LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Wednesday, October 29, 1958.

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

QUESTION.

LIBRARIES (SUBSIDIES) ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—Has the Attorney-General the statement he promised in regard to my question yesterday relative to Professor Duncan's statement on the Libraries (Subsidies) Act Amendment Bill?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I have examined the reported statement of Professor Duncan which appeared in the press and have obtained a detailed report from the chairman of the Libraries Board, his Honor Mr. Justice Abbott, and I find that Professor Duncan's statement is not correct. The following has been supplied by the chairman of the Libraries Board:—

It would seem that Professor Duncan, in making his hostile criticism, has failed adequately to examine the effect of the legislation in other States in comparison with that of South Australia. As will be observed, on a comparison, this State's legislation is more liberal, and will be more effective than that of any other State. As soon as the various local government bodies appreciate the value to their ratepayers of this legislation, it is anticipated that there will be an increase in the number of applications, which will be reflected in an immediate increase in Government expenditure. Those who, like Professor Duncan, devote their time to decrying the legislation, merely discourage the unthinking from applying for the very generous subsidies now available.

The Principal Librarian has supplied the following information in connection with the position in this State as compared with other States. Members will recall that the Bill provides three main things: firstly, that if the premises in which the library is to be established are owned by the council or an approved body the Treasurer may pay to the council or approved body towards the capital cost of the premises the full amount which is raised by the local body.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Would that meet the Port Adelaide position?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—It would. Secondly, the Treasurer may also advance an amount equal to the full amount raised by the local body towards the cost of furnishing the library and, thirdly, the Treasurer may advance an amount equal to the full cost towards the maintenance and running of the library. The Principal Librarian has submitted the following information regarding the situation in the other States:—

Library Subsidy Paid in Each State.

New South Wales.—(Library (Amendment) Act No. 29/1952).:—

(*a*) An amount equal to half the total amount expended by the council on libraries and library services in that year from—
  (i) rate income, and
  (ii) any advance against subsidy made by the Minister to the council in respect of that year; or

(*b*) An amount equivalent to 1s. 6d. for each person resident within the area of the council,

whichever is the less, *i.e.*, £ for £ up to a maximum of 1s. 6d. per head of population.

Tasmania.—Subsidy £ for £ up to the amount which would be produced if a rate of ½d. in the pound were made and collected upon the annual value of all ratable property within a municipal district. (Libraries Act, 47, 1943.)

Western Australia.—Subsidy £ for £ on all money expended on maintenance of a library, including the costs of library services and salaries.

Additional grants over and above the subsidy may be paid for initial stocking of library. (Library Act 1951, No. 42.)

Queensland.—Subsidy:—

(*a*) Books—50 per cent of the total amount expended on the purchase of books.

(*b*) Library accommodation and equipment—50 per cent of total amount with an upper limit of £4,000 on any one project in any one year. (Qld. Library Board—Annual Report, 1956-57.)

Victoria.—£ for £ subsidy in respect of a council's annual expenditure on its library service, provided such expenditure is not less than the equivalent of 1s. per head of the resident population of the municipality.

To summarize, the position is this: The South Australian Act to subsidize libraries is more liberal than that of any other State. Firstly, there is no limit on the subsidy. Secondly, all expenditure, including buildings, etc., will be fully subsidized pound for pound. This is more liberal than any other State. Thirdly, in addition, the Government is assisting the establishment of free libraries by providing the initial book stock with no expense to the council. Free libraries are being planned at Seacombe Gardens (Marion District Council), Port Pirie, Nuriootpa and Woodville.

I feel that if Professor Duncan had drawn attention to what are the correct provisions of this Bill and what is available to councils

under it he would have done a much greater service to his cause than by rushing into print and making a statement which, in my view, was not correct.

WRONGS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Second reading.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—I move—

That this Bill be now read a second time.

This is a measure to alter the method of assessment of damages by the courts in fatal accident cases. The principle has now been adopted by the Supreme Court of South Australia that in assessing damages in ordinary civil cases a wrongdoer cannot take advantage of the foresight and provision that has been taken by the party injured for himself. For instance, if a man is injured by another's negligence, and has to have hospital and medical attention, he can still claim from the wrongdoer the cost of that hospital and medical attention even though he has insured himself with a medical benefit society and will receive insurance moneys to cover the bill. The wrongdoer cannot claim to have the amount of damages he has to pay reduced because an insurance company also has to pay in respect of the same item of damages.

On the other hand where the dependants of a man killed by another's wrongdoing claim damages from the wrongdoer, the courts assess as damages only (*a*) the net pecuniary loss occasioned by the death and (*b*) an amount within specified limits for a restricted class of dependants by way of solace for the pain and grief caused by the death. This has meant that where the deceased by his foresight, or the deceased's workmates by their generosity, or the community as a social service to people in difficulty have provided that moneys will go to the dependants of the deceased man, the wrongdoer has been able to have his damages reduced by those amounts. On the last occasion these provisions were before the House Parliament provided that moneys payable to the dependants on any life insurance policy in respect of the deceased could not be deducted from the amounts payable by the wrongdoer for damages. However, it was widely felt that this did not go far enough—other parts of the British Commonwealth have gone much further.

In a recent case a workman on the B.H.P. Company's railway at Iron Knob was killed by the negligence of the company. In the assessment of damages there was deducted from the amount payable by the company an amount from a combined unions fund payable for death benefit to his dependants, and the damages of the widow were assessed at about £5,000. The judge took cognisance of the fact that the widow intended to buy a house which would use up about £3,500 of the money, and said that it would appear that in the not far distant future she would be eligible for a widow's pension. He therefore reduced the damages by a further £1,600 to allow for the money which she would get by way of pension. In this way the community had to meet damages which should have been borne by the company.

This Bill seeks to provide therefore that where a man has made provision for his family in case of his death, or where moneys are given to the dependants in time of need, or where any Government or superannuation payment will accrue to the dependants as a result of the death, none of those amounts may be taken into account by the court to reduce the amount of pecuniary loss which the dependants have suffered because of the death. During the passage of this Bill through the House of Assembly it was referred to the Law Society's law reform committee, and the Bill incorporates the committees recommendations.

There is a further provision in the Bill. This increases the maximum amount assessable by the court as damages by way of solatium—solace for the grief and pain suffered by reason of the death. Previously the maxima were—to a surviving spouse in respect of the death of the husband or wife—£500; and to the parents of an infant child killed—£300. The Bill increases these amounts to £700 and £500 respectively. The amounts were last fixed in 1940 and the increases are more than justified by the subsequent decrease in the real value of money. This is evident from the fact that today courts rarely fix less than the maximum for solatium.

A further provision in the measure to give power to the court to award solatium to children of parents killed by the wrongdoing of another was removed from the Bill as originally drafted and presented to the Assembly upon the Government's undertaking to have this question referred to the Law Society for its opinion and if necessary itself to introduce a measure to amend the Act if that was what the Society recommended.

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

ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 22. Page 1310.)

The Hon. C. D. ROWE (Attorney-General)—This Bill seeks to amend the Electoral Act to provide, in effect, for compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting for the Legislative Council. Clauses 1 and 2 are preliminary clauses, and clause 3 is the operative one. I think the first thing we have to ask ourselves is this: what is the apparent object in trying to bring compulsory provisions into voting for this House? In that connection I ask myself: are we keen on compelling the elector to vote, whether he is interested in doing so or not?

It seems to me that the object of the Bill is to try and get over the apparent apathy that exists among certain electors in the discharge of their obligations, and if that is its object I think it is pertinent to ask whether the proposals contained in the Bill will achieve the desired effect. After all, it seems to me that it is not our function as an enlightened Parliament to pass legislation, the purpose of which is to apply some remedy to an evil, without asking whether the remedy will have the desired result. If the ill we are trying to cure with this Bill is the apathy of the elector, I do not think compulsion will solve that particular difficulty, nor will it prove an antidote to the apathy which may or may not exist.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Why did you do it in the case of the House of Assembly?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I will deal with that matter in a moment. It seems to me that the remedy proposed is more or less an expedient which deals only with the effects of the evil and does not touch the cause of it at all. If we do not remove the cause but merely attempt to alleviate the effect, we do not make conditions any better and we do not get any further towards what we all wish, which is to have a free and enlightened democracy. My own view is that the introduction of compulsory voting is an admission of failure, because unless the people take an interest in elections, the candidates, and their policies, we shall arrive at the position where we lose the high sense of democracy we value so much.

I am in full agreement with what one person has said on this subject, which is as follows:—

Forcing the performance of a right degenerates the act into an odious obligation, not valued by the doers, for which they therefore do not take the trouble to fit themselves. It seems to me that those who fought for the privilege and the right to vote at elections never envisaged that those who inherited that right would have to be compelled to discharge it. The very fact that it is a right and a responsibility and a privilege surely immediately suggests to the intelligent mind that the act arising from that obligation can be intelligently and properly discharged only if it is actually the voluntary act of the individual.

I believe that it is necessary to get people to take a sufficient interest in the political situation to ensure that they will have an informed opinion on the matter and that they will vote according to that opinion. To compel them to vote will certainly not achieve the desired result. In the first instance, I do not think that compulsion is the answer to this particular problem.

Abundant evidence exists in various spheres to show that by means of education and a correct approach we can get the answer without resorting to compulsion. As an instance of that I compare industrial safety regulations in this State with those in other States. In many other States the authorities have gone to exhaustive lengths to set out provisions in their legislation to ensure safer working conditions in factories and other places, and I think they have done that with the best intentions and in the hope that it will solve the problem. The facts are, however, that in this State we have not resorted to such compulsory legislation yet we have a very much better industrial safety record than any other State.

It may be argued that perhaps our Act does not apply to the whole of the State as it does in some other places, but after more than generous allowance is made for that we still have a very much better record than any other State. This means that if we can induce the individual to use his own initiative and ability we will get a very much happier and very much greater democratic approach to a problem than by compulsion.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—How many States have compulsory price fixation?

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I am not talking about that. The basis of true democracy is the freedom of its citizens to form their own opinions and to freely and voluntarily exercise their rights and privileges. Anyone who seeks to reduce our freedom to act and to think as we will, to regiment us, or to dictate what we shall do in matters where we should have freedom is attacking our democratic institutions. I feel that to compel anyone to do anything which he is not qualified to

do and in which he takes no interest is, firstly, an admission of failure, and, secondly, unlikely to achieve the desired result. There is no compulsory voting for the House of Assembly—

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Yes there is.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—Mr. Bardolph, in the course of his remarks, said that some people endeavoured to belittle the value of this Chamber, and that members knew that there was much derision from some people outside regarding this Chamber. I think that at this stage it is pertinent to ask, "Who are the people outside who are endeavouring to belittle this Chamber?" From my attendance on occasions at the Botanic Park and from my reading of an article published in the magazine *People* a year or two ago, I find not infrequently that the criticism of this Chamber comes from members of the honourable member's own Party.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—We will abolish this Chamber if we get the numbers.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—That kind of criticism is intended not to maintain the status of this Chamber as I think it is entitled to be maintained. Anyone who goes outside and criticizes our political institutions, which are lawfully constituted, is doing a disservice to democracy. If some people outside criticize this Chamber, I feel they are being induced to do so for political reasons. The next point concerns the interjection of Mr. Shard. I think he has let the cat out of the bag. He says that his Party's policy is to abolish this Chamber.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—That is our platform and we make no apology.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—If that is your platform, that is what you should have moved and not gone around another way to get what you want. One of the big difficulties we have to contend with in maintaining the opinion of this Chamber outside is the continually vacillating policy of the Opposition regarding the Upper House. One moment it wants compulsory voting, the next universal franchise, and the next the abolition of the Chamber altogether; so, I think that when its members can decide among themselves what their policy is on the matter and what they want to do, then we can give some serious consideration to it.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—We only want to abolish the personnel, not the Council itself.

The Hon. C. D. ROWE—I am glad to have the honourable member's interjection, because I think it is helping them in their desire to abolish this Chamber, which, of course, is their objective. I think I have made it quite clear that the criticism regarding this House emanated from one source, and I deprecate that source because I have the greatest respect for all honourable members of this Chamber, whatever their Party, and for the ability they bring to their offices in this Chamber. I say without fear of contradiction that the standard of their work in this Council and their contribution to the Legislature of this State cannot be equalled in any other Chamber anywhere in the Commonwealth, and I defy any honourable member to prove otherwise.

I feel that this Council on its present franchise has made a great contribution to the development of the State, and I come now to that point. One judges anything by results. For instance, our Parliamentary system and our franchise are judged by the results achieved; and when one looks upon the results achieved in this State and the progress it has made over the last two decades there is no doubt that our political system is one that cannot be faulted. I do not intend to deal specifically with all the outstanding performances achieved in this State, but tremendous progress has been made, which is emphasized by the great number of industries that have come here and those that have been announced in the last few months.

The fact remains that our unemployment figures are the lowest in the Commonwealth, we have the best industrial record as to freedom from disputes of any State and also the best record as to industrial safety. To whose credit is it that we have this industrial peace? I make no suggestion in that regard, but it is to our credit that we have it. If it is due to wise union leadership, I am prepared to admit that; but Parliament is the institution that must accept the responsibility whether there is wise or unwise union leadership, and Parliament is the place that is criticized if we do not progress as we should. In whatever way the position is approached, South Australia is in a better position than any other State; and that means, in effect, that our Parliamentary institution is working satisfactorily under its Constitution and we would be foolish to interfere with something that has proved so successful over such a long period. As far as I am concerned, I hope it will continue for many years to come. For those very adequate reasons I oppose the Bill.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN (Central No. 1)—I support the Bill. As has already been pointed out by previous speakers, and emphasized by the Attorney-General, the main import of the Bill is contained in clause 3, which includes the following:—

> Every person who is entitled to have his name placed on a Council or Assembly roll for a subdivision . . . shall forthwith fill in and sign in accordance with the directions printed thereon, a claim in the prescribed form . . .

The words "shall forthwith fill in and sign" are a direction. The object is to provide for compulsory enrolment and compulsory voting for the election of members of this Chamber. From the remarks of certain previous speakers, it is apparent what will happen to the Bill when put to a vote. Certain members, in their opposition to the Bill, have emphasized the compulsory provisions. They say that compulsion is repugnant to our democratic way of life and therefore we should refrain from compelling a person to do something that perhaps he would not desire to do. Apparently, we have compulsion on the one hand and non-compulsion on the other. Sir Arthur Rymill laid considerable stress upon compulsion. Apparently, he is one who believes in compulsion in one direction but not in others, as for instance in the proposal before us today. He is very prominent in the administration of the City of Adelaide, which has numerous by-laws providing for compulsion. Restrictions are placed on the motorist who desires to park in the city.

The Hon. C. D. Rowe—For the protection and convenience of the public.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—He is compelled to refrain from parking in certain areas. He is also compelled to put a coin into a parking meter for half an hour or an hour—but that is different because it is raising revenue. It is compulsion. Every piece of legislation dealt with in this Chamber is compulsory; it is the law. The people must abide by it. If they do not, they are dealt with in accordance with that law. Penalties have been written into Acts and any resident breaking the law is liable to a penalty because he has broken it.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Surely you do not object to that?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—No, but why get up here and say you believe in that compulsion but in another case you do not believe in compulsion? Going back to the beginnings of Parliament in this State, a committee was appointed by landholders in the State. This Chamber is the offshoot of that committee, which was advisory in the early stages. Later on, through circumstances, the Legislative Council (as it became known) operated on a fifty-fifty basis: it was a part-elected and part-appointed Chamber. Later, it became a totally elected House. We can go back to the old traditions over and over again. It is apparent that they have to be maintained and held on to today despite our advancement over the years, as a State, as a Commonwealth, and as the world—at least, those parts of the world known to be democratic. My Party is proud of our democratic way of life in this country. We intend to hang on to that to the best of our ability.

Let me take honourable members back to the years between 1920 and 1929 when there was compulsory enrolment in this State. In 1929 the Act was amended so that thenceforward it did not provide for any compulsion. However, from 1920 to 1929 we had compulsion. Now we find it is different altogether. Over those nine years people were compelled to be enrolled, but today we are told that they should not be compelled. Under our Federal Constitution every person attaining 21 years of age is compelled to enrol on the Federal roll and is compelled to vote. If he does not vote he must have an adequate reason and, if his reasons are accepted, the penalty provided for under the Act is not imposed. If, however, they are not accepted, the penalty is imposed. I have not heard Sir Arthur Rymill or any other member of this Chamber at any time oppose compulsion in the Federal sphere.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Most of them voted for compulsion for the other place.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—Apparently, they are not aware of that. We are told that, under our democratic system, we believe in government of the people by the people for the people. I subscribe to that, and there is no better principle. However, we do not have it in this House, for there is not a membership here elected by the people; it is by a section of the people. This Bill does not alter the qualifications for enrolment from what they are at present. The Leader of the Opposition, in explaining this Bill, pointed that out. The Bill does not attempt to alter the qualifications necessary for enrolment on the Legislative Council roll.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—Why not?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—Because it was thought that it would not hit the deck at any time. My opinion is that that, too, should be removed. Further, under our electoral Act a person must have attained the age of 30 before he is eligible to take his seat in this Chamber.

The Hon. C. R. Story—That's too young.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—That may be the honourable member's opinion now, but after another 50 years' experience in this Chamber he will not say that. So much for compulsion. A person is compelled to refrain from seeking election in this Chamber until he has attained the age of 30, whereas the standard adopted for obtaining manhood or womanhood over the years has been 21. Any person attaining the age of 21 is compelled in other instances to enrol on our electoral roll and to vote when he attains his majority.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—Why 21?

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—Because that age has been accepted through the years as the age at which a person attains adulthood.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—That's only an arbitrary age.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—That may be so, but if in another place a person is eligible to take his seat at the age of 21 is there any sane, justifiable reason why he should be debarred from being elected to and taking his seat in this Chamber? Is he any wiser? Or is it any reflection on our people that on reaching 30 he is more mature than when he was 21? I do not subscribe to that theory. I say that if a person is eligible and capable of taking his seat in another place and entering politics and playing his part in the government of the State, if he can do it in one House of Parliament, why not in another? Yet we talk about compulsion. Apparently, we are saner at 30 than we are at 21.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—A man may be a little more experienced then.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—He may be a little more experienced in years then, but in some instances it does not do the individual all that good: it is detrimental to him. If he is eligible for one place he is for another. Some of the present interjections remind me of the ostrich burying its head in the sand. That is done because he is trying to look up his ancestors. All along the line we have heard how repugnant is compulsion. We have a restricted franchise; we have people ineligible to cast a vote or have any say in the representation of this House.

The Bill provides that all people with the necessary qualifications for enrolment shall be enrolled and that when an election is held for a representative to this Chamber, for that purpose people shall go to the poll and cast their vote for whom they consider the best person to represent them here. This Chamber has vast powers, because legislation passed in another place and brought to this Chamber can be rejected. If it is rejected and no compromise or agreement can be reached between the Houses, it cannot go through. It may be re-introduced in some other session but for the time being it goes into a pigeonhole in the session in which it was introduced so, for a period at least, this Chamber has the power of veto. Yet many people have no say in the representation in this Chamber.

I go further and say that there may be something in the statement of the Attorney-General this afternoon, that education would perhaps overcome the position, that if people could be educated to the fact that they are entitled to be enrolled and that they are entitled to go to the polling booth on election day and vote for their representative to the Legislative Council, that would be far better than compelling him to do so. However, as far as elections are concerned many people today, if they did not have to go to the poll and vote, definitely would not.

The results of our municipal elections are worth noting. We do not get the expressions of opinion we are seeking.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—You want the opinion of the people who are not interested.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—I want the opinion of all those people who should be interested and who are entitled by their qualifications to cast their vote, but it is apparent that if this legislation is carried and becomes law we shall have a different set-up inside this Chamber. Apparently, some honourable members are suffering from a fear psychology, that if this Bill went through, perhaps they would find themselves on the outside looking in instead of on the inside looking out.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—You support it because you think you will benefit from it.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—I do not think that I, personally, shall benefit from it; I and my colleagues are only too willing to face our electors at any time and get their opinion.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—And with full adult franchise.

The Hon. S. C. BEVAN—Exactly; we have nothing to be afraid of. The elector for the House of Assembly needs no other qualification than that of attaining the age of 21. I know that the Bill has no chance of being passed this session, but after March, 1959, there may be better chances of getting similar legislation through. I trust that upon further reflection members will support the Bill.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON (Leader of the Opposition)—I have listened to some splendid speeches in this Chamber, but never to weaker opposition than was placed before us by Sir Arthur Rymill and the Attorney-General. One would think that compulsion was unheard of in this community, and in this connection I was very interested in Mr. Anthoney's interjection, for he was the member responsible for introducing into this Chamber in 1942 a compulsion that forced me to vote at House of Assembly elections, with the penalty of a fine if I failed to do so. This is the man who today says he is opposed to compulsion. In 1942, a Bill was introduced by a prominent Liberal in another House, where it was passed. It was sponsored here by my friend, Mr. Anthoney, and in the Committee stage I moved for compulsory enrolment and voting for both Houses. I was defeated, although the Liberal party here passed an amendment compelling electors to vote at House of Assembly elections. Notwithstanding that we hear all this tripe this afternoon about the evils of compulsion.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—When things are different they are not the same. We are not dealing with the same type of election.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I have found on many occasions that when things are different they are not the same, and I know that I am kicking against the wind now. I know that the vote on this Bill will be a party vote. Why? There was no Party vote when it was a question of compelling me.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—You don't remember.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—Unfortunately for many people I have a good memory. By reading 1942 *Hansard* members will see that I moved an amendment and Mr. (now Sir Collier) Cudmore moved a further amendment, but withdrew it to allow mine to be considered first, saying that we should let mine be considered first because he knew that it would get its deserts. If it is fair to have compulsory voting for one House it is fair to have it for the other.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—Chicken broth may be good for an invalid but if you give him rump steak it may kill him.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—One has to listen to members of the Liberal Party saying that they do not, as Liberals, believe in compulsory voting. I have explained what happened to prove that they will believe in anything when it suits them.

The Hon. E. Anthoney—I do not think they are peculiar in that.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The *News* of September 9, 1942, published a report stating that the delegates at the annual conference of the Liberal and Country Party had, by more than the requisite two-thirds majority, carried a resolution requesting that voting for both Houses of Parliament be compulsory. That is my reply to my honourable friend who tries to mislead the public. There are not many members who were here in 1942.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—Some were too young then.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—You do not say to a young man that he must wait until he is 30 before he can go away to defend his country, but you deny him other rights.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—But he may vote for this Council.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—How many of our womenfolk who have reared nine or 10 children, thereby building up the State, cannot vote at Legislative Council elections?

The Hon. E. Anthoney—How many want to?

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—The honourable member compelled them to vote at Assembly elections or suffer a penalty, so it is no use trying to put that over me. Why not be fair about the whole thing and say that the majority of this Chamber believes that as we compel the electors to vote for another place—

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—The honourable member seems to be on the defensive.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I could talk for a week without converting my friend because he has got his instructions. We will see directly, when the vote is taken, how many friends I have here. I think that this Council is more conservative today than it was when I first entered it many years ago. Sixty years ago members of the Legislative Council were not as hard-boiled as some who are here today. However, I hope that upon reflection they will support the second reading.

The Council divided on the second reading.

Ayes (4).—The Hons. K. E. J. Bardolph, S. C. Bevan, F. J. Condon (teller), and A. J. Shard.

Noes (13).—The Hons. E. Anthoney, J. L. S. Bice, L. H. Densley, E. H. Edmonds, N. L. Jude, Sir Lyell McEwin, A. J. Melrose, Sir Frank Perry, W. W. Robinson, C. D. Rowe (teller), Sir Arthur Rymill, C. R. Story, and R. R. Wilson.

Majority of 9 for the Noes.

Second reading thus negatived.

HOLIDAYS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 22. Page 1312.)

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—Although this is a very small Bill, its effect will be very great in influencing the customs and trading habits of this State, and it is consequently an important one. Three parties are associated with this legislation. Firstly, there are the banks, which presumably are represented by the shareholders and directors; secondly, the bank officials; and thirdly, the public and traders at large.

It is very difficult for me, and I suppose for other members of this Council, to decide on a Bill of this nature. This matter is usually dealt with by courts or authoritative bodies which are set up to decide, on the evidence produced, the proper course to adopt. I condemn the silence of the banks themselves, because I think that authoritative bodies such as the banks should have expressed themselves in this matter. The bank officials have produced a very good and effective statement of their case. I agree with some of it, and although I disagree with other parts, I congratulate them on presenting their case to this Chamber.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, the general public and the traders are totally against the bank officials' request for closing on Saturday mornings. I have been consulted by several traders and commercial men and have had contact with many others, and they are all desirous that a facility that has been available for generations should not suddenly be cut off. I intend to give the House the reasons that will guide me in my vote, and I hope they will be of some service to other members. The present Act provides that certain specified days are to be bank holidays. The word "bank" is rather significant. This is a Holidays Act, and it refers to "bank" holidays, which shows the standing that the banks have had in the past. A holiday to a bank was official for the general public.

Under the Act the Governor has power to proclaim special days as holidays or half-holidays. On all other days, except Sundays, the banks are to be open to the public for the transaction of business. The present Bill seeks to add "Saturdays" to the list contained in the original Act. It contains a proviso that all trading banks must agree to keep open until 5 p.m. on Fridays, and the Bill will not operate until that agreement is reached. I point out that the agreement is to be between only the bank officials and the bank authorities, whoever they may be. In this case we have not heard from the bank authorities at all.

The point I make is that the agreement is completely outside the public. In most cases where a drastic alteration to existing conditions is being considered the matter is carefully inquired into and much thought is given to it before a decision is reached. I point out that the proviso was not in the Bill when it was first introduced in another place. As introduced, it simply sought to make all Saturdays bank holidays. It was introduced by a private member and, I understand, at the request of the Bank Officials' Association.

I have always had a great respect for banks and their officers. My experience goes over a long period of years, and I can say that banks and their officers have done a wonderful service to this State and in my experience have been a wonderful help to industry and traders. They are respected, and the officials undoubtedly give splendid service and, in many cases, advice. They enjoy the confidence of the public, which is saying much. I do not desire to see any act by this Chamber, by the bank officials, or by the management which will destroy the confidence and respect the banks now hold in the minds of the public.

We are asked to close the banks on Saturdays. Why? As far as I can make out, the Hon. Mr. Condon, when explaining the Bill, mentioned that it was for the convenience of the bank officers. That is a laudable excuse and a laudable reason, but I submit that it is not a sufficient one. Cases were cited where Saturday closing operated, and New Zealand, Tasmania, and New York were mentioned. I could submit—and so could every member—hundreds of cases where that is not the case. If I remember correctly, only those three instances of Saturday morning closing were mentioned.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—That proves that it can be done.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—Anything can be done; I do not deny that. The point I am trying to satisfy myself on is whether it is advisable to do it. I submit that if that is the evidence of numbers that have decided to close on Saturday, the numbers are very much against the mover of this Bill. Those who have been overseas in recent years have noticed that the Australian early closing hours do not operate everywhere. Last year I was in California where the standard working hours were 40 a week. Shops there were open on Saturday afternoons and at all times,

and they had no early closing legislation. I spoke to several shop assistants regarding this matter and found that they accepted the position; they did not like it and said they would perhaps prefer to have regular hours, but they recognized the right of the buying public and the people that used the services that a store, bank, or office provided; they endeavoured to work in with that service, and their hours were staggered for that purpose.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—You would not want to see those conditions come here?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I am not saying anything about that. I am saying that cases have been cited where Saturday closing applies, and I am citing places where such conditions do not exist.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—I thought you might be expressing an opinion of your own.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I will give my opinions later. At this moment I am speaking of factual things. In California these offices and businesses were open on Saturday afternoons and late at night and the employees worked staggered hours for the convenience of the public. We in this country seem to be getting around to the idea that the management of a business does not count and that all we should do is to make an occupation easier for those that work in it.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—What is wrong with that?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—That is very nice, and I do not object to it, but I do object to it when it does not serve the purpose for which the business was established. We had a glaring example of this in the recent tramways strike. Here is management endeavouring to make the Tramways Trust balance its budget and save this Parliament and the people from having to subsidize it to the extent of £500,000 a year. The minor improvements that are in use all over the world are objected to and a strike results over the management's decision. I think that is quite wrong, and the sooner we wake up to that the better it will be for the economy of this country.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—The honourable member would not say that management is always right.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—In most cases management is right because it considers things carefully before a decision is made; in most cases it is far nearer being correct than a mass meeting of people that do not know the actual facts of the case.

Our financial system is controlled by a central bank. We have trading banks, which are mainly joint stock companies; the State Bank, which presumably is a trading bank; the Commonwealth Bank; State Savings Banks and the Commonwealth Savings Bank. Does this Bill apply equally to those banks? It does not. It applies to trading banks, and trading banks only. To me such a Bill that does not deal with an industry as a whole is no good and should not be accepted by this Council. I think that honourable members, on reflection, would not desire to pass a Bill that did not fully control the industry, as it purports to do. There are near relations to banks in our financial set-up, such as insurance companies, hire-purchase companies, stock firms and others; and these other sections of our financial system will doubtless agitate for the same conditions as the bank employees are endeavouring to obtain. As I understand the position, the function of banks is essentially to provide a service to its clients. It was interesting to read in the brochure sent out by the Bank Officials Association that "banks provide an essential service to the community, but do not contribute directly to the nation's productivity." I agree with the reference to an essential service, and perhaps I agree with the latter part, but surely service to those engaged in the national productivity of the country deserves some respect and consideration?

It seems to me that industry and traders should expect this service at all times within reason—certainly while they are open for business. Users of the banks that I have contacted are opposed to the proposed closing on Saturdays. I have received no communications from the banks themselves, but I have received a letter from the secretary of the New Adelaide Central Traders Association which reads as follows:—

Banking—Five-day week. At a meeting of the above Association held on the 23rd instant I was directed to write you with regard to this matter and to protest against the introduction of a banking five-day working week for the reasons as set out hereunder:—

(1) It is considered that the introduction of a five-day banking week is detrimental to the development of trade in the city.

That is why I mentioned that the closing of banks was likely to have an effect on the movement of trade and the purchasing public to the suburbs. This is evidently a matter of great concern to the Central Traders Association, whose letter to me continues as follows:—

(2) Banking is a service that should be available to the public when shops are open for trade.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—Close the shops on Saturday and there will be no argument.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—Exactly. That is your aim. The letter continues:—

(3) We fear that the closing of banks on Saturday morning will lead to a demand for the closing of shops on Saturdays, followed by demands for a 4½-day working week in industry.

The Hon. A. J. Shard—Hear, hear!

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I think that that part is a corollary to the first part. By the interjection, and because of the approval shown by some honourable members, apparently a 4½-day week is what they are aiming for. The letter proceeds:—

It is considered that as banks generally are situated in shopping areas, bank employees have no difficulty in obtaining their requirements from the shops. Factories, however, are generally inaccessible to both banks and shops, and quite a case can therefore be built up for a 4½-day industrial working week.

Further to the above, and not unimportant in its own way, is the two days' added cost of overdraft if traders are required on Saturdays to deposit their takings in safe deposits. That may mean a small thing to some people, but in some countries, and in the city of New York particularly, which the honourable member cited, certain sections of the banks remain open until 12 midnight to take credits to save interest for the two ensuing days. That is a big thing when money is dealt with in huge sums. That letter is from a responsible body that is concerned with the suggestion of the closing of banks on Saturdays.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—When men worked 60 hours a week I heard the same argument.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—And perhaps with justice. I remember the arguments concerning the application for a 48-hour working week for manual labour. One argument was that workers should be able to do their shopping, which they could not do at any other time except on Saturday mornings. I am using an argument that has been used by the Opposition and by Labor supporters times without number.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—You are using the Conservative case in rebuttal of this proposal.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I am concerned not whether it is Conservative, Liberal or Labor, but with the logic of its application to industry in this State. I could continue for a long time on this subject, but I do not propose to deal any further with the general banking position. I now come to the point of what should be the attitude of members of this Chamber. I am aware of my own calibre, knowledge and judgment, but must confess that I hesitate to pronounce on such an important matter without there having been proper inquiry and advice. I, personally, do not feel competent to deal with it. I know what I should like to do if it were easy and possible—give the bank employees and everyone else their Saturday mornings off, but I am not prepared to do that. I do not feel competent, or as competent as I should like, to make a decision. Other honourable members may feel as I do and I therefore suggest that a matter of such importance and so far-reaching should be the subject of an inquiry as to whether bank officials should have a half holiday on Saturdays or not.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Where else are they to go but to Parliament?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I suggest that some authority should be set up to obtain a report covering the whole position—whether by the banks themselves, the bank officials or the public. Surely there is some way whereby the House can be guided on such a matter? In my judgment I should not be prepared to leave it to the banks and their officials. I must confess that that phase does not appeal to me.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—Your own Premier endorses the proposal.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I cannot help what he does. I am trying to give the Council the benefit of my experience, and I think members should make up their minds irrespective of anyone else, including the Premier.

The Hon. K. E. J. Bardolph—You have just admitted that you have not made up your own mind.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—The question arises whether there should be an inquiry by the court or some authority outside this Chamber. I venture the opinion that if the principle is applied in South Australia it must be by agreement with the banks, and if it is applied here it may also apply eventually elsewhere in the whole Commonwealth. Consequently, I feel it is asking too much of the South Australian Parliament to pass legislation of this nature. I suggest that it is not impossible to roster the banking staff. It may not be necessary for every section of a bank to be open on Saturdays, but for the ordinary current business the service should always be available. The point of

staggered hours arises. That is another means whereby service could be given quite easily to industry and the public. Admittedly, there would be a little inconvenience to the officials, but there are ways of compensating them. Fortunately, we do not get through life by doing exactly what we want to do, and it is a good thing that we are controlled in some way in this respect. We have to abide by the conditions of the industry or the occupation in which we have chosen to work, and having selected that occupation we should give the best service to the general public that that occupation can provide. That is not too much to ask of anyone.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Why pass the buck to someone else when it is our responsibility?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—The honourable member is an authority on everything. If he makes a statement that he knows all about the ramifications of banks, though he introduced the Bill, to my mind he is trying to exercise a good deal of authority that he does not have.

We are building a young country and, of necessity, must do the best we can. We have been told by those who know anything about it that the manufacturing industries will have to do something in the export of their produce if the present standard of living is to be maintained. That is not new. Anybody who studies facts and figures must know that with the drop in the prices of wool, wheat, and metals, we cannot maintain our present standard of living unless our exports are built up from manufactured goods.

Although the bank officials claim that they are not part of the national economy, when it comes to productivity I think they are. They stand as responsible and authoritative people at the pinnacle of our financial system. I want to look up to them and to the banks. Any suggestion that they should run counter to what is desired by their clients and customers should not be entertained. The best that they should be prepared to do is to accept a tribunal that will examine the case and report on or decide it. I would not mind provision being made for an authority to decide the question so that it need not come back to this Chamber. I hope Parliament will not agree to this Bill. If we do agree to it, I hope the Bill will be much modified when it leaves this Chamber. I oppose it.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—I would appreciate it if honourable members would come prepared next time to take a vote.

The Hon. A. J. MELROSE secured the adjournment of the debate.

PRICES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

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

RIVER MURRAY WATERS ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

INDUSTRIAL AND PROVIDENT SOCIETIES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Read a third time and passed.

HOMES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 28. Page 1392.)

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH (Central No. 1)—I support the Bill, which is on all fours with another amending Bill passed only last week. As pointed out by the Minister in explaining it, it increases the amount of the Government guarantee, so that it will, in the appropriate case, apply to the part of the loan representing between 70 per cent and 90 per cent of the value of the house and land in question. It also increases the amount that can be lent for the purpose of building homes from £2,250 to £3,500, upon the valuation of the lending authority. It is fitting that I should mention that this legislation, when originally introduced in 1941, was brought in by the Commonwealth Labor Government headed by the late John Curtin. It has been accepted in virtually every State, but, from that time onwards, there have been about nine or 10 amendments to the original Act and much of the monetary supply guaranteed by the Commonwealth Government is not now available to the various lending institutions or the Government of this State.

Housing has developed into or manifested itself as a national problem. In other national problems we naturally desire the benefit of the technical knowledge and financial ability of those who have it. This Government has been lacking and failing in its duty to our people in not recruiting those elements. Had it not been for the marshalling

of all those resources during the war period, Australia would have been in a sorry plight. Housing is one of our most important problems and the successful tackling of it is one of the greatest barriers we can erect against any inroads of totalitarianism, whether by Communists or by Fascists. It is a great economic barrier. Whilst the Government has been somewhat liberal in extending the guarantee, I submit that more should be done, because people are most contented when they have an equity in their homes and can acquire them, not with the large present-day deposit but with a minimum deposit that enables them to bring up their children and maintain our Australian way of life.

The Hon. E. H. Edmonds—The Bill substantially does that.

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—I am not decrying the increase that has been made, but more could be done. I have instanced what was done during the war period. Today, we have a housing crisis on our hands and similar action should be taken to solve this problem. It would not be out of place to mention too, as one honourable member interjected last week, that housing is not just something that South Australia has to deal with: it is a world-wide problem. Many countries have approached it, and one that comes readily to my mind is the United States. Young newly-weds require about £800 to £1,000 to set up home. After they purchase their land and erect a building, they still need financial aid for furnishing and necessary appliances like washing machines, etc. In the United States a scheme has been in operation for some years called the "packet mortgage." The whole cost of building the home and its furnishing is covered by the one mortgage. That means that those who have entered into mortgage obligations can budget and know just exactly what their commitments will be, from week to week, month to month, or quarter to quarter. I understand that a financial institution in another State is reviewing this policy. That is something that this Government or the responsible authorities in this State who control housing can investigate to see whether a similar "packet mortgage" policy could obtain throughout the Commonwealth.

The Hon. Sir Arthur Rymill—Why "packet"?

The Hon. K. E. J. BARDOLPH—It is a term covering everything, the cost of the house, the furnishing and appliances such as washing machines and refrigerators. As things are now here, as I have said earlier, those items are separated. Under the original Act many people are mentioned as lending authorities—the Co-operative Building Society of South Australia, the Hindmarsh Loan Fund and Building Investment Society, the Permanent Economic Loan Land, Building and Investment Society, and the friendly societies. Whether or not it is that many of these are not acting under or utilizing the provisions of the Act, our main building authority is the South Australian Housing Trust. Nothing is further from my mind than to attempt to decry the trust's activities. I have the highest regard and the utmost praise for it, but it appears to me that this Government is attempting to place the housing problem upon the shoulders of those controlling the Housing Trust. It is not its responsibility to provide homes for everybody in South Australia. Its ramifications are becoming rather too wide now, so much so that it has become the main building authority in South Australia.

These few observations are, I think, worthy of consideration by the Government because we on this side of the House are just as desirous as others of seeing the people of South Australia comfortable, happy and content in their homes, with at least an equity—for 25, 35 or 40 years—in homes they are buying, instead of paying rent. Whilst this Bill does not go the whole distance the Opposition would like it to, it goes part of the journey. Consequently, the Opposition has much pleasure in supporting the second reading.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY (Southern)—I am pleased to support this Bill. In recent years South Australia has relied largely upon Savings Bank and other institutions to provide finance for building the homes necessary for the housing of the people whereas, prior to the last 25 years, people relied almost entirely upon private enterprise to supply the requisite housing. Owing to the difficulties of rent control and other things, responsibility has been thrown more and more upon the Government to see that the people are satisfactorily housed. We have dealt with legislation in regard to the building of homes by the State Bank and now we are considering this Bill which contains similar principles with regard to the Savings Bank and other institutions lending money for the purpose of housebuilding. The principal Act provides that the Treasurer may execute a guarantee in favour of any institution for—

(*a*) The repayment of part of any loan made by the institution on the security of the dwellinghouse; or

(*b*) The payment of part of any purchase money due to the institution under any contract made by the institution for the sale and purchase of a dwellinghouse.

It further provides that the part of any loan or purchase money for which a guarantee is given—

(*a*) shall not exceed the amount by which the loan or the amount of purchase money, exclusive of any sum paid as a deposit, exceeds seven-tenths of the value of the dwellinghouse to be mortgaged or to be sold under the contract for sale and purchase: and

(*b*) shall not exceed one-fifth of that value.

The amendment before us provides for somewhat different circumstances and it is interesting to see that in 1941 the amount provided under this Act was limited to £1,000. In 1947 it was increased to £1,250, in 1949 to £1,500, in 1951 to £1,750, in 1957 to £2,250, and now it is proposed to put the limit at £3,500. These figures indicate the way in which the cost of housing has increased over the last 25 or 30 years. Of course there are many reasons why costs have increased. It is partly because of the tremendous inflation that has taken place, the vastly increased population that has to be housed, and the incidence of the responsibility for home building. I think largely that these Bills are necessitated by virtue of the fact that we have adopted rent control which has governed the position of the letting of homes. Unquestionably, private people or organizations have not seen any great attraction in building homes to be leased at a controlled rent which did not pay them a reasonable return on their outlay. Obviously, the very small increase in rent which has been allowed, having regard to the tremendously increased costs, has influenced this trend, which can be readily understood.

The Bill follows the principles of the Advances for Homes Act in that it provides for a guarantee of 20 per cent above the normal seven-tenths which the bank is prepared to finance, up to an amount of £3,000, and a lesser percentage on the greater amount of £3,500 when the guarantee is only 15 per cent.

I think that under this legislation a great many houses have been built by people desirous of owning their own homes, and the Government has done an admirable job in providing for the changing circumstances. The Government's guarantee, in my opinion, should reach its maximum only in cases of very great necessity. In fact, this Act was originally drawn for the purpose of providing homes for people on limited income. I think that the Housing Trust has largely taken over the responsibility for that class and that this legislation provides for people in a slightly higher grade of income. Yesterday we were told the number of houses that have been built and if that rate continues it will be of great advantage to the people of South Australia.

Bill read a second time and taken through Committee without amendment; Committee's report adopted.

WHEAT INDUSTRY STABILIZATION BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 28. Page 1397.)

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON (Northern)—This Bill, which extends the operation of the Wheat Industry Stabilization Act for another five years, has my wholehearted support, for I remember quite well the parlous state in which the wheat industry found itself and the excellent results that accrued after the introduction of stabilization measures such as those embodied in this Bill. The low price of wheat in the late 20's and early 30's brought the wheat industry to a very low ebb and the farmers, in order to conserve their finance, endeavoured to sow ever larger acreages to meet their commitments. This in turn impoverished the soil, and the more extensively they adopted this practice the worse their position became. Since then science and a better conception of soil usage have improved farming methods, but I believe that it is due more to our orderly marketing of wheat that the improvement has taken place.

Yesterday Mr. Condon, in a very thoughtful and reasoned speech, pointed out the assistance that the industry had received over a number of years. He instanced the flour sales tax of £2 12s. 6d. a ton which was paid into a fund to bring up the home consumption price for the wheat-grower. There was also, he mentioned, a 3s. an acre bounty, which operated for only one year. I thought at the time that that was wrong in principle because it encouraged some people, especially in the outlying districts where cheap methods of cultivation could be practised, to sow greater acreages than were justified. One man in such a locality was asked what his average return was and he replied that it was not a question of averages but of how many acres he sowed for the bounty.

In the following year a bounty of 3d. a bushel was paid on all wheat grown, and in the 1932 season, which was a good one, that played some part in the solvency of the farmers.

With wheat as low as 1s. 8d. a bushel, less freight and cornsacks at 1s. each, there was little return for the grower. Under that type of legislation, the general public contributed to the wheatgrower between £5,000,000 and £10,000,000 as relief to the industry. However, those measures did not prevent wholesale hardship in the industry and there were many bankruptcies. As Mr. Edmonds said, by way of interjection, "They were only palliatives." During this period of low prices Senator Oliver Uphill suggested a scheme of stabilization, and he and Mr. K. C. Wilson worked on it and perfected a scheme which, in principle, was adopted. This provided for a home consumption price supplemented by a flour sales tax but, as the result of shortages in the wheat supply throughout the world through the ravages of war, the export price soon recovered and exceeded the home price. In those conditions the grower contributed to the economy of Australia an amount estimated at £198,000,000.

At one stage the price of wheat overseas exceeded the home consumption price by as much as 13s. a bushel; in fact, the overseas price was at times double the home price. The consumer, including dairymen and the poultry and pig raisers—and even the grower of high priced wool—received benefits because any wheat used as stock feed in these industries was obtained at the home consumption price. This had the effect of reducing the overall return to the grower to such an extent that there was a tendency to go into other avenues of employment and there was a likelihood of a shortage of wheat.

Under the stabilization scheme when the price overseas exceeded the home consumption price, a levy of a maximum of 1s. 6d. a bushel was imposed on the growers and this was paid into an equalization fund which now has a credit balance of £9,300,000. The first calls on that fund were made in 1954-55 in connection with No. 18 pool. That was an amount of .476d. or just under a halfpenny, a bushel, and involved £188,482. The next call was on the No. 19 pool in 1955-56 when the guaranteed price was 13s. 1d. and the average overall realization price was 12s. 10.514d. The disbursement in that instance was £1,035,833. Payments into the fund have now been resumed, indicating that the overseas price now exceeds to a slight extent the home guaranteed price.

The home consumption price of 14s. 6d. was arrived at after reviewing the cost structure that forms the price. The growers now receive the benefit of the current value of the land, improvements and stock, and depreciation on existing plant. The allowance to the farmer-proprietor is £1,040 per annum, which is £20 a week. This is satisfactory apart from one aspect, namely, that the 15-year period now taken gives a divisor of 15.5 bushels an acre as against the previous divisor of 14.8 bushels given by a 20-year period. The previous divisor would have given a price of 7d. a bushel more.

However, I am prepared to accept the present Bill, as the price is reviewed each year. In addition, if we make the price too attractive there will be a great swing to wheat and we will be embarrassed with a large surplus outside the guaranteed quantity of approximately 160,000,000 bushels which is covered, of course, by 60,000,000 bushels for home consumption and 100,000,000 bushels for export, guaranteed at 14s. 6d. a bushel. There would be a carry-over of between 35,000,000 and 40,000,000 bushels, which I suggest could be carried over as a reserve to meet the position if the overall production in the future did not reach the guaranteed amount. It could then be absorbed in the 160,000,000 bushels for which the price is guaranteed.

The Hon. Mr. Condon made a very good case yesterday for the flour milling industry. I do not wish to deal with that aspect because I am not in a position to do so, but I refer members to a speech in another place by the member for Barossa (Mr. Laucke) who dealt very fully with this question from the millers' angle. He made a speech worthy of being read by members of this Chamber. I heartily support the Hon. Mr. Condon in his contention that wheat should be made available to the millers for export flour at a price not in excess of the overseas price of wheat to their competitors. This view is shared by the Government. The Minister of Agriculture (the Hon. Mr. Brookman) has publicly stated that the Government is anxious to see that when millers engage in the export industry they are not charged more for their wheat than the f.o.b. weekly sales price.

I congratulate the Hon. Mr. Brookman on the way he has handled this legislation. He was appointed to the Ministry on

the eve of the meeting of the Australian Agricultural Council in Melbourne, and I feel sure that this House will agree that he deported himself well at that meeting. He endeavoured to secure an assurance from the Wheat Board that when millers are engaged in the export industry they will not be charged more for their wheat than the f.o.b. weekly sales price, but although he could not get a concrete assurance on that, at no time since has more been charged, and at times less has been charged.

We have heard some criticism of the Australian Wheat Board and its operations. I heartily support the board in its management of the affairs of the wheat industry, with one or two slight exceptions. I criticized them at the time when they missed the sale of three cargoes for the sake of a small gain. Some mistakes are made, but taken by and large, over the operation of this legislation from 1945 to the present, the operations of the board have been satisfactory to the grower.

The Hon. L. H. Densley—Were you happy about it when it was under ministerial control?

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON—Some people contended that the Minister should have more say in the matter. I do not intend to belabour that point to any extent because I have dealt with it on previous occasions. I remember when the board was under the ministerial control of Mr. Scully, who was then Minister for Commerce and Agriculture in the Federal Parliament. We all remember the sale of wheat to New Zealand at about 4s. 4½d. a bushel just prior to an election in that country, when wheat was a much higher price in this country. I believe the sale was made to prove to the farmers in New Zealand that the price of 6s. 8d. a bushel which they had been guaranteed was a very satisfactory one. Later on, the difference was made up to the wheatgrower by the Treasury.

It was also under that same ministerial control that an amount of 150,000 bushels was made available for dog biscuits. Mr. Scully was a very great supporter of coursing. I have mentioned this matter before and did not intend repeating it today. I believe that the present system of being free from ministerial control is the most satisfactory system. I am not critical of the merchants who, I believe, during their time were conscientious. In fact, I know that many exporting companies in this country stand very high in the estimation of the people of Australia. I feel sure that no great sum of money was made by merchants out of trading in wheat; in fact, it was only a small amount. I remember Mr. Darling, the principal of one of the most respected firms in this State, telling me that if his firm had made a farthing a bushel out of wheat it had traded in during that period it would have been very happy indeed. I know from knowledge I have gained in more recent years that some merchants were embarrassed at times in trading in wheat when it was rapidly dropping in price. It has always been their custom to sell all their daily purchases before retiring at night, and I know that managers of firms have remained up practically the whole night in order to dispose of the purchases they had made during the day. We had many such firms in this country, and when they purchased wheat they would be competing and would all be on the tables endeavouring to sell that wheat. The buyers knew that and traded one seller against the other, and I believe that had a depressing effect upon the price of wheat.

We have a wheat surplus in the world today. This year American farmers have produced 1,500,000,000 bushels, and as a result 500,000,000 bushels will be added to the enormous stocks held in that country. The assistant secretary of the Department of Agriculture in the U.S.A. said recently:—

If not one bushel of wheat were grown in America in 1959 our carry-over would be enough to meet all requirements until July, 1960, and still leave a surplus of 300,000,000 bushels. Canada has also a large crop, and Russia predicts a record. Under these circumstances, I ask you to assess what we would receive for our wheat in the open markets of the world.

I believe that the wheat stabilization legislation has played a very important part in enhancing the solidity of the grower. It is an orderly method of marketing and I believe it secures the best returns to the grower. I have very great pleasure in supporting the second reading.

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

ADVANCES FOR HOMES ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

In Committee.

(Continued from October 28. Page 1399.)

Clause 3—"Advances for Homes."

The Hon. C. D. ROWE (Attorney-General)—I move—

In paragraph 1 of new subsection (4) to delete "exceeds" and to insert in lieu thereof "does not exceed."

When we were considering this matter yesterday the Hon. Mr. Densley drew the attention of the Council to this matter and raised the question whether the word "exceeds' was correct. I have examined the matter and find that a drafting amendment, in the terms that I have indicated, is necessary.

Amendment carried; clause as amended passed.

Remaining clauses (4 to 10) and title passed. Bill reported with an amendment; Committee's report adopted.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from October 28. page 1401.)

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS (Northern)—In addressing himself to the Bill yesterday, Mr. Condon remarked that several members had had local government experience and suggested that perhaps they were thereby experts on the question. I can assure the Council that I make no claim to be an expert on local government, or on the Act, although I have had some association with councils, as a result of which I gained some knowledge of the ramifications of the Act. I do not express any desire to bask in the reflected glory mentioned by the Attorney-General when he was explaining the second reading.

The Act is the most voluminous document in our Statute Book. Because of the wide field of administration involved, it necessarily follows that as a result of experience and changing conditions it is frequently necessary to amend this law. During the time I have had the privilege of being a member of the Council, there have been only few sessions without an amendment of the Act. The Local Government Advisory Committee usually has submitted to it recommendations for amendments, but I do not know whether that applied to the amendments now being considered. In the past this committee's valuable work has been of great assistance to honourable members when considering alterations to the Act. It is a most comprehensive body and consists of Mr. Cartledge, Assistant Parliamentary Draftsman (chairman), Mr. Ide, of the Local Government Department, two representatives of municipal councils, two representatives of the Local Government Association, Mr. Veale (Town Clerk of Adelaide), and Mr. Lewis, representing the Local Government Officers Association. There we have a body of men who are fully conversant with every aspect of local government, and it must therefore be admitted that any recommendations they offer for amending the Act must receive our serious consideration.

The Minister of Local Government submitted reasons for the amendments and these were amplified by Mr. Condon, who certainly has had wide experience in Parliamentary procedure and practices as well as in local government activities, and therefore we take notice of his remarks on this subject as we do on any other on which he expresses an opinion. Provision is made for alterations to the rating of certain properties, and for the appointment of a deputy chairman of a council. The provision relating to the unrestricted rating of certain properties is very desirable. As already pointed out, in many districts and towns there are small building blocks of about one-quarter of an acre for which a minimum rate of 5s. was fixed. It is ridiculous to think that the administration associated with such areas could be undertaken for such a small rate. The expenditure involved in issuing accounts and receipts would absorb the paltry rate of 5s. Therefore, I support the proposal for a higher minimum rate and also the suggestion of giving councils some latitude concerning the rates collected under differing circumstances.

Provision for the appointment of a deputy chairman is long overdue. Power is already available under the Act for council members to appoint one of their number to take the place of a chairman who may be absent; but a chairman may be absent from the district when an important decision must be made, and unless there is a duly appointed deputy to take his place difficulty may arise in getting an authoritative decision or opinion on matters that may be of urgent importance.

Other matters covered by the Bill concern the activities of councils in the administration of the Health Act. In most country districts, if not in all, the local council is constituted the local board of health, and this responsibility is often by no means a light one as much care is necessary to see that reasonable health conditions prevail. In this connection one amendment relates to the provision of septic tanks. Recently there has been developed a form of sewerage disposal which, for a better name, is called the "all-purpose septic system," and no doubt this will be of particular value in certain districts.

I fully subscribe to the amendment that fixes higher penalties for those who destroy road signs and other property of district councils. I regard such people as being

mentally deficient. I cannot understand the mentality of people who destroy valuable road signs that are a great aid to travellers, particularly those not familiar with the district. If I had my way I would provide a penalty of a month's imprisonment without option. The trouble is to catch these vandals.

The Hon. C. R. Story—Flogging would not be out of place for them.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—It certainly makes one annoyed when one sees these signs, erected for the convenience of the public, destroyed. It could involve a person in an accident or in being misdirected, and thus going a long way off his course. When in the north-west on one occasion I decided to travel by way of a back road on Eyre Peninsula and was told, "You cannot go wrong as there is a sign where you turn off." The sign was there all right and I duly followed the directions, but my natural bump of locality seemed to suggest, before I had gone very far, that I was not travelling in the right direction. So, after some speculation, I decided to travel in the opposite direction, and that proved to be right. Later I discovered that someone had turned the sign around.

That might be considered a humorous thing to do, but in my opinion it was ridiculous and stupid. It involved my travelling about 30 or 40 miles more than necessary. If I remember rightly, the amendment relating to signs applies to the "property of district councils." Many signs are supplied by the Royal Automobile Association and the oil companies and erected by the councils. Would they be considered to be the "property of the council"? If one happened to find a person destroying such signs could one lay a complaint against him of "destroying the property of the council"? This point may be worth looking into. It is very difficult to catch these people engaged in their nefarious acts, and it would be annoying if such a person were caught destroying a sign and the action one contemplated was voided because it did not contravene the Act.

Section 319 provides for contributions to roads. This is something that applies more to the metropolitan area or perhaps towns with large populations. It is something I have not come in contact with and therefore do not feel disposed to express an opinion upon. I prefer to leave that aspect to those more acquainted with the set-up than I am.

This debate is a hardy annual and will continue to be. No doubt the amendments proposed will have the effect of simplifying administration of local government activities. I pay a tribute to those people all over the State who give their time and attention *gratis* to local government affairs. The State is indebted to them for their conscientious discharge of the duties entrusted to them.

The Hon. C. R. STORY secured the adjournment of the debate.

ADJOURNMENT.

At 4.47 p.m. the Council adjourned until Thursday, October 30, at 2.15 p.m.