

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, June 22, 1955.

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

QUESTION.**ADVANCES FOR HOMES ACT.**

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Will the Chief Secretary take up with the Treasurer the question of amending the Advances for Homes Act to extend financial assistance above the £1,750 provided in the Act to those who desire to build homes?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I think the subject is now under discussion and is involved in the agreement with the Commonwealth. I will get the information the honourable member desires.

WOODVILLE CORPORATION BY-LAW.

Adjourned debate on the motion of the Hon. E. Anthoney—

That By-Law No. 56 of the Corporation of the City of Woodville relating to Drinking outside Licensed Premises, made on December 13, 1954, and laid on the table of this Council on May 19, 1955, be disallowed.

(Continued from June 15. Page 326.)

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN (Central No. 1)—I support the motion moved by Mr. Anthoney and draw members' attention to clause 2 of the by-law, which is as follows:—

Any person who consumes liquor or any non-alcoholic beverage upon any footway or carriageway adjacent to or within 50 yards of any licensed premises within the municipality shall be guilty of an offence and liable upon conviction to a penalty not exceeding £10. I think the clause is too far-reaching. It would operate only in the municipality of Woodville, in which I understand there are only two hotels, and would apply for a distance of 50 yards on either side of an hotel. A shop selling cool drinks and confectionery might be situated within that area, and a person, being ignorant of the by-law, might pull up in a car with his wife and children and bring them out a glass of lemonade each. Even water would be included as a beverage under the clause. Having done that, the man would have committed an offence and be liable to a penalty of £10. The by-law places too much restriction on the public. Another man might draw his car up at the hotel and bring his wife out a drink of lemonade because she was a non-drinker, and here again it would be a breach of the by-law and he would be liable to a penalty. If it is

necessary to have such a by-law to prevent the drinking of beverages on the footpath near a hotel it should be done by legislation and not operate only within the one municipality. It has been said that those drinking on the footpath near the hotel have been heard to use bad language, but there has been no proof of it. The council has approached the local police and the Commissioner of Police requesting that action be taken under clause 3 of the by-law, but the Commissioner has stated that his officers report that conditions are not as bad as they were led to believe. He indicated that unless the position considerably deteriorated he did not intend to invoke the provisions of the Lottery and Gaming Act against those customers who carry their drinks outside the actual premises for consumption.

People find they are forced, because of the congested conditions in the bar, to drink on the footpath. I suggest that the remedy is not provided in the by-law, and that better facilities should be available to meet the demands of the public. This is borne out by the following paragraph, which appeared in the *Advertiser* on June 17:—

Footpath drinking outside the licensed premises of the Woodville Hotel would be eliminated in about two months with the opening of a new bar; saloon and beer garden, the part-licensee of the hotel (Mr. J. M. Gill) said yesterday.

It would therefore appear that the present facilities at the hotel do not meet the public's requirements. The whole object of a hotel licence is to enable the licensee to cater for the public. This report states that the necessity for drinking on the footpath outside the Woodville Hotel will be eliminated in the very near future.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Does the honourable member think there should be more hotels in the district?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—In the light of this report it would seem that the facilities are not sufficient.

The Hon. N. L. Jude—Do you know whether the residential accommodation is being increased as well as the bar accommodation?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—I do not know. This by-law is not a cure; the cure is to have adequate facilities, because with adequate accommodation there would be no necessity for drinking on the footpath. The by-law deals not only with alcoholic beverages, but with any drinking on the footpath, and it is too great a power to place in the hands of the council. If the by-law were allowed, people outside the area might not know anything about it.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin—That could apply to any by-law.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—It could, but it applies especially in this case. If it is necessary—and I don't agree that it is—to take action to stamp out drinking on the footpath, it should be by legislation and should operate throughout the State. However, I do not subscribe to that because there is no necessity for it, and consider that the by-law should be disallowed.

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—(Northern)—I support the motion. I sympathise with the desire of the Woodville Council to keep footpaths clear for the use of pedestrians, but this by-law goes too far. Mr. Bevan quoted the reasons for the by-law as set out in the letter of the Town Clerk of Woodville to the secretary of the Highways and Local Government Department, but I point out that Section 63 of the Lottery and Gaming Act provides:—

No person standing in any street shall refuse or neglect to move on when requested by a police constable so to do, or shall loiter (whether such loitering shall cause or tend to cause any obstruction to traffic or not) in any street or public place after a request having been made to him by any police constable not to so loiter.

In the opinion of the Police Commissioner there is not sufficient reason to bring that section into effect because the matter has not assumed dimensions to warrant it.

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—Did the Police Commissioner give evidence to you on that?

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—No, but that is contained in reason 4 of the letter. Although the street should be kept clear for pedestrians, this by-law goes too far and should be disallowed.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE secured the adjournment of the debate.

STATUTES AMENDMENT (PUBLIC SALARIES) BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from June 21. Page 372.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—When explaining this Bill the Chief Secretary gave us the reasons why it should not be unduly delayed. As it is retrospective in its application to public servants it would probably be rendering a disservice to those concerned if its passage were delayed beyond this financial year. The measure amends ten Acts. It proposes to increase the Agent-General's salary by £500 a year, making his salary £2,500 sterling plus £1,000 entertainment allowance. The Auditor-General's

increase will be £750, making his total salary £3,500. The President of the Industrial Court will receive a further £750, bringing his salary to £3,250 and the Deputy President will receive another £650 making his full salary £2,750. The Commissioner of Police gets another £750 making a total of £3,200, the Public Service Commissioner another £900 making his total £3,500, the Chief Justice's salary goes up by £1,000 to £4,750 and the other judges, with increases of £750, go to £4,000. If we wish to retain very valuable officers in our service we must pay them respectable salaries, and I know that but for the loyalty of some of our top public servants to the State they could have enjoyed higher salaries elsewhere.

I mention those amounts in order to bring out the way this Bill affects members of Parliament. It is proposed that the salary of members shall be increased by £475, a totally inadequate amount by comparison with the increases I have enumerated. Members are not treated on the same basis as public servants included in the Bill whose salaries are fixed by tribunals. In a majority of cases the increases are to be made retrospective to December 20 last year, but in the case of officers of Parliament and members only from the first day of the month in which the Bill is assented to, and I can see no reason for this differentiation. For years we have been passing retrospective measures—

The Hon. C. R. Cudmore—I thought the honourable member was one of the real stalwarts against retrospective legislation?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I have been compelled to support it so many times that perhaps I have become a convert. The South Australian Parliament is held on a very high plane and we should be proud of the fact that we set an example to some other Parliaments. Why then should members of the South Australian Parliament not be placed on the same salary level as those of other States?

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Have the increases in the other States been made retrospective?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—That has not been necessary because they have had their increases all along. When my friend came into Parliament he received £3 17s. 11d. a week and we have never caught up with the lag as compared with others mentioned in this Bill. Ours is a full time job; a man is not a member of Parliament for a few days in the week but for seven days and seven nights of the week because most of our constituents are unable to call upon us on week days and therefore are compelled to wait on us at our private homes at

nights and on Saturdays and Sundays, so that our residences really become our offices. I think that the only people in a position to judge the value of the work of a member of Parliament is one who has had experience of it, and I say unhesitatingly that full weight should have been given to this aspect. I cannot see that the Bill is generous to members, although I am prepared to support it. Beyond this the Bill does not need much discussion and in passing it we are rendering a service to our senior public servants. I therefore support the second reading.

The Hon. C. R. CUDMORE (Central No. 2)
—The Chief Secretary, in explaining this Bill yesterday, commenced on the right note when he said that the South Australian Government had not started this upsurge in salaries and remuneration for senior people—if I may put it that way—in the Public Service and in the most important positions. In 1951-52 we were in grave danger of an inflationary crash and I think that the Commonwealth Arbitration Court did a brave thing to try to stop it by pegging quarterly adjustments in wages. After that things settled down for a while, but later the question of margins was pressed, and this is the cause of the whole of what we are doing today. In my opinion one of our real troubles in Australia ever since the Harvester award was made has been that the man with some skill has not received a sufficient margin over the unskilled labourer. That has caused people not to go in for apprenticeships because they could get so much as soon as they were 21, whether or not they were married or had any responsibilities. This persuaded them not to continue their apprenticeships and eventually become useful tradesmen in the community. That is the background of what we are discussing now. Then the Arbitration Court decided that the margins should be on the magical basis of two and a half times those operating before the war. We should realize that what we are discussing today is the result of that judgment. Following upon that the wages of Commonwealth civil servants were considerably increased and that was followed by the States. South Australia, in fairness to its civil servants, did the same. I join with Mr. Condon in paying a real tribute to the senior South Australian civil servants who have resisted the advertisements we see in the paper day after day offering higher salaries for possibly less work in the Commonwealth Service. I compliment them for the way they have stood by the State.

Civil servants as a whole were granted increases of certain percentages on their margins as from December 20, 1954. A number of people receive their salaries under statute, and not under the ordinary Public Service Act, and those are being dealt with under this Bill. Mr. Condon told us who they were, which anyone would know who had read the Bill. We are doing only justice to the highly skilled and trusted officers of the State, who include the Agent-General in London, the Auditor-General, the Commissioner of Police, the Judges of the Supreme Court, the President of the Industrial Court, and also Ministers of the Crown and members of Parliament.

The only increase I wish to complain about is that to the Ministers. I think that they, particularly the Premier because of the work he does, are ludicrously underpaid. I said this 10 years ago and have said it often since in the Chamber. When you compare the Premier's responsibility and his continuous work with the position of a general manager of any industrial business, it is ridiculous that he should be paid such a small salary. I offer no apology for supporting the increases granted under the Bill, and I am more than glad that it is not suggested that we as members of Parliament should make our own increases retrospective. Mr. Condon has often bitterly complained about retrospective legislation, and it is one of the things that we have become used to hearing him eloquent on, but today when things are different they are not the same. However, to me they are the same, and I am glad because I would not have supported any suggestion that we should receive retrospective increases. I support the Bill and hope that when these questions are again being considered, if the Premier will not do something for himself, Parliament will insist that he should be properly remunerated for the great work he does for the State.

The Hon A. J. MELROSE—(Midland)—We are indebted to Mr. Condon and to Mr. Cudmore for their speeches. What I will have to say will have nothing to do with the judiciary or civil servants. The remarks of both honourable members have my complete support, particularly those relating to the Ministry, and especially the Premier. I am sorry that it is proposed that the salaries of members of Parliament are to be increased because, although the matter has been taken out of our hands and done by official tribunals, the public will forget that and it will be alleged that we raised our own salaries. The public reaction to any increase in the salaries of members of

Parliament is always bad. We have the responsibility to the public to set an example in moderation and self denial, and to look upon our job here more as a national responsibility than as a means of livelihood. I noticed that Mr. Condon spoke of the attitude of the courts towards margins. In my view that was all wrong, and the further we get away from the element of responsibility and the closer we come to a livelihood governed by the Arbitration Court, the further we get away from what I believe to be our duty.

I was pleased to hear Mr. Condon remind us of the very high standing of the South Australian Parliament. Unfortunately, the public who listen to the wireless probably think that all Parliaments are bear gardens. We should never forget that the dignity of Parliament is reposed in our hands. More so perhaps is it our special responsibility because of the behaviour of some other Parliaments. Compared with the salaries paid in the ordinary business sphere, the salaries of members of Parliament compare very favourably. Somehow I feel that if ever there is a thing to which the means test should be applied it is the salaries of Parliament. If we looked upon the matter with that in view, and had in mind members with independent means, and some whose time is devoted to other salaried jobs, then I think we could support only a salary on a basis which would enable members to live in dignity. For a long time I favoured the non-payment of members, but now equally firmly believe that members should receive sufficient salary to enable them to live in the dignity appropriate to the job.

I emphasize again that I believe that the leaders of both Parties in each House should be adequately paid, and think that £3,000 a year would not be too much for them. We all know the tremendous amount of time they devote to their work and the nervous strain they bear compared with back-benchers. We must not lose sight of the injustice done to those members who do a tremendous amount of work seven days a week, in some cases day and night at great personal expense and inconvenience. I cannot but agree with the suggestion that those who carry such tremendous burdens are entitled to an increase in their salaries. I do not want it for a moment to be considered that I am of as much value to Parliament as those who lead the Parties in each House. I have much pleasure in supporting the other parts of the Bill.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 1).

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from June 21. Page 368.)

The Hon. E. ANTHONY (Central No. 2)—It is a maxim of public finance that all kinds of work are embarked upon before the money is found, and only after the works are in progress or have been completed are the taxpayers asked to foot the Bill. Private enterprises have to carry out programmes according to the money they have, but in Government activities a vast expenditure is sometimes embarked upon before a thorough investigation is made on where the money will come from. It is reasonable to expect that when a State is expanding, as this State is, great demands are made upon public funds for such works as conservation and reticulation of water, hospitals, railways and roads, not only for their construction but also for their maintenance. Every year the public expenditure increases, as does the revenue. Under those circumstances it is the very great duty of every Minister of the Crown to see that the money so voted by Parliament is very scrupulously accounted for. I do not suggest that it is not, but I do suggest that every Minister should see that every possible economy is carried out in his department, not only in matters of finance but in seeing that the department is thoroughly organized so that the most efficient work can be produced with the greatest economy.

Recently the Public Service Commissioner made a long, critical and excellent report in which he pointed out how a number of reforms could be made. If he is correct it is the duty of everyone entrusted with public administration to see that they are carried out. It is not the first time that I have said that many of our public offices are inefficient because the buildings are in very bad disrepair. This matter has been the subject of a Public Works Standing Committee report, and plans have been ready for many years that would save the country much money.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—The recommendation was made long before bulk handling was dealt with.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—That is so. I was a member of the committee that made the recommendation many years ago, yet the Government is wasting money because of the state of these buildings.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—The only thing to do is change the Government.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—Since the report was issued there has been a Labor Government

in power. If the plans were carried out not only would tremendous inconvenience to public servants and the public be saved, but also money.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—It would save thousands of pounds a year.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—That would be saved in rent alone, not to mention the saving of time of officers who now have to run all over the place, and sometimes lose dockets in transit. At the moment the Premiers are in conference regarding the amount of Loan money to be allocated to the respective States. This has happened every year and we have had greater evidence of it since we lost the right to tax.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—I do not think anybody really wants it back.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—I think we should all be anxious to have our powers restored to us.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—That is only shadow fighting.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—It may be but we should take considerable interest in the matter.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Surely the honourable member is not serious about that?

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—I am. Every member who represents his constituents in the right way should see that we have the powers that a sovereign State should possess. They were taken away from us and have never been restored, so we have lost our right to be called a sovereign State. That is a constitutional point that will not be argued by anyone. However, we cannot get unanimity of opinion amongst the Premiers.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—They know they are on a good wicket.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—They do; they can go along and involve their States in heavy public works programmes involving heavy expenditure and at the end of the year send a bill along to the Grants Commission without having to take upon themselves the responsibility of taxing. That is a cowardly thing to do. Our job is to carry on this State under its Constitution, but we are not doing that now, and every year we have to go to the Commonwealth Government asking it to make up our deficit. It is a great temptation to any Government to involve itself in heavy public expenditure hoping that its commitments will be met by the Commonwealth. If we had our taxing rights restored to us, Treasurers would

be much more careful in their expenditure of public money and in embarking on public schemes, however good they may be. The trouble is that we are endeavouring to do too much too quickly, with the result that everybody is competing in the same pool of labour and for the same amount of money; the same people are being asked to supply loan money as are being tempted to invest in all sorts of companies that are offering higher rates of interest. This is drying up our former source of loans and that is what is worrying the Loan Council. The Federal Treasurer is telling the Premiers that he cannot find this money, and the Premiers say that if he does not they will have to drop some of their public works and thereby cause a great deal of unemployment. That is the threat. Is it a sound or good thing to hold that over the head of the Federal Treasurer?

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Doesn't the honourable member believe in the Loan programme being carried out?

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—I am not saying that we should not push on with important public works, of which there are many.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—Which do you suggest should be curtailed?

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—That is the whole trouble. I am simply saying that we are embarking on too many.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—What are we doing that is not essential?

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—I should say that the housing of the people should have No. 1 priority. We are doing pretty well in this State but we have not yet caught up.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—We are still thousands behind.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—Yes. The next thing is hospital facilities, and here I believe the Chief Secretary has a tremendous task which he is doing his best to meet. I notice in these Estimates that he is making a number of grants to private hospitals. This is quite an innovation and all I would say about it is—

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—You cannot cope with it.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—I know, but the Minister is trying to help private hospitals do the work which the Government cannot cope with. All that I was about to suggest was that when the Government provides money for private hospitals their accounts should be audited by the Auditor-General.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—You are not implying that the money is not spent for the purpose for which it is given?

The PRESIDENT—Order! I must ask members to cease interjecting, and I think it would help if the honourable member did not reply to them.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—It helps me make my points and I am not upset. The fact that the Adelaide Children's Hospital, for example, receives a substantial Government grant every year but is not subject to a Government audit is something to be regretted. All public institutions receiving public money should be subjected to Government audit. I note that there is one item for schools—another important question. The administration of the Education Department is very troublesome at the moment. There is a great shortage of both teachers and schools. That lag has to be made up and the Minister is endeavouring to do this. It is the teachers who make the schools and I am very sorry to see that so many untrained people are having to be brought into the department. I know it is unavoidable—

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—They go through a supplementary training course.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—That does not alter the fact that we are bringing into the department a great number of only partially trained teachers and that will have an effect upon the population in the long run. It is not the Government of any country, but its teachers who largely set the policy of a nation. It was not the military section of Germany that started the last war, but the teachers, who indoctrinated the people and worked them up into a ferment, who really started the drums of war beating. Teachers have a tremendous influence upon the population of any country and it is upon teachers and not so much school buildings, that our future rests and consequently it is all important to see that we get the right type of teachers. I know that the department is advertising all over the world, but one place is just as short as another, due largely to the fact that the profession was starved for so many years that people forsook it and never returned.

I commend the Government on its purchase of areas for recreation purposes. That is a wise and statesman-like attitude. The Government is securing pieces of land wherever it can, particularly around the metropolitan area, to ensure that these areas are preserved as playgrounds for the people. These Supplementary Estimates are, of course, designed to cover expenditure beyond that provided in the Revenue Estimates. The Government was confronted with a number of unforeseeable expenses such as the heavy cost resulting from

the earthquake damage to State Bank homes. Very generously, I thought, it made provision to cover the cost of repairs; there was no obligation upon it to do so and it is to be highly commended for its action. Again, heavy costs were entailed in pumping water from bores and elsewhere during the dry period we experienced in order that people should get some supply. That was a costly job. It has ended, I hope, forever, because if ever there was anything which caused dissatisfaction it was the quality of the water supplied during the time the Government had to use that bore water; it did a good deal of damage to electrical equipment and was a very unpalatable fluid.

Already the State has spent £1,000,000 on endeavouring to eradicate the fruit fly. Members know what I have felt about this legislation from the outset. I still feel that someone ought to be making a contribution. This work has been undertaken to protect our great fruit-growing industry, and I have no complaint about that.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Do you expect the fruitgrowers to contribute?

The Hon. E. ANTHONY—I think the industry that has been protected should make some contribution; I have always said that. I have mentioned Western Australia as an example before. There a tax is imposed upon every garden, in return for which there is an annual inspection to see that there is no host for the fruit fly, I am all for the public making a contribution wherever possible and not leaving the whole burden upon the general taxpayer. I have some sympathy for Mr. Condon when he talks about the losses sustained by the Port Adelaide Corporation as the result of the acquisition of the wharves many years ago, but that is only one municipality. Others are losing through having Government properties within their boundaries and I am glad that one of our members in the Federal Parliament is moving for some redress.

With those few remarks I support the measure and trust that the optimism which most people are expressing about the great possibilities of this country is justified. We have every reason to be optimistic about Australia, but we should be prudent and careful to see that we do not simply waste the good things that Providence has provided for us. If we make the best use of our assets I think nothing but good will come of the work which is being done by prudent and wise Governments.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—In this Bill we are asked to pass Supplementary Estimates amounting to over £700,000, and this has become a custom in the last few years. It is brought about by our method of finance which perforce we have to adopt. We can classify the items under three headings—those under-estimated in the Budget or due to unforeseen contingencies during the year, new items submitted by the Government and straight out grants. When items for an expenditure of more than £700,000 are submitted some indication should be given of the effect upon the State's income. The Chief Secretary gave no such information, and consequently we must use our imagination. It would appear that we are in the good position of having a surplus and the Government by these Supplementary Estimates is getting rid of that surplus before the end of the year. I doubt whether any member would not support all the items the Government has produced on the list, but the method of finance proposed is dangerous. It is wrong that grants should be provided and expenditure contemplated without reference first to Parliament in the form of Estimates. The Estimates and the revenue could be considered together. We know that the Treasurer has budgeted for a deficiency of £1,900,000 but the Chief Secretary did not give us any guidance as to whether that amount will be increased as a result of these Estimates.

The financial position should be made as clear as possible to everyone. By not indicating where the money is to come from and what effect the expenditure will have on the Budget as presented earlier, I do not think the Government has treated this Council to the respect to which it is entitled. If the money is to be made available immediately and not regarded as a surplus, then I think the distribution has been wisely attended to. Admittedly, some of the money had to be spent on such items as the metropolitan water supply, but many of the items are not in that category but in the form of grants, or are additional to the amounts made available in the Budget. I hope that if Supplementary Estimates are to be introduced from year to year a somewhat fuller explanation will be given by the Minister. I prefer that if there is a surplus it should be disposed of in the ordinary way. I support the Bill.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Chief Secretary)—I have listened to some interesting comments in the debate which are deserving

of attention, as requested by members. In reply to Sir Frank Perry I would indicate that the information I have supplied over the years in relation to such measures was considerably in excess of that provided to this Chamber a couple of decades ago, when hardly any details were given. Out of courtesy to members, and to assist them in discussion of the Bill, I supplied them with information regarding the various items. It is clear that the amounts provided should be read in conjunction with the Budget delivered earlier. The obvious answer is that the expenditure has been approved, and at the end of the year on June 30 the final results will be known.

I was interested in the remarks of Mr. Anthoney who, if I followed him correctly, advocated the erection of additional Government offices. This has been considered by the Government on many occasions, but it was decided that the time was not yet appropriate to undertake this work when we have so many other urgent demands on our Loan expenditure which should take priority. Therefore, I was pleased that at the end of his speech he said there should be curtailment of Loan expenditure and that we should confine ourselves to essential things, providing first things first. The housing of our people must be the first essential. That is economically sound and sound for many other reasons, including health. I am glad that he agreed that more hospitals should be built and improved water supplies provided. That has been the Government's policy, also that it should keep spending down to the limit, and not enter unnecessarily into competition and thus push costs and charges up in providing buildings, as Mr. Anthoney first suggested. I think he will agree that although it might be desirable to centralize staff accommodation, that should not be done without some consideration of the cost. I hope that the plans which are in the hands of the Government and ready to be put into operation at the appropriate time will result in maintaining employment in the building industry, rather than dislocate the employment position. This would be the result if these operations were undertaken now when we have so many other undertakings before us.

Mr. Condon advocated as he has done over the last three years that there should be some increase in water charges, on the ground that the cost of providing water, which is one of the cheapest commodities available, has increased. The Government has no intention of increasing the charges for this essential service until that is found to be absolutely

essential. As with electricity, the Government considers an efficient water service as vital as being one of the great public utilities which mean so much not only to the individual in the home, but also to industry. It is desirable that we should keep the cost of such essential services down to the absolute minimum, and only if it were found impossible to continue to provide the service at the present charges would the Government consider any increase in the cost.

Mr. Condon referred to the cost of providing school buses, which are now an integral part of our educational system, and asked that some information should be provided to justify the expenditure, and that there should be a comparison with conditions prevailing before the introduction of school buses. Obviously, it is not possible to make a comparison of conditions which did not exist. School buses started, I should think, within the last decade when we commenced instituting area schools to replace the system of small schools, for each of which a teacher was provided. In the time available this morning, I obtained the following information through the courtesy of the Minister of Education:—

At the present time this department owns 85 school buses and a total of 364 services are in daily operation. Two hundred and forty-one of these are undertaken by contractors. A total of 211 schools are served, all of which are outside the metropolitan area. A total of 10,681 children are conveyed to school daily. The total operating cost to the Government is £300,288 and the capital expenditure in the financial year which is just ending is approximately £80,000. The average cost per child conveyed on the services is 2s. 9d. per school day. The latest costing figures show that the average cost per mile in respect of departmental buses is 1s. 8d. and in respect of contractors' buses 1s. 10d. Using the cost per mile as a unit of comparison pre-supposes that the portion of small and large vehicles are the same in each group. Actually, in our own fleet there is a greater number of larger buses and this increases the comparison of costs in this department's favour.

I have also a report prepared by the transport officer of the department which sets out the following information:—

	Con- tractors.	Subsi- dized.	Depart- mental.	Total.
Services . . .	241	52	71	364
Miles per day	11,308	2,060	3,437	16,805
Cost per day.	£1,019	£132	£321	£1,472

The report sets out that 18 higher primary, 150 primary, 27 high, 15 area and one technical school were served, and that 5,753 higher primary, 2,012 high, 2,811 area and 105 private school children were conveyed at an average cost for each child of 2s. 9d. per day. The

average miles for each service were 46.2. The Director's report continues:—

It is difficult to make a direct comparison between the costs of maintaining a small school and of transporting the children to a larger school unless specific instances are quoted. On the assumption, however, that the small school in question has 12 children and that they are to be transported 20 miles each way to a larger school and that there is no existing school bus service which could be used, the figures would be approximately as follows:—

The salary of a male teacher in the third year of certificated service is £850 per annum to which may be added approximately £150 per annum for contingent expenses, a total of £1,000. To this may be added a proportion of the capital cost of erecting the school and purchasing the site. The cost of transporting the 12 children over the distance of 20 miles might well be approximately £2 10s. per school day or 4s. 2d. per child per day. The total annual cost would be £500. If the condition of the road, the number of hills and other factors warrant it, the cost might rise to £600 per annum. In consequence, in this case the cost of transporting the children would be considerably less than the cost of the salary of the teacher and keeping the small school open. At the same time I should point out that in the majority of cases when small schools are closed and consolidated to larger ones the distance concerned is nearer 10 miles than 20 miles each way. A large proportion of the transport costs is concerned with the carrying of children to secondary schools and is not affected by the closing of small schools.

There is far more to this policy of consolidating small schools to larger schools than the transport cost involved. For example, if 100 children are brought in from say six smaller schools to one central school the number of teachers required would be reduced from six to three or four. This saving of teachers is especially important at the present time when the Education Department is faced with acute staffing problems. In addition, it is true that a larger school presents opportunities for a far better education than small schools of six to 15 pupils. The children can be taught in their respective grades by one teacher instead of one teacher being required to teach a number of different grades. It is also possible to provide greater facilities and amenities in the larger schools. Lastly, I feel sure that the participation by children in the community life of the larger school is beneficial.

It is not easy to present what I think the honourable member was seeking—a financial statement showing the economic advantages that we would get out of those services—because there are other advantages quite apart from financial considerations that have justified the policy. The standard of education is better, the children are brought into contact with larger numbers of other children and the

teachers are able to teach special subjects, all of which are advantages that could be revealed later in the lives of the students.

Another topic that created much interest was the fruit fly campaign, members inquiring whether we were getting any advantage from the expenditure involved. Fruit fly was first reported in 1947 and action was taken to eradicate it immediately. Mr. Story said, by way of interjection, that all the benefits were to the metropolitan area, but I do not think that is so. Although the campaign may have inconvenienced backyard gardeners, keeping this State comparatively free of the pest has been worth the sacrifice and I do not know of anyone who could be asked to contribute towards the cost other than the general taxpayers. Surely, with the existence of an industry at stake, the campaign must have been of benefit to everyone because of the improved condition in which they have got their fruit and for many other reasons. It has been an advantage to fruitgrowers along the River Murray because it has surely been in their interests that there has been a minimum of risk of the disease being carried into the area. If it were allowed to persist in the metropolitan area who knows when someone living only two or three hours' car travel away from the area would take fruit along, find it diseased and throw it out of the window a short distance from a gardening area. The disease could be started in that way. I asked the Minister of Agriculture if his department could provide me with some information relevant to this matter, and the information he provided is as follows:—

When fruit fly was first reported in South Australia in 1947 maggot infested fruit was found over 2½ square miles of Adelaide suburbs. The value of our Adelaide home garden production, our commercial late and midseason stone fruit production and our export markets (the latter nearly £2 million annually) warranted the expense of eradication measures. Major centres of infestation located in 1947 to 1949, although closely watched, have shown no signs of persistent or recurring infestations. Except for the summer of 1950/51 restricted new outbreaks have had to be dealt with in succeeding years but this had to be expected. There is no doubt that the decision to undertake eradication measures was not only warranted but also has been highly successful. Our suburban gardens have been protected and our export trade maintained and even if isolated outbreaks in other suburbs have to be dealt with in future seasons the saving to the State is tremendous.

This is a matter that fundamentally interests every taxpayer and if it were suggested that somebody should bear the cost I do not know

how it could be taken off the general taxpayer and placed on any selected body of the community, because the benefit is to the whole State. I do not think any member would doubt that the campaign has been successful if he heard the views of people who have come from Sydney to Adelaide to live. The matter could not be handled other than by an appropriation as provided in this Bill. I appreciate the interest that honourable members have shown in applying themselves to this measure.

Bill read a second time and taken through its remaining stages.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Chief Secretary)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

The Bill is in the usual form and extends the operation of the Act for another year. In view of the many and varied opinions which are from time to time expressed as to the desirability of extending this legislation, I propose to state shortly the reasons which have actuated the Government in bringing down this Bill. The most important reason is the necessity for South Australia to keep its costs of production as low as possible. Many South Australian manufactureres have to sell a substantial proportion of their output either in other States or in countries outside Australia. In either case they have to compete with the manufacturers of other States. But we have not the easy access to some of the essential raw materials which the eastern States enjoy. A great deal of the material used in South Australian manufactures has to be transported here from a distance. Much of it comes from the States with which we are in competition. The material is on their doorstep, as it were, but has to be brought a long way to ours. Thus, our manufacturers have an initial disadvantage which has to be compensated for in some way; and the only way to compensate for it is to keep our local costs lower than those of the other States.

Experience has shown that control of prices is essential for this purpose. In two other States where prices have been de-controlled, the effect of de-control is that the increase in the "C" series index in those States has been about three times as great as it was in South Australia during the corresponding period. This is very convincing evidence of the serious effects of de-controlling prices at the present juncture, and of the advantage which we gain by retaining control. Another reason

which actuates the Government in proposing an extension of the Act is the existence of trade associations and trade arrangements by which prices can be maintained at a higher level than would otherwise prevail. The effects of these arrangements on prices and on supplies of commodities are from time to time reported to the Government; and so long as the Prices Act remains in force the Government is in a position to ensure that no harsh or unfair arrangements are allowed to operate. If the Act lapsed, the Government would be powerless in such matters.

There is a further factor which also influences the Government. In some important basic commodities used in manufacture and production the local price, although adequate, is at present below the overseas price. In such cases, if there were no price control, the local price would immediately tend to rise to the level of the overseas price. The Prices Department is at present operating with a relatively

small staff and many kinds of commodities have been de-controlled. Nevertheless, arrangements are in force between the department and persons and associations concerned in various trades and industries with the object of ensuring that prices remain reasonably stable. These arrangements are quite effective, but they depend for their effectiveness on the fact that the Act is still in force and can be used, if necessary, to impose a stricter control. The department does not cost much, and the large savings and refunds which it secures for the public amply justify the modest expenditure. For these reasons the Government is not at present prepared to allow the Act to lapse.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.54 p.m. the Council adjourned until Thursday, June 23, at 2 p.m.