did not know

that a subsidy of 10s. for a physical patient and 10d. for a mental patient was paid by the Commonwealth Government.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin—No subsidy is paid for mental patients.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—I am pleased that this matter has come before the public. The Education Department has made vast progress against great odds. The Lieutenant-Governor said in his speech that there has been a 50 per cent increase in attendances in the last five years and a 35 per cent increase is expected in the next five years. This shows what a colossal undertaking it has been for the Department to provide teachers and accommodation. I hope more attention will be given to the construction of better schools in the country. Many people are leaving properties in the outlying regions when their children are of school-going ages. They are in a position to do that today in order to give their children the advantage of better education in the city than would be possible in the country. I hope that better education will be taken to the country. Area and high schools have done a very good job, but more could be done in many of them. I realize that high costs have a great bearing on the matter.

Great progress has been made in the railways in the northern part of the State. On the new line from Stirling North to Brachina, which is a Commonwealth undertaking, the contractors have got through the difficult task very well and trains are now running on it. I was told last week by Miss Cleggett that the journey from Parachilna to Adelaide which once took 36 hours now takes only 12½ hours. Although the fare is higher, I would think the saving in time more than offsets the increase. It will make a great difference to stock in the northern part of the State as well, because they will get here more quickly. We are now looking forward to an extension from Brachina to Leigh Creek and then to Marree. The Lieutenant-Governor mentioned that the tonnage of coal shifted from Leigh Creek is now 500,000 tons a year, and said that it is expected that the A and B power stations will require 1,500,000 tons a year. I believe that the railway will be able to transport this tonnage.

The use of electricity in South Australia has increased very rapidly. To hear the Lieutenant-Governor mention the number of people who have the advantages of electricity makes us appreciate all the more the Leigh Creek coalfield which makes us practically independent of other States and has brought

about an unexpected reduction in price to consumers. Last year, when I was speaking on the Aroona Reservoir, the Leader of the Opposition asked if I thought that it would ever be full. Strange to say, when the first wall was built the water reached that height in 24 hours. Extensions to that wall are now almost completed, and I feel sure it will make all the difference to the coalfield to be able to get an ample supply of water.

I was pleased to hear the Leader of the Opposition refer today to the gypsum deposit at Thevenard. The gypsum field is 63 miles beyond Thevenard in the Lake MacDonnell area. A survey has indicated that 820,000,000 tons of 93 per cent gypsum exist there, and that is a tremendous quantity. There are 34 square miles of deposits and in many places the gypsum is 22ft. deep. I visited the field recently and was amazed at the great value that exists there. The spur line constructed about seven years ago was laid to convey gypsum to Thevenard, but no trains ran over it until last December. The Waratah and Colonial Sugar Refining Companies paid interest over that period, but I maintain that when such a project has been undertaken and the expenditure met by the Government more advantage should have been taken of it.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—How long is that spur line?

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—It is five miles long. The old flying fox that once took the gypsum to the railways is still there, although it is not still working. I understand that the Public Works Standing Committee is obtaining evidence on this undertaking, and I hope precautions will be taken to see that the companies take full advantage of any Government expenditure to avoid high costs in the finished article. I hope the Minister of Mines will be able to give some reply on this matter when speaking on this debate.

The shortage of superphosphate is a matter of great concern to agriculturists today, because time is the essence of success in primary production. I ordered some superphosphate the other day and was told it would not arrive until July.

The Hon. N. L. Jude—You were rather optimistic in ordering only the other day.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Many people who ordered superphosphate last December have not received it yet, and they got in early.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—Superphosphate is the lifeblood of primary production, and without it seeding cannot be completed. It is

pleasing to know that there will be an extension to the works of the Cresco Fertilizer Company at Port Lincoln. It was only two years ago or less when we were told that there was no more brimstone, but now an ample supply has been found to make sulphuric acid. Recently I had the opportunity of taking some New Zealanders to visit Iron Knob, and I drove my car right up to the top of the hill.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Do you subscribe to the idea of setting up a steelworks there?

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—I will not comment on that at the moment. Iron ore is one of our most important minerals. My only comment is that Iron Knob and Iron Monarch have very little over-burden and it is possible to handle practically all the ore by gravity. To see trainload after trainload going away makes one wonder where it is being used, yet despite that we read that iron ore is being imported from New Caledonia. It simply shows how important the steel industry is and will continue to be.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Do you support the establishment of steelworks at Whyalla?

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—I shall not comment on that at the moment, although I would like to see it. At Whyalla we visited the shipyards—and this is in reply to the criticism of the Leader of the Opposition about decentralization; the yards are building only one ship because of shortage of manpower whereas they could handle two. Many men are leaving Whyalla and coming down to work on the satellite town. No-one can deny that the B.H.P. has provided excellent amenities, but apparently people prefer to live as near to the city lights as they can despite the amenities enjoyed at Whyalla.

The only matter not mentioned in His Excellency's speech that I wish to touch on is bush fire legislation. I understand that a Bill will be introduced to improve the Act with a view to making our country more secure from the ravages of fire and prevent such destruction as was caused last Christmas. We read in the *Advertiser* today that Mr. West, chairman of the South Australian Bush Fires Relief Appeal Fund handed to the Minister the sum of £109,502 3s. 7d., the highest response to any appeal on record. That will be subsidized by another £100,000 from the respective Governments. A total of 650 applications for relief has been received, 132 of these being for fencing material only.

The sum of £374,000 has been applied for, so it is apparent that everyone will not be able to get as much as they need. I am of the opinion that every person who owns land should be compelled to make a firebreak. It may be asserted that this would be impossible on some properties. That is granted, but regional committees should be appointed to determine whether it is not possible for a man to make a firebreak.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Would firebreaks have stopped the fire on that day?

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—They would have assisted. When grass is allowed to grow half-way up the walls of a shed, as I have seen, there is no chance whatever, but a firebreak affords some protection and gives at least some hope of combating the blaze. Some land

owners make no effort whatever whereas their neighbours make excellent firebreaks. We should take a lesson from the last disastrous fire and make firebreaks compulsory.

I have pleasure in supporting the motion and take this opportunity once again to congratulate you, Sir, on your re-election as President of the Legislative Council.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH secured the adjournment of the debate.

SUPPLY BILL No. 1.

Received from the House of Assembly and read a first time.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.25 p.m. the Council adjourned until Thursday, May 26, at 2 p.m.