

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, October 16, 1956.

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

ASSENT TO ACTS.

His Excellency the Governor intimated by message his assent to the following Acts:—Hide and Leather Industries Legislation Repeal, Lottery and Gaming (Flood Relief), and Stamp Duties Act Amendment.

INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL AND VETERINARY SCIENCE.

The President laid on the table the final report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works on the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science (central sterilizing unit), together with minutes of evidence.

SOUTH-EASTERN DRAINAGE AND DEVELOPMENT.

The President laid on the table the final report of the Parliamentary Committee on Land Settlement on South-Eastern Drainage and Development (Western Division—Northern Area).

MEETING TIME OF COUNCIL.

The PRESIDENT—I have received the following communication from His Excellency the Governor:—

The Governor returns herewith copy of the amendment of Standing Order No. 50 adopted by the Legislative Council on October 4, 1956 and approved by him in Executive Council on October 11, 1956.

Therefore, as from tomorrow, Wednesday, October 17, the Council will meet at the hour of 2.15 p.m. I consider it desirable that a message be sent to the House of Assembly informing it of the change in the meeting time of the Council.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin (Chief Secretary) moved that a message be sent to the House of Assembly accordingly.

Motion carried.

CRIMINAL LAW CONSOLIDATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE (Attorney-General), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Criminal Law Consolidation Act, 1935-1952. Read a first time.

HEALTH ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

APPROPRIATION BILL (No. 2).

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 10. Page 966.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—Members are asked every year to pass Appropriation Bills as a matter of form, and we do nothing about it but express opinions on the various items and make suggestions. The Government is budgetting for a deficit of £853,000 on the consolidated revenue account and the proposed payments amount to £65,982,000. Receipts from all revenue sources are expected to amount to £65,129,000. Although the Grants Commission was informed that South Australia would require a special grant of over £6,500,000 to enable the Budget to be balanced it recommended a grant of £5,800,000 only, and the Government's donation to the Murray River Flood Relief Appeal imposes an extra burden upon our finances. The Playford Government does not receive as much consideration from the present Commonwealth Government as it did from the Chifley Government. The amount recommended by the Grants Commission is £782,000 less than was sought, therefore increased stamp duty, wharfage charges and liquor licence fees all amount to additional taxation.

Although in this Budget the Government has seen fit to make bigger grants to various bodies I regret that it has not increased the grant to the Royal Zoological Society. The members of the board are amongst the most public spirited citizens of the State and they give their services without fee. The Zoo is of great educational value to children in particular and is of great importance to the State in general, but the board has been compelled to increase the admission prices in order to make ends meet, though this is still difficult. I urge the Government to encourage the board to carry on this educational work by increasing its contribution, as I think this is quite a reasonable request.

The total State funds employed by the Harbors Board at June 30 last were £12,366,653. During the year a record tonnage of 10,449,000 tons passed through our ports, and the Board had a surplus of £65,000, due largely to increased wharfage charges. Of 37 active shipping ports only 10 returned surpluses, totalling £288,000. Three of the five deep sea ports returned surpluses—Port Adelaide, £95,000, Port Pirie, £135,000, and Port Lincoln, £31,000. The remaining two—Wallaroo and Thevenard—showed deficits of

£8,000 and £4,000 respectively. A net deficit of £76,000 resulted from operations at the 32 other outports, the main exceptions being surpluses of £16,000 at Ardrossan, £4,000 at Stenhouse Bay and £5,000 at Whyalla. The net cost of maintaining jetties and improvements at localities not engaged in shipping operations and from which the Board received little or no return was £108,000. The Government should give this matter its serious consideration.

The State has been put to considerable expense in providing bulk handling installations. Some time ago the Public Works Standing Committee recommended the erection of wheat silos at the eastern end of the Wallaroo jetty on high land opposite the clothing factory. Soon after, a deputation waited on the Premier protesting against silos on this site and asking for them to be erected on the northern side of the jetty. The deputation was supported by the mayor of Wallaroo and the clothing interests, all of whom presented a very dismal picture. As a result, the Government referred the matter back to the Public Works Standing Committee, which took evidence from persons interested and then recommended that the site should be altered in accordance with the wishes of interested people. The *South Australian Farmer*, which was a strong supporter of bulk handling, contained the following article in a recent issue under the heading "Japanese Trade Delegation—Silo Sites":—

The party inspected the Wallaroo jetty where bulk loading facilities are shortly to be installed. The site on the low land for the grain silo was considered unsuitable and a new proposed site on higher ground was inspected. Mr. Sanders, the manager of the Bulk Handling Committee, said, "Huge savings will be effected by using the higher ground."

They now want the silo erected in the position first recommended by the Committee. Just what do they want? The committee made a recommendation, and then the bulk handling authorities entered a strong protest against the site suggested. Now they want it altered to the original site. This shows what the Government will have to face up to later from these people. The clothing manufacturing people painted a very dismal picture, but now they favour the alteration. These are the people we have to deal with and those who will put the State to huge expenditure.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—Why did the Public Works Committee alter its recommendation?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—It was on the evidence submitted. Members of the committee can change their opinions, as many others do at times.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—Where was the Committee's judgment?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Influence was brought on the Government to reopen the inquiry. The clothing factory people said that if the recommendation were carried out it would put them out of business. We considered that the factory was of importance to Wallaroo. The Committee pointed out that the site first selected was the best and would result in the least expensive project, but others outside thought otherwise and said that the Committee was hampering them.

The Hon. L. H. Densley—It looks as if the farmers will have to pay.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yes, unfortunately, and make no mistake about it. If I am any judge, bulk handling will be run by the Government in a few years.

The Hon. C. D. Rowe—Was it not a question of difficulties associated with the foundations?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—No. Evidence was submitted, and everyone concerned knew what the position was. People should make up their minds what they want. It is the duty of any committee making a recommendation to consider any further evidence that may be submitted, and, if convinced, it must do the right thing.

Some years ago all the coal shipped to Port Adelaide was handled in baskets. We were told that there would be considerable savings if a bulk handling plant were erected at Osborne. The Auditor-General's annual reports show what losses have been sustained year after year with the handling of coal there, although it certainly resulted in a saving in time of the turn-round of ships. Since then the Leigh Creek coalfield has begun operations and as a result coal importations have been reduced considerably. The Harbours Board has done a very wonderful job and I think that the wharves at Port Adelaide compare very favourably with those in any other part of Australia. However, over a period of years much money will be needed to bring our harbour facilities still further up-to-date. The Harbours Board is one of the few Government instrumentalities which shows a profit.

An amount of £15,249,142 has been provided for the Railways Department which expects to

receive £356,000 more from traffic this year. This will be achieved because of the introduction of diesel electric locomotives for freight traffic and diesel rail cars for passenger traffic. Although I travel on the railways regularly, I fail to see much improvement in the passenger traffic. People seem to be using other means of transport. Before taking action, I hope the Government will further consider the question agitating the minds of residents of Henley Beach and Grange concerning their rail transport. The duplication of the Woodville-Henley Beach line was considered some time ago and the committee concerned recommended the removal of the existing single track between the 7½-mile post on Military Road to the Henley Beach Railway Station and the construction of a new double track. Now, it is proposed to remove that portion of the line from Grange to Henley Beach.

The Hon. E. Anthony—Do you think that a good proposition?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—As the honourable members knows, I presented a petition containing 700 signatures to the Minister of Railways recently after it was recommended that the line from Grange to Henley Beach should be closed. In 1954 Parliament passed a Bill authorizing a committee to conduct certain inquiries. It consisted of Mr. Acting Judge Hannan, the Railways Commissioner and the Manager of the Tramways Trust. They decided what is now proposed, but the people concerned objected strongly. I understand that Cabinet has considered the recommendation, but hope it will give the people most concerned the opportunity to place evidence before the committee. To do that it will be necessary to re-open the inquiry. There was no suggestion that diesel engines would be used on this line.

Under the heading "Industries Assisted by Guarantees," the Auditor-General states:—

Total guarantees given from the inception of the Act to June 30, 1956, amounted to £2,848,550, of which £2,670,400 were still in force at that date, the bank overdrafts of the industries concerned then being £2,171,867.

We should do all we can to encourage industries and I do not think the Industries Development Committee has made any mistakes in the past in that regard.

The sum of £1,036,850 has been provided for the Architect-in-Chief's Department. This amount includes renovations, alterations and additions. I cannot understand why the Government purchased Foy and Gibson's building.

It will be very interesting to know what the ultimate cost of that building will be when it is in full operation, because apart from the cost of purchasing there is the added cost of reconstruction. Many years ago a recommendation was made that a two storey building to house Government employees should be erected in Victoria Square, but unfortunately the work was not proceeded with. The cost of that building today would be three or four times the original estimate. Shortly before the Government purchased Foy and Gibson's building the Public Works Standing Committee was asked to consider the erection of a large office building in Wakefield Street, and the Committee is now in course of considering that matter. In spite of all this, the Government comes along and purchases the building in Rundle Street, which makes me question its sincerity with regard to the Wakefield Street proposal.

The Adelaide Children's Hospital will receive £440,450 this year, an increase of £193,000 on last year. We know that this hospital is doing a wonderful job, and the people who control it should have our very deepest thanks. I do not think the Government can grant too much to such an important institution which means so much to the life of this State. The grant to the Institute of Medical and Veterinary Science is £120,000. This is a very important institution which is carrying on good work.

I now come to the Parliamentary Superannuation Fund, a subject on which members have heard me speak before. About seven years ago Parliament decided on a superannuation scheme, and decided that a member must pay into the fund for six years before he could become eligible for a pension. Over that very short period the fund has accumulated the sum of £73,285. The surplus income over expenditure last year was £9,157, the income for the year being £14,549 and the expenditure £5,392. It is time the Government amended the Act and put members on the same status as public servants. Whenever there is an increase in pensions members have to make increased contributions.

The Hon. E. H. Edmonds—The tempo of expenditure will increase as the years go on.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—A handsome sum has been accumulated in six or seven years.

With regard to the Produce Department, the loss on head office last year was £4,806, the profit on Light Square was £1,937, and the

loss at Port Lincoln was £10,155. The net result over the last five years is a profit of £5,093. Over this period the profit on the head office was £14,490, and the loss at Port Lincoln £52,704. I do not know what is wrong unless it is that there are less sheep being slaughtered. I had thought that there was a great increase in the number of sheep in South Australia. These losses cannot be allowed to continue. In other directions Parliament has increased rates and prices, and it may have to decide whether increased charges can be made in this direction. I recognize that this department is doing a very good job, but at the same time it cannot go on in the same strain every year.

The grant to the Publicity and Tourist Bureau is £275,039, an increase of £50,000 over last year. A grant of £25,000 was made to the Glenelg Corporation towards the construction of a boat haven on the Patawalonga Creek. Subsidies to other councils for the provision of recreation and swimming pools amount to £21,000. I think we should encourage the construction of swimming pools and recreation parks, and further consideration should be given to councils along our foreshore. The grant of £21,000 for all those councils is very small compared with the £25,000 for a boat haven on the Patawalonga Creek.

Like many other members, I have witnessed naturalization ceremonies, which are very impressive, but I have noticed that when naturalization certificates are handed to the new citizens they are given a House of Assembly enrolment card, but not a card for the Legislative Council.

The Hon. L. H. Densley—Perhaps they are not entitled to vote for the Legislative Council.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—They would find out whether they are entitled to vote or not, but why discriminate by handing them only one card?

The Hon. C. D. Rowe—That is a Federal matter.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—That might be so, but it should be rectified. The amount voted for buses to convey pupils to school is increasing every year. This year £331,500 was provided for school bus services, on which 390 people are employed. No doubt it is cheaper to provide buses than to have a great number of area schools.

The Hon. E. Anthony—I do not know that it is. We cannot get the figures.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—This amount seems to be very high. Private schools are doing a good job and should receive some assistance. Last Saturday an election was held in Tasmania, and both political parties recognized that something should be done to assist private schools. In a recent press article, the following appeared:—

The Leaders of the two major Parties in the election have now made clear their views on a principle that is of particular interest to most Tasmanians, direct aid to private schools. The Labor Party has declared for direct aid on a per capita basis. The Liberal Party believes that the first priority financially must be given to the State school system but is willing to consider long term loans to private schools to help them to extend. The Liberal attitude in this issue will be widely endorsed.

Private schools in this State are entitled to more assistance than they have received in the past.

During the last year the Government has been endeavouring to assist the fishing industry. Although fishermen are entitled to everything they get, the price of fish puts it beyond the reach of the average person. Although co-operative establishments are doing a good job, the difference between the amount received by fishermen and the retail price is too great. Last year £10,766 was spent exploring the possibilities of tuna fishing in our waters. That was offset by £5,586 from proceeds of catches, leaving a net cost of £5,180. I commend the Government for assisting this industry in order to provide the public with a very valuable food.

I draw attention to the amount invested in betting. Earlier in this debate I referred to the increased cost of liquor licences. People wanting to drink or bet have to pay dearly. I know there is very strong opposition in certain quarters to betting, and the figures, already colossal, are increasing every year. I often wonder whether Parliament should not consider altering the present system in many ways. Betting investments in 1955-56 were a record, and strange to say, the amount of unclaimed dividends is increasing. Last year £33,294 from unclaimed dividends was paid into general revenue, but I think this money should go to charitable institutions. A few years ago unclaimed dividends amounted to £20,000, and they have increased gradually every year. The total amount from the betting tax has reached £777,226,

all of which has been paid into consolidated revenue. The total paid to the clubs is steadily increasing and last year was £597,000. The amount invested at Port Pirie, where there are betting shops, totalled £701,000, an increase of £96,000 over the previous year. Out of this, more than £300,000 was invested on interstate races. The Government is receiving a handsome amount from betting. I am not complaining about the winning tax, but emphasizing that it is a good source of revenue for the Government, which I hope will consider the matters I have raised because there is a certain amount of merit in them. I support the second reading.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS secured the adjournment of the debate.

LOCAL COURTS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 10. Page 953.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—The Bill proposes to increase the monetary limit of jurisdiction of local courts of full jurisdiction and prescribes additional classes of action which may be dealt with by the Adelaide Local Court in its equitable jurisdiction. At present the ordinary common law jurisdiction of local courts is limited to £750. The amount was fixed 21 years ago at £250, but since then the value of money has altered considerably. A committee was appointed to consider a general review of the position and to suggest improvements to local court procedure.

Clause 4 provides that a magistrate may order that a document which a party is entitled to inspect shall be produced by the clerk of the court under certain conditions. It also gives magistrates the power to fix a special day for the trial of any action. At present there is much delay, and this clause will improve the position considerably. Another clause provides that the clerk of the court shall give notice to all parties concerned when the date of hearing is fixed, and a further clause enables a defendant to withdraw or amend his admission. This is not in the present law. The Bill provides increased jurisdiction to local courts as recommended by a competent committee, the members of which are well-known in the judicial world, and as a layman I cannot but support the legislation, which is in the interests of all parties concerned.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL secured the adjournment of the debate.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 10. Page 961).

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—I congratulate the two previous speakers on their contribution to the debate, but I need hardly say I am not in accord with all they said. I have heard similar speeches on price fixation made in this Council before, but do not want to point out where the members who made them are today. Ever since price control legislation has been introduced we have had strong opposition. Members benefited from the fine address of Sir Arthur Rymill, who went into history, and I intend to indulge similarly. As a Party man, I have a set policy to follow. I cannot understand people who have a set policy departing from it when it suits them. Therefore I say all honour and merit to those who are prepared to speak as they think. A man is within his rights in changing his opinion.

I have always said that State price fixation is not effective, and that the only effective control is under Federal administration. Previous speakers who attacked the Bill spoke on behalf of business interests. With some of their remarks I agree, but when it comes to their attacking wages I disagree. While the living wage remains pegged it would be unjustifiable to abandon price control. My Party was accused of treating wage levels as a religion, and it was said that the level of wages must dictate the level of prices. That is not correct, and the boot is on the other foot. It was also said that wages were always at the bottom of price increases, and that anyone who did not agree with that was merely deluding himself. I also disagree with that.

In this debate the Playford Government has been commended for the wonderful things it has done, but I criticize it for the things it has not done. If a Labor member suggests an amendment of legislation for the benefit of the majority he receives scant consideration. On industrial matters this State is lagging behind. For improvements in most of our legislation it is Parliament that is responsible, not any particular Party, and I am sick and tired on this one man band of musicians. This is a measure that would not have been placed on the Statute Book if it were not for the Opposition in this Council. When I look at the advantages and disadvantages in the Bill I weigh the position and say that if we have pegging of wages we must have some control over prices.

The first Bill to regulate prices was introduced into Parliament by a Liberal Government on August 13, 1914. On the outbreak of war prices rose sky-high, and a deputation waited on the then Minister asking for some control to be introduced. The Liberal Government of the day appointed a committee consisting of the late Mr. Justice Buchanan of the Supreme Court, Mr. Gell and another gentleman. For the first 12 months during which this committee was in operation the increased cost of living was 28 per cent, and during that time not one individual, by arbitration or wages board or by private agreement, received one penny increase in wages. After 12 months the cost of living was 28 per cent behind, and it has been behind ever since.

The Hon. E. Anthony—What year was that?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—It started in 1915. It is not wages that has been increasing prices but the other way round, and I defy any member to contradict it. In 1915 I was appointed with Mr. Colebatch on the Prices Commission. The first thing we did was to fix prices, and before prices could be increased the persons concerned had to submit a case. In many instances prices were increased because increases were justified, and I say without any hesitation that if increases are justified today they should be granted because everybody should get a fair deal. I do not expect any man to put his money into a business if he does not get a fair and reasonable return. That has always been my attitude. There were two commissions at the time, the Foodstuffs Commission and the Prices Regulation Commission. The Federal Government came in on July 20, 1916, and took over price control in South Australia. That continued for three years, and then the Butler Government reintroduced the legislation in South Australia, but it was repealed in 1921. I want to make it clear that wages have been chasing prices ever since the start of the first war.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—What about the prosperity allowance?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I am referring to the fact that it has been stated in this Council that wages are responsible for increased prices, and I am pointing out that that is not so.

The Hon. E. Anthony—Wages must play a big part.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I challenge the honourable member to contradict what I have said. Why is this Government continuing price control?

The Hon. E. Anthony—That is what some of us want to know.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—It is continuing price control because it has found it necessary to recontrol some things which had been decontrolled, because some people were taking advantage of the position. We know that there are many business people who are honest and would not take advantage of the position.

The Hon. E. Anthony—We cannot legislate for everybody.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—We have to legislate because some people will not play the game. I admit that price control has its advantages and disadvantages. Sir Arthur Rymill referred to people who have had to wait for a decision from the Prices Department, but what about the unfortunate worker who has had to wait up to two years for a decision? I have been connected with cases where men have had to wait for 18 months or two years to get to a court. I admit that administration is very difficult, and something can be said for some of the remarks of Sir Arthur Rymill in that regard. I believe that pegging wages without effective price control is unfair, unreasonable, frustrating and ineffectual. I do not know whether many members are aware of it, but there is on our Statute Book the Fair Prices Act.

The Hon. E. Anthony—It has never been used.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—But it is there. I do not think that Act would be used today. It was assented to on December 24, 1924, and was an Act to authorize the holding of investigations into the existence of combines, and to prevent the prices of commodities from being fixed or increased to the detriment of the public by the operations of combines, and for other purposes. A Board of Industry was set up to do this. I maintain that the man who fixes the wages should fix the prices. Unions have been before the court for months and in some cases for years before they have been granted 6d. or 1s. a day increase in wages, and in the meantime manufacturers can fix their prices to absorb that increase. I am pointing out that it is not one-way traffic, and the workers have suffered more than anybody else.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—Give the unions a go on wages and we can lift price control.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—It is expected that an announcement will be made this week that the cost of living has increased by 7s. a week, so the workers are going to suffer again. They have lost 12s. a week already, and they are going to lose another 7s. Despite the fact

that the consumer has been penalized the cost of living has continued to rise, and there will not be effective price control unless it is under the Commonwealth. What we have is better than nothing, but I repeat that it is not effective; it is merely something that is giving some little protection to the people of South Australia.

Under the Fair Prices Act, before an application could be made to the Board of Industry six persons had to be of the opinion that a combine existed. The board had power to fix the maximum price at which an article could be sold, alter prices and to fix different prices for different parts of the State. Other sections dealt with penalties, which were very severe. I don't know when that was ever put into operation.

Mr. E. Anthoney—A regulation under it was never made.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Yet it stands today and has been on our Statute Book since 1924, so there is nothing new in introducing price control and extending it.

Reference has been made to the milling industry and, as members know, I have frequently had occasion to refer to this subject. The Australian Wheat Board sells wheat at the same price in all States, and the milling industry is governed by the one set of wages in all States. In none of the other States is there any flour price fixation, except the price of wheat, and quite recently Victoria and New South Wales increased the price of flour by 30s. a ton and Western Australia by 35s. a ton. The Prices Commissioner in South Australia, however, allowed an increase of 2s. 8d. only. The result is that other States have an advantage over South Australia. What chance has the South Australian manufacturer of competing with those of the other States in overseas sales when he is handicapped in this manner?

In the last 12 months four mills in this State have gone out of business, and more are likely to go out if they do not receive fair treatment. On the morning of the day that Sir Arthur Rymill introduced this subject in the House I spoke to the Premier and his reply was that the Prices Commissioner was a fair man and that he must be consulted. I am not disputing that but, as I have said on previous occasions, honest

mistakes can be made. The result of his decision is that South Australian flour mills are working reduced time whereas those in the other States are increasing their working time. Balance sheets have been submitted by the manufacturers year after year—

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Do you think that balance sheets reveal everything?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I am not speaking on behalf of the employers now, but on behalf of the employees, and I am pointing out the weakness of this legislation. If a man can put up a case he should not be tied down unjustifiably even though it means an increase in price. The only increases that are fought to any extent are in respect of alcoholic liquors and bread; no one seems to worry about anything else. The Government seems to be afraid to permit an increase, but there is nothing to fear if it is fair and reasonable. If a man can prove by his costs that he is entitled to an increased price it is only right that he should be considered. In the case of bread, the same article is produced throughout Australia and wages are exactly the same in all States, yet the price of flour in New South Wales is £35 5s. a ton, in Victoria £33, in Queensland £33 15s., and in South Australia £31 6s. 8d., although all States pay exactly the same price for wheat to the Australian Wheat Board. I think this shows a weakness in our Act which could be and should be remedied. If wages have to be pegged—

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Was there not a basic wage increase recently?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Only the 10s. granted by the Commonwealth Arbitration Court throughout Australia, but in the other States the quarterly adjustments of costs of living were still carried on whereas for three years in South Australia they have not been. This clearly shows the disadvantage that the South Australian worker has suffered. However, because there must be some form of protection I intend to support the second reading.

The Hon. E. ANTHONY secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.23 p.m. the Council adjourned until Wednesday October 17, at 2.15 p.m.