

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, October 18, 1955.

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

QUESTIONS.**MARGARINE QUOTA.**

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I ask leave to make a short statement with a view to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The Government of New South Wales has decided to increase the quota of margarine from 2,500 to 9,000 tons, and margarine from New South Wales is being sold in the South-East of this State. Other States are examining the position. A standing committee was set up by the Australian Council of Ministers of Agriculture and it decided on a limit of 10,000 tons for Australia. I draw attention to an article in the *Advertiser* of October 13 under the heading "Gallup Poll: More Margarine Favoured," as follows:—

Public opinion has swung strongly in favour of allowing a big increase in margarine production the latest Gallup Poll shows. The question asked was, "Do you think manufacturers should be allowed to make more margarine or not?" Of the 2,000 people interviewed in no State is the majority for increased margarine production under 60 per cent. In 1953 48 per cent voted for an increased quota and in 1955 69 per cent.

What action does the Government intend to take in order to carry out the decision of the Agricultural Standing Committee to increase the quota of margarine in order to meet public demand?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I will refer the question to the Minister concerned.

COST OF LIVING INCREASE.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I ask leave to make a short statement with a view to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I direct the Chief Secretary's attention to an article in the *Advertiser* this morning quoting the Commonwealth Statistician's figures which indicate an increase of 2s. a week in the cost of living. What does the Government propose to do in order that this increase shall be reflected in the wages of workers in South Australia?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—In accordance with recognized practice the Government will act in the proper manner and leave the matter to the Arbitration Court to decide.

EXPORT LAMBS.

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON (on notice)—

1. How many lambs were slaughtered for export during the 1954 season (a) at Gepps Cross and (b) at Port Lincoln?

2. What was the approximate number of the Merino breed slaughtered?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—The replies are:—

1. (a) 709,005; (b) 131,257.

2. Details of Merino breed slaughtered were not kept for Gepps Cross or for Port Lincoln. Departmental estimates, supported by meat and stock authorities, are:—Gepps Cross, 200,000-225,000; Port Lincoln, 35,000-40,000.

TRANSPORT OF CATTLE.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON (on notice)—

1. Is it a fact that cattle can be transported by rail from Alice Springs to Adelaide Abattoirs in 28 hours?

2. If not, what is considered to be the minimum time required for the journey?

3. In view of the long delays which occur at sidings en route, is it the intention of the Minister to ascertain from the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner whether it is practicable to minimize such delays to ensure cattle arriving at the abattoirs with a minimum loss of condition?

The Hon. A. L. McEwin for the Hon. N. L. JUDE—The replies are:—

1. No.

2. The present transit times are as follows:—Alice Springs to Stirling North, 40 hours; Stirling North to Port Pirie, 2 hours; Port Pirie to Dry Creek, 7 hours. Cattle are spelled at Stirling North for 24 hours.

3. This matter will be brought under the notice of the Commonwealth Railways Commissioner.

COAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE (Attorney-General), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Coal Act, 1947-1950.

Read a first time.

LOTTERY AND GAMING ACT AMENDMENT BILL (RACING DAYS AND TAXES).

Read a third time and passed.

MARRIAGE ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

MAINTENANCE ORDERS (FACILITIES FOR ENFORCEMENT) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

NOXIOUS INSECTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

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

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Members are aware of the threatened scourge of grasshoppers in plague form and their possible effect over a vast area of the State, and consequently I appreciate their action in enabling me to proceed with the Bill immediately. The insects are hatching and time is precious, even if it is only to take some deterrent action against the menace. The object of the Bill is to confer on municipal and district councils and on the Minister of Agriculture additional powers for compelling landholders to destroy noxious insects. It has been introduced because of the serious plague of grasshoppers now infesting our northern areas. The Noxious Insects Act of 1934, among other things, empowers municipal and district councils to give notice to occupiers of land within the areas of the councils, requiring them to take measures specified in the notices for the destruction of noxious insects. If an occupier does not comply with such a notice he is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding £20. In areas outside districts and municipalities the Minister of Agriculture has the same powers as councils have within their areas.

The work involved in dealing with the present grasshopper plague is now so great that it is necessary for councils and the Government to enlist the aid of the occupiers of the affected lands, and to give them notices as to measures which they must take on their holdings. In order that the officers concerned with the administration of the Act shall be in a position to compel occupiers to do the necessary work, it is considered essential that the Act should be made more stringent. The penalty of £20 prescribed in 1934 is inadequate, and it is not a sufficient remedy to prosecute a man for failure to take the necessary measures for eradication, when what is really required is to get the work done. For this reason it is provided that if an occupier

defaults in carrying out the work specified in a notice, the council may do the work and charge him the cost. The amount of the cost will be a debt recoverable by action in a local court or the Supreme Court, according to the amount involved. The liability of the occupier to pay the cost of the work will not affect his liability to be prosecuted for failure to comply with the notice.

The Bill also provides that in areas outside districts and municipalities the occupiers will be liable to comply with notices given by the Minister and will be subject to the same penalties and liabilities for default as occupiers within districts or municipalities. In view of the seriousness of the grasshopper plague the Government regards this Bill as urgent and asks that it be passed as quickly as possible.

We read in the press every morning details of the development of the grasshopper menace which, I think, most of us have considered was a passing phase and belonged only to the north, but over the years they have been extending further into the settled areas. Only yesterday I read of hatchings taking place south of the metropolitan area, which rather indicates that perhaps like noxious weeds, which over the years seem to have acclimatized themselves, grasshoppers are no longer confined only to the outback, but are extending into the settled areas. Most of us, including city dwellers, know just what damage these pests can cause when they decide to descend upon something that is appetizing. It is to minimize the effect of this threatened plague that the Bill is necessary. I question whether it is humanly possible at this stage to eliminate the expected damage, but at least we can take some action to try to minimize it. Consequently I present the Bill for members' consideration.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—It was my intention to move the adjournment of the debate, but a little grasshopper whispered in my ear that the Government desired to have the Bill passed this afternoon. I think it and the people directly concerned are open to criticism for not taking action earlier. We were warned over nine months ago about this insect which, even at that time, had been causing trouble in various parts of this State.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—What action were the settlers taking?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I do not know. Like everyone else, 90 per cent of the settlers will do the right thing but there is always a

section that will say, "It cannot happen here," with the result that these few people are responsible for a great deal of damage. Some weeks ago, when travelling around Gulnare, I saw millions of grasshoppers on the wing. I also saw millions of the pests of quite a large size in other districts. Recently at Whyalla I heard complaints about grasshoppers; I have heard complaints at Loxton and again this morning at a meeting of the Public Works Standing Committee. Warnings were given nine months ago, and if some definite action had been taken we would not have been faced with the present position. It would have been impossible to eradicate grasshoppers, but at least we could have minimized the loss. Claims will be made against the Government by people who have sustained losses in the same way as claims were made by farmers whose wheat was affected by weevil. That wheat could have been sold for 18s. a bushel, but the farmers would not take it and now have to accept 13s. However, grasshoppers will do more damage than weevil.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin—The wheat will not get weevil if the grasshoppers eat it.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—At least something can be recouped if weevils attack grain, but it is a complete loss if attacked by grasshoppers. We are to spend £3,500,000 to erect extra storage for wheat that we might not require because of this infestation. The Government has been lax in not doing more to combat the pest.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin—When do you suggest action could have been taken?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The Government could have done months ago what it is doing today.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin—Before they were hatched?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—They were hatched and flying about eight or nine weeks ago, as the Chief Secretary and the Minister of Agriculture, who travel about the country, must have known. This position has not been forced on us in the last few days: we were warned about it months ago. I hope whatever action is taken will minimize the cost with which we will be faced. The councils have a great responsibility in this matter. In some areas, particularly around Port Pirie, action was taken some time ago. I realize the difficulties entailed in combating this pest. If they could be placed in one spot and destroyed it would be easy, but they are often in inaccessible places. To assist to pass this legislation speedily I support the second reading.

The Hon. C. R. CUDMORE (Central No. 2)—This, I think, we can take quite clearly as a case of urgent necessity and proceed with its consideration without the usual formula, which I have advocated so often, of separate readings on separate days. It is perhaps a little unfortunate that this matter has advanced so far in the country before legislation has come before us, a matter on which Mr. Condon perhaps had some ground for complaint. However, in view of the seriousness of the menace, irrespective of what has or has not been done, now is the time for us to do our part to help in what way we can to give whatever power is necessary to Government and local government bodies to ensure that everyone does his job as efficiently as possible. That is how I view this Bill generally. Certainly there were warnings from the department; in fact, there were grasshoppers 10 months ago in the north-west corner of this State, in Queensland and New South Wales. That was an indication that this season we were likely to have a grasshopper plague, as the department warned us.

As a general rule I am all in favour of people doing something for themselves rather than relying on the Government, and this Bill has my support because its main objective is to provide that if people will not do something for themselves, someone else will do it for them and charge them for doing it. There are always individuals who will use their money and energies to protect their part of the country when these pests come along, but there are neighbours who will not do anything. That is unfortunate, but it even extends to some councils. Some councils will take energetic action, as they have done right from the north to the south coast, but they may find their efforts stultified because they have no power over individuals in this matter. This Bill gives certain powers, but the Minister was careful to say that nobody could expect to eradicate grasshoppers completely in any district, particularly in hilly or awkward country where they breed and cannot be got at. Whether it is late or early, the fact remains that the Bill is urgent and I hope it will have some effect in inducing everyone to realize that it is his duty in every case to do what he can to help the State in fighting this pest. Without any further comment I support the second reading.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS (Northern)—As Mr. Cudmore has indicated, the gist of this Bill is to give power to the Government and councils to enter properties and take action

against grasshoppers which a landowner may not be prepared to do himself. My only object in making any contribution to this debate is to defend those people who, I am sure, are doing their utmost to meet their obligations. I deprecate the criticism levelled against all and sundry by Mr. Condon who implied that the people had not shouldered their responsibilities in combating this pest as it has developed. It is all very well to say that this menace was apparent some months ago. We have had grasshopper plagues in the past and we know that they go through certain stages, and that the period which the honourable member mentioned of a few months ago when they were on the wing was one of those stages, and nothing much could be done then as regards the subsequent infestation. It is true to say that even a month ago it was apparent that there were hatchings of grasshoppers, but over the last four weekends I have been travelling in the outer areas, as far north as Hawker and on the West Coast, and I found that, without exception, the people are quite alive to the menace and appreciative of the action they must take. They are spraying wherever they find the grasshoppers. I ask members to consider the areas around, say, Hawker where the holdings are large, from 5,000 to 10,000 acres, many in hilly country. It would require a regiment to locate every place where grasshoppers were hatching, and people, with the limited manpower available, are finding it absolutely impossible to treat the whole of their holdings. I repeat, however, that they are doing their utmost and I did not find one landholder during those weeks that I have been travelling around who was not alive to his responsibilities and was not doing his utmost to combat the menace.

I quite agree with the provisions of this Bill because we know that a few people—I should say very few indeed—may take the view that they can do nothing about it. We do not want to encourage that attitude and must do everything we can to help fight the pest. I feel sure that there will be very little necessity to enforce the provisions of this Bill, at least as regards the people in the north. It is useless to say what might have been done earlier. We are doing what we can with the material and manpower available and we cannot ask for anything more.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—I wish to express appreciation of the Government's action regarding this menace. It has made a thorough survey of the infested areas

and arranged for the production and distribution of large quantities of chemicals with which to fight the plague, and also arranged with the Commonwealth Government for the use of military personnel and equipment. This shows, I think, that the Government is thoroughly alive to the situation. If the pest is not tackled and brought under control reasonably quickly it can be devastating in its effects. I believe that, with the co-operation of the Government, the landholders will do everything in their power to destroy the young hoppers.

The Bill provides that councils and officers of the Department of Agriculture may enter upon property for the purpose of destroying grasshoppers where a landholder is not taking adequate action, and subsequently recover the costs, but I would like to be quite sure that we are not merely making an idle gesture. I know, for instance, that councils have used their powers under the Vermin Act to destroy rabbits on landholders' properties, but have found it very difficult indeed to recoup the costs. I believe that when councils have sued a landowner for payment for work done because it has been held that they have not entirely destroyed all the rabbits on the property they have had difficulty in recovering their outlay, and we do not want such a thing to apply in this case. Provided that point is quite clear I think we are doing all we can under the circumstances, and it is most desirable that we should put this legislation through as quickly as possible.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON (Northern)—From Biblical times we have heard of plagues of locusts, and the one with which we are now threatened seems likely to be the worst we have experienced. Time is the most important factor in dealing with the plague. I agree with my colleague, Mr. Edmonds, about the Leader of the Opposition's outburst in regard to the Government's being to blame. It is ridiculous to blame the Government in a case like this. I travelled to Quorn about a month ago and people there who have had a lifetime experience told me that they did not expect much damage on this occasion because in good years the grasshoppers are rarely destructive. Last Saturday week I travelled to Arno Bay by car and during the whole journey of 700 miles did not see one grasshopper. I also travelled towards Cleve from Elbow Hill as I had been told that they were bad in that district. I got out of my car and walked into several paddocks and, again, saw no hoppers.

To blame the Government for not making preparations to meet this plague is unjust and unfair.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—I have no recollection of asking any members what I have to say.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—No, but it is not a good remedy to blame the Government.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Why am I here?

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—The same as everyone else, to give constructive criticism and I do not think we heard it this afternoon. We know from our experience in regard to vermin destruction that some people will carry out the proper measures and some will not. In this case I think the Bill is well prepared, and if the landholder does not attempt to destroy grasshoppers the council will be able to do the work and recover the cost. I give the Department of Agriculture full credit for having made poison available in such large quantities and I am amazed at the great volume that has been produced at such short notice. I read with interest a letter in the *Advertiser* stating that the well-known flower, the larkspur, is deadly poison to grasshoppers, and I think that is authentic, so I dare say more larkspurs will be grown in future. The metropolitan area may not have as much trouble as some people fear because, on the last occasion of a plague, it was found that grasshoppers seemed to favour narrow leaf vegetation such as that on bowling greens. I have experienced the destruction caused by them on several occasions, and one feels quite helpless and therefore must appreciate the fact that the department has taken such prompt steps this year to make poison available. The jeeps which the Army is providing will greatly assist in dealing with the pest in places such as around Hawker where there are, not hundreds, but thousands of acres to be treated in isolated parts difficult to traverse in any other type of vehicle. I noticed that in the Assembly this Bill was referred to as class legislation. I do not think it is. I have much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—It would appear that the metropolitan area has an interest in the Bill in that this pest can damage gardens. We are asked to give compulsory powers to certain members of the community in areas which the grasshoppers have selected as breeding centres. It is to be compulsory for the breeding beds to be destroyed, and if this is not done the local council can do the work and charge the owner. I feel there is no other way to deal with the

plague. I pay a tribute to those doing the work, and to the Government which has supplied the poisons and arranged for the military and other authorities to attack the pest. If it is effectively handled in the affected areas the metropolitan area and areas further south will not be plagued by grasshoppers. I do not like the suggested compulsory powers. Similar powers were incorporated in the legislation to deal with the fruit fly, but those affected were compensated when their fruit was confiscated. The object of the present Bill is to save the community from the effects of grasshoppers. Having passed the Fruit Fly Bill under which the Government accepts the whole cost, we are now asked to pass a measure which involves landowners in considerable expense and work in order to defend the rest of the community. I support the Bill regretfully, but feel there is no other method which can be devised to save the State from the pest.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Chief Secretary)—The debate has revealed the reluctance which this Council has always shown to extreme measures or panic legislation. We have been plunged into the discussion rather hurriedly because of circumstances. I point out to Mr. Condon, who was good enough to proceed with the debate immediately, that this is not new legislation to do something which had not been thought of before. Parliament passed a Bill in 1934 covering practically all the things that this legislation deals with. That legislation authorized councils to enter land, to give directions to the occupiers and gave certain powers to the Minister. Powers were given to deal with those who obstructed any person employed by a council or the Minister in the performance of duties under the measure, and if they were guilty of an offence they were liable to a penalty not exceeding £20. Powers were also provided for the issue of regulations.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Did the Government ever enforce the provisions of that Act?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—No. The regulations required the occupiers to mark egg beds, to report their location and size to the district council or the Pastoral Board, to report the commencement of hatching and to apply control measures as required by district councils. Councils had also to map the egg beds, enforce control measures, issue poison material, and report monthly to the Director of Agriculture on the progress of control measures and submit a general survey of the results. The

only difference between this measure and the present Act is that where the work is not done the Minister can have the work done and charge for it, or direct the councils to do it. It is too late to prosecute after the grasshoppers are all around your ears and crawling down your neck.

Mr. Densley raised a pertinent question as to what powers would be invoked if a person did not kill all the grasshoppers on his property. On certain occasions litigation has failed when a landowner has not killed all the rabbits on his property. In this Bill there is no suggestion of killing every grasshopper. Clause 2 provides that a council may by notice in writing to the occupier of the land require him to take within the time specified in the notice such measures for the destruction and suppression of noxious insects on his land as are set forth in the notice. Even if all the grasshoppers are not killed, it will not make the legislation a failure. The legislation should be strengthened as suggested to make it more effective. I thank honourable members for their early consideration of the measure.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 passed.

Clause 3—"Powers of officers on non-compliance with notice."

The Hon. C. R. CUDMORE—We are obliged to the Chief Secretary for his explanation of the various points raised in the debate, but it is necessary that we should have clearly in our minds not only this Bill but the legislation which it amends. Section 6 of the Act provides three things—first, that a council may give a general public notice to the people concerned to take action against noxious insects; secondly, it can give to an occupier direct notice that he is to take some action; and thirdly, if he does not comply with the notice he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine. As the Minister said, that law still remains, but as the penalty of £20 is not sufficient we are asked to increase it. Further, the Bill provides that the authorized officer of a council can, if a man does not take the action set out in a notice, do the work and charge the occupier for it. I am interested in the effect of the words contained in new section 6a (2) (a):—

An occupier who—

- (a) does not forthwith after the service upon him of a notice mentioned in section 6 commence to comply therewith;

We have had arguments as to when a hen commences to lay an egg. I am not sure that this provision is tight enough, because a man might do the smallest thing in the world towards something yet it might be held that he has commenced to do something.

The Hon. E. H. Edmonds—Subparagraph (b) goes further by providing that he has to keep on with the job.

The Hon. C. R. CUDMORE—But it may be too late then. All this would involve is a fine of £20 yet he still need not take any notice of it. It is a pity that we are not going further with this new subsection. I am not prepared to move an amendment, but I suggest that the Government consider the matter with a view to tightening it. New section 6b contains the question raised by Mr. Densley and commented on by the Chief Secretary. It seems quite clear that new section 6a provides power to enter land and do certain things on it, and new section 6b provides that the expenses incurred by an authorized officer shall be a debt due by the occupier of the land to the appointer of the authorized officer and shall be payable on demand and recoverable by action in any court of competent jurisdiction. I can see no qualification there. I ask that new section 6a (2) be examined to see whether it cannot be tightened up.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Chief Secretary)—The honourable member has raised an interesting comment regarding this amendment. Section 6 (1) provides:—

The council may from time to time by notice published in one or more newspapers circulating in the area require all occupiers of land within the area or any part thereof specified in the notice to take within the time specified in the notice all such prescribed measures as are mentioned in the notice for the destruction and suppression of noxious insects.

New section 6a (1) provides:—

If an occupier does not comply with a notice under subsection (1) or subsection (2) of section 6 any authorized officer may with or without assistants—

- (a) enter upon the land of such occupier;
- (b) take all such measures and do and perform all such acts and things as to him appear proper or necessary to carry out the measures specified in the notice;

There seems to be full power to do what is specified in the notice. Where the owner starts and stops there is power to enter land. This is provided in new section 6a (1) (c) which provides:—

- (c) remain upon and have free right of ingress, egress and regress into, over and across the said land for such

period as is necessary for the purpose mentioned in paragraph (b) of this subsection.

That is followed by new section 6a (2). The question seems to me to be whether there is not sufficient power under new section 6a (1) to do anything provided for in that subsection after a notice has been given and not complied with.

The Hon. C. R. CUDMORE—New section 6a (2) (a) commences by providing that if an occupier does not comply with the notice under section 6, the council can give authority to people to go in and do the job for him. It is then provided that the cost can be a charge against the landowner. These things should all be together. New section 6a (2) is simply an addition to section 6, and provides for the same penalty. That subsection should be in stronger language, as I do not think it means anything as it is. I suggest that this matter be considered before the Bill is passed.

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—If the clause is not effective it should be strengthened. That will not cause undue delay because if the Bill is taken through to the third reading stage it can be recommitted tomorrow, and in the meantime the matter can be examined.

Clause passed.

Remaining clause (4) and title passed.

Bill reported without amendment and Committee's report adopted.

MINING ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 12. Page 1057.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—This is a very important Bill, as it makes important alterations to the Act. There are one or two things in clause 3 that I would like the Minister of Mines to consider and explain. I would like to know what quantity of uranium the Government is likely to purchase and the probable price. I am asking this because I understand that the money will have to be appropriated by Parliament. I draw attention to the Auditor-General's Report, because it deals with a very important part of this Bill. On page 105, under the heading "Services for mining company operating outside of the State," the following appears:—

Associated with the functions that have been carried out by the Department under the authority of the Uranium Mining Act, 1949-1954, the Director of Mines during the year under review made recommendations to the Min-

ister and received his approval to undertake certain research work and provide services to mining companies operating outside the State of South Australia. It was considered that, in approving this work, the Minister exceeded his powers under the Act. In view of the extent of the work proposed to be undertaken, the attention of the Treasurer was drawn to this matter and also to the fact that moneys had not been appropriated by Parliament for purposes other than those authorized by the Uranium Mining Act. Further, it was stated that if the work was to be carried out, and to avoid the irregular use of public moneys, payments should be made in advance by the companies concerned for such services and at least the full costs recovered. The Treasurer has obtained a report from the Director of Mines, but a reply has not yet been received from the Treasurer on the matters raised.

Clause 6 empowers the Minister to purchase uranium or thorium, but I do not know how far that goes and it may be very difficult to ascertain what is proposed by this innovation. The value of the Mines Department is recognized by very important mining companies because they have sought its advice, and I pay a compliment to the Director of Mines—who has been often criticized for expressing his opinion—and all the officers of his department. It was only a few years ago that we heard very little of mining in this State, but we have taken a very forward step. I hope I am not annoying anybody when I compliment the Minister and the Government for their activity in connection with mining, but I am not in the habit of submitting my speeches to members in order to know whether or not they are acceptable.

The functions of the Mines Department include the administration of mining legislation, including the granting of mineral leases and the collection of royalties and fees; ascertaining the extent and nature of the State's mineral resources; operating State gold batteries, and cyanide works, etc.; boring and testing mineral deposits for commercial mining ventures and boring for Government and private water supplies; investigating, mining and treating deposits of uranium; research, testing and treatment of minerals. Until recent years the department has been starved for funds but since 1949-50, when the net payments were £225,000, it has expanded. In 1951-52 net payments jumped to nearly £469,000. Two years later they fell back to £473,000 and in 1953-54 to £428,000. Today we no longer have the hush-hush policy regarding uranium because I think there is far more competition now. However, we are blessed with having Radium Hill, and probably

Crocker's Well will later prove to be an important mining district. The total net payments from Consolidated Revenue and Loan Fund to the 30th June, 1954, on investigating and developing uranium deposits amounted to over £5,000,000, an increase of £2,377,000 for the year. The annual receipts for the past five years, including royalties, rents, leases and licence fees and gold treatment charges, amounted to over £350,000.

I think this legislation meets the comment of the Auditor-General regarding what has happened in the past. By agreement with the United States and the United Kingdom authorities it was decided to construct the Port Pirie chemical plant for the treatment of the Radium Hill ore. This legislation will allow private companies to lease areas for the purpose of mining uranium. In the past companies have been given mineral leases for the mining of gypsum and other minerals but have not always worked them, and the department is now insisting that they should comply with the Act and not peg out claims without working them. There are other minerals besides iron ore, uranium and thorium that will prove of great value to the State and I think that the money spent by both the Government and private interests will mean a great deal to the State.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Private enterprise mined uranium 40 years ago.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Where did they get?

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Not far.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Exactly, but today, with the assistance of other countries, we have developed the Radium Hill field and accomplished a great deal. Throughout the Mines Department has played a very important part. The treatment works at Thebarton are highly regarded, not only in Australia, but by people overseas, and it is not necessary to refer to the importance of what is proposed at Radium Hill and Port Pirie. A few years ago Radium Hill was simply vacant country, but those who have inspected it must feel proud of the development that has taken place. Again, what was merely a swamp at Port Pirie a few years ago is now becoming a very important place. The Government has given every encouragement to those industries and I feel sure that it will pay dividends.

I am not unmindful of the very important part that has been played by others. The State has developed under the guidance of men who were South Australians in the truest sense. Despite all that has been accomplished I

believe there is yet scope for companies or for the Government to explore other parts of this State and increase our mineral production. Gypsum, for example, will mean much more to the State than it does at present. Two companies are interested in gypsum leases in the vicinity of Cape Thevenard and the Government, through the Harbors Board, is being asked to install bulk handling equipment for the purpose of shipping the mineral. One company is already operating and it is suggested that another will commence shortly. However, the whole thing is bound up with costs. It is considered that South Australia has the best quality gypsum in Australia—of 90 per cent purity—and we must realize that deposits now being worked in South Australia are approaching the point of exhaustion.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Is not all gypsum in the hands of Australian Plaster Industries Pty. Ltd.?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—No, the Colonial Sugar Refining Company also has leases and it is a very strong competitor. Another company is operating at Stenhouse Bay on Yorke Peninsula. The Government is prepared to give reasonable consideration to these companies in order that they may be able to develop an industry which will be of great importance to the State.

Clause 6 provides that the Minister may purchase, sell, dispose of or use any uranium or thorium obtained from mining operations and the question arises as to how far this power extends. However, there is the safeguard that Parliament must appropriate the money annually for the purpose. I raise these points in order that the Minister may explain them more fully. I support the Bill.

The Hon. Sir WALLACE SANDFORD (Central No. 2)—When the Minister of Mines was explaining the measure my mind went back to the amending Bill he introduced in 1940, which dealt almost entirely with the search for petroleum. He left his listeners with a feeling that he had submitted a difficult and lengthy subject in a manner that greatly impressed them. Last week he directed attention to the fact that the first feature of the Bill was to authorize the use of funds for the carrying out of research and developmental work on minerals in a much wider field than previously. The history of our industrial development is the record of our mineral resources. Great credit is due to those officers of the Mines Department who have worked so efficiently, patiently and effectively in their

various sections of responsibility and experience. South Australia has received well-earned expressions of appreciation from places far away. The plants now operating at Port Pirie and Radium Hill for the treatment of uranium are the practical results of experimental work in the laboratories.

South Australia is frequently confronted with the high degree of aridity which becomes so evident to us as primary producers, but compensation in perhaps no small degree is to be found in the field of mineral investigation. Uranium has enjoyed a prominence which appears to hold possibilities of great importance and value, and it would appear that production and transport are intimately associated with industrial effort. The Bill will give the Minister absolute discretion in granting a uranium lease, and it will not be possible to obtain a uranium or thorium lease by merely pegging a claim. As the Minister pointed out, the Government has changed its policy on uranium mining whereby, having established plants for treating ore and concentrates, it now desires to have the assistance of private enterprise in developing deposits to maintain treatment plants in production. By agreement with Great Britain and the United States of America it was decided to construct the Port Pirie chemical treatment plant with a greater capacity than was required for treating ores from Radium Hill, to which a visit was paid nearly a year ago when His Excellency the Governor-General started the plant in the presence of members of Parliament, who were thus privileged to inspect it. They did so with absorbing interest.

As has already been said, South Australia deficient in coal, oil and hydro-electric sites naturally turns to nuclear power for its future progress and well-being, and it is hoped that the possibilities for research and development will be used to solve many problems associated with the extraction of uranium from ores mined throughout Australia. Four years ago the Premier and Mr. S. B. Dickinson (Director

of Mines) visited the United States of America and as a consequence to authorities in the United Kingdom and the United States of America, as well as to an increasing number of our own people, was brought home a real appreciation of the value of Australian uranium resources.

The third feature of the Bill is to permit the Government to treat at Port Pirie uranium ores and concentrates produced by private enterprise. This is very important, because, instead of financing the development of new mines, the Government's money will be reserved for public works and other services. Additional chemical treatment facilities are not involved, but mainly the working of leases which will merely involve the establishment of mining plant and community facilities. Guarantees to purchase the output of leases over a period will also be a condition of any lease granted. Mr. Condon rightly raised the question of what will be the likely quantity of uranium available and the price to be paid. I gathered that he was referring to a paragraph in the Auditor-General's most recent report. As in the past, he has been able to quote something from a report which other members had not yet had an opportunity to peruse and I am not therefore in a position to answer his questions.

Included at the conclusion of the Minister's second reading speech was a report by the Parliamentary Draftsman. This is a somewhat unusual procedure, but the report was most interesting and a stimulating summary, and it made clear to us the tremendous expansion in the probing for this rare metal, which apparently is having a far-reaching effect upon the whole world. The Bill is an important amendment of the law, and I have much pleasure in supporting it.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.42 p.m. the Council adjourned until Wednesday, October 19, at 2 p.m.