

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.**

Thursday, September 17, 1959.

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

**LIMITATION OF ACTIONS ACT  
AMENDMENT BILL.**

Read a third time and passed.

**PUBLIC PURPOSES LOAN BILL (No. 2).**

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 16. Page 732.)

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS (Northern)—The Public Purposes Loan Bill offers a wide range of subjects for discussion but as previous speakers have dealt with many of the items of general interest I propose to confine my remarks to that portion of Mr. Bevan's speech delivered yesterday which concerned the Renmark irrigation area and its drainage problems. I appreciate that any member has a right to discuss matters relevant to a Bill, whether those matters particularly concern his own district or otherwise. Mr. Bevan is a member of the Land Settlement Committee which is now in the process of examining an important drainage problem, and I thought that the information secured by him would be of great value in his consideration of the problem. Therefore no-one can take any exception to the fact that the matter he dealt with was outside his own district. I do not propose to make any comment regarding the relief proposals submitted to the Renmark Irrigation Trust or the circumstances surrounding them, but I take some exception to the fact that, by inference, he implied that the members of the Northern District have been somewhat neglectful of their duties in this connection.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin—I thought he was applauding them.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—He started off very well. When he introduced the matter he remarked that he did not want members for the district to feel that he was criticizing them for their inactivity in the district, and he added that he considered that the district was adequately represented. However, he somewhat spoilt that from then on as his general theme seems to imply that we had fallen down on our job. Drainage problems have existed for a very long time; indeed, over the whole 60 years that irrigation has been carried on in Australia there have been growing difficulties in connection with the drainage of irrigated land. In the early days in some instances it

reached the stage where it was seriously questioned whether some of the irrigation areas were worth carrying on, because at that stage of experience no method had been discovered to correct the trouble. Mildura was one of the earliest irrigation schemes, commenced by the Chaffey brothers, and Renmark was not far behind.

The Hon. C. R. Story—Before it.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—I thought Renmark followed Mildura; at any rate they were commenced at about the same period and right from the earliest days the problem of effective drainage, not only for preserving the life of the vines and trees but of increasing their productivity, was most acute; so there is nothing new about it. I assure members that my association with the matter is not one of a few weeks or months. Ever since I have had the honour to be a representative of the Northern District, which embraces Renmark and other irrigation areas, I have taken a keen interest in them in an endeavour to improve my knowledge of the subject and with that I readily connect my colleagues representing the Northern District. The problems of drainage arise from diverse and numerous causes; there is the effect of the mineral content of the soil, the surface contours, and the sub-strata. What may seem to be a perfectly satisfactory drainage scheme for the surface proves to be quite unsuitable for the sub-strata, and for that reason the approach to the solution of the problem was, for many years, largely one of trial and error. In the period of over 50 years that I have mentioned quite a lot has been discovered. Scientific discoveries have been made in that time and have been helpful, and the same applies to other steps taken to overcome drainage problems. We have given and will continue to give our attention to these things and it will be necessary for us to visit the areas and improve our knowledge. I resent any suggestion that we as members representing the Northern District have fallen down on the job as regards Renmark. We have shown that we have attended to our job not only by making inspections and by endeavouring to learn something of the problems but also by the support we have given to the numerous requests and suggestions made to improve the position. I do not think anyone can claim we have been neglectful.

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—I did not at any stage imply that.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—That is the inference I drew from what the honourable member said, and he did paint a rather woeful picture that I do not in any way subscribe to. I venture to say that the honourable member has done the district a disservice by creating the impression that growers are hopelessly broke and that the whole show is not in a position to carry on. From my limited knowledge I claim that is not the case. The position is not in any way hopeless and, if what I understand is correct, the growers and the Renmark Irrigation Trust have favourably considered, if they have not already accepted, the scheme put before them by the Government. I shall be very surprised to learn that they have not. I believe they have accepted it, and that is an indication that they at least have not lost their faith in the proposition and are ready to go on and do what they can towards remedying the position. I repeat that in this and in matters of a similar nature one of the worst things that can be done is to discount a project or a district. When people who are associated with and intimately concerned in the progress of a district start to get the impression that the whole show is hopeless how can they expect to get sympathetic treatment. I say that the kind of opinion held and expressed by the honourable member will not in any way enhance the district's prospects of survival, but we are all vitally interested in seeing it does survive.

I do not intend to analyse the project that has been submitted for the restoration of the Renmark irrigation area, but from what I know of it it is a good one. I was about to use the word "generous," but I do not like using that word as far as Government instrumentalities are concerned. I would rather say that it is a wise and constructive project, and I think the people and the authority concerned in this area will be ill advised if they decline to accept it.

The Hon. Sir Lyell McEwin—They would not be justified in doing that on Mr. Bevan's statement.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—Precisely, and his statement was "either take it or leave it."

The Hon. S. C. Bevan—So it is.

The Hon. E. H. EDMONDS—Have the people made any alternative suggestion? If so, have the authorities refused to give consideration to such alternative suggestion? I have not heard of it. If I as an individual have a proposition submitted to me that is

not acceptable it is up to me to suggest something in its stead and not just say, "This is no good, therefore we are out." That appears to be the philosophy adopted by the honourable Mr. Bevan and I cannot in fairness to my colleagues let this opportunity go without expressing my opinion and voicing my protest at his remarks. I support the Bill.

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

#### LAND SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 16. Page 722.)

The Hon. R. R. WILSON (Northern)—This Bill is important because it extends the term of office of the Land Settlement Committee for another two years. I support the comments made yesterday by the honourable Mr. Edmonds. In another place the second reading was given by the Minister of Lands, and later the member for Burra in four words said, "I support the Bill." That is all the debate that took place on the Bill in another place. I pay a tribute to the present members of this committee as well as to the original members for what they have done on this committee, which is of importance to our production in South Australia. The original committee comprised the late honourable E. A. Oates, the honourable Sir Collier Cudmore (who was chairman), the honourable C. S. Hincks (before he received his portfolio), and Messrs. J. A. Lyons (deceased), W. Macgillivray, H. D. Michael (deceased) who was later chairman, and P. H. Quirke, now the member for Burra. They have, in my opinion, been responsible for the success of the war service land settlement scheme. To have Mr. Edmonds as its present chairman, the committee is most fortunate. He is a practical man who has made a success of his own undertaking; his judgment is sound and I feel that his advice to the committee must be of great value. The present members are Messrs. Edmonds (chairman), Bevan, Heaslip, Hutchens, Jenkins, Laucke and Lawn. All have had considerable practical experience. It has been said that members who represent metropolitan districts know nothing of the land, but I am of a different opinion. I know that Mr. Bevan has had considerable experience, as has also Mr. Hutchens in primary production and in the classing of wool. We cannot underestimate their value, even though they represent metropolitan districts.

In his opening speech His Excellency the Governor said that 1,016 men had already been placed on the land under the war service land settlement scheme and an area of 724,517 acres had been allotted. He added that 1,100 ex-servicemen had been assisted by agricultural loans under the Re-establishment and Employment Act. Most of this land was in its virgin state. An area of 124,000 acres had been cleared and 190,000 acres had been established with pastures. The success of the scheme has resulted from the introduction of modern methods, such as the overcoming of mineral deficiencies. As a result the scheme has been a huge success. I pay a tribute to the Minister of Lands (the Honourable C. S. Hincks) and his officers for the way they have administered the scheme. The principle followed was to select land of quality in good rainfall areas and land suitable for irrigation. Information was distributed among servicemen while still in the services to the effect that probably not all applicants would receive land. That brings me to the point raised yesterday by Mr. Bevan regarding the State's not using all the finance made available to it by the Commonwealth. Late last year the following resolution was sent to the Commonwealth Minister for Primary Industry by the National Congress of the Returned Soldiers League:—

That in view of the state of war service land settlement, the Loan Council be requested to raise a special loan to be used exclusively for war service land settlement.

I consider that the reply received from the Minister was a reflection on our Land Settlement Committee. It was as follows:—

In South Australia, in spite of active endeavours over a number of years it has not been possible to acquire land. There will therefore be some who will not get land, but this is in no way due to inadequacy of finance available. That was not the position in South Australia, as scores of thousands of acres had been recommended by the Land Settlement Committee, but some of the proposals were not acceptable to the Commonwealth authorities. This question is not political. Whatever Party is in power, the Minister in charge must rely on the information received from his departmental officers. The War Service Land Settlement Committee at Canberra was responsible for saying that South Australia did not use the finance available for the scheme, the success of which has been proved by the development of Crown lands in the Ninety Mile Desert through the assistance of science and the adoption of modern methods of development. This area is now a highly productive one. There are

hundreds of thousands of acres of similar country in good rainfall areas that could be brought into production, although at one time this type of land was considered useless.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Is there not a water problem there?

The Hon. R. R. WILSON—I believe that underground water is obtainable in most parts of the area. In the nearby Murray lands I understand there is a basin of water that extends to these other areas and that water may be obtained practically anywhere. Much was said yesterday about the Renmark drainage scheme. There is also a drainage problem at Loxton that is to be investigated by the Land Settlement Committee. I know that complaints are being received every day from that area regarding the grave seepage problem. I believe that the committee will produce a valuable report.

The Bill also contains a clause for the compulsory acquisition of land. This is a most contentious question with landowners for nobody likes compulsory acquisition. I am informed that this power has not been used up to the present because landowners generally are prepared to co-operate, rather than go to the other extreme. I realize that during the two-year term of the committee it will have much important work to do. I support the Bill.

The Hon. W. W. ROBINSON secured the adjournment of the debate.

#### CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 16. Page 736.)

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—This short Bill states clearly that women shall not be debarred from being members of Parliament. Very few people have ever doubted whether women could become members of either House, and it has always been taken for granted that if elected they could sit in Parliament. It was not until a woman was nominated that doubt arose. I feel that the Government is more than justified in making it clear that women are eligible to sit in Parliament. It is true, as Mr. Densley said, that 65 years ago when the franchise was given to women, this was not clearly stated. In those days it was never anticipated that a woman would ever aspire to be a member of Parliament, but since then women have become members of most professions and occupations. For instance, they served in the defence forces, and

in many ways are comparable to men in ability. Consequently, I do not think anyone objects to the Bill clearly setting forth that women are entitled to sit in Parliament.

I should not like to see a Chamber composed only of women. Women predominate numerically in this State; also, they live longer, on the average, than men. My examination of a number of share lists of various companies reveals that they hold much of the wealth of this country in their hands. Whether that has been bestowed upon them or whether they have earned it, they hold it nevertheless and have the responsibility of using it. So, over the past 65 years, women have earned, and certainly deserve, the right to occupy a place in this Chamber. I do not object to that.

However, I rather think that the experience of a man by the very nature of his daily work and duties in the hurly-burly of life fits him better than a woman to consider legislation. I say and believe that, but at this stage in our development women should not be debarred from sitting in Parliament. Therefore, I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill to make clear to everybody that the women of South Australia, without being put to the expense of perhaps defending a case in court or elsewhere, have a right to sit in this Chamber.

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

#### ELECTORAL ACT AMENDMENT BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 16. Page 736.)

The Hon. JESSIE COOPER (Central No. 2)—I rise to support this Bill, and I consider that this is a very just amendment. It is a provision for a minority group. As far as I know, there is only one such group concerned at the moment, and it is in my electorate. It is the Carmelite Sisters at Glen Osmond, but, with the increase in our population and in different migrant groups from Europe, they may not always be the only group concerned. It has always been a principle of British administration and legislation to make provision for the requirements of minorities, where such provision does not constitute a burden or inconvenience to the majority.

The Carmelite Sisters are a purely contemplative order. They have willingly separated themselves from the world to devote themselves to penance and prayer for all mankind. It is a most ancient order, known to have been in existence for over 600 years—that is, many

centuries before our laws governing Parliamentary elections were made. The special circumstances of these women, and indeed of members of any enclosed order, were overlooked in the framing of the Electoral Act. They have no desire to avoid their responsibility as voters. I feel that there is no reason why we should not grant them this concession—the right to vote by post—so that they may maintain their chosen way of life. Therefore, I have much pleasure in supporting the Bill.

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

#### STATUTES AMENDMENT (PUBLIC SALARIES) BILL.

Adjourned debate on second reading.

(Continued from September 16. Page 736.)

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY (Central No. 2)—No great statement from me is needed to persuade this House to pass the Bill. The salary increases proposed are justifiable in the circumstances. The people at the top of any organization—the Civil Service, industry or whatever it is—and the leaders in Parliament deserve remuneration commensurate with their thinking, planning and initiation of measures. It is strange that this Bill should have to be introduced now. Salary increases come about usually by way of basic wage increases, which occur, unfortunately, all too frequently.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—I beg the honourable member's pardon?

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I mean the necessity for these increases is unfortunate for the economy of the country. We are a young country and do not want our costs to outstrip our ability to compete with the world and hold our own with other countries. Consequently, the necessity (if the honourable member prefers that word) of having to increase the basic wage from time to time is a matter of regret, but when we do so the problem of dealing with margins above the basic wage has to be considered. As far as I know there has been no suggestion of a general increase in margins in industry in the last few years. Consequently I was somewhat surprised to read in the *South Australian Public Service Review* an account of the arrangement made last year between the Public Service Association and the Government for the examination of margins. It appears that the Public Service Association approached the Public Service Board with a request for a review of salaries, and the board, apparently, acted independently

of any other organized authority that fixes wages, i.e., either the State or the Federal Arbitration Courts.

As members know, a case is now before the Federal Arbitration Court in which it is sought to establish a new marginal rate over and above the present basic wage. Evidently the Government agreed to the course I mentioned, otherwise the investigation would not have taken place. The board's decision came into effect as from April 1 of this year, but it is rather strange that the amount in which the State was involved because of it, as far as I know, has never been mentioned. We hear from time to time what an increase in the basic wage will cost the country, and if I remember correctly the last increase of 15s. a week granted by the Federal Court involved the State's employers, including the Government, in some £9,500,000 to £10,000,000. However, that was accepted without a wink of the eye, and that is what I feel is a little disconcerting; that we can so glibly accept these increases and the impact they must have on our economy. Consequently I was somewhat concerned on that occasion to learn that the three judges came to three different decisions and that the intermediate decision was adopted as a compromise. I do not think that our salary and wages system can stand such an approach. The authorities who deal with these matters should be the best able to arrive at conclusions after considering the question from all angles and a unanimous decision is what I would desire.

This Bill seeks to grant to certain officers marginal increases that were given by the Public Service Board to public servants generally without—as I gather from the *Public Service Review*—evidence being called from either side; merely as a result of consideration by the board itself, a board which I presume consists of nominees of both the Government and the association with, perhaps, a Government nominee as chairman. My point is that the issue was decided without evidence. We

have given to that board authority to deal with the whole of the salary and wages structure of our Public Service. Whether that is right or wrong I am not prepared to say as I do not know the circumstances that led up to it, but the salaries and wages are getting so high and so difficult to cope with that some uniform method of dealing with them should be adopted.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Despite that, profits seem to be increasing.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I do not deny that. Share values are going up and production from the land is going down, and how we can reconcile that I do not know. I do not subscribe to the haphazard way in which salary increases are granted now, for I believe that all aspects of the case should be studied and argued most carefully and applied uniformly.

This Bill simply brings into line the salaries of certain top members of our Public Service whose salaries are fixed by Act of Parliament. There are only a few officers concerned and whether they are the highest paid or whether they are protected by Parliament I do not know, but there are many other officers whom we do not know and we find that their increases date back to April 1. It seems right that we should bring into line the salaries of the heads of departments who are responsible to Parliament. I do not propose to particularize. They have received increases based on a certain formula which seems to be a percentage margin plus the basic wage increase. This is a small Bill consequential on increases which have been paid to other members of the Public Service and I support it, believing that the officers concerned are well worthy of this consideration under the present conditions.

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

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.06 p.m. the Council adjourned until Tuesday, September 22, at 2.15 p.m.