

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

Tuesday, October 6, 1959.

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

## ASSENT TO ACTS.

His Excellency the Governor, by message, intimated his assent to the following Acts:

Electoral Act Amendment

Public Purposes Loan (No. 2).

## QUESTIONS.

## INSECURE LOADING OF TIMBER.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—I ask leave to read a statement in *The Border Watch* prior to asking a question.

Leave granted.

The Hon. L. H. DENSLEY—The following appeared in *The Border Watch* of Saturday, October 3:—

Strong comments were made by councillors at the district council of Mount Gambier meeting yesterday on the increasing hazards of logs dropped on roads. The overseer (Mr. H. F. Button) reported that a check of four miles of road on Wednesday revealed 75 logs, and a number on other roads. Many were 16 footers and would weigh up to half a ton. On a wet, dark night collisions could easily take place.

Can the Minister of Roads say whether any action can be taken to make the position safer?

The Hon. N. L. JUDE—I am somewhat concerned by the statement as, naturally, both the safety of the public and the improper use of roads is involved. I might add that the Act already contains provisions for the proper tying on of loads on vehicles, and it is one that is usually policed fairly well in timber areas. It is recognized by everyone that timber is one load that should be carefully secured and therefore I will have no hesitation in taking up this matter with the appropriate authorities.

## PRICE OF POWER KEROSENE.

The Hon. G. O'H. GILES—Has the Chief Secretary, representing the Minister of Agriculture, a reply to the question I asked on September 2 regarding the price of power kerosene to farmers?

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN—I have a report from the Prices Commissioner as follows:—

1. The tariff on power kerosene was not increased by  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per gallon in the recent Federal Budget. Prior to the Budget, power kero-

sene was free of customs duty but incurred primage of 4 per cent per gallon equivalent to  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. gallon. The Budget amendment deleted the primage charge and substituted customs duty of  $\frac{1}{4}$ d. per gallon leaving the position unaltered.

2. Power kerosene is not refined in Australia—all requirements are imported. From a cost viewpoint it cannot therefore be compared with petrol refined in this country but should be compared with imported refined petrol.

3. The f.o.b. value of power kerosene is approximately A.15 pence higher than that of imported 83 octane, or standard grade petrol.

4. Freight: There are approximately 308 gallons of petrol per ton compared with 270 gallons of power kerosene. The average freight charge for power kerosene is therefore A.4 pence per gallon higher.

5. A substantial proportion of motor spirit is sold in bulk in the metropolitan area whereas practically all sales of power kerosene are made in the country. In addition, 70 per cent of power kerosene is sold in drums. Expenses of distribution of power kerosene are 1.18 pence per gallon higher.

6. Cost of landing and marketing power kerosene is therefore higher than imported 83 octane petrol, as follows:—

	Per gallon.
F.O.B. value . . . . .	A.15 pence
Tanker freights . . . . .	.4 pence
Distribution expenses . . . . .	1.18 pence

Total . . . . . A1.73 pence

7. The comparison then shows—

	Petrol (Imported). Gall.	Power Kerosene (Imported). Gall.
Price to primary producer . . . . .	3 1 $\frac{1}{2}$	2 2 $\frac{1}{2}$
Less customs duty . . . . .	1 0 $\frac{1}{2}$	0 0 $\frac{1}{2}$

Price to oil  
industry . . . . . 2 1      2 2

The price of power kerosene is not as high as might be substantiated.

8. Primary producers buy power kerosene at 1d. per gallon cheaper in South Australia than in any other State excepting Queensland where the price is the same as S.A.

9. American quotations—

Petrol—U.S. 21.32 cents per American gallon includes a reseller's margin. The current average U.S. price per American gallon exclusive of reseller's margin and taxes is 16.48 cents. This figure is approximately the same as that quoted for power kerosene.

Power kerosene—U.S. 16.3 cents per American gallon is sold direct by the industry to the user.

10. As regards the request for State authorities to approach the Federal Government for removal of what was considered to be an added halfpenny burden upon primary producers, this was presumably made under the impression by the honourable member's informant that an additional duty charge had been imposed. Paragraph 1 of report, however, clarifies this matter.

**SOUTH-WESTERN SUBURBS DRAINAGE.**

The PRESIDENT laid on the table a report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works, together with minutes of evidence, on floodwater drainage of the south-western suburbs.

**AUDITOR-GENERAL'S REPORT.**

The PRESIDENT laid on the table the Auditor-General's report for the year 1958-59.

**CONSTITUTION ACT AMENDMENT BILL.**

Read a third time and passed.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.**

Read a third time and passed.

**LAND SETTLEMENT ACT AMENDMENT BILL.**

(Second reading debate adjourned on September 22. Page 800.)

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 22. Page 804.)

The Hon. A. J. SHARD (Central No. 1)—I support the second reading of the Bill, which provides for increases in salaries to certain officers of the Public Service. At present the salary of the Agent-General is £2,876 and the proposed salary is £3,240, an increase of £364. Comparable figures for the other officers concerned are as follows:—Auditor-General, £3,876, £4,240 and £364; the President of the Industrial Court, £3,750, £4,075 and £325; the Deputy President of the Industrial Court, £3,150, £3,425 and £275; the Commissioner of Police, £3,576, £3,940 and £364; and the Public Service Commissioner, £3,876, £4,240 and £364. I have no objection to these increases because I think they are well merited. They are all good officers of the State. I have never been envious of anyone who has had his wages or salary adjusted in accordance with basic wage and marginal increases. When speaking on a similar Bill last session I said:—

The Minister knows my views. I have never quarrelled about the salary paid to a person doing a full time job, and I think he knows my views of the calibre of the President and the Deputy President of the Industrial Court. I can say quite truthfully that I have never said a wrong word about either of them, and I think that a salary increase is overdue considering the magnitude of their work in the interests

of the State. Although we may not be able to do it this session, I suggest that the Government could well examine again the salaries of these persons and possibly correct an injustice on the basis of relativity.

Prior to making that statement I compared their salaries with what they had been paid many years ago. I am pleased to see that despite the fact that it is not 12 months since we increased their salaries, they are again to be given an increase which, according to my reckoning, amounts to an increase in their margin of about £280 above the general standard of salaries. The only basic wage increase in the last 12 months was the 15s. a week which became operative, I believe, on June 15 last. However, these two gentlemen are to receive a marginal increase of approximately £280. I have no quarrel with that because I think they have earned it. When explaining the Bill the Chief Secretary said:—

These officers include the Agent-General, the Auditor-General, the Commissioner of Police and the Public Service Commissioner, whose salaries were last fixed in 1957. Since then there have been cost of living increases amounting to £80 a year and the general increases of this year which, in the case of the salaries of these officers, would amount to £284, making a total of £364.

There again, if my arithmetic is correct, these gentlemen were granted a margin for a better living standard of £284 a year. If I am not right, I should like to be corrected. I am not criticizing these increases. When Sir Frank Perry was speaking on this Bill he said:—

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 then interjected, "I beg the honourable member's pardon?" Then Sir Frank said, "I meant the necessity for these increases is unfortunate for the economy of the country."

The necessity for the repeated increases in the basic wage is caused by the people Sir Frank represents because, if they were not so anxious to build up their prices and profits, there would be no necessity for the increases.

The Hon. Sir Frank Perry—I did not blame anybody.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD—The honourable member wanted to know the cause, and I am telling him, because I have been quite a while on the road and know what I am talking about. If the index figures as we understand them remained stationary there would be no need for increases

in the basic wage—but my friend races me to the point. I want to refer to the real cause. The unfortunate history of this matter is that in the war years when we had price control and fixation of wages, as well as a certain measure of profit control effectively observed, the community enjoyed a better and more stable standard of living than probably they ever had in their lives. People could budget with a certain degree of confidence that they would be able to do what they wanted to do; that they could purchase this and budget to buy that, knowing that they could afford it. However, with the relaxation of price control, they cannot do it today, and that is the real cause of the persistent increases in the basic wage. I am not interested one little bit in the exact amount of the basic wage, but in what we receive each week or each year as effective income. I do not care whether it be £10 or £20 a week so long as it affords the people a reasonable standard of living. I am sure that, despite inflation, we are a little bit better off today with a high take-home packet than we were when we did not have quite so much in our pay envelopes.

I hope members have securely fixed in their minds that all of the officers involved in this Bill are to have an increase of £280 in their margins, and I refer particularly to the President and Deputy President of the Industrial Court because their salaries were fixed at the same time as members of Parliament last year. Since then there has been only one basic wage increase of £40, but their salaries are going up by £325, and I wonder when the Government is going to consider members of Parliament. Are those of us who make it a full-time job to be expected to carry the basic wage increase? Are we not just as entitled to the increases and margins as some of these officers, or are we some body apart? I do not like having to get up and talk about wanting my share of basic wage increases, but I assure you, Mr. President, that I cannot afford to carry them. Why cannot some basic formula be worked out so that adjustments can be made automatically? On examining the position further I find that everyone in the community, with a few exceptions, has had an increase in recent days: the pensioners have had one—whether it be sufficient is beside the point—and everybody on a weekly or daily paid basis has received an increase. The general public servant not only got a basic wage increase, but marginal increases as well. In our own staff some have been blessed with decent marginal increases, but I may be pardoned for saying that every-

body within the precincts of this building, other than members of Parliament, is not happy with the situation. All have not been treated on a comparable basis with people outside.

I have made some examination of Parliamentary salaries and have before me a table showing the rates in the respective States. Without wearying members by quoting it in full, suffice it to say that I find that our rate of salary is next to bottom, and our scale of allowances below all the others. Further, I was horrified to ascertain that we have suffered a reduction equivalent to £3 a year in our overall income. On receiving my postage allowance this month I found that members are down 12 stamps a month, which is the equivalent of 5s., or £3 a year. That is wrong and I cannot afford it. I do not think that members, particularly those such as myself and my colleagues who have no other income, should be put in the position of having to tell the world that we want the basic wage and marginal increases which the Government sees fit to give to other officers.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Everything we get we have to drag from the Government.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD—That is so and it is not a good thing. I offer the suggestion for what it is worth—and I hope that the Government takes as much notice of it as it did of my suggestion last year regarding the President and Deputy President of the Industrial Court—that the Government set up a committee, either a committee of members of both Houses or an outside body, to make full inquiries into salaries and allowances of members of Parliament, and fix a basis upon which subsequent adjustments can be made automatically.

The Hon. F. J. Condon—Not forgetting superannuation.

The Hon. A. J. SHARD—All aspects of the case. When I talk to people outside and tell them what we get in the way of salary, superannuation and amenities they look at me in blank astonishment and say, “You are considerably underpaid.” I agree with that, and it would be better instead of someone having to bell the cat for the maintenance of our own rights, if the Government appointed a committee to inquire into the whole set-up and establish a formula whereby salaries of members of Parliament would rise or fall with fluctuations in the basic wage. We would all then know where we stood. I support the Bill, which raises the salaries of certain officers, and I sincerely trust that the Government or the

responsible authority will do something for those members of Parliament who cannot afford to be underpaid.

Bill read a second time.

In Committee.

Clauses 1 to 6 passed.

Clause 7—"Operation of increases in salaries."

The Hon. Sir LYELL McEWIN (Chief Secretary)—I move the following suggested amendment:—

After "fifty-nine" to insert "and the rate fixed by section 3 shall for all purposes be deemed to be the salary at which the Auditor-General holding office on the thirtieth day of September, nineteen hundred and fifty-nine, was being paid at the time of his retirement."

The reason for the suggested amendment is that since this House last met the Auditor-General has retired and this means that the benefits provided in the Bill, which are retrospective to April 1, would not be available to him. Retrospectivity is not confined to the Auditor-General by the Bill, but applies to everybody included in the Bill, and if this amendment is not made this officer, who has been lauded by everyone who has spoken on the measure, would be deprived of benefits to which he is entitled. He would not be entitled to receive payment at the new rate in lieu of long service leave or recreation leave due to him because the Public Service Act provides for payment in lieu of long service and recreation leave to be made at the rate at which the officer was paid at the time of his retirement. If this amendment is not made his salary as at retirement will not be that provided in the Bill.

The Hon. F. J. CONDON—It is not necessary for any lengthy explanation to be given regarding the amendment because there is no difference of opinion on whether the officer concerned is entitled to the benefits provided by the Bill. The other officers concerned who are still in the

service are entitled to the increases as from April 1, 1959, and it would not be to the credit of Parliament if the Auditor-General, after his many years of valuable service to the State, were to be deprived of the increase. The Auditor-General's annual report was laid on the table of this House today. It is a very valuable document which gives more information to honourable members and more assistance to them in their work than any other document laid on the table. I pay a compliment to the retiring Auditor-General for the service he has rendered to the State and I have pleasure in supporting the amendment.

The Hon. Sir FRANK PERRY—I too have pleasure in supporting this amendment, and I think the Government would have been doing Mr. Bishop (the retiring Auditor-General) an injustice if this amendment had not been moved. I consider the Auditor-General's report one of the most valuable documents we receive, and it is certainly the most informative one. He is a direct servant of Parliament, and can only be dismissed by Parliament. The salaries provided in this Bill date from April 1, 1959, and a long time will have elapsed before the officers concerned get their increases. It is true that retrospective payment is to be made, but it would have been most unfair if this amendment had not been included. I feel that because of his long service to the State the Auditor-General should receive the additional amount proposed.

Suggested amendment carried; clause as suggested to be amended passed.

Remaining clauses (8 and 9) and title passed.

Bill reported with a suggested amendment and Committee's report adopted.

#### ADJOURNMENT.

At 3.07 p.m. the Council adjourned until Wednesday, October 7, at 2.15 p.m.