LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, October 22, 1957.

The PRESIDENT (Hon. Sir Walter Duncan) took the Chair at 2.15 p.m. and read prayers.

QUESTIONS.

WHEAT EXPORTS.

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Will the Government bring under the notice of the Commonwealth Government the advisability of prohibiting the export of wheat from Australia? We are facing up to a position in which the eastern States will have to import wheat from South Australia, that is if we have a surplus. If wheat is processed in the Commonwealth, further unemployment will be prevented and foodstuffs will be provided for stock, poultry and other industries where there will be a huge shortage. We do not want to import wheat of an inferior quality, as we did in 1914. As this is an important and serious matter for the Commonwealth, will the Government take up the matter in the way I have asked?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I am sure the matter is one of very great importance. While I, like the honourable member, regret the circumstances that led to the shortages of wheat, I am prepared to say that the Government will have a close look at this matter and will in due course refer it to the Commonwealth Government for consideration.

FLARES FOR STATIONARY VEHICLES.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Some time ago I asked the Minister of Roads whether the Government would consider bringing in legislation to amend the Road Traffic Act to make it mandatory for road transports, when stationary, to have a flare fixed some yards in front and also at the rear of the vehicles. There is now no provision in the Act for this. Does the Government propose to abandon the idea, or is it considering the suggestion?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—The matter of suitable illumination for stationary vehicles deprived of their own lights because of unforeseen circumstances is under the immediate decision of the Government by regulation. A delay has been caused because the Standards Committee is sitting next week and may have some further information to afford the Government. I can assure the honourable member that the matter is receiving the immediate attention of the Government.

TELOWIE GORGE HOSTEL.

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—I ask leave to make a statement with a view to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—In last Saturday's *Advertiser* appeared a report that a youth hostel would be established in the Telowie Gorge, 15 miles from Port Pirie. As this gorge is adjacent to a high rainfall and fire risk area, the people in the district have been somewhat apprehensive about the establishment of a hostel there. The application was made on behalf of the Apex Club of Australia, an association that has earned the highest respect of the people in this State at any rate with regard to its fair-mindedness, in as much as it has provided £100 to provide slogans for the prevention of fires, which it services each year. However, if permission is granted, will every precaution be taken to safeguard the area from fire risks, and will members of the Port Pirie branch of that association be educated on the very grave risk of fire in the locality?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I shall refer the matter to my colleague, the Minister of Lands, and table a reply.

NEW RIVER CANNERY.

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

Leave granted.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—In the *Advertiser* of October 16, under the heading "Move for £500,000 Cannery," appeared a statement by Mr. King, M.P., that the new cannery would process fruit from Waikerie to Renmark. Mr. King also said that he had been advised by the Premier that the Government appointed committee had recommended financial aid so that the cannery would be able to process the new season's crop. Whilst I thoroughly agree with the establishment of the cannery, will the Attorney-General inform me what authority the committee had to recommend that the Government grant finance, and whether an application will be made to the Industries Development Committee for it to make the necessary investigations and to forward its decision to the Treasurer or proper authority?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I presume the position is that, pursuant to the terms of reference on which the committee was appointed, it had power to make whatever recommendation it saw fit. One of its recommendations was that finance be provided. I am not able to say how far the matter has gone beyond that point.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Can the Minister inform me who appointed the committee, the personnel of the committee, and the date of its appointment?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I am not aware of the details for which the honourable member asks, but I shall secure them for him, and if he asks the question tomorrow I will let him know.

HOUSING TRUST RENTALS.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL (on notice)—

1. How many houses were let in 1937 by the Housing Trust at 12s. 6d. per week?

2. How many of such houses are still being let by the Trust?

3. How much is the highest rental now being charged for any of the houses referred to in question 2?

4. How much is the lowest rental now being charged for any of the houses referred to in question 2?

5. (*a*) What is the average rental being charged for the houses referred to in question 2; and (*b*) what percentage rise is this above the rentals initially charged for such houses?

6. (*a*) What is the highest percentage rise in the rentals now being charged by the Trust for houses erected in each of the years 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941, and 1942; and (*b*) what is the average percentage rise in the rentals for such houses erected in each of such years?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—The replies are.—

1. For financial year 1936-1937 there were no houses completed by the South Australian Housing Trust. In the year 1937-1938, 84 houses, all of four rooms and sleepout were let at 12s. 6d. per week. These houses were all let below the standard rents then applying for similar houses because the tenants in them were in necessitous circumstances, and received special consideration. If these houses had then been let at ruling rates, the rental charged would have been in the vicinity of 22s. 6d. to 25s. each per week.

2. The whole 84 houses are still being let by the trust.

3. The highest rental now being charged to a tenant who has been in occupation since before September, 1956, is 35s. per week.

4. The standard rent for these houses is 35s. per week but where the present income of a tenant does not justifiably permit that rent to be paid, a reduction of rent is granted. These cases are reviewed at least every six months.

5. (*a*) The average rental is 35s. (*b*) The nominal percentage increase on the rents actually charged in 1937 is 180 per cent, but after allowance is made for the standard rent payable for such houses in 1937, and for the cost of repairs and maintenance, and increases in rates, taxes and insurance, the net increase in the rents would be not more than 40 per cent.

6. (*a*) and (*b*) On the basis of the standard rents payable for these houses in 1937, the percentage increase in rents for each of the years 1938-39, 1939-40, 1940-41 and 1941-42 would be approximately 40 per cent. It is pointed out that, whilst under the Act an increase of only 33⅓ per cent is allowed to the private owner on the 1939 levels, he is also entitled to an increase to cover increased outgoings, such as rates, taxes, insurance, repairs, maintenance and improvements. When these are taken into consideration, the actual increase is more often than not in excess of 100 per cent and, in instances, is as high as 180 per cent.

ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Returned from the House of Assembly without amendment.

JUSTICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE (Attorney-General), having obtained leave, introduced a Bill for an Act to amend the Justices Act, 1921-56. Read a first time.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

For some years those associated with the administration of justice have been concerned at the time wasted and expense unnecessarily incurred in courts of summary jurisdiction, and this Bill is an attempt to overcome that situation. In a great many cases where the defendant is summoned to attend, he either attends and pleads guilty or does not attend at all and the case is heard in his absence. In view of the alterations proposed in this Bill it would be appropriate to consider what happens under the ordinary course of events.

If the defendant appears and pleads guilty the court hears from a prosecutor a statement of the facts and hears from the defendant any matters which he desires to put which might affect the penalty. The witnesses are present, however, unless the defendant has taken the precaution of advising the prosecutor that he would be pleading guilty. The witnesses are either civilians who have come at some inconvenience or police officers who are often required elsewhere on other duties. When

civilians are brought to court, the defendant is of course usually required to pay their witness fees, and on occasions these can amount to a large sum. Witness fees are often greater in amount than the amount of the fine.

The cases fall into three groups:—

(*a*) Where the only witnesses are police officers and no witness fees are ordered:

(*b*) Where there are civilian witnesses who are stopped because the defendant has either personally or by his solicitor advised the prosecution of the plea of guilty:

(*c*) Where there are civilian witnesses for whose attendance the defendant must pay.

Where the defendant does not attend, the charge is heard in his absence and the witnesses for the prosecution give evidence, although in many cases the defendant has no intention of contesting the charge and would plead guilty but for the necessity of attending the court. In these cases police and civilian witnesses are required to spend considerable time at the court. The Commissioner of Police is very concerned at this wasteful system whereby experienced traffic constables must be taken off their patrols to attend court and give evidence against defendants who, whilst they do not deny the charge, are not prepared to go to the court and plead guilty. In addition, in every case the evidence given must be recorded. This imposes a very severe task upon the clerk of the court who, except in Adelaide, Port Adelaide and four country towns, is a police officer usually not well equipped or trained to undertake such duties.

A practice did exist whereby the defendant wrote a letter to the court indicating his desire to plead guilty to the charge, and provided his signature was witnessed by a police officer who verified that fact in the witness box, the court would accept that letter as proof of the charge, and it would not be necessary for the prosecution evidence to be called. However, a recent decision of the Supreme Court has reduced the effectiveness of this procedure, it being held that on the question of penalty the prosecutor must call his evidence to enable the court to make an appropriate assessment, and that it is not permissible for the prosecutor to recite the facts. It is apparent, therefore, that an amendment of the Justices Act is necessary for the following reasons:—

(*a*) to obviate the necessity of police officers attending the court unnecessarily:

(*b*) to prevent some defendants being put to greater expense than others:

(*c*) to obviate the necessity of civilians being brought to court unnecessarily and being made to suffer inconvenience and loss:

(*d*) to prevent police officers, especially those in busy stations, being saddled with the task of recording evidence, 99 per cent of which will never be referred to again:

(*e*) to prevent so much of the time of the court being spent in hearing evidence when a defendant has failed to attend, but does not wish to contest the charge.

A similar problem has been encountered in the other States and in some States procedures have been evolved whereby a defendant may plead guilty without the necessity of attending court.

The provisions of the Bill may appear involved because of the necessity, in drafting procedural matters, to deal in detail with the various steps involved, but to put the position briefly the Bill provides as follows:—Clause 5 enacts a new section 57a which states that in cases where a complaint is made by a police officer for a simple offence which is not punishable by imprisonment, a special form of complaint and summons may be used whereby a defendant who does not wish to come to court, but wishes to plead guilty, may do so by completing a form on the complaint and summons, and returning it to the clerk of the court or the complainant. On this form the defendant may state any facts which he considers to be in his favour on the question of penalty. When such a form is received by the clerk of the court or the complainant they must use every endeavour to stop the attendance of any prosecution witnesses who may have been summoned or warned to attend. Any defendant who returns the form three clear days before the date of hearing cannot be required to pay witness fees. The clause does not apply where the defendant is a child within the meaning of the Juvenile Courts Act. Clause 6 is of a drafting nature.

Clause 7 enacts two new sections of the Act, namely, 62b and 62c. Section 62b deals with the power of the court where a defendant has entered a plea of guilty in writing, and it states that where the completed form is returned to the court it shall be dealt with as a plea of guilty in the same way as if the defendant had personally appeared. The right of the defendant at any stage of the hearing to make an application to withdraw his plea of guilty is specifically retained, and where a defendant in making explanation on the question of penalty discloses facts which indicate that he has a valid defence to the complaint, or which differ substantially in relevant particulars in matters recited to the court by the prosecutor, the court may strike out the plea of guilty and adjourn the hearing of the complaint so as to enable the defendant to be served with an ordinary summons to attend the

court. Under this clause, in particular subsection (6), the limitation of the powers of the court under this procedure are set out in detail.

Under clause 62c, which applies to the case where a defendant has pleaded guilty in writing or has been convicted after an ordinary *ex parte* hearing in his absence, it is provided that the court shall not order that the defendant be disqualified from holding or obtaining a driving licence, or imprisoned, unless the court has first adjourned the hearing and given the defendant notice that he is in jeopardy of such action being taken. This section gives a considerable amount of protection to a person who is convicted in his absence, and will, I think, fully safeguard the interests of such a person and ensure that the interests of the State which, of course, are being considered in streamlining this procedure, are not over-emphasized at the expense of the individual. At present there is no such limitation in the Justices Act regarding the powers of the court on *ex parte* hearings.

Whilst the provisions of clause 62c are unnecessary in the case of hearings before special magistrates who, as a matter of practice, have been following this procedure for some time, it must be remembered that many of the minor offences to which this procedure will relate are matters which are normally dealt with by justices, and it is necessary to state the position clearly and not rely on the inclinations of the individual justices. As a matter of interest, the procedure will relate to almost all the offences under the Road Traffic Act with exceptions such as driving whilst under the influence of liquor, driving whilst disqualified from holding a licence and dangerous driving, which are serious offences and should be dealt with in the ordinary manner. The other subsections are complementary to the main theme of the amendment which has already been explained.

Clause 8 amends section 65 of the Act which deals with the power of the court to adjourn the hearing of any complaint from time to time. Some magistrates interpret this power as being confined to the hearing of evidence up to the stage of the determination of a charge, and as not extending to any proceedings on the question of penalty. In fact, magistrates do frequently adjourn the consideration of matters relating to penalty and from time to time they remand the defendant for a short period while such deliberations are taking place. Rather than leave the matter in doubt, it is desirable to make this amendment which will make it clear that magistrates' powers to adjourn extend to all proceedings from start to finish in a court of summary jurisdiction.

Clause 9 amends section 120 of the Act, which deals with certain minor indictable offences which, depending on the value of the property involved, may be dealt with summarily by justices or a special magistrate. A special magistrate has power to hear and determine such matters where the value of the property does not exceed £100, and justices have jurisdiction up to £5. These amounts were fixed in 1931 and, as we all know, since 1931 there has been substantial devaluation in money, and on that basis alone there seems to be a good reason to increase the amounts to some figure more in keeping with present monetary values. Members will recall that last year the Local Courts Act was amended for the same reason. The effect of leaving the figures unamended is to decrease the jurisdiction of magistrates and justices at a time when the Criminal Court is becoming increasingly congested, and I think there is a very good case to increase the amounts by at least one hundred per cent to £10 and £200 respectively.

The matters dealt with in this Bill have been referred to the special magistrates for consideration and their comments and suggestions have, generally speaking, been incorporated in the Bill. I recommend it to members as I think it will result in considerable saving of time and money so far as the courts and police are concerned, and also save expense and inconvenience to defendants and witnesses. At the same time I feel very confident that the interests of the public have not been neglected and there is no reason to apprehend the miscarriage of justice arising out of this procedure.

I again emphasize the fact that this procedure regarding the plea of guilty in writing will apply only to offences which are not punishable by imprisonment, either for a first or subsequent offence, and only where the defendant wishes to plead guilty without attending the court in answer to the summons.

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

METROPOLITAN TAXICAB ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Recommitted.

Clause 3—"Provision as to fees paid"—reconsidered.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE (Minister of Local Government)—I move—

In line 1 of new section 34 to strike out "appointed" and to insert "proclaimed."

The amendment is purely one of verbiage.

The Hon. C. R. CUDMORE—I am always suspicious of the word "proclaimed" and should like a little further explanation, as when "proclaimed" is used it appears to take away authority from Parliament.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—Actually, Parliament is delegating authority to the Taxicab Board. It is purely a matter of the day to be proclaimed as the commencing day of the Act.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clause 5—"Operation of taxi-stand by-laws and resolutions made by councils"—reconsidered.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—I move—

In line 6 of new section 36 (3) to strike out "appointed" and to insert "proclaimed."

The same reason applies to this amendment as to the amendment to clause 3.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Bill reported with amendments; Committee's report adopted. Read a third time and passed.

BRANDS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

SCAFFOLDING INSPECTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORT ADVISORY COUNCIL ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE (Minister of Local Government)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

Its object is to extend the life and powers of the Metropolitan Transport Advisory Council for a further two years. Unless legislation is passed the operation of the Act will come to an end at the end of this year. The Government believes that further problems relating to the co-ordination and provision of public transport within the metropolitan area may arise and that the Council will be the appropriate authority to deal with them. It is accordingly proposed, Sir, to keep that body in existence for a further period of two years. I commend the Bill for the consideration of members.

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

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

In Committee.

(Continued from October 17. Page 1149.)

Clauses 2 to 5 passed.

Clause 6 "Allowance to chairman."

The Hon. N. L. JUDE (Minister of Local Government)—I move to insert the following subclause—

(2) Subsection (1) of section 289 of the principal Act is amended by striking out the words "not exceeding the sum of one hundred pounds in respect of any financial year" in paragraph (*a*) thereof.

Clause 6 repeals subsection (2) of section 158, which limits the allowance of the chairman of a district council to £100. Section 289 also deals with the same matter and a consequential amendment of that section is necessary. This matter was overlooked when the Bill was originally drafted, but is rectified by the amendment.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—During my second reading speech I suggested that the amount should be increased. I am pleased that the Minister has agreed to this, because it will make it much better for chairmen of district councils.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 7 to 10 passed.

Clause 11—"Differential general rate."

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I strongly oppose this clause which is one of the most contentious in the Bill. I cannot understand why we should wish to depart from something that has been in operation for some time and has proved satisfactory to many councils. Members have received a circular from the Port Adelaide City Council which also reflects the views of the other councils in my district. The letter from the Port Adelaide City Council is as follows:—

It is desired to bring before the notice of the honourable members of the Legislative Council for Central District No. 1, the members of the House of Assembly for Port Adelaide and Semaphore districts, and the Mayor, Aldermen and Councillors of the City of Port Adelaide, the following information in respect to the proposed amendment to the Local Government Act set out above.

(1) Any amendment to section 214 as proposed would seriously affect the method of rating adopted by the Port Adelaide Corporation since 1945—covering the rates for the last 13 years.

(2) The amendment as proposed would remain ambiguous as to the powers of the council.

1. The whole aspect of differential rating has been confused with an application for reduced rates for pensioners.
2. To my knowledge none of the councils who are operating on differential rates have ever used same to make reductions for pensioners or in other words reductions according to the means of the individual ratepayers as has been suggested. This council has declared differential rates based on the requirements of the council to provide for the cost of services given to ratepayers, such as street lighting, road constructions, fire brigade protection, garbage collection, etc.
3. The cost of these services must of necessity vary between industrial, commercial and householder ratepayers, but not greatly between individual householders, whether their land be valued at £100, £500, or £1,000; for example—
   (*a*) The cost of heavy duty roads as compared with light duty roads.
   (*b*) The provision of a fire service for commercial, industrial and shipping establishments including a fire float as compared with the fire service for a residential area.
   (*c*) The cost of a twice weekly garbage collection service and the disposal thereof for industrial and commercial undertakings is of necessity higher than for a weekly household service.
4. The Government has seen fit to make provision by legislation for a reduction in urban farm lands, recreation grounds of ten acres or more. The latter reduction provides for golf clubs and racecourses, but what of bowling clubs, tennis clubs, sailing clubs, etc., who are required to pay council rates. The retention of differential rates within wards has enabled this council to make what they have considered a justifiable reduction to such clubs in accordance with services rendered by the council to the clubs.
5. At this juncture it is desired to point out that the powers vested in this clause are subject to a 75 per cent vote in favour of the whole of the council—a restrictive requirement to say the least, not elsewhere required in the Act—which should at all times ensure that any differential rates so declared were in good faith, and on grounds of justice and fairness.
6. It has been stated by the Minister in his second reading speech that the Local Government Advisory Committee recommended that if a differential rate were to be imposed on property, it should apply to the whole of the ward, and not to any lesser area. Surely if the problems arising between wards in a municipality are sufficient to warrant a differential rate between wards, it should be recognized that such problems will equally occur within the wards themselves.
7. These problems of necessity occur more frequently in municipalities such as Adelaide, Port Adelaide, Hindmarsh, and Woodville, where industry, commercial activities and retail shopping areas are all intermingled one with another, and throughout various classes of residential areas. Councils operating on annual value assessments are not faced with the same problems as those operating on land values, as the annual value assessment reflects the value of the land and improvements as a whole.
8. We are advised that it seemed to the Committee that any inequalities might be remedied by revised ward boundaries—such would be impossible in Port Adelaide where one of the smallest wards alone has seven different rates, and to suggest that this ward should be broken into seven wards "so that the differential rate would bear evenly upon the ratepayers," to use the words of the Minister, would be quite impracticable.
9. If this council is prevented by legislation from declaring differential rates as at present, £14,758 extra of the current rate revenue will have to be paid by a section of the ratepayers who are already paying well above the average rates paid by householders—and likewise £14,758 less will be paid by householders who are now paying less than the average, and the rates paid by industry will be reduced and a corresponding increase put on to dwelling-houses.
10. The alternative would be to vary the assessment to suit the rates; such gerrymandering is contrary to the requirements of the Local Government Act, namely that the valuator will make a fair assessment of the properties to be assessed. Clause 10 of the present proposed amendments has apparently been considered necessary in anticipation of such gerrymandering—the present assessment of this corporation is based on land values as made by the Land Tax Department.
11. If the council's present general rate revenue is to be maintained, it would be necessary to declare a rate of 1s. 3¼d. for the whole of the area as opposed to rates ranging from 5d. to 2s. as at present, or the following schedule in respect of wards.

	Present Rates.	General. Differential Rate for Wards Only.
East ..	7d. to 2/-	1/5½
Centre .	5d. to 1/6	1/2¼
South .	5d. to 1/6	1/1
West ..	6d. to 2/-	1/1¼
Barker	6d. to 2/-	1/3¼
North .	8d. to 2/-	1/4¾

12. Some of the effects of the variations are attached hereto from which it will be noted that the rates in many instances will have to be increased by 100 per cent

or thereabouts. In all the cases cited, blocks of an average measurement of 50ft. x 150ft. or thereabouts have been used.

13. Local Government has often been accused of not levying sufficient rates to meet its obligations, and if the differential rating powers are reduced, Port Adelaide along with other councils will be forced to reduce its rates to amounts that ratepayers generally could be expected to pay, which would in turn reduce others to ridiculously small amounts such as £3 or £4 per property or less.
14. Regarding the second objection of the council as to the wording of the proposed amendment, the council has had legal advice to the effect that the clause, if and when passed, would still leave section 214 open to various interpretations, which may conflict with the intention of the amendment.

I ask honourable members not to come to a hasty decision in this matter. I have considerable data here which if necessary I will ask be included in *Hansard* because I think the matter is very important. The council will lose a great deal of rate revenue, because although the householder in the residential part will be compelled to pay a fair increase there will probably be a big reduction in rates on business premises. In accomplishing the change injury will be done to thousands of ratepayers. The present system has been operating for many years, so why alter it? On one property on the Port Road the present rate is 5d. in the pound, the assessed value £800 and the rate £16 13s. 4d. The revised rate is 1s. 2d. and the rate £47 10s. The proposal is placing a burden on people who are not in a position to pay, and will mean that the rates of business properties on main thoroughfares will be considerably decreased whereas householders will be called upon to pay greatly increased rates.

The Hon. J. L. S. BICE—I was a member of a council which had experience of differential rating, which worked very satisfactorily and enabled the ward to liquidate a loan to effect improvements. I can assure members that there will be much more borrowing by councils which have work to do on beach frontages. I was assured by the Minister that, I think, sections 215 and 244 of the Act had a bearing on this matter, and he partially convinced me. I asked him to make a statement on this phase and I was satisfied, but when I received this communication from the Port Adelaide Council I again felt some misgivings whether a differential rate could be enacted by a council within a ward. I should like a further explanation from the Minister.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—There has been voluminous correspondence on the proposed amendments. Never to my knowledge has Parliament been able to give a local government amending Bill adequate consideration in the short time available. I suggest that progress be reported so that members can further consider the problem and be in a better position to discuss the matter tomorrow.

The Hon. E. ANTHONEY—In my speech on the second reading I said I believed that this clause would be difficult to administer, and I still believe it. I therefore hope the Minister will not press the clause, so that we can revert to the old conditions. The Marion Corporation has adopted the principle for a few years and I believe it is feeling much misgiving about it. It would be difficult for any assessor to strike a differential rate without inflicting injustice. I will vote against the clause because I do not think it would be workable and it will cause much confusion. Before long I feel certain that Parliament will be called upon to make a further amendment. The suggested amendments came from the Local Government Advisory Committee, and I cannot understand its conclusions. A similar body some years ago submitted some suggestions which the Government did not accept, but in my opinion they were better than those now submitted. In the interests of local government I hope the clause will be defeated.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—In my short experience in municipal affairs I have never been very keen on differential rates. I think the answer is in the assessment. In certain councils you find individuals ramming for preferences or concessions to be given to those they represent, and often they are themselves included in the number benefiting. I think the fairest method is for councils to rate all classes of their areas in the same way. I have not had much experience in the country application, but I concede that differential rates might be more appropriate there. Port Adelaide apparently has some anomalies to sort out, and it is noteworthy that that municipality has the land values method of assessment. I have always held that as soon as one gets away from facts one strikes trouble. The land values method is purely artificial, and if an artificial method is adopted the result cannot accord with facts. For instance, under this method the owner of a large hotel erected on two building blocks pays the same rates as the man next door with a tiny house on two blocks, which is obviously unfair to the house owner. I think councils will one day discover that land

value assessments are fictitious and not equitable in all cases and that they will have to get back to reality instead of artificiality. It is my long-range hope that one day Parliament will delete this method of assessment, at least in relation to municipalities. As the instances quoted by Mr. Condon indicate, artificial methods of rating produce curious results in many circumstances. I support the clause because I feel that it is better than the present situation, although it is not what I would like.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I ask the Minister to accede to my reasonable request to report progress, because every member should have the opportunity to consider what has happened in Port Adelaide. That council, of which I was a member for 12 years, lost about £250,000 in rates because of acquisition of wharves, which was recommended by a Royal Commission, of which the Hon. Sir John Bice was chairman. In the circular from the Port Adelaide council it is stated that a property in east ward, on land measuring 40ft. by 145ft. in Junction Road, Rosewater, on which the present rates would be £17 7s. 8d., would be liable for £43 9s. 2d. on the revised rate. Properties on Junction Road, on which one and a half times the rates are paid compared with similar blocks in back streets, will be liable for still heavier rates and the rates on the other properties will be further reduced. It is not for the Government but for ratepayers to say what method of assessment shall be adopted. On a property situated on the Port Road at Alberton, the rate increase will be £30 16s. 8d., yet a property of about the same size in King Street, Alberton, will be assessed at £1 13s. less. The rate for the latter property is only one-sixth of the former. The rate on a property in the south ward will be increased from £20 3s. 8d. to £37 9s. 8d., whereas that of a timber mill occupying about 30 acres will be reduced from £800 12s. 6d. to £578 4s. 7d. In view of these anomalies, I ask the Minister to allow members further time to consider this matter.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—It is quite evident that land value assessments have caught up with certain people, and the old vacant block which was the instigation of the system has disappeared. Whilst I have every sympathy with the Port Adelaide Council, I feel that its system of rating is wrong. I can remember a few years ago when land values assessments were brought in that the owners of business premises and other occupiers of large areas of land had their rates trebled whereas householders had their rates reduced. This went on for a while, and in the case of the Port Adelaide council, it has caught up with the residents now. Although the amount may seem unjust, it is in accordance with the services rendered. It is a rather big thing to make this alteration in rating without sufficient notice, but all those who have land values rating must realize that they should pay their dues in accordance with the system, and the principles for which it stands. Once a method is adopted, the residents cannot have a cross between the two. I support the clause as printed.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—I support Mr. Condon's request that progress be reported. Admittedly, I have not given this matter the attention I would have liked. I do not propose to enter into any debate on the virtues of one system of rating as against another. What I am concerned with is that in my district there are a number of district councils on the land values rating system. For many years some of them, and in particular the one with which I am associated, have found that the differential system of rating, even under the land values system, was exceedingly successful and gave us the result we wanted because we were able to make a differential rating on the properties in the townships as against the agricultural lands. At present I am not prepared to support the amendment, but I will consider the matter further if the Minister will report progress.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—I find the discussion by the Committee highly satisfactory. I was rather astonished by the demeanour of some of my colleagues, including the Leader of the Opposition, with regard to this matter, and I now feel that it is desirable that I should give an outline of the history of the introduction of this amendment. The Act permits differential rating with regard to a portion of a ward. Quite a number of councils have quietly gone ahead with differential rating in wards or portions of wards and nothing has occurred to disturb the peace of that action. A short time ago some corporations found themselves in trouble with regard to rating and felt there should be some further means of differentiating as between one ratepayer and another, and thus it became a question of differentiation between persons as against a differentiation between land.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—The Minister had two opinions with regard to Port Pirie.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—The honourable member knows perfectly well that that is not so. The ex-mayor of Port Pirie chose to make suggestions to the effect that I knew nothing

about the Bill, and because I was unable to get him out of his distress he took the consequences, which are known to the honourable member. As the report from the Port Adelaide Corporation shows, the red herring of individual differentiation has been drawn across this request or need for differential rates in certain areas. This Government believes in local government and giving it all possible powers that it requires except where it cuts diametrically across Government policy. For any member to suggest that the Government is ramming this clause down the Committee's throat would be far from the point, and if anyone feels that that is so I wish to disillusion him immediately. There have been three valuable opinions given with regard to differentiation within wards.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Opinions given by whom?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—By the Crown and by two leading legal firms in this State. Despite those opinions, various councils have still persisted in differential rating. The Government gave proper consideration to the fact that two different interpretations of the Act were being used, which is surely not desirable. In order to bring the matter to the notice of members and give them a chance to discuss it an amendment has been inserted which virtually cuts across the existing provision and sets out that if a differential rate is imposed it must apply to a whole ward, and that has opened up this very excellent discussion. The reason for the amendment is to clarify the position, and surely members realize that it is desirable for the Act to say whether it shall apply to portion of a ward, a whole ward, two acres or something of that nature. The Government does not believe that it should apply with respect to persons as against areas.

The Government is not emphatic that this should be the last word with regard to differential rating. It is not an easy problem. Sir Frank Perry pointed out that one or two people found themselves in trouble because of what would appear to be a bad system of rating. I am not suggesting which system should be adopted, but surely it is desirable that the legislation should be clarified one way or the other. That is the purpose of the amendment, which I point out has been requested by certain members of the Labor Party for the last two years. In view of the representations made during the discussion I am prepared to move that consideration of this clause be postponed until after consideration of clause 38.

Consideration of clause postponed.

Clauses 12 to 17 passed.

Clause 18—"Borrowing powers."

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—I move—

In paragraphs (*c*) and (*d*) to strike out "twice" and insert "four times."

Section 424 imposes limitations on the borrowing powers of councils. In the first place it limits the actual amount which a council may borrow and in the second place it limits the annual amount to which a council can commit itself for payment of interest and sinking fund. The clause increases these limitations to double the existing amounts. However, it is pointed out by the Director of Local Government that it is now common practice for councils to borrow to purchase plant on short term loans and that the limits to which a council may commit its income for interest and sinking fund payments should be extended beyond that provided by clause 18. The amendments therefore provide that, as regards these limits, the amount which may be expended by a council annually for interest and sinking fund is to be four times the present amount instead of twice that amount as now proposed by the Bill.

In the past the majority of borrowing done by councils was over a period of 15 to 20 years, but borrowing is now often done on a short term basis. In order that councils can obtain their requirements as quickly as possible because of the rapid development in the last decade it is desirable that they should be able to borrow four times the present amount if they desire to do so.

Amendments carried; clause as amended passed.

Clauses 19 to 25 passed.

Clause 26—"Unsightly chattels."

The Hon. E. ANTHONEY—This clause enables councils to deal with unsightly chattels and gives them power to make by-laws for the removal of unsightly or disused buildings or structures. I should like the Minister to explain what is meant in the clause by "disused vehicle." Many definitions could be given for "disused," and I can visualize numerous court cases arising on its interpretation. Otherwise, I support the clause, which will give councils much relief, because they have serious trouble in dealing with unsightly chattels.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—I do not know whether the clause goes as far as most councils would like, because it deals only with part of the problem with which they and Parliament have been faced for some years. If a general authority can be granted to councils to take action for unsightly residues and buildings, as well as the abandonment of derelict vehicles

left on the roads, it will be a good move and meet with the approval of councils. The powers of councils are not explained by the use of the word "disused" applied to vehicles. I should like the Minister to say whether there are any means whereby councils can be given authority to deal with these matters.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—I expressed the view during the second reading debate that this clause would probably require amendment after experience in its operation. The Government has apparently been debating for some time whether it should permit by-laws to be passed by councils dealing with this matter, whether it should create a model by-law or whether it should do it by legislation. In my opinion it has chosen the right course. The virtue of empowering councils direct by Act, rather than giving them the power to make by-laws under a general power, is that if a section is found in need of amendment Parliament can do it—and I believe it will have to do it. If any difficulty is found in relation to the term "disused," then Parliament can rectify the position by a further definition, whereas if by-laws were found to be defective it would be much more difficult for Parliament to make the necessary alteration. I therefore propose to support the clause with a view to giving it a trial to see how it works. It is something which has been required in local government for a considerable time. Most councils are correctly asking for this power. We have to trust councils to a reasonable extent and we should not assume they will abuse the powers. I support the clause with the knowledge that if it does not work in any particular respect Parliament can amend it to make it work.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—As to the omission of "structures" from the clause, I admit that because of the diversity of opinions expressed by councils throughout the State the Government has endeavoured to concentrate for the time being on the first portion of this much-discussed clause relating to chattels. There is nothing to prevent an honourable member, if he feels he has the backing, from introducing something regarding structures. By including the word "disused," we have left it to the councils to decide. If the clause proves unworkable, no doubt complaints will be brought to the notice of members, and Parliament could amend the provision if necessary. It is an attempt to get somewhere in dealing with this problem of heterogeneous junk around the countryside, which should be dealt with in the public interest.

Clause passed.

Clauses 27 to 28 passed.

Clause 29—"Penalty for breach of by-laws."

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—In my opinion many of the proposed penalties are too high.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—I do not like very heavy penalties for minor offences only, but the penalty clause in this Act has not been altered for many years, and the amendment will only restore to some extent in money values the previous penalties. In those circumstances there is no objection. In true money values, the penalties proposed are less than those applying before World War II.

Clause passed.

Clauses 30 to 33 passed.

Clause 34—"Authorized witnesses."

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The power to witness applications for postal votes is limited to justices of the peace, postmasters and a few other categories. Would the Minister be prepared to accept an amendment to provide that any ratepayer should be permitted to witness an application for a postal vote? Very often people must travel a fair distance to obtain an authorized witness, and as a ratepayer has an interest in the district I do not see why he should not be permitted to witness these applications.

The Hon. Sir ARTHUR RYMILL—I entirely agree that we should facilitate the making of applications for postal votes, because the difficulty of obtaining an authorized witness sometimes stops people from exercising their franchise. When this power was first brought into the Act in about 1932 or 1933, any ratepayer could witness an application, but the actual vote had to be witnessed by a special type of person. There were some disappointed candidates who had been used to being elected at polling booths who found themselves in trouble when postal votes were counted. I do not know if that has any bearing on the Act's being amended, but witnessing by any ratepayer did not survive for very long, and Parliament tightened up the matter to such an extent that it is now difficult to exercise a postal vote.

Everyone should be encouraged to vote. Voting is compulsory in many political organizations, which shows the general feeling on this matter in some places. I do not believe in compulsory voting, because I feel it should be a privilege, but if one is entitled to exercise the privileges one should have reasonable facilities to do so. I urge the Minister to accept Mr. Condon's suggestion, or if he does not like witnessing to be left open to any

person, I suggest it could be done by a ratepayer, because ratepayers are easy to find. In fact, I wonder whether an application form needs witnessing, but if it is necessary, I do not see why a ratepayer should not be sufficient.

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—I suggest that members have sidetracked themselves on this matter. The latter part of the clause deals with people referred to in section 840—justices of the peace, legally qualified medical practitioners, postmasters, members of the police force, bank managers, the returning officer for the election or poll, and any town or district clerk. The new clause permits the group of witnesses in that category in other States to have the right to witness applications. The addition of ratepayers as witnesses is somewhat of a different matter, as the clause is entirely for the purpose of permitting people of the same type from other States to witness forms. I think the Committee should confine itself to that issue at the moment. If there is a general demand that ratepayers should be included as witnesses, I suggest this matter could be considered when the next amendment to the Act is brought forward.

Clause passed.

Clauses 35 to 38 passed.

Progress reported; Committee to sit again.

LANDLORD AND TENANT (CONTROL OF RENTS) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 17. Page 1147.)

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—This contentious legislation was introduced during the war, and it has been necessary to extend it every year since. Although I support the second reading, I will move an amendment in Committee. I support the measure because the housing position is very bad, and some control is therefore necessary. Since 1953 the Act has not applied to new homes. Now any person who builds a house is not subject to any control either as regards rent or the terms of tenancy, which is a big improvement to those interested in letting houses. Many flats have been constructed in recent years, and high rents have been charged for them because there has been no control. Of course, many people now occupy flats in preference to building their own homes, but every help should be given to those who desire to build homes because the unsatisfactory conditions under which many people live are responsible for so many of the offences dealt with by our courts. Being able to purchase a home often alters a man's whole outlook, because he then feels that he has a stake in the country.

Last financial year the Housing Trust each week received an average of 104 applications for rental homes, 33 for emergency homes and 50 for purchase homes. These figures show that although we may consider that the housing position has improved over the last couple of years, a lot remains to be done. Persons who have not the necessary finance to purchase homes should be assisted more than they are today.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—That is being done, isn't it?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The legislation referred to does not help many people to obtain homes because of the high cost of building, which members who have had jobs done will realize. This Bill provides for an increase in basic rents from 33⅓ per cent to 40 per cent, to which I object. In these days, with more unemployment, increased cost of living and less overtime, people are not in a position to pay increased rents.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Do you think the unfortunate landlord should carry them?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—In answer to a question by Sir Arthur Rymill this afternoon the Minister stated that rents in some instances had increased by as much as 180 per cent. This argument that the landlord has been penalized is not correct, and they are not as badly off as we are led to believe.

The Hon. L. H. Densley—You know what the law is with regard to the increase.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—If there were a few houses going begging today it might be a different proposition, but when there are so many people requiring homes there must be some sort of control. If I were a member of my friend's Party I would not be supporting this Bill, because I understand it is not the policy of his Party to support this legislation. However, they are supporting it because they think it is necessary, and I commend them for wishing to protect people who are entitled to protection. We are facing up to difficult times; we are in a worse position today than we have been for many years, and that position is likely to become worse.

In a number of instances rents have been increased and tenants have been overcharged, but the people concerned have not been found out until it was too late. No action could then be taken against them. This Bill does

not deal with retrospectivity, but it deals with the future and there is a limitation even there. Cases have been brought under my notice where landlords have perjured themselves by saying that they required houses for their sons or daughters or mothers or fathers, and the court has accepted their evidence, but subsequently it has been proved that those people never occupied the property and another tenant was put in at an increased rent.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—They could not do that.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Unfortunately they are not found out. When a person receives an eviction order he goes to the court and may be ordered to vacate in three or six months' time. In the meantime he may be able to secure a Housing Trust home, and he is no longer interested in his previous home or the rent he was being charged. Under this legislation a person has to be a resident of the Commonwealth before he can take action to evict a tenant. There are several improvements in the Bill in that direction.

Clauses 6 and 7 provide that in proceedings under section 55c for recovery of premises the court is to have regard to the hardship provisions. For years a magistrate was allowed to listen to both sides of the case and decide where the greater hardship lay, but the Act was amended despite strong opposition by my Party. The Government now proposes to return to the previous state of affairs, and the magistrate will again have power to consider cases on their merits.

Another clause deals with the owner who refuses to accept rent. As the Minister said in his speech, the owner may be in another locality and a tenant may have to go a considerable distance to pay the rent. Under this Bill an owner cannot recover rent if he refuses to accept it when it is offered.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Why should he refuse to take the money; to get rid of the tenant?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I would not say that. If I live at Port Adelaide, why should I have to go to Glenelg or Brighton to pay my rent? It is only right that payment can be made by postal note or similar means. My only serious objection to the Bill is the permissible increase in rent from 33⅓ per cent to 40 per cent. I support the second reading, and will deal with that aspect in Committee.

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

LAND SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 17. Page 1147.)

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS (Northern)—This Bill extends the term of the Land Settlement Committee and re-enacts section 27a of the Land Settlement Act. The latter section deals with the acquisition of land on the recommendation of the Land Settlement Committee, and will expire on December 22 this year, and the Government considers that it is desirable to extend the term of office of the committee and the operation of section 27a for a further 12 months. The committee was formed in 1944 and the duration of the Act was fixed for five years. It was reviewed again at the expiration of that term and extended for a further three years. It was extended for a further three years in 1953, and from then on the extension has been from year to year. The present Bill extends the life of the committee until December 31, 1958.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—That committee has done an excellent job since it has been in operation.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—It has certainly covered a very wide field of investigation and submitted quite a number of reports. Over the years there have been several committees and one Royal Commission set up to inquire into the possibility of increased production and further development of our lands which were not then being put to their full use. The most comprehensive committee was the Agricultural Settlement Committee which was set up in 1930. The chairman of that committee was Dr. Richardson. The members were Mr. Spafford, later Director of Agriculture, Mr. Coleman, a gentleman well known as a successful agriculturist and a man with very wide experience of land usage, and Sir Lyell McEwin. Sir Lyell was not then of course actively engaged in political life, but was a man who had been bred and brought up on the land and had a very wide experience of all matters concerning agricultural development, usage and practice. In these gentlemen we had a committee amply qualified and capable of making a very comprehensive survey of the conditions then prevailing with a view to expanding our agricultural production.

That committee issued a report on November 1, 1931. It was most exhaustive and contained much valuable information, and it is well worthy of perusal by any members sufficiently interested in land development over the

years. The interesting part of that report is that it dealt with recommendations concerning many of the projects which have since been implemented. Although its report was issued in 1931 and the Land Settlement Committee was not set up until 1944, I feel that the information that report contained was given considerable attention when the duties of our committee were being framed. For instance, we realized that we had to depart from some of our previous practices and give more attention to those lands situated within the better rainfall areas. It specifically mentioned the areas in the southern part of Eyre Peninsula, on Kangaroo Island and large tracts in the South-East, and pointed out that a comprehensive drainage scheme in the South-East should be undertaken to render these lands fully productive.

When the Bill setting up the committee was under consideration a very interesting map was displayed in this Chamber showing the annual rainfall and the incidence of rainfall throughout the State, and it was of interest that only 10 per cent of the State had a rainfall of between 15in. and 25in. a year and only 1 per cent averaged more than 25in. In view of that, it was obvious that most attention had to be given to the two higher rainfall areas. No doubt the report of the 1931 committee had an influence on the appointment of the Land Settlement Committee. Perhaps at first glance it is reasonable to ask why some more definite action was not taken between 1931 and 1944, when the committee was set up, but on second thoughts the circumstances then prevailing give some reason for the delay.

Members will appreciate that in the early 1930's the State's economic position was far from satisfactory, and we had hardly got out of the doldrums resulting from the depression and the general instability of rural industries when war broke out and we directed all our efforts into prosecuting the conflict. Therefore, it is understandable that there was little opportunity to launch out into extensive developmental projects. We had to consider what was to be done in repatriating the ex-service personnel. The Commonwealth Government offered to enter into an agreement to share the financing of land settlement projects. We had every right to expect after the war that there would be an influx of migrants, including displaced persons, who would have to be provided for. That and other matters helped in the realization that something had to be done to make fuller use of our land potential. Naturally, we turned our attention to those areas where there was more or less an assured rainfall, and we were prompted to do that after our experience folowing World War I, when some of the results of our repatriation efforts were not happy.

After that war the great majority of our ex-service applicants were repatriated on land well outside of our assured rainfall areas, much of it Crown lands in the mallee areas adjacent to the Murray and east of the Murray and on the unsettled portions of Eyre Peninsula. Whereas some of them were quite successful, unfortunately many, because of various circumstances, did not have such a happy experience. One reason was the uncertainty of seasons. Whilst those who were more or less native to certain areas knew what to do to combat unsatisfactory seasonal conditions, that knowledge was not possessed by many of the new settlers. A number had very little if any practical experience of agricultural pursuits, and although advisory avenues were open to them unfortunately they were not always taken advantage of, with disappointing results.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—Many of the blocks were unsuitable, too.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—We profited from our experience and when the Land Settlement Committee came to tackle the problem in 1944 it was realized that we had to cover a new field and make full inquiries to see what could be done with some of the lands in the better rainfall areas. As a result, there were numerous inquiries in the lower Eyre Peninsula, on Kangaroo Island and in the South-East which, despite its high rainfall, certainly had its problems, the biggest of which was the need for drainage. In this connection the committee made extensive inquiries; indeed it was one of its first references. They extended not only throughout the areas concerned, but also to other States. It gives some idea of the task accomplished when it is remembered that four years elapsed before its report dealing with the drainage of the South-East was presented.

I have been on the land practically all my life, much of it associated with the development of the mallee country, and therefore the development of Kangaroo Island was of particular interest to me. I must admit that on first visiting the Island prior to my appointment to the Land Settlement Committee I was not at all impressed with its agricultural possibilities, and I was somewhat surprised later when it was suggested that it should be seriously considered as a proposition for development under the Commonwealth-State Agreement. However, after having been appointed to the committee

and having the opportunity to see a demonstration of its potentialities I changed my opinion.

Perhaps only those closely associated with the increased production of our lands can appreciate the great value of the work done by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization in that connection. In my opinion this has been more amply demonstrated on Kangaroo Island than anywhere else in the State. Its surveys and classifications, which demonstrated soil deficiencies and how their inferior quality could be built up by the introduction of trace elements, is something which has to be seen to be fully appreciated.

A further demonstration of the efficiency of the C.S.I.R.O. is to be seen in our irrigation areas where the classification of soils has reached such a fine art that it can be demonstrated with a fair degree of certainty where different types of fruit trees and vines can be planted to advantage. Members can appreciate the value of this information to people engaged in developing country. I pay a tribute to this organization for its wonderful work and the assistance in providing information to those entrusted with recommending what should or should not be done in regard to land development. That, of course, is one of the duties placed on the Land Settlement Committee. Practically all the available land on Kangaroo Island is under production, and an interesting feature of that development has been the readiness with which landholders, some with many years' experience, have adapted themselves with the added knowledge of the success that has followed the work of the Land Development Executive in that area. Not only has the State benefited by introducing this Act to set up the committee, but indirectly greater development has occurred in private landholdings on the island.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—They will be better off when they get a water supply.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—Yes, two things cause worry there—a water supply, which is possible of solution, and transport, which is not so easy to solve. However, those aspects are not the concern of the committee, because the terms of reference are confined entirely to whether certain areas are suitable for development and for inclusion in the Commonwealth-State land settlement scheme. Ancillary matters, such as those mentioned by Mr. Condon, are not within the ambit of the inquiry.

As I said previously, the committee has been appointed for various terms. In the first place, the five-year term was necessary and desirable in view of the task confronting the committee. In many instances there was a virgin field for inquiry and no information was available to the committee on what had been achieved previously, so it had to start from scratch. Latterly it has been more fortunate because it has been in a position to go back over the ground to see how far its judgment has been vindicated, and it has had examples to guide it. Members who have had practical experience on the land know that, when inquiring into the potentialities of any land, a valuable guide can be obtained by surrounding development. However, in the early days this information was not available, so the committee's term in the first instance was a long one.

How long the committee will continue is a matter of Government policy, and will depend on how matters turn out, but we are reaching a stage in land development in which the field of inquiry is fairly well narrowed, unless, of course, properties are purchased for redistribution. To give members some knowledge of what has been achieved in the immediate past, I point out that the committee presented several reports between 1955 and 1957. In that period it reported on a scheme for developing 6,501 acres in the hundred of Monbulla, and on a South-Eastern drainage scheme north of drains K-L involving an expenditure of £1,518,800. Other projects reported on were developments in the hundred of Macgillivray on Kangaroo Island, involving 6,233 acres, a portion of Fairview Estate consisting of 8,240 acres, and a scheme involving a further 5,669 acres in the hundred of Macgillivray. At present before the committee is a scheme involving 10,000 acres on Kangaroo Island, the estimated cost of which is £147,624.

Another scheme before the committee is for drainage in the eastern division in the South-East, the estimated cost of which is £3,254,800, inclusive of bridges, drop and overflow weirs, regulators and outlet structures. The committee appreciates its responsibility in reporting on projects of this nature, and realizes that it has a big job ahead. The drainage scheme to which I referred extends from Kalangadoo in the south to the hundred of Marcollat in the north. Those familiar with the area will know that the drainage that was carried out really amounted to shifting surplus water from one area to another. That is not satisfactory, and it is now proposed to construct an outlet to take the water into the sea by way of Lake George.

The problem is accentuated because of the surplus water brought in from Victoria by the Naracoorte and Morambro Creeks, which floods land in the Lucindale area. When this land is drained production will be increased considerably.

In the report we have received on the drainage scheme in the eastern division, it is stated that drainage will enable an addtional area capable of producing an annual agricultural income of over £2,000,000. During 1955 an area of 455 square miles of extremely fertile land was under water for some periods of winter and spring. In most years inundation occurs between July and October to a depth varying from a few inches to several feet, and much of the flooded land has water over it for from eight to 12 weeks continuously. The Senior Agricultural Adviser considers that with drainage the eastern division lands would carry 55,000 cattle and 1,800,000 sheep. The numbers carried at March 31, 1956, were 31,665 cattle and 757,407 sheep. It can be seen that if the extra stock were carried the annual value of production would be over £4,000,000. The committee has considered these matters, and must check and cross-check by taking evidence from people on the spot to verify information supplied.

I have given a brief outline of what the committee has accomplished and what it hopes to accomplish. In conclusion I pay a tribute to my colleagues on the committee for their efficient attention to their duties, and also to the officers of the departments that members of the committee contact. These men are most helpful, nothing is too much trouble for them, and they obtain information that is necessary to enable the committee to sum up the position and make a report that it considers to be in the best interests of the State and in full discharge of the duties entrusted to it.

The Hon. C. R. STORY (Midland)—I compliment Mr. Edmonds, as Chairman of the Land Settlement Committee, on his very comprehensive outline of the activities of the committee during the years. That committee has had a difficult job in investigating the various references to them, especially in the South-East where it has been so active in recent years. The Bill extends the life of the committee for a further 12 months, and I think it is opportune to mention that another reference should be made to the committee in respect of a portion of land at Loxton additional to that which was reported on earlier. Just recently we have found that many eligible soldier settlers have not been settled. Suitable land exists there, and the Government should do everything it can to see that these men are properly settled on that land.

Only last night I attended a meeting of the Settlers' Association, of which I was the first president, where it was pointed out that certain land was available for settlement. It is the Government's responsibility to settle these people, because they have been promised settlement by a succession of Governments. I think that in the next 12 months the committee should be given the opportunity to have a look at this land at Loxton.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—You should persuade the Commonwealth Government to do something in the matter.

The Hon. C. R. STORY—This would be a continuation of the existing scheme; it would just be a matter of that area being added to. Mr. Edmonds mentioned the work being done in the South-East with regard to drainage which will have an effect on the valuation of that country. Valuations on many properties should have been fixed long ago, and the State is the loser if they are not made very soon. Money is provided on the basis of two-fifths by the State and three-fifths by the Commonwealth, and it is obvious that the Commonwealth will wait until the valuations, or the products from the property, are at their greatest peak. This will make the valuations as high as possible and the writing down will be less. The State should take every opportunity to write the properties down straight away in order that they can get the benefit, because once the Commonwealth is out of this writing off business and some calamity occurs it will be the State's responsibility to assist these people to make a living. It is my firm belief that we should get ahead with valuation as soon as possible. Promises are repeatedly made but something always goes wrong between the Commonwealth and the State and this matter is shelved.

The question of interim valuations arises. Recently a couple of soldier settlers died and their wives do not know what their equities are in the properties, whether to hang on or get off the land and find jobs. For five or six years these men worked and developed their properties for a return of less than the basic wage. Nobody seems to be able to tell their wives what their equity in these properties amounts to. Until valuations are made and settlers can ascertain their equities, the position is very clouded, and these war widows will not be given an opportunity

to get off the land and make some other opportunities for themselves while they are young enough to do so. I think the committee should be continued for a further 12 months or until every ex-serviceman requiring land is settled. It is our responsibility to see that these people are adequately provided for. I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN (Central No. 1)—I support the Bill. The continuance of the committee is imperative for the continued productivity and ultimately the continued economy of the State. Mr. Edmonds in a fine speech has told us the history and the work of the committee since its inauguration in 1944. With the passing of the War Service Land Settlement Agreement Act by the Commonwealth in 1945, we had a committee in operation which was geared for the purposes desired by the Commonwealth Act, and that committee could immediately co-operate with the Commonwealth and go straight into action in the subdividing of land for soldier settlers.

Once the committee has inquired into projects and reported on them its responsibility ceases, and it is then the responsibility of others to act upon the reports. Finance plays a very important part in closer settlement. It is interesting to note that we really commenced land development as a State project in 1939. We have been told this afternoon of the considerable progress which has been made on Kangaroo Island. With the inauguration of our land development policy in 1939, Mr. Rowland Hill was placed in charge of approximately 1,000 acres on Kangaroo Island as an experimental block for the purpose of deciding the suitability or otherwise of developing that area. Members have visited the island and are well aware of the progress that has been made. I do not intend to traverse the ground so ably and fully covered by Mr. Edmonds, the chairman of the Land Settlement Committee. I have been a member of the committee in recent years and my experience of its work has given me a considerable insight into what is required. We have toured Kangaroo Island and inquired into the advisability of taking over partly developed land for closer settlement, and, as Mr. Edmonds has told us, we have reported favourably on that project.

The work of the committee is not confined to investigating and reporting on Crown lands only, but it has extended to land which is offered to the Government by landholders for closer settlement. A good example of the work of the committee can be seen in the enormous area which has been brought into production in the South-East. It was as a result of the investigations by the committee and reports in relation to drainage of the South-East that thousands of acres of land has been brought into production. This investigation actually commenced in the Millicent area, where it was found that considerable drainage work would have to be undertaken to bring the land into production. That was the experimental stage, and we know the productivity of the vast areas of rich country in the Millicent area today since that country was adequately drained. The Government itself constructed various drains in the Upper South-East, and over the years it has increased the work of drainage until now we are well on the way to the total drainage of the western and northern divisions.

When taking evidence the committee met with considerable hostility from various landholders, who expressed the opinion that we would be over-draining the country. Despite that, we find today that the drainage has increased the production to such an extent that the Government is being petitioned for additional drains. The committee has now before it a reference regarding the drainage of the eastern portion of the South-East extending from near Kalangadoo to 25 miles north of Naracoorte in which 727,000 acres are involved. I consider it would be impossible for the committee to conclude this inquiry even by the end of next year.

I believe that much of our Crown lands in this area can be profitably settled if properly drained, and there are still large areas along the Murray which could be brought into economic production if irrigation and other services were provided. Because of our increased population, we must continue to extend closer settlement. It may involve the acquisition of additional areas which have been held idle for years. It is imperative that the committee should continue for at least another 12 months, and in view of the work before it even a greater extension is desirable. I support the second reading.

The Hon. R. R. WILSON secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 5.22 p.m. the Council adjourned until Wednesday, October 23, at 2.15 p.m.